An Actor Remembers: Memory's Role in the Training of the United States Actor

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This dissertation examines the different ways actor training techniques in the United States have conceived of and utilized the actor's memory as a means of inspiring the actor's performance. The training techniques examined are those devised and taught by Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, Joseph Chaikin, Stephen Wangh and Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. As I shall illustrate, memory is not the unified phenomenon that we often think and experience it to be. The most current research supports the hypothesis that the human memory is composed of five distinctly different, yet interrelated systems. Of these five my research focuses on three: episodic, semantic, and procedural. As I believe no one theoretical approach could do justice to the variety of ways the actor's memory has been conceived of and used in U.S. training techniques I have chosen to explore the issue from three different theoretical perspectives. Beginning with a conception of memory that will, in all likelihood be the most familiar to my readers, I explore the ways in which contemporary neuroscience can help us to understand how Strasberg's Method uses the actor's episodic memory to achieve a state of affective remembering. I then use sociologist Maurice Halbwachs's theory of collective memory to reveal how the techniques of Adler and Chaikin utilize the actor's

semantic memory system but to very different ends. Philosopher Edward Casey's phenomenological study of procedural, or as it is more commonly known, body memory serves as the foundation for my examination of how Wangh's acrobatic technique uses the actor's procedural memory to stimulate a state of affective remembering in a manner which is remarkable similar to Strasberg's use of the actor's episodic memory. My study concludes with an examination of another highly physical technique known as Viewpoints, developed by Bogart and Landau. In Viewpoints we see a technique that utilizes not just procedural memory, but also the actor's episodic and semantic memory systems in a manner that is unique in United States actor training

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PREFACE

This work is dedicated to all those who helped to make it possible. To all my teachers, notably Michael "B" Bodolosky, Dr. Robert Wagoner, Dr. Joanna Rotté and Dr. Attilio "Buck" Favorini. To the social frameworks of my families – the one I was born into and those I have acquired along the way; my wife Julie, my boys Quinn and Liam as well as those "friends turned family" who are spread out across the Philly, Baltimore and D.C. areas. Above all, however, this work is for my late grandmother Phyllis Eldora Edenbo whose unconditional love and support made me believe this was possible. I will always remember you.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

"Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit…"
-William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* Act II, Scene ii

Memory is versatile.   Think of the variety of ways in which we use the word "memory."   In its most common usage, memory refers to those past experiences that stay with us. Memory can also refer to our capacity to recall past experiences, such as when we say "so and so has a good memory." Memory is how we are able to learn from our past mistakes. Memory can be seen in a hundred little things that we do each day without a second thought – recalling a phone number, typing these words, tying my shoes or driving to work. Memory provides us with a sense of continuity in our lives - that today we are the same person as we were yesterday. It also connects us with other people, giving us a common ground upon which we can relate and connect with one another. Memory is, then, a mental, physical, and social phenomenon.

Memory is also a performative act. When we remember something, most often we do so in order to carry out some kind of behavior in the present or future. I commit a phone number to memory for future use. I cover my desk with notes that serve as

reminders to do certain tasks in the near future. Even when we simply sit around reminiscing about days gone by, memory is a performance. Memory recreates and reconstructs for us events and actions that have long since been over and done with. The actors may have left the stage long ago, but their ghosts remain, forever reenacting their scene on the stage of our memory. Memory is a difficult thing to pin down because it slips easily across categories. One of the reasons why memory resists hard and fast definitions is that there is more than one type of memory. Some people have a good memory for faces, others excel at remembering numbers, and some can recall trivia with incredibly accuracy. All of these instances are examples of memory, but what is not commonly understood is that in each of the examples mentioned above, the object of the memory - a face, a number, trivia - represents a different kind of knowledge and as such a different type of memory. And what's more, our memories aren't fixed and unchangeable. Memory is alive, and how we experience it depends upon the ever-changing circumstances of our lives – eroding the distinctions in how we designate past, present, and future.

Our word "memory" comes from the ancient Greek Mnemosyne. In Greek mythology, Mnemosyne was a Titan: one of the incredible beings of terrible power who could be considered the elder siblings of the ancient Greek gods. Also referred to as "she who knows all tales," Mnemosyne gave birth to the Muses: the nine goddesses responsible for inspiring artists in a variety of fields. Mnemosyne, or Memory, then, turns out to be the mother of all the arts. The actor's art, in particular, could very easily

and quite correctly be called an art of memory. Actors must be able to remember words and actions set down, more often than not, by another person. As an actor I have participated in a number of audience talk-back sessions. Often someone asks, "How do you remember all those lines?" Actors need to remember not only their lines but also their blocking, stage business, entrance and exit cues and so forth. Actors also use their memories to breathe life into the characters that they play. In short, acting is a process of remembering.

The connection between the actor's art and the actor's memory has only intensified throughout the twentieth century with the development of specialized acting techniques. This relationship between the actor's art and the actor's memory is my subject matter. In the following chapters I will examine the variety of ways in which the actor's memory has been explored and cultivated by various actor training techniques developed in the United States during the twentieth century. The techniques under investigation include those developed by Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, Joseph Chaikin, Stephan Wangh, Anne Bogart, and Tina Landau. I have chosen these specific practitioners because each of their training techniques, to varying degrees and in different ways targets the actor's own memory as a means of jump-starting inspiration.

But to ask how different actor training techniques utilize the actor's memory is to ask only half of the question. The other half deals with what types of memory or memories these techniques call upon. Over the course of the last two centuries, the

subject of memory has been the province of disciplines as wide-ranging as psychology, neuroscience, sociology, and philosophy. Each discipline has proposed its own concept of what memory is and how it functions in our lives. My own examination of memory will illustrate how different acting techniques developed in the United States over the course of the twentieth century reflect different concepts of memory. As I will show, we are endowed with several different types of memory that often, unbeknownst to us, work in conjunction with one another. Most contemporary actors draw from various forms of actor training rather than employing a single style. In much the same way, remembering is usually accomplished thanks to several different types of memory working simultaneously. And while an inter-disciplinary approach to the study of memory and the actor's training presents many challenges, adopting such a wide-ranging perspective allows me to present what I believe to be a well-rounded picture of memory at work in the actor's training.

I approach memory from psychological, sociological and philosophical (phenomenological) conceptions. To provide us with some common ground to talk about these different concepts of memory, I turn to the work of contemporary neuroscientists like Endel Tulving, whose work on multiple memory systems has proven to be helpful in explaining how different types of memory are intricately woven together to form what we often mistake as a single, monolithic entity we call memory.

1.1   MULTIPLE MEMORIES UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Before I delve into the specifics of how different acting techniques develop the actor's memory, let me plainly state at the outset two important characteristics of memory. First, what we call "memory" should actually be referred to as "memories." What's more, the conception that memory is a complete, intact recording of past experiences – a mental photocopy if you will - stored away for later use is misleading. The process of remembering is a process of reconstruction wherein fragments of past experiences are categorized and influenced by our present circumstances. In other words, what you remember is in all likelihood, not exactly how the original event transpired. Anyone who has revisited his old childhood stomping grounds is familiar with the reconstructed nature of memory: the playground is not as big as you remember it and the swings don't go nearly as high or as fast as they once did.

The idea of multiple forms of memory is not new, although corroborating evidence supporting this theory is. Contemporary technology such as Positron Emission Topography (PET) scans and functioning magnetic resonance imaging scans (fMRI) allows us to see memory in action. Evidence provided by these technologies confirms the existence of several different memory systems. This fact has led some of the finest minds in memory research to reassess their basic approach to memory studies. In an article entitled "Concepts of Memory" (2000) Endel Tulving, co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Memory*, makes the case that conceptual analysis of memory is just as important as the traditional experimental analysis that makes up the majority of

memory research. Tulving argues that conceptual analysis is important because it helps us to formulate the right kinds of questions to ask about memory. While there is much interplay and some overlap between our various types of memory, "not every question that can be posed for one idiom makes sense in the other, and not every fact that is true of one idiom is true of the other" (Tulving 38). The first set of questions about memory and actor training that interest me is what Tulving would refer to as "what" questions (33). "What" questions are the kinds of questions that deal with our cognitive understanding of memory, i.e. what kind of memory is being used.

The idea that we possess more than one type of memory can be traced as far back as Aristotle. In his *On Memory and Reminiscence* Aristotle writes about how

> Sometimes in remembering a fact one has no determinate time-notion of it, no such notion as that e.g. he did something or other on the day before yesterday; while in other cases he has a determinate notion of the time. Still, even though one does not remember with actual determination of the time, he genuinely remembers, none the less. (10)

In this passage Aristotle is talking about the differences between two types of memory now identified as semantic and episodic memory. As we shall see, these two types of memory differ in major ways but often work in conjunction with one another to produce what we take for granted as a single memory.

In 1804 the French philosopher Maine de Biran postulated three distinct forms of memory: representative, mechanical, and sensitive (Schacter, Wagner & Buckner 2000). One hundred and four years later another French philosopher, Henri Bergson, asserted that "the past appears indeed to be stored up, as we had surmised, under two extreme forms," these being "motor mechanism" and "personal-memory images" (*Matter and Memory* 102). The former, Bergson relegates to the realm of mere habit, while he viewed the latter as "true" memory. As Suzanne Nalbantian states:

> Intuitively, Bergson was preparing the way for a global approach to the study of memory as a process involving various regions of the brain. He would rather envisage true memory as being stored in the intangible mind (*l'esprit*) than in the tangible brain (*le cerveau*), which could not be a container for the conservation of memory (11).

Bergson's work could be described, as Nalbantian suggests, as a metaphysical approach to memory; metaphysical because he sought to locate true memory in the mind/spirit and not in the physical structure of the brain.

If we think of Bergson as being interested in the more apollonian aspects of memory then the work of his contemporary Pierre Janet, could be seen as pursuing the chthonic side of memory "in the elocutions of hysterics in their dreams and fantasies" (Nalbantian 14). Janet distinguished between two types of memory: elementary or sensitive memory; and complex, or intellectual memory. Sensitive memory consists of recollection of specific sensations experienced by the individual. In contrast complex

memory deals with ideas and occurs only as a function of language. Janet sees memory as synthesis of the sensitive and intellectual forms of memory. In his study of hysterics Janet concludes their condition is due to an imbalance of memory, too much sensitive memory and not enough intellectual memory. In his 1928 *L'Evolution de la memoire* Janet would "posit language as the fundamental agent of memory" (17). As Nalbantian points out this transforms memory into a social act – a concept of memory that is taken up in later years by memographers[1] like Maurice Halbwachs. Like Bergson, Janet's works runs counter to the purely physiological views of memory that dominated his time. At the same time, however, Janet is also criticizing Bergson's metaphysical view of memory as being tied to the mind (*esprit)* and not the brain (*cerveau*) Instead of positing the mind/matter dualism championed by Bergson, Janet sets up a "dualism of consciousness, in which two types of memory could coexist" (Nalbantian 18).

William James, a contemporary to both Bergson and Janet, also posited the existence of a more than one type of memory. In his *Principles of Psychology* James hypothesizes the existence of a primary memory and a secondary memory (Chapter 16). According to James, primary memory is composed of "permanent substratum of neural pathways which are the conditions of retention. Such 'habit-worn paths' are physical brain traces" (Nalbantian 20). Secondary memory depends upon a reactivation of these brain traces and occurs only when the remembered object "has been absent from consciousness altogether" (James 646). Memory then, according to James, is a psychophysical process.

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[1] A term coined by Attilio Favorini, which he applies to memory scholars regardless of their specific discipline.

Our current understanding of how memory functions is not dissimilar from James' psychophysical view of memory. We know that the brain is physically altered by the formation of memory. We also know, and this is where our current understanding of memory differs from James', that memory involves so much more than a reactivation of certain brain traces.

Each of these men stands out as a pioneer in the field of memory studies. And while time and technology have proven that many aspects of their theories about memory were incorrect, their shared assertion that we have more than one type of memory still remains valid. Although each located memory in different realms - Bergson in the spirit, Janet in the interplay between subconscious and conscious and James in the interplay of body and mind – all three recognized that what we call memory is not a unitary system, but rather a composite of multiple systems. Today neuroscientists have suggested five distinctly different, yet interrelated systems of memory. Endel Tulving first defined a memory system as having, "a set of correlated processes" (Schacter et al. 2000). This definition was later expounded upon by the work of Sherry and Schacter (1987) who adopted a very general definition of a memory system as, "an interaction among acquisition, retention, and retrieval mechanisms that is characterized by certain rules of operation" (Schacter et al. 2000). The emergence of more than one memory system is often viewed as an evolutionary strategy for survival. The basic idea is that multiple systems of memory evolved, "when problems of information storage and retrieval required systems with functionally incompatible

properties" (Schacter et al. 2000). Joining forces, Schacter and Tulving proposed three criteria for identifying memory systems: class inclusion operations, properties and relations and finally convergent dissociation. In laymen's terms: what kind of information does the memory system handle (class inclusion), how does a memory system function internally and in relation to other systems (properties and relations) and finally do the different systems present different kinds of evidence of their existence (convergent dissociation).

Using these three criteria as defining parameters, Schacter and Tulving identified five distinct memory systems at work. These include working memory, episodic memory, semantic memory, the procedural representation system (PRS) and procedural memory. The fact that we can differentiate between these five distinct systems of memory doesn't mean that they work in isolation. Even though each of these systems is responsible for its own type of memories they can, and often do, work in conjunction with one another. The first of these, working memory, is that kind of memory that we employ for temporary storage, like how you repeat a phone number over and over to ensure that you will remember it as you make your way to the phone. Working memory may be converted to long term memory, or it may simply be forgotten once we have no longer have any use for it. The second of these systems is the episodic system. This is the one that most people refer to when they talk about memory. Episodic memory is the memory of specific, personal experiences. Episodic memories almost always contain some kind of personal meaning and are the memories that help us to

construct a sense of self. When I remember the births of my two sons – almost missing the birth of my first because my father and I were across the street having a burger, and reading to my wife from Goethe's *Faust* in the moments before my second son's birth – these are episodic memories.

The third type of memory system is one that deals with semantic memory. Semantic memory is another kind of memory that we call on repeatedly throughout our daily lives. It is the kind of factual information that you know but have no specific memory of ever having learned. I know that the capital of France is Paris but I do not have a memory of the context wherein I first learned this information. Semantic memory is eminently practical because it allows us to retain and access the most basic kinds of information without cluttering that information up with the myriad of details that often comes along with episodic memory.

The fourth system identified by Schacter and Tulving is called the procedural representational system or PRS for short. This memory system deals with perceptional information about words and objects. The PRS is believed to play a major role in the phenomenon known as priming. Priming refers to the fact that multiple exposures to a word or object increase the chances of quickly recalling it in the future. It is, in essence, exactly like priming an engine with oil before you start it. The engine may turn over the first time you start it, but priming it with some oil makes it likely that the engine will come to life more quickly than if it hadn't been primed.

The fifth, and at least for now, final system is called procedural memory. This system deals with the learning and recalling of cognitive and motor skills. Reading and riding a bike are a good example of procedural memory. As I move my eyes across the page from left to right I constantly draw upon my memory to recognize the literal meaning of words as well as contextual and syntactical clues to meaning. When I climb on a bike for an afternoon ride I push off and am away. The complex series of physical actions like maintaining balance, maintaining enough velocity and guiding the bike seems to take place all at once. I don't need to prime my memory for how to do these things, the remembering happens in the doing with or without our being conscious of it. If you've ever struggled to learn a new language or master a new motor skill you can appreciate how much we take procedural memory for granted. If it were not for the procedural memory system, we'd have great difficulty in acquiring new skills as well as using those skills we already possess.

The existence of multiple types of memory suggests that what we experience as a single memory is, in reality, a construction made up of several different types of memory. The constructed nature of memory was first suggested by F. C. Bartlett in his groundbreaking work *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (1932). His experiments in remembering and forgetting suggested to him that the process of remembering, "if we consider evidence rather than presupposition … [it] appears to be far more decisively an affair of construction rather than one of mere reproduction" (Bartlett 205). And while today Bartlett's conclusions are accepted as fact, prior to his

work and for some time after it, most memographers throughout history thought of memory as a reproductive phenomenon. Each memory was thought to form "some trace, or some group of traces" that is "made and stored up in the organism or in the mind" (Bartlett 199). It was believed that each trace, or group of traces, was the physical location of a single memory. In the early twentieth century German zoologist and evolutionary biologist Richard Semon coined the term *engram* to refer to these traces.

Semon defined an engram as, "the enduring though primarily latent modification in the irritable substance produced by a stimulus" (12). The formation of memory occurs when an experience leaves its mark, metaphorically and literally, upon the human brain. The process of remembering involved the activation of the engram formed by the initial experience and, if successful, would result in the complete recall of all the details of a given memory – a mental photocopy if you will. The engram hypothesis reflects the idea that our memory is composed of thousands upon thousands of individual memories all stored away in complete detail. And while today we know this view to be erroneous, it was in fact, in keeping with a view of memory that has been the dominant one throughout history. A brief look at the mnemonic device known as the *loci method* will illustrate how pervasive this view of memory has been.

The loci method comes down to us from ancient Greece and remains in use to this day. In the loci method the individual's memory is pictured as a house with an infinite number of rooms. If you want to remember a particular event, thing or person

you construct a mental picture of a specific room and then envision the object you want to remember in that room. The theory goes that when you need to retrieve a particular item from memory all you have to do is visualize the target memory's room and its contents would be remembered. In my own experience I have found the loci method to be a rather effective method for remembering things. In addition the persistence, in one guise or another, of the loci method throughout history also attests to its effectiveness.

In 1950 American psychologist and behaviorist Karl Lashley presented a paper at a symposium for the Society of Experimental Biology entitled "In search of the engram". Lashley's experiments were an attempt to locate, within the brain of rats, the engram of a conditioned reflex. In his experiments Lashley would condition reflexes in his rats and then lesion portions of the rats' brains in an attempt to locate the engram of the conditioned reflex. Lashley's thinking was that if he happened to damage the area of the rat's brain that held the engram, the rat would not be able to remember how to perform its task. Not surprisingly, Lashley discovered that the more damaged the rat's brain was the less effective the rat was in performing its assigned task. What Lashley did not discover, however, was a correlation between damage to a specific area and the loss of a specific conditioned reflex. Lashley concluded that the engram, as envisioned by Semon and others, did not exist. Lashley's results lead him to speculate that memory is not localized in any one area of the brain but instead is distributed across the entire neural cortex. Contemporary research has proven Lashley's assumptions to be, in part, correct. Today we know that individual memories are not located in individual

areas of the brain but are in fact distributed across several different areas of the brain; but not the entire cortex as Lashley assumed. Lashley's findings put an end, once and for all, of the one engram/one memory model of memory. With the refutation of the engram hypothesis, researchers gave Bartlett's theory of constructed memory a closer look. Today there is no question that remembering involves a process of reconstruction encompassing multiple cortical regions and is affected by a variety of factors all contributing to how we make and recall memories.

Although Bartlett's theory of reconstruction and Schacter and Tulving's classification of memory systems tell us much about what is happening on a neurological level, they are not very helpful in describing how we *experience* memory. This is a shortcoming that is all too common among the scientifically-oriented memographers. We have learned a great deal from laboratory studies of memory but that vast wealth of knowledge has often neglected, if not completely discounted, the experiential component of memory. As Favorini notes, "Bartlett's emphasis on the constructive and social dimensions of remembering" did, for a very short period spur interest in what some memographers refer to as "ordinary" memory (Favorini 137), or memory as we encounter it in our everyday lives. Eventually this interest in "ordinary" memory gave way to the study of memory under strictly-controlled, artificial circumstances. Although laboratory research has given us a clearer picture of how memory works, it is an incomplete picture. What laboratory studies of memory often lose sight of is that in our daily experience of it, memory doesn't occur under controlled

conditions. The movement to reunite the study of the memory with the larger social context we, as humans, operate in was spearheaded, in part, by renowned memographer and psychologist Ulric Neisser. In his 1982 work entitled *Memory Observed: Remembering in Natural Contexts* Neisser points out that, "If X is an interesting or socially significant aspect of memory, the psychologists have hardly studied X" (Neisser 1982, 4). Neisser's work, and the work of others like him, takes what has become known as an "ecological" approach to the study of memory - that is to say, the study of memory in its natural environment as it occurs in our everyday experience of it, outside of the sterile confines of the laboratory. The ecological movement among memographers didn't gain much momentum until the 1980s, but since then more and more researches across a variety of fields have begun to pay more attention to memory as it happens in the world and our lives.

I intend to rely on the ecological approach in my own study of memory and the actor's training. Each acting technique will be contextualized not only in regard to its place in the mnemonic discourse, but also within the larger context of theatre history. One question such an approach will help to answer is *what does the use of the actor's memory in these various techniques reveal about the practitioner's understanding of memory*? Do these techniques demonstrate an understanding of memory that is in keeping with or ahead of its time or, conversely, is the practitioner completely off base with regards to their understanding of memory? Such an approach also allows us to examine *how these historical views of memory stack up against our current understanding of memory.* Using

Schacter and Tulving's classification of memory systems will allow me to identify what type/s of memory is/are being engaged by the training system. Once identified, I will correlate our current understanding of how a type of memory functions with how the training technique engages said type of memory.

This approach takes us a little closer to understanding the connections between the actor's training and memory as it occurs in the world. To fully bridge the gap I turn to the work of philosopher Edward Casey and what he calls the Act and Object phases of memory. In his phenomenological study of memory simply entitled *Remembering* (2000), Casey focuses on memory as it is experienced. Casey's work on memory is a far cry from the rigidly analytic, scientific analysis that currently occupies center stage in memory studies. Harkening back to the time when memory was the province of philosophers and poets, Casey's work nevertheless displays significant correspondences with the "hard sciences" approach taken by others such as Schacter and Tulving. Casey distinguishes between what he calls Primary and Secondary remembering. The first, primary, is what Casey (49) calls the ability to remain aware of, of "holding in mind" an experience that has just transpired – what Schacter and Tulving call working memory. Secondary remembering, as defined by Casey, is a much broader category of remembering that encompasses the kinds of memory governed by the episodic, semantic, PRS and procedural memory systems identified by Schacter and Tulving. Casey defines as secondary remembering the kinds of experiences or facts that have "lapsed from my conscious after their initial occurrence" (50). Thus the

"secondary" of Casey's secondary remembering refers to memories that have long since ceased to be governed by the system of working memory and instead have transferred themselves into one of the other four memory systems. In his analysis of memory Casey points out that the phenomenon of memory is a "diphasic" experience that can be, intellectually, divided up into "an act phase and an object phase – roughly, into *how* we remember and *what* we remember" (48). To talk about the act phase of remembering is "to concern ourselves with the actual process of remembering, with how remembering is accomplished or realized on specific occasions" *(Remembering* 48). In terms of acting this refers to the way a specific technique teaches an actor to use their memory. The object phase, as the name suggests, refers to the object or content of memory. Identification of the object phase not only tells us what the content of memory is but also gives us a very good starting point at locating that memory within the context of the five systems of memory. As Casey points out our experience of the act and object phases of remembering are "simultaneous and not successive" but an intentional analysis of remembering needs must be able to distinguish between the two (48). The major reason for this distinction is because, as we have seen, the process of remembering is a process of reconstruction. This is exactly why Casey's act/object phases of memory can be useful – it translates into terms of experiencing memory the same questions asked by Tulving in his conceptual analysis of memory – it bridges the gap between concept and experience, between theory and practice.

In the first chapter I will provide a brief account of how Constantine Stanislavsky's work contributed to the intertwining of memory and actor training. For theatre historians I will be treading over what is most likely, familiar ground. And yet in a study of the actor's training and the actor's memory, Stanislavski's technique must be our point of departure. Not only is Stanislavski's technique the origin of contemporary actor training, it was also the first to rely on a scientifically-oriented view of memory. This should come as no surprise when one considers that Stanislavski's earliest attempts to develop a system of actor training coincide, historically speaking, with the emergence of memory as a subject of scientific interest and study.

In the second chapter I will examine the system of actor training developed by Lee Strasberg. If Stanislavski was the first to utilize the actor's memory in a systematic way, Strasberg's interpretation of Stanislavski is the means by which memory entered into the modern training of United States actors. Strasberg's emphasis on emotional memory illustrates a conception and use of memory that is very similar to the work of behavioral psychologists like Ivan Pavlov. These techniques exhibit an understanding and use of memory in keeping with the psychological and neuroscientific conceptions of memory; conceptions which firmly root memory within the confines of the "body-mindedness" to borrow Antonio Damasio's term).

Chapter three focuses on techniques developed by Stella Adler and Joseph Chaikin whose techniques concentrate on the actor's collective memory; a conception of memory proposed by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Adler's characterization

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technique and its reliance on "type" provides us with the opportunity to see how collective memory influences the actor's portrayal of character. In a similar manner the more experimental actor training advanced by Joseph Chaikin also relies on the actor's collective memory but with one major distinction. While Adler's use of type reinforces and tends to perpetuate the status quo of the collective memory, Chaikin's technique seeks to ferret out and interrogate the inborn prejudices that can be handed down in the collective memory.

Finally, chapter four will take as its subject matter the philosophical concept of body memory as put forth by Edward Casey. The highly physical acting techniques taught by Stephen Waugh and Anne Bogart and Tina Landau all attempt to come at the actor's memory via the body. Waugh's version of Grotowski rests on the idea that memories can linger in the body and accessing such memories can trigger a state of affective remembering. Bogart and Landau's technique uses the nine Viewpoints and the actor's body memory as a means of approaching acting from a non-psychological perspective. In both instances actors are asked to work with the memories that dwell not in their minds, but are embodied in the actors' flesh and bones.

Each of the following chapters follows the same structure, beginning with a general overview of the type of memory that is being investigated followed by an analysis of the actor training technique. Stylistically it should be noted that I have discarded the use of "his or her" convention, which I find unwieldy to write and read, and have simply adopted the gender pronoun of the actor training theorist whom I am

examining. My readers will also note that for many of my examples I rely on my own memories and experiences as an actor who has trained in and used several of the techniques examined in the following chapters. In doing so I must acknowledge my debt to Edward Casey whose own study of memory takes the same approach. Casey adopts such an approach because his is a phenomenological study of memory and therefore necessitates a personal perspective. In my own way, I, too, am conducting a phenomenological study of memory, albeit on a much more general level. I invite my readers to substitute their own memories in place of my examples. I invite them take the time to engage with their own memories, if just for a moment, in order to experience how memory can make one feel. I hope that the personal experience of some of these memories conveys to the reader how truly powerful memory can be for the actor and why the use of the actor's memory can be a risky venture and not to be undertaken lightly. It is also my hope that this work provides my readers with not only a greater understanding of how the actor's memory has been targeted for use by various actor training systems, but also an opportunity to reevaluate their basic assumptions about memory. Memory is not just in our minds; it shapes the world in which we live and resides within our bodies.

2.0   A GARDENER OF THE HEART

"Any system has to become so familiar that you forget about it. Only after it has become part of your flesh and blood and heart can you begin, unconsciously, to derive real benefit from it."
-Constantine Stanislavski, original draft preface to *An Actor's Work*

Theatre history is full of examples of how actors have put their own memories to use in their work. In his *Attic Nights,* the second century BCE grammarian and lawyer Aulus Gellus recounts the story of a popular and well-respected actor named Polus who used his son's death as a means of inspiration. Gellus tells us that, "[. . .] Polus, clad in the mourning garb of Electra, took from the tomb the ashes and urn of his son, embraced them as if they were those of Orestes, and filled the whole place, not with the appearance and imitation of sorrow, but with genuine grief and unfeigned lamentation" (*Actors on Acting* 15). Nearly two thousand years later, the subject of acting and memory was taken up by Denis Diderot in his *The Paradox of the Actor* (1830). In his chapter on Diderot, Joseph Roach concludes that the *Paradox*, "restates Diderot's general contention maintained in the *Reve de d'Alembert* and the *Elements*, that the individual is a succession of experience bound together, given coherence, by the thread of memory" (*The Player's Passion* 145). Even those who disagreed with Diderot's general theory of dispassionate passion in acting, like actor and theorist Francois-Joseph Talma, also

thought of the actor's memory as being the "theoretical bridge between sincerity and art, between inner feelings and outer forms" (Roach *PP*, 173). Although the subject of memory and its relationship to the actor's art has occupied many of the great minds in theatre history, it was the lifelong pursuit of one man whose work on actor training forever linked the actor's art with the actor's memory.

Born into a prosperous, theatre loving family, Constantine Stanislavski began his work in the theatre at a young age. As a young man Stanislavsky achieved some middling renown as an amateur actor. It was during these early years in the theatre that Stanislavsky first began to grow dissatisfied with the acting conventions of his day - conventions he himself did his utmost to emulate. His experience in Pushkin's *The Miser Knight* marks a major, if somewhat obscure, moment in the history of actor training. Prior to this role, Stanislavsky's usual technique was to copy the performance of a famous actor who had also played the same role. This approach to acting was not uncommon at all during this period, and in fact, was the standard method of actor training for many actors. Unfortunately for Stanislavsky, and fortunately for actors coming after him, he had never seen anyone perform the role of the Miser Knight. Having no template on which to model his performance, and because the character of the Miser Knight was so different from him in age, attitude and general demeanor, Stanislavsky felt at a loss for what to do. How would he be able to perform a role for which he had no model? How could he play a character that was much older and

physically decrepit? This early crisis of artistic conscience would lead Stanislavsky to revolutionize the world of theatre.

Early in his investigations Stanislavski became captivated by some of L.N. Tolstoy's thoughts about art. "Art begins," writes Tolstoy, "when a person, whose goal is to convey to other people a feeling which he had experienced, calls it up in himself and expresses it thorough recognizable external signs."(*What is Art?* 178).   Implied within this statement is that art necessarily involves the re-experience of a past feeling on the part of the artist and communicating that feeling or feelings to an audience. This idea of the artist drawing on his past to inspire him in the present fascinated Stanislavski. From his own experiences in theatre, both as an actor and audience member, Stanislavski was quite familiar with those wonderful moments when inspiration takes hold and the performance flows as if of its own accord. Stanislavski noted that during those times when an actor was inspired, he seemed to truly live up to Tolstoy's edict about the creation of art.

Stanislavski's own experiences on stage and from observation of other actors led him to the conclusion that, "Acting is above all intuitive, because it is based on subconscious feelings, on an actor's instincts" (Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work* xxiv). In my own work as an actor I have on occasion had a performance or two that I would call inspired. The strange thing about these few occasions is that I am hard pressed to recall exactly what I did. I have no recollection of actually performing, per se, but rather a general sense of simply being and doing, of acting on instinct. And in spite of my best efforts, I was never able to truly capture the experience again for the rest of the show's

run. In all honesty I would be hard pressed to even begin to explain how or what had inspired me. This is exactly the problem Stanislavski saw when it came to relying on inspiration as a motivating factor for performance. Stanislavski believed that if a way could be found to induce, as it were, inspiration, then an actor would have recourse to a reliable method of calling up past experiences without having to rely on the fickle nature of inspiration. For what Stanislavski had come to believe was that inspiration is the actor's instinct guiding her through the role. The question for Stanislavski became how to access those instincts without inspiration. Stanislavski believed the answer lay in discovering a way to artificially stimulate the actor's inspiration. For Stanislavski this meant finding a way to access the actor's subconscious through controlled, conscious means. This simple formulation serves as the foundation for nearly all systems of actor training that have followed.

In *An Actor's Work* Stanislavski likens the process of an actor seeking out inspiration to that of a hunter attempting to bag wild fowl. "If the bird will not fly to you by herself, then nothing will bring her from the leafy thicket. There is nothing else to do but entice the wildfowl out of the forest with the help of special whistles called 'lures'" (*An Actor's Work*, 14). No one lure woks for every bird so a hunter must be knowledgeable about and proficient in using a variety of lures. Stanislavski experimented with all manner of different lures for his actors with mixed results. Some of these lures include: the sound effects the early Moscow Art Theatre was famous for, the Magic If, the Given Circumstances as well as the Method of physical actions. But of all the various lures Stanislavski experimented with over the course of his lifetime, none

has had such a profound effect on actor training in the United States as affective memory. Even though affective memory, or as Stanislavski called it, emotion memory, is but one among the many various techniques Stanislavski experimented with over the course of his studies, in the United States affective memory was for many years perceived as the end-all and be-all of Stanislavski's system. Publication, translation and second-hand interpretation issues all contributed to this misunderstanding of the importance of affective memory to Stanislavski's system. And as we shall see, these issues helped to shape the ways in which Stanislavski's technique has been appropriated and adapted for use in the United States. But first let us examine in detail the concept of affective memory and how it influenced Stanislavski's work.

According to the French experimental psychologist Théodule Ribot, affective memory is a type of memory which causes the rememberer to re-experience, in the present, the emotions he had experienced during the period he is remembering. It is not just remembering being sad on the day your grandmother passed away but rather actually physically and mentally experiencing that sadness again. Ribot first advanced his idea of affective memory in the 1898 publication of *The Psychology of the Emotions*. In a chapter entitled "The Memory of Feelings" Ribot plainly states that, "The question of the emotional memory remains nearly, if not quite, untouched. The object of this chapter is to begin its study" (*The Psychology of the Emotions* 141). In order for a memory to be classified as emotional Ribot maintained that it must be "felt" in the body in a manner reminiscent of the initial experience, "an emotion which does not vibrate through the whole body is nothing but a purely intellectual state" (*Psychology of*

Emotions 163). Ribot's contention that anything less than a *physical* experience reflects

his belief that all emotions – remembered and presently experienced – are physiological

in origin. In fact every aspect of human psychology, even memory, could be seen as a

biological in origin. As Susan Nalbantian points out in her overview of nineteenth

century psychology, Ribot had in his *Les Maladies de la memoire* (1881), "categorically

stated that memory is essentially an organic biological event" (Nalbantian 6). Through

his studies Ribot concludes that, "The observations, carefully taken, show that there are

two distinct forms of emotional memory, one *abstract*, the other *concrete*" (148). Ribot

classified as abstract those types of emotional memories wherein "only the conditions,

circumstances, and accessories of the emotion can be recalled; there is only an

intellectual memory" (emphasis in original 152). The majority of Ribot's test subjects fell

under this category. A minority, however, displayed concrete, physical reactions to

emotional memory. "Others (far less numerous) recall the circumstances *plus* the

revived condition of feeling. It is these who have the true 'affective memory'[. . .]"

(*Psychology of Emotions* 153). Ribot refers to these people as "affective types" and

concludes that it is a rare and fragile phenomenon. Even in the cases where true

affective memory was taking place Ribot notes that the process is slow and often

required some form of stimulus to fully develop into a true affective memory. Ribot,

however, speculates that there are some types of people who are more naturally

inclined to experiences of affective memory. "It is natural to suppose," Ribot writes,

"that emotional revival must be of frequent occurrence in poets and artists" (154).

Regardless of the rarity or difficulty involved, Ribot plainly states that "It is a serious

error to assert that only the conditions of the emotion can be revived, not the emotional state itself" (153).

There can be no doubt that Stanislavski's emotional memory technique is based on Ribot's work. Ribot was known to the Russian reading public through his monograph on the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer which appeared in Russian in 1896. Sharon Carnicke also notes that "While Freudian psychology took hold of the US popular and literary imagination, behaviourism {sic} including the work of Ribot gained authority in Russia" (*Stanislavsky in Focus* 131). As we saw in the introduction to this work, Ribot was a proponent of the hypothesis that emotions were physiological in origin. "It is," writes Ribot, "the thesis which has been adopted, without any restriction, in this work" (vii), which situates him within the tradition of Ivan Pavlov whose famous experiments on conditioning the salivation reflex in dogs is perhaps one of the most well-known experiments of all time. The behaviorists' sway in Russia, and their influence on Stanislavski's actor training technique is confirmed by Lee Strasberg, originator of one of the more well-known derivations of Stanislavski's system, when he says, "That's how we're trained, not from Freud, but from Pavlov" (qtd. in Krasner 152). Carnicke also notes that "Ribot's major books were translated into Russian within two years of their publications in Paris, and Stanislavsky owned six of them replete with marginal notes" (131-32). Carnicke takes care to mention that Stanislavski's quoting of Ribot's work, "in light of [Stanislavski's] infrequent citation of sources" should be considered an indication of the faith Stanislavski placed in Ribot's

theories (130). It is quite clear that Stanislavsky was not only aware of Ribot's work but also used it in his earliest attempts at formulating a system of actor training.

Stanislavski begins his chapter on emotional memory begins by having Torstov, Stanislavski's teacher-alter-ego, ask his students to repeat an exercise they had performed long ago. The students were thrilled because as Kostya, Stanislavski's student-alter-ego, says, "[. . .] it was good to repeat something we were sure of and which had been successful" (*Actor's Work* 195). And yet despite the student's past success, confidence and exuberance in performing the exercise, "[. . .] Torstov and Rakhmanov told us that while our earlier efforts had been direct, sincere, fresh and true, what we had done today was wrong, insincere and contrived [.]"(*Actor's Work* 195). This experience sets the stage for a discussion between Torstov and his students on emotion memory:

> Just as your visual memory resurrects long forgotten things, a landscape
> or the image of a person, before your inner eye, so feelings you once experienced
> are resurrected in your Emotion Memory. You thought they were completely
> forgotten but suddenly a hint, a thought, a familiar shape, and once again you
> are in the grip of past feelings, which are something weaker than the first time,
> sometimes stronger, sometimes in the same or slightly modified form. (*Actor's
> Work* 199).

Immediately Torstov turns the conversation to the topic of sensory memories, asking if students can remember particular tastes, touches, smells, sights and sounds.

Memories of the sensory details of a past experience, Torstov explains, are not memories of emotion. This is precisely why, even though the students performed the earlier exercise – *just as they remembered doing it* – it lacked the emotional truth contained in the original experience. The students had remembered only the sensory aspects of the exercise and failed to recall the emotion they felt when they believed there was a madman at the door. Although the two are different, Torstov goes on to tell his students a story which illustrates, "[. . .] the tight relationship and interaction of our fives sense and their influence on the things which Emotion Memory recalls" (*Actors Work* 203). The story is about two men who were trying to remember the tune of a polka but they weren't sure where they had first heard it. Slowly they begin to piece together the memory of where they heard the polka as they recall the sensory details of that evening: on what side of a column each was sitting, what they were eating, the smell of cologne in the air and finally the tune of the polka itself. "But that wasn't the end of it. The revelers remembered they had exchanged some insults while they were in a drunk state, and started arguing hotly again and as a result started abusing each other again" (*Actor's Work* 202). Torstov concludes the day's lesson by telling his students, "So, as you see, the actor needs not only Emotion Memory but sensory memory" (*Actor's Work* 203).

Stanislavski thought of sensory memories as being one of the major avenues an actor can use to reach a state of affective memory. Carnicke astutely points out that "Stanislavski underlines the comparison [of memory for emotion] with sense memory by using the Russian word, *chuvsta*, which refers both to 'feelings' and the five 'senses'

"(133). When we look at Ribot's work we can see why Stanislavski would believe that sensory memories could be used as a means of accessing emotional memory. After concluding that such a thing as affective memory exists Ribot then goes on to explore some of the variations his subjects reported during their individual experiences of affective remembering. Ribot came to two conclusions which influenced Stanislavski's own thoughts on and use of affective memory in actor training. First, "The revivability {sic} of an impression is in direct ratio to its complexity, and consequently in inverse ratio to its simplicity" (*Psychology of Emotions* 157).   Second, that in addition to the direct correlation between sensory details and the ability to recall an affective memory, there also exists a direct correlation between the "revivability {sic] of an impression" and "the motor elements included in it" (*Psychology of Emotions* 157).

These conclusions suggest that instead of talking about affective memory we should instead speak of *affective states* of memory. Ribot's observations about "sensory details" and "motor elements" aiding in the arousal of affective memory suggest that he was, unbeknownst to him, making an observation about how affective state of memory can be achieved through the use of two very different types of memory. Those memories which exhibit a high level of sensory detail are examples of episodic memory, one of the five major systems identified by Schacter and Tulving. When the actor engages his sense memory he is recalling the sensory details of a past, personal experience, the experience of the memory occurs within the mind's eye. Memories that had "the motor elements included in it" are suggestive of body memory, which is governed by what Schacter and Tulving have called the procedural memory system.

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And while those memories which include motor elements can be, and often are, memories of a past, personal experience these memories manifest themselves in and through the body. What Ribot takes as different types of details contained in a single memory, are in fact, indicative of different types of memory altogether. Regardless of his error in conflating episodic and procedural memory, Ribot's conclusions support my own belief, and experience as an actor, that both episodic and body memories are capable of producing an affective state of memory in the actor. That multiple types of memory are capable of producing an affective state of remembering is just another testament to the complexity of memory, how the various systems work in conjunction, overlap and influence one another.

Ribot himself did not see any division between emotion and biology and asserts that, "[. . .] a disembodied emotion is a non-existent one" (95)--an assertion Stanislavski echoes when he says, "In every physical action there is something psychological, and in the psychological, something physical" (qtd. in Carnicke 139). It is apparent when one looks at the body of his work, rather than just his work with sense memory, that when viewed in its totality (unfinished as it may be), "The System becomes his compendium of 'lures,' both *physical* and *mental*" (emphasis added Carnicke 127). The earliest portions of Stanislavski's writings represent the "psychotechnique" as Torstov calls it (*Actor's Work* 17). But the psychotechnique is only one half of a whole. "[The] basic goal of our art," says Torstov, "[. . .] consists in the creation of *the life of the human spirit of a role in a play and in giving that life physical embodiment* [. . .]" (emphasis in original *Actor's Work* 36).

What is evident in this brief encapsulation is that Stanislavski saw the training of the actor as needing to focus on two parts. The first - creating "the life of the human spirit of a role in a play" – is about actors learning different techniques which will enable them to be able to experience the emotional life of the characters they will play; sense memory being but one of the ways. The second part of the actor's training focuses on "giving that life physical embodiment" and on the physical life of the actor. The totality of Stanislavski's approach is described by Jean Benedetti in the preface to her translation of *An Actor's Work* as, "a unified, coherent psycho-physical technique" (xvi). Benedetti's translation is my preferred one for a number of reasons, not the least being its more inclusive and accurate translation of the Russian into English. But perhaps the greatest advantage I see in using Benedetti is how he attempts to present *An Actor's Work* in the manner which Stanislavski envisioned it: a single volume divided into two parts. Each part corresponds with a year's worth of lessons. Year one is entitled, "Experiencing," while year two is entitled, "Embodiment. "Most of what actors in the United States have come to believe about Stanislavski's system comes from the material presented in the first year/part of Stanislavski's two year/part study of acting. For my purposes the first year/part of the actor's training is of particular importance because of its use of what Stanislavski calls the emotion memory technique.

The first thing we must understand about Stanislavski's emotion memory technique is that he believed it could be triggered in any number of ways. In order to understand how Stanislavski utilized the actor's affective memory we must also understand how, "A knot of concepts forms around affective memory" in

Stanislavsky's system (Carnicke) 126). Stanislavski believed that emotion lay at the core of the actor's art, and the actor's efforts "[. . .] must be directed towards finding a natural way to discover the seeds of human virtues and vices in himself [. . .] So, make it your business to learn, first, the *means* and *techniques* whereby to draw emotional material from your inner self [. . .]" (emphasis added *Actor's Work* 210). The key to understanding Stanislavsky's emotion memory technique, and how it differs from many of those taught in the United States, is found in Torstov's use of the plural *means* and *techniques*. In Stanislavski's estimation an actor's emotion memory could be triggered in a number of ways. "Stanislavsky links [affective memory] to the logical stringing together of small physical actions [. . .] to inner action bereft of motion [. . .] to the actor's empathy with the character, to intuition, to the unconscious, and to spirituality itself" (Carnicke 126).

Throughout the chapter on emotion memory in *An Actor's Work*, the students ask Torstov which way is the best way to trigger an affective state of memory, but Stanislavski's teacher-alter-ego remains silent on the subject. Eventually, as the chapter draws to a close, Torstov has this to say on how an actor ought to reach an affective state of remembering:

> Artistic feeling, like the woodfowl {sic}, scares easily and it hides in the deep recess of our mind. If our feelings will not come out into the open there is no way to ambush them. In that case we have to rely on a decoy. These decoys are precisely those stimuli to Emotion Memory and recurrent feelings which we have been talking about all this time to lure them out. Each successive stage in

our studies has brought a new decoy (or stimulus) for our Emotion Memory and recurrent feelings. In fact the magic 'if', the Given Circumstances, our imagination, the Bits and Tasks, the objects of attention, the truth and belief in inner and out actions, provided us with the appropriate decoys (stimuli). (parentheticals in original *Actor's Work* 225).

So Torstov's answer to his students, like many professors' answer to the question –"what should we know for the exam?" – is everything. Every single exercise the students have learned thus far in their training can be utilized to reach an affective state of remembering. Stanislavski's own experience as an actor, as well as his observations of other actors, had led him to conclude, and rightly so, that no one technique would work for each and every actor. "Stanislavski always resists the temptation to associate emotion with any single technique, and maintains a multivariant {sic} approach expressed through a central metaphor [of a bird hunter using lures]" (Carnicke 126). Particularly frustrating for Stanislavski scholars, and myself in this particular context, is that Stanislavski, despite his intentions, never completed what Benedetti calls "a handbook of exercise that would set out day-to-day, classroom work in greater detail and could be used in parallel [to *An Actor's Work*]" (*Stanislavski and the Actor* xi). Indeed Stanislavski's works, regardless of translation, read more like philosophical treatises than practical guides to actor training. Most of the exercises Stanislavski sets down on paper take the form of improvisational exercises which feel like they were written to give Torstov a starting place for expounding upon the nature of acting, rather than to serve as a practical example of actor training. The lack of any complete, authoritative

material, something akin to the handbook Stanislavski envisioned but never wrote, has been a source of difficulty for acting scholars since Stanislavski's work was first published in 1936.

Jean Benedetti is attempting to fill this void with her translation of *An Actor's Wor,k* which contains a set of appendices including not only fragments and notes of Stanislavski's theoretical writings but also very rough information about specific acting exercises. Benedetti's *Stanislavski and the Actor* is another attempt to flesh out a more complete picture of the actual exercises devised and used by Stanislavski. Benedetti's sources in this instance are the notes of Irina Novitskaya, a one-time assistant to Stanislavski (Benedetti xiii). It's from this material that I will now provide a brief analysis of Stanislavski's technique for stimulating an affective state of remembering. Although experiencing an affective state of memory is a natural process, it is, according to Ribot, not a common occurrence. In this regard Stanislavski disagreed with Ribot. Stanislavski believed that every person was capable of achieving an affective state of remembering if they received the proper training. Of course it is now an accepted fact that mnemonic recall can be "trained up," so to speak. Stanislavski's anticipation of our current understanding of memory can be attributed, in part, to a belief in, "the physiological base of memory" (Benedetti 62). Recall Pavlov and the conditioned response he was able to elicit from dogs. This is precisely what Stanislavski's emotion memory technique does: it teaches the actor to use a particular stimulus to elicit an emotional reaction. It is important to remember that in the view of Pavlov, Ribot, Stanislavski, and others, emotions stemmed from psychological reactions produced by

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stimuli. In this light drooling is no different from crying or shaking with anger; in each instance an external stimuli produces a physiological reaction.

Stanislavski breaks down his emotion memory technique into three parts. The first focuses on developing the actor's ability to recall sense memory. Next the actor focuses on recalling personal experiences. The third and final part of the training involves the actor discovering "triggers, or ways of gently jogging our memory, without trying to force what is hidden out into the open" (Benedetti 63). In the first part the object of the exercise is to recall the sensory details of past experiences. When performing these exercises the actor is utilizing his episodic memory system. Stanislavski believed, like Ribot, that different people were susceptible to different sensory aspects of their memories. His notes indicate that Stanislavski came up with a list of mnemonic suggestions for each of the five senses (Benedetti 64-65).   The culmination of the actor's training in sense memory was an exercise Benedetti calls "The Five Senses Combined":

> Imagine you are taking a familiar journey – to a shop, the local railway station, school. Remember and try to experience everything you see, hear, smell, taste, touch on the way. Do not invent. Take the time you need actually to recall each sensation. (Benedetti 65)

Step two of the emotion memory technique requires the actor to recall an experience from his past in as much detail as possible. In truth it is no different from the Five Sense Combined exercise. In practice the actor uses the second step to become proficient in recalling emotionally specific episodic memories. At this stage, however,

the memories shouldn't be too emotionally powerful. Some suggestions Stanislavski makes include: an enjoyable party; when you had a success; when you felt ashamed; when you were bored; when you envied someone; when you were given a present. The point of this exercise is for the actor to become proficient in reaching an affective state of episodic remembering. This does not come easily, nor very often of its own accord, and so the actor utilizes the mnemonic skills they first developed in the Five Senses Combined exercise. Supported by Ribot's conclusions, Stanislavski believed that memories with heavily-detailed sensory recall were more likely to produce a state of affective memory than those with less-detailed sensory recall. This belief is in keeping with modern memory theory which holds that an elevated emotional state at the moment of encoding enhances episodic memory, thereby raising the chances of re-experiencing the emotional state at the moment of recall.

At this point Stanislavski says the actor may discover that emotion memories begin to occur for him spontaneously while he is in rehearsal or performance. This, however, is more the exception than the rule. So the actor must learn how to trigger his emotion memory to respond on demand. The actor begins by recalling a memory in which he experienced an emotion analogous to that which his character experiences. Next, the actor improvises in his present circumstances a situation which provokes the emotion. Stanislavski's notes give us an example of this exercise being used in an attempt to induce the emotion of terror. An actor recalls walking home with a friend, late in the evening through a public park. The two of them were laden down with parcels when, "Suddenly we became aware that we could see someone stealing through

the bushes" (Benedetti 67). The rest of the memory recalls the actor's and his friend's experience of getting out of the park. The improvisation occurs as follows:

I am alone with my sister/brother. It is late at night. The doorbell rings. *I go to the door and ask who is there*. No reply. But I can feel that there is someone outside. *I put the security chain on the door and open it*. There is a tall man with a bunch of keys in his hand. *I shut the door and ask once again what he wants*. No answer. *I bolt the door and with my sister/brother push heavy furniture against it. We wait*. After a while *I put my ear to the door and listen*. Silence. *I cautiously open the door* with the chain still on. No one there. (emphasis added Benedetti 67)

Note how much of this improvisation involves the actor physically doing something. Going to the door, pushing heavy furniture, even waiting – these are all physical actions which the actor uses to help himself reach a state of affective remembering. It was Stanislavski's understanding that emotions arise not only from our mental circumstance, but also from our physical circumstances. He understood that going to answer the door in broad daylight when one's parents are in the next room is an entirely different experience than answering the door late at night when one's parents are out of the house. What's more, Stanislavski recognized that the difference was manifest in both our mental and physical states, both of which he believed could be remembered. Of this exercise, Benedetti says, "By this process the past is brought into the present and made immediate but in an imaginary situation" (67). Given the often overlooked physical component of Stanislavski's emotion memory exercise, Benedetti's wording is worth noting. It is, as we shall see, almost identical to philosopher Edward

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Casey's encapsulation of body memory. One of the unique qualities of body memory is that it is a tangible manifestation of memory in the present. Unlike the episodic memories utilized by the first and second parts of the emotion memory exercise, the third and most advanced aspect of the technique draws upon the actor's body memory as well as his episodic memory. As we shall see in the final chapter of this dissertation, body memory is one of the more pervasive and subtle forms of memory – one that influences us in almost every aspect of our daily lives.

The ultimate result of this exercise is that the actor discovers in the course of the improvisation, a trigger – physical or mental– which propels him into a state of affective remembering. Once the trigger has been discovered, the actor can then consciously employ it as a means of achieving a state of affective remembering, a state wherein the actor communes with his creative unconscious. The actor can now move on to specific scene work and use what triggers he has already uncovered, as well as identify and develop those triggers for the emotion memories he will need for his performance. With practice and time, the actor will have a repository of emotion memories and their triggers at his disposal, as well as a technique he can use to discover those he will need in the future. In the following chapters, we will see how Stanislavski's use of the actor's memory has inspired others to do the same.

The interpretation of Stanislavski's system in the United States is directly tied, not only to the publication of Stanislavski's work, but also to the translation and editorial choices made by Elizabeth Hapsgood and Theatre Arts Books. These given circumstances, if you will, surrounding the dissemination of Stanislavski's emotion

memory technique played no small part in the misunderstanding of Stanislavski's work by those in the United States throughout the course of the twentieth century. Stanislavski always feared that any publication of his work "[. . .] would turn experimental attitudes into dogma" (Carnicke 72). It was this fear which kept him from publishing any material, even though he had been keeping detailed notes on acting since his early teenage years. A heart attack suffered onstage forced Stanislavski to retire from acting in 1928. His convalescence was lengthy, and, deprived of the income he made by acting, Stanislavski soon found himself in dire financial straits. Carnicke relates the following conversation between Stanislavski and his partner Nemirovich-Danchenko:

> You can't make a living in the theatre, I must never forget that, never. I have had to search out other ways, writing a book. You probably suspect that I'm doing this for pleasure. But you know my relationship to pens and paper. I am doing this only from the most extreme and heavy necessity. (75)

Eventually economic pressure won out and Stanislavski, who never thought of himself as a good writer and found the writing process torturous, agreed to put down on paper what would later become known as the System. From the outset, however, Stanislavski's project seemed doomed to misfortune.

As mentioned before, Stanislavski initially wanted his work published as a single volume. The publisher, Theatre Arts Books, balked at such a large project which they did not feel would be financially viable, and pushed for a multi-volume publication. Stanislavski agreed, albeit against his will. Stanislavski's main concern about breaking

up his single volume, which now seems prophetic, was that the necessary time lag involved in translating and publishing a multi-volume work would lead to confusion and misinterpretation. This is precisely what happened.

An Actor Prepares, the first volume, was first published in 1936 by Theatre Arts Books in the United States. At the time of its publication the text was already out of date, as Stanislavski had already drafted several revisions in anticipation of another edition being published. The second volume, *Building a Character* would not appear until 1949. Such a lag led many people, among them Hapsgood herself, to conclude that the two parts, "were separate books and that Part Two represented a revision of the ideas contained in Part One" (*Actor's Work* xvi). This was precisely what Stanislavski was afraid of and this misunderstanding lies at the heart of much of the dissension among Stanislavski's U.S. devotees. To complicate matters even further, Stanislavski had not finished more than one or two chapters of *Building a Character* before his death in 1938. The majority of the second volume was translated and complied from the notes and the few chapter drafts Stanislavski had completed before he died. *Creating a Role*, the third and final installment, is even more problematic. As Benedetti notes, the third part, "was never even started" and what comprises the Hapsgood translation is "material for a book, a compilation of articles and drafts drawn from various periods of Stanislavski's life" (*Stanislavski and the Actor* xi).

Despite these obviously fundamental flaws, Elizabeth Hapsgood's translations were the only available English translations for nearly seventy-five years. This is, in part, due to one of Stanislavski's more clever money-making schemes. If Stanislavski

published his work in the United States, then under International and United States copyright law, Stanislavski would immediately profit from his work and the future royalties would go to his family - a deal Stanislavski could not get if he published his work in the Soviet Union. In an ironic twist of fate, Stanislavski's attempts to provide for the future welfare of his family contributed to the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of his life's work. Even after suspicions about the quality of the Hapsgood translation were confirmed, copyright laws prevented any new translations from appearing for a number of years. Aside from a few bootleg copies, notably in Germany and Russia, Hapsgood's translation of Stanislavski served as the foundational text for any future translations.

Much has been made of the editorial and translation choices of Hapsgood and none of it is news. Carnicke points out that as early as 1954 theatre scholars had come to recognize the fundamentally flawed nature of Hapsgood's translations. The bootleg copies circulating in Germany and Russia, when compared to Hapsgood's English translation, revealed mistranslations, omissions and dubious editorial choices. In particular, critic Eric Bentley specifically mentions the complete lack of references made to Théodule Ribot in Hapsgood's English version. Hapsgood, in a translator's note to her third volume, attempts to deflect criticism over her editorial choices by stating: "I have carried out once more the task entrusted to me by Stanislavski himself, to eliminate duplications and cut whatever was meaningless for non-Russian actors" (*Creating a Role* 1961). However, not all of the complaints about omissions and dubious editorial choices can be attributed to Hapsgood. Theatre Arts Books insisted on many

of the cuts and changes to make the distinctly Russian Stanislavski more appealing to "Anglo-Saxon readers" (Carnicke 76). Others have come to Hapsgood's defense by stating that a majority of the editorial confusions should be attributed to Stanislavski, who was simply not a very good writer. For me one of the biggest issues when dealing with Hapsgood's translations is the idea of what exactly was "meaningless for non-Russian actors." To be sure there are cultural differences to account for, and how a Russian actor perceives the world around him is, by necessity, different from how I do as an actor from the United States. Perhaps most telling of the cultural obstacles contributing to the misunderstanding and dissention that surrounds Stanislavski's technique can be found in the nuance of the Russian language, a nuance which English simply lacks. Recall that the Russian word Stanislavski uses for emotion memory is *chuvsta* which can be translated into English as both "feelings" and "senses" as in sight, taste and so forth. *Chuvsta* is both the memory of emotion as well as memory of the senses. In its verb form, *chustvovat*, the possible meanings encompass: to feel, to have sensation, to be aware of and to understand. There simply is no English word that encompasses the same variety of meanings. This leads Sharon Carnicke to conclude that, "the simultaneous physical and emotional associations implicit in *chuvstva* invariably get lost in English translations" (139). All of these issues – the breaking of one into three volumes, Stanislavski's death prior to completing the second and third volumes, questionable editorial choices and mistranslation – contribute to the misunderstandings and misinterpretations that have plagued Stanislavski's work since its arrival in the United States in 1923.

Despite all of this editorial static, nothing about Stanislavski's system has had more of an influence on actor training in the United States than his use of the actor's memory. It was questions over the importance and use of Stanislavski's emotion memory technique that not only led to the dissolution of a promising young theatre company, but also defined a debate in acting which persists today. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Group Theatre was formed. Members included Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, Sanford Meisner, Elia Kazan, Bobby Lewis, Harold Clurman and Clifford Odets. The members of Group Theatre were early proponents of the new style of acting that Stanislavski had developed and which was all the rage in Europe. Lee Strasberg in particular became deeply interested in this new technique. To that end he studied with two of Stanislavski's students who were then teaching in the United States. As I will illustrate in the next chapter, what Strasberg took away from these lessons was an unwavering conviction that the emotion memory technique was *the* way for the actor to reach an affective state of memory. Stella Adler, Bobby Lewis, and others disagreed strongly not only with Strasberg's opinions but also with his methods. Adler found that using what she believed to be Stanislavski's technique made it impossible for her to act anymore. Experiencing a crisis of artistic confidence, Adler traveled to Paris and sought out Stanislavski himself. Adler returned from her journey convinced that not only was Strasberg wrong, but that *imagination,* not memory, was the key to acting (although, as I will show in my analysis of Adler's characterization technique, there is no escaping memory). The tension between Strasberg and the proponents of Strasberg's sense memory technique and Adler, Lewis, and the other opponents of sense memory became

too much for the Group Theatre to withstand, and it disbanded in 1941. This division marks perhaps the original split in American actor training, a split which has given birth to the outside-in /inside-out dichotomy which encompasses most contemporary actor training techniques in the United States.

The distinction between the two styles can be seen in the actor's approach to inspiring the emotion needed for performing a role. The inside-out approach, as its name implies, teaches the actor how to reach an affective state of memory mentally. These types of actors utilize emotional, episodic memories as a means of reaching an affective state of memory. Lee Strasberg's Method is the template for such techniques and was the first inside-out technique developed in the United States. The outside-in approach to acting teaches the actor to utilize the character's external behavior as a means of inspiration. These types of actors use the external aspects of their characters – the walk, the talk, their environment, how they carry themselves, what job they do – as the keys not only to unlocking the character, but also to triggering, in the actor, an affective state of memory. Stella Adler's technique embodies an outside-in approach, as do some of the more overtly physical techniques like Viewpoints. This division has had a marked influence on generations of actor and acting teachers alike.

The influence of Stanislavski, either directly or indirectly, can be seen in nearly every actor training technique practiced in the United States today. In the following chapters I will examine actor training techniques which fall across the inside-out / outside-in spectrum. Each of these techniques is related, on some level, to Stanislavski's own work. Some of the connections are more direct than others, but as I will illustrate

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in my analysis of these techniques, they each reflect at least one aspect of Stanislavski's system. That such a variety of techniques, utilizing a variety of types of memory, can all be connected, in one way or another, to Stanislavski's system is a testament to his attempts at developing a true psychophysical technique. Stanislavski's system straddles the divide that separates the outside-in from the inside-out. New versions of his work, and a better understanding of the old versions of his work, show us, here in the United States, how mistaken we have been. It's not a choice between outside-in or inside-out, but rather embracing both. What I hope the following chapters reveal is how a better understanding of the actor's memory and how it has been utilized reveal to us today what Stanislavski instinctively knew: there is more than one way to reach an affective state of memory. "You must know which stimulates what, what the right bait is to get a bite," says Torstov. "You have to be the gardener, so to speak, of your own heart, one who knows what grows from which seeds. You must not reject any subject, any stimulus to your Emotion Memory" (Stanislavski 225-226).

3.0 MEMORY IN MIND: EPISODIC MEMORY AND LEE STRASBERG'S METHOD

"You'd kill him – the man whose memories you carry? Isn't that a little close to suicide?"

-Alastair Reynolds, *Chasm City*

Our memories make us who we are. They play no small role in helping us to forge a sense of personal identity, of being oneself and no other. In the science fiction novel <u>Chasm City</u>, Tanner Mirabel sets out to avenge the death of his employer's wife, a woman for whom Tanner harbored a secret love. After spending nearly fifteen years in a state of cryogenic "sleep," while traversing vast interstellar distances, Tanner awakens to discover that he is unsure of not only where he is, what he is supposed to be doing but also who he is. Over the course of the novel Tanner's amnesia, a side-effect of his time spent in stasis, recedes. But Tanner's recovery begins to go awry as he begins to remember things that happened to another man. We discover, as does Tanner, that he is not Tanner but another man entirely – Cahuella, Tanner's employer.   In the final pages of the novel we learn how Cahuella, a man wanted for war crimes, had to assume not only Tanner's physical identity but also his mental identity in order to make it past his enemies.   In order to accomplish this feat Cahuella had Tanner's memories

"trawled" and then implanted in his own brain via an intricate system of neural implants. The implants not only enabled the transfer of Tanner's memories to Cahuella's brain but they also suppressed all of Cahuella's own memories, in essence causing Cahuella to believe, wholeheartedly, that he was Tanner Mirabel. Over the course of the book, as Tanner/Cahuella recovers his memories he also struggles to reconcile the conflicting memories of the events which led him to seek revenge. We, along with Tanner/Cahuella begin to see, quite literally, both sides of the story. What begins as a story of Tanner's revenge morphs into a story of Cahuella's redemption. Or perhaps transformation would be a better word, for as Cahuella says in the closing pages, "I don't pretend anything. I'm just not Cahuella. Not anymore. Cahuella died the day he stole Tanner's memories. What's left is . . . someone else. Someone who didn't exist before" (Reynolds 672).

This example, taken from Alastair Reynolds' *Chasm City* is set in a twenty-sixth century world where it is entirely possible for one person to exchange his autobiographical memories with another or even to transfer them into a vast data network. It is not an uncommon trope in science fiction and speaks, in part, to humanity's desire for immortality. Our autobiographical memories are, mnemonically speaking, what make us who we are. If a way were ever found to transfer one's memory into another vessel it would be, again mnemonically speaking, akin to achieving a type of immortality. Another reason that would explain the proliferation of such tropes is that autobiographic memory is the type of memory the average person is most familiar with--being the type of memory for specific personal experiences. But

more than being just a record of where we have been and what we've done and seen, autobiographical memories almost always contain some kind of personal meaning and are the memories that help us to construct a sense of self.

In Lee Strasberg's actor training system autobiographic memory is the pathway to reach a state of affective memory. As I will illustrate in the coming pages, the actor's autobiographic memory is uniquely suited for Strasberg's technique. And in many ways, Strasberg's intuitive understanding of the actor's memory, as reflected in the theory and application of his technique, anticipates some of our current understanding of how our autobiographic memory functions. In the next few pages I will provide a brief overview of a few its key features that directly relate to the core principles of Strasberg's technique.

3.1   EPISODIC AND AUTOBIOGRAPHIC MEMORY

All autobiographical memories are episodic, but not all episodic memories are necessarily autobiographical. The distinction, as we shall see, is a subtle but crucial one, which I shall address shortly. Strasberg's technique takes advantage of not only the unique qualities that characterize autobiographic memory, but also utilizes qualities of episodic memory in general. To begin, episodic memory is, more often than not, a conscious form of memory. This is not to say that one may never experience an unconscious form of episodic memory, but rather to state simply that in the majority of

instances when a person is remembering episodically it is an intentional act of remembering of which one is consciously aware. But there's more to one's awareness of episodic memory than simply being conscious of it. There is a more refined kind of awareness, which is unique to episodic memory and, "necessarily involves the feeling that the present recollection is a reexperincere {sic} of something that has happened before" (Wheeler 597). This is autonoetic, or self-knowing, awareness. In his study of autonoetic awareness and memory Mark Wheeler points out that autonoetic memories include not only the objective details of our past experiences, but also our subjective feelings about these experiences. While the subjective feeling an episodic memory contains may be the most important aspect of it for the actor's purposes, episodic memories are not the only types of memories that can carry with them a subjective tint. The semantic and procedural memory systems can also convey memories that contain a subjective feeling. What distinguishes episodic memory from other types of memory is "the conscious awareness that occurs during retrieval" that the memory happened to you (Wheeler 598). In contrast, when one remembers semantically, even if the semantic memory is imbued with subjective feeling, the type of awareness is noetic (knowing) only. "There is no feeling of reliving any previous episode," says Wheeler (598).

The second salient feature of episodic memory for my purposes is its constructed nature. As I mentioned in the introduction, Richard Semon had hypothesized at the beginning of the twentieth century that the formation of memories physically altered the brain, creating an array of loci within our own heads. Semon called these changes *engrams* and supposed a one memory for one engram correlation. Today the idea of the

engram, as Semon defined it, has been discredited. Technologies that allow us to see into the brain while it's remembering provide clear evidence that there is no one location that a memory is stored in. Yet Semon's idea that memory makes enduring changes in the brain proved quite prescient. But instead of being localized in one, specific area the physical changes caused by memory are distributed across a variety of brain areas. These findings led to the development of a constructive view of memory. According to this view the process of remembering involves the activation of multiple areas all over the brain, each responsible for a fragment, as it were, of the original experience. In *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* Antonio Damasio supposes that mediating systems, what he calls convergence zones, help to correlate the stored bits of memory from the different brain areas (1994). Remembering happens when signals from the convergence zone activate the various memory traces throughout the brain resulting in what Schacter calls, "a temporary constellation of activity" (*Searching for Memory* 66) that gives rise to what we perceive to be a single, unified memory. More recently the idea of connectionism has gained wide acceptance among some neuroscientists. Instead of bone chips or constellations, connectionists believe memory is composed of neural networks, or patterns of synaptic activation. When we make a memory connections between different neurons are made. When we try to remember another pattern, the retrieval cue, produces another neural pattern within the brain. If the retrieval pattern and the memory pattern are similar enough remembering occurs. The result is an "engram" that is a mixture of past, pre-established patterns (the memory) and the newly established pattern (the retrieval cue).

Such a point of view treats memory like a living organism, always changing and adapting to new environmental input. It also can offer a possible explanation as to why particular memories seem to trigger others; perhaps there is enough similarity, neurologically speaking, for the recall of one memory to cause recall in another, seemingly disparate memory. Speculation aside and despite the fact that the exact neurological processes involved in creating, retaining and recalling memories are still largely unknown, the consensus among neuroscientists is that remembering is a process of re-construction. The constructive nature of memory not only occurs on a neurological level, but also reveals itself in the construction of the personal narrative that we remember as our life.

As was the case with the memory of subjective feeling, the re-constructive nature of remembering is not solely the province of episodic remembering. All remembering is, to one degree or another, a process of re-construction. If this were not the case, then actors would find other forms of memory, such as procedural memory, useless as a means of helping them to reach an affective state of memory. Again one must keep in mind that even though the five types of memory differ in a number of significant respects, they remain inexorably tied to one another. In this particular instance the constructed nature of episodic memory is what, in part, helps makes Strasberg's technique useful to the actor. As further analysis of Strasberg's technique will show, what the actor learns to do is make new episodic memories for his use in his acting. This process, as outlined in the previous paragraph, would not be possible were it not for the constructive nature of memory.

A fourth characteristic of episodic memory which Strasberg's technique utilizes is also one that is wholly unique to episodic memory: the ability to experience an episodic memory from two different perspectives. This phenomenon is known as the field/observer perspective and refers to how we see a memory in our mind's eye. The field perspective occurs when one experiences the memory in the first person perspective akin to the initial experience. The observer perspective, as its name implies, is when one experiences a memory from a third person perspective, lingering on the margins like an unseen watcher. Take for instance the memory of the last wedding you attended. How do you see your memory? I attended the wedding of one of my dearest friends a month ago. My memories are all from the first person point of view, her and her soon-to-be husband standing before an old, stone tower; the warm glow of the dance floor and the smile we shared as she danced with her father; the centerpiece getting in my way as I leaned down to hug her before I left. Not long before, I attended the wedding of my wife's work colleague. When I recall the reception hall I see myself sitting next to my wife, speaking with the bride's old college friend; I see myself walking to the bar to get another glass of wine for my wife and me; I see myself leaning out of the way as the bride leaned down to give my wife a friendly kiss on the cheek. Why do I see the first in the field perspective and the second in the observer perspective? The reason for this has to do with the emotional contents of the memory. Studies have demonstrated that a person's mnemonic perspective is indicative of a memory's emotional intensity. Generally speaking the field perspective is the default viewing mode for highly emotional memories while less emotional memories occur in

the observer field. One of the most fascinating things about field/observer perspectives is that they are interchangeable. Our memories are not written in stone and it is rather easy to switch perspectives in memory.

Now let us turn our attention to the features that mark autobiographical memory as a unique type of episodic memory. Strictly speaking all episodic memories could be said to be autobiographical in the sense that, since they are our memories, they help make us who we are. But not all the events in one's life of are equal significance. Remembering seeing the Miami Heat win the 2012 NBA title, while exciting, does not hold nearly the same significance for me as the day of my wedding or the birth of my sons. If I were to suffer some form of memory loss and be unable to recall seeing the Miami Heat win the NBA title, my sense of self, of who I am, would not be affected in the least. But if I were to forget that I was married or had children that would lead to a fundamental shift in my self-definition. These types of memories are not only episodic, but also autobiographical, "a term underscoring the personal, individual nature of the remembering and its 'significance to the self-system' [. . .]" (Favorini 141).

Studies by Martin Conway and David Rubin show us that peoples' autobiographical memories are organized in a tripartite, hierarchal structure. This structure is composed of lifetime periods, general events and specific episodes. Lifetime periods sit atop the hierarchy of autobiographical memory. These periods represent large, general levels of autobiographical knowledge. Various studies of autobiographical memory all support the view, as articulated by Conway and Rubin that this level, "contains thematic knowledge relating to specific time periods" (Conway

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& Rubin, 103). Lifetime periods are best thought of as long stretches of time, often counted in years or decades, and can refer to such things as *going to graduate school*, *living in Pittsburgh*, *being a father* and so forth. Conway and Rubin demonstrated that lifetime periods often intersect with one another so that *being a father* may overlap chronologically with *going to graduate school*, but each lifetime period often retains its own discreet, thematic meanings.

General events are situated on the next level below lifetime periods. The general events level is comprised of summaries of repeated, extended events that may be measured in terms of days, weeks and even months. *Finals week* during graduate school, attending Pittsburgh *Steelers' football games* and summer *family vacations* are all examples of general events. The research of Williams and Hollan has demonstrated that the general event level is, "by far the most frequent type of autobiographical knowledge present, in relatively unconstrained retrieval tasks" (qtd. in Conway & Rubin 154). Their findings have been upheld by both the cued and free recall experiments conducted by Barsalou (1988). The current consensus is that general events level is the natural entryway into autobiographical memory.

Event-specific memories occupy the third and lowest level in the hierarchy established by Conway and Rubin. These memories tend to have more details than either lifetime periods or general events and are specific examples of the summarized events contained within the larger levels. Measured in hours, minutes and even mere moments, event specific memories often come to us in the form of images, strong feelings and very often demonstrate a high level of detailed recall. To follow my

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previous examples: *sitting in my professor's office and receiving a C* on my first graduate school paper, *seeing the Steelers' running back become the fifth all-time leading rusher* in the NFL, *helping my youngest son jump into the pool* for the first time on our vacation to Williamsburg, Virginia.

Notice how as I remember from the lifetime to the specific event level not only do the descriptions of my memories become more detailed, but they also display more emotion. This change marks the movement away from my episodic memories toward my autobiographical memories. Essentially the distinction made between episodic and autobiographic memories is really more a matter of terminology than anything else. Strictly speaking all episodic memories make up one's autobiography, but not all parts of one's life are as important as some others. By calling a particular episodic memory "autobiographic" what I am really saying is: "this is a memory that is important to how I define myself." As such autobiographic memories have a greater emotional quality to them than the emotionally-neutral episodic memory.

Most of the research investigating the relationship between memory and emotion has concentrated on the effects extremely intense emotions have on memory. Two examples of this kind of work are memory for traumatic events such as childhood abuse and what are known as flashbulb memories, highly emotional memories for monumental events such as the World Trade Center attacks of 2001. There is evidence to support the idea that emotional memories involve brain processes, notably the amygdale and adrenergic hormones, that aren't utilized by non-emotional memories (Schooler & Eich, 2000). Schooler and Eich tell us that in his 1959 study Easterbrook

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concluded that emotional arousal during the original event may result in heightened memory for the central details of the event. This was offset by a lessening of memory for the less important, periphery details. Conway and Martin conclude that more contemporary studies support Easterbrook's conclusions citing the work of Christianson (1992) as well as Heur & Reisberg (1990). Building off the work of J. Park (1995) Conway and Rubin also assert that there is strong evidence that suggests a person's ability to recall the details of emotional memories after long periods of time is greater than that for non-emotional memories. Ulric Neisser and others have shown that the emotional content of a memory may affect its frequency of recall (2000). In addition our present emotional state may affect the retrieval of memory, "if individuals experience marked emotion during recall, such emotional intensity could in principle be conflated with sensory vividness, creating the phenomenological experience of a uniquely detailed memory" (Schooler, Ambadar & Bedikensen, 1997). Basically what this amounts to is the proposition that a memory is emotional because it exhibits a high level of detailed recall; or it exhibits a high level of detail in recall because it is emotional. For my purposes the specific reasons why emotional memories are vividly detailed don't matter. The fact that they are is what makes them useful in the actor's training.

Of course the emotional intensity of the memories, as well as the psychological and/or emotional states of the remembering subject, raise questions about the veridicality of any given memory, especially when dealing with the memory of trauma. The relevance of memorial veridicality to actor training can thus come into play.

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Perhaps nothing evidences the potential for so-called false memories as the "Memory Wars" of the 1980s. During this period there were numerous accounts of remembering repressed childhood abuse, one of which included the then quite popular actress Rosanne Barr. In some cases it was concluded that the repressed memories were not true and came to be known as "false memories." Some accused prosecutors, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and so forth of influencing the victim to remember something that in fact had never happened. In fact, some cases proved that this was just the case; just as some cases proved that the repressed memory was of an actual event. Some cases proved that the victim simply misremembered on his own while others showed that the victim's memory was influenced by an outside source, albeit unintentionally. The Memory Wars illustrate the chaos intensely strong emotions can inflict upon the human memory, and they raise the question of the veridicality of "repressed" memories. The question of the veridicality of any given memory, particularly in this context, is the downside to the constructed nature of memory. It also highlights again, that one's identity stems, in part, from the narrative one constructs via autobiographical memory. These memories may be factually false and yet still serve to define a person's sense of self. It also raises interesting questions regarding the veridicality of the memories used by the actor when training in a technique like the one developed by Strasberg: Does, or should, the veridicality of a memory I use matter so long as it enables me to bring down the house with my Hamlet?

3.2   MEMORY COMES TO MANHATTAN

Lee Strasberg is the logical starting point for my examination for one simple reason: Strasberg is the link between actor training in the United States and Stanislavski. Lee Strasberg was born in 1901 in what was then Austria-Hungary. At age seven he and his family immigrated to New York City. As a young man growing up in New York City, Lee Strasberg's earliest experiences with the theatre, both on and off stage, were with the Progressive Dramatic Club on the lower East Side. *During the 1923-24 theatre season, the Moscow Art Theatre toured America, and like many other young actors Strasberg went to see this world-renowned theatre.* Strasberg was captivated and amazed by an ensemble performance that, "was of equal reality and believability regardless of the stature of the actor or the size of the part that he played" (Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion* 37). After witnessing Stanislavsky's technique at work, Strasberg enrolled in the newly established American Laboratory Theatre, founded by Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya, MAT-trained actors who had decided to remain in America following the 1923-24 MAT tour. It was during Strasberg's time at the ALT that he was first introduced to the theory of affective memory.

Strasberg's entire technique, the Method as it is now more commonly known, is predicated upon his belief in affective memory. "Affective memory is the basic material for reliving on the stage and therefore for the creation of experience on the stage. What the actor repeats in performance after performance is not just the words and movements he did yesterday but the memory of emotion [...]" (*Strasberg at the Actors*

Studio 114). It is important at this juncture to briefly consider how Richard Boleslavsky's interpretation of Stanislavski's emotional memory technique compares with the original. After all it was Boleslavsky who introduced Strasberg to Stanislavski's ideas about memory and its usefulness for actors in the first place. It is not my intent to account for and examine all ways in which Stanislavski's technique was interpreted or misinterpreted or changed by Boleslavsky and then passed down to Strasberg, but merely to address those issues pertaining to Strasberg's use of the actor's memory.

When one examines Stanislavski's emotional memory technique alongside Boleslavsky's interpretation of it, one can see that the two corroborate and correspond with one another in several ways. As was the case with Stanislavski, Boleslavsky takes a more philosophical than practical tone in his writing. Boleslavsky emulates his teacher's writing style; all of the lessons in *Acting: The First Six Lessons* take the form of a dramatic dialogue between an acting teacher, "I," and a young actress, "The Creature." This being the case, we encounter the same difficulty when it comes to analyzing Boleslavsky from a practical point of view as we encountered with Stanislavski in the previous chapter; namely that neither man wrote in much detail about the specific exercises. At times Boleslavsky can be as frustratingly vague as Stanislavski. In answer to The Creature's question about how she will know if she is performing the technique correctly, I answers: "You will know when you get it. You will feel the warmth of it and the satisfaction" (Boleslavsky 42). Like Stanislavski, Boleslavsky displays a clear understanding of Ribot's theories, even citing the Ribot's *Problemes de Psychologie Affective* in his own writings (Boleslavsky 36). And like Stanislavski,

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Boleslavsky freely acknowledges that it is not an easy process; it is one that an actor will have to struggle with before he is able to achieve the desired result. Both men, however, agree that with repeated practice and time the actor will become more proficient at provoking a state of affective remembering until, "Finally the flash of thought will be sufficient. [. . .] a mere hint will make you 'be' what you want" (Boleslavsky 43). Boleslavsky, like Stanislavski, also taught that the key to achieving a state of affective remembering was not to try and remember the emotion directly, but instead to focus on other details of the memory. This process can be described as "working indirectly." Stanislavski and Boleslavsky's techniques illustrate their belief that actor's procedural memory was just as valid a means of working indirectly as the episodic memory. If one compares the only example Boleslavsky gives of his version of the emotional memory technique (40) with one of the few extant examples of Stanislavski's version (*Stanislavski & Actor* 67), one finds that both exhibit a high degree of physical action on the part of the actor. Furthermore, Strasberg tells us that, "According to Boleslavsky, affective memory falls into two categories: analytic memory, which recalls how something should be done; and the memory of real feeling, which helps the actor accomplish it on stage" (*Dream* 69). Analytic memory, the memory of "how something should be done" suggests a use of the actor's memory that is body oriented and procedural in nature. It suggests Boleslavsky recognized that the actor's body possessed memory that could also be used to elicit an emotional response, and he therefore incorporated the actor's body into his training. While Boleslavsky's and Stanislavski's works share a number of similarities in writing style, theory and practice,

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Boleslavsky's interpretation, which is itself a kind of memory, varied from Stanislavski's technique in some respects. But in the case of the sense memory and emotional memory exercises, the differences are negligible.

As did his predecessors, Strasberg believed that the actor's memory held the key to inspiring an emotionally genuine performance. And like his predecessors, Strasberg believed in working indirectly to achieve a state of affective remembering. In contrast, however, Strasberg believed that "The correct process of inducing a response is through the senses" and not through the actor's body (*Dream* 115). When one compares Strasberg's Method with the emotional memory techniques of his teacher and Stanislavski, one of the most pronounced differences is their degree of physicality. How is it that a man who comes from a theatrical lineage rich in physicality develops a system of actor training that many critics contend neglects the actor's physical life?

Strasberg's Method, as well as his writings, lectures, and transcripts of classroom work illustrate, as we shall see, a conception of memory that is heavily skewed toward the mentalistic view of memory. In order for the actor to be able to achieve a state of affective memory Strasberg believed that "Everything must be controlled by the brain" (*Dream 127).* Even though many of Strasberg's sense memory exercises have a physical, and thus procedural memory, component to them, Strasberg tells us "it's not the physical sequence of the actions that we're after"(*The Lee Strasberg Notes* 14). In Strasberg's view, the actor's procedural memory is only useful for its ability to be used as an aid for heightening episodic recollection; "to awaken the mind and stimulate the

imagination in order to make contact with sensory memory"(*The Notes* 14) Strasberg does not distinguish between memories of "sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell" and memories of "kinesic, or motor senses"(*Dream* 70-71). Contemporary memographers, however do make a distinction. Today we recognize that memories of the "motor sense" – body memories like tying your shoes or riding a bike – are a completely different type of memory than our memories of our five senses, which are episodic in nature.

Yet we must not judge Strasberg harshly for mistakenly equating the two. Strasberg's conception and use of procedural memory reflect the prevailing biases toward it in his historical and cultural contexts. Episodic memory was considered to be true memory, while procedural memory was accorded very little, if any, status among memographers in the early twentieth century. This is not to say that Strasberg, and memographers in general, did not recognize and acknowledge procedural memory, but rather that their conception of it was limited in scope and understanding when compared with ours. In their view procedural memory was limited to what I call performative body memory – tying your shoes, riding a bike. Strasberg describes it as "remembered muscular behavior" (*The Notes* 17) and did not believe, as did Stanislavski, that it was capable of triggering an affective state of remembering. "When [Stanislavski] abandoned his pursuit of the natural, the personal, the internal," says Strasberg, "and changed his focus to the physical approach, he gave up those wonderful things he found deep within the actor with his original exercises, and led the actors away from the emotional sides of themselves." (*The Notes* 151).

Strasberg says that "My own definition of emotional memory is based on the works of Stanislavski and my teacher, Richard Boleslavsky. I then added to it from my own reading and knowledge" (*The Notes* 146). As we have seen, and as the following analysis will further reveal, Strasberg's Method does indeed share fundamental principles with Stanislavski's technique as well as the version of it taught by Boleslavsky at the ALT. But as we have also seen, Strasberg differs from his predecessors on a fundamental level with regard to the actor's procedural memory. In the following sections we will see how this fundamental shift in attitude regarding the actor's procedural memory has produced a technique that concentrates its efforts almost exclusively on the actor's episodic memory system.

3.2.1 The Method

Strasberg's technique emphasizes emotional memory as being *the key* to acting. Stanislavski believed that emotional memory was just *one way* the actor could employ to reach an affective state of remembering. This philosophical difference is also implied in shorthand commonly used to refer to their respective techniques. Stanislavski's work is often referred to as a "system." A system is, by its very definition, a larger entity, which is comprised of smaller, individual elements. It is an apt description for Stanislavski's body of work: a collection of various techniques that Stanislavski experimented with over the entire course of his adult life. In the larger context Stanislavski's emotional

memory technique was just a single element of his larger system; a system that would evolve and change over the course of Stanislavski's life. Of course Strasberg refined and developed his Method over the years, but never fundamentally altered its foundational premises. Strasberg's technique, in contrast, is commonly known as the Method. Such terminology implies an all or nothing proposition. Either an actor uses Strasberg's Method or he doesn't. One cannot claim to be a Strasbergian actor if one does not utilize the Method. One can, however, claim to be a Stanislavskian actor even if one does not employ Stanislavski's emotional memory technique precisely because Stanislavski's system encompassed many different techniques.

Strasberg's Method has now become nearly synonymous with United States actor training. Part of the reason for the Method's continual success in American acting is its simplicity and apparent effectiveness. There are three core principles to Strasberg's Method. First the actor must be able to respond truthfully to the imaginary stimuli provided by the playwright, or as Stanislavski called them - the given circumstances. In order to respond truthfully the actor must draw his inspiration from his autobiographical memory; this is the second core principle. Finally the actor must be able to clearly convey emotion to an audience through behavior on stage. An actor training in Strasberg's Method begins by developing his ability to concentrate on memory by performing a series of sense memory exercises. Sense memories, as defined by Strasberg, are the purely sensory details of a past experience: touches, smells, tastes, sounds and sights. The actor begins training his capacity for sense memory using personal, but emotionally neutral memories--what we can think of as episodic

memories. As the student progresses the exercises become more complicated, asking actor to utilize his sense memories while performing a task or speaking text. Once the actor has become proficient in recalling and externally expressing the sensory details of a memory he then applies the same processes to autobiographical memories; episodic memories that carry significant personal meaning. There is an elegant simplicity to Strasberg's Method that is admirable. It is an acting technique which, once mastered, can be applied in a variety of performance styles and has proven equally useful for both stage and screen work. The list of celebrated United States actors who have trained in Strasberg's Method reads like a who's who list: Kim Stanley, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Joanne Woodward, Dustin Hoffman, Kevin Spacey, Ellen Burstyn and Christopher Walken to name but a few. Now let us turn our attention to a practical analysis of Strasberg's Method and how it utilizes the actor's memory.

Strasberg developed and wrote about numerous exercises he designed to develop the actor's capacity for sense memory. "We begin the sequence by exploring the real objects from our immediate environment, which can be practiced daily at home like the breakfast drink or looking in the mirror and can be checked and tested" (*The Notes* 16). Breakfast drink, as the name implies, asks the actor to remember the sensory details of whatever it is they drink in the morning, the ubiquitous example used by Strasberg being a cup of coffee. Looking in the mirror requires the actor to recall the sensory details of getting oneself prepared in the bathroom mirror: shaving, combing hair, putting on make-up and so forth. At first actors are to practice at home, taking note of all the sensory details they experience while using real objects. In class the actor

then "tries to repeat the reality without the presence of the objects" (*Dream* 134). Again Strasberg stresses that , "The emphasis is not on imitating the way in which he performs these common activities, but on the ability to recreate the objects that go into the performing of these tasks by means of sensory memory" (*Dream* 134). In fact, many of Strasberg's exercises are performed while sitting in a chair thus forcing the actor into his mind while allowing for a bare minimum of physical activity. This is not surprising when one realizes that Strasberg's conception of memory is heavily biased toward the mentalistic paradigm. Although at some point an increased amount of physical activity and/or text is introduced into the sense memory exercises, Strasberg believes the addition of these elements should be made carefully "[. . .] because we fear the danger that the lines will become the major incentive, and that what the actor does will remain only illustration of the lines. The lines should be part of the behavior of the character, not just an abstract set of words" (*The Notes* 17).

The emotional memory exercise, as Strasberg calls it, functions exactly the same as his sense memory exercise, except instead of engaging the actor's episodic memory of emotionally neutral events the actor now utilizes his autobiographic memory of emotionally charged events. As we have seen, autobiographic memories are episodic memories that have a high emotional content. After finding an autobiographical memory which satisfies the given circumstances of the scene, the actor begins the sense memory exercise "[. . .] one to three minutes before the height of the event" (*The Notes* 31). The actor describes the sensory details of his memory in as much detail as possible. "We don't use generic words. We use sensory realities. Never mind if it makes sense,"

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says Strasberg (*The Notes* 31). As the memory progresses towards its climax the actor should be experiencing an affective state of remembering, if he is not he is to return to the details of his sense memory focusing on "one or two of the objects which are the inciting factors" of the climax. Strasberg, like his predecessors, acknowledges that learning to consciously incite an affective state of remembering requires time and patience. Once sparked, however, emotional memory must be controlled; there is always a danger the actor may get caught up in his own experience and lose sight of the demands of the scene. To prevent actors from being overwhelmed and falling into this kind of behavior, "we give you other things to do, such as daily activities, abstract movement, etc., so you can't indulge yourself in unconscious emotional behavior" (*The Notes* 33). In other words, Strasberg uses, in this case, physical action and, in other instances, text, as containers for emotions. By giving the actor something into which he can channel his emotion, Strasberg helps the actor to retain clarity and a sense of purpose needed to maintain control over the emotion without stifling his experience of it. The actor continues to practice the exercise until he can achieve, consistently and quickly, the desired emotional state by utilizing his autobiographic memory. With enough time and patience the actor will develop a storehouse, so to speak of different autobiographic memories he can use to achieve an affective state of remembering.

3.2.2 The Mnemonics Behind the Method

Strasberg's Method reflects an understanding of memory that is, as I have said before, mentalistic. This reflects the general paradigm of memory that dominated the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But in other significant ways Strasberg's use of the actor's memory anticipates some of the more recent conclusions of contemporary memographers. Now let us return to the work of them in order to see how and why Strasberg's Method works. The first aspect of episodic and autobiographic memory we examined was autonoetic, or self-knowing awareness. Strasberg's Method requires the actor be in conscious control over his memory. The actor's episodic memory is one of the types of memory that we can exert a degree of conscious control over. The episodic memory system functions in such a way that I can consciously search my episodic memory, on both the general episodic and the more refined autobiographic levels in order to find a memory appropriate for use in a sense or emotional memory exercise. Moreover the emotions an actor associates with autobiographic memories are emotional precisely because they happened to him. Their potent emotional content stems from the fact that we know that the things we remember are *our* memories; episodes of our past which hold meaning for us. If these memories didn't happen to the actor then he will not be able to use them to reach a state of affective remembering. Actors and audiences find Strasberg's Method effective because it produces "real feeling" (whatever that may be) onstage. In a sense this is correct. The feelings Strasberg-trained actors experience onstage are real to the degree that the actors have really stimulated them through the

use of affective remembering and are experiencing them in the present moment.

Another way in which the actor consciously controls his memory when practicing the Method is through the switching between the field/observer perspectives. Remember that studies have conclusively shown that the emotional quality of episodic memories is more pronounced in the first-person (field) perspective than in the third-person (observer) perspective. Strasberg uses this characteristic of episodic memory to his advantage. Strasberg taught actors to use the field perspective in their sense memory and emotional memory exercises, thereby increasing the memories' emotional quality. For Strasberg, remembering in the field perspective was an essential element for provoking an affective state of remembering. "When you talk about yourself and you say 'I am…' That's when the [emotional memory] exercise starts to work" (*The Notes* 32). By the time Strasberg was putting his Method into practice, Sigmund Freud had already put forth his ideas about the field/observer perspective in remembering. It is unclear whether or not Strasberg intentionally appropriated Freud's idea of field/observer perspective but I believe it quite likely that Strasberg was cognizant of Freud's idea and incorporated it into his Method. Strasberg's writings illustrate he was well-read on a number of subjects, including psychology and mnemonic theory, and was familiar with the works of Freud.

Now let us return to the subject of Strasberg's criteria for choosing a memory for use in the emotional memory exercise. First, the memory should have an emotional quality that's compatible with that required by the given circumstances. Second, the memory should be of a particular important moment in the actor's life; "[. . .] jealousies,

loves, rages, hurts, or other once-in-a-lifetime exciting or traumatic moments" is what Strasberg recommends (*The Notes* 29). The third and final requirement is that the memory should be sufficiently old, at least seven years in the past. Strasberg felt recent memories may still be too potent, too raw and were more likely to overwhelm the actor than older, less recent memories. Strasberg reasoned that if an actor still remembered something after seven years it would be likely that the memory would not be forgotten anytime soon. He also believed that if the memory provoked an emotional response in the actor after seven years, it was potent enough to be able to do so consistently (*The Notes* 29). Strasberg doesn't discount that more recent memories may work for the actor but cautions actors against their use because such memories have yet to prove they will persist over time (*Dream* 149).

Because Strasberg sets very specific parameters, the actor must be able to consciously search his memory to locate a suitable memory for use. We have established the fact that autobiographic memory is the type of memory that we can exert the most conscious control over. One of the reasons we are able to do so is because of its organizational structure. Conway and Rubin's organizational structure is based upon a connectionist model of memory and assumes that the event specific memories are "constructed into a 'memory' in the context of associated lifetime period and general event knowledge" (Conway & Rubin 107). Because autobiographic remembering is a process of reconstruction Conway and Rubin conclude that "[. . .] the type of knowledge actually retrieved can be tailored to the needs of a particular task" (109). In this case the actor tailors his search to fulfill Strasberg's criteria. Without this

ability the actor's search for a memory that fulfills Strasberg's criteria would be akin to searching for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

Contemporary memory studies also corroborate Strasberg's belief that older memories were better suited to his Method. Studies on the recall of autobiographic memory show that middle aged and older adults tend to remember events that occurred between the ages of ten and twenty-five with more frequency than any other age ranges. This period of time is known as the *reminiscence bump*. Memographers are not sure why this bump in memory occurs, although there are three major hypotheses as to its existence. The life narrative hypothesis suggests that this period of life coincides with the development of what will become the adult social identity of the person and thus remains a potent mnemonic talisman. The maturation hypothesis suggests that the reminiscence bump has more to do with the physical development of the brain than with any kind of childhood nostalgia. The cognitive hypothesis maintains that the bump occurs during this time period because memories are best formed during periods of rapid physiological change. A combination of all three seems to me to make the most sense. Adolescence is one of the greatest periods of physical development and physiological change we human beings experience. And it makes sense that we'd remember more from a period of our lives that we see as greatly influencing who we are today.

The last feature of episodic memory that Strasberg's Method utilizes is its constructed nature. Recall how in the initial portion of this chapter we saw how repeated instances of remembering lead to a strengthening of the cue and the memory it

recalls.   Each time we remember, whether speaking with others or privately in acting

exercises, the encoding of that memory happens all over again. With each additional

encoding we incorporate new information into the memory, much of which is informed

by our present circumstances. Let us take for example my memories of birthdays spent

with my grandmother. These are some of the fondest memories of my life: getting to

wake up late since I didn't have to go to school, not having to share grandma's attention

with my little sister, eating cheeseburgers at the lunch counter of the Murphy's Five &

Dime, buying any toy I wanted. But since my grandmother's death nearly ten years

ago, these memories are now tinged with some sadness. The events of my past haven't

changed, the happy emotions of those memories remains the same; what has changed is

my present reaction to these memories because I will spend no more birthdays with my

grandmother.

What my example shows is how our memories are the subject of constant re-

editing. If the neural patterns of our memories can strengthen and grow over time they

also are able to incorporate new information about an existing memory; in this case a

change of the emotional response to my memories. The feelings of sadness I have now

about my birthday memories become as much a part of the memory as the original

events due to the continual re-encoding process that occurs every time we remember--a

process that incorporates not just the original events but also our present thoughts and

feelings about those events.

This is important for Strasberg's Method because of the way in which Strasberg

defines sense memory.   While originally Strasberg believed that affective memory

"recreated the original emotion" his thinking eventually changed (*Dream* 150). In perhaps his greatest departure from Stanislavski and Boleslavsky, Strasberg rejects the notion that an affective memory reproduces, in the present, the same emotion that which occurred in the past:

> The [emotional memory] exercise doesn't seek to capture the emotions that occurred during the remembered experience. [. . .] How you're affected by that memory today becomes the emotional memory. To access at will the emotions you're having right now about the chosen memory – that is always the actor's work. (*The Notes* 27)

This is a crucial distinction between Strasberg's Method and the emotional memory technique as originally devised by Stanislavski. It also illustrates how Strasberg's own observations on memory led him to anticipate what we now know to be the case. But even more importantly, the constructive nature of memory is what allows Strasberg's Method to be effective at eliciting an affective memory for the actor to use in performance.

In its most basic sense what Strasberg's Method does for its actors is to condition them in a way that is nearly identical to Ivan Pavlov's work employing sensory conditioning to produce an emotion reaction. Pavlov would ring a bell and then give his dogs some food. After many repeated instances of this bell/food combination Pavlov noticed that the dogs would begin to drool at just the sound of the bell. What's happening here, on a very simplistic level, is exactly the same thing that Strasberg's Method does with actors, who use their memory of sensory details to elicit an emotion

response. In Pavlov's case the sense memory was the sound of the bell and the emotion, of course, was hunger. Strasberg himself says, "That's how we're trained, not from Freud, but from Pavlov. The emotional thing is not Freud, as people commonly think. Theoretically and actually, it is Pavlov. By singling out certain conditioning factors, you can arouse certain results" (qtd. in Krasner 152). I will go a step further than this in suggesting that Strasberg's Method not only conditions the actor but actually creates new memories for the actor, tailored for specific use in performing.

In order to use Strasberg's Method in performance, an actor must be able to achieve an affective state of remembering quickly. Affective remembering, however, when it occurs naturally is a gradual process. This, of course is not helpful for the actor. Strasberg believed that practicing the emotional memory exercise over and over again would help actors reduce the time needed to elicit a genuine affective state of remembering. In addition Strasberg taught his actors to "Develop one or two of the objects [in the memory] which are the inciting factors [of the actor's present emotional response]" (*The Notes* 32). The inciting factor can be anything: a sight, a sound, an object; anything in the actor's memory that prompts the first stirring of emotion within the actor. By consciously linking the inciting factor with a specific emotional response and through repeated practice the actor conditions himself just like Pavlov conditioned his dogs. This process is no different from the one that occurs naturally in the everyday context of remembering.

Continued use of the inciting factors to provoke an emotional response first establishes, and then strengthens that particular set of neural pathways. Repeated use

of these pathways leads to an increase in the ease of ability and a decrease in the amount of time needed for mnemonic recall. When the Strasberg trained actor uses inciting factors as the way to quickly achieve a state of affective remembering in performance, what he is actually remembering is no longer the original event; but rather the memory he has constructed during his emotional memory training. In this new memory the actor has associated the inciting factor with the desired emotional response. At this point the actor no longer needs to go through the entire sense memory exercise; all he need do is focus on the inciting factor in order to achieve a state of affective remembering. The creation of the inciting factor memory is what allows the actor to achieve in a very limited amount of time what is normally a much longer process.

3.2.3   Some Conclusions

This mnemonic analysis of Strasberg's Method has shown us how the Method utilizes actor's episodic memory system and why it is able to do so. This kind of analysis can also give us some new perspectives on the common misconceptions and criticisms often leveled at the Method. One such misconception is that a major drawback to Method training is the fact that the actor must draw from his personal experience. These critics point out, and quite reasonably, that an actor is often called upon to perform acts onstage that he could have no possible experience in actually doing. There are also all manner of stories of Method trained actors doing strange or bizarre things while

preparing for a role. A favorite of mine is an apocryphal story about Dustin Hoffman and Sir Laurence Olivier that supposedly occurred during the filming of *Marathon Man*. The story goes that in preparation for his role the young Hoffman, one of the more famous of Strasberg's pupils, spent the night running about the streets of New York City – what his character has to do through the whole movie. Hoffman was telling Olivier about his grueling experience and asked Olivier what he did to get ready for his performance. In the version I have heard Olivier replied, "Nothing my dear boy. It's called acting for a reason." Regardless of whether or not this or any version of this story is true it is indicative of the kind of misunderstanding attached to Strasberg's Method.

Our analysis has shown that the actor draws from autobiographic memories that are *analogous* to his character's given circumstances. The goal of Strasberg's emotional memory exercise is to not recapture a *past* emotion but rather to use the actor's memory to stimulate the actor's *present day* emotions (*The Notes* 27). Therefore there does not need to be a one-for-one correlation between the actor's autobiographic memories and the character's given circumstances. One of the Method's strengths is how it allows the actor to use any autobiographic memory, regardless of the memory's initial emotional content. As we have seen our emotional reaction to memories can and often does change over time. This necessitates a change in the effectiveness of any given memory used by the Method trained actor. Over time some memories will become less effective in provoking a state of affective remembering; but if the actor continues practicing the emotional memory exercises he will find new memories to replace the

ones that no longer work for him. As long as the actor is alive he will be always acquiring new memories, new materials for potential use.

Another major criticism often leveled at Strasberg's Method is that it is more personal therapy than actor training. The idea that actors must delve into the dark recesses of their memories leads many people to accuse Strasberg of being a psychological peeping tom. These critics often ignore, however, Strasberg's admonishment that the content of the memory, i.e. what happened to the actor, is of no concern to him. As a general rule Strasberg believed the instructor should remain professionally aloof from his students and not become too involved with an actor's personal life (*Dream* 149). Strasberg makes it very clear that the less he knows about the story behind the emotional memory the better; and only in situations where the student is having difficulty should they share the pertinent details of the memory (*Dream* 39, *The Notes* 32). And even in such extreme cases the teacher should concern himself with helping the actor focus on the memory's sensory details and not the memory's personal meaning. Strasberg is aware of the inherent risks that come with asking actors to remember what can be in some instances, very dark or painful memories. Strasberg says that he will only push an actor as far as the actor is willing to go (*The Notes* 30). If an instructor pushes too hard, the actor may recall traumatic memories that neither the actor nor instructor is properly equipped to deal with. This very real danger to the actor's mental health must not be ignored: sometimes we have forgotten things for a reason.

Regardless critic and adherents alike can at least agree that Strasberg's Method

occupies an important place in the history of United States actor training. As we have seen Strasberg's Method is the direct link that ties actor training in the United States to Stanislavski's work and consequently the utilization of the actor's memory for training purposes. Strasberg's use of the actor's episodic memory system, specifically the autobiographic memory, revolutionized actor training in the United States. By teaching the actor to condition himself to reach a state of affective remembering in performance, Strasberg devised a method actors have found effective and audiences have found moving. Generations of actors have embraced its simplicity and effectiveness in both stage and screen work. And more importantly for my purposes, Lee Strasberg and his Method heralded a new age of innovation for actor training in the United States. In the next chapter we will encounter perhaps Strasberg's biggest critic and chief rival, Stella Adler. The dissention between their ideas lead to the break-up of a promising theatre company and have defined the parameters of the inside-out/outside-in dichotomy that has come to characterize most contemporary actor training in the United States. But before we get into the details, we must first take a moment to reassess our definition of memory.

4.0   MEMORY IN SOCIETY: COLLECTIVE MEMORY, STELLA ADLER AND

JOSEPH CHAIKIN

"The haze of nostalgia covers their days among their sisters, making those days into something different than they were. That's the way today changes history. All contemporaries do not inhabit the same time. The past is always changing, but few realize it."

-Frank Herbert, God Emperor of Dune

In the previous chapter we have seen memory as it has often been presented: a private, psychological affair. Memory is not, however, solely a private affair. Our memories are also communal, capable of influencing and being influenced by the society in which we live. Stella Adler and Joseph Chaikin developed systems which rely heavily on this sociological, or collective, function of memory, though their application of it differs significantly. Adler's characterization technique uses the collective memory of the actor in order to create easily recognizable archetypes on stage, thus perpetuating and reinforcing these archetypes. Chaikin, on the other hand, employs the collective memory of the actor to interrogate and ultimately undermine the established values and norms of the collective memory. But, in order to fully explore Adler's and Chaikin's uses of collective memory, it would be helpful first to take a look at the theory of collective memory itself. Let me begin with a sort of parable.

In Frank Herbert's six-part series, *Dune*, the mystic order known as the Bene Gesserit vies with the Emperor Padishah IV and the Spacing Guild for control over the universe. The Bene Gesserit is an order of women whose goal is dominion over the universe, and who create, propagate, and control various religions to achieve their goal. In order to hide their true purpose, the Bene Gesserits cultivate a mystic aura, encouraging the popular belief that they are possessed of supernatural powers. This belief is not hard to cultivate, as the Bene Gesserits do possess a seeming omniscience and nearly-superhuman physical prowess. This coupling makes them the most feared women in the universe. Even their rivals: the Emperor, with all his military might; and the Spacing Guild, with its mastery over time-space, fear these women. As Herbert's story unfolds, the true nature of the Bene Gesserit, and the true source of their power, is revealed.

The Bene Gesserit's omniscience and superhuman physical prowess do not come from some mystic source but rather from their memories. At the time of her death, a Bene Gesserit sister passes along to another member of the order all her memories. Everything a Bene Gesserit has ever known, every skill she has ever mastered, is passed along from generation to generation so that a single member of the order carries within her the memories of thousands who have come before her. In order to make sure that nothing is ever lost to them, the Bene Gesserit share with one another the memories that they inherit, thus forming a large collective memory - the true source of their power. This idea, the idea of some kind of connection between all members of a particular

group or race, is not an uncommon trope in the science fiction genre. And like most of the best science fiction, it has an element of truth at its core.

In the early years of the twentieth century, sociologist Maurice Halbwachs put forth a hypothesis that anticipated the imaginings of Frank Herbert's masterpiece: our memories are not just our own, but part of a larger system of collective memory. At first glance the idea of a collective memory may seem highly speculative at best and balderdash at worst. But recently the idea of a collective memory has gained credibility among memographers across a variety of disciplines. The work of philosophers George Lakoff and Mark Johnson has yielded evidence that corroborates and supports many of Halbwachs's fundamental claims about the ways in which social groups perceive and communicate collective memory. The basic premise of Lakoff and Johnson's groundbreaking work, *Metaphors We Live By*, is that despite our differences, our fundamental view of the world is shaped by the cognitive metaphors we all hold in common. Historian Eviator Zerubavel's *Time Maps* parallels Lakoff and Johnson's work in many ways, but instead of cognitive metaphors, Zerubavel focuses on several different narrative constructions and how they exert influence on the way we view and think about the past. The underlying premise of both Lakoff and Johnson's and Zerubavel's work is that the individual's perceptions are shaped by larger forces that are to some extent beyond the purview of the individual's control. On the neuroscience front, various studies lead Katherine Nelson and Robyn Fivush to conclude that, "memory in general develops beyond basic memory functions to serve social, cultural and personal purposes through socialization practices" learned in

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earliest childhood (*Socialization of Memory* 283). In each of these instances, the work of these more contemporary researchers has provided theories and data which reinforce the basic principles of collective memory suggested by Halbwachs nearly a century ago.

In his landmark study, *On Collective Memory*, Halbwachs sets down the basic tenets of his theory of collective memory. First, and most important, is that "memory depends on the social environment" (Halbwachs 37). Second, the social environment is made up of groups of like-minded individuals that Halbwachs calls *social frameworks*. Finally collective memory is forever in a state of flux, always adapting itself to the demands of the present. The first of these, that memory depends upon the social environment, marks a major shift in the way researchers have thought about and approached the study of memory. For the most part, the study of memory has been the province of laboratory studies. Halbwachs advances the argument that the artificial and tightly-controlled conditions of laboratory experiments preclude the study of memory in its natural environment, which is a social one. Halbwachs believes that, "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (38). Halbwachs points out that, except when we are asleep and dreaming, we are never truly separated from the influences of society. The dream state, Halbwachs argues, is fundamentally distinct from memory because in order to remember a person must, "be capable of reasoning and comparing and of feeling in contact with a human society that can guarantee the integrity of our memory" (41). When we are asleep there is no external reference point to guarantee integrity. Only upon waking and reflecting back on the dream can I say that it was

impossible to walk through the living room of my childhood home, turn the corner, and find myself in my high school science wing. In contrast when we remember in our waking hours, there is always some kind of external reference point for gauging the validity of memory: photographs, video recordings, written diaries and, especially, the memories of others. Halbwachs's argument prefigures by nearly half a century the arguments made by contemporary scholars of memory such as Paul Connerton, Ulric Neisser and Lisa Libby (Connerton 2007, Neisser & Libby 2000). Neisser's point of view, now known as the ecological view of memory, espouses the belief that any study of memory that ignores or dismisses environmental influences in favor of purely psychological and neurological explanations provides an incomplete picture of memory.

With the exception, perhaps, of a hermit who takes his calling very seriously, there is never an instance when a person is completely closed off from the influences of the world around them. Even in cases of severe mnemonic impairment such as various kinds of amnesia, people may forget everything about themselves – family, friends even their own identity – but those people do not forget that they are part of a society. In fact the intense emotional problems that often plague people with such afflictions most likely stem from the fact that they recognize that they have lost and cannot reclaim their place in society (Halbwachs 43). As human beings it's very important for us to find where we belong in the world around us. We label ourselves as husbands and wives in order to convey that we are part of a group of people who have committed to monogamous relationships. What's more, we often tag ourselves with a piece of

jewelry as a physical sign that we belong to this group called "married." We proclaim

the political philosophies we adhere to by calling ourselves Democrats or Republicans

and then slap stickers on the backs of our vehicles to proclaim our allegiance. Clearly

this need to belong is a defining factor in our lives. In our need to belong, we form a

bond with others of a like kind or mind; out of this communion, the collective memory

is born.

Halbwachs calls the various groups we belong to the social frameworks of

memory. Social frameworks can be large, such as a nationality or a race, or very small,

such as a social club. They can also be informal, such as "fly fishing enthusiasts." There

is no limit to the number of social frameworks that make up the world in which we live.

Everything from our language, family, and hobbies to our political and religious

affiliations can be considered a social framework. Just as there is no limit to the social

frameworks that make up our world, there is also no limit to the number of social

frameworks an individual may participate in. Participation in a specific social

framework can be by chance or choice. My membership in a political party is a

conscious choice and one that I can change at any time. The accident of my birth

establishes my participation in the social framework known as the Malcolm/Edenbo

family. My choice to get married has made me a participant in the social framework of

the newly formed Costa/Malcolm family as well as incorporating me into the already

existent social framework of the Costa/Long family, my wife's family.

While we have our own, individual memory of our experiences, how we think

about these experiences, what they teach us, and what they mean to us are all greatly

influenced by the collective memory of the social frameworks in which we participate. This is not to say that there is a loss of individuality within the context of the collective memory. It is not, to follow my previous sci-fi example, the insect-like hive mind of the cybernetic Borg from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. The Borg is a bio-mechanoid composed of a variety of life forms that have been conquered by and assimilated into the Borg collective - a collective consciousness of a single cybernetic entity. Although the Borg is made up of thousands of individuals the process of assimilation wipes from them any semblance of individual identity. Nor is collective memory like Carl Jung's famous hypothesis of a collective unconscious wherein primal archetypical forms lurk in the deep recesses of all humanity. "So far as the collective unconscious contents are concerned," writes Jung, "we are dealing with archaic or – I would say – primordial types, that is, with universal images that have existed since the remotest times." (*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* 5) These images, according to Jung, are an unconscious expression "of the instincts themselves, in other words, that they are *patterns of instinctual behavior*" (emphasis in original 44). For Jung the impulses of the collective unconscious are psychological relics: remnants of instinctual reactions that helped fledgling humans survive in an uncaring world. It is, in a manner, similar to the fight or flight reflex. The circumstances that provoke this reflex in us today are vastly different from what we would have experienced in the past, but the reaction is the same. As such the collective unconscious is a psychological phenomenon that affects us all.

Likewise collective memory affects us all as well but in a distinctly different way. Collective memory is a social, not psychological phenomenon. This is the greatest difference between the ideas of Jung and Halbwachs: the former sees the collective aspect of humanity stemming from the drive of instincts while the latter believes that it is a social creation. In other words, collective memories are *patterns of learned behavior*, to co-opt Jung's phrase. Consequently the contents of collective memory are subject to change, and in fact, needs must change in order to perpetuate itself. The contents of the collective unconscious, derived as they are from human instinct, remain the same even though how the collective unconscious manifests itself varies from individual to individual. In the majority of instances, our collective memory is acquired and influences us on an unconscious level. It may be helpful to think of collective memory as a pair of tinted glasses. No matter what we perceive, it will always be colored by the glasses we wear. "One may say," write Halbwachs, "that the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories" (40). Our memories then are a composite of both individual and collective memories coexisting simultaneously, with the latter influencing our perception of the former. The simple fact of our existence is enough to enroll us in the collective memory. It is an inescapable fact of life and, to quote the infamous catchphrase of the Borg, "Resistance is futile."

If our memories are made up of both the individual and collective memories that we possess, it stands to reason that, like autobiographical memory, collective memory is a constructed phenomenon. Collective memories are not, writes Halbwachs, "intact

vertebra of fossil animals which would in themselves permit reconstruction of the entities of which they were once a part" (47). The mutability of our memory is evident when we think about how memories degrade over time or come to take on new meaning thanks to a change in our present perspective. In *Searching for Memory* Daniel Schacter briefly examines the case of a painter by the name of Franco Magnani. Magnani was born a in the small Italian village of Pontito about 40 miles west of Florence. At the age of fourteen Magnani left Pontito for good and eventually settled in San Francisco. Later in his life Magnani began suffering from a mysterious illness. Schacter tells us that:

> In the midst of the illness, Magnani began to experience, on a nightly basis, vivid dreams of Pontito that combined a hallucinatory intensity with a wealth of minute detail that far exceeded his waking recollections of the village. The force of the nocturnal visions inspired Magnani, who had never painted seriously before, to try to capture his images with brush and canvas. (*Searching for Memory* 29)

In 1988 a San Francisco museum mounted an exhibition of Magnani's paintings in juxtaposition with a series of photographs taken of the scenes depicted in Magnani's paintings. The results were startling. In many instances Magnani's work was uncannily accurate and yet it is quite clear that Magnani's paintings are also quite idealized, representing as Schacter says, "a kind of paradise lost in which the remembered world is more beautiful, symmetrical, and whole than the inevitably blemished reality" (*Searching for Memory* 29). It's this idealized aura of the remembered

past that Halbwachs (48) calls a "retrospective mirage" wherein the past seems like a golden age when compared to the present. In part this is a defense mechanism. True hypermnemony, or photographic memory, is, in truth, a torment to those who possess it. Imagine if you remember in complete detail every single moment of pain, sorrow or embarrassment you've ever had. Our favorable editing of our past can also be attributed to one of the major types of narratives that remembering takes on. In *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* Eviator Zerubavel looks at the various narrative forms that collective remembering can take on. "Our tendency to better remember facts that fit certain (unmistakably cultural) mental schemata is quite evident in the highly formulaic plot structures we often use of narrating the past" (parenthetical in original *Time Maps* 4). One of the major narrative structures identified by Zerubavel is decline. "Inherently pessimistic," states Zerubavel, "this unmistakably backward-clinging historical stance typically includes an inevitably tragic vision of some glorious past that, unfortunately, is lost forever [. . .] it is often coupled with a deep sentimental attachment to 'the good old days' "(16).

The idealization of the past occurs not only on a personal level. The origins of the legend of the Masada illustrate how "even more manipulable is the memory of events we have not directly experienced – historical memory" (Favorini 116). Masada was the name of the mountain fortress that some nine hundred Jewish defenders occupied in 73 ACE after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. In his introduction to *On Collective Memory*, Lewis Coser writes, "The only source for this account [of Masada] is Josephus's *The Jewish War*…this chronicle remained almost completely unknown…and there is no

mention of it in the Talmud or in other Jewish sacred texts" (33). Barry Schwartz, Yael Zerubavel and Bernice Barnett conclude in "The Recovery of Masada: A Study in Collective Memory" that the interest in Masada coincides with the rise of Zionism in the twentieth century. Masada has become a symbol of Jewish "resistance and resilience of immense popular appeal" (*On Collective Memory* 33). Coser questions why such a seemingly insignificant event has taken on such meaning for present day Israelis:

> Most national commemorations celebrate the origin, rise, and fall of a nation because these are seen as having had a major effect on its subsequent history. But the battle of Masada exhibits none of these features. It was only a mopping-up operation with no special impact on subsequent events in Jewish history (*On Collective Memory* 33).

Coser concludes, as do Schwartz, Zerubavel and Barnett, that the resurgence of interest in Masada is an example of how collective memory reconstructs, "an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society" (Halbwachs 40). In this case modern Israel, seeing itself beset on all sides by enemies, chooses a long forgotten, historically insignificant event from its past and recasts it as a glorious last stand, a symbol of the resistance and resilience of the Jewish people. In his case study on collective memory and the play *Reunion in Vienna,* Attilio Favorini (116) points out that, "While group remembering may be put in the service of cultural continuity, it is more the case that societies remember selectively to serve present values." Thus the constructed nature of collective memory allows each generation to "write" a history that reinforces its own values. In *Time Maps* Eviator

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Zerubavel also examines the rewriting of Masada's place in history. "Despite the conventional grammatical distinction between the past and present tenses, *the past and the present are not entirely separate entities*" (emphases in the original 37). One of the ways in which the past and present are connected is in humanity's tendency to rewrite history so it conforms to contemporary values. Such revisionist history is possible thanks to what Zerubavel calls *bridging* and *mnemonic pasting* – the processes whereby the human memory creates connections to integrate, "otherwise disconnected points in time into a seemingly single historical whole" (40). Ask a Mexican about the Alamo and you'll most likely hear a story about the aggressive expansion of the United States; a stark contrast to the heroic last stand for freedom people from the United States remember when they "Remember the Alamo!"

4.1   STELLA ADLER AND CHARACTER BY TYPE

"Hamlet was not a guy like you."
-Stella Adler, *The Art of Acting*

The youngest daughter of two actors, Stella Adler was born in 1901. The theatre was a family business for the Adlers; fourteen of Adler's family would work in the theatre in some capacity. Adler was raised to be an actor and trained by her father, the well-known and critically-acclaimed Yiddish actor Jacob P. Adler. Adler says that her earliest training as an actor was wholly practical, "I learned acting by acting" (*The Art of*

Acting). In 1931 Adler became one of the founding members of the Group Theatre. Like Strasberg, who joined the Group Theatre later, she studied at the American Laboratory Theatre. In spite of her previous success as an actor, Adler's introduction to Stanislavsky's system did not go well for her and, she claims, made it impossible for her to act any longer. With the hope that a better understanding of Stanislavsky's system would help her to regain confidence in her acting abilities, Adler arranged to meet Stanislavsky in Paris in 1934. Adler spent five weeks studying with Stanislavsky and is the only American actor/acting theorist to have studied with him.

By 1934, Stanislavsky's theories and techniques had evolved beyond those taught at the American Laboratory Theatre. About the evolution of Stanislavsky's theories, Bella Merlin writes

> Instead of true emotion being the *end*-product of an acting technique, [Stanislavsky] wanted to devise a rehearsal process of which emotion was a *by*-product. In other words, he sought a process in which emotions arose inevitably from the actions, rather than actors consciously trying to arouse emotions as the main challenge to their acting skills" (emphasis in original 29).

The technique Stanislavsky was experimenting with relied on the actor's understanding of the given circumstances and how they affected the physical actions of the character. Stanislavsky believed that if an actor could find the correct behavior for the character in the circumstances of the play, this would be enough to elicit the appropriate emotional response from the actor. Thus the first step for any actor was to understand the given circumstances of the play and how they influence a character's

behavior. Upon Adler's return to America and the Group Theatre, "she spoke about [action's] importance in relationship to the play's 'given circumstances,' thus stressing interpretation of the play (a key issue for Stanislavsky in his last years)" (Carnicke 152). Adler's adherence to Stanislavsky's more recent teachings and Strasberg's insistence on the primacy of affective memory lead to much dissention in the Group Theatre. This difference of opinion between Adler and Strasberg became so rancorous that it contributed to the break-up of the Group Theatre. Eventually Adler, along with Elia Kazan and Bobby Lewis, whose emphasis on stylization clashed with Strasberg's insistence on psychological realism, left the Group Theatre.

In 1949 Adler started her own acting school. In the following years she developed and refined those aspects that eventually became the core principles of her actor training technique. The following analysis of Adler's technique will draw mainly from Adler's *The Art of Acting* and Joanna Rotté's *Acting with Adler*. It should be noted that although Adler kept written journals about her technique and ideas throughout most of her life; she was not overly concerned with publishing. *The Technique of Acting* (1988) is the only book she published on her technique. In its pages Adler explains the basic principles of her technique but does not go into much detail regarding her method of characterization. The other major work on Adler's technique is *The Art of Acting,* edited and complied by Howard Kessel (2000) and was undertaken at Adler's request. It is comprised of audio recordings and transcriptions of Adler's work in the classroom as well as most of the material from Adler's *The Technique of Acting* (1988). Rotté's *Acting with Adler,* an explanation of Adler's technique, also utilizes recordings and

transcriptions taken from classes Adler taught from the mid-1950's to 1980. Rotté studied under Adler in the 1970's and eventually the two formed a personal friendship that lasted until Adler's death in 1992. I will also draw from my own experience as an actor who has utilized Adler's characterization technique on many occasions over the last ten years. My introduction to Adler's technique came by way of Rotté, who was my teacher and director for two years.

Adler's technique encompasses all aspects of the actor's training but it is her approach to characterization that taps, both intentionally and otherwise, the actor's collective memory. Adler espouses a method of creating character that could best be described as *character by type*. Adler recognizes that no matter the specifics of the play, all theatre is about the human experience of life. If the theatre is to connect with its audiences, it must reflect something of the audiences back to themselves. Adler taught that, "No matter how unique the character, onstage [the character] must be recognizable as belonging to some type of group or humanity" (*Acting with Adler* 136). The three core principles which make up Adler's characterization technique are: rigorous analysis of the given circumstances, the actor's use of imagination, and the process of self-enlargement. The actor begins creating a character by analyzing the given circumstances of the play. Adler believed that an actor needed to be aware of the social context of the play before she could understand the character because, "Characters come out of the social situations" (*Art of Acting* 162). Using the given circumstances to understand the character's social situation is the first step in identifying the type to which the character belongs. Once the actor has identified what type her character is,

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the next step is for the actor to utilize her imagination in order to respond to the given circumstances in a manner that is consistent with the character's type. Adler's belief in imagination, and not personal experience, as the key to jump-starting an actor's inspiration leads us to the last of her core principles, self-enlargement. Finding oneself in the character was of no interest to Adler. While she did not dismiss the importance of personal experience for the actor, she also believed that the actor must recognize that the theatre isn't about average, everyday life; it is bigger than life:

> The actor cannot afford to look only to his own life for all his material nor pull strictly from his own experience to find his acting choices and feelings. The ideas of the great playwrights are almost always larger than the experiences of even the best actor. *(Art of Acting* 65)

Even if an actor lives for a hundred years, no individual could amass the amount and variety of personal experience that can be obtained vicariously out of one year of reading. Collective memory is not only reflected in the living attitudes and values of a culture, it is also reflected in what a culture creates. When actors enlarge themselves what they really are doing is increasing their exposure to the attitudes and values of different social frameworks. This increased exposure gives the actor more raw materials, so to speak, for their imagination.

In support of understanding "the ideas of the great playwrights," an analysis of the play's given circumstances is the first of Adler's core principles. The given circumstances include not only the factual details of the play – i.e. when, where, who, why and so forth – but also those elements revealing the cultural, political, moral, and

other values that the playwright either supports or opposes. "The theatre is a spiritual and social X-ray of its time," Adler writes, "The theatre was created to tell people the truth about life and the social situation" *(Art of Acting* 30). If theatre is an X-ray, then the analysis of the given circumstances by the actor is akin to a doctor reading an X-ray for a diagnosis. In a 1964 interview for Drama Review Adler says:

> The playwright gives you the play, the idea, the style, the conflict, the character, etc. The background life of the character will be made up of the social, cultural, political, historical, and geographical situation in which the author places him. The character must be understood within the framework of the character's own time and situation. (*Drama Review* 147)

It's this kind of emphasis on understanding the social, cultural, etc. circumstance that leads David Krasner to conclude, "For Adler, the essence of acting is sociological [. . .]" (153). If, as Adler says, "Every play is written out of a social situation," and "characters come out of social situations" *(Art of Acting* 162) then it is imperative for the Adler-trained actor to identify the social situation in which the character resides and how that affects the character's thoughts and actions.

The strongest correlation between Adler's sociological conception of acting and Halbwachs's sociological conception of memory rests in the use of type as the basis for character. Type in this sense refers to the behaviors and values we automatically ascribe, intentionally or not, to particular individuals and/or groups in our society. There exist many different types, far more than could even be listed, but some examples

include: the carefree type and responsible type, the blue collar type and the white collar type, the noble type and the peasant type. Each one of these types calls up from within us certain preconceived notions about the behavior and values these types display. If I were to describe a person as being an "overachiever type," immediately a host of specific personal qualities and behaviors would come to mind. Whether or not the person in question actually possesses any of those qualities or exhibits any of those behaviors is unimportant; what is important is that we associate these qualities and behaviors with a person, based not on our experience of the individual, but rather on our experience and expectations of a type. Assumptions like these are not only based in our personal experience but are also, to a great extent, determined by the biases of the social frameworks of memory which hold sway over us. In some instances a particular type may be considered to be a social framework of memory in its own right: for instance the noble and the working class types. Other types are more a reflection of the assumptions of the social frameworks of memory rather than a framework themselves. These types tend to be the more abstract, idea-based types that embody an attitude or quality such as the tough-guy or the sensitive-artist. Regardless, in every instance when the actor utilizes Adler's characterization by type technique she is, consciously or not, drawing on collective memory.

The Adler-trained actor begins creating a character by first identifying what general type best fits her character. At this point in the process the actor uses the given circumstances provided by the playwright to begin her search for the character's type. Unlike Strasberg's Method, there is not just one way for an actor to practice Adler's

characterization by type technique. Rotté is correct when she writes that, "Adler offered no single, sure avenue of approach to realizing the character as a type" (*Acting with Adler* 139). An examination of Adler's own lessons on character types shows that she taught her students how to think about type in such different terms as behavior (the carefree/responsible type) or profession (the blue/white collar type) or class (the noble/peasant type). What is also apparent is that Adler did favor certain approaches over others. In this particular instance it is evident by the amount of time she devotes to the discussion and exploration of different class types that class was, for Adler, a very useful type for the actor. Out of the twenty-two chapters of *The Art of Acting* seven chapters, nearly a full third of the book, are given over to Adler's exploration of character and what she believed to be the five types of class: clergy, aristocracy, military, middle and peasant. Adler believed that these five classes were the most recognizable because they have been present, in one form or another, throughout history and across cultures. Adler's assumption here is right in line with Halbwachs's thinking that, "there are no class representations that are not oriented both to the present and to the past" (Halbwachs 181-82).

Halbwachs himself devotes a substantial portion of his *On Collective Memory* to an examination of the ways in which, throughout history, class has functioned as and preserved social frameworks of memory. In the chapter entitled "Social Class and Their Traditions" Halbwachs examines three of Adler's five classes. One of Halbwachs' objectives in the "Social Class" chapter is to illustrate how the social frameworks of memory have come to conflate professional qualities with personal qualities.

Halbwachs explains how the frameworks of collective memory have, over time, come to equate a person's social function with a certain set of personal qualities, i.e. medical doctors are erudite, cultured caregivers. This, according to Halbwachs, is a holdover from the feudal idea that nobility conferred not only a title that indicated a specific rank and function in the social hierarchy, but also inherent personal qualities that made nobles better than everyone else. Halbwachs writes that:

> [. . .] in our society a function represents a technical activity in one respect; in another respect it represents those qualities that have a social value outside the profession. In this sense a function is partially equivalent to a title. But where could society have found the source for the idea of these qualities if not in tradition? (146)

Halbwachs also says that, "It may well be that such judgments often turn out to be false. Nevertheless in every period and in every society a function is valued in a way that presupposes in the person who performs it a certain class of personal qualities" (145). Adler's character technique encourages the actor to do this very thing. "Study the professionalism of certain crafts and how it affects the character's non-professional life," is what Adler tells her students (*Art of Acting* 177). Clearly Adler believes that a person's social function exerts an influence on his or her personal life.

Having established the general type of her character, the actor then begins to particularize this general type according to the demands and clues provided by the given circumstances. The general type of clergy is, more specifically a nun who has lost her faith; the aristocrat-type is a land-rich, cash-poor aristocrat struggling to keep up

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appearances. As an audience member your reception of a character is determined, in part, by your preconceived notions of the character's type. The same is true of the actor. Adler demonstrates an intuitive understanding of this when she says that "One develops an attitude toward everything" *(Art of Acting* 182). And while Adler does not say as much, this attitude comes from the collective memory of the social frameworks in which we are participants. When the Adler-trained actor practices character by type her collective memory figures significantly, usually unconsciously, into the actor's process. Let us return to the metaphor of collective memory as a pair of tinted glasses. The tint literally colors our perception of the objects and people we encounter. This is precisely the kind of influence the social frameworks of memory exert on the actor's attitudes and beliefs regarding types. Even if we have not been active participants in a particular framework, its influences on us may persist, "if a group has affected us with its influence for a period of time we become so saturated that if we find ourselves alone, we act and think as if we were still living under the pressure of the group" (Halbwachs 73). Metaphorically speaking, we forget that we are wearing tinted glasses.

Recent psychological and neurological research offers empirical data that support Halbwachs's sociological conception of memory and its influences on us. In their study "Socialization of Memory" (2001), Nelson and Fivush discovered that what a parent remembers and the narrative form those memories take are more often than not mirrored by the child. Such results lead Nelson and Fivush to conclude that not only what we remember but also how we remember is, to a great extent, a learned behavior influenced by socialization. In addition to their own study on the mirroring of

mnemonic strategies between parent and child, Nelson and Fivush cite studies by Adams et al (1995), Buckner and Fivush (1998), Fivush, Haden and Adam (1995), and Mullen (1994) that have revealed differences in the narrative structure of autobiographical memory between genders and among cultures. It is no longer an issue for argument; the ways in which we remember and what we remember are influenced, in no small part, by our social environment.

In this instance let us take for example my experience playing the character Antiochus in William Shakespeare's *Pericles*. Antiochus, a minor role appearing only in the first scene of the first act, is the king of Antioch who has been molesting his daughter while killing off all suitors who would take her away from him. I began my characterization by identifying what general type Antiochus belonged to. Antiochus' most obvious type is villain; clearly the given circumstances indicate that he is a bad man. Villain however is too broad a type to play. Each individual villain, while exhibiting type behaviors and values, is a unique character defined by his or her given circumstances. In order to discover the individual while still maintaining a recognizable type, the actor must understand the character in his or her social context. In Dr. Rotté's script analysis class she taught us, as Adler taught her, that a character's, "way of thinking on marriage and family, money, government, and conduct of a type [. . .] derives from the values of the larger society passed on to his sub-society" (*Acting With Adler* 138). The same may be said, according to Halbwachs, of the actor as well. The passage from Rotté echoes Adler's own admonishment that, "Each [character] has to be understood in his own social setting" (*Art of Acting* 163). This, too, is a sentiment

that Halbwachs would not disagree with. It is particularly important if the actor is to successfully play a type and not just engage in stereotypical behavior, which is a risk the actor faces when utilizing Adler's technique. Using the play's given circumstances to personalize a type allows the actor to avoid the pitfalls of playing type too generally or stereotypically.

Shakespeare's given circumstances clearly told me that Antiochus is a king; marking him as a member of Adler's aristocratic class. His behavior, however, contradicts the ideas of a king that I have. My initial idea of the king-type was a benevolent ruler, one who does his best to provide for the welfare and safety of his citizens. Shakespeare's given circumstances clearly reveal that Antiochus is not this kind of king. Another idea of the king-type, and the one that Antiochus' words and actions correspond with, is the tyrant-king-type. This process of identifying the general type and then further personalizing that type using the given circumstances utilizes the actor's collective memory, both consciously and unconsciously. In moving from the generalized to the personalized-type we can see how my inherited biases, passed on to me by the social frameworks in which I participate, informed my interpretation of Antiochus.

To begin with, my version of the king-type has been influenced by the fact that as a United States citizen I inherited a different attitude toward nobility than I would have if I were a subject of the United Kingdom. Admittedly my notion of kingship is romantic, more influenced by my youthful fascination with Arthurian legend and well-worn copies of *Idylls of the King* and *The Once and Future King*, than by practical

experience of living under a king's rule. And yet I still have very specific attitudes about the king-type. Some of these attitudes are the product of conscious reflection, thought, and education, but even these are influenced by unconscious influence of my collective memory. Furthermore, my views of the benevolent-king-type and the tyrant-king-type have been influenced by membership in the social framework of "aficionados of the fantasy genre"--an example of one of the many non-institutionalized, or informal, frameworks of memory. I have an extensive collection of fantasy-themed novels, I have played Dungeons and Dragons since I was in the fourth grade, I read Professor Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* annually, my family and I attend Renaissance fairs; furthermore I have surrounded myself with friends and socialize with people who have similar interests. All of these factors, and many more, some of which I am not consciously aware of, have contributed to my conception of the benevolent-king-type and the tyrant-king type. In this example my membership in two social frameworks of memory, one institutionalized and one informal, contribute to my unique take on the tyrant-king type.

In practice, my application of Adler's characterization by type was a much quicker, almost intuitive process than what my analysis would suggest. Upon my first reading of my part I immediately sensed that Antiochus was a tyrant-king-type. This has to do with the fact that collective memory, in many instances, is a form of implicit remembering which falls under the purview of the semantic memory system. I had no need to consciously call up my memories of what the various types of kings entail; my existence within and exposure to specific social frameworks has conditioned in me, and

continues to reinforce, a particular conception of the tyrant-king type. In what seemed to be an intuitive flash, I already had a good sense of where to begin my process of characterization.

This is one of the major benefits of Adler's characterization by type; by playing a type the actor has a yardstick by which to measure her performance; Adler's approach creates actors who are more independent and capable of working on their role outside of rehearsals. For Adler, this was the hallmark of a professional, a quality she demanded of her students. Another benefit to Adler's characterization by type is that actors start with a template of sorts; an immediately-available source of inspiration when compared to the Strasberg's more time-consuming Method. Also, by the time I played Antiochus I had been practicing Adler's technique, as taught by Rotté, for twelve years, a fact which undoubtedly contributed to my ability to rapidly identify Antiochus' type. What this really means, however, is that I have refined and strengthened my ability to think, and more importantly, utilize my memory in a certain way. One may ask: how can actors learn to utilize what is, more often than not, a form of implicit memory? In order to answer this question we must first understand how imagination forms the second core principle of Adler's characterization by type technique.

In addition to using the given circumstances to identify character types, Adler also believed that, "The actor's job is to make the circumstances in which he moves on stage so lively, so immediate that they enliven his actions" *(Art of Acting* 106). Imagination, not personal experience, is what an Adler-trained actor uses to enliven and

make immediate the given circumstances of the play. According to Adler, "Whatever you reconstruct from your emotional memory is no substitute for putting your imagination to work" *(Art of Acting* 83). Certainly, a character's actions and attitudes are determined, to some extent, by the dictates of the playwright. How an actor chooses to interpret those actions and attitudes, however, is the source of the actor's creative contribution to the production. Adler states that, "In an action you must know *what* you do, *where* you do it, *when* you do it, and *why* you do it. But you don't know how you do it. The how is spontaneous and unexpected" (emphases in original *Art* 119). The what, where, when and why are provided by the given circumstances. A playwright can call for a character to be angry, but how that character's anger manifests in on-stage behavior - outright rage, an ominous simmering or a mild annoyance – is left up to the actor to discover with the help of imagination. If Hamlet was, as Adler claimed, not a guy like you or me, then we would have a great deal of difficulty trying to identify with his experiences without recourse to imagination. One of Adler's favorite sayings was "In your choice lies your talent" (*The Technique of Acting* 48). The actor's imagination is the source of her choices in Adler's technique.

Having identified her character's type, the Adler-trained actor then uses her imagination to behave like her character's type would behave within the context of the play's given circumstances. When the actor uses her imagination to respond to the given circumstances according to type; all of the biases of the social frameworks of memory that came into play when she first determined the character's type once again exert their subtle and inescapable influence. It stands to reason that if our conception of

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a type is influenced by the collective memory, then how the actor imagines a certain type will behave must also be under the same influence.

Aristotle was the first to link memory with imagination. "It is apparent, then, to which part of the soul memory belongs, namely, the same part as that to which imagination belongs" *(On Memory* 11*).* The link that Aristotle forged carries through in the work of such diverse philosophers as David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Hobbes and Edmund Husserl. Hobbes went so far as to write that "Imagination and Memory are but one thing, which for divers {sic} considerations hath divers {sic} names" (qtd. in Casey *Imagining* 11). In his phenomenological analysis of imagination, Edward Casey illustrates how possibilities of our imagination are limited by the content of our memory. The reason being that, "Imagination has no genuine ontological power, that is, no power to make real what is nonreal or the reverse – where by 'real' is meant having a determinate and intersubjectively ascertainable status within an enduring spatio-temporal framework" (*Imagining* 82). This lack of ontological agency is precisely why, "by imagining, we ascertain nothing that we did not know beforehand in some respect" (*Imagining* 7). Even when we imagine nonexistent objects or places like the mythological Pegasus, to borrow Casey's example, there is a grain of memorial fact in our fictions. When we imagine a non-existent creature, place or person the image we conjure is cobbled together from the remembered qualities of actual objects, places or people, which have been combined with others in order to produce the desired imaginative image. In the case of imagining a Pegasus we are not so much calling upon an actual memory of having seen a winged horse, but rather the amalgamation of

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memories of: 1) what being a Pegasus entails 2) what a horse looks like and 3) what a large pair of feather wings looks like. The imagination blends these memories together to produce an imaginative construct known as a Pegasus. Imagination in this instance is like memory, a constructed phenomenon. When actors imagine, they draw from the wealth of experiences contained within their memory. The actor can consciously direct her imagination, setting up the parameters of her imagination within the confines of the given circumstances provided. Regardless of intent, however, the implicit influence of collective memory upon our consciousness remains unchanged. Halbwachs admonishes his readers not to forget that even our imagination falls under the influence of collective memory (49).

Adler's belief in the power of imagination is quite clear as she writes: "You must always fill the stage with imagination. Surround yourself with it," and "Ninety-nine percent of what you see and use on the stage comes from imagination," and "Aspects of your imaginative powers will startle you" *(Art of Acting* 56; 60; 73). Imagination was also, in Adler's estimation, a reflection of the actor's collective memory:

> Your imagination consists of your ability to recall things you've
> never thought of. In order to do this readily, you must comprehend how
> rich your memory is. You have a bank account that you know nothing
> about, for the memory of Man is such that he forgets nothing he had ever
> seen, or heard, or read about or touched. *(Art of Acting* 50)

From this, it sounds as if Adler was familiar with Jung's notion of the collective unconscious. Particularly the phrase, the memory of Man is reminiscent of Jung's own

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idea of primordial memories. In another passage Adler states that, "American actors greatly underestimate their wealth of human, or national, memory" which has much more of a Halbwachsian feel to it *(Art of Acting* 50). While my research has not turned up any conclusive evidence one way or another, I believe it to be a near certainty that Adler was familiar with Jung's theories and possible that she could have read or been familiar with Halbwachs's theories; *On Collective Memory* appeared in English in 1950. I do not think it likely that she did encounter Halbwachs; regardless, the passages above illustrate Adler clearly believed in some kind of collective memory and believed it could be used by the actor in her art. What's more, Adler's belief and technique demonstrate a reliance on a conception of memory that only has recently gained general acceptance among memographers.

Adler's belief in an actor's "bank account" of memory leads us to the last of her core principles: self-enlargement. Adler believed that drama, at least the best of drama, was not about the average, everyday experiences of life. It was bigger, grander than life. There is absolutely no correlative an actor can draw on from his own experiences that could ever compare to the moment when the storm breaks in *King Lear*. Certainly an actor may have had a similar experience on a much smaller scale, but Shakespeare's work demands a grandeur that is not to be found in our daily lives. Of largeness and the American actor Adler says:

> Part of the problem is you tend to see actions as merely personal.
> You don't put them in larger perspectives. When Eliza Doolittle finally
> defies Henry Higgins, Shaw is not just describing a former flower girl

telling off a professor of phonetics. He's writing about the servant class

raising itself to the level of its masters. *(Art of Acting* 155)

Adler tells her students that, "Small facts of life will reveal the large meanings.

Immense size comes from understanding your relationship to everything you come into

contact with – ideas, people, objects, experiences" *(Art of Acting* 166). She encouraged

her students to form these relationships by attending lectures, visiting museums,

reading and trying new experiences. The goal of self-enlargement is, as the name

implies, to enlarge the actor's perspective of the world. "You were born into a pattern

of life," says Adler, "You must begin entering into other people's lives to help you get

beyond that boring, personal, egocentric quality you take for 'real' life" *(Art of Acting*

64-65). By moving beyond her own perspective of the world, the actor opens herself up

to new experiences, new ideas and new ways of thinking about the world all of which

can potentially be of use to the actor when creating a character. "By taking elements

you observe in life," says Adler, "you can develop qualities in your acting life that you

don't ordinarily call upon in your personal life" *(Art of Acting* 179). One of the ways in

which Adler taught her students to accomplish this was by looking to an object or to

"shop in nature" (Rotté 140) for examples that are similar to the character's type. In her

example Rotté explains how the image of a city bus can be used to the play a boss-type

(140-141). Adler believed that the actor could find the necessary inspiration for

characterization in almost anything from Beethoven's ninth symphony to a lone

dandelion in an abandoned city lot. Consequently the actor does not need to find a

direct correspondence with the character's type; anything that suggests the type to actor

can be utilized.   In Rotté's example the actor doesn't try to play a bus but rather brings the *attitude* of a city bus to her characterization of the boss-type. In addition to looking for examples of type from nature and objects, Adler also taught her students to look for examples of type in cultural artifacts. Adler tells her students that the, "One thing an actor cannot be is ignorant. An actor has to read. He has to know paintings and music, because they help him understand the past.   They provide nourishment for his imagination" *(Art of Acting* 73).   Self-enlargement not only increases an actor's autobiographical memory but also broadens an actor's exposure to the collective memory contained in the literature, music and artwork of other cultures and times.

Halbwachs talks about how collective memory can form and, to some extent, transmit itself in tangible ways. Up until now we have been conceiving of collective memory only as a mentalistic form of memory, but this is precisely the kind of prejudice among memographers that Halbwachs was working against. According to Halbwachs, collective memory "reconstructs [the past] with the aid of material traces, rites, texts, and traditions left behind by that past" (119). The ways in which collective memory can, and does tangibly manifest in our daily lives are taken up by Paul Connerton (*How Societies Remember*) and Joseph Roach (*Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*). Both authors see performance as a way in which collective memory can physically manifest itself. Performance, and I use the term here to encompass any kind of learned, rehearsed activity; is the means by which collective memory is sustained, transmitted and transformed across generations. The range of activities Connerton and Roach cover between them, from the Nazi calendar and table manners to cemeteries and Mardi Gras,

illustrates how virtually anything can become co-opted as a repository of collective memory. "There is," as Halbwachs concludes, "in short no object upon which we reflect that cannot serve as a point of departure, through an association of ideas, to retrieve some thought which immerses us again, in the distant or recent past [. . .]" (61).

Now let us return to my previous example of creating the character of Antiochus to see how the core principles of imagination and self-enlargement work in conjunction with type to produce a unique, yet recognizable, character. Having already established Antiochus's type I used my imagination to behave the way I believe a tyrant-king-type would behave in the given circumstances provided. I imagined how a tyrant-king would act by recalling other examples of tyrant-kings, either from my own past or from fictitious examples found in literature, opera, other plays, films and so forth. Remember these examples do not need to be actual tyrant-kings, but merely suggestive of attitudes and behaviors I associate with the tyrant-king type. In this particular instance I found one particular image of the tyrant-king-type to be the most effective for me; the Emperor Palpatine from the original *Star Wars* trilogy. Taking Palpatine as my template for the tyrant-king-type I then imagined how a man like him, a man who is the embodiment of the dark side of humanity, would behave in the given circumstances provided by Shakespeare. I then used my imagination to inform my performance in rehearsals and performance because, according to Adler, "Creating imaginatively is what acting is all about" *(Art of Acting* 73).

Mnemonically speaking what occurs when an actor utilizes Adler's characterization by type is somewhat less straightforward than the technique itself. We

have already seen how the social frameworks of memory influence the actor's image of and personal attitudes towards type. We have also seen how our capacity for imagination is determined by our memorial capacity, as well as how the actor's practice of self-enlargement increases her exposure to tangible artifacts of collective memory. Until this point I have been emphasizing how the actor's collective memory is utilized by Adler's characterization technique. I would be remiss, however, if I did not acknowledge how the actor's episodic memory system also plays into Adler's technique. When an actor uses imagination to create and play a character she is drawing from her memories of the types she has experience of, either personally or through self-enlargement. This type of remembering is an example of explicit, episodic and often autobiographic remembering. By using the Emperor Palpatine as inspiration for type I was drawing from my episodic memories of having seen the films *The Empire Strikes Back* and *The Return of the Jedi*. In this instance I was not using any one, specific memory of Palpatine, but rather a summation of all my memories of having seen Palpatine in the films. This type of remembering, as we saw in the previous chapter, is autobiographic remembering on the general event level.

But just because the actor utilizes her episodic memory does not mean she is not also utilizing her collective memory as well. In my example, my episodic memories of Emperor Palpatine do not just contain my experiences of Palpatine but also include my own biases and attitudes towards the character. Recall that autobiographic memories contain more than just the factual information of a memory; they also contain the

memories of our thoughts and feelings. According to Halbwachs, even these types of memories are subject to the implicit influence of collective memory.

> [. . .] there are no perceptions that can be called purely exterior, since when a member of the group perceives an object, he gives it a name and arranges it into a specific category. In other words, he conforms to the group's conventions, which supply his thought as they supply the thought of others. (168)

A convention of the group "Star Wars fans" is that Emperor Palpatine is the embodiment of evil. From Palpatine's pitch black robe and cowl to his twisted physical appearance – like a reverse Dorian Grey--George Lucas's symbolism unsubtly but clearly indicates that Palpatine is representative of the darker side of human nature. Likewise, Shakespeare presents us with a picture of humanity's dark side in Antiochus. Like Lucas did with Palpatine, I chose to reflect the darkness of Antiochus's soul in my physical characterization of him. I adopted a twisted and hunched posture, affecting a club foot. Of particular inspiration to me was the cadence of Palpatine's speech with its slight over-enunciation and disdainful tone. Another actor, one who does not participate in the social framework "Star Wars fans" might find inspiration for Antiochus in another example of the tyrant-king-type, but for me no other example epitomizes this type as much as Emperor Palpatine. This is a function not only of my episodic memory, but also of my collective memory. Once again, and not for the last time, we see how we can never truly speak of just a single type of memory; rather, we should think of memory as being *predominantly* one type or another.

Now that we have seen how collective memory functions within the overall context of memory as well as the specific context of Adler's characterization by type, I would like to examine a few of the benefits and drawbacks commonly associated with her technique. Of all the actor training techniques examined in this dissertation, Adler's is the most text-based. Because the actor's character work is rooted in the text and not in style of acting, Adler's training technique can be applied to any style of performance. According to Adler, a play's style - realism, surrealism, naturalism and so forth - is an outer expression of the technical and performative conventions of a production. The work an actor must do on character remains the same regardless of the outward form the presentation of that character will take. In my own work as an actor I can attest to the versatility of Adler's characterization method. In fact I intentionally chose my Antiochus example to illustrate how characterization by type can be applied to more than just Realism, disproving a common misconception regarding Adler's technique. To be sure some plays are more naturally suited than others for use with Adler's characterization technique. But even in the case of a play like *Waiting for Godot* (in which I was directed by Rotté), the core principles of Adler's technique can be applied. Beckett provides a set of given circumstances for the world he creates. The actor's approach to character doesn't change just because the given circumstances are strange or unfamiliar. They still influence the character's objectives and actions just like the given circumstances of a more realistic play. The actor's use of imagination also remains unchanged. If there is any difference it may lie in the actor's increased use of self-enlargement. When faced with a radically different world such as the one Beckett

creates, I found it very helpful to rely heavily on works of art, music and literature –

anything really – that seemed to me to capture the essence of Beckett's work.

Characterizing Gogo using Adler's technique was, for me, no different from when I did

the same with Vanya, a far more realistic character in a far more realistic play.

Another major benefit for the actor training in Adler's technique is the

independence it fosters in the actor. A major goal of Adler's was to train actors who

didn't need constant guidance or input from a director. As any actor can tell you, the

transition from the classroom or studio to the professional stage can be a difficult one.

The professional working environment is not always as supportive and nurturing as a

classroom can be. Adler's training technique encourages actors to be self-sufficient. An

Adler-trained actor never needs to ask a director, "What's my motivation?" because a

solid understanding of the given circumstances precludes exactly this type of question.

As a result directors working with Adler-trained actors tend to spend more time in

rehearsal working the play and less time having to tell the actors about the play, its

circumstances and themes.

Increased independence also fosters greater creativity on the actor's part. By

feeling confident in her understanding of the given circumstances and how they affect

the character's behavior, the actor is empowered to take risks and make bold choices –

so long as they are supported by the given circumstances of the play. This goes hand in

hand with the final advantage of Adler's system, which is the development of the actor

as a human being. Drama is about life. The more an actor practices self-enlargement

the more life she will experience. The more life she experiences, the greater the range of

imaginative possibilities for her use on the stage. But the unspoken side-effect is that an Adler-trained actor who has taken the principle of self-enlargement seriously will live a full, interesting and well-rounded life that makes her a better actor, and possibly, a better person.

This is not to say that Adler's technique doesn't also have its drawbacks. Despite its versatility across a range of theatrical styles, the text-based nature of Adler's technique makes it difficult to apply to non-text based performances. Additionally Adler-trained actors run the risk of over-intellectualizing in their approach to the text. In some ways the rigorous textual analysis called for by Adler can get in the way of the larger process of characterization. Some actors may find that an overabundance of choices prevents them from making any one choice. Actors must be always thinking, this is true, but actors must also be able to give over control on occasion and go where their imagination leads them.

Another drawback is the lack of acting exercises for the actor to practice Adler's technique outside of the classroom. Certainly analysis of the given circumstances can be practiced outside of the classroom, and self-enlargement by its very definition is an outside class activity, but neither of these involves any actual acting. In this respect Adler's technique embraces an attitude of sink-or-swim. This can be a frustrating experience for actors and Adler's classes often had a high rate of attrition. Dr. Rotté once related to me that when she began at the Adler Conservatory (now the Stella Adler Studio of Acting) her class contained something close to thirty students. At the end of the two-year curriculum, only a handful remained. This does not reflect an attitude of

culling the herd as much as it reflects Adler's own experience of learning how to act.

There is no gradual buildup to the full technique like there is in Strasberg's method. The

actor learns as Adler did, by doing.

4.2   JOSEPH CHAIKIN: SUBVERTING THE SETUP

"Until we can hear the dominant voices of those ghosts whom we contain, we cannot
control, to any degree, whom we are to become."
-Joseph Chaikin, *The Presence of the Actor*

Joseph Chaikin's inclusion in a chapter dealing with the sociological formation of

memory will come as no surprise to anyone who is familiar with his work. Chaikin

makes it quite clear that he believes the individual is influenced by, "observable

political-social forces which move irrevocably through all of us who are alive at the

same time in history" (*The Presence of the Actor* 11-12). Even a cursory reading of

Presence reveals that Chaikin demonstrates a keen awareness of and interest in how the

frameworks of society influence an individual's attitudes, beliefs and values. Although

there is no evidence that Chaikin was ever exposed to Maurice Halbwachs's work, the

"observable political-social forces" Chaikin speaks of are the same thing as Halbwachs's

social frameworks. A few of those mentioned by Chaikin include government, the

commercial theatre and popular culture. These are, in Halbwachsian terms, examples

of "the instruments used by the collective memory" (40). Both Chaikin and Halbwachs

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believe, along with Paul Connerton that, "prior to any single experience, our mind is already predisposed with a framework of outlines [. . .]" (Connerton 6). This predisposed attitude is what Chaikin calls "the big setup" (*Presence* 12). One can see the pejorative attitude implied in Chaikin's deliberate use of the term setup to refer to the dominant social attitudes and values of a society. To be set up implies that a kind of scam or confidence act is being pulled on one. This is precisely what Chaikin believes is happening. The setup conditions the individual to think and behave in particular patterns because "We compose ourselves from the cultural models around us" (*Presence* 13). These patterns, in Chaikin's estimation, are inherently conservative, designed to maintain the status quo of the dominant social institutions, often at the expense of the individual. As we have seen, Halbwachs also believes that the individual is conditioned by the dominant frameworks of memory - the setup in Chaikin's terminology - to think and act in ways that conform to the attitudes and values embraced by those dominant social frameworks. Halbwachs concludes that this process of conditioning is one of the ways in which, "the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories" (40). As we shall see, Chaikin's technique is an open process wherein the actor learns how to identify, interrogate, challenge, and even perhaps transcend those biases whispered to him by the ghostly voices of the social frameworks of memory.

Before we begin a more in-depth examination of Chaikin's core principles, a brief biographical overview will help to illustrate how Chaikin experienced, in his own life, the ways in which the setup influences peoples' attitudes and values. These

experiences were quite influential on Chaikin. An early childhood bout with rheumatic fever left Chaikin with permanent heart damage that he would have to deal with throughout the remainder of his life. At age ten he was sent from his Brooklyn home to live in a children's cardiac hospital in Florida. For the next two years he was virtually living on his own. Chaikin recalls that it was at this young age that he first learned how playing a socially acceptable role could get a person what they wanted. Chaikin says he, "had to learn how to be lovable" to receive attention and affection from the staff of the hospital (Blumenthal 8). After his discharge, Chaikin returned to his family, who had since relocated from Brooklyn, New York to Des Moines, Iowa. In her study of Chaikin's life and work Eileen Blumenthal notes:

> Chaikin became expert, during this period, at maintaining the social mask. He concealed his unfashionable medical problems and, since Jews were considered an oddity (at best) among his peers, he hid his background. Meanwhile, he discovered that he was unacceptable to the mainstream in still another way: Chaikin disguised his bisexuality as well. Carefully navigating around these secrets, he passed himself off as the all-American teenager. (parenthetical in original 8)

It is easy to imagine how in his youth Chaikin must have yearned for a social framework which would place his own uniqueness within a memorialized context; a social framework which felt genuine to him, one wherein he was allowed to be who he really was. Chaikin's sense of self differed so radically from the norms endorsed and promoted by the dominant social frameworks of his time that it may have made him

feel as if he was being setup for failure. This yearning for belonging, for community, reveals itself in Chaikin's technique in his emphasis on the creation of a community between the actors and the audience.   These same experiences also taught Chaikin, at a very early age, how to identify and fulfill societal expectations.   When viewed in the larger context of Chaikin's theatrical work, it is rather easy to surmise, as Blumenthal does, that, "These early experiences affected Chaikin deeply and helped to shape his later work," while also giving him, "keen perspective on social myths and relationships" (Blumenthal 9). A perspective born at least partly out of Chaikin's desire to discover a social framework capable of embracing him in all of his exceptionalities.

After studying philosophy and theatre for three years at Drake University, Chaikin dropped out and, like so many other young actors, moved to New York City to pursue his professional career. At this point in his life Chaikin was not unlike many of the other young actors struggling to make it in New York. According to Chaikin, he was consumed with being discovered in the earlier part of his career. For the young Chaikin all the training and productions were simply stepping stones on the way to being discovered. "And when you're discovered," says Chaikin, "it's the beginning of the second life. You go into another orbit" (qtd. in Blumenthal 10).   Chaikin did eventually reach "another orbit," but it was one that couldn't have been farther from his initial dream of making it as an actor.

In 1960 Chaikin was offered a part in a production by The Living Theater. Chaikin took on the role for the paycheck and exposure, not out of any kind of commitment to the philosophies of Judith Melina and Julian Beck. It was not long,

however, before Chaikin became a regular member of the company. When The Living Theater staged Bertolt Brecht's *Man is Man* Chaikin was cast in the lead role of Galy Gay. This experience would forever alter the course of Chaikin's life, thoughts and work in the theatre. "Until the Brecht play," says Chaikin, "I had been interested in a fancy career for myself as an actor, and I thought the opportunity to play [Galy Gay] would give me all the chance in the world to further this career" (qtd. in Blumenthal 49). As he learned more about Brecht's theories on theatre Chaikin's whole attitude toward the theatre and being a star changed. "As I played it night after night," Chaikin relates to Robert Pasolli, "I got very involved with the questions that were brought up in it. And I had a kind of dismay, a disillusionment with the promises that I was hoping would become my life" (qtd. in Blumenthal 12). Of this experience Chaikin would later say that he felt as he was, as an actor, falling prey to the same process that Galy Gay falls victim to in the play – namely the dehumanization of the individual by society. Ironically this production that made Chaikin reassess and ultimately abandon his quest for stardom would garner him his first great critical acclaim and the first of several Obie awards.

In 1963 when The Living Theatre went into its European exile Chaikin chose to remain behind. It was during this period of his life that Chaikin's place in the theatre world started to become clear to him. He gathered a group of like-minded actors to form a workshop dedicated to exploring various questions and possibilities for acting. Composed of other actors from The Living Theatre that did not go abroad, as well as several students from Nola Chilton's recently-defunct acting class, this group went on

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to become the Open Theater. The members of the group chose the name Open Theater because, Chaikin says, it "implied a susceptibility to continue to change" and "would serve to remind us of that early commitment to stay in process" (qtd. in Blumenthal 15). From its origins as a private, experimental theatre laboratory, the Open Theater, and Joseph Chaikin himself, went on to achieve renown and fame in both America and Europe thanks to groundbreaking productions like <u>The Serpent</u>, <u>The Mutation Show</u>, <u>Terminal</u> and <u>America Hurrah!</u>. After ten very productive and sometimes stormy years, Chaikin disbanded the Open Theater in 1973. Chaikin continued his own investigations and experiments in theatre through a variety of other projects, most notably the Winter Project conducted in the mid 1970's and his collaborations with other artists, particularly playwright Sam Shepard. Until his death in 2003 Chaikin continued to push the boundaries of his own and others' ideas of what theatre entails.

The first core principle of Chaikin's training technique is, ironically, that there are no core principles. "There is no principle," Chaikin writes, "I have held in absolute terms. Not one." (112). Chaikin's technique, unlike those examined thus far, is not a systematized approach to acting. In fact he actively resisted any systematizing of his ideas to such an extent that he disbanded the Open Theater because he was afraid of it becoming, "embalmed as an institution" (qtd. in Blumenthal 25). Chaikin valued exploration and discovery far more than devising a system of set principles. In *The Presence of the Actor* Chaikin writes: "Theories and systems on paper are seldom what they are when they are an active process. Once on paper they get frozen by their most serious adherents, become intractable, and are applied for all occasions" (34). This is

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precisely what Paul Connerton refers to as *inscribing practice* in *How Societies Remember* (73). Chaikin believed that zealous devotion to any one system of acting limited the actor's potential for personal discovery. Such zealous devotion is not unlike that demonstrated by certain elements of religious believers. Both Connerton and Halbwachs acknowledge how religious ideas, once formulated and recorded – either in a literal process of transcription to the written word or through the creation of religious rituals – leads to the inevitable conflict between those who wish to adhere to what they believe to be the original intention behind the written words and those who wish to understand how the written word applies to the current cultural context. Chaikin wished to avoid this dilemma and continually insisted that none of his observations and conclusions should be taken as unalterable truth but merely as a reflection of his own experience and subject to revision or discarded as needed.

As we have already seen, Chaikin's work reflects his belief in the existence of the social frameworks of memory and the influence they have upon the actor. In order to understand how the frameworks of memory function, the actor must be consciously aware of them. This is the second core principle of Chaikin's technique: the actor must cultivate an awareness of how the frameworks of memory exert an implicit and pervasive influence on his attitudes and values. "An actor's tool is himself," writes Chaikin, "but his use of himself is informed by all the things which inform his mind and body – his observations, his struggles, his nightmares, his prison, his patterns, himself as a citizen of his times and his society" (*Presence* 5.) Unlike Halbwachs, who attaches neither positive nor negative qualities to collective memory, Chaikin definitely

sees the influence of collective memory as a negative one on the actor. "It's within the structure of the human character to want," writes Chaikin, "It's the government's and society's malfunction to determine what it is we are to want" (*Presence* 14). One of the ways Chaikin's technique seeks to overcome the setup is by interrogating it. Despite his aversion to set principles Chaikin often used a process he called *jamming* to explore how the setup uses what he calls *emblems* as a means of indoctrinating the individual with desires and expectations about life experiences, "that are of greatest interest and important to" society (Halbwachs 136). As we shall see, actors choose a particular emblem and use the process of jamming on that emblem's meanings in order to explore how the setup has conditioned their responses in a particular way to a particular emblem. This exploration involves both the actor's explicit and implicit memory systems.

For Chaikin the theatre is, above all else, a place for convergence. Theatre is a place where the attitudes and values of the dominant social frameworks can meet, be investigated, questioned and challenged. In the opening lines of *The Presence of the Actor* Chaikin plainly states that:

> There is the situation being played out on the stage (the play), and there is
> the situation of actually being in the theater – the relationship between the actors
> and the audience. It is this living situation that is unique to the theater, and the
> impulses of a new and more open theater want to manifest it. (1)

The exploration and utilization of the actor/audience relationship is the third of Chaikin's core principles. "A company of actors," says Chaikin, "in relation to the work

that they are performing – is a community" (*Presence* 28). And as Blumenthal's study of Chaikin illustrates, creating "a sense of community with the spectators is important to Chaikin" and is one of the major goals of his technique (Blumenthal 60). As Halbwachs tells us, any community, regardless of its size or make-up, is a social framework that affects its members and is affected by the influences of collective memory. In this sense each performance of a play could be seen as being its own social framework, albeit it one with a limited, predetermined lifespan. Drawing from his own experience as an actor Chaikin came to believe that the actor's expectations and preconceptions about the people who make up the audience influence the actor's performance either consciously, unconsciously or both in some combination of the two. As before, Chaikin perceives this influence of collective memory as being largely a negative one, but one, however, which can be made to serve better ends. Because "what we *expect* in the audience is the same as what participation we invite from them" Chaikin experimented with what he came to call the actor's presence and levels of address (*Presence* 143). Chaikin's emphasis on an explicit relationship between his actors and audience is one of the major distinctions between his technique and the others we've examined thus far as well as illustrating Chaikin's innate understanding of the ways in which collective memory can, and does, affect the individual's attitudes and behavior toward others.

A more detailed analysis of the core principles of Chaikin's technique presents a challenge for scholarly study when one remembers that Chaikin's first core principle was to avoid establishing any kind of fixed principles. Despite Chaikin's prodigious body of work, he left behind very little in the form of coherent, composed writings.

Eileen Blumenthal correctly notes that in this respect Chaikin is atypical among other avant-garde artists in the theatre. Aside from *The Presence of the Actor*, Chaikin never published any kind of textbook or summation of his theories. Anyone who has read *Presence* can attest to the fact that it is not as much a coherent explanation of his theories as it is, "notes, then, from several levels of myself" (*Presence* xi). One contributing reason for the lack of a Chaikin canon, so to speak, is that Chaikin's ideas on theatre were forever changing. "In fact," writes Blumenthal, "notions [Chaikin] has worked with over the years flatly contradict each other, and even ideas he is exploring at one time may be incompatible" (Blumenthal 38). My own investigation of Chaikin will focus primarily on his work during the Open Theater years. It was Chaikin's work with the Open Theater that first brought him to the attention of the theatre world and it was also his work during this period that laid the foundations for his future work. It is also where one can most clearly see the correlations between Chaikin's technique and Halbwachs's theory of collective memory.

One of the reasons Chaikin resisted systemization of his ideas is because he felt that, "The conventional actor's inquiry tends to yield whatever it was designed to discover. Little remains to be discovered either about another person or about oneself" (*Presence* 19). The various training techniques used by Chaikin and the Open Theatre were designed to help the actor to investigate the setup and how it affects the actor's personal and professional attitudes. Some of the exercises developed by Chaikin and the Open Theater became part of their regular repertoire, although it was always important to Chaikin that, "The exercises, discussions, and relationships within the

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group and toward the material must be newly assessed at the beginning of each new adventure of work" (*Presence* 134). Such a process-oriented technique is not surprising when we consider Chaikin's belief that an acting teacher's proper role is that of a facilitator. Acting teachers who demand a slavish devotion to a rigorous set of pre-established standards limit the possibilities of discovery for their actors. Teachers like these, according to Chaikin, have, "already fixed what is true beforehand. The student hasn't. Eventually the student only learns what is true for the teacher" (*Presence* 154-55). Acting, for Chaikin, is a process about personal discovery and finding the means to share that discovery with others, not conforming to the truth of another.

Chaikin's actor training technique helps actors to come "up against their own forms of institutionalized thinking, and the culturally dictated forces, even those fully adapted by the professional theatre" (*Presense* 15). Chaikin's rejection of realism in his work is one of the ways in which he sought to overcome the influences the dominant social frameworks exert over the actor. In a 1969 interview published in *Drama Review* Chaikin says that, "one of my reasons for rejecting [realism] is because it corresponds to social order, certain kinds of emphasis, and certain kinds of repression" ("Chaikin Fragments" 145-7). In *Presence* he states that "When theater is limited to the socially possible, it is confined by the same forces which limit society" (23). Both these instances illustrate Chaikin's desire to enable actors to move beyond the constraints imposed upon them by the dominant social frameworks. To this end Chaikin sought to create exercises that would enable actors to recognize how their attitudes and values have been implicitly influenced by the social frameworks of memory.

One of the ways Chaikin's technique utilizes the actor's collective memory is through the study of emblems. An emblem can be an object, or the image of an object, symbolizing and suggesting another object or an idea. "The crown is emblematic of the king. The bars are emblematic of the prison," writes Chaikin (*Presence* 113). Emblems can be one of the "material traces" that Halbwachs says that the present frameworks use to "reconstruct an image of the past" that is in line with the values of the present framework (119). As such an emblem "carries within it a recommendation to be seen within a given system of perception" (*Presence* 128). Chaikin's use of emblems also reveals, as was the case with Adler's principle of self-enlargement, that "there is in short no object upon which we reflect that cannot serve as a point of departure, through an association of ideas" to reveal the influences of collective memory upon the individual (Halbwachs 61). Emblems need not be physical symbols such as a crown or prison bars, but can also encompass, "[. . .] a gesture, a sound, a word, or a series of any of these" (*Presence* 113).

As we have seen, how one remembers and even what one remembers, is significantly influenced "through exposure to training or practices by socialization agents [. . .]" (Nelson & Fivush 283). These socializing agents come in many forms. In *Time Maps* historian Eviator Zerubavel identifies three categories of mnemonic socialization: formal institutions, informal "co-reminiscing" and those of a more subtle and indirect nature (5.) Mnemonic socialization results in what Zerubavel calls "habitual mental stances" (5).

We normally acquire such habitual mental stances as part of the process of learning to remember in a socially appropriate manner. Far from being a strictly spontaneous act, remembering is also governed by unmistakably social *norms of remembrance* that tell us what we should remember and what we should essentially forget" (emphasis in Zerubavel 5).

An emblem is then, more than a symbol which encapsulates meaning, it is also a model of what kinds of things we should remember and what things we should forget. And more than this, from Chaikin's point of view emblems are the setup's way of conditioning not only what an individual wants, but also their expectations of what the individual's experience of life should be like. "The most successful aspect of persuasion," Chaikin writes, "is that people are made to aspire to things they don't even want. How do you get to want these things?" (*Presence* 74). Emblems are the means by which the setup conditions the individual's wants and expectations.

Our memory of an emblem can be episodic, semantic or a mixture of both, but more often than not this type of memory utilizes the semantic memory system. "Semantic memory refers to a person's general knowledge about the world" (Schacter & Tulving 2001). A person's general knowledge about the world not only includes the factual knowledge we normally associate with semantic memory, but it also "encompasses a wide range of organized information, including facts, concepts, and vocabulary" (Schacter & Tulving 632). Here one can see how the setup's conditioning, via the production and recommendation of particular emblems, or concepts, for love, happiness and success, implicitly influence the actor due to the effects of collective

memory. If a given social framework is to perpetuate itself, it must ensure that its values are important to the individuals who make up that framework by foregrounding, "those activities that are of greatest interest and importance to it" (Halbwachs 136). One of the ways in which these activities can be foregrounded is by turning them into emblems. By presenting emblematic examples of the values it endorses, the setup instills in the individual a certain way of thinking and certain types of behavior that reinforce the attitudes and values of the dominant frameworks of memory.

In his article "Nonconscious Forms of Human Memory" Jeffery Toth examines the ways in which "[. . .] a person's thought and behavior could be influenced by prior events of which that person was not aware [. . .]" (Toth 245). The results of Toth's examination support the general hypothesis of collective memory Halbwachs put forth nearly a century before, namely that the frameworks of memory implicitly influence the individual. Results from various studies of the effects of implicit memory lead Toth to conclude, "[. . .] that subjects need not even be aware that a prior event occurred for the event to influence their subsequent performance" (249-50). Although memographers disagree on the specifics, Toth goes on to conclude that, "irrespective of these debates, most researchers agree that nonconscious processes play a powerful role in conscious memory judgments" (Toth 254). And even though the majority of the work thus far done on the implicit memory system's influence on conscious memory "has been based on the processing of rather simple stimuli [. . .] Already strong links have been drawn

between nonconscious processes in memory and socially relevant phenomena such as impression formation, stereotyping and prejudice" (Toth 256).

Chaikin's understanding of the influence of implicit memory on conscious behavior anticipates the conclusions of contemporary memory researchers by nearly twenty years. Chaikin uses the example of two people telling one another "I love you" for the first time to illustrate how emblems affect the individual. "These two people are standing together, holding hands with Shelly Winters and Gary Cooper right between them, and the experience they are having doesn't resemble the thing that happened when Shelley Winters said it to Gary Cooper at all" (*Presence* 73). What it means to say *I love you* and what we expect that experience to be like has, "already [been] predisposed within a framework of outlines, of typical shapes of experienced objects" (Connerton 6). In some instances this influence will manifest itself in the form of conscious, episodic memory – like Chaikin's example with Winters and Cooper. In most cases, however, the influence is implicit, subtly shaping our expectations of our own experiences of the setup's emblematic moments. The power of implicit memory to shape our conscious expectations is so great that "In addition to influencing a person's interpretations of events in the present, [implicit memory] has been shown to influence interpretation of the past (i.e. conscious memory judgments)" (Toth 254). Once again contemporary research corroborates Halbwachs's hypothesis that collective memory reconstructs an image of the past, which idealizes those values and patterns of behavior that support and contribute to the continuance of the dominant social frameworks of the present.

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As we saw in the case of Adler even our episodic memories are rewritten to conform to expectations put forth by the setup's emblems (Toth 254).

In Chaikin's example cited above, all the popular images of love and romance an individual has encountered, from fairy tales to film, serve as emblems of the setup's recommended attitude toward love. "Hence the difficulty of extracting our past from our present," writes Connerton:

> Not simply because present factors tend to influence – some might want to say distort – our recollections of the past, but also because past factors tend to influence, or distort, our experience of the present. This process, it should be stressed, reaches into the most minute and everyday details of our lives. (Connerton 2)

When our experience does not measure up to what we've been conditioned to expect, a person "experiences the hollowness of the words – there seems to be an absence and in fact, as he says, 'I love you,' he sneakily feels he lies" (*Presence* 72-73). The feeling of disconnect between what we believe an experience should be like and what actually takes place is one of the ways, according to Chaikin, in which the setup exerts its control over the individual. In order to make our experience of life more like the emblems provided by the dominant frameworks on which we model our behavior and set our expectations to match those provided by setup's emblems. This is an example of what Eviator Zerubavel calls iconic connectedness. Zerubavel defines iconic connectedness as "our present attempts to reproduce the past in actions and behavior" (45). In this way the dominant frameworks of memory utilize the individual's implicit

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memory to manipulate the individual's expectations and behaviors to conform to those endorsed by the dominant frameworks of memory.

The interrogation of emblems in Chaikin's technique is important because they function as repositories of collective memory – they are artifacts, models of setup-sanctioned behavior. The process by which the actors investigate and interrogate the meanings emblems hold is what Chaikin calls jamming. "Jamming is the study of an emblem. [. . .] the jamming becomes a kind of contemplation of that emblem" (*Presence* 116). Jamming on an emblem provides a chance for actors to confront, "their own forms of institutionalized thinking, and the culturally dictated forces [. . .]" (*Presence* 15). Initially during the process of jamming there is, "a tendency against discovery and toward confirming the cliché" (*Presence* 130). Clichés attain the status of being cliché because they are habitual responses to situations; responses recommended and endorsed by a society's dominant frameworks. "Indeed," writes Connerton, "it is precisely because what is performed is something to which the performers are habituated that the cognitive content of what the group remembers in common exercises such persuasive and persistent force" (88). In other words clichés are an example of what Connerton calls, "a socially legitimate [. . .] performance" (35**).** For Chaikin the danger of the cliché is twofold. By playing the cliché the actor fails to get beyond the prepackaged meaning of an emblem and ends up perpetuating the values and attitudes endorsed by the setup. But on the other hand, if the actor, "censors [the cliché] he may always stay behind it. If he plays the cliché out, it's more possible that he will go beyond it" ("The Context of Performance" 667). In this way jamming is akin

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to jazz improvisation on a theme or the process of free association sometimes employed by psychoanalysts.

Jamming on emblems is a vital part of Chaikin's technique because, "[Emblems] serve an extremely important function and sustain all kinds of misperceptions, all of which help keep things going as they are" (*Presence* 73). In mnemonic terms jamming on emblems promotes an actor's ability to consciously investigate the implicit influences of collective memory. Even when a person is aware of it, the setup's influence on his expectations is virtually impossible to escape. "It is frustrating," says Chaikin," because [we] can't really do it, and [we] can't keep from trying to do it" (*Presence* 73). The process of jamming on emblems raises the actors' awareness of the ways in which their attitudes and values have been surreptitiously conditioned by the setup. Actors who are aware of the setup's influence, according to Chaikin, are a danger to the setup because they, "[. . .] see that there are really other goals and other places to inhabit" beyond the setup's recommendations. (*Presence* 75).

Thus far we have seen how Chaikin's technique uses the actor's semantic memory as a means of revealing to the actor the ways in which the social frameworks of memory influence the actor's attitudes, values and beliefs. Now we come to the final core principle of Chaikin's technique: the presence of the actor. In the following pages the connections between presence of the actor and the memory of the actor may not be readily apparent. I ask my readers to bear with if I seem to digress from my subject. I do so only because the following information is necessary in order to understand how

Chaikin's technique uses the concept of presence to subvert and/or challenge the frameworks of memory.

Chaikin is frustratingly obscure in his definition of presence. He says, "It's a quality that makes you feel as though you're standing right next to the actor, no matter where you're sitting in the theater" (*Presence* 20). In this way what Chaikin calls presence and what is more commonly called stage presence are one and the same thing. Although vague in his definition, Chaikin is adamant regarding the importance he accords presence. "That's what the theater is," Chaikin writes in *The Presence of the Actor*, "It's this demonstration of presence on some human theme or other and in some form or other" (qtd. in Toscun 38). Presence also consists of what Blumenthal calls, "the instant-to-instant awareness of shared moments between the actors and audience" (51). One of the ways Chaikin's technique accomplishes this is by abandoning the pretense that the actor isn't himself, but a different person on stage. "When we as actors are performing, we as persons are also present and the performance is a testimony of ourselves" (*Presence* 6). In order to highlight and reinforce to audiences the dual identity of actor/character Chaikin, "[. . .] prefers, wherever possible, to let the audience see the actor move from being people like themselves into inhabiting the characters" (Blumenthal 61).

Presence also involves a new way of seeing for the actor as well. Chaikin believes that:

Every performer makes some decision about the audience in his own mind; personalizing, making specific the anonymous. He makes a secret choice, in the course of events, as to 'who' the audience is. In attributing a particular quality to the audience, one invites the participation of that quality." (*Presence* 140)

Chaikin uses what he calls "dedication" as a way of intentionally guiding what he see as a natural process. The actor dedicates a performance by calling "on something in another which is also alive in yourself" (*Presence* 141). Actors can dedicate to a specific person, , or an object/emblem, or even an abstract concept such as "all those who killed themselves [. . .] all landlords who trick their tenants [. . .] any metaphor than can be a visceral reality [for the actor]" so long as the dedication evokes a personal connection between the actor and the audience (*Presence* 142).

In Chaikin's technique dedication serves the same purpose as emotional episodic memories do in Strasberg's technique. In other words, it is a means for actors to jumpstart their inspiration. The crucial distinction between Strasberg's technique and Chaikin's lies in what types of memories they employ. As we saw in the previous chapter, techniques like Strasberg's make use of the emotional, episodic memories of the actor. Dedication employs the actor's episodic memory but it also makes use of the actor's implicit collective memory. "What is involved [in a dedication] is my own relationship [to it]" (*Presence* 142). Chaikin demonstrates an intuitive understanding of Halbwachs's theory of collective memory here. In essence Chaikin recognizes that our

expectations of who and what a person is are shaped, in part, by the attitudes toward that particular person which we have internalized via the frameworks of memory that we participate in. Chaikin goes a step beyond Halbwachs by turning the setup's own conditioning against itself. "The audience tends to become stereotyped in the mind of an actor," writes Chaikin, "and what the dedication does is to invite a particular presence from the audience, and unfix that stereotype" (*Presence* 144). Dedication undermines the "us and them" mentality that is one of the uglier consequences of collective memory. Instead of seeing a faceless group of spectators, through dedication the actor can instill in the audience "a particular part of yourself that you want to share with the audience" (qtd. in Blumenthal 77). By doing so the actor undercuts the stereotypes that the setup uses to alienate us from one another. In this way the dedication of an audience can be seen as the creation of an entirely new social framework. This new framework may last for only the performance but for that time the actors are not meeting the audience on the level of fictitious characters, but rather as human beings.

> When we actors are performing, we are also present as person and the performance is a testimony of ourselves. So each role, each work, each performance changes us as persons [. . .] In former times, acting simply meant putting on a disguise. But now, it's clear that the wearing of the disguise changes the person. As he takes off the disguise, his face changes from having worn it.

The combination of the presence of the actor and the dedication of the audience is one of the ways in which Chaikin's technique seeks to throw down the walls of the categories that we have come to use to define ourselves thanks to the implicit and persistent influence of the collective memory of our society.

Perhaps the greatest advantage to Chaikin's technique is its universality. The non-dogmatic nature of Chaikin's theories makes his technique readily applicable to a wide variety of theatrical styles. Chaikin's technique does not embrace any particular style of acting as much as it provides a way for the actor to investigate her own personal relationship to the material. Chaikin's technique can be used in traditional script-based productions, like Chaikin's own performance as Vanya in Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* (La Mama Annex, New York 1983) or Hamm in Beckett's *Endgame* (Cite Universitaire, Paris 1969). Of course most people familiar with Chaikin's technique recognize its applicability to the creation of original emblem-based work like *The Serpent* (1968) and his collaborations with Sam Shepard such as *Tongues* (1978).

In large part the range of Chaikin's technique is due to the open-ended attitude he takes toward the theatre. Another contributing factor, and another major advantage of Chaikin's technique, is that of all the actor training techniques thus far examined, Chaikin's is, by far, the most actor-centric. Most of the exercises Chaikin talks about in *Presence* and in his various other papers are not solely of his design. Chaikin talks about how he doesn't come up with acting exercises with a specific goal in mind, but instead allows them to develop organically from the interests of the acting company as a whole. The exercises provide an agreed upon structure for exploration but do not in and of

themselves have any kind of meaningful, inherent content. Their value lies instead in each actor's individual response to the exercise. Strasberg asks the actor to use his own memories the emotional life of the character and Adler, as we have seen, advances a highly sociological way of thinking about character. Despite their differences, one commonality shared between Strasberg and Adler is that their training techniques are derived from a philosophical viewpoint that embraces theory first, practice second. In a reversal of this process, Chaikin's training techniques emerge from the practice first. Such a process-oriented technique is not surprising when we consider Chaikin's belief that an acting teacher's proper role is that of a facilitator. A teacher, in Chaikin's estimation, "looks for the right steps for each student, and when the student is about to make his discovery, the teacher must disappear" *(Presence* 154). Those acting techniques that adhere to a rigorous set of standards limit the possibilities of discovery for their actors. Acting, for Chaikin, is a messy process about personal discovery, finding the means to share that discovery with others and not capitulating to the truth of another.

Chaikin's technique is not for the beginning actor; it assumes that the actor comes to the training with an already established acting skill set. While it may seem reasonable to assume that Chaikin wouldn't want actors who were already indoctrinated, so to speak, with the mainstream acting techniques, this is not the case. Chaikin welcomed, and even encouraged actors to train in a variety of styles. But from the perspective of a professional actor and teacher of acting, there is nothing in Chaikin's technique that could be considered fundamental at all. It's an advanced way

of thinking about acting, a technique capable of enhancing the actor's basic skills but not one that will teach the actor those basic skills. What Chaikin's technique does is increase the actor's awareness of the ways in which collective memory influences the individual's attitudes and values, and it helps the actor to form a more personal relationship with the material and the audience. It does not teach the actor how to identify objectives or through-lines of action. Instead it enables the actor to go beyond the standard classroom exercises to encounter the material and its performance on a more immediate and personal level.

Like any actor training technique that draws upon the personal life of the actor, Chaikin's technique runs the risk of touching upon personal aspects that the actor either cannot, or is not prepared to confront. Although this risk is considerably less than with those techniques which rely solely on the episodic memory system of the actor, it is still a risk nonetheless. In addition to the emotional risk some actors may have to deal with, is the time investment demanded by Chaikin's technique. The fact that his technique is so oriented on process, and not product, makes Chaikin's technique less suited for commercial theatrical work and more conducive to a laboratory-like atmosphere.

The techniques of Adler and Chaikin share a number of similarities. Both techniques are predicated upon a use of the actor's collective memory that is both implicit and explicit. Both use the actor's collective memory in a way that corresponds with Halbwachs's own ideas on the subject. Adler and Chaikin also were ahead of the curve, mnemonically speaking, in embracing Halbwachs's sociological conception of memory well before it had gained popular acceptance among memographers. And both

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recognize how the actor's participation in the collective frameworks of memory influences not only the actor as a person, but also the actor's performance. Yet for all their similarities, when we examine how these techniques themselves interact with collective memory we see they are very different.

Chaikin's technique is predicated upon interrogating and deconstructing the influences of the social frameworks of memory. "Our modern societies impose many constraints on people" (Halbwachs 49). The goal of Chaikin's technique is to reveal the ways in which the actor is constrained by his collective memory. Actors cannot hope to ever free themselves from the influence of the setup. But by developing an awareness of the ways in which he has been constrained and conditioned by the social frameworks of memory, the actor can reevaluate and better understand his suppositions about himself, a character, and the audience. Awareness in this case can lead the actor into a conscious change in thought or behavior, in both his personal and his professional life, as he discovers those, "parts of [himself] imprisoned in the disguise of the setup" (*Presence* 130).

Collective memory does not just constrain the individual; it also provides supports for the individual's memories within a larger memorial context. Adler's technique takes advantage of this supportive property of collective memory. When an actor practices characterization by type she is performing collective memory. The type is recognizable to the audience precisely because the actor's performance of it is in accord with the dominant social frameworks' conception of that type.. When employed in this manner collective memory supports not only the actor's characterization, but

also the audience's reception of it. In this way the collective memory works for the actor. Characterization according to type reinforces and transmits an embodiment of type, which is in accord with the attitudes and judgments of the dominant social frameworks of memory, thus supporting and reinforcing via the actor's performance the social status quo. In the final analysis, Adler's use of the actor's collective memory is quite conservative, when contrasted to Chaikin's subversive approach.

5.0   MEMORY IN THE BODY: PROCEDURAL MEMORY, STEPHAN WANGH

AND VIEWPOINTS

"There is more wisdom in your body than in your deepest philosophy."
-Friedrich Neitzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

I have been a video gamer ever since I first turned on my Atari 2600 almost thirty years ago. Back then it was blast the asteroids or avoid the ghosts, as you munch as many pellets as possible. Today the level of complexity involved in some games is staggering. The controller for my Atari was a simple joystick with a red button in the top left corner. My PlayStation 3 controller has two joysticks and twelve buttons. As if that weren't complicated enough, many contemporary games utilize "combos" – actions that can only be accomplished by activating a combination of buttons and/or stick movements. In short, playing video games today involves a level of physical coordination on the part of your hands that would put a world-class video gamer (yes, there are competitions for video game playing) on par with a concert pianist in terms of digital dexterity.

One might ask what my video game hobby has to do with memory and the actor's training. Thus far we have examined how the episodic and collective memories of the actor serve as creative stimuli. In this final chapter we will turn our attention to

the form of memory known as body memory. Philosopher Edward Casey defines body memory as "memory that is intrinsic to the body, to its own ways of remembering: how we remember in and by and through the body" *(Remembering* 147). Prior to sitting down to write this chapter, I decided to perform a little experiment on myself involving video games and body memory. Having just finished a season of hockey and noting the impending arrival of summer, I decided to devote some time to playing a baseball video game. Not having played my baseball game for almost a whole year, I certainly would have benefited from re-reading the controller instructions in the manual, and ordinarily I would have done so. For most sports-themed games, the bulk of the manual contains instructions for using the controller, once again highlighting the increasingly complicated nature of today's video games. For the purposes of my experiment, I chose not to re-read the controller instructions, but rather to trust in my body's memory of "how to play" the baseball game. The results were mixed. I had no difficulty recalling how to make a player swing the bat or pitch the ball; two of the simplest actions in the game. Throwing the ball to a particular base also presented little challenge. When it came to more complicated actions, such as stealing a base, I found myself hopelessly lost. In particular I had a great deal of difficulty with switching the player I controlled. In the baseball game one switches the player being controlled by pushing the X button. In this instance, I kept pushing the R2 (right, bottom) button--which would have worked perfectly if I were still playing hockey. Even after I understood that I should push the X button, I kept finding myself pushing the R2 button whenever I wanted to

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switch players. Eventually, after playing several games in a row, I managed get my *hands to remember* that X was the button to push in order to switch players.

It may seem odd to say I had to get my *hands to remember*, but that is precisely what my example of playing video games is intended to illustrate. Of the forms of memory we have thus far examined, none is so pervasive, so often overlooked, or so greatly missed when lost as body memory. It is important to make the distinction here between body memory and memory of the body. When we have a memory of the body we are remembering our body in the physical context of a particular past experience, what Casey calls "the self-presence of the rememberer," as a component of the overall mnemonic presentation (*Remembering* 69). As we saw in chapter two, the perspective in which one remembers bodily presence can be, and often is, conscious, as with Freud'sfield /observer perspective. But this kind of memory of the body is not the same thing as body memory. "The difference is manifest, "writes Casey, "in the noticeable discrepancy between recollecting our body as in a given situation [. . .] and *being* in the situation itself again and feeling it through our body" (emphasis in original *Remembering* 147). My video game example illustrates remembering, or in my case struggling to remember, through the body.   What makes this an example of body memory and not memory of the body is the fact that my bodily actions were a key component in remembering how to play the baseball game. I did not need to re-learn how to play the baseball game, I simply played the game and, with the exception of switching players, I had little trouble remembering the various physical gestures I needed to execute in order to be successful in the game. I could have committed the

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instruction manual to memory, thus assuring that I would have knowledge of how the controls functioned in gameplay, but such knowledge takes time perhaps better spent in the lived experience of acquiring body memory. One can see this in how I had difficulty adjusting from one set of body memories to another. For the better part of the previous year I had been playing my hockey game and had become habituated to a certain set of bodily movements. When I discovered my continual error when trying to switch players, I went back to the manual to refresh my cognitive memory about what the correct button for switching players was. Consciously I knew that I would have to push X in order to execute the switching of players. But when I was in the midst of playing the game, "*being* in the situation itself again" (emphasis in original *Remembering* 147) my hands kept choosing the R2 button seemingly of their own accord. I had become so accustomed to a particular set of controls that the established body memories kept asserting themselves regardless of my intentions.

The lag in time between learning something and that knowledge being transformed into body memory is indicative of the unique nature of body memory. Body memory belongs to the procedural memory system. "Procedural memory refers to the learning of motor and cognitive skills, and is manifest across a wide range of situations which "[. . .] enable the acquisition of new skills" (Schacter, Wagner & Buckner 636). This particular memory system is very different from the other systems of memory we have encountered thus far. At this juncture an adjustment to the way in which we have been conceptualizing memory must be made, namely from a perception

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of memory as a neurological or psychological process hidden from our view to a perception of memory as a behavioral phenomenon on display for all to see.

In his article "Concepts of Memory" Endel Tulving asks the question whether or not a form of memory "whose operations are expressed purely in behavior, in the absence of corresponding (conscious) thought, can be regarded as the same kind of 'memory' whose operations are expressed in pure thought, in the absence of any *necessity* to convert the thought into behavior" (Tulving 37). The answer, as Tulving and many others have concluded, is no. Tulving cites how encoding and retrieval studies have become regular tools in the study of cognitive forms of memory (i.e. episodic and semantic memory systems). But such emphasis on the encoding and retrieval processes does little to reveal the ways in which the pre-reflective nature of body memory works. It is "awkward at best and silly at worst" (Tulving 38) to apply the research methodology useful for investigating a cognitive form of memory to a form of memory that is evidently pre-reflective.

Other research which points to the distinctions between procedural and declarative forms of memory includes John Hodges's "Memory in Dementias," Andrew Mayes's "Selective Memory Disorders," and Hans Markowitsch's "Neuroanatomy of Memory." These studies approach the question via a neurological and/or psychological point of view. Neuroimaging techniques, like PETs cited by Schacter, Wagner and Buckner in their article "Memory Systems of 1999" corroborate the distinctions neurological/psychological research has made between procedural and declarative forms of memory. From the evidence under examination, Schacter et al.

conclude that "Procedural memory is characterized by gradual, incremental learning and can function normally in the presence of damage to medial temporal lobe structures, thereby distinguishing it from episodic and semantic memory systems" (636). Neuroimaging studies also reveal that "extensive practice on a task often produces a shift in the brain pathways used to complete the task" (Schacter, Wagner & Buckner 636). The presence of this memory migration has been observed in a variety of experiments that test the tasks believed to be under the control of the procedural memory system. The continued presence of this shift from "naïve performance" pathways to "overlearned performance" pathways lead Schacter, Wagner and Buckner to conclude that, "This basic observation [. . .] appears to be quite general in studies of procedural memory" (Schacter, Wagner & Buckner 637).

This idea, that the formation of memory physically alters the structure of the brain is not a new one. It dates back to Descartes theory of animal spirits and the formation of memories (Sutton chapter 3). The shifting of brain pathways reflects the way in which body memories are acquired. When one first learns to ride a bicycle the process is shaky in its initial stages. One must manage three physical tasks at once: balancing, steering, and pedaling, and each task requires constant minute adjustments. The process seems hopelessly tangled at first, but with practice the herky-jerky motions of the novice rider soon become smooth, almost imperceptible and "second nature." Such an evolution is behavioral evidence for "the shift to more automated pathways" that practice brings about (Schacter, Wagner & Buckner 637). It is the automatic quality

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that practiced behaviors assume, which distinguishes body memories from those of the episodic or semantic systems.

The "automatic" or "second nature" qualities of body memory means that it occurs without conscious thought and/or intention. Further, If the "body memory is suitably active, one need not have recourse to other levels or kinds of experience beyond that which one is presently engaged" *(Remembering* 148). In order to ride a bicycle, even if you haven't ridden one in years, all one need to do is get onto a bicycle, push off and pedal away. There is no need for one to recall previous times of bicycle riding in order to remember how to ride. In fact trying too hard to consciously influence a bodily action that has become a body memory usually results in the failure of that action.. If I involve my conscious attention in the act of typing, for example, I lose the effortlessness and nearly automatic quality that my non-reflective state of typing has.

In body memory the past "is *embodied* in actions. Rather than being contained separately somewhere in the mind or brain, it is actively ingredient in the very bodily movements that accomplish a particular action" *(Remembering* 149). Casey's argument for the embodied nature of body memory rests upon the notion of embodiment as delineated by another philosopher and phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

For my purposes Merleau-Ponty stands out among the philosophers of the twentieth century because his *Phenomenology of Perception* elevates the body to a place of prominence rarely seen in Western philosophical thought. Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment stems from his rejection of the objectivist bias toward thinking and

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knowledge that has plagued Western thinkers since Descartes first declared, "*cogito ergo sum*." In brief, Merlau-Ponty, like other phenomenologists, takes issue with the notion that our experience and knowledge of the world can only be explained through objective observation and the applications of the principles of causality. He does not discount the existence, or even validity, of objective knowledge, but he does take issue with the hubris he sees in "the dogmatism of a science that thinks itself capable of absolute and complete knowledge" (Merleau-Ponty *Phenomenology of Perception* 45). An objective paradigm proposes, and attempts to attain, a no-point of view: a point of view that is completely neutral. The problem is, such a no-point of view does not exist. And yet we are still capable of perceiving and ascribing meaning to our perceptions even without recourse to an objectivist explanation of them. Subjectivity then, is the de facto state of human existence as it is our main source of experience of the world.

Where Merleau-Ponty distinguishes himself from other major phenomenologists like Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger (two major influences on Merleau-Ponty) is by linking the individual's subjectivity with the body. Every human being has a unique point of view because we each inhabit a unique body. Therefore all of our perceptions of the world, of the other bodies around us, of ideas that come from those bodies – all of these are accessed through a very specific point of view that is defined by our individual physical bodies. "Human beings are embodied *subject*s," writes Eric Matthews, a Merleau-Ponty scholar (emphasis in original Matthews 52). Merleau-Ponty's embodied subject raises entirely new questions with regard to the need for consciousness in order to for a human being to operate on an intentional level. Husserl,

and phenomenologists of his ilk have sought to connect intentionality with consciousness. Merleau-Ponty's embodied subject raises the distinct possibility that intentionality need not arise from consciousness but could, in fact, be a function of biology.

In their groundbreaking work, <u>Metaphors We Live By,</u> Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate how our embodied experience of the world shapes the very ways in which we think and the language we use. The premise of Lakoff and Johnson's book is that, "metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff & Johnson 3). One of the major categories of metaphor that Lakoff and Johnson examine is what they call orientational metaphors. "Orientational metaphors give a concept a spatial orientation; for example, HAPPY IS UP." (emphasis in original Lakoff & Johnson 14). This is not, Lakoff and Johnson argue, the result of some arbitrary coincidence but rather they, "have a basis in our physical and cultural experience" (Lakoff & Johnson 14). One of the metaphors that illustrates how our embodied experience of the world is reflected in our conceptualization of certain ideas is the "conscious is up; unconscious is down" (Lakoff & Johnson 15). When we wake *up* we are conscious, when we *fall* asleep we are unconscious. One can reach a *higher* consciousness via meditation or lose all consciousness by *sinking* into a coma. The metaphorical conception of conscious equals up, unconscious equals down has a physical basis, according to Lakoff and Johnson, in the fact that, "Humans and most other mammals sleep lying down and stand up when

they awaken" (Lakoff & Johnson 15). This is but a very short example of the ways in which the metaphorical concepts of Lakoff and Johnson illustrate how the experience of being an embodied subject affects our perception of the world around us.

Congruent with the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, our understanding of metaphors comes naturally as a result of our experience as an embodied subject. We do not need recourse to any objective account to explain these metaphors to us; our subjective experience of them makes them already intelligible to us. Like body memory, our experience of being an embodied subject is also pre-reflective. When something happens with or to our bodies we immediately register the experience and the effects it has had on our body. We do not need to observe, gather data, analyze and or theorize about the experience in order for it to have meaning for us. If I touch a hot stove I do not need to have any understanding of the laws of thermodynamics or the ways in which the body receives processes and registers pain in order for the experience to have meaning for me. The stove was hot, it hurt to touch it and so I will not touch a hot stove again. All of the meaning I need to take away from my experience I already have without having to look beyond my own subjective experience of the event. To be sure, objective analysis of such an event contributes much to our knowledge of why things get hot and why hot things hurt the human body, but such knowledge only supplements the initial meaning of my experience.

Let us take a look at two examples that will provide evidence of the embodied and pre-reflective nature of body memory in action. The first example comes from the annals of neuroscience and deals with the peculiar case of memory loss and recovery in

a patient known as GR. In 1992, while he slept, GR experienced a stroke, which affected the left thalamus of his brain and left him suffering from retrograde amnesia (inability to remember experiences prior to a trauma) and anterograde amnesia (inability to remember experience following a trauma). About a year after suffering the stroke, GR was diagnosed with an irregular heartbeat and GR's doctors decided to install a pacemaker. What happened next is somewhat astonishing:

> As he was lying quietly on the operating table, GR felt some discomfort as the surgeon prepared his chest for the pacemaker. Then, in a stunning instant, GR clearly remembered that he had experienced a virtually identical situation some twenty-five years earlier when he had undergone an operation for a hernia. [. . .] Soon his head was swimming in a roiling sea of memories, as his past life came back to him in a torrent of images and thoughts. (Schacter, *Searching* 33)

While GR's condition improved greatly, his memory problems did not vanish completely. Still, enough of his memory was recovered for GR to reclaim his sense of self.

The case of GR is a medical oddity and to date no one has been able to provide a completely satisfactory explanation for GR's sudden and substantial recovery. "The neurologists who reported GR's memory recovery," writes Schacter, "called it 'the petite madeleines phenomenon' "(*Searching* 33). This of course is a reference to Marcel Proust's epic <u>À la recherche du temps perdu</u> (<u>In Search of Lost Time</u>), wherein the physical act of tasting a madeleine brings back a flood of forgotten childhood memories for the narrator Marcel. Marcel's experience with the petite madeleines is perhaps the

most often cited by memographers, but it is not the only example of body memory in Proust's epic work. In the following example the narrator Marcel talks about his tendency from time to time to wake up in a state of confusion:

> My body, still too heavy with sleep to move, would endeavor to construe from the patter of its tiredness the position of its various limbs, in order to deduce therefrom the direction of the wall, the location of the furniture, to piece together and give a name to the house in which it lay. Its memory, the composite memory of its ribs, its knees, its shoulder-blades, offered it a whole series of rooms in which it had at one time or another slept [. . .] And even before my brain, lingering in cogitation over when things had happened and what they had looked like, had reassembled the circumstances sufficiently to identify the room, it, my body, would recall from each room in succession the style of the bed, the position of the doors, the angle at which the sunlight came in at the windows, whether there was a passage outside, what I had had in mind when I went to sleep and found there when I awoke (Proust 9).

What is most illuminating in this passage is Proust's recognition that his body had, "become a material condition of possibility for remembering" (Proust 9). This example clearly illustrates the pre-reflective and embodied qualities inherent in body memory: the body "deduce[s]" from "its memory" which room the narrator is in "even before [the] brain, lingering in cogitation [. . .] had reassembled the circumstances sufficiently to identify the room" (Proust 9). As in the case of GR's stunning recovery, body memory endures and even thrives where recollective forms of memory do not. Of

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particular interest is Proust's suggestion that his body's memory is even capable of reminding him of, "what I had had *in mind* when I went to sleep" (emphasis added Proust 9).

Studies focusing on what has been called *state-dependent retrieval* suggest, as Proust does, that the physical state of the body has an appreciable effect, as a precondition, on the subject's ability for recollective recall. In his study of state-dependent retrieval E. Eich noticed that people under the effects of alcohol or marijuana during the initial encoding phase experience difficulty with recall testing when sober. This in and of itself is not surprising. What was surprising, however, was that similar doses of alcohol or marijuana, administered prior to the retrieval phase, dramatically improved the test subjects' ability to recall (Eich 1980). In his study Eich speaks of "mental states," but is not intoxication also a bodily state? Like Proust's body making him aware of what he had in mind before he drifted off to sleep, the state-dependent retrieval studies suggest that body memory can, and does, influence recollective forms of memory once believed to be the sole purview of the mind or consciousness.

5.1.1 Marginality

Another unique characteristic of body memory is its marginal quality. Unlike the episodic and semantic memory systems, "bodily memory assumes for the most part a marginal position vis-à-vis our most pressing concerns – and is all the more effective for doing so" *(Remembering* 163).   Take for example the swing of a baseball player, which

involves so much more than simply swinging a bat at a ball. A batter must not only be able to judge the speed and movement of the pitch but also must time his swing perfectly to hit the ball. In addition the batter must also be mindful of the physical mechanics of the swing, which involve a myriad of details like the positioning of one's elbows, the location of one's hands on the bat, the twisting of the hips in the follow-through. Add to these the additional physical adjustments to one's basic swing when a batter attempts to pull or drive a pitch in a certain direction. Usually this is accomplished by baseball players within seconds, even fractions of seconds. There is simply too much happening at once for a batter to pay conscious attention to every detail simultaneously. Hence the importance of working on one's swing over and over again until the very unnatural act of swinging a baseball bat becomes as natural as breathing. Such transformation can be seen as behavioral evidence for the process of marginalization of body memory. As we saw earlier, one of the unique characteristics of the procedural memory system is how the brain pathways governing the execution of a naïve skill change over time resulting in the formation of completely different pathways, which are associated with a practiced performance. This change in the neural makeup of the subject reflects, I suggest, an increase in the marginalization of a particular body memory.

When discussing the subject of body memory, "*almost everything is marginal*" (emphasis in original Casey 165). This not only excludes conscious awareness of the physical motions involved in a certain body memory, but also the rememberer's perception of body memory itself. In short, when one utilizes body memory, one

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doesn't *feel* as if she was remembering, at least not in the sense we've come to associate with the act of remembering. Riding a bicycle or swinging a baseball bat doesn't bring to mind all the other times I've ridden a bike or swung a bat. Body memory is rarely a memory of the body, "as an explicit *focus memorius*" but rather a memory of how to do something *(Remembering* 165). Instead of being transported back in time to a particular moment that will not come again, body memory focuses on the present situation. The memory of body memory isn't a memory of having done something in the past, but rather the memory of how to re-perform a past activity in the present circumstances. The marginality of body memory is precisely what allows us to direct our conscious attention to the present circumstances while performing a remembered activity. Conversely the marginality of body memory can contribute to the unintentional alteration of a body memory. Sometimes batters fall into a slump due to psychological factors, such as depression, domestic stress, etc. which can result in minute, unconscious variations in the batter's swing. In this instance the batter's autobiographic memory – the memory of a fight with his wife or what was said about him on the local sports show - can affect his body memory. The batter is unconscious of the changes because of body memory's marginality. Very often it takes an external observer like a batting coach who can notice the minute, unconscious variations to help a batter reclaim his rhythm.

5.1.2 Density and Depth

Casey contends that "most body memories come to us as notably dense in felt quality" (*Remembering* 165). The density is manifest in the ways in which body memory defies description. I can lecture you for months on the intricacies of the perfect baseball swing but my words are simply not enough – you are going to have to experience swinging the bat before you get what I'm talking about. As Casey notes, "It is as if the density of body memories, their rootedness in the heft, the thick palpability of the lived body, rendered them mute" (*Remembering* 165). Furthermore, the density of body memory makes pinpointing the exact moment of acquisition of a certain body memory, for the average person, virtually impossible to pinpoint. In this way body memory is akin to semantic memory. In both instances we are utilizing memory in the present, even though we may have no episodic recall of acquiring a particular skill (body memory) or knowledge (semantic memory). I know how to ride a bicycle and I remember my father teaching me to ride in the alley behind my childhood home. In particular I remember losing my balance in the midst of an extremely large, and dirty, puddle of water. These, however, are just episodes that come under the larger memorial heading of "learning to ride a bike." As to the acquisition of the skill of bike riding I have no memory whatsoever of crossing the line between "learning to ride a bike" and "being able to ride a bike." Part of the reason for my inability to identify this moment may have to do with the shifting of neural pathways that occurs during the formation of procedural system memories.

The particular density of body memory is a "direct reflection of the body's own densely structured being" *(Remembering* 166). As human beings we are made of layers of organic matter: skin, muscles, viscera, and so forth. Since the body is dense it makes sense that body memories also have a density to them. The density of the body even hides the body's own actions from our conscious attention as we saw in the case of the marginality of body memories. When occupied with a physical task the body often seems to withdraw from itself. Again let us take my typing these words as our example. There is very little feeling on my part that I am typing these words at all. They come to my mind and then appear on the screen. What is lost in this observation is the crucial ingredient of my hands and fingers translating those thoughts into the actions that will make the appropriate letters, and then words, appear on the screen. This feeling of disconnection illustrates how even in the midst of an activity the body becomes "so deeply engaged in its various involvements as to be virtually self-transcending and thus unknown to itself" *(Remembering* 166). The self-opacity, to borrow Casey's phrase, of a body in action is often taken for granted in our normal experience of body memory but it comes to the foreground of our experience whenever the body breaks down. Several months ago I sustained a minor break in the middle finger of my left hand, which required a splint to heal. The seemingly effortless process of typing suddenly became a crash course in understanding Lacan's "le corps morcelle." My usually fluid typing became stilted and uncomfortable as I continually had to adjust the positioning of my hands to compensate for the broken finger. No longer did the words seem to write themselves. I became acutely aware of the process

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of typing in a way that I had previously been unaware of. Typing with a broken finger forced me, "to pay attention to the body in and by itself" *(Remembering* 166) and thus recognize how bodily dense is a relatively simple physical activity like typing.

Body memories are not indiscriminately dense; they are experienced as being dense in their depth. Depth in this instance is not an indication of, "the distance which we infer we would have to travel to reach a predesignated point" *(Remembering* 166). Such a definition deals with depth in its external sense. The depth of body memory, on the other hand, is a matter of internal depth. When a body memory is not needed it vanishes into the depths of our own bodily existence, when needed it arises from these same depths. This internal depth makes the remembering experienced in body memory radically different from the remembered quality that accompanies non-body oriented forms of remembering. Whenever one recalls an episodic or semantic memory one does not "connect with the depth of the scene being called back to mind" *(Remembering* 167). With perhaps the exception of true instances of affective memory, such remembering removes us from re-experiencing the physical sensations of what we are remembering. In recollection we experience our memories from an external point of view, namely one removed from the original experience by time. As such, when we remember a birthday celebration or our first day of college what we experience is a kind of self-voyeurism. We stand apart from ourselves removed from who and what we were by the distance of time. To further highlight the disconnected nature of recollection, as when compared to body memory, the field/observer phenomenon allows one to switch the perspective by which you "see" your own memory! "No such voyeurism occurs in a body memory,

which takes me directly *into* what is being remembered" (emphasis in original *Remembering* 167). Instead of existing as a quasi-pictorial image or fact, as is the case in episodic and semantic memories respectively, remembering body memory necessarily entails its own re-performance. "In such remembering," concludes Casey, "I leave the heights of contemplative recollection and enter the profundity of my own bodily being"*(Remembering* 167). Thus the vertical density of body memories is tied up not only with the physical density of the human body, but also the memorial density of the human experience.

5.1.3   Co-immanence of the past and present

The relationship between the past and present in body memory is quite different from the relationship of the past and present that characterizes recollective forms of memory like those of the episodic and semantic systems. Such types of memory, "peer resolutely backward toward a past that is felt to have its own independent being;" hence the feelings of distance and separateness that accompany recollective memories *(Remembering* 168). In our experience of them, recollective memories manifest themselves in imagery or words, which only serve to heighten the sense that such memories are remnants of a time gone by. Contrast this experience with that which occurs with body memories. In this instance the past enters "actively into the very present in which our remembering is taking place" *(Remembering* 168). In this case the past does not take the form of images or word, but rather the form of physical actions.

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It is, then quite literally, the past reemerging into the world of the present. Moreover, the past not only influences present bodily action, but it is, in turn influenced by the present. In this body memory shows itself to be, like other forms of memory, a re-construction of the past based, in part, on the rememberer's present circumstances and biases. Where body memory differs from the recollective forms of remembering we have looked at thus far lies in the fact that the reciprocal influence of the past and present physically manifests itself in the re-performance of behavior. It is in the act of doing where body memory makes itself known to us. And it is in the act of doing that body memory adapts itself to account for the physical differences that have arisen between my past and present selves. Thus one can see that the co-immanence of the past and present in the case of body memory accounts for "difference in the very context of sameness" whereas recollective forms of memory seek to preserve sameness in the context of difference *(Remembering* 168). Without the co-immanence of past and present that occurs in body memory one would have incredible difficulty, if not outright failure, if one were to try to ride a bicycle after not riding one for five years.

Thus far we have seen that body memory is: pre-reflective, embodied, works best when it is marginalized, displays a density in depth and is a physical manifestation of the co-immanence of the past and present. All these characteristics contribute to making body memory vastly different from the recollective forms of memory that have been utilized to train actors in the United States. One must, however, keep in mind that these are just the general characteristics of body memory. In the following sections of this chapter we shall see how body memory manifests itself in several different forms,

each displaying a different degree of participation in the general features of body memory. Casey outlines three different types of body memory: habitual or performative memory, traumatic body memory and finally erotic body memory. Although Casey's study of body memory is by no means exhaustive, these three basic divisions of body memory provide us with a starting point for examining the ways in which training techniques in the United States utilize the actor's body memory.

5.2   STEPHEN WANGH

"We do not *possess* memory, our entire body *is* memory, and it is by means of the "body-memory" that the impulses are released."

-Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Grotowski*

The actor-training technique developed and taught by Stephen Wangh can best be described by the subtitle of his book, *An Acrobat of the Heart: A Physical Approach to Acting Inspired by the Work of Jerzy Grotowski*. Wangh was a student at NYU in 1967 when Grotowski offered an intensive workshop in his physical style of acting. In *Acrobat* Wangh states that his experience with Grotowski helped him to understand and deal with the issues Wangh was experiencing in his own acting. Specifically, Wangh claims that he never felt fully present in his acting work, that despite his best efforts he never felt as if he ever truly inhabited the character he played. His experience with Grotowski's technique is what Wangh credits with opening his eyes to the

interconnected nature of the actor's body, memories and emotions. Starting with his stint at Emerson College in 1976, Wangh began to develop and refine his own formulation of Grotowski's actor training technique. Over the past thirty-six years Wangh has continued to develop and refine his technique while working at Emerson and other institutions such as NYU's Experimental Theatre Wing, The Actor's Space, as well as with the Tectonic Theatre Company. Presently Wangh is an instructor at Naropa University where he continues to refine and teach his technique.

The aim of Wangh's technique is to teach the actor how to use his body and its memory to, "find [the] deep, connected, emotional logic" an actor needs in order to play a role convincingly (*An Acrobat of the Heart* 181). The basic premise of Wangh's training is predicated on his belief that actors' bodies "[. . .] *contain* emotions, and that physical forms – even simple exercises like stretches or aerobics – connect you with the thoughts and feelings you need for your acting work" (emphasis in original "Acting with the Wisdom of our Bodies" 176). As we have already seen, acting techniques like Strasberg's Method or Stanislavsky's affective memory are predicated upon the belief that emotions can be remembered. Wangh's technique is no different in this respect. Wangh's technique, however, differs from those of his predecessors by virtue of the type of memory it utilizes. Whereas Strasberg's and Stanislavsky's techniques employ the actor's episodic memory system, Wangh's technique focuses instead on the actor's body memory, part of the procedural memory system. This is the first core principle of Wangh's actor training technique: the actor's body is a site of memory. Wangh's

technique teaches the actor to utilize his body and its memories as a means of inspiring the actor's performance. Despite the major differences between the episodic and procedural memory systems, Wangh doesn't see his technique as being all that different from those which utilize mentalistic forms of memory. In the following passage from *Acrobat*, Wangh explains this to one of his students who had, in fact, been trained in Strasberg's technique prior to studying with Wangh:

> You see, the work we will be doing is in many ways the same work you call emotional memory and sense memory work. The difference is that we do not do it relaxing in a chair. We do it with our bodies active because **memories are not encoded only in our brains; they are trapped in our muscles too**. (emphasis in original *Acrobat* 111)

Clearly Wangh believes that the mentalistic paradigm of memory does not account for the totality of human memory. Furthermore, the passage above illustrates Wangh's understanding that although it may touch upon similar memories, body memory is a distinctly different type of memory from the more mentalistic forms of episodic and collective memory. Of relevance to acting training, Casey's phenomenology of body memory illustrates how our lived experience of body memory *feels* different from our experience of episodic and semantic forms of memory. Furthermore, the work of Lakoff and Johnson offers corroborating evidence for the existence of body memory by revealing the ways in which our cognitive processes are informed by our bodied existence.

In *Acrobat* Wangh acknowledges that the James-Lange theory of emotion has played a large role in the formulation of his technique. In the late 19th century psychologist William James, building off the work of Danish physiologist Carl Lange, hypothesized that what we call emotions – anger, joy, fear and so forth – occur not because of changes in our cognitive state, but rather as a direct result of changes in our physiological state that are produced by our bodies' responses to external stimuli. In James's own words:

> Our natural way of thinking about [emotions] is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called the emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expression. My theory, on the contrary, is that the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion. Common-sense says, we lose our fortune, are sorry and weep; we meet a bear, are frightened and run; we are insulted by a rival, are angry and strike. The hypotheses here to be defended says that this order of sequence is incorrect [. . .] and that the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry, strike, or tremble, because we are sorry, angry, or fearful, as the case may be. Without the bodily state following on the perception, the latter would be purely cognitive in form, pale, colorless destitute of emotional warmth. (emphasis in original James 449 – 450)

This radical redefinition of emotion as the result of physiology instead of a cognitive act has been met over the years with a great amount of skepticism. Even James himself recognized that his theory had a "paradoxical character" about it and, "[. . .] is pretty sure to meet with immediate disbelief" (James 450). The intervening years made James's self-criticism seem prophetic.

For a long time the general consensus among psychologists and neuroscientists was that the James-Lange theory was highly speculative and fundamentally flawed. But this trend has reversed as psychologists and neuroscientists have devoted more study to the phenomenon we call emotion. In particular neurologist and author Antonio Damasio is quite vocal in his support of James's work. In his book *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, Damasio contends that "James's proposal was attacked unfairly and dismissed summarily," which Damasio sees as further evidence for the proof of the "scientific neglect of emotion during the twentieth century" (*Feeling* 39). Perhaps the most compelling evidence to support the basic hypothesis put forth by the James-Lange theory of emotion comes from our current understanding of brain anatomy. "The devices which produce emotions," writes Damasio, "occupy a fairly restricted ensemble of subcortical regions, beginning at the level of the brain stem and moving up to the higher brain; the devices are a part of a set of structures that both regulate and represent body states [. . .]" (*Feeling* 51). So it seems that the areas of the brain that are responsible for not only maintaining but also communicating information about our body's physiological state are closely connected,

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on a physical level, with those areas that deal with our emotions. Damasio argues that the close proximity of these two areas of brain function is not merely an accident of evolutionary design. Furthermore Damasio points out, and rightly so, that "emotion, as the word indicates, is about movement, about externalized behavior, about certain orchestrations of reactions to a given cause, within a given environment" (*Feeling* 70). From an actor's perspective Damasio's definition of emotion hits close to home. As actors our job is not only to "feel" the emotions of our characters, but also to portray those feelings in "externalized behavior" to an audience in a way that is clear and believable. Even the language is similar: the scientist's given cause and given environment equal the actor's given circumstances.

Wangh's technique, however, is not solely about training the actor to access and utilize body memory. Body memories, like collective memory, can be and are conditioned by the social frameworks of memory. In the previous chapter we focused on collective memory as a mentalistic phenomenon, but this is not to say that the influence of the social frameworks of memory have no effect on the body. The findings of Nelson and Fivush support the supposition that procedural memory, like episodic memory, is influenced by social forces. Specifically they mention what they call childhood "scripts" such as bedtime and bath time routines - very bodily activities – as examples of socially learned strategies of procedural remembering (Nelson & Fivush 285). According to Paul Connerton one of the means by which collective memory is preserved and transmitted from generation to generation is through the use of what he calls "incorporating *bodily* practices" (emphasis added Connerton 72). Incorporating

bodily practices are tangible evidence of, "how memory is sedimented, or amassed, in the body [. . .]" (Connerton 72). Taking posture as his first example Connerton reveals how differences in postural behavior can be read as markers of the dominant values of a given society. In the United States, for example, there is a difference between the ways men and women are taught to sit. Postural protocols that are observed in ceremonial occasions, such as standing for the arrival of a judge or head of state, are remarkably similar regardless of historical period or cultural context (Connerton 73). Such behaviors are usually learned and transmitted unconsciously not unlike the form of collective memory examined in the last chapter. "Postural behavior, then, may be very highly structured and completely predictable, even though it is neither verbalized not consciously taught and may be so automatic that it is not even recognised as isolatable pieces of behaviour" (Connerton 73). Incorporating bodily practices do more than simply condition our physical behaviors. Drawing upon the work of Lakoff and Johnson for corroboration Connerton discusses the way in which the incorporating bodily practice of posture affects our mental lives as well:

> When we speak of someone as being 'upright' we may use the expression descriptively and literally to mean that they are standing on their own feet, or we may use it evaluatively and metaphorically to express admiration and praise of someone [. . .] When we refer to someone who enjoys a high social position, we say that they have 'status' or 'standing.' When we speak of misfortunes of all kinds we express the change of circumstances as a fall; we fall into the enemy's hands, we fall upon hard times, we fall from favour. (Connerton 74)

Such metaphors illustrate the subtle ways in which a society conditions, via bodily practices, certain patterns of behavior, which in turn bleed over into our mental conceptions and are reflected in the way we use metaphor. As such one may say that they are an example of *embodied*, collective memories. These "mnemonics of the body" as Connerton (74) calls them, are precisely the patterns of behavior that Wangh seeks to identify and disrupt.

The primary way in which Wangh's technique seeks to undermine the influence of incorporating bodily practices is through the use of a pedagogical method known as *via negativa*. This is the second core principle of Wangh's technique. The term *via negativa* originated as a means of describing what is known as Apophatic theology, a type of theology that attempts to describe and/or prove the existence of god by negation. Instead of trying to discern the nature of god by what it is, the *via negativa* approach focuses on what god *isn't* in order to understand what god is. Those who embrace a *via negativa* approach seek to strip away the extraneous in their search for the essential. Now this is not to say that Wangh's approach to acting has anything to do with humanity's quest to come closer to the divine.

Wangh is not the first to utilize a *via negativa* approach in actor training. Jerzy Grotowski embraces a *via negativa* philosophy in not only his actor training, but also in his overall vision of a "poor" theatre. It comes as no surprise that Wangh's technique, being a derivative of Grotowski's, also utilizes a *via negativa* methodology. Wangh believes that our emotional lives have been stunted by society's standards of appropriate and inappropriate behavior. These standards, as we saw in the previous

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chapter, are themselves a type of memory. These standards of behavior condition our physical expression of emotion. Thus the collective memory of a society becomes embodied within the individual becoming as much a body memory as swinging a baseball bat. The important difference to note is that swinging a bat is a consciously acquired body memory while societal standards of expression are unconsciously learned. Philosophically speaking, Wangh's technique is not much different from that of Joseph Chaikin. Both men recognized society exerts a subtly pervasive influence upon the actor. But whereas Chaikin's technique focuses on the society's influence over the collective, semantic memories of the actor, Wangh's focuses on the ways in which society has conditioned the body memories of the actor.

In order to grasp more fully the concept of *via negativa* and its implications for actor training, let us look to the example of the uninhibited physical expression of emotion by young children. The emotional lives of young children are not a mystery; they are on display for all to see. A child who has a purloined cookie taken away from him becomes upset and angry. Instead of physically repressing emotion, as most adults do, a young child freely expresses his emotions: his face gets red, his entire body begins to quake as he wails. Perhaps he throws himself on the floor, screaming and kicking in his attempts to get his cookie back. Conversely think of a child who wants to be held. Arms outstretched he toddles over to you, reaching upward with his arms, possibly even giving a little jump upwards, as my children did, to show you that he wants to be held. There is nothing secret in the emotional lives of young children, not because they are less developed or sophisticated than adults, but rather because young children live

their emotional lives in and through their bodies for all to see. And while such behavior in young children is endearing at its best, and exasperating at its worst, such emotional expression is forbidden in adults.

As we grew from child to adult, somewhere along the way "most of us learned how to suppress our emotions" (*Acrobat* xxxix). After a certain age we are discouraged from engaging in such blatant and potent displays of emotion. We are told to "act your age" and not "cry like a baby" when we don't get our own way.   More than simply repressing our emotions we also learned how to mask our own emotions with our bodies. Anger or frustration is hidden beneath a smile; laughter hides nervousness, embarrassment or even sadness. "To clothe our emotional lives," writes Wangh, "we constricted our voices and armored our bodies with muscular tensions" (*Acrobat* xi). In this statement we can see how Wangh's technique embraces psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich's belief that physical tension can be a symptom of repressed mental trauma. Following Reich's general premise Wangh writes that, "what psychoanalysts call 'repression' (the unconscious forgetting of traumatic memories) operates by employing muscular tension to 'hold' emotional memories within our bodies. In his analytic practice, Reich demonstrated that these feeling can be accessed and released by muscular means" (*Acrobat* 126). By employing a *via negativa* pedagogy, Wangh's technique attempts to make the actor aware of, and free him from, the ways in which his physical expression of emotion has been conditioned to meet the expectations of the actor's society and/or hide from those memories that are less than pleasant.

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Actors training in Wangh's technique begin with the exercises called (after Grotowski) corporels. The corporels are, "a physical form that evokes thoughts and feelings, while at the same time providing safety and permission for their expression" (*Acrobat* 53). The point of the corporels is twofold. First, the corporels serve to make the actor aware of the fact that his body is indeed a site of memory and consequently, emotion. "You may notice," writes Wangh, "[. . .] that your body seems to actually *contain* emotions, and that physical forms – even simple exercise like stretches or aerobics – connect you with the thoughts and feelings you need for your acting work" ("Acting with Wisdom" 176). At this early point in the training the focus of Wangh's technique is on the experience of emotions brought about by physical movement. As Wangh tells his students prior to using the corporels for the first time, "All you need to do is let yourself know what you are feeling while it is happening, and give yourself permission to allow that feeling to inhabit the form" (*Acrobat* 54). Actors are not prompted to utilize their body memories *per se*, but rather simply to notice how their physical movements make them feel.

Secondly the corporels are a means "to relieve us of our cultural habits [. . .] which constrict our use of our bodies" (*Acrobat* 60). As Wangh notes, "We have packed away our full-bodied emotions, and we have disconnected our faces and voices from energies in our lower bodies" ("Acting with Wisdom" 177). We have learned to keep the lower half of our body closely guarded and physically tense for a variety of reasons such as toilet training, protection of the sensitive genital region, cultural, religious or personal strictures and/or taboos regarding nudity, sex and so forth. The *exercises*

corporels combat the conditioning effects of society – forcing the actor to focus on his lower body by "turning us upside down and freeing our legs and pelvis from their assigned roles as guardians of our propriety and porters of our weight" (*Acrobat* 61). Indeed, the corporels force the actor to use his body in a manner that is quite out of the realm of ordinary bodily action: undulations, forward and backward rolls, several variations on headstands as well as literally bending over backwards (fig. 1).

Shoulder Stand   Tripod Headstand   Straight-Arm Headstand

Elbow Headstand   Ear Stand   Handstand

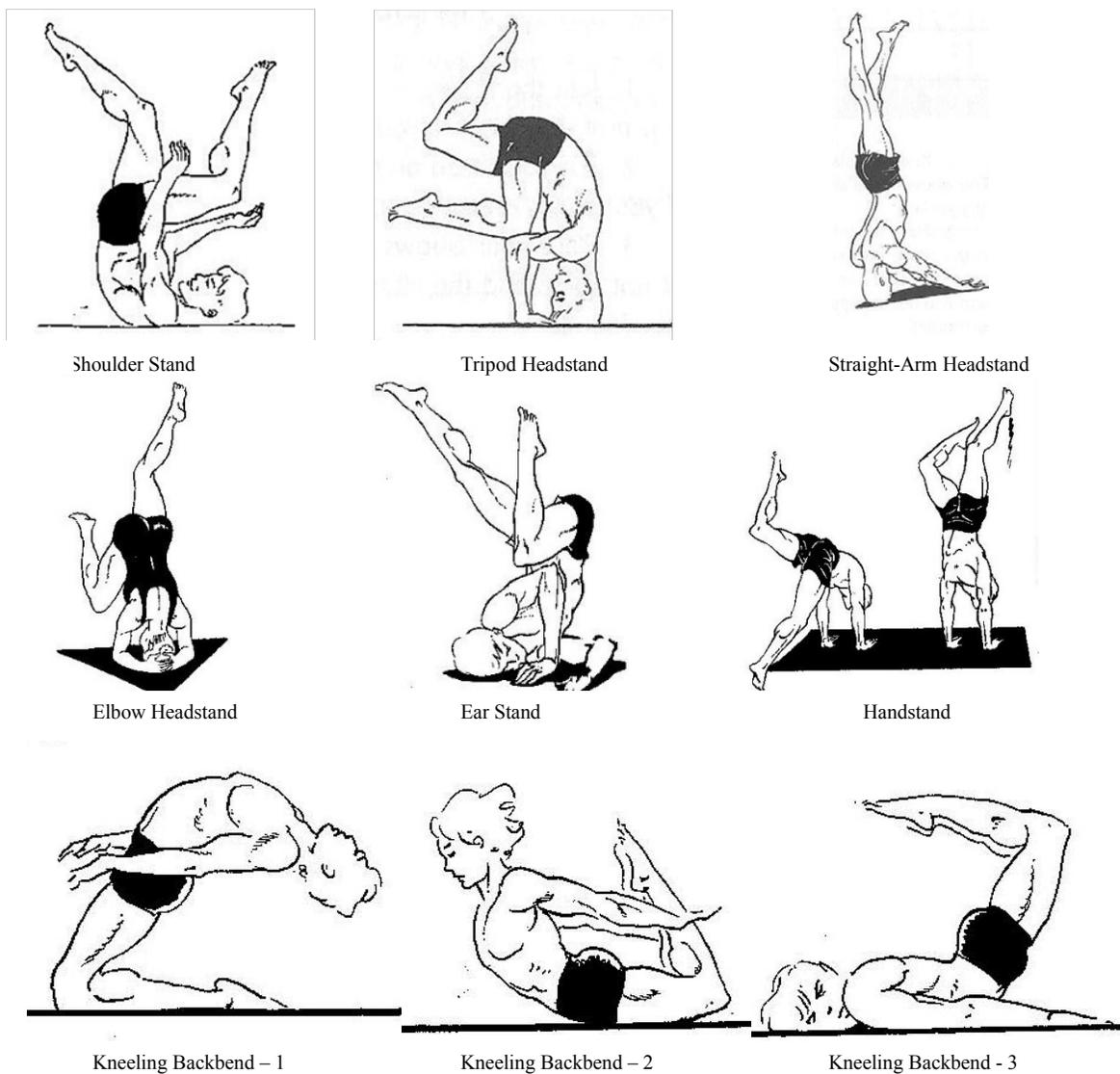Kneeling Backbend – 1   Kneeling Backbend – 2   Kneeling Backbend - 3

Figure 1. Examples of Wangh's *Exercises Corporels* (*Acrobat*, 64-69)

The final core principle of Wangh's technique is the emphasis on the individual's process over product. In his preface to *An Acrobat of the Heart*, Wangh writes that the "essential technique" of his system of actor training, "does not lie in the exercise forms, or even in the particular answers you may find while using those forms. It lies in the centrality of the act of questioning itself" (*Acrobat* xxxviii). Unlike the techniques developed by Strasberg, Hagen, and Adler, which attempt to construct a reliable method for the actor's use of memory, Wangh's *via negativa* style of actor training is deconstructive in nature – it seeks to remove those obstacles that stand in the way of the actor's full awareness and utilization of his body as a source of memory for the actor's work. The emphasis of process over product makes Wangh's training technique similar to the technique practiced by Joseph Chaikin. Like Chaikin, Wangh does not envision his actor training technique as a "method" or "system," at least not in the same sense as when we speak of Stanislavsky's system of Strasberg's method. "Because each of our histories is different," Wangh writes, "there is no one gesture that will provoke the same emotional connection for everyone" (*Acrobat* 126). This is precisely the reason why previous attempts to develop physical styles of acting, like the standardized lexicons of gestures developed by François Delsarte, were not successful. Delsarte's system taught that specific physical gestures when made correctly would induce specific emotions. As we shall soon see the correlation between physical movement and emotion is indeed a real one but Delsarte's error lay in assuming that, "the human body's mechanisms of muscular memory are universal" (*Acrobat* 126). To an extent this is true, as Paul Ekman's work on facial expression of emotions in various cultures concludes ("Facial

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Expressions of Emotions: New Findings, New Questions" 34-38). Yet, as Antonio

Damasio points out, "regardless of the degree of biological presetting of emotional

machinery, development and culture have much to say regarding the final product [of

emotional expression]" (*Feeling* 57). The error Delsarte made was in assuming that his

lexicon of gestures would work for every actor, every time. In reality this proved not to

be the case. In a rather insightful observation Wangh notes that expressions of both

great sorrow and great joy are often expressed by what he calls the "open chest:" arms

wide apart, head slightly tilted back while the chest area is thrust forward. Were it not

for the emotion that we read on a person's face it would extremely difficult to

differentiate between an "open chest of sorrow" and an "open chest of joy." What

Delsarte's system of gestures did accomplish was to reinforce the highly declamatory

and melodramatic style of acting that Stanislavsky's system was a reaction against. To

be sure there is a methodology in Wangh's technique, but it is a methodology that

values the individual actor's experience over achieving a pre-determined result.

The bulk of the actor's training in Wangh's technique focuses on what are known

as the *plastiques*. "The *plastiques* are," writes Wangh, "a method by which you can enlist

your voluntary muscle system to 'turn on' or to alter your image and emotional world.

But at the same time the *plastiques* are also *containers* [. . .] that permit you to expand or

contract or make the gestural forms that disclose your private imagery to the world

more specific" (emphasis in original *Acrobat* 108). If the *corporel* exercises awaken the

actor to his body memory and the ways in which its expression has been conditioned by

societal standards, then the *exercises plastiques* are the means by which the actor learns to

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consciously elicit an emotional response through a physical action. The primary goal of *plastiques* training is for the actor "to notice how each physical choice you make can inspire a memory, a thought, or an emotional impulse" ("Acting with Wisdom" 177-178). In this way the *plastiques* serve the same function in Wangh's technique as the sense memory exercises do in Strasberg's: both are "*initiators,* keys, specific forms that [the actor] can use to open the doors of [his] image/emotional life" (emphasis in original *Acrobat* 108).   The actor can use them when he needs to jump-start his inspiration because plastiques are "containers, forms that both *evoke* and *contain* emotional life" (*Acrobat* 81). It must be stressed that the *plastiques* themselves have no set form. They are not, as I have already pointed out, a lexicon or series of standardized gestures like those that comprise Delsarte's system. "What makes something a plastique," writes Wangh, "is that the movement is specific, that it is filled with life, and that it is related to an image" (*Acrobat* 84).

The actor begins plastique training with what Wangh calls *plastique* isolations. The actor isolates one particular part of his body (such as his eyes or his left hand) and simply explores all the different ways in which the chosen part can move. By isolating a single part of the body the actor is able to explore and play with moving that part of the body in ways he normally would not. At this early stage the plastique isolations are "movement explorations of one body part at a time in every direction that part can move" and help to awaken the actor to the full expressive potential contained in their bodies (*Acrobat* 75). One of the first things an actor working in physically based style of actor training learns is that our daily "physical vocabulary," if you will, is rather sparse.

The point at which the *plastique* isolations cease being merely body movement and come closer to body memory is when, as Wangh puts it, "you sense that a lift of the shoulders is a 'jerk' or a 'slump' or a 'shrug' [. . .]" (*Acrobat* 76). Note how Wangh contrasts a simple description of a physical movement with words that not only describe physical movement but also provide us with a sense of the feeling that movement embodies. At this point in the training an actor focuses on how physical gestures can, and often do, call forth emotions. Building upon the foundation established in the *corporels*, the actor practicing *plastique* isolations must keep their awareness centered on thoughts, images and emotions that their movements provoke. The actor should not judge whatever he experiences, nor should he try to push for some pre-determined result. This first step of *plastiques* training focuses solely on heightening the actor's awareness of the intimate connections between his physical and emotional lives. Once the actor becomes proficient at working in isolation he then moves on to what Wangh calls the *plastique* river. The distinction between the isolations and the river is as simple as their names imply.

To initiate a plastique river the actor begins with a single isolation and then allows the emotions, images, impulses – whatever the isolation makes the actor experience – to lead him into the next plastique and then into another, and so on. What were once isolated, individual *plastiques* begin to flow into one another and the river takes on a life of its own. I find the river imagery particularly apt in describing this process. An actor must learn to surrender control, allowing himself to be carried away, as it were, on a current of his body's making. By allowing one plastique to transform or

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travel to a different part of the body, an actor begins to become aware of how he can consciously use his body as a means of calling forth the emotion needed to play a role on stage.

To sum up my analysis of Wangh's technique thus far: the corporel exercises introduce the actor to the idea that the body is a site of memory. In mnemonic terms, the corporels teach the actor that his body does indeed possess memory while they also seek to undermine learned behaviors of physical expression that have been instilled in the actor via incorporating bodily practices. The *plastiques* are the next level of training wherein the actor learns to focus on a specific body part/gesture in order to produce an emotional reaction for the actor. In moving from plastique isolations to the plastique river, an actor learns that he is capable of using physical gestures in order to call forth a specific emotion from within himself. Two pertinent questions remain: how exactly do the *plastiques* function as a type of memory?   And, more to the point for those of us with more than a scholarly interest in this subject, how does an actor apply the use of *plastiques* to creating and playing a role on the stage?

To begin with, one must think of the *plastiques* as more than "simple emotion-filled movement" (*Acrobat* 108). *Plastiques* should be thought of as:

> [. . .] muscular reminders, provocations, goads that stimulate submerged feeling to surface once again. By observing the images and emotions that pour through us as we work with our bodies, we being to 'know' ourselves, and we can begin

to catalogue the particular physical keys that open our personal emotional doorways. (*Acrobat* 126)

In a way one can think of training in the *plastiques* as the actor gathering raw materials he will need in order to perform a role. While working on the *plastiques*, actors discover that certain physical gestures or ways of moving consistently produce a particular emotional reaction. Over time and with practice, actors trained in Wangh's technique begin to develop a storehouse of *plastiques* that they can use, which consistently produce the desired emotional response. One of the major advantages Wangh's technique has over those which utilize episodic memory is that the actor does not need to be able to remember a previous experience in order to access it via body memory.

Casey's examples of the way in which traumatic body memory manifests in our lives will help us to better understand how Wangh's technique enables actors to use memories they do not consciously activate. In the case of traumatic memory Casey relates the story of how his experience in a mechanic's garage called back the painful and traumatic memory of having undergone a root canal.

A few weeks after the drilling had occurred I was in a service station and heard a pneumatic bolt tightener at work. The shrill grinding sound almost immediately evoked the dread of being the hapless subject of my dentist's drill; I felt myself stiffening in anticipation of worse to come just as I had done in the dentist's chair: ushered in by the dread, my body was itself remembering the trauma. This

led in turn to a vivid recollection of the scene – which was, I suspected, a defense

against a still more engaging body memory than I had so far allowed myself to

undergo. *(Remembering* 155)

If I translate Casey's example into Wangh's terminology we can see how the

plastiques serve the same function as the pneumatic drill in Casey's example. Instead of

the sound of the pneumatic drill calling up the image "of being the hapless subject of [a]

dentist's drill," the *plastiques* gesture prompts the pre-reflective recall of emotion on the

part of the actor. "To put it simply, "says Wangh, "if you keep your full body open and

available, **your character's intentions will arise within you, quite unconsciously [. . .]**

without your needing to figure them out" (emphasis in original *Acrobat* 187). In some

instances actors who have trained with Wangh reported subsequent episodic recall

associated with a particular body memory, just as Casey experienced. This is not to say,

however, that a body memory must be corroborated by an episodic memory in order to

be a *plastique*. That Casey's body memory triggered an episodic memory merely

reinforces the point that even though our various systems of memory display unique

characteristics and seem to, in our experience of them, function independently of one

another, in actuality they collaborate with one another in ways we often escape our

perception. Body memory may, as it did in Casey's example, be the catalyst that calls

back to mind an episodic memory, "a vivid recollection of the scene." In this example,

however, Casey's episodic memory occurs as a secondary instance of remembering. The

primary instance of remembering, the trigger that stimulated episodic recall, takes the

form of body memory. That body memory can prompt other types of remembering is indicative of the causal efficacy of body memory. In Casey's words, "To be efficacious in its own right is at once to be capable of producing further feeling on subsequent occasions *and* to re-enact prior feelings in memory" *(Remembering* 175). The causal efficacy that body memory possesses is exactly the reason why the *plastiques* can elicit an emotional response in the actor.

As with other acting techniques, the rehearsal process for the Wangh-trained actor is about discovering what works for a scene. But instead of looking to his sense memory, or the given circumstances to help craft his performance, the Wangh-trained actor looks for "physical forms that permit [him] to play *repeatable* acting beats" (emphasis in original *Acrobat* 197). Once an actor has found a plastique that he can reliably use to produce the appropriate emotional response the continued use of that plastique in rehearsals forms a performative memory of the plastique, just as we acquire the performative memory to tie our shoes by practicing over and over. "**By executing precise *physical* choices that we discovered during our training and rehearsal process,**" Wangh writes, **"we can dependably access our emotional acting sources"** (emphasis in original *Acrobat* 212). This is an inversion of the process that typifies most systems of actor training taught in the United States. In the techniques already examined the actor must be able to reach back in time, as it were, to access memory. For these actors the memories they access, whether episodic or collective, are mental relics of a past over and done with. In contrast Wangh's technique uses the actor's memory as

a means of connecting the actor "[. . .] with a part of memory, not as a past event, but as a living action" (*Acrobat* 111). This type of memory is more "alive" than other forms precisely because it is in the doing of an action that performative memory manifests itself. "The secret of this work," says Wangh, "is that you do not need to dredge up the emotion. The emotion is there. All you need to do is the physical act [. . .] If you can do that, the acting will take care of itself" (*Acrobat* 211).

Before moving on to the examination of the sixth and final actor training technique under examination in this dissertation, I will briefly look at the perceived advantages and disadvantages of Wangh's technique. From an actor's point of view perhaps the most obvious advantage of Wangh's technique is its commitment to process over product, which in turn gives his technique a very actor-centric feel. The goal is not to execute the technique correctly, but rather to experience what the body remembers in response to the exercises. "By plunging into the unknown with no certainty of what you 'should' be doing, whatever you discover in the process is uniquely yours. And that lesson is more important than the details of the exercise"(*Acrobat* 51). Such an open-ended approach gives the actor's memory a degree of freedom and autonomy that we have not seen before. Wangh's technique doesn't teach the actor to command memory like Strasberg's. Instead memory takes hold of the actor using the *plastiques*. I believe this allows the actor to connect with memory on a more immediate and, literally, visceral level. Even though a Wangh-trained actor may

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not be able to episodically recall a memory; that doesn't preclude him from being able to use it to achieve an affective state of remembering.

A major criticism often leveled at Wangh's technique, and others similar to it, is that it is too experimental. "The work this book describes," Wangh writes "has been called *experimental theater*. But when people say 'experimental theater,' they often seem to think the word *experimental* means 'new' or 'nonrealistic' or 'weird'" (emphasis in original *Acrobat* xxxvii). To be sure, running around and doing jumps and headstands is wonderful for helping actors to explore and expand their creativity and expressiveness, but how useful could such a technique be in playing a realistic drama such as Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*? Joan, one of the students met in *Acrobat*, voices precisely this kind of concern when she tells Wangh that "I just don't see what all this body work has to do with *acting* – you know, with doing real plays" (emphasis in original *Acrobat* 109). Another student named Carlos shares similar concerns about how Wangh's training can be applied to "non-experimental" theatre: "And in the back of my mind I realized that I was afraid that this stuff we've been doing might be good for commedia dell'arte or something, but not for regular American acting" (*Acrobat* 113). Wangh responds to his students' concerns by pointing out that we as audiences and theatre practitioners "[. . .] have come to assume that what we don't do on an everyday basis in our lives is not real. But in fact the small, immobile kind of activity that we have come to think of as real is no more realistic than full-body movement is" (*Acrobat* 116). As Wangh clearly states in the above passage, all the crazy running about and rolling on the floor are

simply a means by which the actor can get in touch with his emotional life. What makes Wangh's technique different from a more introverted and conventional style, like that of Strasberg, is that Wangh's technique uses body memory as a means of stimulating the actor. It is only a natural that the form of such a style of training be intensely physical. In performance the Strasberg-trained actor doesn't use sense-memory in the same way as he does in rehearsals. The process of rehearsing and refining the actor's technique is what enables the Strasberg-trained actor to utilize his sense memory much more rapidly in performance than he would in rehearsal. The same holds true for Wangh's technique, save the obvious exception of using the body instead of episodic memory of the actor.

Critics of Wangh's technique would point out that the highly physical nature of the corporel and *plastiques* training make it unsuitable for actors with physical limitations or disabilities. Wangh, however, recounts his experience of working with a paraplegic woman who "discovered that she could achieve the emotional release of the Cat kicks by 'kicking' with her head" (*Acrobat* 55). At first one may find this statement startling but when one thinks for a moment about Wangh's technique it begins to make sense. In its simplest formulation Wangh's technique is all about the actor learning to trust in his body's memory and learning how to access this memory via forms of movements that exceed the boundaries through the use of non-conventional movement. It seems quite plausible to me that Wangh's technique could be useful to an actor whose own "conventional" movement is limited or absent completely. An actor without the use of their legs may not be able to do all of the exercises as taught by Wangh but as we

have seen, one of the great advantages of this technique is how it values the actor's experience of the process over achieving some pre-determined form. Like memory itself, Wangh's system is predominately procedural.

5.3   VIEWPOINTS

"The gift of Viewpoints training is allowing us to see old things in new ways – to wake up the sleeping form…to find surprising and new possibilities in ourselves, our environment and our art."

-Anne Bogart & Tina Landau, *The Viewpoints Book*

The final, actor training technique I will examine in this dissertation is the Viewpoints technique, as developed by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. Viewpoints distinguishes itself from the other actor training techniques we have thus far examined in a few respects. To begin with, Viewpoints has its origins as a technique used for the training of dancers. Originally the Viewpoints were an attempt by dancer/choreographer Mary Overlie to discern what she believed to be "natural principles" of movement in order to help structure dance improvisations in time and space. Note that this is an almost verbatim restatement of Stanislavsky's own attempt to find "natural principles" for the actor's use. This is a sentiment that Bogart and Landau share when they write that Viewpoints, "[. . .] belong to the natural principles of movement, time and space" (*The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* 7). In the late 1970s

Overlie first began formulating what eventually became what she called the Six Viewpoints. Overlie's work resulted in what she describes as system of training which she sees as a "physical embodiment of a new philosophical step, called postmodernism" (Overlie, "The Six Viewpoints" 191). Viewpoints is a technique which embraces ideas commonly associated with the postmodern movement: the deconstructing of traditional hierarchies; embracing a pastiche of techniques; and not privileging any perspective as authoritative. "It releases the existing materials of theater, formerly organized into various rigid hierarchical orders, into a fluid state for reexamination" (Overlie 188).

In 1978 Overlie began to teach her Six Viewpoints to students in the Experimental Theatre Wing of NYU's undergraduate theatre program. "The Six Viewpoints," writes Overlie, "began with dancers' questions about choreography, and has evolved into an investigation into theater in the era when so much crossover happened in the arts" (Overlie 187). When Anne Bogart joined the faculty of NYU's Experimental Theatre Wing in 1979, she soon came to recognize that, "Mary's approach to generating movement for the stage was applicable to creating viscerally dynamic moments of theatre with actors and other collaborators" (Bogart & Landau, *The Viewpoints Book* 5). Fascinated by the potential Overlie's work held for the theatre, Bogart began to incorporate the Six Viewpoints into her own work.

In 1987 Bogart met Tina Landau while both were working at the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, MA. Like Bogart, Landau became fascinated by the Six Viewpoints and what Overlie's technique could bring to the theatre. Over the course of the next ten years Bogart and Landau experimented with Overlie's Six

Viewpoints and eventually expanded the original six into the nine that are now utilized in Viewpoints training for actors. To this day Bogart and Landau remain committed to the use of Viewpoints in the actor's training, often employing the technique in their own directorial work as well as conducting numerous workshops. Most recently, in 2005, Bogart and Landau collaborated to produce the first written, and much anticipated, work on the use of Viewpoints for actor training called *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (hereafter referred to as *TVB*).

Before we get into the particulars of how Viewpoints uses the actor's memory, let us take a moment to define exactly what the Viewpoints are, as well as identify the core principles of Bogart and Landau's technique. I was first introduced to Viewpoints as an undergraduate about fifteen years ago. At that time Bogart and Landau had expanded Overlie's six Viewpoints into seven. It is rather difficult to convey exactly what the Viewpoints are in words because Viewpoints, like body memories, "do not lend themselves to facile verbalization" *(Remembering* 165). In the second chapter of their book, Bogart and Landau offer up three possible ways of defining Viewpoints. First, "Viewpoints is a philosophy translated into a technique for (1) training performers; (2) building ensemble; and (3) creating movement for the stage" (*TVB* 7). Secondly Viewpoints can also be thought of as, "a set of names given to certain principles of movement through time and space; these names constitute a language for talking about what happens onstage" (*TVB* 8). Finally, "Viewpoints is points of awareness that a performer or creator makes use of while working" (*TVB* 8). For our purposes let us concentrate on the first two. Bogart and Landau take care to clearly state that these

definitions, "reflect *our* understanding and use of them. Even in the context of the work

of such pioneers as Mary Overlie [. . .] it is impossible to say where these ideas actually

originated, because they are timeless and belong to the natural principles of movement,

time and space" (*TVB* 7). The nine Viewpoints which currently make up the technique

taught by Bogart and Landau can be divided into two distinct groups: the viewpoints of

time and the viewpoints of space:

Table 1. Viewpoints of Time and Space

Viewpoints of Time	Viewpoints of Space
Tempo	Shape
Duration	Gesture
Kinesthetic Response	Architecture
Repetition	Spatial Relationship
	Topography

Over the years some of the Viewpoints have been further refined into smaller

subdivisions. For example the Viewpoint Repetition can be distilled down into the

Viewpoints of *internal* repetition and *external* repetition; the Viewpoint Gesture

encompasses two different kinds of gesture: *behavioral* gesture and *expressive* gesture.

These refinements of the larger Viewpoints come into play as actors become more

accustomed to working with the larger categories. It is important to note here that none

of the Viewpoints are more important than the other. This is the first core principle of

Bogart and Landau's technique - its nonhierarchical nature. In training and application,

no one Viewpoint holds precedence over the others. Bogart and Landau extend this even further in practice by applying their nonhierarchical philosophy to all the elements that compose a theatrical performance – text (if there is one) does not hold precedence over lighting, setting, costumes, music, and so forth. Not only does this approach underscore the highly collaborative nature of Viewpoints work, but it also points to the importance given to ensemble acting in Bogart and Landau's technique. As noted before Bogart and Landau list "building ensemble" as one of the defining features of Viewpoints training (*TVB* 7). In fact it is virtually impossible for an actor to gain the full benefit of Viewpoints training working on her own.

The second core principle of Bogart and Landau's technique is that Viewpoints training is about experiencing a process; it is an invitation for actor to explore possibilities. While both Bogart and Landau admit that "There *are* steps and basics that we believe are crucial for understanding Viewpoints in the body, and for using it most effectively in training and rehearsal," both also plainly also state that their approach "is not definitive, not gospel, not absolute truth" (emphasis in *TVB* x).. Bogart and Landau write: "As Joseph Campbell has said: 'Where you stumble, there you shall find your treasure.' We invite the stumbling. We hope maybe to have indicated a path but not cleared it, leaving you to work through the most thorny areas" (*TVB* xi). Unlike Strasberg's Method or Wangh's technique there is no set progression by which one must study Viewpoints.

The final, and perhaps most important, core principle of Viewpoints is its attempt to train actors to make acting choices rooted in something other than

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psychology. With the exception of Wangh, and to an extent, Chaikin, all of the actor training methods I have examined are attempts to use the actor's memory to make acting choices that conform to the psychological realism that dominates most of today's theatre. In fact, the key to understanding the Viewpoints technique is to realize that it is a method of actor training that seeks to break the actor out of a psychological way of thinking about acting. "In specific terms," writes long-time collaborator and co-founder with Bogart of the Saratoga International Theatre Institute, Tadashi Suzuki, "Anne Bogart is taking on the backbone of American theatre: realism ("Creating a New/Different America" 85). In his forward to *Anne Bogart: Viewpoints*, a collection of essays written by Bogart and those who have worked with her, Jon Jory states that, "In a culture where the best acting is done from the neck up, Anne's work is an obvious antidote" (xv). This is not to say that Viewpoints should be thought of as a reactionary movement against Stanislavski's work; in fact, the opposite is true. As Bogart and Landau note in the *TVB*:

> Later, Stanislavsky admitted that his earlier psychological methods, which had been so influential in the United States, were misguided. He then altered his emphasis from inducing emotion through affective memory to a system of psycho-physical chain-of-action, where *action*, rather than psychology, induced emotion and feeling. (emphasis in original 16)

When viewed in the overall context of Stanislavski's work on actor training, Viewpoints can be said to be a closer derivative of Stanislavski's later work than any of the techniques we have examined thus far. This is not to say that the techniques

previously examined are of any less value or effect for actors than Viewpoints, but merely to refute the notion that a physical style of acting which eschews the traditional psychological paradigm is somehow the antithesis to the work of Stanislavski – nothing could be further from the truth.

Writing about the Viewpoints technique presents a unique challenge for the established pattern of inquiry that I have followed throughout this dissertation. First it is difficult to write about the exercises that make up Viewpoints training because this type of training is not based upon a set progression of exercises prescribed by Bogart and Landau. They offer many suggestions of how one should teach Viewpoints but prescribe none. In many ways, when an actor begins training in Viewpoints she is immersed in the totality of the technique from the outset. Among the suggestions Bogart and Landau offer to help aid the actor's exploration of the various Viewpoint is what is known as "grid work." Simply stated, the actor imagines the stage as being covered in an imaginary grid consisting of columns and rows. To begin with the actor may only move along one axis of the grid while exploring whatever particular Viewpoint is being examined. Once the actor feels comfortable or is given permission by the instructor, she then begins to explore the Viewpoint being studied along both axes of the grid. The primary function of the grid exercise is to limit the possibility of choices for the actor so that she does not become overwhelmed when first learning how to utilize the Viewpoints in her movement on stage. It is an example of the paradox that strong boundaries can actually encourage greater freedom of expression for the actor. Although I strongly recommend, as do Bogart and Landau, using grid work as a means

of introducing the individual Viewpoints to actors, it is not strictly speaking, a required part of Viewpoints training. All of the systems I have examined thus far are composed of a series of steps, which lay the foundation for further work.

The second difficulty in conforming to my established pattern of inquiry is the fact that Viewpoints training does not employ the actor's memory in the way we have been conceiving of it up until this point: namely that the actor's past experiences are called upon to help inspire her performance. In reality, memory never comes into play, in a deliberate way, in Viewpoints training. Individual actors may experience memory in all or one of its guises while practicing Viewpoints, but this would be a by-product rather than the ultimate goal of Viewpoints training. The connection between Viewpoints and body memory can best be understood when we look at how the Viewpoints function as memory in the actor's use of them in rehearsals and performance. "Instead of forcing and fixing an emotion," write Bogart and Landau, "Viewpoints training allows untamed feeling to arise from the actual physical, verbal and imaginative situation in which actors find themselves together" (*TVB* 16). Not only does this statement reinforce the idea that Viewpoints aims to give actors non-psychological ways of thinking about her character and performance, but it also illustrates how Viewpoints training functions as memory, specifically body memory. Compare Bogart and Landau's views with Casey's definition of performative body memory: "If [performative] body memory is suitably active, one need not have recourse to other levels or kinds of experience beyond that in which one is presently engaged. All that is called for is that one exist bodily in the circumstances where a given body

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memory is pertinent" (*Remembering* 148). In both passages the path into memory does not lie in the past, but rather the present repetition of past "bodily circumstances" which elicits the actor's memory. In this way we can see how Viewpoints utilizes a form of memory that is pre-reflective, complete in its presentation and embodied – three of the general characteristics Casey's attributes of body memory. The actor trained in Viewpoints does not try, specifically, to remember anything, but instead relies on her use, in the present, of Viewpoints in order to inspire her performance. Instead of thinking about a character's archetype, as would the Adler trained actor would do, the Viewpoints trained actor focuses her attentions on a character's shape or tempo of movement. In the rehearsal process the actor explores all the various possible shapes and tempos of her character until she finds those she believes are most appropriate for her character. By sheer repetition the shape and tempo of a character sink into the actor so to speak. In terms of memory what is actually occurring is the creation of a new performative memory, not unlike the process when one practices at riding a bike or tying one's shoes. These physical actions become engrained in the actor's body and are pre-reflectively triggered when one finds oneself in the same bodily circumstances associated with these memories. This is precisely how Viewpoints utilize the actor's body memories as a means of inspiring and guiding her performance.

Another characteristic of body memory that illustrates how Viewpoints exploits the actor's performative body memory is what Casey calls the "co-immanence of past and present" (*Remembering* 167). All of the techniques examined thus far have taught actors to utilize their past experiences in order to inform their present activities. This is

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exemplary of the traditional view of memory, namely that it is a remnant of the past which influences and informs our present situation. The manner in which Viewpoints training draws upon the actor's memory demonstrates a reversal of this past to present formula. As Casey states, "[. . .] in body memories we allow the past to enter actively into the very present in which our remembering is taking place. Moreover, such immanence is a two-way affair: it is immanence of the past in the present and of the present in the past" (*Remembering* 168). In other words in the world of body memory we must acknowledge that our memory not only influences our present, but is also influenced by our present. The implications of this statement are important for understanding how Viewpoints functions as a form of memory. To begin with, the Viewpoints an actor relies on are never exactly the same from one performance or rehearsal to the next. The Viewpoints-trained actor may find that a rapid tempo of movement and speech is her character's defining characteristic, but this rapid tempo can never be repeated in exactly the same way. And yet, the performance of a character's tempo can be similar enough from night to night to elicit a mnemonic response in the actor's body. "Because [performative body memory] re-enacts the past," writes Casey, "it need not represent it; its own kinesthesias link it from within to the felt movement which it is reinstating [. . .]" *(Remembering* 178). Consequently the, "lived body's role, far from being merely formal, has become *a material* condition of possibility for remembering" for the Viewpoints-trained actor (emphasis in *Remembering* 176).

Think of my previous example of being able to ride a bike even after not doing so for years. While time has effected numerous changes in my body, such as increased or

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decreased coordination, changes in weight, and ability to balance, the essential physical activities required to ride a bike remained unchanged. The result is that because I presently exist in the same bodily circumstances in which I first learned how to ride a bike, I am able to quickly adapt and successfully carry out the action of riding a bike. This is precisely what Casey alludes to when he says that, "the present is effectively at work on the past's very ingression into its own realm: instead of simply repeating this past, [body memory] modifies it by extending intentional threads to ever-changing circumstances, much as a pianist extends his or her already acquired skills in playing new and more difficult pieces" (168). In much the same manner Viewpoints training enables the actor to utilize the present work with the Viewpoints as a means of eliciting a performative body memory, despite the fact that each night's performance will not be exactly the same as any other. "As training," writes Landau, "the Viewpoints function much as scales do for a pianist or working at the barre does for the ballet dancer. It is a structure for practice, for keeping specific 'muscles' in shape, alert, and flexible" ("Source-Work, the Viewpoints and Composition: What Are They?" 23). The "muscles" Landau speaks of in this instance, are those of performative body memory.

Now let us turn our attention to the ways in which Viewpoints training also encounters the actor's collective memory. First, like Wangh's technique, Viewpoints training is a process in which the actor un-learns the patterns of emotional expression that have been conditioned in her by society. In the second chapter of his book *The Feeling of What Happens* Antonio Damasio boldly states, "We do not need to be conscious of the inducer of an emotion and often are not, and we cannot control

emotions willfully" (*Feeling* 47). Due to his acceptance of the James-Lange theory of emotion Damasio must accept that there is nothing we can do to control our emotions, which are, according to the James-Lange theory, rooted in the changes that occur in the physiology of the human body due to external stimuli. Although I agree with Damasio about physiology determining emotion, I take issue with his belief that emotions elude our willful control. In fact it is my job as an actor to willfully manipulate my emotions on a nightly basis. Perhaps Damasio anticipates such criticism because he does backtrack a bit by later stating, "We can also control, in part, the expression of some emotions [. . .] but most of us are not very good at it and that is one reason why we pay a lot to see good actors [. . .]" (*Feeling* 48).

Whether or not an actor is capable of *inducing* an emotion on her own as opposed to being highly skilled at *portraying* an emotion is irrelevant for my current purposes, but the actor's expression of that emotion is very pertinent to my current inquiry. In particular the ways in which we have been conditioned by outside influences that inhibit our emotional expression are particularly relevant when illustrating how Viewpoints treats the actor's collective memory. Damasio goes on to say that while, in his opinion, "We are as effective at stopping an emotion as we are at preventing a sneeze. We can try to prevent the expression of an emotion, and we may succeed in part but not in full. Some of us, under the appropriate cultural influence, get to be quite good at it [. . .]" (*Feeling* 49). The key words in this passage are *cultural influence*.

As we saw in the chapter 3, the phenomenon known as collective memory, is a powerful and invasive force which permeates our lives in ways we are unconscious of.

One need look no further than the development of the modern rules of theatre etiquette in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for proof that emotional expression can be conditioned. Prior to the development of today's code of theatre etiquette audiences were quite vocal in expressing their emotional responses to a production. Actors who pleased the audiences with a particular soliloquy were often called upon to perform it again on the spot, a demand many of the actors with a melodramatic bent were more than happy to oblige. Those actors whose performances were less pleasing to audiences would find themselves the target of whistles, boos and occasionally rotten produce. But as the rules of modern theatre etiquette began to take shape, a process itself which is partly the result of the accumulation of collective memory, audiences were conditioned (partly through the new convention of dimming the lights in the auditorium) to become less expressive of their emotions about a performance, at least while the performance was occurring. The idea that we are conditioned in our expression of emotion is also quite easy to see in a more mundane example. Think of the admonishment to a young boy, "not to cry like a girl." While this example is not only sexist, but also some argue, detrimental to healthy psychological development, it is a perfect example of how our emotional responses can be, and are, conditioned by society.

The problem with this kind of inhibited emotional expression for the actor is not a small one. As we saw in case of Wangh's system, a large portion of the training undergone by actors is designed to break through the learned restrictions of emotional expression. In a similar manner Viewpoints training also seeks to break the actor free

from the patterns of emotional expression that have been conditioned within her. Like Wangh's technique, Viewpoints utilizes the actor's body in unusual ways in order to break the actor's habits of expression. In this respect, the two systems are counter-memorious when it comes to collective memory.

In the previous section on Wangh's technique we saw how body memory and collective memory often bleed over into one another. One of the core principles of Wangh's system was undermining the physical social conditioning all actors are subjected to in order to free up the actor's range of possible physical expressions. Albeit without the intentionality we must ascribe to Wangh, Viewpoints does much the same thing. Viewpoints training encourages the actor to learn to utilize her body in unfamiliar and often unconventional ways. In my early Viewpoints training we observed that men and women would lead with different parts of their bodies when they walked. In nearly all instances the men's walk was far more aggressive, projecting out into space as they walked across the stage. Interestingly enough, most of us males were found to be leading with the pelvic region of the body. The women on the other hand, had a movement pattern that was less aggressive and none of the women in this particular instance led with their pelvic area. These differences can be easily attributed, in part, to the social conditioning imposed upon individuals by and through the use of gender stereotypes. The physical manifestation of culturally constructed patterns of behavior or imagined ideals is yet another example of the ways in which the social frameworks of memory direct, constrict and typify bodily behavior.

Like Wangh's technique, Viewpoints seeks to free the actor from those incorporating practices she has internalized and which limit her usable vocabulary of physical expression. Once actors become aware of the multitude of physical behaviors they could engage in, instead of just the standard patterns of behavior we have come to internalize as being representative of normal, "you are no longer bound by *unconsciousness*" (my emphasis *TVB* 19).

Bogart and Landau's use of the word "unconscious" as a means of describing the process by which our patterns of behavior are set and actualized is quite telling. Implicit in their word choice is the idea that somewhere during our lives we were taught that specific types of bodily expression were acceptable and some were not. The fact that we do not even have to consciously deliberate as to what types of physical behavior are condoned and which types are not is a strong indication that Viewpoints training not only utilizes the actor's body memory, but does so in a way that reveals how tenuous the imaginary lines between memory systems are. For now we see how Viewpoints not only explores the actor's body memory, but engages, even if to contest it, the collective memory of the actor as well.

Unlike Wangh's technique, however, Viewpoints does not stop with interrogating the ways in which the actor's collective memory has influenced her physical life. Let us return to the Viewpoint of Tempo for another example. Let us say I will be a character in Tennessee William's play *Summer and Smoke,* which is set in town of Glorious Hill, Mississippi. In thinking about how best to portray a citizen of this small, Southern town I envision a tempo that is much slower and more relaxed than my

own personal tempo. Why such a difference? Well I'm from the North and I talk fast, I walk fast and in general do everything faster than do those in the South.   Now I am aware that my broad characterization of Southerners as being more slow and relaxed than Northerners is a stereotype, but it is one I learned via the social frameworks of my Northern heritage. Nothing in *Summer and Smoke* directly tells me that these people move more slowly than I do, nor speak more slowly than I do, but my initial thoughts about the character's tempo are still dictated by the biases I carry within me. Biases that can be, and often are, passed along by my involvement in the social frameworks of memory.

In this way we can see how Viewpoints and Adler's system of characterization display a remarkable parallelism in the ways in which they address the actor's semantic and collective memory. Even something like a functional exercise, the Viewpoint Tempo, can be, and is, influenced by the collective memory. Exchange the Viewpoints for archetypes and we can see how my example of playing a character from *Summer and Smoke* can translate over in to Adler's system. As a Northerner when I think of a Southerner two particular archetypes come to mind: the drawling speaker and unhurried mover. Of course I am fully cognizant that not all Southerners have a long, relaxed drawl in their speech, nor do they all leisurely amble though life. But what these archetypes represent are cultural markers we have come to identify with Southern culture thanks, in no small part, to the perpetuation of these archetypical patterns of behavior by the social frameworks of memory. Perhaps the biggest difference between Adler's system of characterization and Bogart/Landaus' Viewpoints is the latter's

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rejection of stereotypes.   Viewpoints teaches the actor to make choices about characterization that are rooted in the physical life of the character. In many ways such acting leads to a much more honest, and truthful, portrayal because these choices are based in the truth of the onstage situation instead of some preconceived notion of how a certain type of person behaves.

In the fall of 2004 I was preparing to play the role of Ubu in the University of Pittsburgh's adaptation of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*. About three weeks before rehearsals were to begin the director and I met with one another and a faculty member who was overseeing the production. As we talked about our various goals for the production, I mentioned my own personal goal of enhancing my use of negative space in my acting. The director, an already rather accomplished young director, stared at me as if I were speaking nonsense. His faculty advisor gently chuckled and said: "Devin's talking in Viewpoints again. He does that a lot." We of the theatre world, like many other professions, have a language that is specific to our profession, one which holds meaning for us but may be confusing to someone not initiated in our ways. Social groups carry within themselves, and pass along memorably to their initiates, certain ways of using language and the associations that go along with the words.

It may seem odd, at first, to think of language as being a form of memory but that is precisely what it is. Language is what Halbwachs calls, "the most elementary and the most stable framework of collective memory" (45). Language passes along a system of expression that indicates membership in a specialized group.. This is what leads Halbwachs himself to plainly state that, "It is language, and the whole system of

social conventions attached to it that allows us at every moment to reconstruct our past" (173). Halbwachs notes, when aphasia affects a person's ability to perceive and use language, "[. . .] he can no longer identify his thought with that of others or attain that form of social representation which is exemplified by a notion, a scheme, or a symbol of a gesture or of a thing. Contact between his thought and the collective memory becomes interrupted at a certain number of detailed points" (44).

The diverse argots and technical terms specific to actor-training systems are therefore instrumental in perpetuating the systems themselves. Such systems and occult terminologies fit into a long tradition of ritualized body practices and mnemonic systems designed to yield secret knowledge. Viewpoints as a language, constitutes a new social framework, and thus a new set of collective memories for the actor. In its use, Viewpoints as language not only offers a shorthand for communication, thus streamlining the process of making theatre, it also engenders a non-psychological way of thinking about acting in general. Such changes in the way the actor uses language as well as the overall way of thinking about acting, actually changes the actor's brain, forming new memories encompassing all three of the major types of memory I have undertaken to examine.

6.0   CONCLUSION

"Without memory, there is no culture. Without memory, there would be no civilization, no society, no future."
– Elie Weisel, *A God Who Remembers*

Actor training in the United States has been closely linked with the actor's memory throughout the course of the twentieth century, targeting different types of memory for use.   From its very beginnings, modern, systematic actor training has relied on the actor's memory as a means of inspiring the actor's performance. Drawing on the work of Théodule Ribot, Stanislavski encouraged his actors to reach an affective state of remembering by using autobiographic memory. Stanislavski taught his actors that concentration on the sensory details of such memories could often lead to a re-experiencing of the emotion felt in the original experience. With practice the actor could learn to achieve this affective state of memory on demand, thus providing the actor with a reliable and systematic means of experiencing genuine emotion in performance without needing to rely on the fickle nature of inspiration. Sometimes considered the same as or a subset of episodic memories, autobiographic memories are precisely what their name implies: memories of our past experiences, often infused with emotional content. Because of this, autobiographic memory is the type most likely to

trigger an affective state of remembering in the actor. Although Stanislavski would eventually pursue other emphases, his exploration of the actor's memory would exert a profound influence on actor training the world over, particularly in the United States.

Having studied under Stanislavski's pupils Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ousepenskaya, Lee Strasberg's interpretation of Stanislavski's affective memory technique has become perhaps the most widespread and certainly most widely recognized training technique in the United States today. As we have seen, Strasberg's interpretation of Stanislavski's work displays significant differences with the original; and yet for all their differences the two techniques, mnemonically speaking, are quite similar. In utilizing the actor's autobiographic memory these techniques focus on the types of memory that often have the most emotional content associated with them. This type of memory is also a conscious form of memory, which gives the actor some degree of control over what and how he or she remembers. The field/observer perspective unique to episodic memories is a good example of the ways in which actors can consciously influence how they remember a past experience. It is this ability to be consciously induced and analyzed that makes the episodic memories useful to the Strasberg-trained actor. Strasberg's understanding of episodic memory demonstrates a conception of memory that is in keeping with his times. Our contemporary understanding of the episodic memory system corroborates and supports many of Strasberg's own beliefs about memory and helps to explain how his technique has proven effective to countless actors over several generations.

Conscious memory, however, as we have learned, accounts for just a small part of our mnemonic life. In fact, most of our mnemonic life occurs on the unconscious level. The semantic memory system governs much of the unconscious memory we utilize in our day to day activities. Although it may not carry the same emotional impact or contribute to our sense of self, semantic memory is just as vital, and in some ways more vital, than episodic memory. The semantic memory system governs the kind of mnemonic information that we can classify as being factual, or knowledge based. State or national capitals, basic math "facts" (2+2=4), phone numbers, trivia and other similar types of things that we just know, but have no memory of ever learning are examples of semantic memory. Maurice Halbwachs's theory of collective memory, although predating our recognition and understanding of the semantic memory system by many years, corroborates and corresponds with much of what we now know about how semantic memory functions in our lives, for it is semantic memory that collectives preserve and convey. Halbwachs believed that memory was as much a function of sociology as it was a function of psychology or physiology – two of the main views of memory in Halbwachs's time. He hypothesized that the social groups to which an individual belonged exerted an unconscious influence on a person's memory. These social frameworks of memory include both official and unofficial groups from nationalities to amateur hobbyists. Individuals still retain their own personal memories, but what type of information it remembers, how the individual remembers and even what the individual's memories mean to them are all influenced to some degree by the social frameworks of memory. Perhaps most importantly, the social

frameworks of memory influence the perceptions and belief of a society as a whole. More than simply influencing a society's perceptions, Halbwachs illustrates how collective memory can, and often does, re-write history as a way of legitimizing a society's current values and beliefs.

We have seen how the techniques of Stella Adler and Joseph Chaikin draw upon the actor's collective memory, and it should not be surprising they display a number of similarities. Both techniques are predicated upon a use of the actor's collective memory that is both implicit and explicit. Both techniques exhibit an understanding and use of collective memory that display a number of correspondences with Halbwachs's theory, although there is no conclusive evidence to link either to the work of Halbwachs. Adler's and Chaikin's work recognizes how the actor's participation in the social frameworks of memory influences not only the actor as a person, but also the actor's performance. And yet for all their similarities the techniques of Adler and Chaikin take opposing positions on collective memory.

Whereas Adler's technique shows us how collective memory supports the actor, Chaikin shows us how it constrains the actor. In the final analysis Adler's use of the actor's collective memory is quite conservative. Characterization according to type reinforces and transmits an embodiment of type that is in accord with the attitudes and judgments of the dominant social frameworks of memory. When the Adler-trained actor plays character according to type she adopts and makes use of a number of preconceptions about her character's type: what her character values, how her character behaves, the character's place in society, and so forth. The sources of the actor's

preconceptions, many of which the actor is unaware of, come from the social frameworks of memory in which the actor participates. Using these preconceptions the actor constructs a characterization that meets the unique demands of the given circumstances while remaining a recognizable type to the audience. The audience is able to recognize a character's type because the actor's performance of it is in accord with and influenced by the dominant social frameworks' notions of that type. When employed in this manner collective memory supports not only the actor's characterization, but also the audience's reception of it.

Chaikin's technique presents us with a wholly different attitude toward and approach to using the actor's collective memory. Being predicated upon interrogating and deconstructing the influences of the social frameworks of memory; Chaikin's technique illustrates the ways in which collective memory can constrain the actor. By fostering an awareness of his collective memory, Chaikin's technique helps the actor to interrogate his own suppositions about himself, character and the audience. Together the techniques developed by Adler and Chaikin provide us with a complete picture of the pervasive and persuasive powers exhibited by the actor's collective memory.

Stephen Wangh's Grotowski-based technique and the Viewpoints developed by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau provided us with the opportunity to examine how memory is embodied in the actor. The idea that memory had a bodily component is not new. From Descartes' animal spirits, to Richard Semon's engram, memory has often been thought to make its mark on the body. For many years body memory was relegated to the status of a "second-class" or rudimentary form of memory comparable

to simple habit. Today, however, body memory and the procedural memory system that governs it are seen to be an integral part of our mnemonic life. The fact that our bodies have a memory that is located within the flesh, and not the grey matter can be experienced in any number of mundane, daily activities: typing, riding a bike, walking to work. All of these activities, and hundreds more like them, are accomplished with little or no conscious effort on our part thanks to the pervasive, persistent and mostly unconscious efforts of the procedural memory system. Body memory, however, encompasses more than simple physical activities. Like episodic memory, body memory can provoke an emotional reaction in the present. Like the semantic memory it is also subject to the influence of collective memory. Wangh's *corporels* and *plastiques* take advantage of both of these characteristics of body memory. By first recognizing and then un-learning societally conditioned physical behaviors the Wangh-trained actor is able to use body memory to inspire emotion in a manner which is remarkably similar to Strasberg's use of the episodic memory.

The Viewpoints has the same goals as Wangh's technique but accomplishes them in a very different manner Being the most recently developed of all the techniques Viewpoints use of the actor's memory reflects our most current attitudes toward memory in general - all of it is important, all of it is needful. By teaching actors to perform, think and even speak in terms of the Viewpoints, Bogart and Landau's technique illustrates a use of all three of the memory systems we have been examining. It also displays a very different approach to using the actor's memory.   Stanislavski, Strasberg, Adler, Chaikin and Wangh all speak of accessing the actor's past experiences

as a means of inspiring their present performance. Bogart and Landau, in contrast, believe that:

> Emotion induced by recollection of past experience can quickly turn acting into a solipsistic exercise. The Herculean effort to pin down a particular emotion removes the actor from the simple task of performing an action, and thereby distances actors from one another and from the audience. (*TVB* 16)

By rejecting not only the idea of using recollection of past experience, but also the psychology based style of acting established by Stanislavski, Viewpoints eschew almost a hundred years of tradition in United States actor training. Instead Bogart and Landau's technique engenders memories for the actor using the Viewpoints in training and rehearsals. When the Viewpoints- trained actor performs she focuses all her attention on the present trusting in the pre-reflective nature of body memory.

There is much left to be said about memory and the actor's art. In the course of my research I have had to set aside many interesting lines of inquiry in order to conform to the survey-style approach I had chosen. Before I conclude I would like to point out one possible avenue for further research. Michel Foucault's work, especially his notion of counter-memory, could offer much to say about the ways in which U.S. actor training has used the actor's memory. Counter-memories are those memories which stand in opposition or are in minority to the dominant collective memory. If the winners write history, then the losers must console themselves with counter-memory. As we saw in Halbwachs, collective memory changes over time and counter-memory can be thought of one of the ways in which these changes are accomplished. Counter-

memory acts as a destabilizing force by preserving the memory of something other than the status quo. Some counter-memories can be powerful enough to affect a change in the dominant collective memory, to be remembered by all. Tony Kushner's two part Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes is an excellent example of this type of counter-memory. By telling the story of the onset of the AIDS epidemic in 1980's United States from the perspective of gays, Jews and Mormons Kushner puts on stage a memory of a 1980's United States that is counter to and contradicts the dominant collective memory of his time. The critical and popular success of Kushner's play and its entry into the canon of United States drama illustrates how counter-memory may overcome and become part of the official memory.

What, if anything, does counter-memory have to do with the actor's training? In denying the psychological for the physical approach to acting can Viewpoints be said to be a counter-memorious throwback to the more presentational acting styles that pre-date Stanislavski? As we have seen, the techniques of Chaikin, Wangh, Bogart and Landau seek to free the actor of society's influences on mental, emotional and physical levels. I suggest these techniques could be construed as examples of counter-memory at work in the actor's training-- specially "counter" to the memory work of Strasberg and Adler. And why do these two groups stand at opposing ends of the century? Is it reflective of our knowledge of memory or the evolution of acting or both?

The evidence of cultural fascination with memory reaches back to the *ars memoria* practiced in Ancient Greece such as the *loci method*. Memory occupies a central place in films, literature, art and music across cultures and historical time periods. Over

the course of the twentieth century our knowledge of what memory is and how memory functions has grown, become more complicated, more sophisticated. We have seen memory move out of the mind and into not only the body, but out into the world around us. In an interesting parallel, as our understanding of memory increased over the course of the twentieth century, so too did the different ways and types of memory used by actor training in the United States. Perhaps of all the conclusions to be drawn from this dissertation the most important may be this: acting should no longer be thought of as some kind of mystic, unknowable process. To be sure there will always be an intangible element to acting, one either gets it or they do not. But by using our current understanding of mnemonics from such diverse fields as neuroscience, sociology and philosophy we can see not only how certain techniques use the actor's memory, but why these techniques are effective in doing so. When coupled with the memory of what has come before us, this new understanding increases our ability to refine, experiment with and evolve the art of acting.

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