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Birth of the *Acteur-Auteur*
authorship through history, practice, and the pedagogy of Jacques Lecoq

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Abstract

This research interrogates the definition and theory surrounding concepts of the *auteur*/'author', and how they are embedded within the theatre pedagogy of Jacques Lecoq (1921-1999). By first establishing the defining practices of the *auteur*/'author' and *acteur/'*actor' through a genealogy of theory and practice, alongside historicisation of the cultural implications from which these concepts emerged within theatre, literary and film theory in French, American, and English contexts, I establish a framework through which the practice of the *acteur-auteur* can be defined. Aided by the *auteur* theory framework proposed by Andrew Sarris, as well as Roland Barthes' thoughts on the relationship between 'author', 'reader', and 'text', I propose a critical lens through which to examine the training and overarching pedagogical philosophy of l'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq.

My pedagogical exploration is supported through a historicisation and cultural situation of Lecoq's school, elaborating on artistic forces of influence as well as the effects of May 1968 and French Maoist philosophy on the development of key tools for the establishment of the *acteur-auteur*: the *autocours* and the *enquêtes*. I argue that authorial practice is fostered through a unique and shifting relationship between student and pedagogue alongside the application of 'play' and the student's ability to 'write'. I establish the link between writing and improvisation as more than setting pen on paper, but rather the intersection of movement, structure, and presence, which establishes the students' authority and agency in training. Informed by autoethnographic writing on my own embodied experience of training at l'École Jacques Lecoq (as both a student and teacher) this work functions as a proposal to reconsider Lecoq's pedagogy as 'actor training', but rather the training of the *acteur-auteur* and auteurial practice.

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Part I

Chapter 1: Introduction

'L'élève vient à lui avec un désir… d'éduquer son corps d'acteur, geste et parole, de provoquer son imaginaire d'acteur-auteur.'

('They [students] want him to train their bodies, to help them explore gesture and speech, to ignite their 'actor-creator' imagination.')

– Jean Perret[1]

It has become a common understanding amongst English-speaking theatre academics and practitioners that Jacques Lecoq's goal was to train his students to become 'creative actors' (Murray, 2002, p. 17) or 'actor-creators' (Murphy, 2017, p. 327), a term which does not appear in his pedagogical philosophy, *The Moving Body* (2009), nor any other writing of his that I have yet encountered.[2] While successfully communicating that Lecoq's pedagogy was intended to train his students to be more than 'just' actors, a potential discrepancy arises in this choice of translation. The 'actor-creator' seems to have been an invention of a team of American theatre practitioners, trained by Lecoq, who oversaw a theatre festival celebrating his work and his school at Lehigh University in 1994.[3] For the purposes of this festival, this term 'actor-creator' was adopted to clarify the strengths exemplified by the Lecoq-trained performer to an English-speaking audience

[1] In J. Lecoq, 1987, p. 107. English translation Lecoq, 2006, p. 94.
[2] LISPA (London International School of Performing Arts) trained theatre maker and scholar Maiya Murphy recognises the term 'actor-creator' is now not only regularly applied to Lecoq's pedagogy, but is used in other theatre pedagogical tradition to signal a 'broader agency' (2017, p. 348). Making direct associations amongst different 'actor-creator' pedagogical methodologies run the risk of inappropriate assumptions. For example, to align the Lecoq student alongside the Nikolai Demidov-trained 'actor-creator' (which relates to a concept derived from the psychological 'inner creative state' of Stanislavski's thinking (Demidov, 2016) rather than an actor who creates work) could lead to confusion, since there is a somewhat baffling difference between the practices and definitions.
[3] The festival 'Theatre of Creation: A Festival Celebrating the Work of Jacques Lecoq and His International School of Theatre' was organized by Bridget George, Deborah Sacarakis, and Augustine Ripa and brought Lecoq based companies from the UK, as well as Lecoq himself, to America (Murphy, 2017, p. 347).

(Murphy, 2017, p. 347). This adoption was likely rooted in an interview between Jacques Lecoq and a former teacher from his school, Jean Perret, in which Perret describes Lecoq's students as '*acteur-auteurs'* (J. Lecoq, 1987, p. 107). This interview, first published in the compilation of essays *Le Théâtre du Geste* in 1987, would later be translated in the English version of *The Theatre of Movement and Gesture*, as 'actor-creator' (J. Lecoq, 1987, p. 107). While it is unclear as to whether this choice of translation was a direct result of the influence of the Lehigh festival or an attempt at simplification for the English-speaking audience, there is a slight gap which implies not only a shift in cultural and linguistic implications, but a difference in the expected student engagement with the pedagogy. The question remains: Who is the *acteur-auteur* of Jacques Lecoq's pedagogy?

While the translation is not necessarily incorrect, there is more to be discovered in the interrogation of Perret's original observation. The *auteur* presents a long history of shifting definitions and creative practices, as well as varying translations, and hundreds of years of linguistic evolution. A similarly varied history comes with the concept of the *acteur* and its connection to practices of popular theatre. What is missing is an encompassing definition. This research aims to develop a definition of the *acteur-auteur* through an intersection of historical, theoretical, and critical contexts while interrogating how to practically *train* an *acteur-auteur*; highlighting how the authorial work of the student might be approached and pedagogically fostered, rather than how an authorial practice is recognised in an artist's work after training.[4] The title of *auteur* has, historically, been a posthumous one, so in this research I intend to uncover what is

[4] While Lecoq may not have used the term *acteur-auteur* himself, he has referred to his students as *auteurs* or 'authors' (J. Lecoq, 2006, pp. 100, 25; Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, pp. 16, 46), and often references a 'writing' practice that must be developed by his students (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, pp. 22, 46, 99, 105, 152). I will explore this 'writing' practice in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

necessary in practice to be an artist of this definition: What were the historical and cultural conditions from which the concepts of *acteur* and *auteur* emerged, and how were their practices shaped? Can these artistic approaches lead to a common definition or approach to practice for the *acteur-auteur*, and can it be trained or encouraged through theatre pedagogy? What is taught (or 'expected' of the student) within Lecoq's pedagogy, and what cultural context can be given to its pedagogical goals? How must the Lecoq pedagogue approach their students to support, challenge, or provoke their *authorial* practice? To trace these cultural shifts and influences on the development of the school and pedagogy, the evolution of the *auteur* (and subsequently, the *acteur*) will provide a more thorough understanding of the practice of the Lecoq student, illuminating unexplored elements of a pedagogy that is known to produce an extraordinarily varied group of artists, practicing across genres, styles, and forms of art.

Due to Lecoq and his school's international reputation and cohort (the school's formal title being l'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq), there is often a disregard for the 'Frenchness' of the school, in particular its relationship to Paris and French culture, as well as its relationship to the French language. The innate internationality of the school and its ethos of movement-driven theatre over spoken or text-based work supports the perspective that the Parisian location of the school was inconsequential to its pedagogy. This internationality, David Bradby argues, situated Lecoq in a unique position as 'suspect' and very much outside the French theatrical culture and its institutions (in Murphy and Sherman, 2013, p. 116). The teaching is in French, but students often resort to speaking other shared languages when working in groups or improvising, sometimes even in performance, due to the focus on physical expression rather than spoken language. Lecoq's school has an atmosphere of training that exists beyond cultural identity, language, and history, shaped by his position as an

outsider to Parisian theatre culture and his focus on unspoken language and the creation of 'a young theatre of new work' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 16). When interviewing Parisian students who had trained at Lecoq, Susan Wright Thompson noted their perception of Lecoq as 'other':

> When they met Lecoq, he was an outsider to the cultural theatrical hub of Paris. No one else approached theater the way he did, eschewing text-based work and fostering original creations over the work of playwrights. He was, and indeed remained for most of his lifetime, an unknown in France, quietly teaching while others in the profession theorized. (Wright Thompson in Murphy and Sherman, 2013, p. 116)

This is in some respects necessary for the school to truly function as a launching point for students to discover their own theatre. However, for the purposes of this research, I am interested in re-situating the school in certain cultural and historical moments to understand how the pedagogy has evolved to foster the development of the *acteur-auteur*.

The influence of French culture has often been disregarded when considering Lecoq's work as his own inspirations were multi-national and multi-lingual. A liberty in translation seems to exist around key terms and pedagogical tools due to the variance of students' own native tongues, and the basis of movement that is ever present throughout the students' experience, leading a student to develop their own terminology for things they feel or experience and adapting it to their own language. Indeed, perhaps this is exactly what Lecoq was trying to teach us – that words do shift in meaning with the shift of language, but often the essence of what we mean lies in movement. That being said, what is missed in translation?[5] There is no doubt that the translation of these texts have

[5] This is exemplified by David Bradby's translation of *Le Corps Poétique,* 'The Moving Body', which itself is not a direct translation of the original title (though Lecoq himself approved). In her unpublished thesis, Ellie Nixon includes an excerpt from her interview (in English) with Jacques Lecoq's wife, the Scottish-born Fay Lecoq, and questions this specific choice as her research pertained to the connection between Lecoq's

contributed to the enormous interest that exists in English-speaking countries (particularly in the UK), however, as David Bradby notes, Lecoq's teachings are often 'misunderstood' or 'underestimated' specifically within the UK (Fusetti and Willson, 2002, p. 93). Perhaps it is time to re-introduce a more 'direct' translation to some of these terms and undo some unintended damage or simply uncover certain forgotten or passed over (truncated or wilfully ignored) elements of the pedagogy. This likely stems from the implied expectation of the Lecoq student to be able to return to their country and teach a Lecoq-'based' workshop or class, which must rely on packaged exercises that are more easily marketed as a 'method' or 'technique' and can be passed down from a teacher to student in a limited period of time[6].

The 'author' and *auteur* both appear in Lecoq's descriptions of and wishes for his students, the *auteur* appearing in French texts (J. Lecoq, 1997, p. 21) and both 'author'/*auteur* appearing in English texts (Lecoq in Murray, 2002, p. 25; Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 16). **While it is not entirely clear whether Lecoq himself established the term *acteur-auteur* or even approved of it (considering it appeared in the introduction to Perret's interview rather than from the interview itself) there are clear allusions to his desire to establish an 'auteurial' practice in his students. I will**

pedagogy and the philosophy of Gaston Bachelard's 'poetics'. When asked about the decision to change the title for the English audience Fay Lecoq states that it was on the advice of Simon McBurney to retitle the book, as the idea of 'movement' would sell better to an English-speaking public (Nixon, 2015, p. 281). *Le Corps Poétique* has been translated into nine languages, including German, Portuguese (European and Brazilian), Spanish, Italian, Turkish, Polish, and Dutch, and in each language the title remains *The Poetic Body* (though the Dutch translation seems to vary slightly, as *Het lichaam als dicter*, or 'The body as poet') (École du Théâtre Jacques Lecoq, n.d.). Mark Evans, in the third edition publication of the English 'The Moving Body', recognises this missing element of 'poetic' as essential to the pedagogy; '…for Lecoq, the body not only moves but also expresses, it creates; it not only imitates but also brings to life; that it has significance and meaning beyond its literal functions within the world' (Evans, 2020, p. 13).

[6] A perfect example of this would be the 7 levels of tension- something that has regularly been referenced to me when speaking about Lecoq with anyone who has encountered his pedagogy outside of the school, but is never written about by Lecoq, and considered within the school's training for one hour (out of two years of training). It is a tool to help understand where the playing of the neutral mask begins, where the performance register starts, but has been adapted into an entirely different tool.

use this term, auteurial, to indicate the method of work uniquely belonging to the *auteur*- different from 'authorial' or 'authorship' in that it includes elements of practice that are not indicative of literary practice.

In an interview for the British Newspaper *The Observer* in 1988, Lecoq states 'I remind the actors that they are "auteurs". The task is not to interpret: you must re-live each phase physically.' (in Murray, 2002, p. 25). Reference to the 'author'/*auteur* echoes throughout Lecoq's writings and those of his peers and students, including Complicité member Simon McBurney, who in a 1984 brochure for the company's workshops states quite clearly 'The Lecoq approach begins with the assumption that the individual performer is an author of the work, not a cipher through which the writer or director expresses his or her ideas' (McBurney in Fry, 2015, p. 167). There is a unique approach to practice presented here, using the 'author' and *auteur* as its signifier, though it must be recognised that the two are different, and the two may not be translatable. The nature of translation is such that two different things are likened to each other, with the translator searching for a 'good enough' resemblance knowing that something, inevitably, will remain behind in the original language. What is shared by both the 'author' and *auteur* implies a great deal about the goals of Lecoq's training as well as the expected capacity of his students, especially when situate next to the designation *acteur*.

The title of *acteur-auteur* is somewhat ambiguous (perhaps by design), but it indicates artistic lineages and specialism of practice that should not be ignored. To that end, how can this definition of the *acteur-auteur* be applied to the Lecoq student, and how can this practice be trained? To understand this, I must turn to Lecoq himself and the roots of his pedagogical practice.

Jacques Lecoq and his École

Jacques Lecoq (1921-1999) was born in Paris and began his relationship to movement through sports. While training in physical education at university, he was introduced to theatre through a friend, Jean-Marie Conty (head of physical education for France), and through him the work of Antonin Artaud (1896-1948)[7] and Jean-Louis Barrault (1910-1994) (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 3). Inspired by these great thinkers and practitioners, he began his own theatre training with Travail et Culture – a branch of the French resistance during the Second World War (Murray, 2017, p. 8) – where he was introduced to corporeal mime and choreography, and started to see connections between athleticism and what was possible in performance. While performing with a group of fellow amateurs at the end of German occupation of France in 1944 (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 4), he was approached by Jean Dasté, to join a new company he was putting together called Les Comédiens de Grenoble (Evans, 2008, p. 108), and asked to lead their physical training.[8] Lecoq worked with Les Comédiens de Grenoble for three years and was introduced to some of the key elements of Jacques Copeau's practice[9] – particularly mask work and mime (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 4)—before he was invited to teach in Germany with the new project L'Éducation par le jeu dramatique (set up under the methods and influence of Jean-Louis Barrault,

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[7]Antonin Artaud was a multi-disciplinary artist best known for his work as a performer and writer. His published work includes *The Theatre and its Double* (1938) where he proposes his highly influential manifesto 'The Theatre of Cruelty' which suggested a rejection of playwrights and their texts, and the importance of spirituality (or mysticism) to theatre.

[8] Dasté was the husband of Marie-Hélène Dasté, daughter of Jacques Copeau of Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier.

[9] Jacques Copeau (1879-1949) was best known as a director, producer, writer, and founder of Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier and its school. His approach to theatre making and actor training (with his collaborator, Suzanne Bing) caused a colossal shift in twentieth century French theatre (see Chapter 3).

Marie Hélène Dasté and others) as a part of the peace efforts to reconnect German and French students (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 5).[10]

Lecoq was invited to teach at the University of Padua where he was introduced to *commedia dell'arte* and the sculptor Amleto Sartori who, through Lecoq's insistence, rediscovered the traditional and almost lost art of leather mask-making (Murray, 2017, p. 11). He remained in Italy at the invitation of the Piccolo Teatro in Milan to help found a theatre school, where he taught from 1951–1956. This time in Italy was defined by key collaborations, with the likes of Dario Fo (1926–2016) and members of his own company – the Parenti-Lecoq Company, founded by himself and Franco Parenti (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 7). **In 1956 he returned to Paris to begin his own school, bringing together the three core practices of his experience thus far: '*Copeau, plus le sport, plus l'Italie : trois références à partir desquelles j'ai pu faire un école*' (Lecoq in Freixe, 2014, p. 88).[11]** In 1976, after years of moving, the school found its 'permanent' home, a nineteenth century boxing gym in the centre of Paris (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 12), where Lecoq taught until his sudden death in 1999. The school has subsequently seen many leaders, though the running of the school remained with the family, namely under Lecoq's daughter, Pascale Lecoq, until recently.

This research project has come during a remarkable moment for the Lecoq school and my own practice as a creative and teacher. The beginning of my research came about five years after I began my time at l'École Jacques Lecoq, (during a period when, according to l'École mythology, I will begin to understand what it is that I learned while

[10] Lecoq said, 'I like to think I helped a little in the "denazification" of Germany' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 5).

[11] 'Copeau, plus sport, plus Italy: three references from which I could make a school' (Lecoq in Freixe, 2014, p. 88, my own translation).

in training) and I began my own journey as a teacher. For the school itself, a massive shift was coming.

In his writings, Lecoq references death as the end of movement, in terms of perfection and the lack of error (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 21), but also in terms of the school itself; 'If the school doesn't move, it dies. Yes everything moves and I confirm that the school does too' (J. Lecoq, 2006, p. 121). It was during my second year of this project that l'École Jacques Lecoq announced its plans to move from its home of **47 years** in Le Central of Paris to an undisclosed location in Avignon, later revealed to be a converted fire station in the town centre (De Corbier, 2023), and to (amicably) sever ties with the Lecoq family. The news came first by word of mouth from current students at the school and other alumni, then from the school itself. On 31 May 2023, I found the announcement on the school website, stating officially the school was moving to Avignon. Lecoq's daughter and outgoing head of the school, Pascale Lecoq, shared this statement on the French version of the website:

> *Elle nous offre la possibilité d'impulser une dynamique nouvelle et de poursuivre l'enseignement de l'école dans de nouvelles perspectives. Comme disait mon père Jacques Lecoq : Tout bouge !*
>
> **[This offers us the possibility of stimulating a new dynamic and to continue the teaching of the school with new perspectives. Like my father, Jacques Lecoq, said: Everything moves!)] (Pascale Lecoq, 2023, my translation)**

Literature

Within the field of scholarship concerning Jacques Lecoq and his work, there are few accounts of Lecoq's life and pedagogy, the most relevant coming from Lecoq himself (J. Lecoq, 1987, 1997) or his son, Patrick Lecoq (P. Lecoq, 2016), along with Simon

Murray's monograph examining Lecoq's life and work (2017), and *The Routledge Companion to Jacques Lecoq* (Evans and Kemp, 2016). **In French, Lecoq's own writings seem to be the primary resource for those interested in his reading about his work apart from Guy Friexe's research linking him to Ariane Mnouchkine and Jacques Copeau (2014). Aside from these works, there is a limit to what has been written about Lecoq in English, French, and other languages (Allain and Harvie, 2025, p. 61). For this reason,** working from Lecoq's own words and original research give great insight into how his method developed over his lifetime, as well as the primary goals and intentions of his philosophy. While these formative texts are invaluable, they cannot be the sole source of information regarding this pedagogy (critical reflections from my own experience of the pedagogy will engage a more practical perspective in this exploration and help to suggest how the pedagogy trains what might be considered an 'authorial' practice). His work is critiqued **in American** and British scholarship from the 1980s on the emergence of post-modern French mime in the early part of the twentieth century (Felner, 1985; Leabhart, 1989), but the majority of academic interest has appeared in the past 20 years, following closely on the heels of the first publication of David Bradby's translation of *Le Corps poétique* – as *The Moving Body* – in 2002.[12] Mark Evans in particular delves into the importance of movement practices and physical education influences from Lecoq's life, while highlighting many shared aspects between his work and that of Jacques Copeau's **(Evans, 2008, 2013; Evans and Fleming, 2019). This work is complemented by Cass Fleming and her critique of the exclusion of**

[12] *Le Corps poétique* was first published in France in 1997, two years before Lecoq's death, and at the end of his personal pedagogical journey after more than 40 years of teaching (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009).

Suzanne Bing from reference in Copeau's work (and by extension, Lecoq's) (Fleming 2013, 2020).

Within the past decade there seems to have been a renaissance of interest in Lecoq's technique, partially spurred on by the sudden development of the intersection between the fields of acting training and embodied cognition (Kemp, 2012, 2016; Murphy, 2019), led by the research of Rick Kemp. Recent works have been published regarding the application of Lecoq's approach to performing Shakespeare (Woodall and Rokinson-Woodall, 2024) as well as a retrospective on the evolution of mime and physical theatre in Britain from the 1970s to the 2000s (Evans and Murray, 2023). **Ellie Nixon's meditation on the embodied presentation of material elements provides an interesting example of Gaston Bachelard's influence on Lecoq's thinking and the development of his pedagogical poetic (2024). Analyses of theatre companies who emerged from l'École or were influenced by Lecoq's teaching regularly appear in publications exploring ensemble-based or collaborative theatre work (Heddon and Milling, 2005; Harvie and Lavender, 2010; Britton, 2013; Syssnoyéva, 2013), including explorations of Ariane Mnouchkine's work (Bradby, 2002a; Dusigne, 2002; Miller, 2007; Vescovo, 2018; Bradby and Williams, 2020), as one of Lecoq's most influential students[13].**

Nevertheless, while Lecoq's contributions to acting training and the realm of ensemble based or physical theatre in the UK and Europe are undeniable**, as evidenced by such volumes as *Jacques Lecoq and the British Theatre* (Chamberlain and**

[13] Mnouchkine's approach to theatre direction is world renown and well documented. She is considered one of the great theatre *auteurs* (alongside Peter Brook, who was often present at Lecoq's school as an observer). For the purposes of this research, as it concerns the development of an *acteur-auteur* (highlighting the *acteur*) and the pedagogy enacted within Lecoq's school, I will refrain from examining her work or that of Brook's, as their practice is directing-based and (for Mnouchkine) reflective of her practical development post-training.

Yarrow, 2002) and the *Paris Jigsaw* (Bradby and Delgado, 2002), which include accounts and reflections by former students and teachers, only part of his pedagogy is regularly utilized or examined. Lecoq's ideas are often explicitly laid out in the form of exercises in anthologies of various modern acting methods or training (Evans, 2008; Hodge, 2010; O'Brien and Sutton, 2012) or enveloped and cited in an all-encompassing theories of acting training or physical theatre (Lutterbie, 2011; Callery, 2015). These tend to focus on the movement techniques taught within the first year of l'École Jacques Lecoq, **while others engage more deeply with specific pedagogical elements such as neutral mask (Wright, 2002, 2017; Arrighi, 2010, 2016; Sherman, 2016) or clown (Davison, 2013; McCusker, 2023),** and often touching on 'devising', a distinctly British term with which I disagree in its application to this pedagogy (I will explore this further in the introduction to Part III). A number of scholars exhibit dismay that his pedagogy has not been more thoroughly examined, considering his impact on British theatre and acting training in Europe and North America (Chamberlain and Yarrow, 2002; Evans and Kemp, 2016; Murray, 2017).

The function of l'École itself is underexplored as well, its position as an institution overshadowed by Lecoq's pedagogy, only reflected upon by former teachers or students at the height of their careers (Schechner and Taymor, 1999; Fusetti and Willson, 2002; Shevtsova and Mendus, 2006; Barker, 2012). **Its history is briefly discussed in Lecoq's own writing (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009) or in Patrick Lecoq's biography, *Jacques Lecoq; Un point fixe en mouvement* ('Jacques Lecoq; A fixed point in movement') (2016).** Equally, there is little research regarding Lecoq's practice of enforcing engagement with collaborative creation or, for the purposes of my argument, 'writing'. Jon Foley Sherman notes in his article "The Practice of Astonishment" (2010)

that, while a version of the 'devising' technique[14] attributed to Lecoq is taught regularly in drama schools throughout the UK and Europe, there is still very little research exploring what is actually taught within the pedagogy (p. 90).

As in all fields of research there arise discrepancies and alternate opinions, and due to the almost mythic nature of the Lecoq pedagogy, links or terminologies developed by practitioners or researchers have ended up in the Lecoq pedagogical lexicon. Reasons for potential incongruities in terminology or practice range from different experiences of the school (from learning about the technique through research and interviews, to attending the school for one year or two, or engaging with practitioners whose techniques sprang from Lecoq's pedagogical lineage) to language differences (the pedagogy is taught in French, though it engages practitioners from around the world). Lecoq himself did little to expose the exact functions of the school or reflect how the pedagogy works, rather giving broad strokes of his philosophy (Kemp, 2016, p. 199). The reasons and implications of the written word in relation to the technique have been illuminated by Simon Murray who posits Lecoq's teachings among other theatre pedagogues Monika Pagneux and Philippe Gaulier (both trained by Lecoq), and references their hesitancy to record their teachings because of an inability to translate a 'lived sense' of the pedagogy (2010, p. 190). Lecoq and other teachers of his pedagogy reflect this hesitancy as well, questioning whether a threat of 'canonisation' might limit the pedagogy or separate it from the body (Russel, 2020, p. 370). Nevertheless, there is a hypocrisy in this, as teacher

[14] While the concept of devising will not be a focal point of this research, I will argue in the introduction to Part III that devising is indicative of a specifically British practice, one with its own social history and cultural relevance that is distinctive from the creative work enacted within Lecoq's school. Lecoq's students may go on to develop a devising practice with a specific methodology in their professional lives, but there are not specific techniques or methodologies that are taught within the Lecoq's school (see Part III for further disambiguation).

Aurelian Koch reflects: ‘you sell it as a noncanonical approach, and yet it has become canonical’ (in Russel, 2020, p. 370).

An ‘academic exercise’

The general field of research into Lecoq’s pedagogy tends to focus on Jacques Lecoq himself or reflections from former students solicited by academics with a limited experience of the pedagogy in practice. This is not a judgement but a fact. This position leads to a conflict in research. In Simon Murray’s exploration of Lecoq’s life and work, he makes the following statement:

> It would be possible to devote considerably more space to teasing out connections between Lecoq's ideas and those of other major thinkers and practitioners of twentieth-century theatre. However, the danger in such a project is that it becomes a purely academic exercise that loses touch with the reality of how Lecoq actually worked, both as pedagogue and researcher ... while Lecoq was, of course, very aware of particular historical traditions of theatre practice … the pulsating heart of all his work was the human body and its movement in space. (2017, p. 33)

Murray continues to quote David Bradby and his summary of Lecoq’s thoughts on the role of more academic inquiry to his work:

> He was not primarily interested in making connections with historical figures. He was really interested in the body and how it moved, and that was the centre of everything. To ask if he was more influenced by Copeau or Artaud, or whoever, is missing the point: missing the centre of his own natural passion and the way he developed his own teaching. (2017, p. 33)

Lecoq’s interest was in movement and the expressive properties of the body, though to divorce that work from surrounding culture and historical practice seems misguided.

Both Bradby and Murray are justified in their consideration of Lecoq's pedagogy from the perspective of a student – if they want to 'understand' Lecoq's pedagogy through reading, they will find it impossible. It is possible to grasp concepts or thoughts about movement but ultimately, one must *do* it. There is no other way to fully understand the practice. However, this perspective does not apply to the academic. To trace the evolution of the technique and the historical and artistic events that led to its development is a worthwhile practice. Lecoq himself may have been at leisure to not share his research or the influences on his work, but that was at his own discretion. Murray does go beneath the surface of some of these areas, tracing the lineage of some of Lecoq's influences, but perhaps relies too heavily on a certain mysticism around Lecoq's teachings.[15] As theatre history recoils further into the past, along with the direct influence of Lecoq himself, I think it is appropriate to track these influences with the growth of the school and its evolving pedagogy (see Chapter 3).

The work done by Bradby and Murray does begin to uncover the elements which lead to Lecoq's pedagogical and philosophical perspectives, but there is more work to be done. While I may critique their approach to Lecoq-based research, I cannot stress enough how important their work is to the ongoing popularity of Lecoq's work in the UK and other English-speaking countries. Nevertheless, perhaps their hesitancy to engage with Lecoq's influences and artistic lineage should serve as a warning. It would be an impossible task to trace every line of lineage, especially considering the ancient and winding roots from which these practices spring, as well as the school's methods which evolve with every new influx of students. It is through them that perhaps the largest force

[15] Murray himself trained with Philippe Gaulier and Monika Pagneux for a year (Evans and Kemp, 2016, p. xxi).

of influence emerges. It is, after all, a school of new work and while some practices may remain the same, it must evolve and move forward.

Perhaps I feel at liberty to deviate from the perspective of academic research on Lecoq's work being superfluous or 'missing the point' because I have the physical training of the Lecoq student, and through that experience of training was drawn to understand the influences and practices which led Lecoq's work. **There is a question of authority since I did not study directly with Lecoq (as I trained some 16 years after his death) but can call upon his writings and reflections of those who learned with him, taught alongside or after him. This perhaps provides me with some critical distance to observe what is written and juxtapose it against my experience, enabling me to discover the gaps or shifts that have taken place over time as the pedagogy continues to evolve. Lecoq's own wish that the school be one of 'new' theatre (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 16) and his expectation that it will 'move' (J. Lecoq, 2006, p. 121) indicates that while there may be a grounding philosophy over which Lecoq was an authority, there is necessity for growth and change. To this end, Lecoq's own writings serve as both a touchstone for this research and one voice in a broader conversation, one that includes others with experience of his pedagogy, be it academic or practical, directly from his teaching or those who followed in his footsteps.**

Though this research is not about Lecoq himself, Lecoq the man serves as a 'specter' to this work, to use Jacques Derrida's thinking, in that he is always present in this work (as he is in his pedagogy), and as a 'scholarly' exercise, this work serves as an attempt to 'speak with' his ideas;

> He (the 'scholar' or 'intellectual') should learn to live
> by learning not how to make conversation with the

> ghost but how to talk with him, with her, how to let
> them speak or how to give them back speech, even if it
> is in oneself, in the other, in the other in oneself: they
> are always there, specters, even if they do not exist,
> even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet.
> (Derrida, 1994, p. 221)

To this end, Lecoq reflections and writings will serve as key perspectives into his philosophy and desired outcomes of his pedagogy but will be balanced by my experience and historical perspective. His thoughts and intentions will always be present though this is not a study of how he made his pedagogy, rather, this research is concerned with what the pedagogy does and what cultural or historical literacy can be given to the practice.

The *acteur-auteur*

There is no established theory or definition of the *acteur-auteur*, and each term on its own does not come with a clear definition or practice aligned to it. Both the *auteur* and *acteur* are representative of a myriad of practices and approaches across multiple fields, and so the first part of this project will be dedicated to examining the history of each term individually, considering relevant cultural movements and creative practices in which these terms emerged or demanded distinction from previously established terminology.

Methodology and methods

> ‘A philosophy always comes after technique! Tell me: do you walk home with your legs or your ideas?’
>
> - Jerzy Grotowski[16]

[16] Grotowski, 1968, p. 201.

Upon finishing the professional course at l'École Jacques Lecoq, I was struck by the sensation that I knew how to 'write with my body', that I had developed a skill to be at once inside the work while crafting its future based on what had come before. From this realisation I was drawn to reexamine the pedagogy to understand why and how this feeling had developed. How had this training taught me to 'write' (if this was indeed what I had learned), and what was this 'writing' I could suddenly understand and execute? In revisiting Lecoq's own writings and reflections from other former students I found regular references to the student's 'writing' practice (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, pp. 22, 46, 97, 99), though one that was clearly divorced from the assumption of generation of 'text' or 'written' material. In approaching the academic and practical reflections written about Lecoq's pedagogy (specifically in English) I realised there were some discrepancies in language and terminology, as well as interpretations of certain exercises or aims of the overall training. I turned to the original texts and found gaps through translations and associations to English terms **that contradicted what I understood of the pedagogy** (including that of the 'actor-creator' in place of the *acteur-auteur*).[17] I returned to my training, in revisiting my notes and embodied practice, as well as returning to the school for an intensive in pedagogical training. What has emerged is a definition of practitioner and approach which is latent within Lecoq's texts and the school's continued training.

This project is a genealogy of the research itself, beginning with theoretical definition of practice through historicisation, close reading, and translation, to practical analysis of the pedagogy **grounded by autoethnographic analysis. While this research**

[17] Tony Adams highlights the 'insider perspective' that comes from autoethnographic inquiry (which I employ in this research), and its ability 'to call to attention the complexities of commonly held, taken-for-granted assumptions about these cultural phenomena' (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2015, p. 31).

is not 'practice as research' it is practice-informed. It employs a multi-method and sometimes non-linear presentation of findings in order to trace questions that arise from each strand of inquiry, mirroring key attributes of practice as research methodology according to Brydie-Leigh Bartleet (2022, p. 137–138). By including autoethnographic elements (which John Freeman notes has become an almost 'compulsory' method for practice as research (2010, p. 183)), this research becomes reflexive, recognizing, in Freeman's words, my own 'experiential knowledge, containing not only the period of study in question but also interweaving of past and present knowledge' (2010, p. 182). True to my training, I was led by my interest (and suspicions) through a process-led exploration, and the focus of autoethnographic materials link pedagogical theory and physical training, as the recording of training within the school and access to Lecoq's personal archive were not possible.[18] The restrictions on access combined with the embodied nature of the subject of this work exposes the ways in which text can be limiting, or can communicate certain kinds of knowledge better than others, suggesting, as Susanne Gannon asserts, the benefit of multiple modes of writing (2022, p. 44), including those based on physical experience

The cumulative and multi-method nature of this work was inevitable due to the intersection of fields established by this inquiry. Consideration of the *auteur* would be incomplete without context of literary and film theory (see Chapter 2), just as the pedagogical effect of the *autocours* (the weekly student-led assignment to create new work), could not be explored without the historical and cultural context of French Communist actions in the 1960s (see Chapter 5). **This work is concerned with**

[18] This research began during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which there were a great deal of barriers to travel, access to materials and people, as well as major shifts within Lecoq's school. When visiting the school in 2024 I was told there was no archive, which indicates that the family has taken possession of Lecoq's personal research.

genealogy, tracing the evolution and shifts of meaning and practice rather than searching for origins (Foucault, 1977, p. 140). To that end, I must explore the development of my own understanding of pedagogical practice as well as develop a definition of practice which does not already exist through a careful tracing of two thus far unconnected concepts – the *acteur* and *auteur*.

I began this research with my own body of knowledge (literally, in this case). My trained body which absorbed the practice of the pedagogy and the functions of the school from my two years of training on the professional course and one year in the Laboratoire d'Étude de Mouvement[19] at l'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq (at its former location in Le Central in Paris) from 2015–2017, followed by a pedagogical training intensive[20] at its new location in Avignon in 2024, informed my research. **From this autoethnographic reflexive position**, I turned to conduct close readings of Lecoq's original writings (in French and English) alongside the reflections of other alumni of the school provide a broader perspective on the effects of the pedagogy while further illuminating a practical perspective. The necessity of historical and cultural tracing of certain artistic practices made itself clear in relation to Lecoq's thinking and the development of certain pedagogical elements that highlight an auteurial practice within l'École's training.

Supported by my own retraining (as a teacher), reflection, and analysis of excerpts from my personal archive from professional training, I propose a critical discourse between my past and more recent experience of the pedagogy (evolving my perspective from student to teacher). **Following Estelle Barrett's suggestion of Foucault's notion of**

[19] A separate course launched by Lecoq, Kreikor Belakan, and Pascale Lecoq studying structures and their movement in space.
[20] A two-week intensive course led by Anne Astolfe and Paola Rizza, heads of the school and the professional training course.

'dispersed selves' as a methodological approach to practice as research (developed through an analysis of questions posed by his article 'What is an author?' [1998]), this attempts to provide a critical distance between the multiple 'selves' presented in this research (2010, p. 140). My approach is not only as student and teacher in training, but researcher and one occupying the author function. Through autoethnographic writing and analysis, these 'selves' who appear through past reference to training in journals, transcribed notation, and current reflection, come into conversation while undertaking a critical engagement with Lecoq's own writings. This analysis is supported further by engagement with pedagogical theory to critically consider the overall effects of this pedagogical approach.

My experience, as one who looks backwards on training while reflecting on how that training was conducted from a position of attaining new knowledge and developing theory, places me in a position not dissimilar to the *acteur-auteur* I am trying to discover. Keith Johnstone points out that the improviser, in their relationship to time, is '…like a man walking backwards, he sees where he has been, but he pays no attention to the future…' (Johnstone, 2014, p. 116)[21]. In a similar way, this research was approached in an almost improvisatory fashion, aware of my past and the material I would draw upon, and yet unclear of where that experience and further inquiry would take me. Engaging with autoethnographic method provides the ability to do just this. As Gannon (2022) notes in her analysis of Patricia Ticineto Clough's work, autoethnography captures shifts in thought as they happen, throwing the writer 'backward and forward to find the self that is turned into parts,

[21] I will explore this idea more deeply in Chapter 4.

turned around parts of a new assemblage' (Clough, 2000, as cited in Gannon, 2022, p. 44).

Though the analysis of history, genealogy, and pedagogical theory provide the scaffolding necessary for this research, the autoethnographic element provides insight into my own 'sensemaking process' and 'subjective knowledge' (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2022, p. 4) when training as student and teacher, while highlighting the practical core to Lecoq's thinking and pedagogy. To ignore this archive of experience would be impractical and dishonest, though employing it as a source of this research is not without complications of which, to cite a few from Tami Spry, include 'self-indulgence… blaming and shaming… heroics… avoiding critical analysis of injustice and oppression… self-righteousness… disengagement…' (in Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2015, p. 96). To avoid these, Caroline Ellis comments that you must be 'faithful to your experience and respectful of and responsible to your participants and readers' (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2015, p. 97). I attempt this through the reflection on materials developed during my time in training, written in their present on my particular experience of the pedagogy. Its inclusion adds my voice to the chorus of former students who have written about their experiences (many of whom I have included in this project) providing, perhaps, an echo to their reflections or differing perspectives to understanding certain approaches or exercises.

Lecoq's pedagogy is centered around understanding the student's unique strengths to create a 'new theatre' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 16), and so to let my experience speak 'for itself' alongside those who have come before, either in training or research, hopefully provides a challenge to hegemonic traditions of research that qualifies some experiences over others (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2015,

p. 15; Sikes, 2022, p. 25), while highlighting the fact there is no objective 'truth' in reflection (Bruner in Sikes, 2022, p. 25) nor any creative endeavor. To pretend that my perspective is more valuable than another's would be ludicrous, as ludicrous as assuming this research comes from a place of 'neutrality' or complete objectivity (Gannon, 2022, p. 42). Including autoethnographic response illuminates my positionality while providing context for my approach to this line of inquiry, hopefully promoting a core interest of this research: the strengthening of agency through the exercise of knowledge and an authorial practice.

As much as the *auteur* is historically a title posthumously given (assigned to the artist after their work is done), this project serves to propose that one may be an *auteur* before they are declared one, and equally one can only become an *auteur* by *doing*, and so my own auteurial position and practice is declared by this research, through this research. **This is only supported by the autoethnographic materials entangled in the last few chapters of this project, not unlike the practice of *auteur* which, as Pat Sikes points out, enacts the potentially 'existential' project of 'interrogating what being may involve as we live through particular contextualized experiences' or more simply 'whereby doing it is also to be' (2022, p. 24).**

Structure

The structure of this thesis follows two stages of my research; the initial academic exploration, and the subsequent autoethnographic analysis. While the first stage is concerned with proposing the definition of a practice for the *acteur-auteur* (chapters two and three), the second is influenced by the historical evolution of Lecoq's pedagogy, informed by analysis of key cultural and political shifts.

From the identification of overlapping practices or elements of produced work between the *acteur* and *auteur*, I outline necessary elements for an *acteur-auteurial* practice, and informed by the framework proposed by Andrew Sarris's '*auteur* theory' ('technique, personal style, meaning' (Sarris, 1962, p. 563); see Chapter 2), divide them into sections that I believe correspond with Lecoq's pedagogy (this is explained in detail in the introduction to Part II). These sections are defined by the nature of the Lecoq teacher's engagement – if they are actively teaching (Chapter 4) or establishing frameworks for the emergence of expected methods of student conduct (Chapter 6) – in an order defined by when each class was included within the pedagogy. Chapter 5 provides a historical interjection offering context for the introduction of the assignments the *autocours, les enquêtes,* and *les commandes,* before moving on to examine their pedagogical effects in Part III.

By Part III of this thesis, the taught elements of the original pedagogy when the school was founded, (i.e. improvisation and movement) will have been analysed, leaving the final chapters (six and seven) to consider the expected methods of student conduct that emerge through the 'new' additions to the pedagogy after 1968 (*autocours* and *commandes)*. Exploring these final elements identifies how the student's authorial practice is further developed through a unique relationship between teacher and student, and the assignments that demand their specialised skillset.

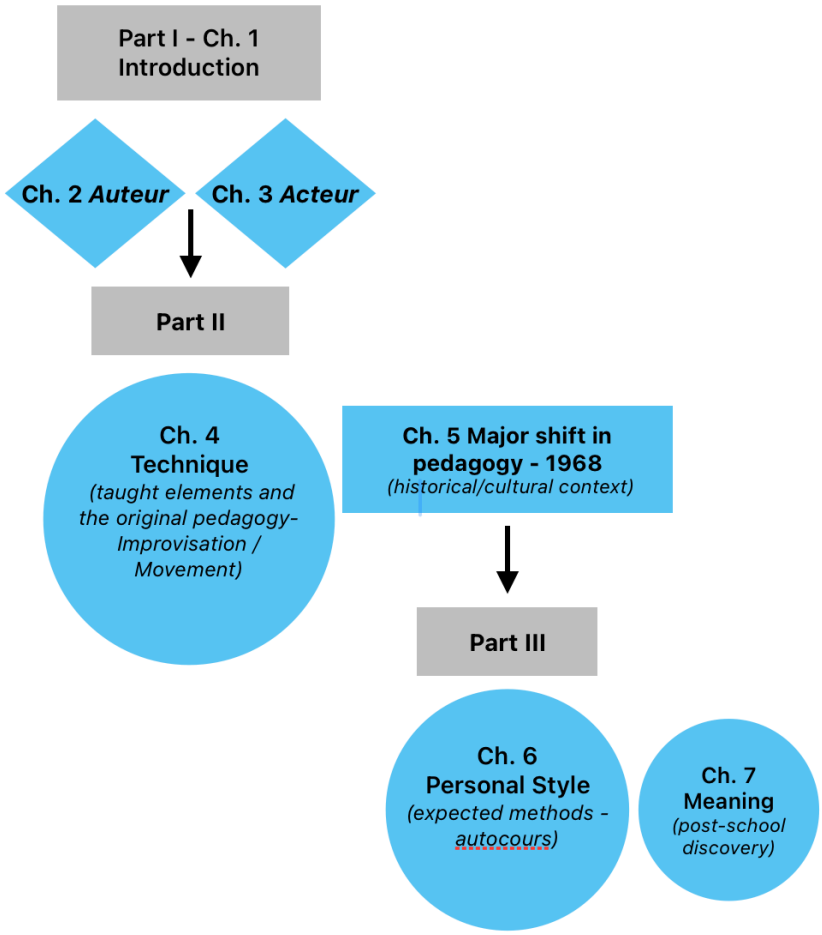


Figure 1: Visualisation of thesis structure

Chapters

The first part of the project concerns itself with defining the *acteur-auteur* through an historical tracing of the movements and practices that lead to the term's development. Dividing the title, the work begins in the second chapter which traces the evolution of the concept of the *auteur*/'author' through its romantic literary roots to its adoption in reference to a quality of director in theatre and film. Through the evolution of the concept of the director, a unique relationship between text, writer and writing, performer and director, establishes a distinctive set of qualities to be expected in the work of an *auteur*, laying the groundwork for the projected definition of one labelled as *auteur*, especially

since the title, by its nature, is one that is typically applied posthumously. Two critical frameworks appear in this chapter that help analyse the scope of the pedagogy and the teacher/student relationship: the *auteur* theory of Andrew Sarris provides an overarching categorisation of the aims of the school, while Roland Barthes' 'Death of the Author' later (Chapter 6) provides a relational analysis of the active objects of study– that being the student, their work, and the teacher.

The third chapter builds from the director-*auteur* to the development of the actor whose practice engages with, or rejects, text through their practice which elicits a similar posthumous distinction from the 'classical' or dramatic actors of their time. These 'performers,' 'mimes', 'pantomimes', 'actor managers', or even 'actor-authors' establish a practice that demands distinction while establishing a multifaceted method that echoes some elements of the director-*auteur*. Through the development of their writing, virtuosic performance, satire, and subversion of oppression and censorship, a performer emerges who is reliant on their own abilities to create work in collaboration with those equally in control of their work and craft, rather than relying on the input from an outside authority.

In establishing a definition of practice for the *acteur-auteur*, this thesis shifts to understand how this practice and approach is trained within the pedagogy of Jacques Lecoq, and how it came to be the core distinction of its students' practice. The second part of this work will begin with the fourth chapter, exploring original pedagogical classes of 'improvisation' and 'movement' and how they intersect to develop a writing practice, defined by the student's engagement with presence (or the parallel *neutre* in Lecoq's pedagogy), 'play', and structure–recognised by Lecoq as key elements of dramatic play (rhythm, tempo, space, form, and *durée*). By examining the use and engagement with 'play' within the pedagogy, a framework for emancipatory and

liberatory pedagogies (from Jacques Rancière and Paolo Freire) come into consideration as the project of establishing approaches to knowledge and learning reveal themselves.

The fifth chapter examines the introduction of two key elements of the pedagogy (the *autocours* and *les* e*nquêtes* – or 'investigations') during a remarkable period in France's history: the 'student rebellion' of May 1968. Situating the school in the cultural context of this era allows me to trace the effect of student activism on the pedagogy (and France) as well as a subtle influence from one of the primary communist groups active during the time, the French Maoists. The additions of the practical approaches of the *autocours* and the Maoist-inspired *enquêtes* leads directly to the establishment of the *acteur-auteur* within the pedagogy by providing support to the development of the Lecoq student's writing practice into an auteurial practice.

The third part of this project continues in Chapter 6 with further examination of the pedagogy, analysing the function of the pedagogical tools of the *autocours* and parallel assignments and exercises, while considering the roles and expected engagement between students and teachers. Informed by my own experience as a student of the school, and later as a pedagogical student (during a training *stage*), the analysis of these elements will help to establish how the *acteur-auteur* is shaped and encouraged during the training through a lens of the *auteur* practice previously established in Part I, and post-structural author theory, aided by the framework suggested from Barthes' and his 'Death of the Author', and a proposal of the auteurial pedagogue as 'reader'.

Chapter 2: The *auteur*.
Authority and identity in the search for meaning

Jean Perret's proposal of the title *acteur-auteur* for the Lecoq-trained student (in J. Lecoq, 2006, p. 94) is, at closer inspection, well supported by the fact that Lecoq's writings are littered with references to a 'writing' practice and implied 'authorship' of his students. In his text exploring the function of his pedagogy, *Le Corps Poétique* (2016) (published in English as *The Moving Body* in 2009), Lecoq only refers to his students as 'authors'/*auteurs* once, acknowledging how the development of movement from the observation of animals and natural elements will appear in the peculiarities of characters they begin to make (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 49; J. Lecoq, 2016, p. 69). He does, however, refer to the students' 'writing' practice often (see Chapter 1). He recognizes the inherent link in movement to the writing – the experience of observation leading to physical imitation, then to the writing and creation of their character. In defining the Lecoq student and their work in this way, there is an implication of writing alongside a difference in quality and practice – originality rather than interpretation, action and physicality rather than simply placing pen to paper.

The ambiguity of Lecoq's pedagogical philosophy is in itself a tool for the student (and teacher), as it does not promise any explicit answers or technical 'tricks,' but frames a way of thinking about the making of theatrical work. So, what does the *auteur* add? How might we define an auteurial practice, and how might it manifest in training? To understand, I propose to return to its roots. Through an analysis of three key cross-cultural, cross-media movements, this study reveals shifts in definition that hint at an approach to be applied to artists of a certain practice, while highlighting the specific cultural atmospheres that led to their emergence.

What defines the *auteur*?: a genealogy

There is no direct English translation for the term *auteur*, as it functions as a loan word in most of its uses.[22] The closest terms English possesses are 'author'[23], 'writer', 'creator', or through its association with film theory, 'director' (Corréard, 2013). Its usage in film is unique since not only is the French term itself used there is also an understanding that while it refers to a 'director' of film, it also signifies a specific type or calibre of director. Therefore, its usage in that field needs no translation in English as it has taken on a meaning of its own within this language. In the theatrical realm, however, it is less common, and (according to Patrice Pavis) is perhaps a less honourable title: 'the *auteur* is a theatre director who decides everything without worrying about the intentions of the author of the text. Such an *auteur* imposes his or her own trademark on the whole performance' (2016, p. 20). While clearly critical of the *auteur*, Pavis does highlight a connotation of a single authority in the creative work, be it theatre or film, whether it is deserved or not. While this association perhaps explains the impetus behind the chosen translation of the 'actor-creator' for Lecoq's *acteur-auteur*, it is not entirely satisfactory as it negates a historical context, as well as ontological and pedagogical elements passed on

[22] **The word *auteur* is masculine in the French language but applied more neutrally as a loan word in English (though more often applied to male filmmakers historically). The gendered nature of the French language has a profound sociological effect, and has led to a current discussion around the adoption of more gender neutral language (Giraudo and Morel, 2025, p. 225), but its application to those of other genders in English threatens what could be seen as highlighting a gender bias, even though English nouns are generally epicene. There are two feminisations of the word *auteur*, often used specifically in the context of a female 'writer'–*autrice* and *auteure* (Giraudo and Morel, 2025, p. 227)–but the masculine *auteur* is still often used to refer to a female author (with the presence of the pronoun *l'*). As Hélène Giraudo and Aurélia Morel recognize in their research, there has been a shift to avoid masculine forms of job titles in the contemporary French workplace, but '…it is still commonly used as a generic form in spoken and written language' (2025, p. 226). As this research engages with the idea of the *auteur* as a loan word in English as well as the French definition, though relying perhaps more on its links to the role of a director or the concept of authorship, I will use the term *auteur* to represent the epicene nature of the concept throughout this work.**

[23] 'Author' is perhaps the most correct as the other terms have corelating words in French, i.e. writer/*écrivain,* creator/*créateur,* and director/*metteur en scène* (Corréard, 2013).

to Lecoq students. I will proceed to examine the roots of this term within the primary theories and fields in which it appears, specifically in the film, literature, and theatre of the twentieth century.

A historical examination of the term *auteur* re-establishes certain reverberations that the term has held on to over time. In French, it first appeared as *auctur* or *autor* around the late 1100s as an evolution from the Latin *auctor*, meaning 'originator' or 'advisor'; in law it was used to signify someone who had 'the right to sell', later developing religious connotations (Rey, 2006, p. 261, my translation). The original root comes from *augere* which in French translates to *faire croître,* in English, 'to make grow', which itself is derived from *auctoritas*, or 'to gain authority' (Rey, 2006, p. 261, my translation). Amongst Medieval Christians, *auctor* was used in terms of someone who 'founds or establishes'[24] in social and religious senses, 'or sets a representative of God'[25] (Rey, 2006, p. 261, my translation).

When looking at its original appearance in English, it appears in Medieval literature as '*aucteur',* referring to an author, or writer, who was 'thought to derive their authority from the wisdom of the past and ultimately from God' (Wexman, 2003, p. 9). During the Renaissance, the author was an agent of 'cause' or 'authority' in reference to the new legal discussions occurring around the development of printing technology and the new issues of access they presented (MacCabe, 2003, p. 31).

As the term *auteur* evolved across various fields, it retained its foundational meanings of 'originator', 'authority', one who makes something 'grow', and even one who holds the 'right to sell'. Although creative fields in the West have attempted to

[24] '*celui qui fonde et établit*' (Rey, 2006, p. 261).
[25] *'sert à désigner Dieu*' (Rey, 2006, p. 261). It is interesting to note the French historical dictionary consulted in this passage warned specifically against confusing '*auctor'* with *'actor',* which is derived from *agere* or 'to act' (Rey, 2006, p. 261), which implies not only a link between the two but a common confusion between the terms.

divorce themselves from organised (primarily Christian) religions in general, there remains a spiritual element that has transcended time and medium. While it appears in different ways in diverse movements, from Antonin Artaud's demand for the return of 'spirituality'[26] in the theatre during the Avant Garde movement, to recognition of the '*élan* of the soul' (Sarris, 1962, p. 562) in Andrew Sarris' '*auteur* theory' of cinema, it seems to have first appeared in the realm of literary theory as the root of what might be more contemporarily presented as the indefinable element of 'genius'.

The beginnings of an *auteur* theory as we understand it in English have been remarked upon by M. H. Abrams as originating, in concept, within the Romantic literary movement of the early 1800s. At this time, poetry as a form began to shift from a method of replicating what the author observed to an imaginative representation of internal attitudes and appetites[27], and the concept of the author's 'spirit' became regarded as not only inspiration for creating works of art, but an element that can become detached from the author and inhabit the work in question. From this view, three angles of criticism were developed within the Romantic movement, as Abrams writes: 'One looks to an author for the explanation of his work; another reads an author out of his work; and the third reads a work in order to find its author in it' (1981, p. 19). In other words, this involves approaching a work as something unique because of the author's identity, approaching something as a record or reconstruction of the author, or approaching something as a sort of window to the soul of the author. In each view of the work the author's being (or 'spirit') holds value, and their identity cannot entirely be separated from their work. With this view, Abrams notes, a romantic critic might assume to understand every personal

[26] Artaud was inspired by Eastern Asian religions and performance practices encountered during colonial expositions popular at the turn of the twentieth century (Appler, 2016, p. 20).
[27] Abrams' book *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1981) uses this metaphorical language to distinguish between these two views–ne being an author's ability to represent what they see (as a mirror), the other to expose elements of life that had previously been ignored or left in darkness (as a lamp) (p. 17).

detail of the author through an examination of their work, as the work is inherently a part of them as a product of their 'spirit' (1981, p. 19). This translates directly to American film critic (and surrogate father of *auteur* theory in film) Andrew Sarris's concept of the *auteur* in film. In a later reflection on his original thoughts on *auteur* theory, he notes that 'a director's formal utterances (his films) tell us more about his artistic personality than do his informal utterances (his conversations)' (2003, p. 24). This positionality in regards to an artistic presentation of an artist's self within their creative work becomes the basis of *auteur* theory in film, which in future is split between two schools of thought: 'Romantic' auteurism in France and later America, and structuralist-auteurism which emerges in England in the late 1960s-early 70s (Wexman, 2003, p. 5), influenced by the French post-structuralists the same era.

The roots of 'auteurism'–the theatre 'director'

From this point forward in this 'authorial' discourse, the 'author' shifts from an English, romantic literary 'genius' to the French *auteur* of the theatre; distinct from the French 'author', this theatrical rebel was intent on overthrowing a literary hierarchy while firmly rooted in a historically authoritarian control over theatrical production. To clarify the difference between the two, the term 'author' will now refer to the English definition of simply 'one who writes' in both French and English contexts, whereas *auteur* will continue to expand, referring to the artistic figure that emerges from the various creative movements I will continue to outline, highlighted by a few key examples.

The position of the *auteur* in theatre and film is deeply entangled with the role of the director, a concept itself that has existed formally for just over a century. The title, as we know it, only emerged as part of a theory presented by theatre artist Edward Gordon

Craig[28] in 1905, though the origins of the role itself are somewhat more difficult to trace. In considering the contemporary emergence of the director-*auteur*, director and scholar Avra Sidiropoulou defines 'auteurism' as 'the creative process of those directors who adapt/interfere with/deconstruct the playwright's original script or construct their own, having developed a unique style, a trademark that characterizes their work' (2011, p. 1). **This approach parallels the idea of 'Total Theatre', derived from German director Richard Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, an aesthetic approach that combined artistic disciplines into one 'Artwork of the Future' (Innes and Shevtsova, 2013, p. 54). This multi-faceted and multi-media approach to theatre indicates the work of a director who is interested in every aspect of the theatrical production, often a visual artist themselves drawn to a more cinematic presentation on stage (using certain lighting techniques or more episodic structures in their work) and often led by a more physical approach to their work (Innes and Shevtsova, 2013, p. 147).** Borrowing the term *auteur* from film theory, Sidiropoulou links transformative moments in history such as the emergence of the 'director' and the Avant Garde, to the theatrical director-*auteur* who appeared later in the twentieth century, such as Anne Bogart, Peter Brook, Ariane Mnouchkine, and Robert Wilson among many others.

Before the emergence of the first directors, 'actor-managers' took upon themselves any producing or director-like roles, but with the introduction of technological design elements (and the wonders produced by electricity) into the theatrical space, as well as the popularity of 'spectacle', the necessity for one controlling authority arose in order to keep track of the new staging elements (Sidiropoulou, 2011, pp. 11–12). This

[28] Edward Gordon Craig (1972-1966) was a British actor, set designer, and director, known for his theoretical writings on theatre and his conceptualisation of the working relationship between actor and director.

role, titled the *metteur-en-scène*, a term still used to mean 'director' in French, signalled the birth of not only director but the stage manager (Sidiropoulou, 2011, pp. 11–12). There is, in fact, some confusion as to whom to title the ‘first’ director. Sidiropoulou cites the first recognized 'stage director' as Duke Georg Saxe-Meiningen, who formed his company, The Meiningen Company, in Germany in 1866 (Sidiropoulou, 2011, pp. 11–12), while Daniel Kennedy recognises Saxe-Meiningen’s stage manager, Ludwig Chronegk, as the true first director, considering Saxe-Meiningen was not present in rehearsals and primarily concerned with design, though being in control of all elements except for performing or writing (Kennedy, 2005, p. 39). It was Chronegk who would be concerned with the ‘business’ of the actors onstage, directing while ‘standing on a chair ringing a hand-bell’ (Holland, 1987, p. 211).

The Meiningen Company, and Chronegk specifically, were inspirational to Constantin Stanislavski and the Moscow Art Theatre, who, during their company’s second visit to Russia in 1890, introduced Stanislavski to their production techniques, such as intense historical research behind costume and design, as well as intense background identities for all extras in large crowd scenes (Holland, 1987, p. 211).[29] It was here that Stanislavski was introduced to Chronegk’s approach to rehearsal, which he refers to as a 'despotic', though admits to 'ashamedly' appreciating his style (Stanislavski in Holland, 1987, p. 211). Before the arrival of Chronegk and the Meiningen Company in Russia, there had already been established a strong tradition of actor training and ensemble work. This indicates that while their performances and perhaps over engagement with Naturalism in their theatre, while influential, were by no means

[29] The Meiningen Company was made up of seventy highly-trained actors, all of whom would take up roles of background crowd members in scenes which required them, no matter their role in the drama or ‘star quality’ (Tresidder, 1936, p. 470).

matched by their introduction of the director's authority over the process of theatrical production.

What perhaps remains from the influence of Chronegk on Stanislavski's work is the treatment of plays and texts, as observed by Peter Holland:

> Frequently the play chosen for the exercise of power is deliberately less than excellent since the play then offers less internal resistance or contradiction to the imposition of will, and can be steamrollered into a form of representation that resists and submerges whatever the text might subvert the thematic model imposed by the directors will. The autocrat stands revealed by the complete way in which his will has been imposed over the play. (1987, p. 211)

The director's ability to entirely overpower a text with their own vision, as observed by Holland in reference to Stanislavski's style, not only inferred a lack of quality on the side of the text, but the distinct abuse of the ineptness of a text to serve as material to be formed in to the 'autocrat's' vision. From its inception, issues of power and control are at play within the development of the role of director, submitting any creative work on behalf of a production to the ultimate authority of a director's vision.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the theatre in France was revitalised after decades of censorship on popular performers and restrictions on the licensed theatres (McCormick, 1994, p. 146). Two experimental forms of theatre began to emerge in opposition to the established romantic style of theatre, which was disliked in the Third Republic and viewed as a 'detrimental, anti-patriotic and immoral movement that corrupted the youth' (Naugrette, 2024, p. 253) perhaps due to its fixation on the struggles of marginalised people and flawed heroes or rulers (Naugrette, 2024, p. 252). One of these forms was defined by its dedication to hyper realism (naturalism) while the other (symbolism) was almost against realism,

presenting characters as symbolic of 'psychic impulses' or a scene as motif representing a greater metaphor or meaning (Naugrette, 2024, p. 255). While each style borrowed elements from each other, and both naturalism and symbolism were concerned with 'the drama of life' rather than staying within more traditional and formulaic dramatic plot structures, what remained the same was the precedence of the author who often experimented between the genres (Naugrette, 2024, pp. 254–255).

A creative hierarchy had long been established beginning with the playwright and moving downward towards the director (or actor-managers), and then to the actors. This was a period of opulence and naturalistic designs in the theatre that would be wildly contrasted by the arrival of Antonin Artaud and his theatrical peers of the Avant Garde, and parallel movements of the early twentieth century.[30] **This emergence of the theatrical Avant Garde was ultimately inspired by the work of Alfred Jarry. His landmark production *Ubu Roi* at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre in Paris in 1896, combined a number of popular performance techniques, such as clown, unique physical styles and mask to draw out the farcical subject matter of its text, which itself helped inspire the theoretical writings of Antonin Artaud (Sidiropoulou, 2011, p. 13) (I will discuss this further in Chapter 3).**

No doubt influenced by the creative chaos that *Ubu Roi* and Jarry had provoked, Craig presented his ideas on what the director could be, identifying a form of theatre in which the playwright is not the ultimate authority.

> When he [the stage director] interprets the plays of the dramatist by means of his actors, his scene-painters, and his other craftsmen, then he is a craftsman—a master

[30] **According to historian John Henderson, 'the first' Avante Garde, between 1886-1894 was a reaction to the stagnation of the commercial theatres and the establishment of alternative independent theatres, such as André Antoine's Théâtre Libre, founded in 1887 (1971, pp. 13–14).**

> craftsman; when he will have mastered the use of actions, words, line, colour, and rhythm, then he may become an artist. Then we shall no longer need the assistance of the playwright - for our art will then be self-reliant. (Craig in Sidiropoulou, 2011, p. 4).

Not only concerned with establishing the role of the director as the authority in theatre, Craig also wanted to reframe the director as an individual whose role is not to simply 'interpret' a dramatic text. This idea echoes throughout the *auteur*-related movements, later to be reflected in the *auteur* theory of French and American cinema, as well as within the Lecoq pedagogy itself. Interpretation of pre-existing work maintains the authority of the source, the text or the writer, so an artist whose work defies interpretation, reshaping a text or simply doing without it entirely, completely shifts the power structure as well as what is necessary in a method of theatrical (or cinematic) creation. Authority is claimed in creation, in action, and the *auteur* is forced not only to function as originator, but executor of the creative pursuit. As articulated by Artaud:

> If, then, the author is the man who arranges the language of speech and the director is his slave…this man is merely an artisan, an adapter, a kind of translator eternally devoted to making a dramatic work pass from one language into another; this confusion will be possible and the director will be forced to play second fiddle to the author only so long as there is a tacit agreement that the language of words is superior to others and that the theater admits none other than this one language. (1958, p. 119)

Artaud's thoughts not only express frustration with the authority of written language but show that this element of 'translation' or 'interpretation' ultimately leads to the subjugation of the director. Again, he questions not only if the playwright should be in control of the creative endeavour, but whether the text should be. Lecoq notes that the turn of the twentieth century marks the 'rediscovery of the human body' (Evans, 2008, p.

1) through the integration of more physical styles of theatre, physical education, and the newfound interest in training the actors' bodies. Text was shifted to the side, and directors and actor-trainers were able to develop their theatre practices through the exploration of the limits of their actors' bodies and their expressive capacities. In most cases this afforded actors more creative agency within their work, but not without exception.

While Craig's ideas shaped what it means to be a theatrical director, they present certain ideological difficulties, especially considering his thoughts on the ideal actor as the 'über-marionette' – basically a human puppet 'subordinating their personalities to the directors rudimentary precepts' (Sidiropoulou, 2011, p. 21). The desire to dominate the performer, in many ways, complimented reports of his extraordinary misogyny, antisemitism, and support of fascist rule (Burt, 2024, p. 340). Control and authority were clearly of the utmost importance to his dream of the consummate director as well as the ideal acting training institution (which manifested as his blessedly short-lived Arena Goldoni in Florence), which functioned under the expectation of complete subjugation of other artists to his will (Burt, 2024, p. 334). Through techniques of isolation, demands of 'loyalty', 'discipline', and 'obedience', Craig controlled his students' every action while claiming he was working to create a theatre that contrasted the text-based, overly commercialised work being produced in London at the time (Burt, 2024, p. 330). Feeling challenged by the power held by the text in theatre (strengthened by his other insecurities of being unpopular in an industry where his mother, Ellen Terry, dominated as a performer), he moved to create a role for himself where he had the control of the stage. His work led to the development of the director in a contemporary sense, as well as the

stereotype of the all-powerful, authoritarian, temperamental director, which lingers on in the discourses around the role in contemporary performance practices.[31]

The lineage of the director as *auteur* is only recognisable when looking back through history as this term was only attributed to theatre directors of the 1970s onward, though their roots are clearly established in the Avant Garde. Though rooted in a historically tracible practice, the *auteur* gets their title, as we understand it now, from the influence of the future. As Sidiropoulou mentions, the term *auteur* in theatre comes from the film theory of the same name, developed in response to various experiments emerging from French filmmakers, and ultimately adapted as criteria for a certain class of director, and classification of American Film.

Auteur theory in film

The first seeds of auteurism in film were sown by Alexandre Astruc in his 1948 essay '*Naissance d'une nouvelle avant-garde: la caméra-stylo*' ('Birth of a new avant-garde: the camera-pen'). A New Wave director and theorist himself, Astruc presents the idea of the camera's relationship to the director as a pen to the writer, ultimately to be manipulated in such a way to create work as worthy of recognition as great works of art or writing (Sidiropoulou, 2011, p. 1). While these ideas were not popular at first, they became the foundations for *auteur* theory as we know it through further development and adaptation by François Truffaut and Andrew Sarris, as they suggested an appealing metaphor to the desired authority of the early film director.

The term '*auteur* theory', in reference to a specific theory or categorisation of film or a kind of 'director' (or *metteur en scène)*, was solidified by American film critic

[31] Copeau, with his own authoritarian tendencies in his school and theatre, spent time with Craig in Florence and found him both a 'genius' and 'disconcerting' (Copeau in Baldwin, 2013, p. 74).

Andrew Sarris in his essay 'Notes on Auteur Theory in 1962'. Previously referred to as '*la politique des auteurs'* ('the politics of authors') in *Cahiers du Cinema*, a French publication concerned with the cinematic arts and populated by the writings of critics (who, uniquely, were mostly film makers themselves), Sarris outlines in his essay what defines an *auteur*, building off what the *Cahiers* had already proposed through the work of André Bazin and Truffaut. To avoid confusion, he proposed clarification in terms, stating, 'Henceforth, I will abbreviate "*la politique des auteurs*" as the *auteur* theory to avoid confusion' (Sarris in Buscombe, 1981, p. 22, italic s in original). Confusion, naturally, ensued as there was no clear definition or delineation between the two, nor was there a functioning translation in English, let alone any matching English (American or British) terminology (Sarris, 1962, p. 561). The clearest difference between the two is that Sarris' theory wished to categorise a certain kind of creative work while the original *politique* was somewhat controversial in that it hoped to signify the kind of work that defied classification (Buscombe, 1981, p. 22).

The original defining element of the *auteur* in cinema, according to French critic and director François Truffaut, was an ability to take material and transform it into something imbued with the *auteur'*s personality, rather than simply an effective replication of a script or text (Buscombe, 1981, p. 23). This perspective is shared by Bazin, who agrees an *auteur*'s work is defined by the ability to separate the work from any suspicion that it originated from anywhere other than the director's imagination (Buscombe, 1981, p. 24). This positionality stemmed from Truffaut himself as a rebellion against what was termed 'Traditions of Quality', the power held by writers within the French cinema at the time, whose work was made up primarily of adapting popular novels into screenplays (Caughie, 1981, p. 35). These films were overshadowed by American films which had been banned during the German Occupation of France and

were flooding back into the French cinemas with the latest and greatest Hollywood had to offer, feeding the cinephile culture of the French and challenging the native film making traditions–those 'Traditions of Quality' (Wollen, 2009, p. 455).

Truffaut's key disagreements with this popular French style of filmmaking rested on two main concepts: '1. A constant and deliberate care to be *unfaithful* to the spirit as well as the letter; 2. A very marked taste for profanation and blasphemy' (Truffaut, 1954, p. 12, italics in original). The latter rule refers to a spate of popular films with religious subjects and yet anti-religious messages that had been released at the time, which is interesting if not hugely relevant (aside from painting Truffaut himself as a clearly devout Catholic). The first refers again to an idea that a creative work, in this case the original story or novel, loses itself as it is forced by other men, who are not the author, into a different form.[32] He observes that 'characters disappear, others are invented, the script deviates little by little from the original and becomes a whole, formless but brilliant: a new film, step by step makes its solemn entrance into the "Tradition of Quality"' (Truffaut, 1954, p. 13). This impulse by a screenwriter to take what they wanted of a text and leave the rest was countered by the practice of directors who wrote their own stories and dialogue, the *auteurs*, of whom Truffaut recognised the natural instinct to reject the 'Tradition of Quality', and praised it (Truffaut, 1954, p. 16). This served not only as a basis for postwar criticism, but helped to create the divide between what was considered 'popular' French cinema, and the New Wave and *auteur* cinemas (Hayward and Vincendeau, 2000, p. 6).

[32] In his essay 'A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema' *('Une Certaine Tendance du Cinéma Français')* published in the *Cahiers du Cinéma* in 1954, he references three filmmakers who, at different times, battle with adapting a certain literary text into a film. The first two who try to adapt it are unable to because the original author is still alive, whereas when the author has died, another film maker is frustrated because he would have felt at liberty to enact further changes on the story had the author been alive (Truffaut, 1954, p. 12). The presence of the author, no matter dead or alive, still has an overwhelming influence on their work.

While discourse around the cinema was establishing itself as an important artistic element of French culture, another cultural movement was emerging during this time (specifically, in Paris): existentialism. The *Cahiers* were full of contemplations on the development of existentialist thought (Kouris, 2008, p. 4), especially the strains spearheaded by the work of Jean-Paul Sarte, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus, whose ideas built upon the post-war 'Personalism' of Emmanuel Mounier (1905–1950) (Kouris, 2008, p. 101). Mounier was a devout anti-capitalist (noted by Hugh Gray to be even more critical than Marx) and a great influence to Bazin's work through his denunciation of 'the system' and recognition of the importance of the primacy of 'a philosophy of existence before being a philosophy of essence' (Gray, 1971, p. 5).[33] At its core, Mounier's 'Personalism' was concerned with rejecting the systemisation of people in an attempt to remove agency or creative thought:

> Nothing…is more repugnant than the fondness so common nowadays for a machine to think and act for us, an automatic distributor of solutions and recommendations; such a thing is a barrier to research, an insurance against disquiet (Angst) or any sort of self-testing or the taking of risks. (Mounier in Gray, 1971, p. 3)

His devotion to the individual's ability to think for themselves and resist the mitigation of risks through exterior control (or ultimately, oppression) is reflected in Bazin's own conceptualisation of a director whose identity is so tied to their creative choices.

The rising interest in communism and Marxist theory in France during the postwar period equally supported and popularised Mounier's thinking, providing a basis from which Sartre and Camus' thinking would emerge. Inspired by Mounier's mentorship

[33] A distinction that would later be reflected in Sartre's 'Existentialism is a Humanism' (Kouris, 2008, p. 103).

(Kouris, 2008, p. 109), Sartre would continue to develop his thinking in parallel to Personalism by publishing his *Being and Nothingness* in 1943, which would centre on the idea that a person's 'authenticity of self' is defined by how they choose to interact with the world based on their freedom of choice and self-derived role in society rather than 'submission' to morals or social roles defined by others (Kouris, 2008, p. 102). The concern with individual thought was at the centre of both Sartre and Mounier's thinking, as ultimately, these were the tools necessary to maintain autonomy. Resisting the prescriptions of society and developing your own moralistic approach towards life (without the influence of organised religion, for example) would bring with it true 'authenticity'.

While 'authenticity' was a key concern for Sartre, his conceptions of 'meaning' are at once linked and overshadow authenticity, as one is the pathway to the other. Sartre's existential humanism (first proposed in 1945) presents the case of a human existence determined by action (or 'anguish'), freedom and accountability (or 'abandonment'), and choice at the risk of probability (or 'despair'). He writes:

> **to say that we invent values means neither more nor less than this: life has no meaning *a priori.* Life itself is nothing until it is lived, it is we who give it meaning, and value is nothing more than the meaning that we give it (2007, p. 51).**

This early thinking from Sartre, before his engagement with Marxist critique, highlights the concept of 'being-in-situation', which describes the intersection of 'facticity' and 'transcendence'. 'Facticity' takes into consideration the facts of our existence – our origins, abilities, strengths, and so forth – as well as the 'others' who affect us. 'Transcendence', meanwhile, describes the way in which we approach and respond to these limitations through the 'intentionality' of consciousness (Flynn,

2006, pp. 65–66). In relation to concepts of 'authenticity' within Sartre's existential thought, one lives inauthentically when one avoids choice or allows oneself to be defined by one's facticity (Flynn, 2006, pp. 74–75). As Flynn summarises,

> **[w]hatever identity we have is either imposed from outside … or is sustained by our ongoing, self-defining existential project, our fundamental 'Choice'. It is this failure to coincide with ourselves that is the basis both of our freedom and of our capacity for self-deception. We are fundamentally a work in progress, a story in the process of being written (2006, p. 69)**

To understand individuality, and enact it, is to be authentic, indicating that facticity is transcendable (Flynn, 2006, p. 67). Through determining an identity that is based on action and an individual's 'will', Sartre's 'man' makes themself through their actions and how they are reflected in the perspectives of those around them, ultimately leaving the definition of their life and their identity entirely at the mercy of their own created 'meaning'.

Concerns of 'meaning' and 'will' will continue to echo throughout this exploration of the *auteur* and, later in this thesis, the training of the *acteur-auteur.* In considering the style of teaching which will be necessary to train such an artist, 'will' will be tied to emancipatory pedagogy of Jacques Rancière and provide a lens through which to understand the unique engagement of the student, whereas 'meaning' will establish itself as a primary concern of the *auteur.* Until that point, we must return to cinema and the defining *auteur* theory as proposed by Andrew Sarris.

Auteur theory: technique, personal style, and meaning

Across the Atlantic, inspired by the work of the *Cahiers*, French filmmakers and critics, Andrew Sarris was working to develop his overarching theory of the *auteur* as a tool to examine the American cinema. His definition, while not entirely straightforward nor unchanging, comes with a diagram I recreate here. In his words, 'the *auteur* theory may be visualised as three concentric circles: the outer circle is technique; the middle circle, personal style; and the inner circle interior meaning' (1962, p. 563. italics in original).

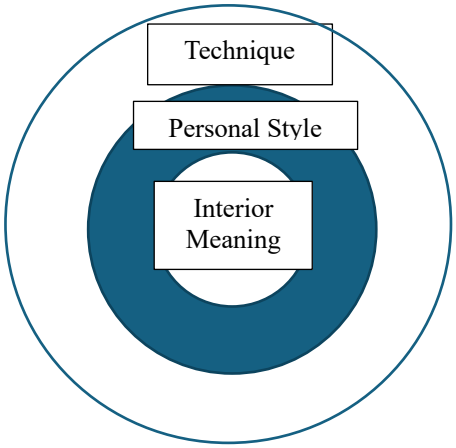


Figure 2: Visual representation of Sarris' *auteur* theory.

The baseline demand of the *auteur* is that they have the 'technical ability' to direct. Within the realm of film, this requires a technical ability to create (in relationship to technology and skill), to execute the basic understanding of the elements needed to make a film, and the ability to guide that production in a direction towards completion. The second circle of 'personal style' is slightly more complex, regarding the more aesthetic preferences of the director regarding the shape of the film, be it overall design of the piece, length and frame of the shots, timing of the actors, style of lighting, etc. The final, most important, and complex element is the injection of 'interior meaning'. Sarris' text is ultimately ambiguous as to what it means by 'interior meaning', but it rests

somewhere between the director's 'vision of the world', 'attitude toward life', and more philosophically, the '*élan* of the soul' (Sarris, 1962, pp. 562–563, italics in original). '*Élan*[34]*'* (a French term) is somewhat difficult to translate, but roughly means 'springing forth' or 'gathering momentum'[35], whereas by 'soul', Sarris clarifies slightly as 'intangible difference between one personality and another' (Sarris, 1962, p. 563), which in many ways reflects the Personalism at the root of Sartre's Existentialism. Sarris notes this 'interior meaning' is also referred to by other cineastes such as Truffaut who describes this as 'the temperature of the director on the set' (Sarris, 1962, p. 562).

Sarris' ideas have garnered fierce criticism, especially as his theory began to shift and change over time. Later in his career, Sarris himself reflected that auteurism should be approached as more as a set of guidelines for evaluation or criteria in distinguishing films as unique – more a critical tool than an aesthetic (2003, p. 28). The fiercest of his critics, American film critic Pauline Kael, launches a systematic demolition of his model of *auteur* criticism and the circles of quality he devises only a few months after his theory is published. On 'technique', the outer circle, Kael challenges judgement based on technical ability, citing that often what is truly good is experimentation (or novel mistakes).[36] She quotes poet and multi-disciplinary artist Jean Cocteau on this point – 'the only technique worth having is the technique you invent for yourself' (Cocteau in Kael,

[34] Both Lecoq and Copeau use this term when referencing quality of movement. Copeau refers to it in observing the 'joy or fantasy' of child's play (Copeau, 1990, p. 155).

[35] It implies, simultaneously, a momentum, a tension, an impulse or impulsion. Sarris notes: 'If I could describe the musical grace note of that momentary suspension, and I can't, I might be able to provide a more precise definition of the *auteur* theory' (Sarris, 1962, p. 563). His likening this moment to a grace note implies executing a predetermined flourish (as grace notes are always written into music by the composer). The *'élan'* may be better thought of as a creative absence, like the moment in a piece of music where a musician pauses between notes, waiting a millisecond longer than expected before striking the last note the audience anticipates, resolving the melodical statement. They are adding nothing but their own creativity to the moment between notes, playing on the audience's expectations from the pre-established rhythms and patterns of the composition.

[36] There are liberties taken within Sarris' theory, as even to this point Sarris identifies the director Luis Buñuel as an *auteur* before he developed a grasp of the technical aspects of directing (Sarris, 1962, p. 562). It is clear that identifying the *auteur* is inherently subjective.

1963, p. 14). On the middle circle, ‘personal style’, she points out that when the director’s influence is most visible in a film, the audience becomes focused on their tried-and-true tricks rather than the film itself.[37] To this point, she references Alfred Hitchcock and how his success as a director resides not in his personality or personal style, but rather his understanding of the audience and his ability to manipulate them in order to evoke the desired response (1963, p. 15). On the final circle, ‘interior meaning’, she states that this circle does nothing but clarify what the *auteur* critic is looking for in their director, not so much a ‘meaning’, but rather a ‘personality’:

> Their ideal auteur is the man who signs a long-term contract, directs any script that's handed to him, and expresses himself by shoving bits of style up the crevasses of the plots. If his 'style' is in conflict with the story line or subject matter, so much the better - more chance for tension. (1963, p. 17)

This seems more of a continuation of her thoughts towards ‘personal style’. However, it does reveal a major conflict within the American adaptation of the *auteur*, that being the assignment of value to commercial films, the similarity between French and American auteurism here being a shift in power away from the writer. While Kael bemoans the director who will take a bad, commercially viable script and do what he wants with it, the French *auteur* desires recognition for their artistic ability and for their art (their films) to be valued in society as such. The auteur does not want to simply take the badly written script and remake it, but to have authority over the art they are creating and appear as equals to the all-powerful writer. Invoking Astruc’s original metaphor that launched the *auteur* into being, Bazin reflects:

> Today we can say that at last the director writes in film. The image – its plastic composition and the way it is set

[37] ‘The smell of a skunk is more distinguishable than the perfume of a rose; does that make it better?’ (Kael, 1963, p. 15).

> in time…has at its disposal more means of manipulating reality and of modifying it from within. The film-maker is no longer the competitor of the painter and the playwright, he is, at last, the equal of the novelist. (1967, pp. 39–40)

Bazin's point invokes the desire for the evolution of the popular view of filmmaker to become that of reverence and adoration like what would be owed to the great artists and writers of the time. In a later reflection on the *auteur* theory, published in 1969, Peter Wollen reflects on the *auteur* as the director who

> does not subordinate himself to another author; his source is only a pretext, which provides catalysts, scenes which fuse with his own preoccupations to produce a radically new work. Thus the manifest process of performance, the treatment of a subject, conceals the latent production of a quite new text, the production of the director as an auteur (2009, p. 466).

This preoccupation with the artist being 'subordinated' to a text or writer, or demanding to be raised to the status of other artists, highlights the distaste for the functioning system, as well as the advancement of film as a medium requiring a greater critical engagement.

Kael's criticisms of the *auteur* were also concerned with the inherent maleness of the industry. As Sarris himself summarises: 'Auteurists were invariably male (at least according to Pauline Kael). They never bathed because it took time away from their viewing of old movies…They preferred trash to art' (2003, p. 22). I have not yet come across a critique of the *auteur*'s hygiene (aside from Sarris' reflection), but his mockery of Kael's observation on gender does nothing to challenge it. Sarris simply does not engage with the conversation of how gender influences the ability of women to take part in the film industry, let alone how they might achieve the status of *auteur.* His examples are entirely male, though women were indeed making their marks on the film industry at this time in history, thereby

accentuating the history of exclusion and misogyny in film.[38] The category of *auteur* would evolve to include more female filmmakers as Sarris' ideas were adapted by other critics and more women took up the position of director, specifically in France where the events of May '68 (which I will describe in my fifth chapter) intensified the call for women's rights and the development of 'women's cinema' (Vincendeau, 1989, p. 153). Film scholar Ginette Vincendeau points out that for many female directors, specifically in France, the *auteur* cinema was both a tool for development and provided a conflict of identity:

> **Given that the model for the auteur is still the individual genius, or at least the artist driven by internal necessity towards self-expression, this has had the consequence of pushing French women directors into heightened individualism and alignment with male 'colleagues'... The refrain from French women directors is 'men have the same problems (1989, p. 156).**

This attitude proved to serve more as a tactic to adapt to a male-led industry and perspective than an invitation to create 'radically new work' by an 'un-subordinated' author (to echo Wolin's definition).

Outside of Kael's critiques, perhaps the strongest challenge to Sarris' model of the *auteur* was the idea of individuality as an indicator of 'quality'. Bazin's own critique, presented in *Cahiers* as a note to the publication itself as well as his fellow critics, pushes against the immortalisation of the director as a sole figure of 'genius', referencing the roots of Romantic theory in his own exploration of *la politique des auteurs*, and the

[38] This includes writings from Truffaut who was told explicitly by the editor of the right-wing publication *Arts – Lettres – Spectacles* that his writings would no longer be published if he continued to make discriminatory remarks against women and 'homosexuals' (Neupert, 2013, p. 252).

tradition of the artist's struggle for personal expression despite the pressures of society (Buscombe, 1981, p. 28). He writes,

> there can be no definitive criticism of genius or talent which does not first take into consideration the social determinism, the historical combination of circumstances, and the technical background which to a large extent determines it" (Bazin in Buscombe, 1981, p. 26).

Sarris disagrees with this perspective, arguing that 'historical determinism' has no role in the development of the *auteur*. He says that '[i]f directors and other artists cannot be wrenched from their historical environments, aesthetic is reduced to a subordinate branch of ethnography' (Sarris in Buscombe, 1981, pp. 26–27). Kael responds in exasperation, pointing out that aesthetics is, in fact, a branch of ethnography (Kael, 1963, p. 17). To ignore historical or sociological elements in order to find the *auteur'*s 'pristine state', 'it' factor, or as Sarris puts it, the '*élan*', 'reduces aesthetics to a form of idiocy' (Kael, 1963, p. 17).

A later critique of the *auteurist* perspective comes in the form of validation from the Hollywood studios which produced the canonical *auteur* films of the time. Thomas Schatz's pulls directly from Bazin when he desires recognition of 'the genius of the system' (Bazin in Schatz, 2009, p. 526), illuminating the ingenuity of the whole studio complex as opposed to simply that of the director. *Auteur* cinema in America, as previously mentioned, moved from the 'Old Hollywood' system of writers and directors into veneration of *auteurs* who seemed to rebel against the constraints of the studio system and yet, as Schatz points out, whose successes arose specifically because of how they engaged with the studios (2009, p. 524). There was an established narrative that these filmmakers succeeded 'despite' the controlling studio environments, and yet, the

majority of 'canonical' *auteurs* seem to have been provided with extraordinary control by the studios, including input on script development, editing and casting:

> The quality and artistry of all these films were the product not simply of individual human expression, but of a melding of institutional forces. In each case the 'style' of a writer, director, star—or even a cinematographer, art director, or costume designer—fused with the studio's production operations and management structure, its resources and talent pool, its narrative traditions and market strategy. And ultimately any individual's style was no more than an inflection on an established studio style. (Schatz, 2009, p. 525)

This collaboration between the studios and their *auteurs*, rather than the disguised function of an individual genius held back by risk averse studio executives, was in Schatz view the key to *auteur* cinema, repeating Bazin's own thoughts on the 'classical art' of American cinema, that art lies 'not only the talent of this or that filmmaker, but the genius of the system' (Bazin in Schatz, 2009, p. 526). For Peter Wollen, however, this 'system' creates further demand for the use of the *auteur* criticism which focuses on the individual in order to identify what creative vision truly 'belonged' to or 'originated' from the *auteur*. Since film is by its nature a wildly collaborative form, the director cannot have the same level of control over its creation as, say, with theatre. As Wollen states, 'this explains why the *auteur* theory involves a kind of decipherment, decryptment. A great many features of films analysed have to be dismissed as indecipherable because of "noise" from the producer, the cameraman, or even the actors' (2009, p. 465). The true *auteur*, from this view, must be seen through the interference of the lowly specialists who are forced to enact his vision. This idea indicates, however, that the *auteur* can only be recognised posthumously, after a canon of their work is produced, and evaluated by the analysis of the structures of each film to understand an individual film to recognise the

semantic structures at play and, thereby, the presence of the director (Wollen, 2009, p. 468).

Towards the author's death

The phenomenon of introducing the role of an author/*auteur* into an artistic medium historically seems to emerge from a need or desire for a shift of power within the field. The *auteur* becomes the artist that can resist comparison to previous work and cannot be restrained by the texts of others. It becomes a title for an underappreciated artist of a certain capacity or medium or is used to signify an approach that demands control over artistic production. **The notion of the director as 'author' is further established by the expectation that their work presents a kind of 'personal expression', often working without a writer or text (Innes and Shevtsova, 2013, p. 147), but also presenting a unique approach to practice that often relies on control and stylistic or design elements. While Stanislavski may have had his prompt book, German director Max Reinhardt had his 'director's book', a complete manual recording excruciating detail of actors movements (including vocal tone, expression, gesture, blocking, etc.) as well as all technical elements of production (Innes and Shevtsova, 2013, p. 151). For Peter Brook's 'Total Theatre' (inspired heavily by the work of Artaud) the fourth wall was done away with entirely, forcing the actors and audience to intermingle, and restricting theatrical spectacle to the actor's physicality and performance rather than overreliance on set design or textual lyricism (Innes and Shevtsova, 2013, p. 157). Robert Wilson storyboards each important moment of the piece before rehearsals even begin, creating 'visual books' detailing what his production will look like regardless of any creative input that might come later**

(Innes and Shevtsova, 2013, p. 161). Each approaches their work with unique vision, though also with an extraordinary creative reach and control.

The unfortunate inference of an 'autocratic' or 'despotic' impulse at the heart of the role of director is unfortunately not only stereotypical but earned through the experiments (and misbehaviours) of its forefathers (and they are all fore-*fathers*). The evolution and emergence of the *auteur* in theatre involves either an expansion of their power or softening of it. Their practice becomes reliant on the engagement with the other performers and artists into a more collaborative space (such as with Ariane Mnouchkine, Peter Brook, Robert Wilson, etc.), or affirms the control and power of a playwright over a whole production (in the case of Samuel Beckett). The director-*auteur* suggests the director with a power which is 'other' – demanding the freedom of (and from) a writer, and the ability to fill their rehearsal room with the artists necessary to inspire, kinetically, the content of the production.

The *auteur* theory of film emerged from a critique of popular cinema that led to the recognition of certain directors whose work challenged the established hierarchies of the film industry. While the French were frustrated by the lack of recognition for a certain type of art and artist, the American evolution of film theory, Sarris' in particular, functioned at once as a critical framework through which to decide whether a director had indeed engaged in an auteurial practice, while simultaneously proposing an aesthetic (perhaps unintentionally) as well as a new icon for artistic adulation. While the question of individualism and hero worship of the *auteur* is still very much a part of the discourse surrounding its theory, at its core there remains a desire for a shift in power (not dissimilar to the advent of the director), as well as a reliance on 'systems' of creation, collaboration, and constant engagement with other creatives and specialists in their practices – be they part of production departments, actors, or producers. Focusing on the

concept of the *auteur* risks obscuring the collaboration integral to these creative forms, and yet there can be no *auteur* without the labour of others.

In these creative fields the *auteur* has usurped power from those originally placed at the height of control, unseating the dominant players to shift values and practices key to their mediums. In literary theory of the twentieth century, however, we find the opposite – the *auteur* (or French 'author') sits atop the hierarchy until it is erased from existence, extinguishing its power. In its removal, the vacuum left by the author gives the reader (or audience) the ability to live and the text its full breadth of potential meaning, rather than existing as an object to be interpreted from its sole creator's perspective.

Post-structuralism and the 'Death of the Author'

While the *auteur* of cinema was coming to life, the author of literary criticism was facing their end. In France, the events of the May 1968 'student' rebellion signalled an enormous cultural and political shift that would (eventually) mean catastrophe for Charles du Gaulle and his right-wing government, including social waves of sexual liberation, feminism, and other upheavals amongst many cultural and educational institutions (which I will discuss further in Chapter 5). While the cultural upheavals of May '68 raged, another revolution was taking place in the field of literary criticism and especially in the thinking of Roland Barthes, whose own author theory would be published shortly after the revolt had begun to die down.[39] The political and cultural climate of France at the time provided an atmosphere already rife with the desire to question the previously established roles of power, which may have shaped the effect Barthes' work had on the cultural sector.

[39] Seán Burke recognises Barthes had been developing this idea for at least five years and was not necessarily influenced by the events that took place (2011, p. 19).

In what could easily be argued as an anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian reframing of the primary actors in the literary industry, Barthes critiques the importance of the author's identity in relationship to their texts, challenging the belief that their personality functions as a code to decipher any work. He wrote that the '*explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* "confiding: in us' (1977, p. 143). This approach was unacceptable to Barthes (and to other post-structuralists such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, among others) because it deified the author, promoting a subjective view of writing, language, and knowledge, which to their thinking, must be abandoned (Burke, 2011, p. 14).

Again, we hear the echoes of rebellion against the authority of the producers of text. Barthes separates words and language from authorial identity by examining them on their own, letting them 'perform' by themselves without the influence of the author's history or personality. In establishing his concept of the '*scriptor'* in rebellion against the author, Barthes introduces a creator that arrives into existence at the same time as their work, declaring the text an 'enunciation', something that exists in a constant present that is not simply a record but a performance with 'no other content…than the act by which it is uttered' (Barthes, 1977, p. 146).[40] It was necessary, then, for the author to not only 'die', but recognition of the fact that the existence of writing was in fact the signification of the absence of the author (Burke, 2011, p. 15).

[40] There is a key cultural element that Seàn Burke recognizes in the realm of French thought, that being of a lack of a 'notion of the self' in literature, which is so intrinsic to Anglo-American thought. The concept is absurd to the French literary critic, as after all: 'It is not something called the self that speaks, but language, the unconscious, the textuality of the text' (Alice J. Jardine in Burke, 2011, p. 16). This separation of the identity of the author and their work, clarified by Barthes demand for their destruction, functioned as a liberation of an ultimate 'meaning' of a text (to which the author could serve as cypher) while simultaneously denying the deification of the author as 'creator', functioning within the realm of literary criticism as a position not unlike Nietzsche's pronouncement 'God is Dead' functioned within western philosophy (Burke, 2011, p. 21).

The extreme demand for the death of the author, though only a 'call to arms' rather than a pronouncement of death (Burke, 2011, p. 27), seems to have been reflective of a specific kind of critic rather than an epidemic within realm of literary criticism. In fact, Burke argues, through his demand for the death of the author Barthes establishes their existence, as well as the existence of the reader (which was his the primary goal) (Burke, 2011, pp. 25, 28). His intense reaction to the evaluation of a text through its relation to its creator is not entirely unique. Burke points out that Stéphane Mallarmé had previously suggested an 'exclusion' of the author from their work (Burke, 2011, p. 9). Other international schools had already considered removing the author, with the best-known theoretical proposal being 'The Intentional Fallacy' of critic William Wimsatt Jr. and philosopher Monroe Beardsley, which had been published in the US in 1946. They argued that the author's own story cannot be used to justify the text as it exists and challenged the critic's inclination to take into consideration the 'intention' of the author over the text itself is flawed. They write 'the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work' (Wimsatt Jr. and Beardsley, 1946, p. 469).[41]

While these qualms are more tailored to the criticism of poetry, it presented a strong case for abandoning the author in literary criticism and succinctly proposes the concept of evaluating a text on its own merits rather than those of its author. As Barthes will conclude thirty years later, 'language knows a "subject", not a "person"' (Barthes,

[41] In 'The Intentional Fallacy' they highlight five main issues with assuming an author as a key to literary work: 1) because a work is crafted by an individual does not imply 'the design or intention as a standard' (Wimsatt Jr. and Beardsley, 1946, p. 469); 2) the complication of how to find the writer's intention outside of the text (especially when it is unclear in the text, because surely that's where it should be clearest); 3) in terms of poetry, that due to the openness of interpretation – 'a poem must not mean but be' (Wimsatt Jr. and Beardsley, 1946, p. 469) it cannot be held to the same qualifying analysis as 'practical messages'; 4) again specifically to poetry, a poem is defined by a 'dramatic speaker's' experience, rather than an author's; 5) the observation that surely every author's intention is to write something that will be revised and then made better '…every author's intention is the same' (Wimsatt Jr. and Beardsley, 1946, p. 470).

1977, p. 145). Though perhaps not the ‘originator’ of the anti-author thought, Barthes’ proposal was by far the most consequential as it centred, for the first time in history, the experience of the reader, proposing a system of valuation not derived from identity politics, publishers, or critics, but rather the work itself and the various ways it could be interpreted. Barthes wrote,

> We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture (1977, p. 146).

The interpretation and value of a text is suddenly opened to all potential readings, forcing the author to not only craft their texts with clearer intention, and the reader to centre their experience of a text as the arbiter of its quality.

Barthes’ proposal remains the prevailing sentiment regarding the relationship between author, reader, and text (supported and echoed through the work of Foucault and Derrida). In his analysis of Barthes’ ‘Pleasures of the Text’, Burke highlights a moment where Barthes suggests the reader might be 'desiring the author', which could be read as a retreat from his extreme positionality, potentially an admittance that the author's power was exaggerated in his call for their death. ’Now that the author is dead’ – Burke summarizes – ‘now that the lesson has been learnt, let us return the author to our circle as a guest whose past transgressions have been forgiven but not entirely forgotten’ (2011, p. 28). While this (very slight) backtracking may seem somewhat outrageous, its effect is ultimately minimal as the death of the author did ultimately lead to the ‘birth of the reader’ – its primary goal. Even if Barthes had admitted to an overreaction to the role of the author, the importance of the reader would remain central to his theory (Burke, 2011, p. 28).

While the reader was never centred in literary criticism until their 'birth' in 1968, the reader/audience/critic is ultimately responsible for what we know of the author or *auteur.* It is challenging to explore the history of artistic movements or cultural shifts in artistic practice because the perspective and analysis always comes from the outside viewer- the critic, the academic, or the audience. There are hints within the thoughts of the Avant Garde theatre artists as to how to *be* or how to *think* like an *auteur*, but most theory that exists reflects on how to *recognise* the *auteur*. Perhaps it is something that is unteachable, perhaps it is a position one can occupy only through the recognition of others. From the perspective of romantic and film theory, I believe the latter is probably true, especially considering Sarris' shift in definition of the theory as a tool for categorisation rather than 'aesthetic' (which I have pointed out earlier). There is, however, the lingering question of the *auteur'*s (and the Lecoq trained actor's) practice and being, perhaps best named by Jim Hiley in his 1988 interview with Lecoq as the 'practitioner as art form' (Hiley quoted in Murray, 2002, p. 35), questioning the importance of the performer's presence in their own work, or *as* their work. For this reason, perhaps, it is time to shift our notice away from the first part of this defining title of the consummate Lecoq student, the *acteur-auteur,* to the second portion – the *acteur.*

In summary of the *auteur*

The image of the author/*auteur* that emerges from these movements tends to reflect either an individual genius fighting on behalf of their art within a hierarchical system of text producers and fine artists, or a petulant and power-hungry stereotype of a self-perceived leader, unwilling to acknowledge their collaborators while subjecting them to the whims of their 'vision'; the overbearing 'author-god' who must be 'killed' in order for the their creation to exist and be enjoyed. Nevertheless, Jacques Lecoq states clearly:

'I remind the actors that they are "auteurs"' (Lecoq in Murray, 2002, p. 25). The implications that come with this title are complicated by the historical contexts and critiques I have outlined. What is perhaps most profound, however, is that this title is consistently applied, historically, to an artist posthumously. Lecoq's description of the student as *auteur* indicates, from a critical view, that the student's work has been analysed and their creative pursuits are imbibed with not only a certain level of 'quality', but a distinct element of practice which will alert a critic or viewer to their artistic ability and status therein. The effect of placing this title on a student, in the midst of their training, equally implies that they must continue to behave as *auteurs* as they approach their work, and that they are working towards something greater than *auteur*, more specifically *acteur-auteur*, which then equally implies the unique approach and practice of the *acteur*. To propose this definition, I will highlight key reverberations through the author/*auteur* movements with a goal to further exploring how Lecoq's pedagogy engages these traits of practice, rebels against them, or encourage their students to develop beyond them through the engagement with key pedagogical tools and techniques.

Definition of practice: the *auteur*
1. Identity/soul/spirit present and palpable in work 2. Interdisciplinary practice in methods of work: (writing, directing, performing, designing, etc.) 3. Originator (rather than interpreter) of work 4. Relationship to writing (or role/ position of writer) in development of work; dichotomy of text vs. body, rejection or adaptation of text. 5. Visual style of work 6. Active collaboration in development work 7. Control/Shift in power; rejection of institution, demand for moving up a hierarchy/ control of artistic project

The analysis of the *auteur* movements reveals some ambiguity as to what or who the *auteur* is, and what defines their practice. Echoes of certain meanings continue to reverberate; the 'individual genius' of Romantic literary author theory, for example, has seemed to shift into something more akin to a 'personal style' from Sarris' *auteur* theory in cinema, or the more mysterious element of the presence of a 'self' or 'spirit' within the created object. There is something not yet quite fathomable about a relationship between a certain type of creator, their identity (soul, spirit, etc.) and their work. It is indicative of a kind of artistic practice but transcends medium. The concept of the 'self' or 'spirit' reflected in the creative work of the director/writer/artist/creative holds a certain value (though not always a positive value). It is reliant on a multi-disciplinarity and reflective not only on the identity of the maker, but a greater meaning within the work itself, thereby qualifying the creator to be referred to as something beyond simply a 'director' or 'writer'. By attaching or imbricating their identity into the work they not only heighten the work, but themselves as artists. It questions of the roots of creativity yet links them simultaneously to a value of implied 'mastery', whereas for the literary author (post-Barthes) must be completely absent (or 'dead') for their craft to be revered. While it could be argued that any form of creative work is inherently imbibed with some element of the creator (be it spirit, love, energy, etc.), what perhaps differs in the work of the *auteur* is the active presence of their identity in their work, from their thousands of miniscule choices, employment of a recognised ensemble or production team, or even their appearance as a character or cameo.

From this perhaps emerges the idea of the *auteur* as originator rather than 'interpreter', and the shifting of power from 'text' or 'writer' to the 'other'– the director, creator, actor, etc. Within Romantic author theory, the soul/identity/spirit became an essential tool in the development of a work/text's meaning, and a cypher to the author's

internal state or previously unexplored elements of the world and society. Simile and metaphor replaced language that would otherwise have replicated the view of the author, transposing what they saw into text rather than exploring sensation with more creative language. It seems that the Romantic period introduced interpretation as a quality of artistic interest rather than mimicry or imitation, using a visual medium, though not visually representational (such as an image or picture), to develop suspension between a reader's intake of information and exercise of imagination. The shift in medium to film or stage poses the challenge of developing a recognisable, visual language through which the audience can understand the *auteur's* perspective, which perhaps leads to the adoption of a more imitational, representational practice rather than the 'interpretation' of the written word.

Both author and *auteur* have their relationship to the 'text', the with 'author' being the originator or creator of a text, while *auteur*, in many ways, becomes the destroyer and resurrectionist. Both create their 'texts', in a way; one forms theirs through a practice of generating text, while the other builds from a source of written word (or other medium) to shape time and space around a performance, reflecting again Bazin's thought of how the director 'writes in film', using it to shift and 'manipulate reality' (1967, pp. 39–40). The preexisting text of a script or screenplay becomes obsolete in the eyes of the *auteur* due to their own practice of writing which comes before or alongside their vision of the play or film. Writing is inherent to the *auteur's* practice; it simply exists alongside or as part of the overarching process and may not necessarily be relegated to the development of a 'text'. While the author is tied to their text and writing practice, the *auteur* must create and maintain an interdisciplinary practice with their own unique perspectives and recognisable stylistic elements which are a direct result of their interdisciplinary virtuosity. The *auteur* must be writer and other. In each authorial

movement it is a unique practice of writing, influenced by interdisciplinary practice, that gives the author/*auteur* their power – their literal authority.

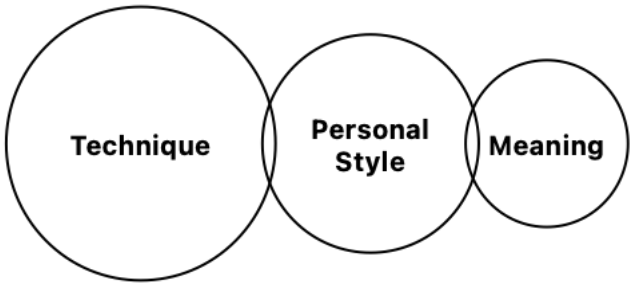
There is an implication of reliance on 'visual' aspect of the author/*auteur's* work as the author's text will be read, the director-author/*auteur's* theatre or film being seen (or at least created to be seen as well as heard). The work must be developed with a unique visual element to their style as it will be engaged with visually. This will often serve as a sort of 'signature' or the recognisable aspect of the *auteur's* individuality (or soul), often the 'proof' that they are indeed something other than the typical director, writer, etc.

Regardless of the position of perceived animosity or reluctance to name collaborators in the work of the director-*auteur /auteur* of film, a fundamental difference between the author/*auteur* theories of the literary world and the theatre/film fields is the fact that both fields are almost impossible without an active collaboration. In assuming there is one great mind behind a film, the critic accounts for perhaps a fraction of a percentage of the visions, personalities, and work behind a finished product, considering the tens to hundreds of people engaged in any one production. While the literary author is isolated, aside from perhaps the collaboration of an editor or another writer, the *auteur* must engage with a team of specialists in their own areas, be it actors, technical teams, costume makers, or producers, among many potential others. There is always, to repeat Bazin 'the genius of the system (in Schatz, 2009, p. 526).

At the root of every auteurial movement, however, there remains the same impetus – to shift power from those in authority. From the desire to be seen as 'genius', to overthrowing that same 'genius' of text, to attributing value to the commercialised Hollywood film, there is a constant flux at play with who should control what is made, and how that creative project should be judged. For the early directors of theatre, there was a desire to be seen as great as the literary writers and playwrights –for the directors

of film, to move on from the poorly-scripted adaptations of texts and overbearing studios to fully realise their own visions.

In the evaluation of the *auteur's* work, Sarris' diagram of quality – the concentric 'technique', 'personal style', and 'meaning' – highlights that which must be identifiable in the true auteurial enterprise. Kael's critique of this theory is fierce (and hilarious), presenting a great many issues as to how this method of critique is potentially damaging and derivative. She condemns his development of 'rules' for criticism, stating that its primary role is to recognize the unique and new elements of new work, rather than defining a 'scientific' method for what is good.[42] While I agree that the specific arbiters of value Sarris outlines are not the appropriate parts of a practice to be analysing, these elements, while perhaps basic or lacking nuance, could illuminate an interesting evolution in an artist's development. For this reason, I would like to revisit Sarris' visual as a rough roadmap for training rather than a checklist for critical reception. For example, if the visual were arranged as in Figure 3, one might recognize a form that can serve as a somewhat generic formula for most schooling or artistic practice, and a similarity to the structure of Lecoq's own pedagogy, specifically regarding the elements of study assigned within them:



[42] 'Criticism is an art, not a science, and a critic who follows rules will fail in one of his most important functions: perceiving what is original and important in *new* work and helping others to see' (Kael, 1963, p. 14).

Figure 3: Second visual of Sarris' *auteur* theory.

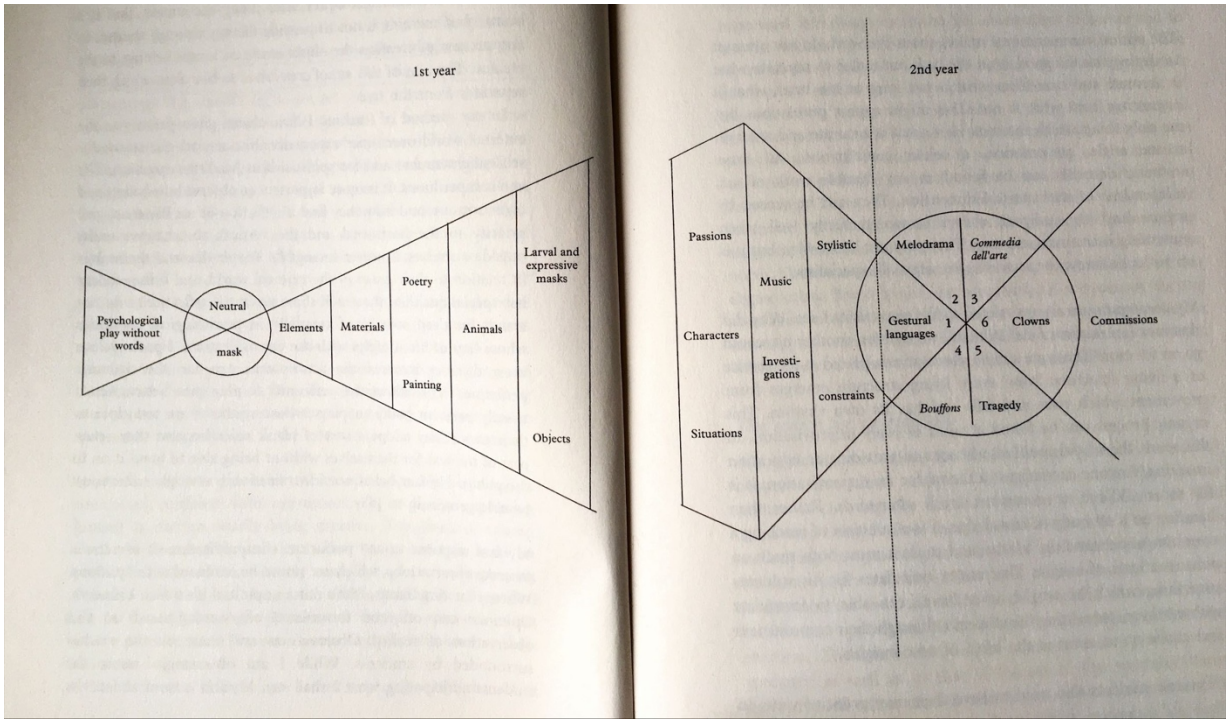


Figure 4: The Educational Journey of the International School of Mime and Theatre (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, pp. 18–19)

Approached as a method for establishing an artistic practice, the three areas of Sarris's design reflect nicely the areas of practice central to Lecoq's pedagogy, concluding with the student's introduction to the most important, and the most difficult to achieve: 'meaning'. Traveling from left to right (in both maps) the student begins with what could be considered 'Technique'– mechanical and physical. In Lecoq's pedagogy, it takes the student the better part of a year to explore the limits of the body and the skills of mimicry and observation in the improvisational and movement analysis elements (in the chart above, beginning with psychological play and neutral mask to passions, characters, and situations). Once these are sufficiently established in the students' body, the students

begin the development of a ‘personal style’, continuing to utilize the ‘technique’ learned while shifting into making performance within specific theatrical forms, beginning, perhaps, with the *enquêtes* and stylistic constraints that end the first year. At this point comes a shift in the school when half of the students are retained for the second year of practice and are invited to continue into deeper interrogations of dramatic territories, their personal strengths and interests, thereby continuing to develop their ‘personal style’. Their second year of training will end with *les commandes* (commissions), which is often where a student begins to develop a sense of ‘meaning’ in their work. This search for ‘meaning’ will continue to develop for years to come, long after this training has ended.

In reflecting on the director-*auteur* in contemporary theatre, Sidiropoulou remarks that ‘auteur performances will always be facing the issue of *meaningfulness*, of how to stimulate thought, memory, and the senses, by reinventing (their) form’" (Sidiropoulou, 2011, p. 8, italics in original). This thinking clearly, though perhaps unintentionally, invokes the existentialist project of ‘meaning making’ presented by Jean-Paul Sartre within his existential humanism. As with Bazin and the *auteurs* of French cinema, the question of ‘meaning’ is a constant concern, only established through the actions of the artist or individual; their ‘projects’ serve as the defining material of themselves and the key to making themselves known (Sartre, 2007, p. 37).

These defining aspects of the author’s approach, established through their attitudes towards control, rebellion, individuality in vision and style, mastery of a technique, and a greater yearning towards a ‘meaning’ continue to plague the field of authorship until the 1960’s. What will change with time will be the relationship between author and audience/reader, and the question will be raised as to whether the author should exist at all. Lecoq’s pedagogy and his claim that not only is the *auteur* alive but present in his classroom makes it necessary to revisit this positionality, and at worst,

conducting a resurrection. The questions that remain concern the '*acteur*' part of the '*acteur-auteur'* title, as well as an understanding of the pedagogical tools used and developed by Lecoq's pedagogy which leads the students towards the development of what I will call an auteurial practice. To define the *acteur*, I will trace a lineage of theatrical influence that leads directly to the Lecoq and his school, while recognizing another quirk in translation.

Chapter 3: The ‘actor-author’ and Jacques Lecoq.
Forces of influence through mime, mask, and muzzle.

1. I offer a form of mime that is free from any of its previous codes or aesthetic formalities.
2. After that, mime can speak. That’s it. That’s where we are.’

– Jacques Lecoq[43]

From the long shadows of the author and *auteur* I will shift to the examination of a different kind of author, that which is distinctly linked to the development and initial inspiration of Lecoq’s pedagogy and theatrical development. In invoking the title of *auteur* alongside the *acteur,* Lecoq links his practice not only to the revolutionary discourse of the anti-textual director or the cult of literary genius, but to a heritage of performance with an often-forgotten tradition of writing. The concept of an *acteur-auteur* itself most likely erupts from the practice of corporeal mime and *commedia dell’arte* – the mime because of their solitude in performance and the *commedia* actor because of their inherent relationship to physicality and writing. In reflecting on the practice of the modern mime, Lecoq refers to them as the ‘actor-author’ due to their solo performance and identity that is tied to their style of performing. He says that

> mime is an art in itself which can be summed up as an artist who imposes his personality and his style, pre-empting the formal question: 'is it mime or not?' This question is without interest as regards a poetic space unleashed by talent. Beyond the surprise that the 'genre' can produce when seen for the first time, the quality of the poet stands out. Often a solo performer, the mime is an actor-author who cannot claim to own the genre and, as such, is inimitable. (2006, p. 67)

[43] J. Lecoq, 2006, p. 112

The perspective of the artist's identity as 'actor-author' is once again highlighted as an important element of the ultimate performance and creation of the work, their 'personality' and 'style' ever-present in their performance. Nevertheless, the definition of the 'actor-author' or *acteur-auteur* remains unclear in this excerpt, and I have yet to find any theory that defines their practice. While it may suggest a potential approach towards work, as above, there is no clear definition, and so I will propose one. Constructed through the analysis of key historical popular performance practices, I will highlight a shared approach. This approach is defined by ingenuity in the face of political restriction, virtuosity and range of skill, and overall, an unbending authority over their work as the *acteur-auteur*. Traces of influence that directly affect the development of Lecoq's own pedagogy will become clear through the exploration of the *commedia* actors, ancient mimes, and the work of Jacques Copeau, Suzanne Bing, and Les Copiaus, highlighting certain qualities not only present in the work of the popular theatre *acteur*, but necessary in the development of the Lecoq student. These approaches to practice will help illuminate a shared genealogy and push this research further towards a definition to the practice of the *acteur-auteur*.

The *acteur*

It is worth noting that while the translation of *auteur* does not translate directly to 'creator' in English, there is another discrepancy of the *acteur-auteur* translation – that of the *acteur* to 'actor'. Simply translated, the *acteur* of the Lecoq pedagogy does not necessarily mean an 'actor' of theatre or film. While this may serve as a very contemporary or informal translation in relation to an actor (usually of film), it is not precise. The French actor is known as *comédien/comédienne* (depending on gender),

whereas the *acteur* is simply 'one who acts/takes action' (Rey, 2006, p. 31).[44] For the purposes of an examination of Lecoq's pedagogy, this shift in terminology expands what it means to be his student, effectively shifting the goal from training simply the 'performer' to the 'active participant'. It reflects his 'utopian' desire to train not only theatre artists, but 'livers of life' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 16).[45] By shrinking the definition to simply represent an 'actor' in the context of the pedagogy, the plethora of artists of varying styles (and ultimately vocations) who pass through Lecoq's school are forced into a reductionist view of what it means to be an artist in theatre, and a Lecoq student. The distinction of the classical or 'traditional' actor (*comédien/ne*) from the multi-disciplinary popular performers that so inspired this pedagogy should be highlighted in this revised definition.[46] To remedy and expand this translation which, while sometimes sufficient, defies nuance, I will explore the history of an actor who 'authors' their role, as well as the potential of the artist student whose primary descriptor in this pedagogy is, rather than to 'act' as one on the stage, but to 'act' as in 'be driven to action'.

Disentangling Lecoq's *acteur* from the standard definition of the 'actor'/*comédien/ne* is necessary as their practice is so different from the performer whose sole job is to interpret a role and be malleable to a director and playwright (or screenwriter). While these performers are skilled, these skills vary from the historical practices of those whose work was driven by the development of their own unique

[44] My translation from French, 'celui qui fait une action ou qui y a une part active' (Rey, 2006, p. 31).
[45] **This is echoed nicely in a comment made by director Max Reinhardt on the multi-disciplinary nature of the *commedia* actor: 'Where the actor is also a dramatic writer, he has the power to create a world according to his own image, thus awakening the drama to its highest form of life' (Reinhardt in McGehee, 2015, p. 10).**
[46] This is not to say that Lecoq never referred to his students as *comédien/nes,* in fact in the earliest title of his school included the phrase 'Éducation du Comédien' (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 170). As the school developed, however, the term seems to have been left behind, and *acteur* preferred in reference to his students.

practice and agency over how and what they performed, along with the ingenuity that arose despite the restrictions and censorships imposed on their medium. The styles and practices of these performers were born from necessity rather than training, responsive to whatever restrictions emerged from societal, religious, and historical circumstances. To begin in tracing the work of these performers and the qualities that defined their practice to Lecoq's contemporary model of the *acteur-auteur*, I will begin with the 'mimes'[47].

The turn of the twentieth century brought a renaissance of mime through the practices of Jacques Copeau (1879-1949), whose work and training led to the development of the dramatic corporeal mime through Étienne Decroux (1898-1991), eventually followed by Jean-Louis Barrault (1910-1994), Marcel Marceau (1923-2007) and Lecoq (in a profoundly different style from the others), springing into popularity in France as a rebellion against French literary traditions (Felner, 1985, p. 168).[48] However distant Lecoq's practice may be from these 'true' modern mimes of the twentieth century (or an historical *commedia dell'arte*) it is undeniable that these two practices, through his work with Jean Dasté and Marie-Hélène (Copeau) Dasté and his time working and teaching in Italy, formed the foundations of the pedagogy, and was expanded by the creative hunger and determination of his students. To continue an examination of the *acteur-auteur*, I move to develop a further understanding of this specific kind of *acteur* through the lineages of both the mime and *commedia* practices, which wind and intersect

[47] There is a strange and somewhat fruitless debate as to whether Lecoq was indeed a 'mime' or even taught mime as a practice, trickling down from the debates defining mime as a form, emerging from the discourse of modern and post-modern mimes at the turn of the twentieth century, triggered by the work of Jacques Copeau and his successors. A 'true' mime corporality is an impossibility as its practice is inherently hard to define, its ancient practice shifting over history and changing with every mime 'master' who is recognized by popular culture. In fact, the twentieth century was the first in which mime practice was actually taught whereas in the past, much like other theatrical family traditions of Noh or *Commedia dell'Arte*, performers secrets were kept and passed down through families from as early as sixth century B.C. (Felner, 1985, p. 16).

[48] Copeau's practice, however, began as intensely text based and eventually evolved towards a more corporeal practice, though the role of playwright was always present in his theatrical work (Baldwin, 2013, p. 86).

through a history far longer than that of the *auteur*. While the 'mime' can be clearly traced from ancient theatrical practices at the root of all western theatre performance to the popular vision of the white-faced, white-gloved 'Bip' of Marcel Marceau[49] who became the face of contemporary mime, *commedia* emerges (argued by mime historian Mira Felner) as a further evolution of the same ancient mime practices (Felner, 1985, p. 24). To understand how the two diverged in the development of their unique approaches to practice as *acteurs*, we must begin in ancient Greece.

Ancient mime and pantomime – dance, meaning, and defying the gods

The earliest 'mime' performances were built from different elements, often with acrobatics accompanied by music, and written or improvised speeches by costumed performers often in padded clothes that distorted the body (not dissimilar to the later bouffon), as well as masks and fake phalluses (Felner, 1985, p. 22). The term 'mime' is derived from the Greek *mimos*. Meaning 'imitator', it was used as a broad term for a performer, whether they performed in plays and dramas (as 'mime-actors') or as popular entertainers (buffoons) (Lust, 2003, p. 1). As early as the sixth century B.C., Aristotle notes that these performers were often volunteers, not 'comedic writers' that would be remembered in history (Felner, 1985, p. 17). These secular performances of ancient mime were often a mockery of the comedies and tragedies that were held as a high art form at the time, and were performed by traveling troupes, eventually moving from Greece to Italy by Doric Greek settlers (Felner, 1985, p. 22).

[49] Marceau has no direct relationship to Lecoq though his practice comes from similar routes, both were experienced in a practice derived from Jacques Copeau, though Marceau's was filtered through his training by Étienne Decroux (a student of Copeau, whose pedagogy again had some similarities with Lecoq, though his codification of corporeal mime Lecoq fundamentally disagreed with) (J. Lecoq, 2006, p. 97).

The original Dorian mimes may have been influenced by the cult of Dionysus from Thrace, whose followers (primarily women) partook in 'intoxication, ecstatic dancing, and possession by the god, offer(ing) release from constricting social codes and possibility of joyous renewal' (Wylie, 1994, p. 35). Kathryn Wylie cites these trance-led dances as a core influence of the later Dorian mime performances, as well as their use of satyric masks and body padding which were used by Dionysians to honour his role as 'Master of Magical Illusions' (1994, p. 40). The grotesque appearances and intense, possession-like physicality from the Dionysians combined with the development of stock characters and short skits, and evolved into the practice of the Dorian mimes. Eventually mime distanced itself from the religious connotations of the Dionysian cult, while maintaining its comedic and culturally subversive tone. Its intention being that of 'overthrowing the spiritual and social hierarchy in order to allow life-giving energy to flow into society' (Wylie, 1994, p. 55). It was clear that this mime was one of the earliest forms of 'popular entertainment', one that was reliant solely on the performer's engagement with their audiences rather than subsidies from a state or church. Their subjects and characters reflected common man rather than aristocracy or classical heroes (Schechter, 2003, p. 4). They were not taken as seriously as 'drama' or 'comedy', as these often had moralistic values and a religious element to them (Felner, 1985, p. 17).[50] Concerned with challenging the established hierarchies and systems of control within their culture, the practice could explore life and human meaning without the influence or control of religious entities. The performers were free enough to mock society and play their own opinions of the gods and religion for the greater public to see.

[50] Felner notes that Plato hated mime because the audience enjoyed watching it without learning any moral message; 'give(ing) the audience pleasure in wrong and improper ways' (Felner, 1985, p. 17).

The style of the Dorian mimes eventually travelled to Rome and evolved into two different practices; ‘Roman pantomime’, a silent physical performance with a perhaps more abstract or interpretive nature, and ‘Roman mime’, a form that saw physical performers mime along to comedic narration (Felner, 1985, p. 23), or speak from pre-written scripts, authored by themselves or others (Leabhart, 1989, p. 3). There is a linguistic complication as ‘mime’, specifically during the time of the Roman Republic (between 509-27 B.C.), referred to any kind of performer, as well as a broad spectrum of theatrical events (Wylie, 1994, p. 138). However, a clear distinction springs up between the ‘mime’ and ‘pantomime’. Between the two styles, the most profound difference rests in the mime’s ability to speak and the pantomime’s silent expression, though both were driven by movement.

In discussions of the roots of Roman mimes, another style of performance is often referenced, that of the Atellan mimes, though it is unclear as to whether the practice of the Dorian mimes led to the development of the Atellan mimes (Wylie, 1994, p. 138). It is possible both styles arrived in Rome around the same time (fourth century B.C.) to evolve into one mime practice (Rolfe, 1981, p. 11). From a region close to Naples, the Atellan mimes were known for their farcical presentations of common life, through song and short plays with stock characters and improvisations, accompanied by festival performers, such as acrobats, jugglers, rope walkers, and animal acts (among others) (Rolfe, 1981, p. 11). While remarkably similar to that of the Dorian mime in subject and tone, it suggests a style and clear practical elements that are carried through to the later *Commedia dell’arte.* It is unclear if the two are linked, but it would be obtuse to imagine both existed in a vacuum, without the possibility of influence.

Distinct from both the Roman and Atellan mime styles, Roman pantomime was performed by masked 'dancers' ('*saltatores*') whose masks took up their whole face

without an opening for the mouth. The subject matter was often less comedic than that of the Roman mime, reliant on corporeal expression rather than physical comedy (Felner, 1985, p. 23). The performance of the mute *saltatores* was always presented with either the speech of a secondary actor and/or music (Leabhart, 1989, p. 3). While this practice is reminiscent of dance rather than mime, another ancient corporeal practice, Roman pantomime corresponds to the mime if we consider the way Marcel Mauss distinguishes between the forms: '…that the primitive dancer tends to be animated by a spirit, moved by some superior force; whereas the mime has always been motivated by worldly impulses' (in Felner, 1985, p. 19). A key question in distinguishing between mime, pantomime, and dance is whether movement is performed primarily for its aesthetic and expressive qualities or as a means of communication and action.[51] The value of wordless communication was undeniable, as an aid for communication in spite of linguistic differences or as a way to tap into general understanding of common gestures. While it is clear the ancient mime was never completely silent, communication through gesture was always more important in performance than spoken language (Felner, 1985, p. 19).

The mime's position in society has never been secure; banished, censored, regaled or privatized depending on the emperor, each political era brought with it a new reaction to the performer (Rolfe, 1981, p. 13). With the fall of the Roman Empire came the end of the Roman mimes. While there was no formalised drama between this period and the appearance of mystery plays in the Middle Ages (Lust, 2003, p. 31), the mime was

[51] One of the first records of Roman pantomime (of which there are few) survives from 240 B.C., when actor Livius Andronicus had an enslaved person read out his performance text while he mimed alongside silently due to the overwhelming popularity of his performance and demands for performance, which lead to the loss of his voice (Rolfe, 1981, p. 11). The legitimacy of this story has been called in to question, but it does ultimately draw a clear picture of how the original pantomime might have presented itself. Another account from the rule of Nero suggests the Emperor was approached by an unnamed foreign ruler after viewing a pantomime performance at his court, requesting that he might take this actor home as a gift to help him communicate with a neighbouring tribe whose language could not be deciphered (Felner, 1985, pp. 23–24).

replaced by (or evolved into) traveling jesters, jugglers, and musicians ('troubadours' and 'jongleurs'). Crucially, it is likely that their skills and performances were more based in drama than their names suggest. Sketches starring recognizable stock characters would be performed alongside acrobatic and musical elements of a performance (Felner, 1985, p. 24), not dissimilar to the previously mentioned Atellan mimes. While it is unclear if the mimes of Rome evolved directly into the mimes that begin to reappear in this era, there are remarkable similarities fundamental to their performances, including the presentation of short, secular plays with musical interludes (Lust, 2003, p. 31).[52] As the medieval mimes continued to perform and their practice evolved, their secular nature presented a challenge to the Christian church which was gaining control over Europe. The church's distaste for the practice most likely led to the decline of its popularity during the Middle Ages (Felner, 1985, p. 24). From the fading popularity of the medieval mime emerged the popular *Commedia dell'arte*, which thrived during the Renaissance, spreading from Italy to France and ultimately Britain (though not until the late seventeenth century) (Felner, 1985, p. 27).

The beginnings of the development of a 'mime' practice and definition establishes a distinction between the performers of high drama and popular performance – between one whose work is dictated by texts appeasing gods and one whose work was informed by their own perspectives on everyday life, without concern for the gods or maintaining any standards of high art. Roman mime were left to their own devices, writing their roles and perform their stories without restriction (depending on their favour with the emperor of the time). The mimes were not silent, unlike their pantomime contemporaries, but like

[52] This perspective echoes Felner's, as she recognises that while there may be 'no concrete evidence' that *commedia dell'arte* evolved from these practices (the classical mime of Greece and Roman mime and pantomime), there are such marked similarities that it would be a remarkable sign of some universal force of character and theatricality if the development of these forms was simply a coincidence (Felner, 1985, p. 24).

the pantomimes the core of their performance was built upon movement. The mimes' reliance on and physical comedy allowed them to speak freely while providing a target for the more unforgiving leaders. These patterns will continue as they evolve through history into new, more recognisable contemporary forms. In every iteration, they maintain a root in concern for everyday life as the common people would experience it, the satire and mockery of those in power (religious or governmental), and the agency of these performers to function within their theatre without the outside influence of an established dramatic writer or director. The clearest descendant of this practice is *commedia dell'arte*, although, as previously demonstrated, the precise route of its development remains uncertain.

Commedia dell'arte – 'rediscovery' and reinterpretation

> 'I don't bury myself in historical references. I try to rediscover the spirit of these forms. Commedia has nothing to do with those little Italian troupes who export precious entertainments. It's about misery, a world where life's a luxury.'
>
> – Jacques Lecoq[53]

Lecoq was by no means the first to reignite interest in *commedia dell'arte*, but David Bradby points out it was Lecoq who returned the mask to contemporary *commedia*, recognizing the importance of the craft as well as their physical performance (Bradby, 2002b, p. 86). His first encounter with *commedia* would have come through his experience with Jacques Copeau's practice, whose own work was hugely inspired by *commedia* and Asian mask performance styles (Arrighi, 2016, p. 29). As stated in the quotation above, this would not be an academic engagement but a deeply practical one,

[53] In Rudlin, 1994, p. 201.

filtered through the work of Copeau (and others) which highlighted elements of the practice that were culturally relevant**. Scott McGehee recognises that at the end of the Second World War a number of new theatre companies and makers (such as Theatre du Soleil, San Francisco Mime troupe, Bread and Puppet Theatre, Dario Fo, and Franca Rame, to name a few) drew upon *commedia* practice specifically due to its political nature. He writes:**

> **Many, if not most, of these artists and groups were also politically engaged activists who imagine theatre generally and Commedia specifically as a potential force in political struggles. Their interest was in utilizing Commedia to provoke a comic critique of existing power relationships: against war, against racism, fascism, sexism, and capitalism itself (2015, p. 10)**

Just as the traditional *commedia* commented on contemporary and social subjects, so do more modern practices, following the reinvigoration of practice by Copeau (and eventually, Lecoq).

Lecoq encountered Copeau's pedagogy through his daughter, Marie-Hélène Dasté and son-in-law, Jean Dasté. Both had been actors in Copeau's company Le Vieux Colombier and founded Les Comédiens de Grenoble after the liberation of France at the end of the Second World War. Lecoq was invited to join them as the head of the company's physical training due to his background in sports and physical education, and through them was introduced to such concepts as the 'noble' mask[54] and Copeau's approach to the corporeal mime (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 5). Influenced by

[54] The 'noble mask' was later replaced in Lecoq's pedagogy by the 'neutral' mask – *masque au neutre*. In renaming the mask, the sculptor Sartori hoped to provide some distance from the original form and the potential sociological connotations of a 'noble' class. Lecoq hoped that 'neutral' might draw a parallel to the '*poétique du neutre*', a theme that had made itself present in twentieth-century modernist art and writing, as well as a 'desubjectification' of the actor (Freixe, 2014, p. 96).

the writings of Vsevolod Meyerhold, Copeau was equally fascinated by *commedia* and its 'improvisatory' practice, and intent on its adaptation into a pedagogical tool that could be used to develop a 'new theatrical language', one that bridged the gap between performer and (dramatic) text (Balme and Vescovo, 2018, p. 244). He thought the actor could be challenged to develop every potential skill available to their body, thereby empowering the actor to work for themselves and shifting power away from the authority of the writer. In his own words:

> Introduction of the characters in the new comedy by their ancestors from the Italian comedy and the French farce. They evict from the theatre: the poet who comes offering his written play, the pretentious actor, the prompter from his box, etc. Finally the director appears, looking sad, constantly searching for a good literary play... They tear off his wig and his beard... rid him of is director's clothes and he appears in the costume of a jester. And the improvisation begins. (Copeau in Rudlin, 1994, pp. 177–178)

There is of course a contradiction in this vision of a director as a 'jester' ready for play, as Copeau (as a director and playwright) was known to have a firm control over his company (Baldwin, 2013, p. 82). Les Copiau (a company made up of his former students and actors) would truly embodied this thought through a more collaborative creative approach. (Baldwin, 2013, p. 86).

Through the reengagement of old styles of performance, especially those where the actor is required to develop their own material, shape their characters, and have a degree of ownership of and authority over those characters, the roles of the director and of the playwright would become obsolete, thereby creating space for a new kind of work. The focus on developing the individual actor as the perfect interpreter of the director and writer's vision would have to shift towards developing the ensemble as a whole (Rudlin,

1994, p. 178). Concerned with developing the actors' sense of play, Copeau's (and Suzanne Bing's) engagement with the 'Italian Comedy' pushed the students to return to the roots of performance, as well as rejuvenating the theatre through engaging the body in practice (Murray, 2017, p. 31). Remarkably, it is through the interest in *improvviso* of various twentieth-century artists that the concept of improvisation as we understand it today was, in fact, invented – creating a mythic practice that had not historically existed (Vescovo, 2018, p. 59).

Jean Dasté, like his teacher (and father-in-law) Copeau, was also attracted to what he understood of the *commedia* practice, a theatre based on improvisation and physicality driven by masks. Masks, however, were used to a minor extent in training and performance as they were often flimsily made of cardboard and paper, and unable to hold up for multiple uses. Through collaboration with the Italian sculptor Amleto Sartori, Lecoq helped revitalise the mask-making practice though experimentation with leather bookbinding techniques (as traditional crafting techniques had been lost to time). Lecoq took great interest in masked performance and studied many styles, according to David Bradby, who observes that 'all were approached with the same purpose: of discovering a physical vitality which connected with the permanent preoccupations of human beings of every time and place' (2002b, p. 86). His own performance in the style while working in Italy established the physical form and performance of the mask which would become primary to his practice.

During his eight years in Italy (1938-1956) Lecoq was introduced to a more traditional *commedia* through his work at the University of Padua. It was there that he met Sartori (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 5), and where he witnessed the culture and places which inspired the characters native to *commedia*. While working with Sartori,

Lecoq reflects on spending time at the Padua livestock markets outside of town, where they would mingle with 'horse thieves' in the local bars:

> In these outlying districts I got the feel of the authentic *Commedia dell'arte*: dramas in which the characters are permanently seized by an urgent passion for life. It was not a bookish *commedia*, but the *commedia* of Ruzzante[55], rooted in peasant life, closely connected to its Italian origins (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 6, italics in original).

Differing from the *commedia* of Copeau (which I will explore later in this chapter), Lecoq was interested in the life of the characters rather than an academic approach.

While Lecoq's understanding of *commedia dell'arte* was based in practice and the cultural remnants of the highly influential form of popular entertainment, many have not been so lucky to engage with the practice. Any physical or cultural understanding of *commedia* imbricated in this work comes filtered through the lens of Lecoq's own pedagogy and, as an English speaker, any influence of Shakespeare's 'Italian' plays. For this reason, a brief history of the practice of *commedia dell'arte* will follow, providing context to better understand the evolution of Lecoq's pedagogy.

A (brief) history of *commedia* – the impossible practice.

Commedia (as we refer to it now) evolved in the sixteenth century by piecing together various elements of Italian folk performance into a somewhat structured form. From dances to well-known folk stories, music, and the masks themselves, the established troupes were able to develop a practice and performance style that would be honed by the individual and passed down through families or troupe lineages (Rudlin,

[55] Angelo Beolco, playwright known for work that reflected the 'peasant life' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 182).

1994, p. 2).[56] Italy at the time was a collection of sovereign states rather than a unified national culture, so each region contributed specific characters or situations to the creation of *commedia* performances. The location of performances would determine which characters were presented, which stories, which style, and which vocabulary or dialect performed (Rudlin, 1994, p. 7). To this end, *commedia* performers were constantly moving, performing in various cities throughout Italy instead of being based in one artistic home (Henke, 2002, p. 11).

Robert Henke identifies an entanglement between the performance and literary practices of the period, noting that *commedia dell'arte's* 'golden era' of popularity (1545–1625) coincided with the emergence of new print technologies and new literary forms, and an increase in literacy. A culture that was primarily oral, and creative practices associated with it, were suddenly challenged and forced to evolve due to the shifting literacy of the Italian public. Unlike their audience, the *commedia* performer was almost always literate and would not only write out scenes, phrases, songs, or poems for their roles, but would aften take from literature available to them (Henke, 2002, p. 12). Henke argues that the success of *commedia* came down to its careful balance of both oral and literary forms (Henke, 2002, p. 1), while John Rudlin proposes that it thrived specifically because of its physical form and visual communication style to its predominately illiterate audiences (Rudlin, 1994, p. 2). It makes sense, then, if the practice was not reliant on a text, that the emerging theatre would be physical, reliant on familiar, recognizable characters and tropes that would be easily replayed by the performers, presenting the

[56] Annette Lust argues that *commedia,* while eventually becoming something deeply Italian, came from the return of mimes to Venice after the fall of Byzantium (1453), where many had resided since the fall of the Roman empire, continuing their craft in Turkey and forming the Karagoz style of theatre, which maintained a resemblance to the Greek and Roman mimes, and performed throughout Byzantium and the Middle East (2003, pp. 37–38).

illusion of a plot seemingly pulled out of thin air. This seemingly 'improvised' form of *commedia* was in many ways a myth derived from the culturally uneducated speculation of other Europeans who attended *commedia* performances towards the turn of the twentieth century. Historically the form of *commedia* was made up of a firm structure with some flexible scenes and changing dialogues (Balme and Vescovo, 2018, p. 58).

The 'writing' of *commedia* and *commedia all'improvviso* – the 'skeleton' and the myth.

While *commedia* performers were primarily recognised for their acting skills and 'improvised' dialogue in performance, behind the scenes there were heavily structured plots and the performer's individual repertoires. Storylines were often complex, either focused on master/servant relationships and trickery when performed by men, or tangles of lovers when women were introduced to the stage around the 1560's (Henke, 2002, p. 6). Henke links the inclusion of women into *commedia* troupes and an increase in the performance of written plays, as *commedia* troupes would periodically perform pre-written scripts. The presence of women on the stage seems to have increased the practice dramatically (2002, p. 6) (to which one can make all kinds of horrific assumptions, beginning with a desire to control what female actors could do onstage). In either case, multiple storylines and relationships were woven throughout the primary story with deceptions, cons, and intrigue (Henke, 2002, p. 14).

Performances were made up of a careful balance between the 'virtuosic solo performer' whose technique was physical with some improvisational speech, whereas the *zanni* and *buffone* were engaged in more literary, crafted scenes (Henke, 2002, p. 2). *Zanni* (which denotes either singular or multiple performers) refers to specific masks (or characters) of a low status, the 'dispossessed immigrant worker' much like *Arlecchino* or

Brighella (Rudlin, 1994, p. 67). The *buffone* (who only appeared in the *commedia* troupes in the mid-sixteenth century) or *piazza buffone,* were akin to stand-up performers and were likely to be without a formal performance licence (Henke, 2002, p. 6). Masks were motivated by sex, love, cowardice, or greed, and every actor would have pre-established knowledge of their relationships to other characters (friends or enemies) (Henke, 2002, p. 14). They would generally stick to their character's recognisable traits and alliances (for example, one of the *zanni* often antagonises *Pantalone*, and *Pantalone* often chases a young woman or *inamorata*). Each character would have phrases to hand that would either antagonise an enemy or engage with a friendly character (often in the forms of compliments or insults) (Henke, 2002, p. 15).

Though based on recognisable stock characters, many *commedia* actors held one role for their entire lives and were thereby given a certain amount of creative leeway (Henke, 2002, p. 19). Performers would create *generici*, small books compiled over years with phrases, speeches, and dialogue prompts organized by:

> rhetorical action, locutionary situation, and emotional comportment, categorizing speech genres such as 'council,' 'persuasion,' 'curse,' 'farewell,' etc.… To each of these speech genres the actors must have linked codified gestures, motions, and expressions. With codified storehouses of actions and speech genres, an actor could mnemonically organize and retrieve the linguistic formulas appropriate for performing a given action. (Henke, 2002, p. 44)[57]

Speech and movement were tied together in the *commedia* practice. Each text, whether developed by themselves or taken from an external source, was heightened by

[57] One of the very few *generici* that remains intact to this day is that of Stefonello Bottarga, known for playing the role of '*Magnifico*', which includes various pieces of text including dialogues, proverbs, and poems organized by theme as his performance arsenal (Henke, 2002, pp. 44–45).

interpretative gestures that brought together the actor's personal performance style, their developed character (mask), and the text itself.

The actor's creativity gave them a certain ability to 'improvise' specific scenes and parts of performance, but this 'improvisation' is hardly recognisable from what we might call improvisation today. Vescovo notes that the twentieth century brought about a reinvention of *commedia dell'arte all'improvviso*, which was intended to revitalise the original practice but invented an entirely new one, posthumously rewriting what was known about *commedia dell'arte* (Vescovo, 2018, p. 59). Any improvisation that took place on the authentic *commedia* stage was based off material from an actor's *generici* and other 'stock' material, but the myth of an 'improvised theatre' prevailed outside Italy. This was perpetuated by the fact that *generici* are hard to locate and *commedia* families tended to be secretive about their practices.[58] For the *commedia* actor, 'improvisation' meant that they 'wrote' their own roles and whatever language they might use in performance. They would "*fanno sopra la parole"* (build on top of words)' (Vescovo, 2018, p. 57). Here '*parole*' refers to the beginning outline ('*scaletta*' or '*ossatura*', meaning 'skeleton', 'framework', or 'ladder') onto which the dialogue was built (Vescovo, 2018, p. 56).

Key differences between *commedia* and contemporary understandings of improvisation stem from the fact that *commedia* improvisations were not performed in a quotidian dialogue but more refined rhetorical patterns that would have been studied by the actors from Renaissance commonplace books and other literary outputs (Henke, 2002, p. 15). Plots would have been pre-written or adapted from literature or other culture-

[58] Rudlin notes this practice was not dissimilar to the traditions of Japanese Noh Theatre, where Ryu or family based 'troupe' would have their private practice passed on from generation to generation in the form of treatises (the treatises of Zeami), which were published for public access in the early eighteenth century to reengage audiences in Noh Theatre to reestablish the audience's theatrical literacy (Rudlin, 1994, p. 3).

specific stories, and built upon by adding secondary plots and improvisations between characters, usually two at a time, who would be either be working together or against each other (Henke, 2002, p. 15). Upon repetition and rehearsal plots, dialogues, and characters would become more refined and tailored to the individual's performance, seeping into memory. All performance elements were ultimately pulled from the actor's individual performance archive, to be presented as they wished within the greater structure of their predetermined plot. It seems the only actually improvised element of *commedia* was the *lazzo*[59], or *lazzi* (plural) which refers to either a character specific bit of solo action or comedic performance, a brief interlude of virtuosic performance that might interrupt a scene or transition (Rudlin and Crick, 2001, p. 173), or simply 'what masked actors do in the middle of a scene that they have interrupted... and to which it is therefore always necessary to return' (Luigi Riccoboni in Vescovo, 2018, p. 57). In each case, it is a moment for the character to engage with the audience or regain their attention if a scene has gone badly, and will be repeated throughout the performance to build up the relationship between the mask and the audience (Rudlin and Crick, 2001, p. 173). Though potentially a short, seemingly inconsequential part of the *commedia,* its inclusion is essential, giving an actor an opportunity to show off a skill developed in training or simply to enhance the liveness of the performance by engaging directly with the audience, bringing them in and making them a part of the spectacle.

The *commedia* author

As previously demonstrated, debate remains over the literary influence on commedia and the writing practices therein, reflecting the broader academic debate over

[59] Vescovo notes that in an older, northern-Italian dialect, '*lazzo*' is a banking term meaning 'added interest' (V2018, p. 57).

how physical practice should be represented in writing. There is no doubt that the *commedia* performance is a highly physical form, characterized by each *zanni*'s unique embodiment and face, and presented in a flexible, ever-changing scaffolding of action and dialogue, carefully reflecting stories that would resonate with their audiences. It is clear that the majority of *commedia*'s attraction lay in the physically energetic performances and virtuosities of the performers. As Jacques Copeau notes, the 'scenarios of the *commedia dell'arte* are not very funny. The *spirit* is in the movement' (Copeau in Rudlin and Paul, 1990, p. 148). Rudlin reflects on the 'genius' of the inventors of this form, and claims that while they may or may not have been professional actors, 'it has been very clearly decided and recorded that the inventors were not *play-writers*' (1994, p. 2, italics in original). By whom he does not say, but there is surely an element of truth to the statement.

In exploring the relationship between the *commedia* performer and their unique practice, the term 'author' appears periodically in reference to the unique creating/writing practice rather than 'writer', implying something other than simply 'writing' as text on paper. It is clear that *commedia* actors 'authored' what they performed (Vescovo, 2018, p. 57), or were the 'self-authors' of their role (Rudlin, 1994, p. 1). This highlights a need for a different nomenclature for their practice. In summarizing novelist and playwright Luigi Pirandello's description of *commedia*, Vescovo describes

> a theatre of authors who either become actors or work alongside actors in order to write their texts in a different way, rather than the theatre of actors who get rid of the authors and act by themselves by reason of their own ignorance and shortcomings (2018, p. 59).

While the 'author' may be afforded the liberty to craft performance without 'writing' with text, the writer seems to be inherently doomed to relate solely to the page and their text.

However, the skill of 'writing' in one fashion or another is integral to the *commedia* form, as its structures and dialogues require a crafting that cannot be replaced by simply acting or improvising.

Another possible explanation for the use of this title rests in the somewhat late 'specialisation', or formal recognition of the art form by the government, of the *commedia* performer. By the time Lecoq was introduced to the practice, the *commedia* actor had evolved in standing, recognised as professional artists as the term for their theatre shifted from *commedie* (plural) to *commedia dell'arte* ('comedy of art' or 'artistic comedy') in the eighteenth century. The former signified the performance that would have actors wearing masks and including some of the characters native to the later *commedia dell'arte*, but would not be professionally associated with the artistic practice signified by the added '*arte,*' meaning 'art', insinuating specialised craft (Vescovo, 2018, p. 56). This 'specialisation' and honorific of a recognised value again distinguishes the actor as not simply an 'actor' but one with a level of authority in practice – and, in this case, not solely in their ability to perform. The writer and actor were inherently entwined, which led to the illusion of their seemingly 'improvised' performances. It is a style compromised of shifting responsibility and blurring of the clearly defined roles later established in the popular western theatre model. The term 'improvised acting' in this context represents the breadth of skill and multifaceted nature of the performers' work.

Lecoq himself was aware of this fact, that there was more behind the 'improvised' form, observing that the 'actors did not improvise, as we once believed: he was the author of his own lazzi and did not change them every night; he simply had a wealth of things to choose from' (2006, p. 100). From this we can understand that while he was interested in the practice of improvisation (as it makes up a third of his pedagogy's teaching) he recognised that the improvisation practices that would be taught in his school would not

be rooted in an older, more structured tradition (an echo of Copeau's approach). In fact, the improvisations his students would engage in would rather act as the first steps towards creation, a method by which to experiment, and later – 'write' (see Chapter 4). There is an expectation of experimentation in this, as with all pedagogical thinking, along with the acknowledgement that attempts and failures will be inevitable to the process of development. As an author or writer will develop drafts of their writing, so too will the physical theatre performer develop drafts of their work; the difference lies in the materiality of these drafts, and the mnemonic work that becomes corporeally bound to the performer.

Considering the *commedia* and ancient mime actors, there is a shared history and development of practice that provides insight into their definition. Both practices begin with the individual. Performers, or '*acteur-auteurs'* with history, agency, an individual practice, and an archive of unique material and performance skills, come to perform either by themselves or with a group. Whether they are silent or not, their primary skill is their unique abilities to perform their crafted characters physically (through gestural, corporeal means). Although based on some form of pre-existing text, both styles of work entangled textual material with improvisational performance, relying on performers' deep knowledge and crafting of their own characters and their capacity to intuit and embody a story's structure. These abilities depended upon a style of performance that was free to say what it liked, unconcerned with religious or moral messages and relying heavily on a freedom to critique and mock. They found 'meaning' outside of religion and the ritualistic performances or mystery plays of more formal styles of performance.

These '*acteurs*' and their multidisciplinary practice (be they musicians, acrobats, jugglers, *and* actors) carved a practice for themselves in which they consistently reflected on the concerns of the time. Their practices established the roots of what was to come in

popular entertainment across Europe, as their styles were adapted and spread to new countries and audiences. The impact of these styles would be particularly influential in Western Europe, especially France where *commedia* established not only a strong position in French theatre culture, but inspired the development of new forms.

French theatre (fifteenth-twentieth century) – speaking through the muzzle

Lecoq's most recognised innovation in contemporary mime stemmed from his desire for the performer to be able to speak. This helps explain his preference for describing his practice as physical performance, or as a continuation of commedia for contemporary audiences, rather than claiming to teach 'mime'. In keeping with his resounding pronouncement '*Tout bouge'* [Everything moves] (J. Lecoq, 1987, p. 77), Lecoq pushes the artist to perform in a style which, while rooted in older, culturally specific forms, broadens the performer's ability to communicate with audiences unfamiliar with cultural stereotypes or specific languages. As important as the use of speech is to the Lecoq style of 'mime'[60], it is worth reflecting on the fact that, historically, mimes have always had the ability to speak**.** What we recognise as the practice of a contemporary mime seems to have emerged from the innovations of popular performers who were unable to speak due to the extraordinary restrictions of censorship.

Reflecting on the clown from which his own theatre pedagogy is elaborated (branching off from the pedagogical tree of Lecoq), Philippe Gaulier recognises the plight of the censored, and the creativity necessary for the clowns and popular performers who wished to continue their craft under the restrictions of the French government. He notes one of the many ways the clown could subvert the restrictions: accents. He writes,

[60] 'Mime is not a theatre where the actor does not speak, mime is a theatre where the actor's body does speak' (Lecoq in Martin, 2002, p. 60)

> Censorship has played a part in the history of accents. In certain theatre, talking is forbidden. The clown has invented a language made up of strange sounds and noises which haven't be defined in the dictionary. Censorship couldn't cope with this.
> In other theatres, musical instruments are banned. The clown has invented other instruments not on the prohibited list. Another failure for censorship!
> The clown has rebelled against many absurd administrative decisions. The clown has the laughter and joy of someone who hoodwinks the administration, of someone who is disobedient. (2007, p. 292)

Commedia, mime, and *la pantomime blanche* in France – language, silence, and ingenuity

Commedia was performed internationally by well received troupes, their popularity in the courts of France and with playwrights (especially Molière) is notable. The first *commedia* theatre in Paris, the Comédie-Italienne, was established in 1658 and played until the Revolution began in 1789 (with a decade long sabbatical in 1697 due to their temporary banishment from Paris[61], and another banishment from France between 1699-1711[62]). This theatre would become one of the three most powerful in Paris under the rule of Louis XIV, who allowed them to perform in the French language (Bradby and Sparks, 1997, p. 4), though by this point their material had shifted away from the original *commedia* performances. While hugely inspirational to the French playwrights[63] and

[61] Italian theatre troupes were barred by Louis XIV in 1697, though they continued to perform on the left bank, due to their popularity, with the restriction that they could not speak onstage. They were allowed back into Paris in 1716, but under different restrictions, including the necessity of a gauze screen between performers onstage and the audience (Leabhart, 1989, p. 5).
[62] This banishment was in line with Louis XIV's desire to establish a monopoly on the great theatres and focus on the restriction of the smaller, festival theatres that were in competition with the Comédie-Français and Opéra (Root-Bernstein, 1984, p. 23).
[63] **Inspirational not only from their popularity with French audiences but also do due six volumes of Italian plays that were published in 1700, containing plays performed between 1682 to 1696 (Spielmann, 2024, p. 168). This – and a lack of copyright laws – enabled French playwrights and producers to present and create new work using the Italian plots and stock characters, many of which were directly from *commedia*.**

theatres of the time, *commedia* performances were ultimately banned in the early eighteenth century by licensed theatres (the all-powerful Comédie Français and L'Opéra de Paris) who felt challenged by the past popularity of these 'foreigners' (Rolfe, 1981, p. 30). During this period more restrictions were imposed on all forms of theatre, though primarily targeting the performers who played at the fairs and fetes popular during this era, the most renown, La Foire Saint-Germain, and Les Théâtres de la Foire (Lust, 2003, p. 41). Here audiences could see *commedia* performances, pantomimes, acrobats, animals, and puppetry, though often the restrictions were so great that the only reliable entertainments were animal acts and acrobatics. Such restrictions included prohibitions on more than one actor on stage at one time (to which performers would speak from the wings, or sing), to singing, and ultimately to speaking at all (to which, performers responded by using title cards) (Rolfe, 1981, p. 30).

These restrictions were not new to French theatre artists and audiences, as the theatre had been plagued by censorships and speaking bans from the fifteenth to seventeenth century, primarily by the theatre guild *La Confrérie de la Passion*, an organisation in charge of checking theatrical permits and organising the religious mystery plays (Lust, 2003, p. 41). At various periods of time over the 200-year period, permits requirements would be lifted and plays with dialogue could be performed at fairs and fetes, but would often be followed by a reinstatement or new forms of censorship.

Along with *La Confrérie*, Louis XIV's establishment of the Comédie Français in 1680 gave the institution power over all French theatre, not dissimilar to the Académie Française, who was in control of French language and literature. It banned any unlicenced use of text and completely controlled the use of the French language in performance, providing a short-lived loophole for Italian performers (Bradby and Sparks, 1997, p. 4). The licenced, 'royal' theatres and their actors led a full-blown attack against the smaller

theatres and the fairground performers for most of the eighteenth century in order to secure their monopoly.[64] It was through the Comédie Français that all language was banned from unlicenced stages in 1710, and they completely wiped out the fairground theatres between the years of 1718-1719. However, they were alarmed when the fairground re-emerged stronger than ever, with new styles and tactics for circumventing restrictions (Root-Bernstein, 1984, p. 24). **Unlicenced performers were keenly aware of the lack of a formal definition of 'theatre' and so developed performances that were sung or that merged forms, such as 'dance theatre', claiming that because they used no spoken language, they could not be held to the same restrictions applied to 'theatre' performers (Wilson, 2015, p. 358).** This battle raged on for the better part of a century, the fair theatres maintaining their popularity and enraging the licenced theatres (even prompting the temporary closure of the Opéra Comique for six years in 1745) until the French Revolution (1791-1807) stripped power from the royal theatres and la Comédie Francaise. For a brief moment in time, all theatres were 'equal in social order (Root-Bernstein, 1984, p. 38).[65]

While the French Revolution signalled a shift for theatres, from suffering under royal restrictions to inconstant censorship policies, popular entertainment thrived in the

[64] Actors of eighteenth-century France were not the only ones concerned with maintaining a hierarchy and monopoly on the industry. As Michèle Root-Bernstein points out, there was a clear division between the playwrights and authors whose work was presented in the royal theatres verses the Boulevard theatres. Each small theatre had a number of writers who would write for them, but they would not be considered quality 'dramatic authors' unless their work had been presented by a royal theatre (1984, p. 168). While the smaller Boulevard theatres did not pay well, their popularity and constant production of new work left ample opportunities for scripts to be taken up (Root-Bernstein, 1984, p. 168). The field was wildly competitive, and rampant with plagiarism and outright theft of works (Root-Bernstein, 1984, p. 172). To support themselves, writers would often take on roles within a company, as managers, directors, or performers themselves (Root-Bernstein, 1984, p. 174). Root-Bernstein uses the term 'actor-authors' to describe these multi-disciplinary artists, though it is unclear as to whether this is their term or history's. This presents an interesting parallel to Vescovo's observation (previously stated above) of 'actor-authors' of *commedia*, in that they were not actors who wished to rid themselves of authors, but rather authors who worked as actors (2018, p. 59).

[65] Quoted in Root-Bernstein from *the General Almanac for all the Theatres of Paris* published in 1791.

streets and fairs, prompting experimentation from competing performers and signalling the emergence of new styles (Carlson, 2003, p. 24). Napoleon I's ascension in 1807, however, signalled the reintroduction of strict license and censorship laws, with few theatres licensed to present approved repertoire. His licensing limited public access, reserving theatre only for the upper classes by shutting down all but eight theatres (four state theatres and four Boulevard theatres), each with their own defined genres or styles (Carlson, 2003, p. 24). Napoleon's censorship laws enforced a reclassification of theatres, ranging from '*forain*' or '*spectacle de curiosité*' (foreign or curiosity forms, such as short *commedia* pieces, acrobats, animals), to 'secondary' (vaudeville, pantomime, melodrama) and 'official' (high drama, opera). Each category was subject to its own mandates on styles of performance and restrictions which continued until 1864 (long after Napoleon's defeat) (McCormick, 1994, p. 13). These classifications brought with them a level of threat, and depending on Napoleon's perception of the threat, little to nothing would be done to interfere, leading to a surge in 'street fairs' that would host a variety of performance styles, including acrobatics, hot-air balloon flights, performing animals, and concerts (Carlson, 2003, pp. 24–25). Whatever performance venues that continued to exist despite Napoleon's restrictions, Rolfe writes,

> confined their offerings to nondramatic acrobats, clowns, musicians, animals, magicians, and pantomimes. Not only were silent pantomimes a legal necessity, but another law required that all performers in the 'unfavoured' theatres, whatever the program or part, enter stage with a somersault, on the tight rope, or walking on their hands. (1981, p. 61)

Under these sanctions, new theatres could open under the firm restrictions of what could be performed (as well as how it could be performed) which included the limitation of

dialogue, while the state sanctioned theatres could continue showing select performances of (French) pantomimes and melodramas (Felner, 1985, p. 29).

Cracks in these restrictions began to show as early as the 1820s as complaints against unlicenced theatres became fewer, and the licenced theatres began to broaden their repertoires from their approved genres and styles (Carlson, 2003, p. 28). Finally, in 1830 censorship was abolished and new theatres appeared (McCormick, 1994, p. 103), leading many entertainments to abandon street fairs and move into theatres. Some entertainments disappearing completely (Carlson, 2003, p. 29). Of course, this time of liberation was short lived. Censorship was reestablished four years later (McCormick, 1994, p. 104) and lifted again in 1848, and enacted again in 1850 (McCormick, 1994, p. 108). Censorship was banned briefly in 1870 and enacted again in 1874 until censorship of the press was abolished in 1881 which led to the eventual abolishment of censorship in all its forms (McCormick, 1994, p. 110) (though the office for theatre censorship technically existed until 1906, when it was shut due to a lack of funding) (Bradby and Sparks, 1997, p. 5).

At the time of Napoleon I's ascension in 1804, the terms 'pantomime' and 'mime' were somewhat interchangeable, but historian Mira Felner notes that pantomime took on a life of its own, inspired by circus performer Jean-Gaspard Deburau whose family circus was invited to perform in one of the Boulevard theatres from their home in Bohemia. Deburau went on to create the iconic French 'Pierrot'[66] and develop the style of *la pantomime blanche*, a unique combination of all the original practices from the Greek and

[66] This 'Pierrot' was an evolution of a *commedia zanni*, a contemporary to Harlequin, presented by Molière in his *Don Juan* and eventually becoming the protagonist of *la pantomime blanche* through Deburau's development (Felner, 1985, p. 30). This character was performed as a sort of vigilante clown of the people- one who enjoyed chivalrous wooing and theft of the finer things while pranking and satirizing the rich and powerful, in distinct contrast to his canonical character; somewhat weak and put-upon with Harlequin-esq appetites. To this end, Deburau adapted the previously written sketches to accommodate these changes and improvised politically relevant material (Felner, 1985, p. 31).

Roman mimes that included acrobatics, dance, and the development of their own recognisable stock characters, all performed in the required silence (Felner, 1985, p. 30). This pantomime differed from *commedia* in that it had one unifying plot, with multiplying complications until a happy ending (not unlike British pantomime performance evolving across the channel). Like *commedia* it was performed with comedic physicality and some acrobatics but differed in its reliance on tableaus and stark lack of dialogue. Actors performed in silence with the assistance of title cards for any inescapable lines of dialogue (Felner, 1985, p. 31).

With the eventual end of restrictions on speech in the French theatre, *la pantomime blanche* faded out of popularity, though Deburau continued to perform silently: 'My pen is like my voice on stage, but my heart is like my face' (Deburau in Felner, 1985, p. 33). Pantomime after 1830 adopted dialogue as part of its performances, and soon Deburau was the only silent performer on stage in Paris (McCormick, 1994, p. 146). The role of Pierrot was eventually passed on to his son, but the visage of Pierrot and *la pantomime blanche* faded into the past, and performers turned to the music halls and circuses to perform popular entertainments. **Audiences were interested in movement that was 'more authentic and modern', signalling a shift towards what would become indicative of modernist tastes (Evans, 2015, p. 350).** In France, Naturalism and melodramatic styles reigned in theatres, while the mime continued to perform in silence on the streets and in informal venues (Felner, 1985, p. 34).

The theatrical Avant Garde

The establishment of Naturalism as the dominant style in 'professional' French theatre led to the emergence of the Avant Garde and its focus on defining the role of the director and shifting the power held by playwrights, while equally challenging the role of

the actor as simply a ‘personality’. The professional theatres of France in the 1870s and 80s were consumed by celebrity, and while Laurence Senelick argues that the theatrical Avant Garde was more interested in the role of the writer then that of the actor[67] (Senelick, 2000, p. 20), this perspective echoes the values of the established naturalist movement. The Avant Garde was wholly against the practice of relying on an actor’s celebrity, as theatre in France had been restricted by the shifting censorship laws and, thereby, become a highly commercialized industry run on star power and guided by the monopoly of the very few licensed companies. In an effort to reconceptualize the role of the theatre and the theatre artist (specifically the relatively new role of the director and the performer), Artaud proposed the idea of 'total theatre' – a theatre that defied restrictions imposed by a given text (which could be censored and controlled by others outside of the performance making process) while creating work that was so engaging (and in some cases, shocking), that it forced an audience's attention (Graver, 2000, p. 43). David Graver associates Artaud's desire to dethrone text from the position of authority in theatre as a part of his goal to legitimize theatre as art rather than a 'social custom' (Graver, 2000, p. 43) again relying on the merit of the performance rather than the reputation of the author or performers.

By providing the performer (and director) with not only the authority over their own practice but the respect and reverence afforded to other forms of 'fine' art, Artaud's ‘total theatre’ would demand a shared model of authority, one that would carefully balance 'text, spectacle, and performance’ (Graver, 2000, p. 48). This did not mean that

[67] He draws attention to *Ubu Roi* and the fact that Jarry had approached the creation of his characters as puppets, using masks to provide distance between actors and their performances: ‘A cast of puppets subjected to the author's will was the logical devolution of the Wagnerian idea that everything in the theater must serve the vision of a single genius’ (Senelick, 2000, p. 20). He argues that casting a famous or recognisable actor in the starring role would overshadow the work of the author to the detriment of the story.

text was not something to be discarded, but rather to be understood as a part of a greater production. Consumed by the spiritual potential of the theatre event, the text was seen to be simply at service of the theatre, a tool through which to provoke the divine. Graver writes that 'the text does not just make sense; it conjures up spirits. It creates a world rather than just representing a world' (2000, p. 49). Artaud was concerned that the actors and spectators alike must 'experience' the performance rather than 'consume' it (Graver, 2000, p. 49).

The presentation of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre in Paris in 1896 signalled a colossal shift in French theatre. The controversial performance engaged the audience in what seems to have been a wildly 'live' event, utilising clowning, masks, stylised movement and grotesque physicalisations to present an unreality intended to turn a mirror on its bourgeois audience (Sidiropoulou, 2011, p. 13). These performance elements, taken straight from the styles of the popular theatres, would ultimately inspire a greater shift in performance aesthetics that would continue in the work of the Avant Garde and director-*auteur*s of the twentieth century. As Peter Brook recognises,

> **[i]t is always the popular theatre that saves the day…every attempt to revitalize the theatre has gone back to the popular source. Meyerhold ... [turned] to the circus and the music hall.... Brecht was rooted in the cabaret; Joan Littlewood longs for a funfair. (Brook in Schechter, 2003, p. 9)**

This would be true of Copeau, Artaud, and Lecoq as well, as their concern for the future of the theatre would manifest in a rediscovery and redevelopment practices based on the old popular styles.

From the first performance of *Ubu Roi*, Jarry set the stage for Artaud and his work, providing inspiration not only for the eventual emergence of the twentieth-

century Avant Garde movement, but subsequent artistic movements such as surrealism, dadaism, and absurdism (Sidiropoulou, 2011, p. 13). It would not be difficult to say that the aftermath of this production led to establish the roots of Jacques Lecoq's own theatrical research, especially considering another shift that changed the theatrical landscape – the interest and development of methods of acting training. Prior to the turn of the twentieth century, actors were trained through apprenticeships or roles passed down through theatrical families. Actors in the tradition of *commedia dell'arte* literally inherited roles from older family members, training through the guidance of their elders (Rudlin, 1994, p. 2). This shifted with a newfound interest the training of the actor and the body, taken up by Stanislavski and his work with the Moscow Art Theatre (beginning in 1898), Vsevolod Meyerhold, and Jacques Copeau (from whom Lecoq's own pedagogical lineage emerges), not to mention the later 'gurus'[68] such as Eugenio Barba, Jerzy Grotowski, and Peter Brook (whose ideas on theatre also descend from Copeau) (Sidiropoulou, 2011, p. 14).

While Artaud was key to the development of the theatrical Avant Garde's philosophy, the work of Jacques Copeau and his collaborators provided practical embodiment of what this theatre could be – a theatre that reimagined the body through a sort of 'primitivism', as Simon Murray recognises, which may or may not have been in reference to the 'noble savage', a conception put forth by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78); 'someone uncorrupted by the debilitating complexities and demands of modern Industrial and *bourgeois* society' (Murray, 2017, p. 29, italics in original). While the

[68] It is interesting to note that each of the 'gurus' listed here developed their training systems in balance with their directing work, unlike Jacques Lecoq who would periodically direct or act but was first and foremost a teacher. Perhaps it might be natural for actor trainers to believe their control as the director was necessary to shape their students to perform effectively in the creative world outside of their training, or simply they wished to train actors to fit specifically within their own professional companies. In either case, again we come to the issue of the playwright or producer of text in power over those performing - word coming before bodies. The one person who was not in the rehearsal room held all the power.

concept emerges from a racist, colonial ethnographic perceptions, the desire to throw off *bourgeois* societal restrictions and industrialist capitalism embedded in European life does perhaps signal the beginnings of Personalism, the thoughts of Emmanuel Mounier, and ultimately the development of Sartre's existentialist humanism (explored in Chapter 2). These ideas led an energizing of the European performer's body through an interest with physicality and action, theorized by Artaud and enacted by Copeau and his collaborators.

Jacques Copeau, Suzanne Bing, and Les Copiaus

Albert Camus made the striking statement that in 'the history of French theatre there are two periods: before and after Copeau' (Camus in Evans, 2018, p. 1), reflecting on the extraordinary effect his work had on the evolution of modern theatre, corporality in performance, and actor training. Through the tumultuous running of Le Vieux-Colombier school and theatre in Paris, their theatrical experiments at the 'Chateau de Mortreuil' and the eventual separation of Les Copiaus, Copeau and his partner, Suzanne Bing, established a system of creating theatre and training together which had not been considered in western theatre. The impact of the Avant Garde and new ideas from East Asian theatres led to the development of performance practices rather than a specific training practice, whereas one could argue the post-modern mime emerged specifically from the training that emerged from Copeau's company and school. Le Vieux-Colombier was revolutionary not only in its practice but also as the only other acting school in France – aside from Conservatoire Nationale – 'where students learned by imitation' of the great licensed actors of the time (Baldwin, 2013, p. 76).

Le Vieux-Colombier legitimised a different approach to acting and creating, one that was ultimately drawn from the same roots as the popular performance practices of

the past century but also engaged with the classic works of Molière and Shakespeare, among others (who in their own ways were inspired by popular performance). The literary approach at the core of Copeau's work helped provide legitimacy to the new style of theatre that would emerge from Le Vieux-Colombier, and provide context to their approach to the theatrical event – not replicating life as it was but heightening it through the physical expressive capabilities of the actors and their ability to employ their bodies exploration of a text (Graver, 2000, p. 45). While Copeau was still deeply attached to the individual roles of director, writer, and actor, the lines began to blur through the work of Les Copiaus, where their roles and established rehearsal hierarchies evolved into different shapes.

From the beginning of his theatrical career, Copeau was concerned with interrogating historical theatre practices to define how the French theatre should be re-born. Inspired by the work of Molière and concerned with theatre traditions of Ancient Greece, Renaissance England, and medieval Europe (and later, *commedia*), he began his approach to directing, acting, and teaching through an intensely text-based approach, placing the actors and himself at the service of the 'great plays' (Baldwin, 2013, p. 72).[69] Through the turbulent years at the start of the First World War, Copeau conducted research and travelled, spending time with Edward Gordon Craig (Baldwin, 2013, p. 74) and Émile Jacques-Dalcroze, both of whom would have a profound effect on his practice and that of his partner, Suzanne Bing.[70] Both Copeau and Bing, along Copeau's daughter Marie-Hélène Copeau (later Dasté) spent time in Switzerland observing Jacques-Dalcroze's eurythmics classes (a movement and music education system for children),

[69] In a poster calling for young actors for Le Vieux-Colombier's opening, Copeau invites 'the educated public interested in maintaining the cult of classic texts' (my translation) (Copeau in Evans, 2018, p. 9).
[70] Suzanne Bing (1885-1967) began as one of Copeau's students and swiftly became one of Copeau's most trusted followers (and romantic partner). Without her work and influence, Copeau's work would not have been possible.

where they were inspired by his students' use of improvisation and facility with physical expression, as well as their ability to engage their entire body in performance (Evans, 2018, p. 17).[71]

Bing and Copeau's observations of children's play (in Jacques-Dalcroze's technique) would lead them to rethink the 'play' that they would like to see their actors undertake, interested by the children's ability to play out and expand upon their own observations of the world (Baldwin, 2013, p. 75) .[72] Copeau, writing in 1916, observed:

> It seems to me that the best and most direct initiation into improvised comedy will be by observing children at play. Some children play very badly, never knowing what to do, precisely like some actors who play badly, without élan, joy or fantasy, borrowing everything they do from others, copying one another. But children who play well, who know how to play, are models of verve, naturalness and invention. They are masters of improvisation. (Copeau, 1990, p. 155)

The free play and imagination of children was perhaps more useful to Bing since Copeau's approach to improvisation came through literary research (rather than his own practice) and her concern was running the school rather than running or directing the theatre. Nevertheless, Copeau's literary research led him to revitalise *commedia* practice in France and develop his own pedagogy which challenged the traditional literary form of French theatre, and provided tools for a practice 'centred on the body of the actor (the body and the action determine the plot)' (Balme and Vescovo, 2018, p. 244). He was not

[71] Copeau would later reject eurythmics to favor George Hébert's system of 'natural gymnastics' (Evans, 2018, p. 26) (another link to Lecoq's pedagogy).

[72] The concept of play and methods of child education would become of great interest to Bing who, in 1916, during a two year sojourn in New York with Copeau and the company (at the behest of the French Ministry of Culture), would be introduced to the pedagogy of the Montessori system (Baldwin, 2013, p. 76). During this time, Copeau's company would include two former students of Jacques-Dalcroze (Jessmin Howarth and Jane Erb) who were hired to conduct movement training, though were ultimately let go (Evans, 2018, p. 18). It is during this time that Copeau began experiments with improvisation (Baldwin, 2013, p. 76), likely due to the influence of the Jacques-Dalcroze students.

concerned with the revitalisation of old traditions (a value adopted by Lecoq), but instead interested in the ancient root of theatre, a more universal understanding of the spirit of the performer (echoing his friend, Artaud). He argued that

> [t]here is no question of making historical reconstructions, or of exhuming old scenarios… We shall study the commedia dell'arte and the fairground theatre. We shall learn the history and development of improvisation, the manners, the methods and peculiarities of the actors who practiced it. But our goal is to create new improvised comedy using contemporary types and subjects. (Copeau in Balme and Vescovo, 2018, p. 245)

Le Vieux-Colombier school's curriculum was dictated by Copeau, but Bing's teaching led it; including (alongside text analysis and other previously established elements of Copeau's pedagogy) gestural expression and improvisation (Baldwin, 2013, p. 77), along with mask work (as a part of Bing's course on 'dramatic instinct') (Baldwin, 2013, p. 80).[73] Bing was hugely influenced by her private research on Japanese Noh theatre; their masks and expressive movements adapted into definitive elements of the pedagogy (Evans and Fleming, 2019, p. 41). **These embodied styles, combined with the development of 'play' as a pedagogical and creative tool, established the core of Copeau's teachings, despite emerging from Bing's research. Her contributions have been overshadowed due to 'subsequent cultural inflections hat have prioritized the achievements of some over others' (Evans and Fleming, 2019, p. 67) – or, in other words, commentaries have sought to protect the canonical patriarchy of actor training (Fleming, 2020, p. 2). Recent research has begun to uncover her influence,**

[73] The initial training masks, like Lecoq's 'neutral mask', were full faced, white cardboard masks (perhaps made by the students themselves: 'by modeling their own masks') (Baldwin, 2013, p. 80).

which, according to Etienne Decroux was defining for Vieux-Colombier.[74] He said that '[w]ithout her, the school would have remained nothing more than a project, or ended up like the others: chaos…Without Suzanne Bing, there was no one' (Decroux in Fleming, 2020, p. 4).[75]

The school, Jane Baldwin argues, became the breeding ground for the forms of collaborative creation that would become popular later in the century due to Bing's role as primary teacher, and the influence of the Montessori system she had encountered in New York – a pedagogy based in 'creativity, spontaneity, choice, and independence, within limits' (Baldwin, 2013, p. 80). Copeau's goals for training remained to renew what theatre could be, prompted by historical research of theatrical practice and physical training of the body (Evans, 2018, p. 29), and by a connection made with Stanislavski and his work, a new emphasis on psychology and its link to action (Evans, 2018, p. 30).

Nevertheless, for all of Copeau's research and correspondence with the 'great men' of the theatre, it is clear that Bing's dedication to Copeau's vision and the execution of his ideas provided the students with practical reality of what his philosophy entailed, while providing Copeau with the ability to see in real time the effects of his thinking on the evolving students. Baldwin's perspective is also echoed in the research of Mark Evans and Cass Fleming, who state that Copeau's work as a director was his primary focus, while Bing was no doubt the pedagogue behind the training (Evans and Fleming, 2019, p. 65). Any 'liberties' she may have taken in encouraging the students to develop their own perspectives and practices clearly bypassed Copeau's desire to control his

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[74] **Fleming notes that Bing never published her research (like her male counterparts whose texts have become touchstones for actors and trainers alike), instead focusing her efforts on the 'embodied and interpersonal exchanges of training and practice'. In doing so, she eschewed any hierarchy established by authorship or perceived 'ownership' established by publication (Fleming, 2020, p. 16).**

[75] Decroux was a former pupil and actor of Le Vieux Colombier who went on to develop his own school and teach the likes of Marcel Marceau. Considered the 'creator of modern mime' (Felner, 1985, p. 51).

students/performers and elevated his pedagogy. **In fact, it was Bing's development of play-centred teaching that led to the shifts in pedagogy necessary to enable actors to create their own work rather than rely on direction or writing, implicitly overriding Copeau's desire for control (Fleming, 2020, p. 6).**

The closure of Le Vieux-Colombier theatre in 1924 (due to financial difficulty and Copeau's health) initiated a fraught future for Copeau and his students. Training would continue at Chateau de Mortreuil in Burgundy (regardless of Copeau's various absences) and would be disrupted upon his return. During this time the remaining students were led by Bing and the other actors, continuing to train in improvisation and character development (Evans and Fleming, 2019, p. 30), eventually including *commedia* and Greek Chorus inspired work as well as gymnastics, pantomime, and theatre games, in a setting where the teachers and students would train together (Baldwin, 2013, pp. 81–82). This would change upon Copeau's comings and goings, who demanded control and structure be imposed upon his company (Baldwin, 2013, p. 82).

When the company was disbanded after six months in Burgundy, the remaining company members founded their own group. Les Copiaus (Copeau's Children) was led by Michel Saint-Denis (Copeau's nephew) (Evans and Fleming, 2019, p. 30), and focused on the *comédie nouvelle* that they had been developing through engagement with half mask, *commedia* style performance, and stock characters (Baldwin, 2013, p. 83).[76] The company would be disbanded and reformed over the following years, repeating a cycle of moving to a new location and expanding their skills without Copeau, and eventually

[76] Baldwin notes that only the male actors were able to develop their characters, quoting Jean Dasté who suggested women were not physically strong enough, though Baldwin suggests perhaps the women were too busy with labours of costuming and mask making (Baldwin, 2013, p. 83). In Lecoq's pedagogy, a former teacher once mentioned that women were not allowed to wear the *commedia* masks in training, Lecoq citing the fact that in traditional *commedia* women did not wear masks. This was changed after uproar from students, now any student may wear any mask (though I have yet to find record of when this change was instituted).

being disbanded by Copeau who didn't agree with their approaches (Baldwin, 2013, pp. 85, 87; Evans and Fleming, 2019, p. 32). Nevertheless, they continued working, as Baldwin describes: 'In preparation for new works, they improvised topics, singly and in groups. Their interest was large and universal themes that could be represented through mime, sound, rhythm, and music' (2013, p. 86). They often worked from plays scripted by Copeau, but more often their uniquely developed characters based on their own skills would lead the drama. Baldwin writes that the 'characters drew on their personalities and particular skills' and that '[a]s in the earlier Copiaus-generated work, the production was an entertainment or theatre game (*jeu),* written around themes rather than a story" (Baldwin, 2013, p. 86). Though, it seems, there was always a need for a playwright within the group (Baldwin, 2013, p. 87).

The members of les Copiaus would go on to found other theatre companies, such as Compagnie des Quinze which became known as an extension of Copeau's work, whilst not under his creative dictation (Baldwin, 2013, p. 87). Saint-Denis would leave Les Quinze for England in the 1930s and become an enormous influence on British acting training and theatre (Evans and Fleming, 2019, p. 62). **His role as the head of the Old Vic Theatre School would provide him the opportunity to use his experience of Vieux-Colombier as a blueprint for his own training programme, inspiring the creation and development of similar courses in the UK, North America (including Juilliard), and even l'École Supérieure d'Art Dramatique in France (Evans, 2013, pp. 121–122). While Saint-Denis concerned himself with directing and teaching abroad, Marie-Hélène Dasté, Jean Dasté, and Jean Vilar would go on to establish Les Comédiens de Grenoble – where they would work with a young Jacques Lecoq (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 64).**

There are a number of similarities between Copeau/Bing and Lecoq's pedagogies; both training programmes begin in silence (to develop specificity of movement before speech), include mask work (Lecoq's *neutre* and Copeau/Bing's 'Noble'), and assignments where students would 'construct their improvisations together' (Baldwin, 2013, p. 80).[77] There was also a great focus on the development of characters, though Copeau/Bing's students would often start with known characters form Molière's work, or other classical texts, and develop them further (Baldwin, 2013, p. 80), whereas the Lecoq student is required to create characters originally (see Chapter 5). The work of Les Copiaus and their interest in *comédie nouvelle* also parallels that of Lecoq's *Comédie Humaine*, likely adapted from his time working with Marie-Hélène (née Copeau) Dasté and her husband, Jean Dasté.

The Copiaus' dedication to developing a practice of improvisation and 'play' in theatre had a profound effect on modern theatre in France and abroad. It is extraordinary to recognise how these practices would evolve into the improvisation styles of today, such as the now hugely popular American comedy practices developed and perfected by the theatres of Upright Citizens Brigade, Second City, or the now defunct Improv Olympics (among many others) who have become synonymous with the practice of improvisation. The array of practice that comes under the umbrella of improvisation demonstrates the varied and individual cultural attitudes that led to their development. In the USA, the New York school became a tool for developing the individual actor's art[78], while the

[77] Baldwin draws a parallel between this practice and Lecoq's *autocour*s (2013, p. 80).
[78] Based in a Russian technique inspired by the work of actors at the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) and Stanislavski's 'method' and practice, the New York school was established after a MAT tour of America in 1923 by the newly founded American Laboratory Theatre in New York by actors who had left Russia, dissatisfied with the dawning of post-revolutionary politics (Frost and Yarrow, 1990, p. 46). The 'Lab's' training was based on Stanislavski's work, made up of three core elements: the training of the voice and body, or 'outer means of expression', 'intellectual and cultural awareness', and 'refinement of inner means of expression' (Ronald A. Willis in Frost and Yarrow, 1990, p. 46). The focus of the improvisations was, at its core, to develop character, understand the cause and effect of interaction between characters, and to live

Chicago style, directly inspired by the work of Les Copiau (Frost and Yarrow, 1990, p. 49)**,** was more concerned with engaging community and audience.[79] In England (through a lineage of Saint-Denis), improvisation became a tool for generating material and inspiring the playwright (Radosavljević, 2020, p. 256).[80] Each practice has travelled to different corners of the world and evolved, shifting practice with the demands of each individual company, cultural landscape, and audience, not unlike the practices outlined in this chapter, which provided the roots of these practices.

The mime/*commedia* link – the practice of an authorial-actor

Mimes and *commedia* performers developed their practices to be somewhat itinerant and limber, to cross language and cultural barriers by exploring common themes of day-to-day life, mocking the powerful, ignoring religious rules and restricted or taboo subjects. Perhaps most importantly, these actors were not 'actors' in a formal sense, either according to cultural definitions or the struct licensing of theatres (Graver, 2000, p. 43)

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in the 'given circumstances', a direct technique of Stanislavski's. The focus of the work was based upon what was happening on stage, the audience was never considered in its execution in contrast to the Chicago style (Frost and Yarrow, 1990, p. 47).

[79] The Chicago style emerged out of the work of Neva L. Boyd on play and games in her sociological research and development of educational theory (Frost and Yarrow, 1990, p. 49). Boyd's research would evolve through the work of theatre academic Viola Spolin, who's development of game theory became the basis of dramatic improvisational practice as well as her approach to community work. Spolin was known to use improvisation to encourage situations of play, even by taking suggestions from an audience as to the performance structure and subject matter (a tactic integral to most Chicago style improvisation performances) (Frost and Yarrow, 1990, p. 50). For Peter Sills (son of Viola Spolin and founder of Second City, among other improvisation groups) the Chicago style is 'an attempt to find the art in confrontations between groups of people and in their all living together within the theatre form- which includes the audience sitting and witnessing. The actors, to my mind, are witnesses to the truth of the life that the community is living' (Sills and Mee Jr., 1964, p. 167). This was the core of Spolin's work, for whom the improvisation must be as much for the actor, the amateur or professional, as it is for the audience (Sills and Mee Jr., 1964, pp. 169–170). In these senses, it provides a sharp contrast to the New York style.

[80] Improvisation appeared later in the UK, and was technically illegal until closure of the Lord Chamberlain's office in 1968 (Radosavljević, 2020, p. 256). The 'British style', pioneered by Keith Johnstone in association with the Royal Court Theatre (as its head playreader), took after the practices of both Copeau (through George Devine, who was taught by Michel Saint-Denis) and Stanislavski, serving as tool to encourage the development of new and potentially surprising techniques for engaging with problems of playwriting (Radosavljević, 2020, p. 256).

(excepting, of course, Italian *commedia* performers who eventually gained the title of *dell'arte* (Vescovo, 2018, p. 56)). Each practice evolved alongside a formalised, licenced or religious theatre, considered high drama with approved written scripts and upper-class audiences. These actors were those who were given a role and performed. The actors of ancient mime, *commedia*, and French popular theatre created their roles for themselves, if not through text, through their bodies. Regardless of whether their role was based on a stock character or recognised figure, their choice of language and/or movement was their own, rather than dictated externally by the writing of another individual. This would not be necessarily recognised as a multidisciplinary practice as it was integral to the form, the actor would naturally be the author of their own role, perhaps helping the assumption of the myth of improvisation in *commedia dell'arte* (the *commedia* performer was labelled an 'actor' thereby their writing practice was forgotten). The attachment of the 'author' to the title of actor recovers the ancient assumption of one who authors their own role which seems to have been forgotten to history while the revered stories of formal, 'classical' actors are well documented and respected.

The mime, *commedia* performer, and pantomime, which all fit into the category of 'popular performer', shared parallels with the work of the 'professional' or licenced 'actors' of the French theatrical tradition but were repeatedly forced to shift their practice and subject matter in response to changing restrictions. Such malleability became second nature to them, whether through shifting their *ossatura* ('skeleton'/'outline') or finding ways around the absurd restrictions and ever-changing laws of censorship. To differentiate between the *comédien/nes* of the grand, licenced theatres of France, and, for example, the juggler, the term *acteur* indicates a skillset similar to that of the *comédien/ne* with the implication of a much greater breadth of specialism and skill (though perhaps a lower social standing).

Since there is no clear or concise theory around what makes the *acteur-auteur*, or indeed the actor-author, I would like to propose the theory constructed from shared elements of the historical practices I have explored here, recognising a methodological framework of developing work, shared political attitudes and oppressions, and overarching styles of performance:

Proposing a practice – the *acteur*
1. Secular and satirical subjects 2. Completely or partially original content 3. Collaborative process 4. Linguistically, stylistically flexible as a technique to reject censorship 5. Visual style of work 6. Relationship to writing (either by writing themselves or being prompted by texts in performance) 7. Interdisciplinary performance and virtuosic individual practice (self-direction, music, dance, acrobatics, writing, developed mime, etc.)

The practice of an *acteur* is reliant upon a significant amount of creative freedom in order to maintain flexibility in performance to react to restrictions imposed upon them by cultural politics and social attitudes, as well as crafting work quickly to respond to current politics and societal issues. While their work does not need to be satirical, it must have the freedom to mock what holds power (such as religion, class, or money, reflected in portrayals of the wealthy *Pantalone* in *commedia* or the tyrant King of *Ubu Roi*) or those who enact injustices (and thereby must remain secular in order to do so). The *acteur* is reliant on their company, and while they have ownership and originality in how they perform, they are ultimately bound to a collaborative practice, defined through a common performance language and process built over years (often through familial bonds).

Considering the performance spaces (large amphitheatres, roadsides, town squares, etc.) and the shifts in language depending on the location of performance, it was imperative that these performers developed a style that could be encountered and understood by an audience visually as well as aurally, in case sound could not travel or language could not be translated (or in case the government decided language needed to be licenced to be performed, thereby necessitating silent performance). This visual style could be determined by masks, costumes, set pieces, and props, but were equally established by the virtuosity of the performers and their skills in other areas such as acrobatics, music, and dance, among others. All these skills and approaches to establishing and developing performance would be stitched together, prompted, or embellished by writing. This might involve adapting existing texts to suit the needs of performance, generating new scenarios based on performers' intimate knowledge of their theatrical worlds and characters, or codifying momentary impulses from the stage into a written record for their own company's (or character's) *œuvre*. Perhaps most importantly, each performer was expected to be the 'author' of their role, possessing – and becoming known for – unique strength in a distinctive set of skills. These were shaped by the individual *acteur's* practice, pushing them beyond the 'interpretation of a role' towards the development of a virtuosic character defined by their particular abilities and, in most cases, the necessity of creatively avoiding censorship.

A relatively clear image of the *acteur* in contrast to the *comédien/ne* emerges, echoing in the thinking and influences of Jacques Lecoq and his pedagogy, as well as the work generated by the students as they developed their practice in and outside of the school. As the practices outlined above emerge from the specific needs and demands of their cultural spheres, Lecoq's pedagogy includes them as established practices that strengthen the students' abilities while inspiring them to develop their own styles.

In the comparison of the ancient mimes, *commedia* performers, modern mimes, pantomimes, and clowns, the styles that emerge come not only from the historical evolutions of practice, but the demand for theatre of the present.

In considering Lecoq's unique perspective on mime (one that seems, in practice, to be disconnected from its history and almost controversial in its ability to speak) and the historical links with writing, an even more provocative observation on the practice of the *acteur* can be proposed. The student as the 'speaking mime' becomes the site for which writing happens in real time without the material object (or within the body), developing the actor-author to a point of individual expertise with strength of memory that binds them to their developed 'repertoire'. Tracing the intersections of practice between these popular theatre forms provides a clear sense of the approach the *acteur* element of *acteur-auteur* provides, while highlighting forces of influence to Lecoq's pedagogy that may have been overlooked. By reestablishing these connections I uncover the ancient – yet oft-ignored artist – who is considered 'new' or original in the cultural climate that regulates what the 'professional' or licenced actor can say or perform. In defining the practice of the *acteur* not only does a framework emerge which, like Sarris' *auteur* theory, can help us identify this type of artist, but this framework can (and will, in this project) evolve into one through which we can analyse how Lecoq's pedagogy produces the *acteur-auteur*. The training is itself is remarkable, but *how* the training is executed is perhaps the more remarkable.

Part II
Towards the *acteur-auteurial* approach

The various 'author'/*auteur* movements I have thus far outlined (up until the mid-twentieth century) highlight the desire to overthrow the hierarchy of literary traditions, the supremacy of the 'text', and writers of those texts. Similarly, the work of the *acteur* or 'popular performer' developed a practice that challenged the authority of the playwright by refusing to rely solely on an external text, instead drawing on the performer's own resources to develop character and performance. While the *auteur* came to signify a specific calibre of artist theoretically unimpeded by restrictions of censorship or 'arbiters of quality' (as recognized by Truffaut), the 'author' maintained the value of their work through an allegiance to publishing institutions and a seeming 'cult of personality', up until the colossal shifts of the post-structuralist movement from the 1960s onwards. Again, in parallel, the *comédien/ne* of the French theatre inhabited a space of celebrity which, through their association to licenced theatres, kept them above the concerns of censorship, while the *acteurs* were forced to develop methods of avoiding censorship leading to virtuosity in their practice.

The first part of this project examines the historical evolution of what defines an *auteur* or author, and proposes a definition, collating the shared histories of the *acteur* (Ancient mimes, *commedia* performers and French popular performers) which inspired and led to the development of Lecoq's pedagogy. Through each section there emerges a rejection of and questioning of institutional authority, be it religion, film studios, literary cultures, or contemporary politics. While the *auteur* historically used their auteurial practice to exert control (over other artists, the industry, etc), the *acteur* used theirs to subvert external control and maintain their own artistic license (in some cases, literally).

Having situated these practices of the *auteur* and *acteur* within their historical contexts, the discussion now turns to their practical application within Lecoq's pedagogy and the pedagogical structures established at l'École de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq. Informed by key theoretical touchstones of post-structuralist literary theory and critical pedagogical theory, I now proceed to reject (or evolve) the conventional implications of text, of writing, of the reader, specifically in relation to the educational setting, as well as the training and definition of the *acteur-auteur.* Barthes thoughts on the 'Death of the Author' prove useful as a subverted framework, as I will propose instead of his 'dead' or 'absent' author, the pedagogy relies on training a 'living' (or 'active') author, who lives in the presence of their text. Supported by the movements of the late 1960s-70s and the end of structuralism which highlight tensions between the 'text' and the 'author', this theoretical intervention provides territory to be explored. This will become more relevant in the third part of this thesis, but for the moment it is useful to clarify that my consideration of a written object or 'text' draws on Barthes' definition of the terms, discussed in Chapter 2. It is worth quoting Barthes once more:

> We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning … but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture. (1977, p. 146)

The text is a readable and infinitely interpretable material defined not by its creator but by its reader.

There is a paradox at the heart of this research: in attempting to understand a practice grounded in physicality, I have necessarily drawn away from its core values by constructing a framework of literary theory and history, and writing more than eighty thousand words on the subject. Why use literary theory to analyse a practice that is in

many ways so against 'text' and literary practice, that defies academic analysis and rejects the 'supremacy' of literature? Because writing is inherent to this practice. Because the *acteur-auteur* is not an *acteur-créateur*, a *comédien-écrivain(e)*, or simply, a *comédien(ne)*, *écrivain(e),* or *metteur-en-scène.* In fact, a common piece of feedback you will hear as a student within the pedagogy will be that your work was '*bien écrit'* ('well written') or, more often than not, '*pas bien écrit'* ('badly written') The links between the Lecoq pedagogy, authorship, and *auteur*-ship are inevitable, and, when considered through the *acteur*, provides a framework for an 'active author'.

Proposing the practice of the *acteur-auteur*

In the first chapter, I proposed seven elements of the *auteur's* approach and practice:

1. Identity/soul/spirit present and palpable in work
2. Interdisciplinary practice in methods of work (writing, directing, performing, designing, etc.)
3. Originator (rather than interpreter) of work
4. Relationship to writing (or role/ position of writer) in development of work; dichotomy of text vs. body, rejection or adaptation of text.
5. Visual style of work
6. Active collaboration in development work
7. Control/Shift in power; rejection of institution, demand for moving up a hierarchy/control of artistic project

When the title of author or *auteur* is considered with the *acteur*/popular performer of relevant historical practices, a similar list of elements of practice emerges:

1. Secular and satirical subject of work
2. Interdisciplinary performance and virtuosic individual practice (self-direction, music, dance, acrobatics, writing, developed mime, etc.)
3. Completely or partially original content

4. Relationship to writing (either by writing themselves or being prompted by text in performance)
5. Visual style of work
6. Collaborative process in development and performance
7. Linguistically, stylistically flexible as a technique to reject censorship

While remarkably similar, there is a distinct difference in how identity/soul/spirit is constituted in each. In the acteur/popular performer's practice, the emphasis is on virtuosity, defined not by the uniqueness of a particular vision or perspective, but by the performer's active, virtuosic physical performance and creative abilities. This differentiation emerges from the secular practice of the *acteur*, as well as the active role they play in the development of their work. In reference to Lecoq's training, titling his student the *acteur-auteur* may also serve a desire to move his student away from spiritual or religious implications of a 'creator god' embedded in the origins of the author (Chapter 2). When combined and collated into a potential definition and practical approach for an *acteur-auteur*, these practical elements can be divided into observations on practice and necessary elements of performance:

Proposed Practice and Produced Item/Performance of the *acteur-auteur*

Practice:	**Produced item/performance:**
• Completely or partially original content • Active collaboration in development of work • Linguistically/ stylistically flexible as a technique to reject censorship or authority (in production and performance) • Shift in power/ control over work, demand for artistic legitimacy	• Identity/soul/spirit present and palpable in work – or – virtuosic individual practice • Secular and satirical subject of work • Linguistically/stylistically flexible as a technique to reject censorship development of work (in production and performance) • Visual style of work • Interdisciplinary performance

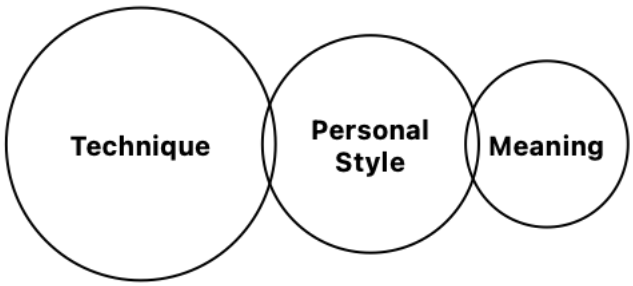
• Relationship to/practice of writing (either by writing themselves or being prompted in rehearsal) • Interdisciplinary practice in methods of work and development of virtuosic individual practice	

The adoption of this approach in making work is enacted within the pedagogy of Lecoq in an unconventional way, mainly because the majority of these practices are impossible to teach. For example, the act of 'origination' (like 'identity' or 'virtuosity') cannot be taught, nor can one teach the practice of 'shifting power and demanding artistic legitimacy' (although they might seem the natural state of the student, artist or not). These practices are, however, in their own way, fostered. 'Collaboration' and 'interdisciplinarity' could be taught, but they are not taught within the Lecoq pedagogy – rather, they are expected.

While each of these elements are indeed practiced within the work and training of the Lecoq student, the only elements which can be actively taught are those relating to 'visual style' (the skills required to develop virtuosity in performance) and a 'practice and relationship to writing'. Nevertheless, these skills are developed by Lecoq students, indicating that this unique pedagogical approach relies heavily on the students' actions, tastes, pre-existing and innate talents to define how the subject of work will develop. This lack of truly 'teachable' elements indicates that the pedagogy functions not as a banking system (to borrow terminology from Paolo Freire's critical pedagogy), but as a structure of experimentation, a demanding atmosphere for the *auteur* to prove themselves worthy

of a title they already have. [81] Titling the student the *acteur-auteur* establishes an expectation that their work begins at school with these elements already at the core of their practice, only to be fostered and strengthened through the unique relationships between students, students and teachers, and specific pedagogical tools.

In the second half of this thesis, I will engage an analysis of the pedagogy divided into categories through the framework proposed by Andrew Sarris (Sarris, 1962, p. 563), in the first chapter of this work, which I subverted.



Repeat Figure 2: Second visual of Sarris' *auteur* theory.

Rather than criteria through which to evaluate the potential *auteur* and their work, the framework serves as educational roadmap through which the evolving *acteur-auteur* must journey to establish their understanding and ability within an *acteur-auteur* practice. Within the context of the pedagogy, the student must pass through and develop 'technique', explore and execute their own 'personal style', and eventually (perhaps outside of school, later in their career) be able to present a point of view and present work imbibed with 'meaning'.

To situate these elements within the revised Sarris framework, 'Technique' can be defined by the elements which are *taught*:

[81] 'Banking' indicates a system of education which is simply concerned with the amount of content absorbed by the student rather than promoting actual cognitive engagement with a subject (Freire, 2017, p. 52).

- Relationship to/practice of writing (either by writing themselves or being prompted in rehearsal)
- Linguistic and stylistically flexibility (range of visual styles)
- Some skills for virtuosic development[82] (I will not focus on this element in the main thread of my argument as these are in ways supplemental to the overarching pedagogy).

'Personal style' will then evolve from the employment of the 'Technical' aspects in the pedagogically *expected* methods of practice:

- Collaboration
- The development of completely or partially original content
- Interdisciplinary practice
- Shift in power/ control over work, demand for artistic legitimacy

The final element of 'Meaning' is not clear, and much like the existentialist thinking it echoes, must be decided by the individual student themselves. It is something that will evolve over the student's lifetime and cannot be taught, though hopefully can be developed, or at least inspired by, their practice of 'technique' and 'personal style'. All authorial practices – whether a film, piece of theatre, or literary endeavour – begins with writing. So, the second part of this thesis begins with the question of 'technique' and the writing practice developed by the *acteur-auteur* student of Lecoq's pedagogy, which I will explore in the following chapter (Chapter 4).

To clarify the distinction between the 'teaching' and 'expecting' pedagogical approaches I mention above, I will engage with ideas from the emancipatory pedagogy of Jacques Rancière and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed from Paolo Freire. Recognising the centrality of 'will', 'expectation', and the discovery of knowledge as a shared journey—

[82] These skills include juggling, acrobatics, stage combat, and more, though are to varying degrees supplementary to the main scope of the pedagogy. Those who are already trained and have a propensity for acrobatics will thrive, and those who do not will become better, but not necessarily virtuosic (unless extremely self-driven).

characteristic of 'liberatory' and 'emancipatory' pedagogies—makes Lecoq's pedagogical project of developing and maintaining student autonomy more visible. His pedagogy establishes strong scaffolding for creative assignments and exercises that aim to develop the student's auteurial practice.

L'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq: establishing the structures for training the *acteur-auteur*

Founded in 1956 in Paris, Lecoq's school began as after his return from Italy as 'École Jacques Lecoq – MIME – Éducation du Comédien' (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 170). In an early prospectus from 1960, the aims of Lecoq's training were advertised thus:

> This is for the actor to have the liberty of their body, so that it will cease to be an obstacle for their expression. He must know how to walk, breath, turn and stop… with ease.
>
> This is, for the mime, how to express themself in silence, without the technique being external to the feeling, who gives us the illusion of life in the solitude of his body, without ever becoming a demonstrator (show off), a virtuoso, or a mannerist.
>
> This is to create a theatre of action, based on the mime-actors, which restores the mime to their theatrical function with speech and music, and to encourage, with the authors, the desire to write with this new instrument.[83] (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 170, my translation)

In this same pamphlet, the areas of study studied are laid out as part of the three-year (part-time) curriculum, covering primarily expressive gymnastics and acrobatics; gesture

[83] '*Il s'agit pour le Comédien d'avoir la liberté de son corps, de manière que celui-ci ne soit pas un obstacle à son expression. Qu'il sache marcher, respirer, se retourner, s'arrêter…avec aisance. Il s'agit, pour la mime, de s'exprimer dans le silence, sans que sa technique soit extérieure à son sentiment et qu'il nous donne l'illusion de la vie dans la solitude de son corps, sans jamais devenir un démonstrateur, un virtuose, ni un maniéré. Il s'agit de créer un théâtre d'action, basé sur des comédiens-mimes, qui redonne au mime sa fonction théâtral en compagnie de la parole et de la musique, et de susciter, chez les auteurs, l'envie d'écrire avec ce nouvel instrument'* (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 170).

(with music and speech); the study of movement; mime efforts; neutral and expressive masks[84]; manipulation (most likely referring to objects); and improvisation. The dramatic territories (as they would later be termed) consisted solely of *commedia dell'arte*, *pantomime blanche* (or Pierrot), *figuration mimée,* and chorus (*du Chœur*) (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 170). It wouldn't be until 1962 that the clown was introduced to the pedagogy, including the discovery of the individual student's personal clown (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 288).

From its earliest iterations, Lecoq's school has always referenced the '*auteur*' and an expectation of writing with the body – '…to encourage, with the authors, the desire to write with this new instrument' ('*…susciter, chez les auteurs, l'envie d'écrire avec ce nouvel instrument*') (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 170) – and yet there was no distinct pathway to develop the practice of the *acteur-auteur*, or even an opportunity to develop work that was not prompted by the teacher. Through movement and improvisation, the student would learn the basics of writing with the body. They would learn the vocabulary, the tools, the timing and punctuation (all metaphorically speaking), but never how to craft of a piece or the drafting process. The performer that Lecoq began training was not the *acteur-auteur*, but the 'moving/writing actor'. This would all change come the events of the May '68 strikes which would change the school's curriculum and establish two important practices necessary for the development of the students' auteurial practice (which will be explored in Chapters 5 and 6).

Each year of training at l'École Jacques Lecoq consists of three core classes: *improvisation*, *mouvement*, and *autocours* (which was only included in the pedagogy from 1968). The focuses and purposes of these classes shift between first and second

[84] The neutral mask was an evolution of Copeau's 'noble' masks, while the expressive masks were designed by Lecoq and Amleto Sartori.

year. The first-year movement classes are a cacophony of physical exercises from the simplicity of neutral mask and corporeal mime movements to the wildly abstract movements of short stories, music, colours, or paintings, to imitations of real-life animals, elements, and materials. The first-year improvisation classes tend to focus on practicing the movements and exploring the skills of crafting structure of dramatic action, be it silent or with words. The inclusion of the *autocours* in the student's development would be an enormous shift in the pedagogy (which I will explore in Chapters 5 and 6 of this project).

The movement class establishes itself as the space for guided experimentation, a moment when the students will be on their feet, all experimenting with some element of movement, be it practicing one of the 20 movements[85] or the mimicry of observed animals, elements, language, music or objects. This class will take place in the bigger room of the school, providing not only space but time for the student to try out what they have seen, surrounded by their peers conducting the same experiments, before receiving any guidance or presence of an audience. The students will negotiate space with their peers, perhaps be instructed to help with certain movements, or provide an example. The teacher, in this space, will move around the room, observing the students' movements, providing minor pieces of advice or corrections before moving on. There will be pauses

[85] Sprinkled throughout the first year are the *20 mouvements* which are presented to the whole first year and faculty at the end of the school year as either a point of passage on to the second year, or on to whatever the future may have in store for the students. This collection of movements organized by Lecoq, pulls from his own sports training, 'natural gymnastics' from Georges Hébert's system of naval fitness (and precursor to the obstacle course), and the general influence of Copeau's corporeal mime work and commedia dell'arte (Evans, 2020, pp. xx–xxi). The *mouvements* are a combination of abstract movements (*ondulations* [undulations]*, sortie de la hanche, éclosion dégrène, contre torsion, tourniquet avant, phrase d'articulation, point fixe, bâton*), corporeal mime (*passeur, le mur, poids en haltère, patinage*, *brasse, grande godille, disque antique*), and acrobatic movements (*cabriole, équilibre, roue, mouvement de massou)* that are to be presented in any order the performer chooses as a comprehensive journey, without emotion or narrative; they are simply to be performed to the best capability of the performer, the focus being on how they are performed; the *qualité de mouvement* (quality of movement) and *présence (*presence).

where the teacher may direct students to a certain moment of the movement that they will demonstrate before letting the students experiment on their own again. The movement of the actor is at one time an exercise in replication, over time becoming a kind of virtuosity imbued with originality.

The improvisation classes are more simply organised; the teacher and students sit on long benches or on the floor along one wall of the smaller teaching space of the school, providing the rest of the room as a performance space. The teacher, in the centre of the bench, will provide the prompt, and students will volunteer by standing up in the rehearsal space. They will adjust their numbers depending on how many people are needed for the exercise.

Each space demands different methods of teaching and different ways of learning, but each concerns themself in different ways with establishing atmospheres of play, the practice of mimicry and observation, *whilst* encouraging the development of new perspectives – unique observations on how life is and how to present it. The movement classes, which take place in the bigger spaces where students work simultaneously, are more amenable to the process of experimentation and mimicry. The improvisation classes are also places of experimentation but more so of observation, as students will spend most of their time watching their peers play. No notebooks, pens, paper or recording devices are allowed in the classroom spaces, the students must remain entirely present.

Chapter 4: Teaching ‘technique’.
The writing of improvisation.

> ‘I do not see why one only has the right to be called an author if one has a pen. An improvising actor is an author, an author in the broadest sense of the term.’
>
> – Ariane Mnouchkine[86]

In the previous section I outlined the overlapping practices and performance elements proposed by historical examination of the emergence of the *auteur* and *acteur*. Under the heading of ‘Technique’, borrowing from Andrew Sarris’ *auteur* theory in an attempt to establish an *acteur-auteurial* pedagogy, the elements of a ‘relationship to/practice of writing (either by writing themselves or being prompted in rehearsal)’, and ‘linguistic and stylistically flexibility (range of visual styles)’ are the only elements which are directly taught within Lecoq’s pedagogy. Of these elements, the most complex is the ‘relationship to/practice of writing’ (as the other is somewhat contained within the practice of this ‘writing’).

This chapter will explore how the fundamental auteurial technique of ‘writing’ is taught within Lecoq’s pedagogy through presence, play, and structure, which emerge through the relationship between movement and improvisation. I will begin by contemplating the definition of ‘writing’ and the limits of what that meaning might encompass, then interrogate improvisation and its practice within the pedagogy, as well as the links that emerge between the two. In exploring improvisation, the essential role of play to the practice will become a clear, and I will outline how play is used within the pedagogy as a learning tool as well as a formative element of the students’ auteurial

[86] In Nixon, 2015, p. 53

approach. The actor's command of movement and presence will become inseparable when considering how this writing is performed, illustrating how the structural elements of improvisational practice generate the content of the writing. Finally, the examination of a few key improvisational exercises unique to Lecoq's pedagogy will highlight how the student is taught to embrace these elements as the core of their practice as they begin to explore their authorial abilities.

To aid my analysis, I will consider Jacques Rancière and Paolo Freire's thoughts on emancipatory and liberatory approaches to learning. I will make a clear distinction between what the student is 'taught' and what they 'learn' (or how they apply previous knowledge to their development). To propose an approach of work and learning determined by the student themselves, there must be an underlying pedagogical framework that supports, strengthens, and develops the student's autonomy – especially if the pedagogy is training an artist to be the *acteur-auteur*.

What is writing?

The various auteurial movements referenced in previous chapters rebel against the producers of text, or the written object that controls the creative endeavour. Within the context of the Lecoq pedagogy and the desire to train the 'authorial' actor, this rebellion manifests through a writing that is not textual or material. It isa bodily practice rather than an 'intellectual' recording of thoughts on paper. While the 'action' of writing is a physical practice (conducted by a hand moving a pencil or typing on a keyboard, etc.), a full body engagement is often not of primary importance in the act of writing, thereby indicating a separation of the body from the cerebral generator of material in the standard production of text. This of course assumes that writing is indeed the act which is responsible for

creating a text. To include a definition of writing[87] it is useful to consult Barthes once again. In a footnote of the English translation of *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (*Writing Degree Zero*) the French *écriture*[88] is described thus:

> Écriture, which in French normally means only 'handwriting' or 'the art of writing', is now more and more frequently used as a substantive corresponding to all senses of the verb écrire, generally to mean the style, the fact of composing a work, or the actions which properly belong to a writer. It is used here in a strictly technical sense to denote a new concept, and is translated as 'writing', ‘a mode of writing’. (1970, p. 1)

It is unclear whether the footnote was written by Barthes himself or his translators, nevertheless, the clarification is helpful, moving past the more classical definitions such as that of Aristotle who insisted that writing was simply the representation of spoken word: ‘Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words’ (in Derrida, 1997, p. 30). Whether the ‘work’ indicated in the above definition of *écriture* is indeed relegated to that material space (that of text on a page) is unclear[89]. For this reason, I would like to suggest perhaps it is not, rather *écriture* is perhaps defined by the labour of writing whether the writing exists materially or not. In another meditation on ‘writing’, Barthes questions the inevitability of writing becoming

[87] It has been difficult to establish a definition of writing in this work as it is often referred to as a given in theory considering the development of other, more complex ideas. My favourite reflection of this struggle comes from Patrice Pavis’ definition: ‘*writing* refers to something written’ (Pavis, 2016, p. 54, italics in original).

[88] It’s worth noting the root of *écrire* comes from the Latin *scriber,* from which also emerged the French terms for ‘carve’ or ‘scratch’ (*gratter, inciser)*, relating to the earliest writing which appeared as carvings on rock and clay (Rey, 2006, p. 1179), which does indicate the production of a physical object as the representation of the act. (My own translation).

[89] Seán Burke points out Barthes is generally unclear when it comes to his definition of ‘work’, whether he means the actual labour of writing, the *texte,* or *œuvre*, (as in *Sade Fourier Loyola,* Barthes specifically uses the term *texte* to mean *œuvre*) (Burke, 2011, p. 39).

an ‘intransitive verb’, a practice without an object (‘I write’ rather than ‘I write a book’)[90]:

> Today to write is to make oneself the center of the action of speech [parole]; it is to effect writing in being affected oneself; it is to leave the writer [scripteur] inside the writing, not as a psychological subject … but as the agent of the action (Barthes, 1972, p. 142, italics in original).

This expectation of the writer who engages in the action(s) of ‘writing’ provides the basis for a writer whose defining feature is not only reliant on an output or created object (i.e. text), nor whose ‘product’ is restricted to the material of pen on paper (or any other material).

If writing is, by this definition, the ‘action’ of the writer, then the definition of what ‘writing’ can be is extended far beyond placing words on a page. In his own approach towards examining an author’s practice, Lecoq recognises the importance of action through improvisation. He says, ’[e]very author, whether he creates a gesture or a spoken or written text, improvises the first time that he moves in the space or puts pen to paper’ (J. Lecoq, 2006, pp. 100–101). Improvisation, with its inherent risk and ephemerality, is the first attempt at writing. Writing then becomes the processes of thinking, crafting a narrative of ideas, or structuring a movement. Lecoq’s own reflections on the definition of writing state clearly that writing is simply ‘a structure in motion’ (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 22). The possibility of a created ‘whole’, a finished product or act, can be ‘written’ in any way which indicates a specific method of structuring. If writing can be simplified to the structuring of an object (or act) of the

[90] In part due to a separation in French literary theory between language and literature. In this line of thinking, he recognises the position of the writer (‘scriptor’, not ‘author’) in relation to their writing, through a unique temporality (Barthes, 1972, p. 136), personal relation (in terms of pronoun) (Barthes, 1972, p. 138) and the actual verb of ‘writing’ (Barthes, 1972, p. 141).

'author's' creativity – much as the *auteur* in Bazin's *camera stylo* (camera pen) uses the camera to 'write' with time and space in film (Bazin, 1967), or the *commedia* performer develops their written structure, their *ossatura* or *scaletta,* depending on their chosen performance and audience (Vescovo, 2018, p. 56) – what is necessary within the practice of writing, and how can it be taught?

To examine the writing practice of the *acteur-auteur* within Lecoq's pedagogy, it is first necessary to consider the elements of writing that are taught before exploring the student's auteurial practice (Chapter 6). Having reflected on the work, or action, of writing – the *acteur-auteur* student as the 'agent of the action' in Barthes' terms – and the pedagogical implications of improvisation within Lecoq's school, I propose that presence (*neutre*), play, and structure come together through the intersection of improvisation and movement to constitute the 'writing' of the *acteur-auteur*. I will then analyse the pedagogical tools through which this writing is taught. It will become apparent that there are clear parallels between what the students are taught and how they are taught. They are taught to play through playing, developing the capacities for observation and mimicry through the very acts of observing and mimicking. These skills will ultimately lead to the student's ability to transpose their experiences into the theatrical dimensionality determined by their grasp of structure and presence, and above all – *willingness* to play.

The language of improvisation: movement

In proposing a definition of 'improvisation', Anthony Frost and Ralph Yarrow state:

> …the skill of using bodies, space, all human resources, to generate a coherent physical expression of an idea, a situation, a character (even, perhaps, a text); to do this spontaneously, in response to the immediate stimuli of

> one's environment, and do to it *á l'improviste*: as through taken by surprise, without preconceptions. (Frost and Yarrow, 1990, p. 1).

The tradition of improvisation described here echoes the practices of European clown or mask theatre (as explored in Chapter 3) and highlights the importance of the physical aspects of the practice, primarily the 'physical expression'. It is interesting that there is no mention of language or dialogue, considering the wealth of contemporary improvisational practices that rely heavily on the spoken word. Via the exploration of the moving body, the *acteur-auteur* student of Lecoq's pedagogy is provided with a vocabulary of sorts through which to communicate and compose, thereby 'writing'. **This intersection between writing and movement is core to the feminist embodied writing practice proposed by Helene Cixous' *Écriture Féminine,* an innately liberatory practice defined by a writer who is present and physical within their work. Cixous writes that '[w]oman must write her self…Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement' (1976, p. 875). When considering early experiments with theatre making that eventually would be known in the UK as 'devising', Cass Fleming states that through 'play-based methods' Bing and Copeau provided the framework for the actor to author their work, resituating the importance of text, previously assumed supreme by Copeau (Fleming, 2020, p. 13). Fleming places this act of play and the creation of work through play alongside a non-textual writing that can be illuminated through Cixous' thinking. She cites Segarra, who observes that *écriture feminine* functions as '"writing the body"', meaning [it] does not rely mainly on rationality but incorporates the body's rhythms, humors, and moods' (Segarra, as cited in Fleming, 2020, p. 13). The writer**

must have agency to act for themselves and thereby create themselves, becoming not only subject but material of the writing itself.

In considering the material of writing, Jacques Derrida observes, in 1967, the basic intelligent material that makes up writing:

> the writer writes in a language and in a logic whose proper system, laws and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely. He uses them only by letting himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system. And the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language he uses (1997 [1967], p. 158).

In situating language and writing on the same plane, Derrida continues his project in refuting the approach of Ferdinand de Saussure, who continued the classic view of writing as separate and secondary to language, claiming that '[l]anguage and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first' (Saussure in Derrida, 1997, p. 30). Derrida disagrees with this on many levels. He disagrees with the implication that there are only two modes of writing, which restricts the consideration of any more (Derrida, 1997, p. 32), and also with the idea that language and writing are inherently different to each other, saying that '[i]f language were not already, in that sense, a writing, no derived 'notation' would be possible; and the classical problem of relationships between speech and writing could not arise' (1997, p. 63).[91] In

[91] Derrida also recognizes a conflict between Saussure's speech and writing as representative of a mind body dualism, 'speech' being tied to the spirit (interior) and 'writing' to the body (external) (Derrida, 1997, p. 34). This duality adapted slightly in Derrida's analysis of Freud and the questions of conscious and subconscious that arose from his psychoanalytical research. Philip Auslander proposes through Derrida's reading of Freud that Stanislavski's approach to acting can be thought of as 'writing'; "Derrida asserts that the making conscious of unconscious materials is a process of creation, not retrieval" (Auslander, 1995, p. 61). Auslander proposes since the actor is often viewed as an 'opaque medium' or 'intertext' (rather than an easily read text) through which language is presented with the actor's presentation of self- "we are written only as we write" (Derrida in Auslander, 1995, p. 61).

other words, for Derrida, speech and writing are both signifiers, thereby inherently serving the same purpose.

While spoken language is perpetually in flux or absent within Lecoq's pedagogy – owing to either the silent nature of many exercises or the varying French-speaking abilities of the students, there is an understanding of a physical language within the school. Developed over time as the students grow to understand each other as well as the capacities of their own bodies, they learn not only how they can portray and express, but how they are read. Perhaps, just as the 'writer writes in language' for Derrida, the improvisor writes in a physical language, as movement functions as much as the word or signifier of meaning as language, text, or speech might. The mutual understanding of the performers' language establishes the writing.

In reflecting on the various paths taken by his students, Lecoq accepts that students of his who go on to become 'writers' do write differently, which he attributes to a differentiation between *discours* and *parole*: 'For my part, I recognise myself in their writing insofar as it differentiates between 'speech' [le discours] and 'the Word' [la parole]. Where 'speech' is stuck at the verbal level, 'the Word' involves the whole body' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 152). His references to *parole* and *discours* perhaps points to the thinking of Saussure who followed the classical definition of writing, understanding speech (which he translated to *parole*) as 'the realm of the individual moments of language use, of particular "utterances" or "messages", whether spoken or written' (Barthes, 1977, p. 7), and the primary form of sign system, 'writing' being the system developed to represent speech (Derrida, 1997, p. 30). Lecoq's distinction of 'the Word' as *la parole* rather than 'speech' could be a discrepancy in translation[92] or a signal

[92] The original French states: '*Pour ma part, je me reconnais dans leur écriture au sens où elle porte sur la différence entre le 'discours' et la 'parole'. Là où le discours en reste aux mots, la parole engage le corps*'

towards a different meaning – perhaps *discours* as 'speech' or 'talk' (Corréard, 2013, p. 135), verses *parole* as 'speech' or 'word' – as in promise or truth (Corréard, 2013, p. 312). The nuance between the two terms indicates, perhaps, the differentiation between dialogue of the subject and the presentation of the subject itself, harkening back to the implication of the *acteur-auteur* as originator rather than interpreter. Lecoq said that the 'task is not to interpret: you must re-live each phase physically' (Lecoq in Murray, 2002, p. 25). While it is unclear exactly what he means by 're-live', a clear expectation is established for the work of origination, that of 'physicality'– or, of movement.

The story/structure of movement

> 'Movement is more than just a matter of covering the distance between points A and B. The important thing is how the distance is covered.' – Jacques Lecoq[93]

For Lecoq, the practices of writing and movement are deeply imbricated within his pedagogy. Upon considering the 'laws of motion'[94] – a series of rules which highlight an intersection between a moving body and physics such as 'no action without reaction' or 'no motion without fixed point' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 94) – Lecoq states clearly:

> Paradoxically, this work on movement, evidently so applicable to performance and production, should be even more useful to the writer. Whatever the themes dealt with, the ideas expressed, the stories or styles employed, it is essential for playwriting to be structured from a dynamic point of view. In particular, it must have a clear beginning and an end, for any movement

(J. Lecoq, 2016, p. 195). There is no clear indication as to whether he is conjuring linguistic theory, but it would be surprising if he referenced these terms with no thought to Saussure's works.

[93] Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 21

[94] Lecoq's complete list of these laws goes as follows: 'There is no action without reaction. 2. Motion is continuous, it never stops. 3. Motion always originates in a state of disequilibrium tending towards equilibrium. 4. Equilibrium is itself in motion. 5. There is no motion without a fixed point. 6. Motion highlights the fixed point. 7. The fixed point, too, is in motion' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2020, p. 104)

> which fails to end has no true beginning. The sense of an ending is essential. (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 95)

In considering a 'dynamic point of view', it is easy to link the overarching structure of a piece of dramatic writing to the laws of motion, such as push and pull, fixed point, equilibrium/disequilibrium, and action/reaction (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 94). These qualities can be used to clarify character relationships, define settings, even determine the dramatic arc of a play. But what is key to Lecoq from the beginning of the student's training is the importance of an overarching structure in its simplest form: the necessity of a beginning and end, referencing Aristotle's requirements for dramatic plot[95]. This is communicated not only in critique of student's improvisations but utilised in the demonstration of technique.

There is an order to the way the Lecoq teacher guides the student through learning movement, driven largely by demonstration and logic as well as the students' own experimentation. The practical approach of play (observation + mimicry + experimentation) becomes productive within the pedagogical space, as it is employed to establish a structure at the basis of the development of skill. In the summer of 2024, I was invited to a pedagogical intensive workshop at l'École Jacques Lecoq[96] where, among many other unspoken or unwritten pedagogical tools, the system of teaching movement

[95] Aristotle notes, famously, the primary necessity of drama is the 'whole' of the plot: ' tragedy is the representation of an action that is complete and whole and of a certain magnitude – for a thing may be whole and yet lack magnitude. Now a whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end' (Aristotle, 2000, p. 66).

[96] This intensive took place at the school in its new location in Avignon, over a period of two weeks. Differing from the full pedagogical year, the intensive is an opportunity to revisit the pedagogy (two years in two weeks), ask questions, and retry exercises with observations from the teachers as to how to guide students, highlighting key takeaways from the exercises. The participants observe and engage in the exercises themselves, differing from the full pedagogical year where the pedagogical student is a silent observer for the entire year of classes, only teaching a self-developed movement sequence towards the end of their observations.

was made clear to the participants in five stages.[97] The teaching of movement begins with the story of movement – the teacher demonstrates the movement as they tell the students the narrative of the action and the impact of every individual movement. ' … ils nous ont donné l'histoire, le récit c'est more like a story than a recipe, the story of the thing' ('they gave us the story, it's more like a story than a recipe, the story of the thing') (Brune, 2024, n. Sep. 29)[98]. After being told the story, the student simply plays with the movement. They try it out for themselves, attempting to make sense of the logic of what they have seen demonstrated, and considering how they might put the movements together on their own. From there, every consecutive session evolves. My notes continue:

> Second one [session], we put in the counts, found the verbs that described it; the third one we tried to find the life in it, put the life in it; and then the fourth one, we did everything, we revisited everything, and then try to put the game in it. And then the last would be finding the pleasure in it. (Brune, 2024, n. Sep 27 pt. 1)

At each stage the students are shown and then given the space to experiment with their bodies, all the while knowing what the movements must contain due to the sequence of events in the narrative.

There is a story communicated in every movement, and movement is taught through the telling of a story. Even in the most abstract embodiment of a colour or element, there is something to be communicated. In Lecoq's few descriptions of physical movements he tells them as if they were a short narrative. If one was to describe the

[97] These are not communicated as such to the Lecoq student, though are easily observed when learning a movement from a Lecoq trained teacher or in observing in practice over time.
[98] This note was made after consulting some of my classmates on the term *récit* which I had initially interpreted in class as *recette* (thus the unfortunate franglais). The implication of a story or narrative made a great deal more sense in reflecting on how the sequence of movement was communicated to us students rather than simply a list of ingredients.

movement of the corporeal mime sequence '*le mur'* or 'climbing the wall', it might look something like this:

> The actor stands facing an audience and looks up towards the top of an imaginary wall in front of them. Their arms swing forward and backwards, their knees bending and their body sinking to gain momentum to jump. As their arms swing forward their body straightens as if in mid-jump (though their feet never leave the floor) as they reach up to the top of the wall. Their hands land on the top of the wall, their fingers gripping the top as the weight of their body is signalled by the extension in the actor's elbows and tension in the shoulders. The actor flexes their arms, pulling their chest up to the height of their hands (this struggled shown through the actor lowering their hands to chest height, maintaining the tension). The actor changes their hand position, one hand shifting so it is flat on the top of the wall, fingers pointing towards the other hand, with their elbow pointing out. The actor does the same with the other hand, and raises themselves up (lowers their hands) so their elbows are straightened and the top of the wall is at the level of their pelvis. The actor, breaking the tension in their arms for a moment, shifts their weight to one foot, kicking the other to one side briefly in order to gain momentum to place it on the top of the wall. The swinging foot meets the closest hand to it on the top of the wall, and pushes down with the hands, bringing the other foot up on top of the wall (the level of the two hands and foot sink down to the floor so the other foot can step onto the wall). The actor stands up to their full height, making sure not to fall off the wall, and looks down at the ground below them. After admiring the view, the actor swings their arms backwards as before, bending their body to get momentum, then swings their arms up as they 'jump' off the wall (step forward). The actor lands their step and brings their knee and hands to the ground (to soften the blow of the landing). The actor stands, wipes off their hands, and continues on their way.

This description, while providing a textual blueprint to the physical movement, most likely misses important details or includes some which are irrelevant. The details of changing hand positions or shifting of tension in the shoulders are unimportant on their own (and would be baffling to a student if presented on their own), and yet with the context of the greater movement – the understanding of what the movement is, where it is in the sequence, and what it is *doing to* the sequence – the movement establishes its meaning and becomes a recognizable language. The additions of 'After admiring the view…' or bringing 'hands to the ground (to soften the blow of the landing)' add some context to the movements, explaining why they should happen. But when considering Lecoq's written directions for the movement, the other details seem superfluous:

> You are in a town, being chased; you hide beneath an archway at the end of an alley. Your pursuer passes by without seeing you. Your only way out is by climbing over a wall, on the other side of the street. You rush to it, climb and jump down on the other side.
> Unfortunately, he has seen you and is already there waiting for you! (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 84)

The story includes a few more steps than my own description, but he does not write the specifics of the overall movement.[99] The above excerpt is all he writes, and in the classroom, the teachers show the movement (all 57 unwritten steps) and repeat the above story. There is no explanation of the movement, the teacher simply states the story of what is happening, and the student must investigate with their bodies. They are not *told* specifics of movements or why they happen in whatever order –they are *shown* the movements and establish for themselves the logic of why one specific movement happens before another. The student is given the structure and story of the movement, but they

[99] Lecoq states there are 57 individual movements that are necessary to complete this movement as a whole (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 84).

must enact the structure within their movement. By the term 'structure' I refer not only to the order of the movements, but also to timing, rhythm, space, duration, and form – all of which I will clarify later in this chapter.

This practice which is defined by corporeal revelation rather than spoken or written direction reflects the futility often expressed when considering translating movement to text-based writing – or, indeed, writing about Lecoq's pedagogy at all. How can one put to paper the moment of momentum that comes right before you 'jump' (without jumping) to the top of the wall? Or the split second between grabbing the top of the wall and letting your shoulders raise to your ears, signifying to your audience that your weight is hanging from your hands? It is for this reason, perhaps, that very little research exists on the *20 mouvements*[100] and there is resistance to writing (in text) about movement in general. The students observe and mimic, repeating the motions and making adjustments whenever necessary, whilst having a basic understanding of the movement based on the narrative structure provided by the teacher, with a clear beginning, middle and end. From there, they are given space to try their movement, and to recognise what they already understand about how their body moves and how they might conduct the action suggested.

This process recognises that students have pre-existing knowledge and can seek out answers to questions within themselves, promoting as Paolo Freire would call 'acts of cognition, not transferals of information' (2017, p. 53). This is one of the criteria for a liberating pedagogy, as well as the recognition of the fact that these students '"know

[100] Lecoq mentions the 20 Movements once in *The Moving Body*, simply to state that they will be linked and presented at the end of the first year (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 15). Mark Evans makes reference to them in his introduction to the second edition, simply to echo the statement and mention the influence of Étienne Marey (Evans, 2020, p. 16). They are not mentioned in Simon Murray's 'Jacques Lecoq' (Murray, 2017). Lecoq himself goes into depth about specific movements in the second chapter of 'Movement Technique' – though he does not make it clear that he is talking about the '20 Movements'.

things" they have learned in their relations with the world and with other women and men' (Freire, 2017, p. 37). There is a clear strain of liberation and emancipation within Lecoq's pedagogy, perhaps most driven by the necessity of play (and the engagement of 'will' at its core) which makes it possible for the *acteur-auteur* to exist. The concept of 'play' becomes enormously important to the work of the *acteur-auteur* and the development of the student.

In the formation of their personal approach to theatrical work, 'play' allows the student to discover for themselves what they want to portray, while establishing an approach in which the artist is continually evolving and shaping their work within a flexible framework that instils a certain level of quality. 'Play' creates a constant state of learning and evolution, keeping the artist in a regular state of discovery. Within Lecoq's pedagogical perspective, 'play' does not simply refer to engagement with games or performance; rather, it constitutes the performer's work and the atmosphere of learning, shaping how they learn and explore. Roger Caillois reflects on this in his definition of play:

> In a general way, play is like education of the body, character, or mind, without the goal's being predetermined. From this viewpoint, the further removed play is from reality, the greater is its educational value. For it does not teach facts, but rather develops aptitudes (Caillois, 2001, p. 167).

Like Freire's pedagogy, Caillois' 'aptitudes' point to the importance of training that recognises the student's own knowledge, rather than relying solely on that of the teacher. To understand how this functions within a classroom, the concept of 'play' itself must be defined.

Lecoq's approaches: the play of pedagogy

Within Lecoq's pedagogical perspective, 'play' does not simply refer to engagement with games or performance; rather, it constitutes the performer's work and the atmosphere of learning, shaping how they learn and explore. Without play there would be no learning or discovery, and there would be no improvisation. Simon Murray reflects on the importance of play to the Lecoq student, situating it as the key to an auteurial practice: 'we can locate Lecoq's notion of play as part of that wider terrain which offers the actor the opportunity to express his/her voice as auteur and not simply as a mouthpiece and interpreter' (2002, p. 34). I agree, but argue that this goes beyond play. Play provides the educational atmosphere in which students will learn, and their desire to play intensely impacts the work they create. Within Lecoq's pedagogy, work and play can be seen as synonymous. Crucially, both are only possible through the 'will' of the student.

The movement and improvisation classes at l'École Jacques Lecoq, which make up two thirds of Lecoq's pedagogy, overlap in theme and subject matter; the first offers space to practice and exercise skills without the demand of crafting something for a seated audience of peers, whereas the other often focuses upon the generation of material for feedback and reflection from the teacher and, as their training progresses, their audience of peers. The links between movement and improvisation are integral to the pedagogy. Together, they establish a core for the students' practice in

> creative acting, by means of improvisation and the analysis of movement in life. A permanent link is established between these two activities…through improvisation, we externalize what is latent within the students; on the other, through objective study of movement techniques, we allow them to work from the outside in (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, pp. 27).

This ‘outside in’ approach clearly implicates the ideas of Marcel Jousse, whose work in linguistic anthropology and development of ‘anthropology of gesture’ was revolutionary in France at the turn of the twentieth century[101], and a direct influence on the development of Lecoq’s thinking around gesture (Kemp, 2017, pp. 99–100). Jousse’s concept of ‘intussusception’- meaning to carry within and ‘play out’ what one has received through experience - provides a more rigorous means of filtering experience through experimentation, or ‘play’. As Edgar Roger Sienaert summarises:

> Play, then, is the osmosis of man and the reality that imposes itself upon him, it is the way by which reality is progressively instilled into him from childhood. It is this act of playing out, this play, that is at the origin of all art, for man needs to reproduce what he sees. (1990, p. 95)

Jousse aligns a child’s ability with their capacity to understand the world around them, to mimic and to be creative in the act of reconciling experience through a filter of their own perspective and memory.

Jousse suggests an atmosphere of learning that is perhaps ‘childlike’, built around a person’s ability and desire to experiment and imitate, ‘playing’ within rules and their own abilities (Sienaert, 1990, p. 94). The idea of ‘play’ is essential to the learning space, both in terms of what a learner does, how they learn, and how they are taught. For Lecoq this is also the case, as he is acutely aware of the fact that ‘play’ and ‘game’ are the same in French and inherently entwined in theatre performance and pedagogy (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 179).[102] Within most theatre pedagogies, games are an integral part of training, and the acting student must understand what it is to ‘play well’. Lecoq’s is no

[101] His first publication in 1925, *The Oral Style*, was so revolutionary in French anthropology that it was known as the ‘Jousse bomb’ (Sienaert, 1990, p. 92).
[102] This may also be an echo of influence from Les Copiaus, guided and trained by Suzanne Bing whose interest in the Montessori system greatly impacted her approach to theatre training (Baldwin, 2013, p. 76).

different.[103] His definition of 'play', however, seems to be aimed more definitively at the practice of the performer: 'when the actor can shape an improvisation for spectators, using rhythm, tempo, space, form' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 29). Rather than describing an atmosphere in which play takes place, Lecoq offers a structure through which the performer can construct play, which I will use here to consider the way the improviser writes.

To consider what is necessary for the action of 'play' I invoke the approach that Roger Caillois proposes in his work *Les Jeux et les Hommes*, first published in 1958, where he outlines the necessary elements:

> One plays only if and when one wishes to. In this sense, play is a free activity. It is also uncertain activity. Doubt must remain until the end, and hinges upon the denouement. In a card game, when the outcome is no longer in doubt, play stops and the players lay down their hands. ...An outcome known in advance, with no possibility of error or surprise, clearly leading to an inescapable result, is incompatible with the nature of play. (2001, p. 7)[104]

Within this description, Caillois outlines six necessities for the activity of play: 'Free… Separate… Uncertain… Unproductive… Governed by Rules… Make-Believe' (2001, pp. 9–10). [105] By including 'free' as a defining element, Caillois recognises the importance of the player's desire from the outset. Within Lecoq's pedagogy, performers

[103] Simon Murry reflects on 'play' in Lecoq's pedagogy as something that is often left out of summaries of his teaching. When it is referred to, it is referred to as simply a 'characteristic' of performance in Lecoq trained companies and is often placed alongside the concept of *complicité* – which, in Murray's words 'suggests an alive, vibrant and engaged rapport between performers, and performers and audience. It is, in a sense an *outcome of play*' (Murray, 2002, p. 33). He allocates it to the relationship between audience and performer, and as a tool for the actor to free themselves from an overbearing play text (Murray, 2002, p. 34).

[104] Caillois' research into games and 'play' was rooted in the belief that through the analysis of different cultures through these practices, one could learn just as much as through an analysis of any other element of their society (Caillois, 2001, p. xi).

[105] In the original French: '*libre…séparée…incertaine….improductive…réglée…fictive*' (Caillois, 1958, pp. 23–24).

volunteer for an exercise rather than being forced into play. There are no ‘requirements’, no attendance is taken, there are no marks or written assessment. Privately, the teachers take copious notes and discuss each student’s progress regularly, but this is not made obvious to the student until individual meetings at the end of the first term and first year of training. If the student does not want to play, they do not play. Of course, there are politics of power within the institution that will often make students feel pressured to stand up and engage, but ultimately, if a student cannot play, or does not ‘want’ for whatever reason, they do not. There is no punishment.

The importance of freedom in Caillois’ definition of ‘play’ resonates with a key tenet of Jacques Rancière’s thoughts on an emancipatory pedagogy: the ‘will’ of the student (Rancière, 1991, p. 13). Through the analysis of the bizarre case study of Jean Joseph Jacotot[106], Rancière realised that while Jacotot taught the students nothing of his own knowledge, he nevertheless taught them through the 'constraint' of a 'command' –that command being simply 'read this book'. The students learned without the previously assumed necessity of 'explication', instead accepting the command through the exercise of their own ‘will’. Reflecting on the story, Rancière argues that the ‘method of equality was above all a method of the will’ demonstrating that ‘[o]ne could learn by oneself and without a master explicator when one wanted to, propelled by one’s own desire or by the constraint of the situation" (1991, p. 11). Rancière emphasises ‘will’ and ‘desire’ as necessary elements for learning, implying that the student is free to disengage whenever they want. For Rancière, equality and agency in the learning space are the basis upon

[106] In Rancière’s story, a banished Frenchman at the turn of the twentieth century is hired to teach Flemish students French (when he himself knows no Flemish). Through the single tool of a Flemish book that had been recently translated into French, he finds that the students are able to teach themselves with little help from their ‘ignorant’ master (Rancière, 1991, pp. 2–3).

which learning takes place. Within his framework of pedagogy, equality is inseparable from intelligence:

> Intelligence is not a power of understanding based on comparing knowledge with its object. It is the power to make oneself understood through another's verification. And only an equal understands an equal. Equality and intelligence are synonymous terms, exactly like reason and will. (1991, pp. 72–73)

Without the student's willingness or desire to learn, learning will not take place, and without 'equality' the student will not be able to exercise their own knowledge or intelligence. The same is true for the concept of 'play'. There is an emancipatory tilt to the pedagogy of Lecoq. The implication is that 'play' should immediately establish the student as responsible for their own engagement in action, with such engagement dependent on willingness or desire. The student cannot and should not play against their will. If they try, they will find themselves unable. This requires the teacher to encourage play, but never to force it. Equally, this is necessary for the specific work of the *acteur-auteur*, whose work must be based in play.

The majority of the other qualifications for Caillois' 'play' are clearly applicable to the pedagogical space and dramatic practice of students. 'Make-believe' is implied in the context of the theatrical event or rehearsal, as the practice is reliant on the performance of an 'unreal' or fictional space. 'Uncertain' brings into focus the potential and value of risk and liveness within the improvising space (as well as performance). 'Separate' signifies a metaphysical element of a specific time and space established before the playing begins (Caillois, 2001, p. 9). Regarding the fifth requirement, that play is 'governed by rules', the 'play' exists within the make-believe but the performer (or student) must develop a keen awareness of the audience, and thereby the interaction with

the real world within their play. From there, the 'Rules' of the game come: 'The game consists of the need to find or continue at once a response *which is free within the limits set by the rules*' (Caillois, 2001, p. 8, italics in original). There are, of course, moments where the rules need to be broken, especially in the later stages of Lecoq's pedagogy with the *géodramatiques* and genre explorations that arrive in the second year of training (which are often met with delight by the teachers if done well). The stylistic experimentations only move the student towards the creation of the 'young theatre of new work', as was Lecoq's desire (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 16).

The one limitation to applying Caillois' definition of play to Lecoq's pedagogy rests in his statement that play must be 'unproductive'[107], to which the improviser might agree, but the *auteur* cannot. The play of the *auteur* is centred around discovery, but structuring and memory-building are required for finessing that play, developing the work into something better and more refined. It is where the play of learning and improvisation meets the work of rehearsal, the 're-' of which, as observed by Elin Diamond, 'acknowledges the pre-existing discursive field, the repetition in the performative present… the possibility of something that *exceeds* our knowledge, that alters the shape of sites and imagines new unsuspected subject positions' (in Carlson, 2001, p. 2–3, italics in original). This is, of course, the same in French – *rejeu* (replay), *répétition* (repetition or rehearsal), *réaction*, etc. The expectation of making discoveries when revisiting play becomes the system of writing and editing for the *auteur*, a system of refining which is driven by a highly productive play. It may not produce a material product, but this play ultimately leads to a professional practice, through which the student can exchange

[107] Caillois defines 'unproductive' as 'creating neither goods, nor wealth, nor new elements of any kind; and, except for the exchange of property among the players, ending in a situation identical to that prevailing at the beginning of the game" (1958, p. 10).

performance for financial capital. For the actor (and arguably any artist) there must always be play in their work, establishing methods and productive frameworks for the work of play.

The actions that constitute a 'play' of learning – mimicry, observation, and experimentation – take place within an atmosphere of 'play', defined through Caillois' characteristics of 'Free… Separate… Uncertain… Governed by Rules… [and] Make-Believe' (Caillois, 2001, pp. 9–10), while leaving behind his category of the 'Unproductive' in certain instances. Together, these provide the student with a pedagogical atmosphere and a system of guidance, but one that ultimately relies upon some innate ability and, most importantly, the student's own 'will' (Rancière). The freedom inherent in a performer's ability to play and the Lecoq student's will to learn are key to developing the student's work alongside the greater project of developing their practice as an *acteur-auteur.* While the student must establish an awareness of themselves and how they perform, their work is shaped and bettered by their ability to imitate and reproduce their observations on the world. These are strengthened by external input from their peers and teachers rather than relying on a vacuum of their own experience, leading to the development of an objective understanding of how they present themselves and how they are perceived by an audience.

This is equally where the potentials of unique visual styles are introduced, as students not only experience the sensations of their own bodies moving in unique and perhaps alien ways, but must witness the experimentations and movements of their peers. This leads them to develop their own critical eye that recognises movement and can critique the mismatched intention and performance of their classmates. Further to that, students develop an understanding of stylistic constraints necessary for certain kinds of performance. This becomes more relevant in the second year of training when the

géodramatiques come into the pedagogy, but it begins in the exploration of movement (and mask).

Structure of play

From the language and story of movement through the practice and structure of play, the student is equipped to engage in improvisation, putting to practice the elements that make up the writing of the *acteur-auteur.* If movement and play establish the basic tools through which the *acteur-auteur* can write, then it is improvisation and the structures of its practice that help to build content and shape writing.

The first improvisations the Lecoq student undertakes are mostly silent and based upon real experience of the world before the student can begin exploring more advanced dramatic expression. Lecoq states that 'simple situations' must come first, and that '[p]lay [acting] comes later, at the point when, aware of the theatrical dimension, the actor can shape an improvisation for spectators, using rhythm, tempo, space, form' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 29). Looking more closely at the elements of 'rhythm', 'tempo', 'space', and 'form', a structure emerges for the student wishing to present play which is 'engaging' to a spectator and suggests a framework to through which to approach actor training. In the original French, however, Lecoq lists a fifth element for the student to consider in their improvisations: '*un rythme, une mesure, une durée, une espace, une forme à son improvisation*' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 29). The inclusion of '*une durée'* adds a temporal element, referring to 'duration' or the length of a period of time. It is unclear as to why it was left out of the English translation. Perhaps the translators (and Lecoq himself) thought it was somewhat redundant placed next to the inclusion of 'rhythm' and 'tempo'. Nevertheless, its inclusion but does add another level

of meaning to the understanding of time in performance for the improvisor, suggesting a possible connection to Henri Bergson's philosophy and his concept of *durée.*

The missing element – *durée* and the problem of the 'blank page'

In proposing a definition of 'pure duration', Henri Bergson (1859-1941) recognises a time between past and present. It is 'the form which our conscious states assume when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states' (Bergson in Russell, 1912, p. 327). In other words it is 'the awareness of time in its passing, a heightened consciousness of being alive' (Wiles, 2014, p. 41). David Wiles' rephrasing can be directly linked to the concept of an actor's 'presence'. Bergson's 'duration' highlights the separation of time from space – 'time which is the essence of life' (Russell, 1912, p. 327), whereas mathematical time is congruent with space, the time of duration is based in reality and reliant on memory: 'for in memory the past survives in the present' (Bergson in Russell, 1912, p. 328).[108] In considering memory, Bergson makes a clear distinction between 'habit' and true memory, say that the 'past survives…under two distinct forms: first, in motor mechanisms; secondly, in independent recollections' (Bergson in Russell, 1912, p. 328). Bertrand Russell gives an example of this distinction in a man who has memorised a poem, arguing that memorised recitation is more of a motor memory exercise, as it is 'repeating an action'. By contrast, remembering a moment in the past where he encountered the poem is what Bergson would argue is true memory, as it brings a past event into the present without relying on a practiced 'habit'. This 'memory' is what Bergson finds important to

[108] In his exploration of Bergson's philosophy, Russell points out a flaw in his thinking, reflecting on the difference between memory (in present) versus the past event itself: 'when Bergson speaks of the past, he does not mean the past, but our present memory of the past. The past when it existed was just as active as the present is now; if Bergson's account were correct, the present moment ought to be the only one in the whole of history of the world containing any activity' (1912, p. 342).

his definition of *durée* (Russell, 1912, p. 328). The sensibility of a distinct 'presence' implied within Bergson's concept of *durée* suggests the necessary consideration of the actors' 'presence', which in Lecoq's pedagogy might be recognised as an equivalent to his *neutre.* As varied and complex as the concept is, its relevance to performance is undeniable.

Since the work or 'writing' of improvisation (within Lecoq's pedagogy and in its other styles and applications) is created *in* performance, we must examine what is needed to perform. It recalls Peter Brook's pronouncement: 'A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged' (1968, p. 11). This reduces the conditions of performance to three basic elements: a performer, a space, and an audience or individual witness. In training, the audience is removed from the equation and replaced by an imagined audience, or simply adapted into something more critical; an educated eye of peers for the benefit of the performer. To put aside this critical audience, we're left with the 'man' (performer) and the 'empty space'. A person walking across a space can be a performance, or simply a person walking across a space. The definition of theatricality rests, for Lecoq, in quality of movement: 'The laws of movement govern all theatrical situations…the structures of acting remain linked to movement and to its immutable laws' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 22). The movement of the actor and the movement of the writing are both reliant on an established or emerging structure, and how it moves within performance. For the actor, it is their movement which helps create and establish the performance space, for the writer it is the structuring of their performance which brings into life the writing –not only bringing it 'to life' but 'into life' through the act of improvisation. The connection between movement and improvisation are essential to the pedagogy as well as the student's ability to develop their writing.

What Brook perhaps leaves out of his definition of theatre and theatricality is a performers ability to be watched (or perceived), and their ability to draw a spectator's attention. A person can move across a theatre space, but it is *how* they move that will define the audience's perception of them. In the realm of actor training, one can attribute this ability to attract an audience's attention to an actor's 'stage-presence', usually one of the primary subjects of an actor's training.[109] The numerous definitions and interpretations of the actor's 'presence' signify the complex nature of assigning language to an ephemeral, untraceable quality of the performing actor. For Grotowski, 'presence' might rest in his idea of the 'total act':

> the act of laying oneself bare, of tearing off the mask of daily life, of exteriorizing oneself... It is like a step towards the summit of the actor's organism in which consciousness and instinct are united (Grotowski, 1968, p. 210).

In a summary of the theoretical positioning of Eugenio Barba, former director of Odin Teatret (and student of Grotowski), Simon Murray reflects:

> the achievement of 'presence' is based on the quest for a state of 'pre-expressivity', a condition whereby the performer is no longer in the daily idiom of (physical) existence but not yet in an 'expressive' mode….For Barba, 'presence' is predicated upon the performer's mastery of the principles of 'pre-expressivity'. (2002, p. 26)

This 'pre-expressive' state is also referred to in the Odin Teatret vocabulary as '*sats*', 'the impulse towards an action which is as yet unknown and which can go in any direction', indicating a state that is difficult to describe, but often signified by a slight 'bend in the

[109] Often taught and defined in different ways.

knees' (Barba, 1995, p. 6).[110] This term, which has been adopted by many theatre makers and trainers, though perhaps first used by Barba, is the Norwegian word for 'impulse' (Carreri, 2014, p. 27).

The concept of 'pre-expressivity' sounds remarkably similar to Lecoq's 'neutral', as John Martin reflects:

> …a state of great readiness and energy, not a state of non-presence. Neutrality is where everything is possible, not where everything has stopped... It is a physical and mental state which is free of the little idiosyncrasies of everyday life. To achieve this state is to be ready to create a character, a mood, a shape, without the baggage of the outside world... From neutrality you are clear and able to create in any direction. You have a state of energized awareness which is pre-expressive. (2002, p. 61)

To use an automotive metaphor, 'neutral' can be thought of as a car in neutral, ready to shift into gear at a moment's notice. Ready. *Disponible.*

A complex area of discourse arises when considering the 'neutral' body, specifically in terms of the ableist, racist and sexist oppression of bodies, the 'natural' body being a classification used at the turn of the twentieth century to signify a certain ability, gender, and race within European physical practices and modern aesthetics (Evans, 2008, p. 127). Although Lecoq's 'neutral' evolved from Copeau's work with his own 'noble' mask, the term refers to a state of presence rather than the performance of his (neutral) mask.[111] There is a fear around the idea of the 'neutral' body as one that is

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[110] Barba, notoriously fascinated by Asian performance practices, noticed this 'bend in the knees' while watching these performers, then later noticed the phenomenon in his own actors (Barba, 1995, p. 6)

[111] **The neutral mask is a tool to help the actor develop the neutral state (or body) but is not defining feature for the 'neutral' performer. There is a conflict here as there are technically two neutral masks, a female and a male mask. Jon Foley Sherman remarks that Lecoq seems to view the male neutral mask as the standard, which proposes not only a conflict of gender preference, but also a challenge to anyone whose gender exists outside of the binary (Sherman, 2016, p. 40). It should be noted that since the COVID-19 pandemic, the school has been using different masks from the originals made by Amleto Sartori due to the necessity of cleaning between wears (these were kept by**

'correct' or even achievable[112], emerging from the related concept of the 'natural' body, as well as the verbiage of 'stripping' the acting student. This is a common sentiment from acting trainers, from Jacques Copeau's 'stripped as bare as the stage' (Copeau in Evans, 2008, p. 139) to Jerzy Grotowski's 'stripping down' of the actor (1968, p. 16), although perhaps these formulations have different meanings and are even subject to misinterpretation.

In *The Moving Body*, Lecoq also includes the idea of 'stripping' the student in a section titled 'A Blank Page', stating that 'we have to begin by stripping away learned behavior patterns which do not belong to them, eliminating everything which might hinder them from rediscovering life at its most authentic' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 27). However, the original French differs slightly: *'Il faut donc commencer par éliminer les formes parasitaires qui ne leur appartiennent pas, retirer tout ce qui peut les gêner pour retrouver la vie au plus près de ce qu'elle est'* (J. Lecoq, 2016, p. 45). The important difference perhaps rests in the use of *'éliminer'* (eliminate) and *'retirer'*; the latter could be translated to 'stripped' but might be better read as 'set aside', 'withdraw' or 'take back', reflecting the implication that something that does not belong to the student should be taken back from them, i.e. the 'learned behaviors', 'ways' or the more visceral *'formes parasitaires*' ('parasitic shapes').

This quote continues:

> We have to divest the students of some of what they have learned, not in order to diminish their store of knowledge, but to create a blank page for them. In this way they can be awakened to that far-reaching curiosity

the Lecoq family after their split from the school in 2023). The new masks were made by Sartori's granddaughter using the same techniques as the original masks with one major distinction: there is now only one 'gender' of mask based on a combination of the original male and female masks' features.

[112] Mark Evans delves deeply into the damage this can wreak on specifically differently abled and female students in actor training (Evans, 2008).

> that is essential if they are to discover the quality of play (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 27).

This statement seems to echo the actor training jargon of 'breaking' a student, but it may instead suggest a reorganisation of knowledge. To 'divest' does imply a removal of sorts, but the desire to maintain a 'store of knowledge' implies a recognition the value of knowledge already held by the student. The 'blank page' requires the student to refocus upon what they might already think they know while opening themselves to new knowledge; 'far-reaching curiosity' is essential not only for the patience needed for the process of observation and mimicry, but also characterises a key state necessary to the performer within Lecoq's pedagogy: that of *neutre.*

There is always a risk that 'teaching' becomes a system of banking or 'oppression', to invoke Paolo Freire, and so the pedagogy must recognise that the students are indeed in full of knowledge collected from the world around them (Freire, 2017, p. 37).[113] If a student is to gradually take more ownership in their performance and writing capacities, they must be aware of and utilize the knowledge they already have. The first year of training focuses intently on the development of technique – the improvisation and movement skills that turn into writing – whereas the second year and the *autocours* concerns itself with developing the auteurial practice of the student. This idea of the 'blank page' can facilitate oppression if abused, as is the case with other elements of Lecoq's pedagogy. The teacher must take care not to approach the student as 'an empty vessel' (Freire, 2017, p. 52), but must engage in the dialogue of teaching while being taught – 'become[ing] jointly responsible for a process in which all grow' (Freire, 2017, p. 53). It is perhaps for this reason the school considers itself continuing to develop

[113] I refer to Freire's thinking here as a key difference I have noticed between his and Rancière's thinking is that Rancière understands that all knowledge is equal and all have the ability to learn, whereas Freire articulates that all people already possess knowledge.

its research[114], providing space for those who come to teach at the school to engage techniques and specialisms unique to their training and practice (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2020, p. 55). **Repeating a quotation from Marie-Hélène Daste regarding Le Vieux-Colombier, Lecoq expected his school and students to be 'a group of researchers, experimenters, explorers' ('*groupe de chercheurs, d'expérimentateurs, d'explorateurs*') (Lecoq in Freixe, 2014, pp. 105–106).**

The most inclusive reading of the neutral body in Lecoq's pedagogy I've come across comes by way of Mark Evans, who argues that the neutral body is in fact working against an ableist practices by seeking to 'normalise' the body, every body, while providing a basis for shifting the focus of theatre from the voice and text to the actor's body (Evans, 2008, p. 206). To provide new guidance on how to approach the neutral body, Evans quotes from former Lecoq student turned movement trainer Shona Morris: '[T]he neutral body isn't the perfect body. The neutral body is *your* neutral body, is your body without tension, with alignment that is physiologically possible for your body' (Morris in Evans, 2008, p. 124, italics in original).[115] Lecoq's own sentiment *'tout bouge'* ('everything moves') is indiscriminate and all-encompassing, though the training may not be perceived (or executed) in that way. Regarding the neutral mask, he states specifically that while it is 'neutral', it is not a 'mystical' object. He says that the 'idea that everyone is alike is both true and totally false. Universality is not the same as uniformity' (Lecoq,

[114] When undergoing some pedagogical training at l'École Jacques Lecoq in their new location in Avignon, I and 16 others were inducted into training by a clear statement from our teachers: 'number one, this is a part of our research as well as it's a part of us teaching, so we're all kind of engaging in in this research and continuing on in this research that Lecoq started'. And then they said to us very clearly that the way that. they were teaching us how they teach, they were showing us how they specifically teach, not how Lecoq taught, not how Norman Taylor taught, not how Jason taught, just very much how they teach, and that there's ultimately no real right way, it's just what they think is useful. Because ultimately, we will never be able to teach in any other way outside from our own way' (Brune, 2024, n. Sep. 23).

[115] **Sherman disagrees with this slightly, reflecting on the performance of the neutral mask, that *neutre* may be balanced, but it is not without 'movement or tension…There is tension between the mask and its surroundings, but a tension without conflict' (2016, p. 43).**

Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 41). **Lecoq expects the mask to provide its wearer and their audience the ability to 'recognize what belongs to everybody' (Lecoq in Sherman, 2016, p. 43).**

The attempt, even failure, of the individual in performance will always be more powerful than the repetition of the perfect mimic, as John Foley Sherman observed during his time training with Lecoq:

> The student who performed the movements with technical brilliance but little indication of personal deviation from the taught sequence was jeered as a 'golden boy' by the faculty, while the student whose technique was a catastrophe but who was discernibly striving to attain a point out of reach was cheered for her bravery. Watching her try and fail was more compelling to the staff than watching the other student breeze through. (Murphy and Sherman, 2013, p. 119)

There is more life and play in the struggle and attempt of the student who tries rather than the student who finds perfection with ease, as this is not what the training is for. I encountered a similar sentiment when revisiting certain corporeal mime sequences in pedagogical training. When attempting one of the *20 mouvements* (*les masseu)*, one of my fellow pedagogical students asked, 'when the hand goes to the back of the head is it is it straight up or is it the side?' to which the teacher responded:

> 'Who cares? Who cares – are you doing the movement? Then like yeah, great, it's fine.' There's no… it doesn't help to be exact … to have a formula that says you are doing exactly what is expected. …it doesn't matter if you do it a certain way, that's fine, you do it your way. And again, this is so reflective of the pedagogy as a whole; it's not a formula, it's sort of a loose outline of what's going on. It's not an exact science, which is which I think is great, ultimately, and also very frustrating as someone who's trying to learn how to teach this thing. (Brune, 2024, n. Sep. 26 pt. 1)

Other Lecoq graduates might read the above note and consider it ridiculous, recognising that the various forms of physical theatre are reliant on specificity of gesture or quality of movement to communicate. What this interaction communicates, however, is either a shifting attitude in the pedagogy from a more militant expectation of exact or 'perfect' movements, or the distinction between specificity or quality of movement while being true to the individual's unique version of the movement (I am inclined to believe both, but primarily the latter). The form of the movement is important, but only as much as the student is able to execute it while understanding its function and perform with specificity in their movement.

While *neutre* is not necessarily an equivalent to the concept of 'presence', it is a tool used to help the student understand when presence begins. In the seven levels of tension (a relatively unimportant yet wildly popular exercise outside of the school)[116] the student is asked to begin in a state in which they are barely awake and end in a state of bodily tension so great that it can only be achieved for a few seconds. **Level four (*alerte*) is where the *neutre* appears (Sherman, 2016, p. 43). Coincidently, it is also where the student begins to find a performance register, they begin to achieve a sort of 'presence'. Just as Barba noticed a 'slight bend in the knees', Sherman notes that the presentation of *neutre* and the neutral mask are often accompanied by a lean, or an 'inclination forward': 'The mask tips forward so that it need never decides to advance – it simply does so' (2016, p. 43).** During the pedagogical stage, it was made clear to us that the student finds themselves in 'a place of discovery…of some excitement…"I'm looking at the space! I'm seeing it for the first time" …the body gets bigger and – shows that space a little bit more' (Brune, 2024, n. Oct. 2). Rather than a

[116] It is not mentioned in any of Lecoq's writings I have yet encountered.

‘blank page’ on which to be written, the student becomes the agent of writing. Once the student has achieved that presence *neutre* and established their performance register, the performance can begin, and so can the writing.

The present structure: Rhythm, tempo, space and form.

For Bergson, durational time is something more ‘intuitive’ than intellectual, whereas space is tied to intellect (Russell, 1912, p. 326). One is easily measured while the other is ephemeral, presenting an interesting parallel to Lecoq’s definitions of ‘rhythm’ (*rythme)* and ‘tempo’ (*mesure).* Lecoq illuminates the different between these elements:

> Rhythm is the result of an actor’s response to another live performer. It may be found in waiting, but also in action. To enter into the rhythm is, precisely, to enter into the great driving force of life itself. Rhythm is at the root of everything, like mystery. (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 33)

Rhythm cannot be measured, it must be felt, whereas tempo can be measured as it is ‘geometrical’ in nature. The ‘measurability’ or ‘intelligence’ of tempo and space (or mathematical time) may be why duration was left out of the English translation, being that perhaps tempo and duration are too similar in opposition to the feeling, memory, or ‘living essence’ of rhythm and time (separate from space). However, I’m more inclined to believe that it was excluded because an English-speaking audience would not necessarily have been familiar with Bergson *durée*. Nevertheless, its omission removes the performer’s presence, their ability to shape the present time by shifting and utilising memory in performance.

In considering ‘space’, Lecoq’s understanding has a metaphysical dimension. The student in training is constantly asked to '*bouge l’espace*' (‘move the space’), suggesting a conception of space that echoes both Einstein and Aristotle. It echoes Aristotle's belief

that there could be no ‘empty space’, since objects could not be separated by ‘nothing’, that there must at least be air surrounding everything (Rovelli, 2018, pp. 48–49). Of course Aristotle was wrong (air can be removed from any sealed space) but Einstein realised he was right in that there is ‘something’ around us, even if only a gravitational field (Rovelli, 2018, p. 52). The conception of ‘space’ as a movable (if invisible) force provides material for the student to shape into imaginative (or theatrical) spaces. Louis Barrault describes how this sensation relates to the actor’s body:

> [J]ust as the earth is surrounded by an atmosphere, the living human being is surrounded by a magnetic aura which makes contact with the external objects without any concrete contact with the human body. This aura, or atmosphere, varies in depth according to the vitality of human beings… the mime must first of all be aware of this boundless contact with things. There is no insulating layer of air between the man and the outside world. Any man who moves about causes ripples in the ambient world in the same way a fish does when it moves in the water. (Barrault in Johnstone, 2014, p. 58)

Through the ability to communicate the manipulation of space through movement, the performer transforms their surroundings, placing themselves in the dramatic plane, feeling their way through their creation and providing an invisible structure the audience will understand through the ‘readability’ of their skill.

As to the final element of structure (rhythm, tempo, space, duration, and form), Lecoq gives no real insight into what he means by ‘form’, but he uses the term when considering the characters that students take up when encountering the mask – or, to use his words, ‘entering into the form’ (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 59). **To clarify further, Susan Thompson quotes Peter Hall’s description in her exploration of the effect of constraints within Lecoq’s pedagogy: ‘Any defined form in the theatre performs as a mask: it releases rather than hides; it enables emotion to be specific**

rather than generalized. It permits control while it prevents indulgence. Form frees, it does not inhibit' (Hall in Thompson, 2013, p. 402). Understanding the shape of the 'mask' (or form) and the movement it suggests allows the student to inhabit the appropriate style and find freedom within it. For Thompson, this highlights a key tactic of Lecoq's pedagogy: through constraints the teachers provide opportunities for students to move beyond their the teachers' own thinking, encouraging them to 'move beyond the first and most obvious choices, and to respond and engage with the assignments in new, surprising and profound ways' (2013, p. 393).

By playing into and respecting the shape that pre-exists their improvisation, the character the student develops becomes indicative of not only the character, through gesture and quality of movement, but also of style of performance. For example, the expressive masks will demand a different performance than that of the larval masks. I can extrapolate that Lecoq refers to 'form' as the stylistic restraints, often communicated through material elements (masks, costumes, props, etc.), but often, established through the culmination of styles or qualities of movement, expression, speech (if there is any). Overarching themes or recognisable characters and narratives become much more concrete indications of 'form' in the second year of training, when the students enter into various *géodramatiques* and must create work within the restrictions of the various genres.

The basics of the Lecoq student's improvisation practice do not change over the two years of training. Few of the exercises are documented in writing or film, and if they are, they are not made available for public view – any recordings made are primarily kept for the school's own pedagogical research**.** Students may not take pictures or notes in class, so perspectives on the improvisations come from my notes recorded in private after having partaken in the improvisations in class. When exploring a phenomenon that is

constantly changing and deeply personal, we must ask: how do you write about improvisation? It is a practice that is inherently tied to the practitioner, with a limited history and no future. It is in many ways a purely 'present' practice. In reflecting on the state of the improvisor, improvisation teacher and writer Keith Johnstone reflects:

> The improviser has to be like a man walking backwards, he sees where he has been, but he pays no attention to the future. His story can take him anywhere, but he must still balance it, and give it shape, by remembering incidents that have been shelved and reincorporating them. (2014, p. 116)

The complex positionality of both the past and present of the performer is entangled in the writing practice of the *acteur-auteur*, and in many ways defines it. Differentiating them from the 'authorship' of Barthes' author, as well as the writing of Barthes' *scriptor*, the *acteur-auteur* combines both positions, as one separate and present within their writing, by placing the emphasis, again, on the *action* integral their work.

Improvisations

Improvisation is at once a performance and method of composition – capable of being repeated to develop and shape an emerging structure. For the improviser-as-writer within the practice of Lecoq's pedagogy, the necessary components of composition are an establishment of a performative presence, a structure to the composed work, and a necessity of play- which is contingent on the desire of the player to engage. It is ultimately impossible to study the improvisor's work, so I will analyse the constants. I will analyse a few examples of exercises Lecoq himself writes about and a few he does not, and provide an analysis of my notes as a student of the professional course and later as a pedagogical student in intensive training. By analysing the assignments and their 'fixed points', the specific elements of practice necessary to the writer-improvisor

become clear. These reveal how students are expected to work with the proposed structures of tempo, rhythm, space, *durée*, and form, as well as the theatrical spaces of play, laying the foundations for the development of their writing towards an auteurial practice.

Improvisation 1: The Encounter

Improvisations begin when the teacher announces a theme or exercise and invites whatever number of volunteers necessary for the scene to stand in the performance space. In the very first improvisation exercise that students undertake, two people stand at opposite sides of the room and walk towards each other.[117] What happens when they meet in the middle of the space is up to them – will they simply walk past each other? Bump into each other? Will one follow the other off the 'stage'? Endless possibilities. Two by two, students go up. They do the exercise, the teacher gives some reflection on what they saw and perhaps asks them to repeat the improvisation or invites another pair to complete the same exercise. The process is defined by an invitation, the execution, and the response of the teacher (and sometimes the other observing students). The improv relies simply on an entry, an encounter, and an exit – the beginning, middle, and end.

The simplicity of the improvisation exercises gives the students room to make their play more complex as the year of training goes on. Depending on the focus of the trimester, improvisations can be masked, silent, abstract, animalistic, elemental, or based in mime. The basic interaction of people, abstract elements, or aspects of Lecoq's

[117] On my first day of training, I describe the exercise thus: 'two people walking from different directions into a space, and seeing how they react to each other, if they react at all' (Brune, 2015, n. Oct. 5). In the same note I reference the fact that the teachers specifically asked for 'volunteers' for the exercise.

'universal poetic awareness'[118] provides the simplest and most immediate opportunity for performers to begin the structuring of their writing through the engagement of the student's presence in an imaginative space. From there, their interaction with the space and other students establishes the varying tempos and rhythms that will indicate the form or style of performance, leading to the development of a whole. When asked during the pedagogical training to walk around the space and make eye contact with the other students, holding that contact until both parties feel the interaction is finished, I reflected:

> Something that felt important was it felt very much like … it's sort of marking the beginning and the end of something and, in the middle, being **ready** for something to happen. Nothing happens, but you're ready in case something does, and it feels very much like setting up a page to write, in the sense of just like creating the space where the writing could happen and then, you know, ultimately deciding not to do it, so the practice of setting up that space and being ready to react. (Brune, 2024, n. Sep. 23)

This 'readiness' reflects an element important to both concepts of 'presence' and *neutre*: establishing the sense of *durée.* Once a sense of *durée* is established by the performer the action of the improvisation can begin, establishing the rhythm of play.

Improvisation 2: *L'Attente* (Waiting)

In a notebook from my first year of training, I describe this improvisation thus: '[Our teacher] designed a room for us, told us we were strangers waiting in a space for the same person, and called us up five by five to enter the room, and see what happens' (Brune, 2015, n. Oct. 8). Unfortunately, this description leaves out an alarming amount of

[118] In the original French, *fonds poétique commun,* is the idea that all humans have an understanding of 'life', or the real world, that can be translated through imagination into something else (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2020, p. 169).

detail, while Lecoq's own description includes significantly more than my experience in actual training.

> You have been invited, by a very rich lady, to take cocktails at around 5 pm on a Friday. The guests have never met each other before. The floor is covered with a huge Persian carpet; a Venetian glass chandelier hangs from the ceiling; on one side of the room is a Renaissance painting, no doubt a forgery; on the other, a beautiful piece of Chinese porcelain stands on a little column. The apartment is on the second floor (the smartest floor to live on in Paris) doubtless in the *seizième* arrondissement, with a big 1920s bay window looking out over an avenue. At the back, a sideboard with cocktails, whisky, fruit juice, nibbles…
> Five characters present themselves, one after the other, at the entrance. A majordomo has let them in, they have come through a door, along a corridor and have been told: 'It's there!' The first to come in doesn't know that he will be the first, he arrives and there's no one else, just him. A second person arrives, then a third, a fourth, a fifth. The lady, of course, never appears! So they find themselves confronted with a silent situation, not daring to speak, rather as if they were in a waiting room.
> (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 32)

Lecoq's prose presents a fully realised space, more detailed than is perhaps necessary, with the reader of its description placed in the position of the potential student (he addresses 'you' as the person in the room). The reader is *in* the improvisation, until it becomes necessary to describe what happens once they have entered the scene. From there, the necessary entrances are laid out, but the action of the scene is not commented upon, aside from the task of 'waiting'.

Upon revisiting this improvisation in pedagogical training (almost exactly nine years after I first encountered it), the important details of the improvisation seem much

more significant (my focus in first year was on getting up and volunteering for the improvisations):

> …you walk into the room where you're supposed to meet someone and he's not there… it's a big, beautiful, grand room, and there's a buffet laid out, and there's … a rug, a chandelier, a painting, and a window, and as you wait four other people join you there (one by one) and you don't necessarily know them, maybe you do…[119] (Brune, 2024, n. Sep. 23).

From a teaching perspective, the details of the room became more important. The specifics of a piece of art, rich interior decorations, a window outside, and the presence of food and drink provide the students with somewhat universal 'things' they can react to and engage with. Regardless of background, students recognise a space where they may feel restricted by formality, they have a desire to eat nice food, and they know how to react to a precious object. They are drawn by curiosity to the window and understand the shifts of power that occur when a stranger enters a shared space. Some students may feel more at home in this space than others (which communicates a great deal about the student), but there is a general understanding of the elements at play. The key to the exercise lies in whether the student will relax into the space and encounter these elements realistically. From the excerpts above, it is clear that as a student, my focus was on what was happening, what I was meant to *do* in the scene, and who the other characters involved might be. From the perspective of the teacher, however, the striking element of this improvisation is the detail of the space, and the honesty with which students react to what they are given.

[119] Personal notebook, Pedagogical Stage: Edited- segments from this notebook have been transcribed from voice notes.

A common critique in improvisations of this kind is that student has *téléphoné* (pantomimed) a state or emotion, reverting to pantomime when unsure of what else to do – to *make* something happen. For example, tapping their foot to show they are impatient, or yawning largely to show they are bored. Lecoq also mentions this as a threshold of sorts students need to pass over, shifting from a place of speaking what they are feeling to silent portrayal, often leading to facial expressions or communicating gestures rather than simply seeing and engaging with the situation they are faced with, and the surprise that comes with it (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 32). While useful in certain styles of performance, the importance of this improvisation is not to find the drama in the scene but to find the truth in the situation. In the pedagogical training I reflected that '[i]t's not about making theatre, it's about trying to really mimic life and what happens in life… and being ready again … react to whatever happens around you' (Brune, 2024, n. Sep. 23). The purpose is not to present an interpretation of what waiting might look like, but rather to explore what waiting really is through the originality of the action and its realistic portrayal. This is the first instance in which the student begins to experiment and become aware of timing – or more specifically in Lecoq's terminology, rhythm. The student must also develop tempo – but rather than a sustained tempo, the tempo should vary, making it interesting to witness. Performers entering the stage at regularly defined intervals is not interesting, so variation must be established that feels organic, balanced by the rhythm of reaction – to the space, the other performers and their actions. If the tempo or rhythm is off, if a student does not see the space, or if they are not present and ready for action, the teacher will stop the improvisation.

This is one of the first improvisations you will do and at the very end of the first year of training you will repeat it as one the last[120]. Strangely, it will be just as hard as it was at the beginning. It is not so important what happens in the improvisation. It will not be 'good' (whatever that may mean), it will not be particularly entertaining (form is not necessarily an element that comes into play here, as the exercise is literally to imitate life). But what will be (and is) electric is the *potential of what might happen*. There are few rules for the interaction itself. What is concrete, however, is the space and the game of waiting. The teacher will stand up and outline the space, using their steps to show the length of the corridor into the room and their hands to indicate where the painting hangs on the wall, where the window is next to it, where the buffet is etc. What the students do in this defined invisible space is up to them, though there would be pauses in play where the teachers might critique the students' use of the space – did they see the chandelier when they entered? Did they take the time to really observe the space they entered? How clearly had they observed the teacher's definition of the space? If another performer has already reacted to something in the room, has the newcomer seen and continued to play with that proposition? There is a legitimacy in the play, a series of rules that the improviser must abide by in order to 'play well', and yet these rules are never given to the student, they must find them out by themselves through trial and error.

The exercise provides a setting in which students can write with their bodies; the imaginary space of the improvisation allows the student to explore the potential for play in a specific space with a set of implied, and recognisable rules that exist in the reality of the played situation as it is in life. By providing the space and its inherent rules of engagement, the student is then left with a certain number of actions or behaviours that

[120] Personal notebook II – June 9th, 2016. 'Impro-…walking into a fancy room where you are waiting with a bunch of strangers' (Brune, 2016a, n. Jun. 9).

would be ‘realistic’ within that world. One of the challenges is finding what they are and how to portray them, as well as how to keep a relationship between themselves playing out, providing some if minimal interest for an audience. The rules of the space lead to the rules of the game.

Improvisation 3 – *L’Adieu au bateau* (Farewell to the Boat)

This improvisation introduces the neutral mask and evolves as students attempt it through the different forms that arise throughout the two years of training. *L’Adieu,* or ‘the goodbye’, in which a person waves goodbye to someone on a departing ship, is described by Lecoq thus:

> Farewell to the Boat:
> A very dear friend goes on board a boat for a long journey to other side of the world. The assumption is that you will never see him again. As the boat is leaving, you rush onto the jetty at the mouth of the harbour in order to wave him a last farewell. (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 41)

His description gives more detail and context to the action then the student receives in the classroom. From my perspective as a student, the arc of the improvisation follows thus:

> you're on a dock, you see the boat, you run down the dock, you wave the final goodbye to someone leaving on a boat, then you drop your hand…and then you back up- you turn around, you walk back along with the dock and then you go on your way. (Brune, 2024, n. Sep. 24)

Like the improvisation of *L’Attente,* the teacher first outlines the space of the dock, showing the student from where they will enter, how far downstage they will come, and how they will make their way back down the dock and off stage. The student then attempts the exercise, alone at first, and then receives a critique. Once the student has attempted it alone, in the correct state of the mask (one of readiness rather than grand

emotions), the group forms a small chorus of neutral masks. In pedagogical training, when attempting this exercise I reflected:

> Once we did that, one by one, and then as a group of seven, and sort of doing it… together as a group, it's really difficult. And again, noting this thing, that if we're doing it together, we don't all have to do it in the same way, but there has to be a thing together. And throughout this there's also been this thing of recognizing the timing. So if someone takes too long to do something, we feel it, the audience feels it, and sometimes the actor feels it, sometimes they don't, but this thing of the '*le temps juste'* is always a thing that is … being trained during these exercises. (Brune, 2024, n. Sep. 24)

The 'thing' I mention in my reflection on the exercise above insinuates an unnameable unity, the shared *temps juste* or, in Lecoq's thinking, 'rhythm'. The timing based on the collective engagement, when performing in a chorus as in the excerpt above, is based on not necessarily the reaction, but the shared action – not necessarily a uniform action, but a unity nonetheless. As Lecoq reflects, it must be felt and cannot be measured.

When writing about this improvisation, Lecoq frames the *Adieu* as an example of a neutral mask exercise, but in fact this exercise recurs multiple times during the training. While it first appears in the context of learning the neutral mask, it will return alongside the movement analysis of materials, and the during the study of Tragedy (chorus, both in and out of neutral mask), and then Melodrama, and finally, as an improvisation for a clown. Each style of performance (or 'form') demands a slightly different interaction with the structural elements of play and writing –with the space of performance, the tempo, and rhythms unique to the demands of the form. For the neutral mask, the focus of the performer must be on their own body and how it maintains its neutral presence while engaging with the space, whereas the Clown must maintain those elements while also

reacting to an audience, finding ways the *Adieu* could go wrong, and establishing the unique logic of their clown required to incite laughter and help them finish the scene. I noted '…swim after the ship, get confused, be mad at the person leaving, etc' (Brune, 2017, n. Apr. 14). In the dramatic territory of chorus, an entire group of people come to the dock to wave 'goodbye'. Every individual does not necessarily wave themselves, but they are all there for the same purpose. They must move as one, not in sync, but as one entity reacting with the same spirit to what they are losing as the boat sails away (an example of tempo – the measurable timing of the performers' actions). In neutral mask the chorus will function in the same way, simply without the added emotion that the tragic chorus territory demands.

When working with materials, or with any other movement analysis theme, the improvisors are asked to replay the material in action, for example the disintegration of a sugar cube in water, the blooming of a crumpled piece of paper, the blowing up of a balloon, and the stretching and snapping of elastic. Elastic becomes surprisingly useful within the dramatic territory of melodrama – the tension between characters and the physical presentation of those tensions often resembles the tautening of elastic as two doomed lovers must move away from each other, or when a character suppresses swelling emotions before a confession or a fight. Within the context of *L'Adieu*, this can manifest in a few ways. On a micro scale, the melodramatic character can find elasticity in moment of a gesture, in this instance, waving 'goodbye': '…the tension of when you drop your hand; that there's that sort of elastic, stretching tension- and then it finally falls…' (Brune, 2024, n. Sep. 24). Even within movement analysis, the different approaches to rhythm, tempo, and space are established by the form – the rhythm, tempo, or space of an elastic band will be different to that of the colour yellow, or the sea in a storm. Each form demands a different approach, and each form introduced establishes its own demands.

The unique shape of a mask requires a certain physicality, whilst the *géodramatiques* require entirely different writing elements –different rhythm, tempo, and space, though the aspect of *durée* does not change.

Improvisation 4: *L'Arnaque/le tricheur* (The Trap/The Trickster)

A more advanced improvisation comes in the second year of training while exploring the dramatic territory of *commedia* or *la Comédie Humaine*.[121] It arrives in a portion of the year when the students have finished working with melodrama and *langage du geste* and have made their own half masks to delve into what might be the *commedia* of today. This exploration begins with the tricksters and the charlatans, whose 'wants' drive them to take advantage of those around them. The improvisation begins with three people waiting on a bench when a passerby drops a coin. As I summarised in my notes, 'So the three people have to figure out 'how do I get it so that the other people don't get it?'" (Brune, 2024, n. Oct. 2). They must employ different tactics to trick the treasure away from their comrades, and the inherent naiveté and pride of the *commedia* character means that any tactic might work.

Lecoq himself does not write about this specific improvisation, but he reflects on the core of *La Comédie Humaine* and *commedia lazzi*, which describes how this improvisation must function:

> This territory brings into play all the great trickeries of human nature: persuading people, duping them, taking advantage: it deals in urgent desires and its characters are concerned with survival….The fundamental theme

[121] In writing, Lecoq makes a distinction between the two due to the fact many students will have taken short courses on *commedia* and arrive at school with a set style of performance 'clichés' that make the students' play 'lifeless'. He notes that often due to the students age there is a lack of life experience to fully explore the themes of commedia, so a differentiation must be suggested (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 124). From the beginning he introduces the style as *La Comédie Humaine*, later introducing specific *lazzi*s and masks of the traditional *commedia*. He says that 'using a much broader field of reference, we have rediscovered our creative freedom' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 116).

> is how to lay a trap for whatever reason… (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 116).

From compliments, to feigning illness and hunger to scaring the others, the characters must try whatever they can to get the coin. Nevertheless, it is necessary to play 'well' in order for the improvisation to work. In my notes as a student, again my focus is on the action of the scene: 'They [the characters] must not outwardly acknowledge their find, they want the other to be unaware of their gain' (Brune, 2016b, n. Nov. 7). This makes sense for the character, but completely ignores the necessary work of the actor – making sure the other actors know where the coin is, so they can make their attempt and develop the scene further.

From a pedagogical perspective, it is clear the action of the scene is less important than the play of the actors:

> [S]omeone will get the coin and they'll hold onto it for dear life, and that doesn't work because then that stops everybody- that basically stops the play. What you need then is… if you get the coin, you need to feel a success of it, but ultimately you need to let it go again in order for the game to continue playing…the goal is not to win, the goal is to play the game. (Brune, 2024, n. Oct. 2)

If the actors cannot play well together, the scene will be lost in either a lack of real competition or a mess of unclear focus between attempts at grabbing the coin. Even the coin itself must play well: if the teacher throws the coin and it rolls for too long or lands closer to one actor than the others, the teacher must roll it again. The time between the sound of the coin landing on the ground, whether it rolls or lands flatly, and the first attempt at sneaking the coin are equally important to any action that follows. The timing must be right, the *tempo* must be established, or the scene will not play. The teacher must be as ready and aware of the necessary timing to literally 'set the stage' for play.

Within this improvisation we see not only a need for collaboration – a give and take (or push and pull as Lecoq might call it) with the other actors to ensure a certain amount of entertaining play – but also an understanding of the rules of the game and how they aid to structure the improvised narrative. The tempo of each individual attempt to try to get the coin, the complicity of the actors in the power structure at play (the rhythm established between them), and the believable engagement with the 'characters' in their play, all function as necessary parts of heightening the improvised game to structured narrative arc.

As the students become more advanced, the level of play becomes more 'risky' and more exciting. The tactics of the *Comédie Humaine* character can be anything, resulting from any force of hunger, and the students are faced with a wealth of possibility for the potential of their play. While the scene may be 'realistic' in many ways (there is greed and suffering in our world as there was in the golden age of *commedia)*, the scene functions in a theatrical dimension rather than the real. The expectation of a spectator that does not want to be bored also is also present in the room (not literally but figuratively). As with the other *géodramatiques* and forms, the student, by this point, must understand that the tempo of the scene must be varied and engaging, the space must be appropriate within the style of performance (again, relatively realistic at this stage). They must be attuned to the rhythm established between their fellow performers, and they must understand what the form demands (which becomes more nuanced in the second year of training). These elements encompass the craft of the writing of the improviser, though are nothing without the inclusion of the *durée*, the actor's presence, which establishes how these come together as performance and become readable to an audience. Finally, the element of play – not only is it useful in the pedagogical space, but necessary for the actor's desire (or 'will) to engage in their work of imagining.

From writing to an auteurial practice

To complete Lecoq's quote from the beginning of this chapter:

> Every author, whether he creates a gesture or a spoken or written text, improvises the first time that he moves in the space or puts pen to paper. Even if he has an initial idea, he must at some point throw himself into the unknown. From this starting point, the actor-improviser-author rehearses and refines his creation, testing it and finally performing it for an audience, who see only the finished product. (J. Lecoq, 2006, pp. 100–101)

While establishing the link between the 'actor-improviser-author' and their practice of writing/improvising, Lecoq also presents a distinction between this work and the 'finished product'. The difference between writing and the crafting of this 'author's' work reflects Barthes' distinction between a 'writer' and an 'author' – one who is concerned with the 'technical' aspect of writing, while the other masters both the technical and the 'artisanal' (Barthes, 2000, p. 186). The author must, like Sarris' *auteur*, be master of both 'technique' and 'personal style'. Once they have mastered those elements, they move on to something greater – for Sarris this is 'meaning' for Sarris, and for Barthes it is work indicative of an 'author'. Much like the 'writer', the 'director' must be technically skilled, but the 'author'/*auteur* must achieve something greater in their work. The evolution from one quality of artist to another within Lecoq's pedagogy is developed through what might be considered a 'finished product' for the Lecoq student – the practice of the *autocours.* To understand its pedagogical effect and implications, the cultural and political atmosphere of Paris in the 1960s must be explored as it directly led to the introduction of the *autocours.*

Chapter 5: May ‘68, pedagogy, and the author.
Revolt, research, and resurrection.

The roots of the actor-author proposed in the previous chapters cannot be fully understood within Lecoq’s pedagogy without the cultural atmosphere and rebellious spirit of the French people in the late 1960s. While based on the acting and performance practices outlined in the second chapter of this thesis, the work of this kind of performer (*acteur- auteur*) would not translate to the Lecoq student until later, as the school had not quite developed its pedagogical identity, nor the clear image of their student or the work they would wish them to undertake. The question emerges of how Lecoq’s pedagogy, which always referred to the ‘writing body’ and the *auteur*, evolve from a school of movement and improvisation to one of new work. What was missing from the original pedagogical structure and how was it amended?

This chapter will sketch a brief history of Lecoq’s school, the formative effects of the events of May ’68, and the tactics of the Maoist[122] communist groups in France to show how these events prompted the introduction of the pedagogical tools of the *autocours* and *les enquêtes*. These elements in particular lead directly to the development of the *acteur-auteur*, providing the foundations for a pedagogical rebellion that would

[122] **Seen as an evolution of Leninism, Maoism (conceived by founder of People’s Republic of China, Mao Tse-Tung (1943-1976)) proposed a new strand of socialism that seemed to move away from the Soviet model and reflect directly on China’s needs (Boncardo and Cooke, 2017, p. 70). Inspired by Chinese literature and the work of Li Ta-chao (a founding member of the Chinese Communist party) rather than the work of Marx itself, Mao’s own political philosophy was concerned with the power of the peasant class and their capacity for revolution (Gregor and Hsia Chang, 1978, pp. 309–310). Guided by Li’s interpretation of Marxism, his politics carried forth a nationalistic view of China as a ‘proletarian nation’ that must reject capitalist values, no matter economic or cultural advancement, as this would lead to a stronger societal shift and revolution (Gregor and Hsia Chang, 1978, p. 318). Mao insisted that all Chinese people were ‘poor’ and ‘blank’, arguing that from there the most effective revolution would take place (led, inevitably, by his own thinking) (Gregor and Hsia Chang, 1978, p. 320).**

take the student's 'writing' from simply an exercise of 'Technique' to an exploration of their 'personal style' (to echo again the terminology of Sarris). The development of an *acteur-auteur* (its definition proposed in the first two chapters of this thesis) is made possible within Lecoq's pedagogy through the overarching training, but especially by the inclusion of these final, student-driven elements.

The physical practice within the school had, up to this point, been perhaps not vague, though hardly specific. The title of the school had evolved over time from its foundation in 1956 as 'École Lecoq- Mime: Éducation de Comédien' (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 170) to 'Mime - Mouvement - et Théâtre'[123] and finally in 1988 to 'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq' (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 291). This adding to the confusion of who this 'actor/performer/mover/mime' would be when they emerged from the school, and what kind of work they would be trained for. The answer to this question of work would come through a somewhat surprising channel: a massive political upset. Through the political action Lecoq was given an answer to the questions 'what are they being prepared for?' and 'What kind of work would they do?' The response (allegedly) came from the students – 'our own!. The events of 1968 would directly lead to the inclusion of the authorial practice in the pedagogy. Without the students who engaged with and challenged the systems of education (Lecoq's own included), the pedagogy would remain limited to training the actor who moves beautifully. To understand the effects of these events it is necessary to revisit the historical context from which these events emerged.

[123] In an interview with Jean Perret, Lecoq states that he did change the name to remove the 'mime' (J. Lecoq, 2006, p. 111), yet I cannot find evidence of when this may have been.

Interruption: The events of May ‘68

Across historical accounts it is clear that no one event led to the Paris riots of ’68. Rather, their arrival was signalled by an inevitable build-up of cultural and social shifts that had long been underway (Thibault, 1989, p. 193). The staging of two consecutive protests, at Nanterre on May 2 by students against the institution, and the Sorbonne on May 3 against the police and institutional retribution against the students at Nanterre, seem to have been the catalyst for the impending political actions (Hamon, 1989, p. 11). There exists a veil of mythology around the events, especially considering the source of most information regarding the strikes comes directly from those involved, and more specifically, the university students and youths of the time who have lived on to tell the tales of ‘their revolution’. The testimonies produced from this time come from people who wanted to be included, who took an opportunity to amplify their voices rather than those who were involved in the minutia of the movement, which explains a focus on the student actions and perspectives rather than those of the workers or lower classes (Ross, 1988, p. 8).

Unfortunately, my project perpetuates this perspective to some extent, as the student actions are the elements of this specific moment in history that are relevant to my research. **I will attempt to remedy this by stating that while the student revolt may have begun this movement, the sparks of this unrest were ignited by the recent history of German occupation of France and the Allied victory of the Second World War, and the uncovered horrors enacted by French forces during the Algerian War.[124] The extreme violence in Algeria stoked anger against the right-wing**

[124] This includes torture and other human rights violations by the French forces in Algeria (which are still being investigated), the slaughter of Algerian Muslims (Harkis), and the general toll of lives lost during the conflict, Algerian and French (Morin, 2023, pp. 40–41). The end of the colony came with Algerian Independence in 1962 and mass repatriation of French settlers (approximately one million), the return of over two million soldiers, and immigration of over half a million Algerians (Muslims, Christians, and

government, and outrage at the USA's involvement in the ongoing war in Vietnam only strengthened anti-colonial sentiment (Hamon, 1989, p. 11). In January of 1968, the attempted capture of the US embassy in Saigon by the Vietcong confirmed the massive missteps by the Americans in Vietnam. The extraordinary violence of the war, including the use of napalm and chemical agents and the deaths of almost two million civilians, was regularly broadcast on French television, generating considerable support for Vietnam among the French public, (itself a former colony as 'French Indochina'). Historian Peter Wolin cites this as one of the sources of reinvigoration of Marxist thought, as the world was watching US imperialism at work, at the 'highest stage of capitalism' (Wolin, 2010, p. 71). With these events ongoing or in the recent past, the year of '68 itself was rife with extraordinary global movements and political crisis in major parties, including the communist revolution in Cuba[125] (Hamon, 1989, p. 15), student uprisings in Mexico protesting against cruel treatment of prisoners, to the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia ('socialism with a human face') which was snubbed out by Soviet invasion and Warsaw pact troops (Wolin, 2010, p. 72).

The effects of the events of May were felt across France, with nine million people participating in a general strike towards in support of the movement (Hanley and Kerr, 1989, p. 1). It caused a shift not only in government but systems of power in the workplace and across the entire French educational system (Prost, 1989). The goal was to challenge the primary ideologies of the day: capitalism, right-wing Gaullism, and US imperialism, which was seeping into Europe through its politics and export of pop culture

Jewish people alike) leading to a shift in French culture and population growth (leading to further conflict on French soil), which now, according to a study in 2023 by Paul Max Morrin, accounts for 39% of young French people (between the ages of 18-25) who can link a relative to the conflict (having been involved or directly affected), or the French-Algerian colonial project (2023, p. 36).

[125] The Cuban rebellion was an inspiration to the '68 movement, the Union des Étudiants Communiste going so far as to organize trips where students could witness their youth/minority driven revolution (Hamon, 1989, p. 15).

(Ross, 1988, p. 8), alongside demands for democratisation of educational institutions and the workplace.

These events altered the whole of France – no industry was left unaffected, no area of France immune to change – yet were labelled simply a 'student rebellion' and limited to the short period of 'May', as Kristin Ross points out in her research. She notes that Jacques Rancière[126] identified the police as the main group that referred to it in this way, shifting the perspective that it wasn't by any means as revolutionary or disruptive, effectively infantilising the movement (Ross, 1988, p. 22). Yet again, in a very different context, we are faced with a desire to shift power, to change the rules of who has authority and to weed out older and archaic values that no longer serve.

At the time of the strikes, France was in the midst of what was later termed *les trente glorieuses* (the thirty glorious), a period of economic growth and urbanisation after the end of the Second World War that strengthened the middle classes and prompted an influx of new students (male and female) into universities, eager to shape a new post-war society and their place within it (Reid and Sherman, 2018, p. 184). The population of school-aged children increased by about 30 percent, signalling a shift in the quality of life. Parents no longer needed their older children to help provide for the household and could instead hope that education would enable them to attain better social positions. In the postwar years, the government desired more trained personnel, leading a massive reorganisation of the school systems. Classes were now open to mixed genders, pre-*baccalauréat* schooling was extended by three years, and the number of *baccalauréat* increased three-fold (Prost, 1989, p. 24). Curricula were updated as well, including more

[126] Rancière himself was hugely active during the events of May. A pupil of Louis Althusser, the unofficial leader of the Maoist movement through his engagement with students at École Supérieure Normal, Rancière questioned his Leninist ideals and ultimately split from Althusser's ideology completely, critiquing him for not supporting the student revolts and mass actions of '68 (Karlson and Villadsen, 2015, p. 99).

maths and French language courses, though the methods of teaching had not been adapted to the needs of the new pupils. There was a demand for more modern pedagogies that would engage students in ways that were useful and interesting to them. A few weeks before the strikes began, Roger Grégiore, a civil servant at the time, spoke at the Amiens Conference about the modern French student:

> Attempts are made to pass on to them a cultural heritage which they are indifferent, it is passed on via models which they reject...by means of an hierarchical system, intolerable both to their common sense and their dignity. (Grégoire in Prost, 1989, p. 26).

It would not be difficult to state that this sentiment was equally reflected by the students of l'École Jacques Lecoq.

The schools and the students

The protests began at the universities the year before. Buoyed by the arrival of the era of sexual liberation[127], student demonstrations began with a demand to end gender-based separation and options for more affordable housing (as the influx of students was overwhelming supply), to which police reacted by arresting eight of the protestors. The university responded by expelling four of those arrested, which led to more protests (Wolin, 2010, p. 78). The issues of housing and gender separation would not be addressed properly until much later, observes historian Richard Wolin, long after the campus at Nanterre became the centre of the rebellion, as it was ill-equipped for the students – it lacked sufficient housing, had poor work and study conditions, and lacked transportation links to and from the city (Wolin, 2010, p. 79). Students were driven by frustrations with

[127] Some universities had erected observation stations by dormitories to make sure the genders stayed separate; men were forced to leave women's chambers by 11pm while women were only allowed in men's rooms if they were above the age of 21. The demand for these stations' removal was one of the many catalysts for the impending conflict (Wolin, 2010, p. 78).

overcrowded classes, negligent or non-existent relationships between students and teachers, and teachers who had simply neglected their responsibilities[128]. While little to no learning was happening in the universities as students grew more and more suspicious and hostile towards the institutions, the headquarters of their activists groups (Union des Étudiants Communiste and Jeunesse Étudiantes Chrétienne) became their 'alternative universities' (a term popular in 1968 according to active participant, Hervé Hamon) (1989, p. 15). More demonstrations took place, protesting the Vietnam war as well as the conditions in the universities, each leading to more and more violent arrests, finally culminating in the events of May (Wolin, 2010, p. 83).

Students gathered at the Sorbonne on May 3 to discuss the protests, police violence, and recent closing of the Nanterre campus. The Prime Minister at the time, Georges Pompidou, was out of the country, leaving President Charles De Gaulle in charge. He informed the minister of the interior (Christian Fouchet) that the student actions were to be stopped (Wolin, 2010, p. 86). Riot police showed up at Sorbonne and arrested 600 students. Other observing students reacted by throwing rocks at the vans, until the police fired tear gas and began beating and arresting the onlookers, many completely uninvolved with the actions and simply passing through the busy Latin

[128] While chaos reigned within the universities, écoles (primary/elementary schools) and collèges (middle/lower secondary schools) simply went on strike. The administrations of the Lycées (high/upper secondary schools) challenged authority on behalf of the students and the teachers to their superiors. Informality seeped in, students began smoking on campus, dress codes relaxed, even the language shifted from formal to 'tutoiement' (for teachers to students, at least). Some teachers even reorganized their classrooms, so students sat in a circle rather than in lines and chose to adopt a letter grading system rather than continue with the old score out of 20 system. Some teachers resisted these changes, but the government stance, especially post May, was open to changes within the systems, including shifting the curriculum to have fewer hours of classes, no Saturday classes, and including physical education in the school day (Prost, 1989, pp. 26–29). French schools (to this day) remain very strict, but during this time old systems of punishment seemed to disappear as well, though expulsion remained as a sole repercussion for bad behavior. (Prost, 1989, p. 27) While most changes were positive, historian Antoine Prost notes that the influx of students and shifts in mediatisation meant a disinterest in academics, as they were focused on 'a media-powered society where scholastic knowledge had lost its credit.' (1989, p. 32) (though this sentiment resembles the age old despair 'kids these days…').

Quarter (Wolin, 2010, p. 86). The violence of this reaction by the police was shocking (and reminiscent to the Parisians of the violence between police and Algerian immigrants not long before, spurred on by the right wing government and the recent end to French control of the colony), and though the arrested students were released the following day, there was a call for the immediate release of any students who had been formally charged, a demand for the removal of police from the Latin quarter, and the restarting of classes at the Sorbonne. In the delay between the events and the government's response, however, the protests had spread to the rest of France, now including exponentially more people, not just middle-class students of Paris' institutions (Wolin, 2010, p. 87).

The 'night of the barricades' on May 10 signalled the most bloodshed the uprising would see. The student leaders, Louis Joxe and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, had attempted to negotiate with Fouchet, as Pompidou was still abroad, but failed (Wolin, 2010, p. 88). Roland Barthes would later describe the student revolutionaries gathered in silence as they listened to the radio, doing nothing but listening, not seeing, not moving, just listening as the sound of history happening 'now' came over the airwaves, the radio as a new 'appendage', becoming a part of the revolutionary anatomy (1989, pp. 149–150). Warnings of tanks and buses filled with police to arrest any protestors prompted the students to fear the worst and build their barricades with whatever materials were to hand, some by tearing the paving stones from the roads, revealing sand beneath them – leading to the slogan '*Sous les pavé, la plage*' (under the paving stones, the beach).[129] Sure enough, the police arrived with tear gas and grenades, arresting and assaulting hundreds of students and bystanders, even entering homes and pulling uninvolved citizens into the

[129] The use of graffiti was popular during the uprising, and numerous slogans became associated with the struggle, such as '*Je suis marxiste, tendance Groucho*' ('I am a Marxist, of Groucho persuasion') – no doubt a critique of the French Marxists' Leninist leanings – '*Le bâton éduque l'indifférence*' ('Violence [the stick] teaches indifference'), and '*Plus je fais la révolution, plus j'ai envie de faire l'amour*' ('The more I rebel, the more I want to make love') among many, many others (*Le Monde*, 1973) (my own translations).

streets (Wolin, 2010, p. 90). It was this action that ultimately led to the involvement of the Communist parties, who had previously disparaged the students for their little revolt but were appalled by the violence they faced at the hands of the government. When the students decided to hold another demonstration on May 13, the Communists (Parti Communiste Français) were beside them, along with the left-wing catholic group (CFDT), some of the Maoists, and more (Wolin, 2010, p. 91).

On May13, hundreds of thousands of workers, students, and civilians marched from the Gare de l'Est to Denfert-Rochereau, while waving flags and singing (Brown, 1989, p. 444). Reflecting on the event, Patrick Ravignant (author and '68er himself) commented:

> Perfect strangers challenged one another, addressed one another, in the familiar form, shared and gave; for the first time in generations communication among individuals was no longer that goal toward which one wends one's way through a labyrinth of complexes and frustrations; it was a basic fact, burstingly evident. One felt that something unheard of was occurring, that suddenly nothing seemed impossible any longer. (Ravignant in Brown, 1989, p. 444)

The spirit of a revolution had grown in that time to encompass most of France, and while the movement itself would be unsuccessful in the short term, the spirit of the movement would ultimately change France for good. This event banded together the workers and students to build to the nine -million-person strike that would take place shortly after on May22, and bring all of France to a screeching halt (Ross, 1988, p. 4).[130]

[130] The mass action of the 22 May led to several factories (most notably the Renault car factories) taking hold of their own management by establishing systems of self-governance (referred to as *autogestion*) and isolating the foremen (Wolin, 2010, p. 99). The working-class French had been reluctant to engage in revolution as they were relatively satisfied with the negations of the communist party and their unions (even though they remained well behind the middle class in terms of earnings and work conditions), however with the actions of the students joined by the communist parties, they were encouraged to demand more (Wolin, 2010, p. 99). While previous negotiations had concerned better pay and work safety, their new

L'École Lecoq and May '68

While schools and universities in Paris (and most of France) were shut down by students' activities, l'École Jacques Lecoq's doors stayed open (a very rare exception as the majority of schools were forced to close); students partook in the revolutionary activities *and* went to class (Murphy and Sherman, 2013, p. 115). The contradiction in students' actions was possible simply because of an agreement between the school and its students. The students demanded the opportunity to develop their own work, so Lecoq gave them the time and space to do so, ultimately enveloping this practice into a greater pedagogical tool – the *autocours* (Murray, 2002, p. 30). This may seem charitable of Lecoq, but his school, like others, was threatened with a standstill as the students would not continue to work unless their demands were met (Murphy and Sherman, 2013, p. 116). It is perhaps important to note that l'École Lecoq is a private school, so it was under no risk of losing funding or being forced to fight state sanctioned interference,; it was entirely reliant on its students' fees.

According to Lecoq, the May revolution solidified his approach and encouraged students' interest in his school due to his attitude toward discovery and developing new work. He said that '[w]hile the student movement exploded onto the streets, we were exploding the traditions of gesture and text in search of a new language and new meanings' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 11). The rebellious and anti-establishment sentiment among young people during this era gave Lecoq the opportunity to practice what he preached by giving his student the opportunity to make the 'new

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demands were for societal inclusion of marginalized people, and destroy any possibility of social authoritarianism (Wolin, 2010, p. 99).

theatre' his pedagogy demanded (while ultimately saving his school). To his credit, he embraced it; 'he (Lecoq) sides with the students and their desire to overthrow the status quo, using his capacity as authority figure to incorporate a permanent creative revolutionary component – the auto-cours' (Murphy and Sherman, 2013, p. 116).

While it is unknown if the non-French Lecoq students engaged in the protests themselves, Lecoq's acquiescence to his students' demands signals, at the very least, significant support for their French peers and some understanding of the frustrations of the French people. At the time the school was located at 83 Rue de Bac on the left bank, bordering the Latin quarter (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 171). The students would have been aware of the conflicts raging literally streets away, not to mention affected by the complete chaos which enveloped France that summer. Core members of the company *Mummenschanz* Bernie Schürch and Floriana Frassetto, who trained at Lecoq's school during this time, reflect: 'We were questioning everything…*Why do you teach this? What does it mean? Why do you think we should learn this?* We took advantage of the situation to look for new ways of addressing problems' (Schürch and Frassetto in Murray, 2017, p. 114, italics in original). They even noted that Lecoq encouraged them to go entertain picketers striking at factories. As students, they 'were engaged in many activities' (Schürch and Frassetto in Murray, 2017, p. 114). While it remains unclear what 'activities' exactly, it is implied that the students were active, if not with the greater strikes and actions of May happening nearby, they were indeed active with their own rebellion in questioning the 'authority' of the school, its teachers, and the purpose of their instruction.

David Bradby suggests that Lecoq's international work and appeal benefited from his resistance to engagement with French institutions and popular French theatre culture: his work was not only able to provide new perspectives on training and theatre, but also

situated him outside traditional power structures, thereby making him more likely to relate to students demanding change (Murphy and Sherman, 2013, p. 116). The events in May were, after all, in part a 'cultural revolution', so in this spirit, theatres and artistic institutions were shut, and the Théâtre de l'Odéon, home of Théâtre de France, was occupied by the rebelling youths, at the time run by a sympathetic Jean-Louis Barrault (Brown, 1989, p. 445), a former student of Copeau and member of Les Copiau.[131] The somewhat removed position of Lecoq's school from the distinctly 'French' theatrical tradition, or at least the Parisian theatrical zeitgeist, provided an element of protection from the events and rage towards the great artistic institutions, while equally giving him the ability (and ultimately, expectation) to evolve the practice and training into an increasingly relevant style and form.

In brief, the *autocours* is a class which establishes a more experimental laboratory-like space than a traditional classroom set-up, where the students are required to develop individual pieces of theatre in groups, without an established hierarchy of roles (such as writer, director, actor, etc.). This practice has been labelled as 'devising' by several academics and practitioners alike, though the practice is inherently different (I will delve into this distinction in the introduction to Part III). The teacher has no role in the evolving *autocours*. Indeed, the teacher's absence is integral to the development of the work; feedback is withheld until the ultimate presentation at the end of the week.

[131] First occupied by about twenty-five hundred people, the numbers ultimately swelled to between eight to ten thousand. Everything was looted or used in benefit of the movement until the occupiers were eventually removed (Brown, 1989, pp. 446–447). Although he was sympathetic and eager to engage with the students, Barrault felt mocked by the occupiers, and his efforts were hampered by the ministry of culture, who instructed him and his company to leave the building to the rebels (Barrault, 1974, p. 317). The Odéon was completely trashed, serving as a sort of sacrifice to the rebelling population who did not dare storm the other government-linked institutions, like the senate or Académie Français (Barrault, 1974, p. 319). Furious by the lack of action from the government, Barrault spoke out on behalf his theatre and was ultimately fired for going against the ministry's directions, as well as publicizing his critique of the situation (Barrault, 1974, p. 324). The events proved devastating for Barrault and the theatre.

Supported by improvisation (which one could argue is the teaching element that leads to the *autocours*) and feedback, the students are given liberty to explore their abilities and make mistakes. The only input from the teachers arrives at the very beginning of the process with a prompt, often (though not always) related to the themes or practices being looked at in improvisation or movement classes that week. It is a practice of 'self-teaching' – *auto* translating to 'self', *cours* to 'class'.

Along with the development of the *autocours*, two other elements of the pedagogy were introduced into the school's curriculum at this time of unrest: clown companies and *commandes* (or 'commissions') for the first year students (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 11). While today clown training only appears at the end of the second year of training, there is a question of terminology regarding the *commandes*. In the original French publication of *Le Corps Poétique*, Lecoq refers to the first time the school engaged the students in the *commandes* and describes the process thus: '*on les envoya en* enquêtes *dans différent milieux pour nourrir les spectacles qu'il présentaient dans des soirées'* (J. Lecoq, 1997, p. 24, italics in original). Literally, 'we sent them on *investigations* in different environments to nourish the spectacles that they presented in evenings' (he is referring to the evening presentations open to the public).[132] This describes clearly the project of *les enquêtes,* the penultimate project of the first year of training, which is different from what is now called *les commandes* (which I will discuss in Chapter 6).

During *les enquêtes* the first-year cohort (70 or so students) are divided into groups and sent to observe something – an area of town, a profession, or a unique

[132] This is my own translation. It should be noted that this is the one time the first year is allowed to present to the outside public. The second-year students present their *soirees* to the public for two nights every trimester.

Parisian establishment. The goal is to not only observe how people engage or encounter the space, but to 'become a part of it'; the exercise 'involves genuine integration into a live working environment, with the aim of experiencing what happens there as full participants' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 97). After this period of investigation, students come back to the school and craft a representation of what they experienced in the form of an *autocours.* Practitioner and teacher Carlos García Estéves refers to this process as a 'transposition' of observation into theatre:

> its main principle is concrete observation of life. For me, it is a way to bring to light things that we don't see at a glance...rhythms, sounds, smells and behaviour are the observable material that will then be transposed onto the stage. (García Estéves, 2002, p. 167)

This exercise, though ultimately a theatrical one, is in no way meant to be an 'interpretation' or creative representation of what was witnessed, but a careful reconstruction of the movements, attitudes, and engagements of people and spaces within the *milieu* of study. García Estéves' choice of term 'transposition' communicates well the shift of language that must take place, though excluding the artistic license that is impulsive to a creator. It centres the engagement and observation of the student in the action and atmosphere of the environment, in ways that hint at Lecoq's choice in terminology – *acteur*; one who does an action rather than an actor of the stage.

The introduction of les enquêtes into Lecoq's pedagogy during this period is noteworthy in that it makes a remarkable link to Maoist revolutionaries. One of the less active communist groups during the events of May '68, Maoist revolutionaries used the exact same term, enquêtes, to describe a strikingly similar practice.[133] While it is unclear

[133] Throughout my research I have seen little reference to *les enquêtes* in Lecoq's pedagogy (aside from their inclusion in The Moving Body) and have read nothing that links them to the Maoist *enquêtes*. However, I have a brief memory of a teacher, during my time at the school, mentioning the fact that the pedagogical exercise of *les enquêtes* were in fact derived from the Maoist tactic.

if Lecoq was aware of the practices of the Maoists before, during, or after the events of May, it is clear they had an impact, though through what channel remains a mystery.[134] The inclusion of *les enquêtes* with the addition of the *autocours* suggests he was aware of the Maoists and their practices before May '68.

Maoist *enquêtes*

> 'We should proceed from the actual conditions inside and outside the country, the province, county or district, and derive from them, as our guide to action, laws which are inherent to them and not imaginary, that is, we should find the internal relations of the events occurring around us. And in order to do that we must rely not on subjective imagination, not on momentary enthusiasm, not on lifeless books, but on facts that exist objectively'
>
> - Mao Tse-Tung[135]

Initial interest in Maoist thought in France came through the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) in the 1960s through Louis Althusser and his students at École Normale Supérieure (ENS) who were critical of Soviet activity (Karlson and Villadsen, 2015, p. 97). They were eager to adjust their approach to communism in a way that would better reflect the challenges of French class systems taking into consideration the issues of decolonisation, the large class of white-collar workers and the well-established service industry workers (as opposed to 'peasant' classes of the Soviet Union and China) (Wolin, 2010, pp. 117–116, 133).[136] The PCF's blind support of Soviet activity and Stalinist

[134] A potential source for Maoist ideology could be the actor and director Antoine Vitez, a teacher with Lecoq between the years of 1966-1969 (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 297) and a known member of the Parti Communiste Française (PCF) (Burger-Roussenac, 2011). While not a Maoist himself, he would have been aware of the accomplishments and work of other communist groups.
[135] In Ross, 1988, p. 109.
[136] The Union des Communistes de France marxiste-léniniste, founded in part by Alain Badiou in 1969, would use the term 'paysans' in place of 'peasant', referring to a class of people who owned land but could not farm due to lack of laborers rather than the original Maoist definition, a class of people unable to own land, thereby unable to farm (Hoffman, 2017, pp. 97–98).

ideology eventually prompted the separation and creation of the Union des jeunesses communistes marxiste léniniste (UJCML) in 1966 by students of ENS, under the guidance of Louis Althusser. The UJCML would ultimately break down after the events of May ’68, and its members would be absorbed by the Parti communiste marxiste léniniste de France (PCMLF, founded in 1967), or help to begin the Gauche Prolétarienne (GP) (Karlson and Villadsen, 2015, p. 97). Each branch of these Maoist groups were ultimately were united by the same interest in Marxism, much like the powerful PCF, but their attitudes towards Leninism divided them. Each believed in the Marxist mission ‘to mobilize the proletariat for a revolution against capitalist society’ (Karlson and Villadsen, 2015, p. 99), but their tactics differed depending on their perception of Lenin.

The appeal of Maoism was its active approach to Marx’s theories, providing a link between the intellectual approach and the practical. It forced the ‘intellectual’ or student activist to engage with the workers, prompting the unique link between students and workers while challenging ‘intellectualism’ of Lenin’s ‘scientific’ Marxism (Karlson and Villadsen, 2015, p. 99). Its ideals and Soviet-socialist critique resonated with those who disapproved of the colonisation of Algeria and supported their bid for independence, while providing a framework for a Marxism that would truly help the common man (Boncardo and Cooke, 2017, p. 70). This ‘active’ approach led to the adoption (and adaptation) of a number of actions proposed by Mao and executed by Maoist and non-Maoist youth, interested in understanding and engaging with the workers (Wolin, 2010, p. 129). While the Maoist cause provided a shift of perspective and offered new methods of sociological examination, the French Maoists were ultimately functioning under an idealised vision of Maoist China that, of course, did not exist. A watered-down Cultural Revolution inspired them, despite their lack of critical examination with, or basic knowledge of, the realities of Mao's China (Wolin, 2010, p. 122).

There were three main actions employed by the Maoists in France, (which would later become integral to the work of the GP): *établissement, enquête,* and *tribunal populaire* (Karlson and Villadsen, 2015, p. 100).[137] The *établissement* (or *établi*) involved students taking employment in the factories, often forcing them to hide their identities and privileged backgrounds to engage with the workers. Many undertook physical labour for the first time in their lives while being, exposed to the terrible working conditions within the factories. It was seen among the Maoists as a rite of passage and point of pride, though many of the almost 2000 young people who engaged struggled immensely and were either fired or quit of their own accord (Wolin, 2010, p. 129).

The *enquête* was another, somewhat more reserved approach to understanding the needs of the people. These 'investigations' would involve the observation of the lives of workers, identifying the unique needs, working and living conditions of the various groups who made up the working and middle classes (Ross, 1988, p. 109). The goal was to develop an understanding of the individual to eliminate a view of the working classes as one homogenous group. In order to do so, the Maoists went directly to the source: 'What one did not know about the direct experience of workers…one could find out by "going to the people", learning from them – from practical action and close attention to local circumstances, that is, and not from theoretical texts' (Ross, 1988, p. 109). This differed from the pre-existing *enquête de consommation* which was basically market research looking at health, commerce and government policy from the perspective of capital rather than 'masses' (Ross, 1988, pp. 110–111).

[137] The *tribunal populaire* was less popular and more controversial as it was a form of 'people's court', inspired by Mao's own judicial system of the Cultural Revolution which, according to Foucault, too clearly reflected values of the old judicial system of the bourgeois (Karlson and Villadsen, 2015, p. 98).

The primary methods of the *enquêtes* involved speaking with people (going door to door, engaging people in town centres or public locations), or going to the factories or work cites directly to observe and engage. There was a focus on local context within these studies, centring the history of an area and its contemporary conditions to better understand the people's needs (Ross, 1988, p. 109). Through 'prologued immersion' (Ross, 1988, p. 113) in these communities, the Maoists learned from 'the school of the masses' how to shape their demands and engage in revolutionary practices that sought to attack specific, realistic issues rather than theoretical ones. '*Sans enquêtes, pas de droit à la parole'* ('No investigation, no right to speak') (Mao Tse-Tung in Ross, 1988, p. 111).

The Maoists were not involved in the events of May '68 until the May 13 strike, as they were more interested in involving those who lived in the suburbs in the greater struggle rather than continuing to strike up conflict in the already active areas (Wolin, 2010, p. 97). The UJCML (again, primarily made up of students from ENS) was explicitly against the conflict, claiming that any action taken by students (mostly of the bourgeois class) would be irrelevant to the struggle of the people, that it was only the workers whose actions could inspire lasting change (Karlson and Villadsen, 2015, p. 97). Some of the highest ranking members of the Maoist group even argued that the uprising was organised by De Gaulle himself, going so far as to contact the Chinese embassy for help in foiling 'De Gaulle's' plan during the violence of May 10 (Wolin, 2010, p. 134).

Nevertheless, during the events of '68 a particularly effective *enquête* was enacted by Maoist student activists at the University of Censier. Situated at the edge 5th arrondissement –removed enough from the centre of the media storm at the Sorbonne and the Latin Quarter – the Censier engagement was unique in that the institution had established relationships with the nearby factories, meaning that workers sought out the students rather than the other way around. Instead of risking a model where students were

‘dropped into’ situations with no prior knowledge of the current climate (thereby hindering efforts rather than helping), the closeness with the factories and workers promoted a complicity. This led to the workers’ perspective being held by those within the institution as highly as the academics who engaged them (Ross, 1988, p. 113). From there, a centre of organisation and 'experimentation' erupted, generating material and printing visuals and pamphlets for their efforts to be distributed widely (Ross, 1988, pp. 107–108).

The *enquêteur* (investigator) was encouraged to engage with the subject of the *enquête* through to the end, from the observation of their lives through to the productions of texts that recounted the *enquêtes’* findings:

> Listen all the way to the end: only then does the enquête take on all its meaning. Because all the way to the end means that one is not content with first responses.... Then you see better with whom and why you are fighting…you no longer speak about ‘revolution’ with stereotypes… but with all the explosive force that words represent when the imaginary and the real as lived from day to day become the basis for words...
> (Philippe Gavi in Ross, 1988, p. 112)

Yet again, we come up against a group of people interested in process reliant on an active and creative practice rather than relying on old texts and theories, drawing authority from experience of labour and expertise of the working masses. Historian Kristin Ross even reflects on its practice as one of many ‘experiments in collective authorship’ developed during this time, though most experiments of this nature in France were taking place in the realm of film and cinema (1988, p. 112). There was a conscious objection to the sole *auteur* as film director, as well as the solo theorist and intellectual that, to critics’ minds, represented the ‘bourgeois cultural and knowledge production’ (Ross, 1988, p. 112). The

attitude of the era was that work must be collaboratively made, be it through film, text, or activist charter.

There is, of course, in any study, the conflict of an unconscious agenda; neutrality is an impossible state, and this was recognised in the actions of the students engaging in these experiments. In an account consulted by Wolin, a member of the UJCML reflected on an *enquête* in which he was sent to the Vosges to observe the 'working-class reality' of the provinces. He left after six months having learned that his method of investigation taught him nothing. He wrote, "So long as I was content to sit in a café, or to stand by the factory gate, I would understand nothing. I had to go inside the factory, with the workers" (anonymous in Wolin, 2010, p. 132).

The Maoist approach to research continued and evolved well into the 1970s. An associated group of the Gauche Prolétarienne (GP) called the Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons (GIP), held an *enquête* which saw Michel Foucault and some of his peers (including Gilles Deleuze) investigate French prison conditions, where many members of the GP were being held due to the government's ban on the party in 1970. Continuing to organize within the prison, the GP held multiple hunger strikes to negotiate their treatment as political prisoners rather than criminals, which inspired Foucault to get involved with the investigation of their conditions (Karlson and Villadsen, 2015, p. 100).[138] Following Mao's technique, the GIP collected and shared information, primarily through the form of questionnaires illegally brought into the prisons by visitors, to be filled out by the prisoners regarding their experience and returned to provide source material for publications written by Foucault himself or other members of the group

[138] Foucault himself was wary of the GP, though many of his peers were members of the group and he himself did on occasion engage with the organization (Karlson and Villadsen, 2015, p. 98).

(Karlson and Villadsen, 2015, pp. 102–103). The success of the GIP project is debatable, as well as their ability to remain true to the Maoist origins. Their attempts to engage with Maoist methods of inquiry ensured that they would provide an avenue for the subject of the enquête to speak for themselves (to a certain extent), investigate the real conditions of their study rather than a theoretical concept, and only engage those involved in the study itself to conduct the work, rather than consult a specialist or outside eye. A GIP pamphlet stated:

> The GIP…does not propose to speak for the prisoners of different prisons: it proposes, on the contrary, to give them the possibility to speak themselves and to say what is happening in the prisons. (in Karlson and Villadsen, 2015, p. 103)

The effectiveness of Maoist techniques within research are debatable. The GIP's use of questionnaires does not necessarily give the subject the ability to 'speak for themselves', is not necessarily accessible, and is inherently a sociological method. The challenge of engaging with the work, space, or atmosphere first hand, by the researcher themselves, however does provide the opportunity for a more unique comprehension and, perhaps, empathetic response to the situations of others. It was through the production of new texts, based on the findings of the various *enquêtes* that the Maoists were (arguably) better able to understand the needs of the community around them and develop an informed basis for their demands.

The Lecoq *enquête* and the *acteur* – one who acts

While the practice of the Lecoq *enquête* may be more similar to the Maoist project of *établissement* in its execution, it shares the Maoist *enquête*'s goal– engaging with a space, people, and action through observation and engagement (if possible) to better

understand and reflect the real experiences of day-to-day life. The project evolves over two weeks – the student does not have a great amount of time to engage with the milieu, but the students always find ways to get involved. Be it volunteering, working, or observation, the key is the physical, experiential involvement rather than a theoretical one. In opposition to the *enquêtes* of the Maoists, no text is produced – questionnaires, writing material for publication, or any other kind of text for sharing. The Maoists relied on the *enquêtes* to serve as the activist event itself, as well as provide experiential material to inform writing: 'Gather the news of the struggle, write it up, give it back in a new form, circulate it, reproduce it, become the vehicle' (Ross, 1988, pp. 110–111). These texts would serve as the means for educating the populous on the struggles of the masses, while providing context for future investigations. There was the belief, however, that regardless of the outcome or findings, the action of conducting the *enquête* at all was at once the searching and the solving of any societal problems, serving as a catalyst for organization and activism as well as seeking out solutions. As described in the official UCFML documents '*Le Livre des paysans pauvres*' ('The book of poor peasants') published in 1976, the resolutions to societal issues were 'condensed by Mao in the formula: to investigate a problem is to resolve it' (UCFML in Hoffman, 2017, p. 100).

The pedagogy tends to elevate activity over theory or 'intellectualizing' as some alumni and practitioners have pointed out. Giovanni Fusetti, for example, noted that during his training, Lecoq was harsh with students who had, or relied on, an academic background.

> For him, the only way to understand is to just do it. It is very dangerous to theorise about Lecoq's work, because it is a completely practical work, in the sense that it is really understandable only through practice, through experience. (Fusetti in Fusetti and Willson, 2002, p. 99)

Fusetti goes on to express his own worry that even speaking about this and knowing it will become writing makes it inevitable that the words will lose 'part of their body'. What perhaps Fusetti's (among others') perspective leaves out is the potential inhibition of intellectual growth within the pedagogy if it is not theoretically challenged, as well as the fact that student engagement does not only refer to physical activity. Practical work does not necessarily withdraw itself from the realm of the theoretical, and alongside the experiential elements of Lecoq's pedagogy, observation is the first element of mimicry and one of the key tenements to Lecoq's pedagogy. It is one of the key methods of learning within the school, and the main method of sharing information between students and teachers (and students themselves). When the student is not up in the space improvising or attempting a movement, they are seated, observing their peers, learning from their mistakes or triumphs.

While observation is the easiest, most accessible approach for the students (depending on ability) to enter into an *enquête*, many do have experience in the areas they research. For example, during my first year of training, a group had the *enquête* of a professional kitchen- a place where many students were actively working at the time. The *maison de retraite* (retirement home), is a popular *enquête*, where students will often volunteer for their research. In my group, we had the *enquête* of a neighbourhood of Paris at the base of Montmartre, Barbés-Rochechouart, known for the culture clash between the bourgeois, tourists, and African immigrants new to Paris. Lively with markets, posh cafes, an extremely busy metro, and an iconic bargain department store (Tati, which closed shortly thereafter), we spent time in each location, speaking with those who lived or were passing through, and observing the area. One of our members sought out part-time employment in a newspaper kiosk, providing wonderful insight to the characters who engaged or ignored him for the short time he was working.

The themes of the *enquêtes* are proposed by the students, with some suggestions from the teachers, and are ultimately confirmed by the teachers as a viable area for research. Some have been revisited by many generations of students, such as *maison de retraite* (nursing home), *les horloges* (clockmakers), or different hubs of travel, like Gare du Nord or certain metro stations. Each must be specific enough to illicit findings within the students' allotted time for research and be a unique space which is tied to specific human behaviour (or movement) which can be observed and even engaged with by the students.

Cultural implications and *Auteur* theory post-May '68 – Death and definition

Shortly after the strike on May 29, De Gaulle left Paris for Baden-Baden, where he consulted the head of French forces, general Jacques Massu, on whether or not he should step down from service. Massu convinced him not to, though Wolin points out this meeting may have been a consultation as to whether to bring the French troops to Paris, which could have led to a civil war (Wolin, 2010, p. 100). Nevertheless, when De Gaulle returned to France he stated clearly that he would not resign. Instead, he suspended the national assembly and called for an election in June. Claiming to restore 'normalcy' to the charged political atmosphere, the Grenelle accords prompted negotiations between the major trade unions and the government, 'result[ing] in a 35 percent rise in the minimum wage, a 10 percent wage increase, a reduction in social security payments, and one hour's decrease in the workweek' (Wolin, 2010, p. 101). The June election brought an astounding victory for the right-wing Gaullists, but within a year, De Gaulle would announce a referendum and find himself out of a job and forced to retire (Wolin, 2010, p. 102).

While the immediate goals of the rebellion would remain unrealised, the impact of the events would become hugely relevant to the evolution of culture and politics in the year to come. **Second-wave feminism had already begun to find its voice the 1960s, and the aftermath of '68 led to further questioning of women's roles and the development of their position in industry and politics, alongside the inclusion of queer (specifically gay) communities (Hamon, 1989, p. 21).** For Lecoq and his school, the school term would end in June, and the school would open again in October, in its new location in La Mission bretonne, rue La Quintinie with a greater number of students than before (P. Lecoq, 2016, p. 211).

The aftermath of the Second World War had created new opportunities for global commerce and cultural exchange. France's colonial ties were soon to be broken, and the Cold War challenged traditional systems of power while introducing previously unconsidered international perspectives (Reid and Sherman, 2018, p. 185). Artistic, cultural, and consumer tastes among young French people were changing due to the influx of American cinema and pop culture which, as previously noted, triggered a shift in the European perspective on *auteur* theory within film and literary theory. The world was becoming smaller, and the outrage of the French people in solidarity with those protesting and rebelling in Vietnam, America, Mexico, Cuba, and Czechoslovakia during the year of '68, made very visible due to modern technologies, would encourage them into their own rebellion and provide an extraordinary cultural shift.

The French critics and filmmakers associated with the *Cahier du Cinema*, inspired by the summer's events, made demands for their own revolution in August of 1968 – challenging the established norms of the industry in relation to production and distribution, as well as the subject matter of the new cinema. Primarily, this involved considering cinema as 'art', and as something that should have a political message

(Swiss-French director Jean-Luc Godard called for cinema to "…make politically a political cinema" (Godard in Vincendeau, 1989, p. 152)). The value of the audience to the film and filmmaker was also recognised, moving away from the cult of the 'author' that had been established by the French New Wave (Vincendeau, 1989, p. 152). The popularity of American culture, cinematic and otherwise, was undeniable. It was easily accessible due to globalisation, often to the detriment of French popular culture (specifically cinema). Suddenly France was not only awash with American pop culture but reporting on their political movements, from the conflict over the Vietnam war to the Civil Rights Movement (Reid and Sherman, 2018, p. 183). **Feminist perspectives in film, the rise of female directors, and even the establishment of the category of 'women's cinema' (which eventually proved problematic) were in great part due to the cultural shifts of '68 (Vincendeau, 1989, p. 153). This was, of course, degraded by critics attached to the *auteur* theory and the evasion of ideology in film, posing a critique of work that was 'non-theoretical' and 'distracting from the individual auteur's supposedly detached personal expression' (Vincendeau, 1989, pp. 155–156).**

Alongside the evolving political climates and cultures, the shifting film industry presented a reflection to the parallel field of literary theory where similar changes were being proposed, specifically with the post-structuralists and the work of Roland Barthes. The critical bombshell that was Barthes' theory on authors, *scriptors* and their readers/spectators presented in 'Death of the Author' (which I explore in Chapter 2). First published in 1968 in the American 'Aspen Magazine' and later in French in 1970 ('*La mort de l'auteur'*), it proposed a complete rejection of the individual author in favour of the centring of the reader's experience. Foucault's 'What Is an Author?' followed, containing his ideas on the historical ideology of the individual genius, challenging the community who engaged in that culture of hero worship and thereby lead to its existence

(Wexman, 2003, p. 6). Both perspectives, moving beyond the previous assumptions of structuralist literary theory, set the stage for their eventual ascension into the establishment of post-structuralist thought.

Structuralism was well established as the leading cultural theory in the 1960's, providing an alternative to phenomenological thinking around experience. For the structuralists, a description of the experience was overshadowed by the events that caused the experience to happen, or the 'structure that make it possible'; 'In place of the phenomenological description of consciousness, structuralism sought to analyse structures that operate unconsciously (structures of language, of the psyche, of society)' (Culler, 1997, p. 124). This perspective proposed to put the reader at the centre of the experience to function as meaning -maker in the systems at play in the creation of the experiential event. The limits of structuralism were quickly surpassed by the thinking of Barthes, Foucault, and Lacan, who graduated to the development of post-structuralism, with Derrida eventually going further than all of them into deconstructionism. The post-structuralist project ultimately challenged systems of knowledge in relation to the subject:

> The structures of the systems of signification do not exist independently of the subject, as objects of knowledge, but are structures for subjects, who are entangled with the forces that produce them. (Culler, 1997, p. 125)

It is from this point that Barthes' 'Death of the Author' becomes the reigning theory regarding authors and their relationship to their work.

Lecoq's *acteur-auteur*: the author who acts

The values of some actions proposed by the Maoist communist movement mirror some of the fundamental elements of Lecoq's pedagogy; mimicry and observation

provide a methodological framework for their practical application in developing theatre.[139] Without this application, there would be no space for the development of the students' 'personal style', as Andrew Sarris might refer to it. The utopian proposal of the French Maoists suggests that the shifts in power informed by observation and repetition that make the auteurial project possible within the pedagogy. The rise of post-structuralism equally presents some context for an era of cultural evolution concerned with shifting power away from conservative and controlling institutions (educational and otherwise) as well as questioning the defining elements of those institutions and how they claimed their value. What had been assumed in terms of knowledge and power was being questioned, leading to enormous cultural and political shifts which would take place (in France and other parts of the world) over the coming years. Without these shifts, the pedagogy of Lecoq would have been simply incapable of developing the practice of the *acteur*, but by reflecting the shifts of the world around it the practice of the *acteur-auteur* became possible.

Titling the students *auteurs* rather than simply 'students' or '*étudiants*' suggests that Lecoq viewed his students as practitioners in their own right before they arrive at his

[139] The Maoist influence not only affected Lecoq's pedagogy, but it seeped into the physical theatre culture of such West-Coast American companies as San Francisco Mime Troup. Family Circus Theater, and Lilith: A Woman's Theatre, whose practices were inspired by founding members' training with Étienne Decroux and Viola Spolin (Lewis, 2013, p. 89). In an effort to establish 'communitas' (people's culture) amongst players in these companies different techniques based in Mao's teachings were employed (Lewis, 2013, p. 190), such as being known only by the company rather than individuals, and a system of 'criticism/self-criticism' (derived from the practice of villagers levying critiques against the landowner), who in response would critique themself and pledge to change their ways (Lewis, 2013, p. 191). This practice was ultimately abolished in the San Francisco Mime Troup and led to the destruction of the Family Circus, as it provided a system in which troupe members could tear each other down rather than encourage conversation and development (Lewis, 2013, p. 193). Victoria Lewis makes the argument that Lilith Theatre's work and employment of Maoist technique was successful only in its combination with feminist approach- for example rather than 'criticism/self-criticism', a 'feeling circle' was employed, where company members would share feelings without criticism before beginning work (Lewis, 2013, p. 196). Along with its goal to be 'at one with the audience' (Lewis, 2013, p. 198), Lilith proposed their performance work and workshops as a 'conscious-raising tool' to show shared experience and establish 'communitas' (Lewis, 2013, p. 200), however the company's philosophy would not evolve with the developments in intersectional feminism and would begin to dissolve in the early 1980s (Lewis, 2013, p. 201).

school, implying agency from the beginning. Students are expected to have their own opinions and to create work that resonates with them, even at the risk of disagreeing with the teachers. Reflecting on his experience training with Lecoq, Jon Foley Sherman notes that this can be a challenge for some (especially younger, less experienced artists) due to the often-philosophical nature of given feedback:

> Lecoq had a gift for aphorisms, his comments veered from the poetic to the concrete, and he never talked longer than seemed necessary. This easily gave the impression that his words were coming down from 'on high'. (Sherman, 2010, p. 92)

While I did not train under Lecoq directly, and no doubt the style of feedback has evolved as the school has continued to change leadership and grow, this struggle remains, I found (perhaps as a slightly older student) that while the feedback was often valid, part of the training involves learning when to listen to feedback and when to ignore it, when to let something go, and when to defend it or resist. '*Défendre!*' was a command often shouted from the benches when a teacher suspected a student of giving up.

By placing these two descriptors side by side (*'acteur'* and '*auteur'*), one can establish a definition and approach to creative work. If we can loosely translate *acteur-auteur* to mean 'an *auteur* who acts', one not only makes the *auteur* active, but implies a set of beliefs, behaviours, and methods which one could ascribe to the *auteur* as practitioner, rather than performing object. While the *auteur* is implicated in the work as a representative of their original contribution and artistic vision, the *acteur-auteur* implies not only the representation of their identity, but the presence of their own bodily self, engaging in physical actions within the piece. It challenges the developing *auteur* not only to understand what it is to be in collaboration with other *auteurs* and creators but

also to engage the entire body in the auteurial practice and empathetic engagement with the subject matter as well as with collaborators.

The Lecoq pedagogy does not rely on the idea of an individual 'genius'. In fact, it disregards it and prepares its students for a life without great moments of 'inspiration' or 'genius' by instilling a work ethic that expects creation no matter the quality of the work. A commitment to creation that is aware of its potential short comings (even before its presentation) while fully embracing the opportunity to learn from the failure or triumph.

Over the course of training, the Lecoq student will perform (at minimum) 27 *autocours* over the course of 33 weeks in the first year, and 21 in the second year (not including *les commandes*).[140] That means (again, at minimum) the performance and invention of 50 characters over two years and 48 pieces. The students do this work no matter their natural talent or previous training – they simply do it, developing a work ethic that relies on the constant creation of work that may be good one week, bad the next, and is unrecorded for assessment or archive purposes. 'Inspiration' is irrelevant to the Lecoq-trained actor, because if the artist is faced with one moment of 'writer's block' or stage fright, or simply does not want to work, they can no longer be a Lecoq student. This also speaks to the collaboration inherent to the pedagogy. No one person is ever alone in performance – their work will always be made up many minds coming together to solve the problem of performance (*les commandes* are the sole exception to this), though their characters will inevitably be determined by their personal desire to play, shaped to fit the scene with input from their collaborators.

Barthes reflected in 1960 (before his denunciation of the author) that

> the author is the man who labors, who works up his utterance (even if he is inspired) and functionally

[140] See Chapter 5 for a list of *autocours* from training undertaken 2015-2017.

> absorbs himself in this labor, this work. His activity involves two kinds of norm: technical (composition, genre, style) and artisanal (of patience, correctness, perfection). (Barthes, 2000, p. 186)

He recognises the writer seems to be satisfied by their writing, stating ‘the writer's function is to say at once and on every occasion what he thinks’ (Barthes, 2000, p. 191), whereas the author puts in the labour only to find they still don’t entirely know the extent of their work or craft; the exercise of expression is not sufficient for the work they are creating. An analogy here could be established between ‘writer’/ ‘improviser’ and ‘author’/*acteur-auteur*: the improviser creating their writing in the present, with knowledge of what has come before but no future, while the author continually crafts and shapes their work through the potential of future presentation as a ‘finished product’. To understand this shift from one quality of practice to the other within Lecoq’s pedagogy, it is necessary to consider what might be the ‘finished product’ of the Lecoq student. Now I must move to explore the final class in the pedagogy: the *Autocours* and the development of the *auteur* who does not wait for inspiration but *ACTS!*

Part III

Deaths and rebirths/*Les morts et les renaissances.*

The author, the reader, and the text/*l'auteur, le lecteur, et le texte.*

The question of the 'text'

Without the actions of May 1968, the conception of the Lecoq student as the *acteur-auteur* would not be possible. The training in movement and improvisation would have introduced the students to techniques, working vocabularies, and the ability to perform at a certain level of quality, but would have left their individual auteurial approaches under-developed. The emerging students could have functioned purely as actors or even actor-authors in the sense of the popular performers, mimes, and *commedia* actors, but the shaping, crafting, and development of a piece of theatre as a whole with any sense of authority or broader vision outside of the virtuosity of an individual character could not have been practiced within the institution without the pedagogical tools of the *autocours,* the *enquêtes*, or the *commandes.*

The cultural aftermath of the events of May '68, in which those with authority were challenged, upbraided, and even mocked for their power or influence, irrevocably changed the position of the 'author' within literature. Roland Barthes demanded the 'death of the author', while Michel Foucault asked, 'what is an author?', both reflecting the shaky ground on which this pillar of literary criticism rested. The author, for Barthes, should be a martyr for the experience of the reader, while for Foucault, writing (or a text) should 'create a space into which the writing subject (the author) constantly disappears' (Foucault, 1998, p. 206). Each demands, to different degrees, the absence of the author in the experience of the written work/text, opening the up the possibility for a centring of the

reader's experience. Barthes even went so far as to state that 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author' (1977, p. 147).

Barthes declaration of the reader's 'birth' equally functions as a liberation of the text. To quote Barthes again: ''To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text' (1977, p. 147). This restricts the countless influences and connections between itself and other texts, understood as a network of references. This also potentially suggests the opposite, that a text may restrict the author as well, constantly linking them to a physical record, unable to separate it from their reputation, and identity. In the case of the student-author, a question arises regarding the effect of a solidified body of work generated by the student in education, and how that permanent record of assignment, assessment, and writing, which can be referenced long after their schooling, lingers as a qualifier for their ability in life and labour. Lecoq's pedagogy, however, dodges this question, in a way. While students gain a qualification – finishing their training either in the first trimester, first year, second year, or, rarely, third year of training -– the only evidence of this progression resides in a final certificate, some photographs from public-facing productions, and the private records of the school. There is no evidence of student-generated text because, within Lecoq's pedagogy, the text and the *acteur-auteur* are inseparable.

Devising – a quick abandonment

Devising is a term that is often related to Lecoq's pedagogy, as supposed important teaching element of the school (Mason, 2002, p. 32; Sherman, 2010, p. 90; Murray and Keefe, 2016, p. 177).I want to quickly remove it from the conversation. To define it, I will invoke Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling's definition of devising as a piece of theatre created without a previously written script or text (Heddon and Milling,

2005, p. 3). While the creators may choose to create a script as they develop their piece or draw inspiration from previously written texts, at its core 'devising is a process for creating performance from scratch, by the group without a pre-existing script' (Heddon and Milling, 2005, p. 3).[141] This may seem easily applicable to the work made in the *autocours* or through the processes of improvisation. Devising even reflects rebellion against the dichotomies of the playwright-director relationship, as Allison Oddey points out, as well as the power of the 'text' (1994, p. 4). Much like the rebellion of the *auteur* movement in French cinema and literary culture around the events of May '68, the development of devised theatre in Britain specifically seems to have emerged in similar (though perhaps less explosive) feelings unrest and dissatisfaction under the political climate of the 1960s and 70s. Oddey makes the argument that this unrest, alongside shifts in cultural beliefs about sexuality and the end of theatrical censorship, led to the development of devised practices as a queering of the theatre (1994, p. 5), whereas Duška Radosavljević recognizes its development in relation to British education, as a 'pragmatic' approach to teaching theatre (2013, p. 82).

It is perhaps important to note that 'devising' seems to be a specifically British term (that has grown in popularity globally), used as a sort of umbrella term to represent many different theatrical forms (including physical theatre, certain applied theatre practices, collected collaborations, etc.); it can apparently refer to any theatre-making method that requires a democratic system of creation and the common understanding of how and from what inspirational materials/text the creation process will begin (Oddey, 1994, pp. 7, 9). Patrice Pavis notes the French practice of *écriture de plateau* (or 'stage

[141] Duška Radosavljević recognizes a question around the difference between improvisation and devising, noting that the Heddon and Milling definition of devising was intended to separate the practice from the lineage of Stanislavski-based improvisations, whereas others do argue that devising can be defined by the use of improvisation (Radosavljević, 2020, p. 266).

writing') shares similar practices to 'British' devising, but notes that this method is not 'collective creation' (2016). It is, however, ' a theatre of interartistic collaboration that rejects too great a degree of specialization' (Pavis, 2016, p. 243). Pavis' less than generous view on 'devising' is also apparent in his failure to include a definition for its practice in either of his theatre or performance and contemporary theatre dictionaries (Pavis, 1998, 2016). To this day there seems to be no French term for the concept of 'devising', aside from the parallel *création collectif, écriture de plateau* (Pavis, 1998, p. 55) or, from director Roger Planchon, *écriture scénique* (Bradby, 2011, p. 33). Perhaps a better term for this type of work would be 'collective creation' (from the above *création collectif).* Kathryn Mederos Syssoyéva illuminates this in her edited collection on the history of the practice, stating that the shifting of terminology removes implied politics of the 'New Left' while establishing the case for a definition of practice developed by the companies themselves within their historical contexts, and directly in response to frustrations of oppressions, restrictions, or censorship (2013, p. 5).

At play is a clear shift in values and a desire to disrupt a textual theatrical tradition in order to explore further what can be done or said within the medium of theatre that is new and evolving. In philosophy this is a spirit the Lecoq pedagogy shares, though this is where their similarities end. In continuing to define the devising 'process', Heddon and Milling make this observation: "At the core of all devising or collaborative creation is a *process* of generating performance, although there is an enormous variety of devising processes used" (Heddon and Milling, 2005, p. 3, italics in original). This 'process' is what differentiates these practices. Devising implies a methodology, or, rather, the development of a methodology. They are the *processes* by which you generate material and figure out how it all fits together, rather than the actual generation of material itself. The generation of material comes from writing, improvisation, or other visual or audio

stimuli, but not from ‘devising’. Devising develops the system of *how* you create material, not the act of creating itself. The term is too broad to define any specific action. It can only be looked at as an alternative methodology to generating material, composed of many methods that will ultimately make up a whole. It is specifically this, the variety of methods employed by ‘devisers’, that makes its definition inapplicable to the Lecoq ‘authorial practice’.

When creating work at Lecoq there is only one method: improvisation. Through the playing and replaying of improvisations, a performance is rehearsed and created. Improvisation is the *only method* used to create these pieces. There then, of course, arises the question of the paintings, the short stories, movies, and music – when recreating these in *autocours*, do they not serve as another method of generating material? I would argue no, considering these pre-existing materials are in fact what is being presented. They *are* the pre-existing ‘texts’, perhaps meaning that their recreation on stage makes them ineligible for the title of ‘devised’ work.

The school teaches material generation and editing through improvisation while giving the student space to learn to create on their *own terms* within the time allotted to the *autocours*. Where devising implies a systematic method for creation and a journey of discovery, l’École teaches you the rules of performance through critiques on the final product rather than the method of arriving there. Students are given an assignment and told to go make something. There is no guidance on how to communicate or function within a group, no advice on how to work together or generate material. Through the classes on improvisation and the examination of the dramatic territories within the second year of training, students are guided on how to ‘write’ in the moment and comprehend the rules of each genre so that work can be created within their forms. These elements of craft

are the most important aspects of writing, evolving into a process of editing and revision developed in practice for the *autocours*.

This is not to say that devising is entirely separate from the Lecoq-trained actor's work. Lecoq-based theatre companies that create work after training will often develop their own devising processes, engaging text and writing practices as well as other methods of generating material. While their methods may be inspired by or draw from the working method at l'École, it is often something more evolved from the practice in which they engaged during their *autocours.* Devising is a post-training practice for the Lecoq student, whereas the training practice during Lecoq is improvisation, play, and replay, and a constant demand for 'doing', generating material regularly without planning or guidance for the purpose of discovering something new.[142]

From writing to authorship

Lecoq students create their work through improvisation and repetition in rehearsal; they do not develop scripts (or texts) to be adhered to, nor do they bring in pre-written work to present or practice with (aside from a few key moments in the second year of training and a more abstract examination of the movement of poetry and words in the first year[143]). To this end, the call for the 'death of an author', or even the question

[142] Since the school has moved to its new location in Avignon, there seems to be a re-branding at work. When revisiting the website on December 14, 2023, the website included a new information including in the description of its first year of training: '416 hours of face-to-face teaching / 240 hours of "auto-cours"' where students will learn to how to 'appl(y) universal laws of movement to acting and to devised theater' (École du Théâtre Jacques Lecoq, 2023a). In the French version of the site, however, this last sentence *'L'enseignement applique les lois universelles du mouvement à la création dramatique et au jeu de l'acteur'* translates directly to 'the student will apply universal laws of movement to dramatic creation and to the play (or playing) of the actor' (École du Théâtre Jacques Lecoq, 2023b). Again, the terminology of 'devising' does not exist in French, perhaps suggesting the desire to attract more a more Anglocentric cohort. These changes were not present before May 31, 2023.

[143] **Namely, certain exercises concerning *le chœur* (the chorus), where the performers must be able speak in unison, or from a shared memorised text. Text analysis was at one time a part of the Lecoq's school, namely through the brief collaboration with Antoine Vitez (who may have brought Maoist influence to the pedagogy, see previous chapter). Vitez, who had not studied with Lecoq, was**

'what is an author?', functions differently for the *acteur-auteur* student and proposes an interesting framework for the pedagogical positioning of the student to their work and the teacher in theatre training. Specifying the theatrical medium adds a layer of difference as well, considering the many elements unique to a form based in a live event. Barthes considers theatricality in a preface to a collection of works by Baudelaire in 1954, long before 'Death of the Author':

> What is theatricality? It is theater-minus-text, it is a density of signs and sensations built up on a stage starting from the written argument; it is that ecumenical perception of sensuous artifice – gesture, tone, distance, substance, light – which submerges the text beneath the profusion of its external language. (in Scheie, 2006, p. 37) [144]

This passage implies that theatre is inherently entwined with a text, but the performative elements of the theatre – belonging to the theatre and behaving in a way that signifies the theatre – are separate and unique from text and bound up in the multi-disciplinarity of a performance or production. Nevertheless, it maintains a 'writing' and a point of view, shaped through the structure of an 'argument'. There is a transmutation from text to performance that, in reflection on the practice of the *acteur-auteur,* must be reconsidered. The theatre of Lecoq's school is devoid of text, and yet his students are labelled 'authors'/*auteurs* and have a writing practice; this indicates a Barthesian reading of an *acteur-auteur* as one who performs and simultaneously authors the text. Here, theoretical is tied with the practical –What is the effect of viewing the Author as the 'text'? Is there

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interested in the non-psychological approach Lecoq proposed, though also interested in text and developing a 'musical' diction (rather than natural) to uncover hidden layers of dramatic texts through the use of an actor as a translator of signs (Freixe, 2014, p. 142). Text was no longer included in the school's teachings after his departure in 1969.

[144] '*Qu'est-ce que la théâtralité ? C'est le théâtre moins le texte, c'est un épaisseur de signes et de sensation qui s'édifie sur la scène à partir de l'argument écrit, c'est cette sorte de perception œcuménique des artifices sensuels gestes, tons, distances, substances, lumières, qui submerge le texte sous la plénitude de son langage extérieur* ' (Barthes in Scheie, 2006, p. 37).

the possibility of an author without a text – a material text – and what might a non-material or living 'text' be? Is it simply 'writing' which is alive in the work?

In this thesis, I must consider if the death of a material text is necessary for the birth of the theatrical author – the *acteur-auteur*. By replacing the text, or filling the space where the text may have held value, what emerges is the writing – the work of the student (not the *œuvre* of Barthes and Foucault's thinking, but the actual work of the student). This is established through the *acteur's* ability to improvise, through a grasp of structure and an ability to play, with the aid of the tools of the body: awareness of space and timing in their movements, along with the necessary performative presence (or, as Lecoq may have referred to it, the ability to arrive at *neutre* – neutral). From this system of writing comes the more advanced practice of authorship, recognised through the system and autonomy of the *autocours* and its adjacent and more advanced iterations (i.e. the *enquêtes* and *commandes*). It becomes a practice of performer as text – one who authors while they are read. To develop the shift from the *acteur-auteur's* writing practice to an auteurial practice, the *acteur-auteur* must evolve their writing practice by resituating themselves in relation to the work as a representative of their presence as 'text', and a relationship must be established between the *acteur-auteur* and their 'reader'.

Chapter 6: ‘Personal style’.
Autocours (self-study), the *acteur-auteur* and their reader.

‘Instead of talking about the moon to a child, we both go and look at it.’

–Jacques Lecoq[145]

The events of May ‘68 established the authorial strain that would eventually become a defining element of Lecoq’s pedagogy, entrenching within its philosophy an expectation of the student as responsible for the development of the ‘new theatre’ Lecoq wished his school to produce. The students and workers who engaged in the strikes called for their experiences and informed reflections to be integral to the shaping of legislature and governance that directly impacted them, and so did the students at Lecoq during this time, in their own way. From 1968 onward, Lecoq’s declaration of his student as the *auteur* (Lecoq in Murray, 2002, p. 25) solidifies not only an expectation for their training, but equally their beginning position – they are the *auteur* before the quality of their work is examined, because the constraints of the training demand they approach their work authorially.

In tracing the practices and performance elements of the *auteur* and the *acteur* in the first portion of this thesis and proposing their ‘technique’ (pulling again from Sarris’ terminology, mapped out in the introduction to Part II), the remaining elements of the ‘personal style’ and ‘meaning’ have yet to be explored. To understand how the ‘technique’ or ‘writing’ of the previous chapter evolves into an ‘authorial’ practice, the elements of the ‘personal style’ must be located in the next step of this exploration, i.e. the practices of collaboration, the development of completely or partially original content, interdisciplinary practice, and shifts in power/control over work/demand for artistic

[145] Lecoq in Leabhart, 1989, p. 94.

legitimacy. To situate these elements, following the exploration of 'Technique' (the 'writing' of the *acteur-auteur*, or the intersection of play, presence, and structure) the natural evolution of this project builds to the 'authority' of the *acteur-auteur* and how that is developed by the *autocours* and similar assignments.

Unlike the taught elements of improvisation and movement, 'personal style' emerges through an expectation of authorship rather than direct teaching. How can this be fostered? Since it is impossible to study the student-made work of the *autocours* (it is a private to the school, with classes witnessed only by teacher, students, sometimes invited guests, and never recorded), it would be subjective in that the work of the students is indicative of the students themselves, and thereby constantly different and changing. To examine how the student's authorial practice is encouraged it is important to inspect the constants of the pedagogy –the exercises and assignments that demand the student's authority – to understand how these elements are built into the students' engagement. Alongside embedding the elements of authorial practice within the teaching, the role and function of the teacher must be examined as well. In considering the position of power held by the teacher alongside the authority of the student, the pedagogical framing of Jacques Rancière's 'Ignorant Schoolmaster' (1991) and Paolo Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (2017) once again becomes useful in establishing how the student is guided towards the development of their authorial voice. Barthes' reflection on the triumvirate of author, text, and reader becomes, again, a useful framework for analysing this relationship, and understanding what is created by the *acteur-auteur*'s writing practice and training – that of the *acteur-auteur* themselves.

While Barthes' 'Death of the Author' places the focus on the relationship between reader and text, the unique nature of what might be considered 'text' in Lecoq's pedagogy renders the *acteur-auteur* (the author) inseparable from that text, and thereby in constant

relation to their reader. To understand the development of the *acteur-auteurial* voice, I propose to examine the role of a pedagogue as 'reader' within a training environment. The student-to-student collaboration established through the development of the *autocours* alongside the student-teacher relationship established through the presentation and critique of the *autocours,* creates the environment in which the writing of the actor becomes the act of authorial practice: a practice of interdisciplinarity, collaboration, originality, and ultimately, artistic autonomy.

The *autocours* – the unteachable exercise

Of the three classes that make up the pedagogy the *autocours* is the class most concerned with 'personal creativity' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 28). The *autocours* is a weekly endeavour in which the students are given class time to put together a short piece to present to the teachers and their peers on the following Friday. **Briefly summarised by former student Susan Thompson:**

> **There is a time constraint; one week. There is a theme; dictated by an 'outside voice' and often accompanied by training in a theatrical style. Frequently, there is an ideal group size (dependent on each week's theme). Finally, there is an audience. (Thompson, 2013, p. 395)**

As with the improvisations, he teachers provide a *thème* (theme), either the Friday or Monday before, giving the students the week to rehearse before the Friday showing. In the first year of training, students are given about four and a half hours of rehearsal time within the school (second year students are given more as some of their pieces will be

presented to the public[146]), and students often take time to rehearse outside of school.[147] The teachers are not involved in the running of the *autocours*; students are reliant on themselves to find their groups, develop their scenes, and rehearse. While the theme, subject, or style of performance may be dictated by (or chosen with input from) the teachers, the crafting of the piece is entirely up to the students. Material is generated through improvisation, but the process then shifts to one of editing and framing, scripting in a way (but completely without a 'material' text). It is likely for this reason that Lecoq considered the *autocours* to be more concerned with playwriting and production, rather than acting (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, pp. 97–99). The teacher's only engagement is to offer criticism at the Friday presentations or provide minimal guidance to pieces that are performed to the public (the *enquêtes* of the first year, and any pieces that might under consideration for the *soirées* in second year).

This weekly project forces the student to rely on their own authority and that of their peers in their work, rather than the guidance or advice of a teacher or 'master'. *Autocours*, loosely translating to 'self-course' (though perhaps more commonly translated to 'self-driving'), is in some ways a misnomer, as its title of *auto* or 'self' must refer to the communal rather than the individual. In its 'self-teaching', it is not the individual teaching themselves, but the group of students teaching each other, learning from each other how to engage, communicate, create, and develop different skills at the hands of their peers. Collaboration is expected and required. The students must rely on each other without interference from teachers to exercise their own authority and creative control

[146] These public facing performances do, of course generally have a somewhat curated audience as they generally consist of invitees of the students, friends of the school, and some alumni. The dates of these performances are not advertised, rather you must contact the school to know when they will occur (though they do happen around the same time each year).

[147] When the school was in Paris, we would meet in parking lots, parks, people's tiny flats, even rent out warehouse space to rehearse. In Avignon, I understand students do the same but find it easier to rehearse in public squares or more ample living spaces.

over their work. Over time, this leads to further student autonomy and greater artistic legitimacy, as in the second year of training when the students become public representatives of the school, as performers in the *soirées.* The nature of the *autocours* requires the student to control and advocate for their own work as they develop their authorial voice.

Over the year numbers of each group change from a minimum of three to an entire class, and second year *autocours* will vary in time from 5–20 minutes depending on the theme. Props, costumes and minimal set pieces begin to appear (towards the end of first year), but the structure of the *autocours* remains the same. Any scene must contain, at the very least, a place and an event. The event can be anything, though it necessarily implies the presence of characters and action, without necessarily requiring verbal dialogue. From the perspective of the performer, the action of the event is entirely the character's making, and the place can be anywhere if it is made clear through the performance.

Themes and Function – *Un lieu, un événement!* (a place, an event)

Term 1	**Term 2**	**Term 3**
Week 1: 'no words, no props or costumes, and our theme was solely "a place" and "an event"' (Oct. 5, 2015). Week 2: *L'homme invisible*- the invisible man. Week 3:The imaginary Journey.	Week 1: The battle of materials. Week 2: Movement in a painting. Week 3: Same group, two paintings in dialogue with each other. Week 4: Movement of a short story.	Week 1: Exploring the passions on three levels of a stage (no one understood the assignment). Week 2: A scene using second character developed for the full week. Week 3: A scene where each actor must appear in all three characters.

Week 4: *La ville* (small group?). Week 5: 'Creating individual scenes for shifting the focus of the square' (Nov. 9, 2015) whole group. Week 6: 're-create Gare du Nord with neutral mask' (Nov. 9, 2015). Week 7: Exodus (*l'exode*) – (Neutral Mask). Week 8: The hurricane (*l'orage*) – (Neutral Mask). Week 9: Characters-80% element, 20% human. Week 10: Characters-20% element, 80% human. Week 11: The '57' steps with music- climbing over the wall.	Week 5: Animals in a human situation (80% animal, 20% human). Week 6: Scene where the characters are 80% human, 20% animal. Week 7: Silent scene with our own made masks. Week 8: Scene with masks that passed on from the first week (selected by teachers). Week 9: Two-part *autocours*- week 1, the set up for a fight. Week 10: The fight. Week 11: *Autocours* with objects- on a *plateau*	Week 4: *Autocours* with one character from the past two weeks, and a new one. Week 5: A piece on a plateau. Week 6: *Les Enquêtes* – week one – collecting materials/observations Week 7: *Enquêtes* – Week 2 Week 8: *Enquêtes* – Week 3 Week 9*: Enquêtes – Soiréee* on June 3. Week 10: No *Autocours*, presentations of the 20 movements. Week 11: no classes, just watching *Les Commandes*.

Autocours themes, collated from personal notes of first year of training (Brune, 2015, 2016a).

Reflecting on the spread of themes for the *autocours* of the first year, the lack of instruction provided to the students is immediately evident.[148] While these themes are not directly quoted from the teachers, they reflect the amount of guidance provided to the

[148] Thompson recognizes that the first *autocours* theme is given before the first teacher-led class takes place (2013, p. 393).

student. The students are not given complex plotlines with multiple restrictions (aside from the accepted limits on props, set pieces, and costumes established from the beginning of training, which are loosened over the year), nor are they assigned pre-existing characters or plots. The themes tend to fall into four categories of exploration: physical task or obstacle, recognisable or real location, character-driven scenes, and movement analysis.

Collaboration

The very first *autocours* of the training sets the tone for the structure of most *autocours* to come throughout the two years of training. It is a scene, less than ten minutes long, presented with 'no words, no props or costumes' with the theme of '"a place" and "an event"' (Brune, 2015 d. Oct 5, 2015). Students divide themselves into groups (usually of five to seven) and begin improvisations or discuss potential settings or events. The first *autocours* lays the foundations not only for the structure of the *autocours* performances themselves, but also for the working environment in which the students must function. There is no interference from the teachers (the teachers tend to remain outside of the room where students are working[149]) nor guidance on how they should work or relate to each other – there is simply the 'expectation' that they will. In their shared reflections on training respectively at LISPA and Lecoq's school, Maiya Murphy and John Foley Sherman recognise that the

> pedagogical power of the auto-cours resides in the way it refuses to prescribe collaborative styles, tools, or models but instead induces an urgent creative collision through which students are forced to envision and produce their own theatre. (2013, p. 111)

[149] However, in the old space of Le Central in Paris, the Grand Salle had the benefit of a balcony where the main offices were situated, providing easy viewing into the space. It has been assumed by many former students that the teachers would spy on autocours rehearsals without the students' knowledge.

Just as the expectation of the *auteur*'s practice is placed upon the student before they begin their work, the expectation and necessity of collaboration is embedded in the nature of the training. Even as the students are left completely unguided, they discover their work is impossible without each other.

Rancière's thoughts on the 'Ignorant Schoolmaster' (Rancière, 1991) provide a useful perspective into how expectation functions as a teaching tool. Rancière recognises within the Jacotot experiment that Jacotot discovered previously established 'systems of teaching' were based on an assumption for the 'necessity of explication', or that the introduction of a new idea to a student must be illuminated by the teacher (Rancière, 2011, p. 4). Why should a teacher need to explain the idea? Rancière says that 'logic of explication calls for the principle of a regression ad infinitum: there is no reason for the redoubling of reasonings ever to stop' (2011, p. 4). Without providing the student with the ability to explore for themselves, to conduct their own research, the teacher establishes a power dynamic that not only positions the student as 'unknowing', but equally of the teacher as 'all knowing'; 'To explain something to someone is first of all to show him he cannot understand it by himself' (Rancière, 2011, p. 6). Implicitly, by setting the expectation of the student that they will discover by themselves how they will best work together, the pedagogy ensures the student will learn. As long as the students share a goal and willingly engage in the work (or 'play', as explored in Chapter 4), they will learn how to work collaboratively**. In Thompson's words: 'Through action you learn that the task of an artist and an ensemble is to actually do what you dream and talk about, to move from conception and incubation to action' (2013, p. 395).**

Lecoq and his teachers observe that this not a conflict-free approach, and that students often struggle to adapt to this style of working:

> Occasionally, a student will come to me and say: 'They won't play with me!', to which I have only one reply: 'Well, play with them!' By placing oneself at the service of others, one discovers an important dimension to the theatre work. (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2020, p. 109)

In the face of conflict or insecurity, Lecoq proposes that the students 'play' to connect, just as with improvisation. It is not possible to work alone or approach the autocours as a sole director of a piece, and so the students must navigate for themselves the working relationship they develop with their peers. From the beginning of their training, collaboration is a necessity for the student's work, yet it is never taught: the student must develop this skill entirely for themselves, as without it neither the work nor the learning are possible. Within the broader project of developing the student's *authorial* practice, the expectation and necessity of collaboration instils a value we see reflected in the practice of the director-*auteurs* referenced in the first part of this project. Amongst theatre *auteurs*, this can be seen clearly in the work of Ariane Mnouchkine (a Lecoq alumna) who relies heavily on the creative work of her ensemble of actors (Bradby, 2002a, p. 119), while in the cinema, the nature of the film making process for the auteurs is quietly made possible by the 'genius of the system' (Bazin in Schatz, 2009, p. 526).

Interdisciplinarity

Through the working conditions established by the assignment and the implicit necessity for collaboration within the *autocours*, another element of the 'personal style' becomes clearly embedded in the practice: interdisciplinarity. As there is no outside engagement (either by teachers or any outside authority) the students are required to rely entirely on themselves to enact the skills of crafting (writing), shaping the visual style (directing), sourcing necessary materials (producing) and performing. Lecoq demands

that the student be all the above rather than be assigned to a specific role, with the hope of training artists who will go on to engage professionally in a number of different creative fields (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 16). The goal has never simply been to train the actor.

This expected interdisciplinarity provides a unique opportunity to uncover the student's individual strengths. While all are engaged in the same creation, students will recognise what they are good at – perhaps one student is musical while another talented at producing. The students and teachers will discover these talents together while establishing a baseline ability to undertake any role afforded to them within the *autocours* rehearsal space. Through trial and error, the students not only discover how to craft their play but begin to establish their own interests while developing a practice that is made up of many skills and unique to them.

In considering the key to an 'emancipatory practice', Rancière quotes Jacotot's reflections on his experiments, citing the necessary attempts and mistakes the students make in order to reach and develop their unique skills: 'Stumbling is nothing; the wrong is in diverging from, leaving one's path, no longer paying attention to what one says, forgetting what one is. So follow your path; (Jacotot in Rancière, 1991, p. 57). This highlights another expectation: finding your own way without being led by a teacher in a specific direction. This approach broadens the students' ability and desire to explore and expand their practice, empowering them to take responsibility for their work and the development of their talents.

In establishing this practice without formal delineation of power or role, students' desire to engage becomes stronger and, as former student and performer Bim Mason reflects, this leads to greater investment in the work. In reflecting on the Lecoq student who enters the professional theatre as an actor, he observes:

> Because the actors feel responsible for the work and are concerned for the whole and not just their own part the shows will continue to develop during the run whether the director is present or not. This improvement is not merely in the sense of 'running-in' the show but actually expanding, diminishing or changing material. (2002, p. 54)

The implicit interdisciplinarity and expectation of collaboration requires students to rely on themselves for the authorship of the work. What emerges is an artist who is concerned with *the* work, rather than simply *their* work. Again, the expectation of interdisciplinarity, as with collaboration, and the lack of explication (echoing Rancière) leads to the development and refinement of these tools through their implicit necessity.

Against interpretation – 'origination'

The majority of the *autocours* of this first year are concerned with the student's ability to develop their *own* characters –whether they be drawn from movement analysis of animate and inanimate objects/beings or crafting the faces of their alternate selves through mask making for the *comédie humain.* For the animate, this may be the run of a jaguar, the explosion of bicarbonate of soda and vinegar, or the swell of an ocean. For the inanimate, the challenge is greater – the flick of a brushstroke, the character of colour, or the energy of sounds. This is not to be an 'interpretation' of how these materials or creatures might move, but a replication[150] of their qualities of movement, a 'replaying' to the best of the student's ability to develop their character. Lecoq refers to this as a 'poetic transposition of the character';

[150] Lecoq distinguishes between interpretation and replay as key towards the theatre student's creativity; interpretation being the tool of an actor performing '(someone else's) technique' (Murray, 2002, p. 25). Indeed, in order to be the student *auteur* of his pedagogy, the student must not 'interpret: you must relive each phase physically' (Lecoq in Murray, 2002, p. 25).

> After having experienced, by means of these identifications, the greatest possible number of natural or animal dynamics, the actor (or 'author') is in a position to use these experiences, sometimes unconsciously, to feed the characters which he must act (or 'write') and to bring out some of their fundamental characteristics. He will acquire a set of references, at once very complex and very precise, as a support for future work. (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 46)

The characters that emerge from this analysis and craft will not be characters made for a scene; rather the characters instead will be established first, either by the form of the mask (the character native to its shape) or the student's own characterisation. The students begin with the observed elements to develop their character, and then as the play becomes more advanced they let these non-human elements emerge from an originally human-based character; 'begin[ing] with a human character and gradually, at particular moments of the performance, the elements or animals in which it is grounded show through' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 46). Unlike schools or conservatories where the students choose or are assigned pre-existing characters, the students are required to create their own (much like the *commedia* practices that inspired this approach). The student first decides who they will be and then decide where they will be and what they will do, at times (when they are able) adapting their character slightly to settle into the scene.

The development of the students' individual characters and the characters of their peers in their *autocours* groups will determine the scene they create together –where would these specific characters meet? What situation these specific characters might find themselves in, or what types of roles and actions might be complimentary or contradictory to their personalities? The crafting of plot, relationships, and action come from a character-first approach, and the characters always originate with the actor

themselves. Again, it is not about the interpretation, but the observation and writing of movement. As Simon Murray recognises, Lecoq's primary concern was the development of the artist not as a mere repeater of technique (mime, for example) and other work, but someone with an original practice:

> A corollary of this is Lecoq's antipathy towards both the actor as interpreter or as an instrument for the display of (someone else's) technique, and the codification of mime into a rigid aesthetic which locks shut the performer's potential for creativity. (2002, pp. 24–25, italics in original)

This rebellion against interpretation, of course, echoes a method of authorial practice highlighted in the historical *auteur* movements and the very root of its etymology (explored in Chapter 2) – the *auteur* cannot interpret, they must 'originate'.[151]

The 'finished product'

As the students develop their *autocours*, they are, in fact, developing themselves, guided by a teacher who introduces challenges, asks questions, and provides exercises. The writing established through the practice of improvisation, together with the required elements necessary to approach the *autocours* – collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and so forth – serves to create a finished product. Returning to Lecoq's words, quoted at the end of Chapter 3:

> From this starting point (improvisation), the actor-improviser-author rehearses and refines his creation, testing it and finally performing it for an audience, who see only the finished product. (J. Lecoq, 2006, pp. 100–101)

[151] The end of the first year will bring with it the *enquêtes* (discussed in Chapter 5), and for the first time in the pedagogy, the space for the student to claim responsibility for their theme, their research, their creation, and their artistically established argument for how their work represents an industry or community with authority. The teachers may have previous knowledge of the subjects of the *enquêtes* or may be completely new to their chosen environment and learn from the students.

The finished product Lecoq refers to is no doubt, the *autocours*, the performance of the crafted piece which evolved from the writing of the student's improvisational practice, shaped through the repetition and rehearsal of the *autocours* process. Nevertheless, a question arises when considering whether, within the construct of the pedagogical product, the *autocours* is the 'finished product' of the training. Once performed, the *autocours* is abandoned and never repeated (except for the second year in which the students will revisit them as potential material for the public facing *soirées,* but even then, they are never again referenced after performance). Within the first year there is no opportunity to refine or implement feedback received at the presentation; the 'product' is simply abandoned and ultimately resigned to the performer's memory. So, what is it that is being developed? The *acteur-auteur* themselves.

On Fridays the students and teachers gather in the bigger training room (historically, *la Grande Salle)*. Benches are positioned at one end of the room, and the teachers centre themselves to the presentation space in front of them. The students situate themselves amongst the audience of teachers as they present feedback on the work, from the same vantage point, beginning a passive training of the student's eye. Each *autocours* group present their work, often being stopped part of the way through by the teachers to be offered a critique. The critique is never personal, and often somewhat vague. In describing the mode in which he provided feedback for the students, Lecoq states: 'My comments deal only with the structure of the performance and the dramatic development of the improvisation. Everything must be clear to the spectators' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 97). The feedback concerns the clarity of the student's performance and crafting of theatrical structure, and this seems to remain the case (as it did in my training and recent experience in pedagogical training). The impersonality of the critique can

seem hurtful to some students, but it provides an element of distance from the teacher, hopefully helping to maintain impartiality. The critique never gives value to what the student meant, or what they were trying to do (even if the teacher understands the intention). Instead, the focus of critique rests on what the teacher can see –what the student did do and what they didn't. The concern is rarely how well the students responded to a prompt, but whether the piece worked on its own[152]– if the timing and structure of it felt right, or if it was engaging (Murphy and Sherman, 2013, p. 120). During pedagogical training, when a peer asked what to do if a student is really struggling and not succeeding with a certain exercise, our teacher, Paola Rizza replied:

> 'You can tell them they're bad'…you don't make it dramatic, you just say – 'Oh la vache, c'était mauvais!' you know? …There should be a touch of humor in it… she was saying, 'it's not serious – there are so many worse things in the world that are going on and we're just, we're here doing theater. C'est de la luxe!' … it's not important- it's not serious, it's literally play… (Brune, 2024, n. Sep. 25)[153]

The process involves a shared spirit of playfulness and an exacting honesty that the teacher must carefully balance (some do this better than others). This impartiality can be alarming to some students, though ultimately, this relative objectivity is an ideal training for the *auteur* – a system of evaluation that is focused on the work/writing of the *acteur-auteur* on exactly what is there, instead of intention or personality-based reflection.

Returning to Barthes and his primary critique of the author:

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[152] There have been times when the students misunderstood the *autocours* theme and were told to reshape them. After my own training I returned to the school to watch an *autocours* presentation where the students were instructed to engage with the movement of a short story. After three or four presentations where the teachers had concluded that no one had truly understood the assignment, they told the students to take 30 minutes and revise their *autocours* with new instructions. In 30 minutes, we returned and watched the revised presentations.

[153] It may seem flippant, but as this was spoken to us, I was sitting between two fellow students, one from Ukraine, one from Israel, whose homes (on that day) were both being bombed. The global conflicts (the war in Ukraine and Palestinian genocide) were unavoidably present in our thoughts and work.

> The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* 'confiding' in us (Barthes, 1977, p. 143, italics in original).

By reflecting only on what is presented by the student in performance, the teacher bypasses the expectation of an explanation of the work and provides a 'reader's' (or audience's) response. While this may seem to parallel Barthes' ultimate desire to remove the author from the text, a conflict arises in the theatrical nature of this work – the author, as actor, must always be *present*. To consider the 'text' of the *acteur-auteur* there must be recognition that the 'text' is in fact inseparable from the *acteur-auteur*; their potential 'text' exists only as long as they perform.

The presence of the author

Evaluating and recognising the *acteur-auteur's* work is complex. The impartial position that the pedagogue must take is challenged by the fact the author is always present in their work; without their presence, the writing/performance does not happen. While Barthes locates the author's position in time as '… the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a *before* and an *after*' (1977, p. 145), the *acteur-auteur* (like the 'improviser' discussed in Chapter 4) must occupy both positions, existing as the past *and* present of the work. The author's position in their work 'is thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child' (Barthes, 1977, p. 145, italics in original). In contrast, the *acteur* must be present, similar in ways to that of Barthes' 'scriptor' who

> is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*. (1977, p. 145, italics in original)

Nevertheless, the *acteur-auteur* cannot simply be restricted to the title of 'scriptor'. While the *acteur-auteur* must be present, they must always (as with improvisation) have a sense of what has come before.[154] How the writing becomes the authorial practice, however, rests in how the *acteur-auteur* is be both present, aware of the past, and equally aware of their crafted writing, looking forward to what they know comes next. The system of rehearsal and development established by the students within their own *autocours* groups will be different with the inclusion of each member, but the practices of improvisation and replay remain a constant. The memory of the student's improvisations and ability to replay and edit in real time establishes the performance they ultimately present. The work which has been written in movement, edited and crafted through the performer who stands before the teacher, full of context, personal experience, struggles and individuality, must be evaluated from what they present rather than who they are. There must be a separation between who the student is and what the *acteur-auteur* does.

While perhaps Barthes critique of a text in which the author is present is more reflective of a 'cult of personality' or celebrity of sorts, a mime or *commedia* performer's practice is built upon their unique 'archive' of performative skill or individual character developed over years of rehearsal and writing (in one way or another), rejecting any reliance on their identity. A separation emerges between the actor's own identity and the

[154] This is equally true when considering the role of the actor in performance of a mask, as in *commedia* or Lecoq's *Comedie Humaine.* As John Rudlin reflects of *commedia,* when the actor put on the mask, 'personality disappeared to be replaced by type: the personality of the actor is thus overtaken not by an author's scripted character, but by the persona of the mask to be played' (1994, p. 34).

performance identity they've built up as a recognisable 'type' or individual character, a 'ghosting[155]' as Marvin Carlson would describe it, indicating the actor who is perceived as representative of their past work in performance (Carlson, 2001, p. 8) or simply as representative of a text (Carlson, 2001, p. 53). Containing the same multitudes as the author, there is an expectation for the separation between the artist who develops their craft, and the recognised, virtuosic performer. As literary criticism or writing in general offers no such distinction, a removal of the 'author' from their creation seems valid as the only way to develop an objective opinion of their text. And so, as the text of the *acteur-auteur* is inseparable from the *acteur-auteur* themselves, and only viewed through their performance of their writing, the *acteur-auteur* must always be present, though read through a lens of an informed 'reader' in training (their peers). The development of this reading 'lens' may be aided by considering the 'space of writing'. Returning to Barthes, he establishes the reader as the final location of meaning for a text:

> The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted. (1977, p. 148)

From this view, the reader is the impartial maker of meaning, establishing what the work is or is not through their experience. It is this impartiality, focus, and ability to evaluate that would ideally be qualities of the Lecoq teacher. Nevertheless a complication remains:

[155] 'The recycled body of an actor, already a complex bearer of semiotic messages, will almost inevitably in a new role evoke the ghost of ghosts of previous roles if they have made any impression whatever on the audience, a phenomenon that often colors and indeed may dominate the reception process' (Carlson, 2001, p. 8).

while the reader must read their text, they cannot do so without the presence of the author. Lecoq says that '[w]e must remember that the students are improvising in their own words and cannot rely on the distancing effect of a text written by an author' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 64) – echoing again the inherently entwined nature of the student and their work. While the student is present (the *acteur-auteur* is always present), their work must be 'read' impersonally. This constant back and forth between the student's action and the teacher's reflections, again based in the observation of the students' practice, puts the teacher in a position of a 'reader', not dissimilar to the reader of Barthes literary theory. It is through their experience of the work that the student is evaluated; the development of the *acteur-auteur* comes through the 'reading' of their work. This does, however, put the 'reader' (the Lecoq teacher) in an extraordinary position of power that must be mitigated.

The power of the reader

> 'If contemporary academic theatre criticism and semiotic analysis warns us off any attempt to understand a piece of theatre merely by attributing 'authorship' to either writer or director, how do we begin to place the contribution of the teacher?'
>
> – Simon Murray[156]

It is common for an *autocours* group to not reach the end of their performance. John Potter, a former student of the school and of Lecoq himself, explains;

> For Lecoq, if you are not *performing* he stops it. He would only allow things to happen in front of the curtain - those pieces where people present their work and walk off again. There is nothing of who is

[156] 2002, p. 42.

> performing and who is not, nor of challenging the stage space. (Potter in Murray, 2002, p. 41, italics in original)

This abrupt interruption can come to the student as a surprise or relief. In my own first *autocours* presentation, we were stopped before the end, 'which was a blessing really' (Brune, 2015, n. Oct 9), as the scene we had presented we knew was not 'good'.[157]

Potter's observation indicates two interesting elements of the *autocours* project: first, the student as not-student, but an individual separate from their identity as one-in-training; and second, the teacher's position of power in 'allow(ing)' things to happen on stage. These two roles – the student as not-student (but, I argue, 'author') and the teacher as maintaining the position of power – present a complicated dichotomy, and a potential for great conflict and struggle. Nevertheless, the power held by the teacher is unique based on their ability to be a 'reader' in a Barthesian sense: one who can differentiate between the student and their creation while remaining fully aware of the fact that *acteur-auteur* is, in fact, simultaneously both 'author' and the 'text'.

This ability to arrest performance is the one of few instances of 'power' that is afforded by the pedagogy to the teacher. This 'power', to employ Foucault's definition, indicates the control of an economy that is driven by 'action', so it cannot be 'given' or 'exchanged'; 'power is essentially that which represses. Power represses nature, the

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[157] When reflecting on how to define the Lecoq student, former teacher Alain Mollot states: *'L'acteur accumule donc des expériences de la chute, du "bide" comme disait Lecoq. Et cela ne peut être positif que si tu adoptes une attitude modeste dans le travail. A l'École, tu es face à des obstacles tellement énormes que la modestie devient obligatoire. Car tu sais que pour arriver-la, il te faudra beaucoup travailler. Mais en même temps, il y a chez l'élève aussi une sorte d'orgueil… Il y a un langage qui s'est installé en eux, fait de dynamiques corporelles, d'attitudes, et intuitivement les élèves savant qu'ils ont cela comme un trésor, à leur disposition. Modestie et orgueil me semblent doc les deux traits principaux de reconnaissance d'un acteur ayant été forme par Lecoq, c'est un paradoxe dynamique'* (in Freixe, 2014, p. 228). My translation: 'The actor accumulates experiences of failure, of "flop" as Lecoq calls it. This cannot be a positive experience unless you adopt an attitude of humility in the work. At school you face enormous obstacles and humility becomes necessary. To get there, it will take a great deal of work. But at the same time, the student also possesses a sort of pride… There is a language that is instilled in them, made of embodied dynamics, attitudes, and intuitively the students know that they have a gift at their disposition. Humility and pride are to me the two main traits recognisable in an actor that has been trained by Lecoq, it is a dynamic paradox.'

instincts, a class, individuals' (Foucault, 1980, pp. 89–90). In this instance, the place of economy is taken by the performance space and time afforded. While I do not think the 'power' of the Lecoq teacher is based in a desire for or active use of 'repression', this raises questions about the restraints placed on students and the ways in which these may impede or restrict the students in their learning.

There is no question that a person in the position of educator in any kind of institution inherently occupies a position of power, indicating an imbalance between themselves, as representative of knowledge/institution, and their pupil(s). As highlighted by Rancière and liberatory pedagogical theorist Paolo Freire, the position of the teacher will ultimately determine how the student will learn; if they are the 'explicator', the student will not be able to develop their own thinking (Rancière, 1991, p. 8). If they are 'the-one-who-teaches', they become the owner of knowledge who controls how the learning is shared (Freire, 2017, p. 53). While the Lecoq teacher must have their own authority in contrast to Rancière's 'ignorant schoolmaster', who cannot have prior knowledge and 'can only be performed by someone who effectively knows no more than the student, who has never made the voyage before him...'(Rancière, 2011, pp. 29–30). Yet the teacher's power and knowledge must be balanced with the 'authority' of the student. Perhaps we can take a more charitable view of the 'powerful' teacher, if we consider how they ultimately 'empower' their pupil. In the case of the Lecoq student there is always a question of the students' own 'authority', an authority that is embedded into the pedagogy through the ever-present necessity of 'will' (or willingness to play) and is inherent to the structure of the *autocours*. This 'authority' in relation to 'power' may serve as an antidote (or explanation) to the issue of arrested performance and possibly serve as the Achilles heel to an otherwise emancipatory practice.

In considering critical pedagogy, Patricia Bizzell (1991) indicates that there are three different kinds of 'power' (specifically within the field of education): coercion, persuasion, and authority. The difference between each kind of power is identified by the consent of the one being 'overpowered', whether they wish or do not wish to shift their behaviour to the wills of the one in power (Bizzell, 1991, p. 57). In the case of authority, however, the consent of the overpowered enables the powerful to relinquish their need to constantly persuade as a part of their directive (Bizzell, 1991, p. 58). In other words, perhaps instilling and relying on an element of trust between the two parties.

In considering an 'emancipatory authority' in the field of critical pedagogy, Henry Giroux begins with liberal educational theorist Kenneth D. Benne's definition of 'authority':

> a function of concrete human situations in which a person or group, fulfilling some purpose, project or need, requires guidance or direction of a source outside himself or itself…Any such operation relationship – a triadic relationship between subject(s), bearer(s), and field(s) – is an authority relationship. (in Giroux, 2019, pp. 98–99)

While Giroux points out issues with this definition, including its disregard for the influence of power structures and complex relational dynamics (2019, p. 100), the definition clarifies a 'need' from the overpowered, or at least the element of an expertise required of the powerful, whereas 'power' (at least according to Foucault) has no real qualification aside from an ability to repress through an imbalance. The 'authority' – whose etymology lies, like the 'author' in the Latin *auctoritas*, literally 'to gain authority' (Rey, 2006, p. 261)[158] – implies an element of achievement, the earned possession of something to be valued.

[158] For more see Chapter 1.

Both these definitions of authority (Bizzell's and Benne's) share similarities with the 'author', in that it relates to practical experience, an object, or knowledge that is somehow judged to be of value, thereby proving a 'worth' which might lead to a sort of power. Considering these discussions of balance between teacher and student, the relationship established between the Lecoq student and teacher appears unique – not so much the 'emancipatory authority' proposed by Giroux, and yet not quite the 'ignorant schoolmaster' of Rancière. Perhaps, like Duška Radosavljević's 'heterarchical director' (2020), the relationship between teacher and student is characterised by a consistent fluctuation of authority.[159] When the student presents their work, they exercise their creative authority before the teacher is able to impose their own perspective. The 'authority' then is of course reversed when the teacher either stops the performance or provides their critique

To justify 'arresting' performance and practice (if it is possible to justify), the teacher must be an extraordinarily informed 'reader', one who Lecoq himself suggests must 'be prepared, at every moment, to question his own approach, to get back to seeing the world with freshness and innocence, to avoid imposing clichés' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 49). They must, in fact, be an 'authority' themselves, both in their own established practice and the practice of 'seeing' that the Lecoq student must themselves become an expert. When considering the improvisation of *l'Attente* or 'Waiting' in Chapter 3 of this project, I recognise the difference between my notes as a student versus

[159] Pulling from Bruno Latour's concept and reflections on his own actor network theory, Radosavljević uses his definition of heterarchy, which 'has the potential "to complicate the hierarchy of voices [making] the conversation between disciplines move ahead in a way that is more representative of the 20th century"' (Latour in Radosavljević, 2020, p. 248). She conceives of a director (not dissimilar to the *auteur* directors of theatre mentioned in Chapter 1) who 'is dedicated to the idea of ensemble, though not the idea of hierarchy… (who) predicates the success of the creative process on the quality of interpersonal relationships and is comfortable sharing authority with other collaborators and members of the ensemble'(Radosavljević, 2020, p. 252).

a pedagogical student – the former being one who was concerned with doing the exercise and the latter concerned with guiding or 'teaching' the exercise. The student highlighted what was happening or what was expected of them, whilst the pedagogical student highlighted the space and the constants of the exercise (i.e. the grand room, the expectation of meeting someone, the entrance of strangers, etc.). In pedagogical training, when revisiting the *grande voyage*[160] of the neutral mask, those who were observing were asked to give criticism on the person's attempt, which would then be critiqued in return. In my notes on the session, I recalled that when I was asked to present feedback:

> I said that – 'It was a bit short' and she said 'OK, well what was short?' and I said 'Well, specifically, the forest was short… the time – *le temps dans la forêt, n'étais pas juste*' and she said 'OK, well what do you mean by "juste"?' and I was like 'It was it was too short'. So, she's like 'OK… the forest wasn't big enough. That's what you should say – "the forest wasn't big enough."' …which is interesting because … what I was thinking about was time, and she translated that into space, which is ultimately so much more useful to someone who is in the mask. (Brune, 2024, n. Sep 25)

The teacher must understand what is necessary in 'reading' the work of the student and formulating a response so the student can continue to experiment. The teacher must understand the form (as with the neutral mask) and be able to observe and translate what is useful to the student in moment (i.e. the recognition of 'space'). The teacher must be able to distinguish between 'observation' and 'direction' when deciding how to guide their student. During the same pedagogical session, I reflected on a key observation from our teachers: 'the thing that you need to watch as a teacher, is that it will become a -like a

[160] *Le Grande Voyage* or 'The Fundamental Journey' is a neutral mask exercise where a student must emerge from an ocean, walk along a beach, through a forest, up and down a mountain, cross a river, a desert, and watch a sunset (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 42).

directing thing…You don't want to be a director. It doesn't matter what you think, it doesn't matter what you like or what you don't like, it's if they're doing the exercise or not' (Brune, 2024, n. Sep 25). This echoes the sentiment of helping the student figure out how they do it rather than if they are doing it 'right'.

Nevertheless, the teacher must couch their own expertise in their teaching.[161] This is complicated because the student will have witnessed the movement teacher's prowess during the presentation and teaching of movement. Improvisation is taught through immediate feedback and guided exercise – the teachers' owns skills is rarely if ever on display. The inappropriate application of *via negativa*[162] to Lecoq's pedagogy is understandable as it is imperative that the student originates their work and ideas, and that

[161] '…it's up to the student to discover what the teacher already knows' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 49).

[162] There is an academic inclination to apply the concept of *via negativa* to Lecoq's work which I find inappropriate. Maiya Murphy cites John Wright as the first to assign the term *via negativa* to Lecoq's work as a descriptor of his pedagogical approach (Murphy, 2019, p. 36). In what is a somewhat baffling chapter by Wright, included in the Chamberlain and Yarrow's book *Jacques Lecoq and the British Theatre*, he makes a number of statements that are not backed up by the pedagogy he examines, such as Lecoq never having 'heard of Copeau' (Wright, 2002, p. 72) and citing 'the 5 masks at the centre of his teaching' (Wright, 2002, p. 82), as well as '6 physical levels of play' (Wright, 2002, p. 82). Wright's attribution of the concept of *via negativa* invokes Jerzy Grotowski's practice, and his belief that the training of an actor implies not 'a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 17), invoking the idea of 'stripping' the actor or 'laying oneself bare' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 210). Wright states that Lecoq's use of this *via negativa* is based in confrontation: 'This is a strategy where the teacher restricts comment to the negative, namely what is inappropriate *and unacceptable*, thus forcing the student to discover what is *appropriate,* whilst avoiding being prescriptive' (Wright, 2002, p. 72, italics in original). This adapts Grotowski somewhat, who says that the 'education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to his psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 16). This is achieved through his *via negativa.* Grotowski is vague on how the *via negativa* works in practice though its Greek theological roots and Christian adaptation suggest that it is a tool for understanding 'the absence of a given quality' (Mortley, 1982, p. 429), such as the mysteries of a 'God'. This, however, is recognized through a negation. To quote Aristotle: 'Assertion is as statement of something in respect of another thing, negation is statement of something away from another thing' (in Mortley, 1982, p. 434). Philosopher Raoul Motley notes the ancient Greek word for 'negation' can also mean 'assertion' (Mortley, 1982, p. 429), highlighting the roots of a heuristic of knowing through recognizing the 'not-ness' of something. In terms of Christianity, this reflects the 'unknowableness' of God and potential existence. Grotowski's own work is deeply rooted in Polish Catholicism and inspired by East Asian religious practices, and regularly engaged with biblical themes – associations Lecoq would have rejected (Yarrow, 2008, p. 30). Simon Murray reflects that Thomas Prattki, who was in charge of the school after Lecoq's death, did use the *via negativa* himself along with 'many of the tutors' (Murray, 2017, pp. 51–52) but I would argue that this comes down to the individual teacher's approach rather than something inherent to the pedagogy itself.

they are not ‘shown’ or ‘told’ the correct way to perform or make work through the examples of their teachers. This demands, however, a ‘power’ imbalance, or a very charitable and perhaps unearned ‘trust’ in the authority of the teacher.

Other trainers of actors may view this approach as dangerously close to a sort of ‘guruism’, and while Lecoq was alive, perhaps this was indeed the case. For Australian acting coach Ira Seidenstein, this system of feedback instils a ‘“Please Papa” (or Mama) syndrome’, where the students are constantly concerned with ‘pleas(ing) the authoritarian figure’ (2011). This is indeed a concern, though surely this is the concern with all educational systems.[163] The sole antidote to this observation lies in the relative impotence of the Lecoq teacher’s feedback. Though the teacher has the ability to stop performance and dismiss the students from the playing space, ultimately the critique they offer is nothing but observation. The student does not have to redo the *autocours*[164], they are not punished nor are they banned from performing again. By its nature, once the *autocours* is performed will never be performed again. If your performance was perfect or if it was stopped as it began, the result is the same. In the second year of training this changes, when most *autocours* become potential material for the *soirées* (public showings at the school). But even if an *autocours* is stopped or a performance is bad, the students have the ability to ‘defend’ their work and revisit it, reworking it if they believe there is something there to show. There is no grading system, no written feedback, no ‘permanent record’ – any notes the teachers take stay within the school. The student is authoritative

[163]There is some irony in this, especially when considering the ancient Greek root of the term ‘pedagogue’ refers to an enslaved person whose job it was to lead the children to school, as explained by acting trainer Jessica Hartley: ‘The historical pedagogue was charged with making the child's journey to gaining knowledge a safe and clear one. They are enslaved and indentured to their purpose - their role as slave, and their function is insight. The role is never challenged. The slave leads the child; they are enslaved by a social role, as well as a function, but the slave's job is not to question their enslavement, or their duty’ (Hartley, 2017, p. 120).

[164] Excepting the instance of ‘misunderstanding’ the theme.

within the school, they always retain their agency, no matter the criticism. This indicates that the student is provided with a sense of their own authority from the beginning of their training, already filled with knowledge (unlike the 'empty vessel'). It also positions the teacher in dialogue with their student, echoing Freire's approach to pedagogy. The Lecoq teacher is a dialogic pedagogue within a 'heterarchical' system, engaging with the student's work as an informed reader, reacting solely to what the student presents.

YEAR 2 – '*Racontez-nous une histoire!*' [165] – 'tell us a story'[166]

Fundamental shift in the function of the *autocours*: the demand for legitimacy

Term 1	**Term 2**	**Term 3**
Week 1: Companies – Movies	Week 1: Children play grown-ups	Week 1: Make the audience laugh
Week 2: Companies – Movies week 2	Week 2: Adults acting as children	Week 2: 'As clowns, present a perfect number' (April 14, 2017)
Week 3: Companies – 'represent solitude in a city' (Oct 14, 2016)	Week 3: Bouffon – 'present an everyday event' (Jan 13, 2017)	Week 3: 'Create a number that goes wrong' (April 21, 2017)
Week 4: Companies – 2 weeks – Melodrama	Week 4: Bouffon – present an element of Paris	Week 4: Clowns in everyday life
Week 5: Companies – second week Melodrama	Week 5: A group of people observe an event, unseen by the audience. '…and through their act of observing give hints to the audience of what they are seeing without	Week 5: The *escalade* (slapstick)
Week 6: Melodrama with 2-3 people.		Week 6: Choice – Absurd, black comedy or cabaret (*burlesque*), etc.

[165] J. Lecoq, 2016, p. 140.
[166] Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 106.

Week 7: Self-made half masks – *Comédie humain* – 'convince someone of something/to do something' (Nov 11, 2016) (*convaincre*) Week 8: Self-made half masks – *Comédie humain* – a trap (*arnaque*) Week 9: Self-made half masks – *Comédie humain* – ? war love death? Week 10: No *Autocours* – Prepping for *Soirée* Week 11: No *Autocours* – Prepping for *Soirée*	speaking/directly referencing.' (Jan 30, 2017) Week 6: Male and female choruses Week 7: Same? Week 8: Smaller groups with a text? Week 9: *Mystère* Week 10: No *Autocours* – Prepping for *Soirée* Week 11: *No Autocours* – Prepping for *Soirée*	Week 7: Prepping for *Soirée*? Week 8: No *Autocours* – Prepping for *Soirée* Week 9: No *Autocours*, Writing week for *commandes* Week 10: Rehearsal for *commandes* Week 11: *Les Commandes.*

Year 2 themes collated from personal notes of second year of training: (Brune, 2016b, 2017)

The second-year training focuses more deeply on the development of the students' understanding and execution of the stylistic limits and demands of the *géodramatiques*, a certain number of (one might argue) 'genres' of physical theatre – *bande mimé, mélodrame, comédie humain* (Lecoq's version of *commedia*), bouffon, Chorus, *Mystère*, clown, *burlesque* (Cabaret), and subgroups of absurd, escalade, and dark comedy. The *autocours* of this year become the trial and error for what will be developed into public performance. Curated and selected by the teachers, these *autocours* are given more feedback and more time to develop in order to be ready for public presentation as part of the *soirées* (a few nights of performance that end every term), not only protecting the

student from a greater potential of public failure, but also the school and their reputation for presenting a certain quality of student and work.[167]

The class also undergoes a 'cut'. A little more than half the students remain for second-year training, the other half simply told they do not have a place or recommended other schools. It is presented as an inevitability, and one without any sort of 'failure' or lack of ability attached to it (but is horrible for the students, nonetheless). It does, however, signify a distinct shift in the training – one that I would argue pushes the student more deeply into the discovery of their auteurial practice, which may not be useful for the student whose style is more natural (or perhaps suited to film), or who wishes to act within a more traditional industry power structure. Simon Murray notes that Lecoq simply questioned whether the student was *disponible* (available/ready) to another year of training (2017, p. 20).

The rehearsal process for the *autocours* becomes more complex as the students' hold (in their bodies/memories) the structures of *autocours* presented weeks earlier to be refined for the *soirées* alongside multiple other pieces to be presented. The ability to defend their work becomes more important, as the *soirées* become a palpable goal to work towards as they will be shared with the outside world. The *soirées* not only provide the student with the opportunity to perform before a broader audience but establish the student as a representative of the work and training of the school. An element of competition arises during this time, forcing the student to become an advocate for their work, or to realistically recognise its limitations and let it go.

[167] *Soirées* have been known to be cancelled if the work created by students over the semester is not good enough to show to the public, and this eventuality is always apparent in feedback and preparation up to the event.

The shifting subjects of the *autocours* themes from the first year to the second become broader, more concerned with the students writing and performing within a certain style than with the execution of certain physical tasks or recreation of a place or quality of movement. The focus on development of original character remains, though the characters must be at home within the given style of the proposed genres. With these broader genres come broader themes of life (love, war, loss, injustice, etc.) and with these themes comes a necessity for the work of the student to 'say something', to use the constraints of the style to present not only a story, but a perspective on the style and subject matter they choose.

'*Quelque chose à dire*' and the 'neutral' pedagogue

> 'I don't want my pupils to love me. Good and evil don't exist in teaching, nor do prescriptions, only analysis of how things move. I'm like a gardener who knows how to make a carrot grow better than others. But I could never turn it into a turnip.'
>
> – Jacques Lecoq[168]

A great critique of Lecoq's approach to theatre and teaching came from actor Dario Fo, Lecoq's long-time friend and collaborator in youth.[169] Referring to Lecoq as 'An Exceptional Master with whom I Disagree' (Fo, 1991, p. 148), and reflecting on his regular appearances at Lecoq's school (where he was invited to provide 'demonstrations'

[168] In Murray, 2002, p. 43.

[169] During Lecoq's time in Italy he worked often with Fo, whose unique physicality and inherent talent Lecoq found interesting (Farrell, 2001, p. 39), so he developed a system of vocal and physical training for him, including exercises not dissimilar to those that continue on in Lecoq's pedagogy, specifically mimicking mammals and elements. While Lecoq helped Fo develop much of his performance style, Fo would later distance himself from Lecoq's style of mime, claiming it was 'too abstract' and uninterested in exploring the effects mime could have in political expression (Farrell, 2001, p. 40). 'It is dangerous to learn techniques unthinkingly when no prior care has been given to the moral context in which they are to be employed' (Fo, 1991, p. 149). Fo likens this to building a house, where the architect will be informed by the type of building and setting before choosing their materials (1991, p. 149).

for his students (Fo, 1991, p. 148)), Fo questions the lack of teaching towards a specific 'ideology' of the movement practice, saying 'it is a grave mistake to separate technique from its ideological, moral and dramatic context' (1991, p. 148). While Lecoq seemed to try to remain apolitical in his work, Fo's work was inherently political from the very beginning of his career, reacting against Italy's fascist government which valorised all Italian endeavours (Farrell, 2001, p. 39).[170] Fo's deep commitment to the artist's political responsibility led him to reject Lecoq's 'apolitical' position and tendency to engage only with work that was part of a greater spiritual or political endeavour, 'distanc[ing] himself from teachings which could be applied equally by the oppressed or oppressor' (Farrell, 2001, p. 40).[171].

Fo was deeply critical of Lecoq's reluctance to engage with his students politically, and his air of 'moral neutrality' (Farrell, 2001, p. 278). When observing students who had trained with Lecoq, Fo noted a strength in physical technique but a lack of depth: 'Lecoq teaches his actors to walk, stand, use their hands, impersonate, hold their breath and deliver a joke, to talk endlessly but to say nothing' (Fo in Farrell, 2001, p. 278). The training was for the body rather than the political voice; to Fo, this was unacceptable. It 'encourages performers to exist in a historical vacuum, to take no responsibility for the effects they create' (Farrell, 2001, p. 278).

[170] Fo and his collaborator (and wife), Franca Rame, notoriously fought against pre-fascist Italy's censorship laws, established by Mussolini and carried on by the incoming fascist government; the 1950s brought major restrictions to authors, forcing them to submit any writing to the government to be approved before publishing or staging (in the case of playwrights), often changing works entirely if unapproved of by the church or state (Farrell, 2001, p. 42). Biographer Joseph Farrell notes that during this time, much like other points in history where words were censored and performances were restricted, slapstick became a tool of rebellion for theatre performers, showing again a shift from word to movement (2001, p. 42).
[171] While this is not a direct quote from Fo himself, the use of terms of 'oppression' recalls the political environments from which Fo and Rame's work grew, while simultaneously posing the question of the teacher's relationship to oppression.

This sentiment is echoed in a way through the recollections of few alumni who have studied under Lecoq, including Jon Potter who reflects that

> Lecoq would give you the means of saying things, but couldn't be involved in what you were saying. He'd respond to what he saw and say whether it was effective or not. It was up to you to take responsibility for what you were saying (in Murray, 2002, p. 32).

This design sought to avoid political indoctrination for the benefit of the student, though not necessarily represent a desire to avoid the political. The first year of training is relatively focused on developing the body and training facility with improvisation, but it ends with the deeply political engagement of the *enquêtes.*

The second year of training engages with *géodramatiques* (genres) that are inherently political, such as melodrama, bouffon, and *comédie humaine.*[172] Melodrama and bouffon present two extremes of the same goal – to 'believe in absolute values' and either to 'compel their audience to accept these convictions' or to 'make fun of everything: of God, of the Vietnam war, of AIDS' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 112). The *comédie humaine*, based on Italian *commedia,* has the same goal of exploring

> all the trickeries of human nature; persuading people, duping them, taking advantage: it deals in urgent desires and its characters are concerned with survival. (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 116)

The inherently 'revolutionary' nature of *commedia*, with its constant subversion of social relationships and questioning of power systems (whether they be sovereign or

[172] All the *géodramatique*s can be approached politically. *Mystère* simply the staging of a metaphor, the absurd is often based on the reflection of illogical elements of society (bureaucracy, immigration, authoritarianism, etc.). Chorus equally has the possibility of being political depending on a choice of text by the student, as well as the improvisations leading to political alignments from the presentation of speeches.

disciplinary) for the benefit of the audience's laughter serves as a constant rebuke to censorship and the politically powerful (McGehee, 2015, p. 16).[173]

Historically, melodrama's popularity was built on its concern with the struggles of 'the less fortunate', maintaining the idealistic values of those who believed in a better future while actively mirroring the struggles of the audience, rather than portraying stories about the monarchy and upper classes (McCormick, 1994, p. 2). To say the work of the bouffon is not political is as ridiculous as the bouffon itself, as their target of mockery always reveals an underlying politic. The draw of popular theatre was rooted in its relevance – its constant shifting to accommodate the subjects of the times while retaining artistic authority – which in itself is a political statement. As David Bradby reflects on Lecoq's approach:

> He did not want to do Brecht, but he was very interested in discovering the popular roots of theatre... So his whole practice was about giving voice to the people, giving expression to the people. His four main dramatic territories[174] were all in their own way 'popular' art forms. It's not by chance that one of these was melodrama -the popular art form par excellence. He was interested in those basic situations of people saying goodbye, people in need. He reckoned that was his political statement. (in Murray, 2017, p. 9)

In providing students the opportunity to develop their own perspectives through the tools of the pedagogy – namely the technical elements of writing and further development of their individual auteurial aspect – the pedagogy perhaps enacts its clearest politic of all:

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[173] **Sovereign versus 'disciplinary powers' refers to Foucault's thinking, who recognised different systems of power; the older sovereign ruled by more obvious social hierarchy and class systems versus modern 'disciplinary' in which power is held and executed through institutions or larger, faceless organisations through surveillance and enforcement of rules (McGehee, 2015, p. 14).**

[174] Likely referring to melodrama, chorus*, comédie humaine*, and clown.

aligning the student not with the teacher's perspective, but prompting them to establish their own.

While it is true that the politics of the teachers remain relatively unknown, the students are indeed given space to develop a political view through the exploration of making new work, and the presentation of a clear point of view in students' works is often rewarded with a good critique. Potter reflects again on his time with Lecoq;

> You are good when you find this *quelque chose à dire* (something to say). It's a phrase he uses which I think is very interesting, because coming from my background I had always connected *having something to say* with being political. But Lecoq's *quelque chose à dire* is a very personal thing. When you are communicating something effective about your world - or yourself then you are finding something to say. Everyone has something to say. (in Murray, 2002, p. 39)

This reflection places Freire's philosophy front and centre, echoing that the student does indeed have something to say (Freire, 2017, p. 37), though not perhaps in the way that Fo seems to value. Fo's definition of political seems to be specific, relating to the open and clear declaration of a point of view, which forgoes the nuance of political positionality that is without clear solution or perspective. There is of course the argument that every action is inherently political, much like Potter suggests in his experience before Lecoq. In Sarah Grochala's consideration of what makes a 'political play', she cites her working definition of 'political' from Stefan Collini, who defines it as 'the important, inescapable, and difficult attempt to determine relation of power in a given space' (Collini in Grochala, 2017, p. 4). With this definition in mind she pulls from Barthes, reflecting, as I have, on the relationship between reader and text, stating that like the experience of Barthes' reader, a 'political act is a political act because we perceive it to be one, regardless of whether it was intended as one' (2017, p. 7). While Lecoq's intention may be to remain

'neutral', the questions raised about the shifts in authority between students and teachers within his pedagogy communicate a clear politic, though as Grochala points out, it will always be defined by outside interpretation. Fo's interpretation of Lecoq's pedagogy was that it lacked political engagement; mine, by contrast, is a strong political statement, necessarily influenced by the student themselves.

The choice to engage in art and performance is inherently political. A school cannot be apolitical – it is impossible, especially within this pedagogy, considering that parts of it were developed from the roots of the major political action of May '68, as well as anti-Nazi and anti-fascist resistance in France and Italy. There is, however, a difference between enforcing a political doctrine on students and letting them develop their own perspectives. Student and teacher Alan Fairbairn reflected on working with Lecoq:

> Since he keeps a distance from his students – and that's an admirable thing – you never really get to know what his political views are, or indeed his views on anything. There's no political mission, though I think at a profounder level people are encouraged to be subversive. The whole Lecoq style subverts, if you like, conventional theatre practice. (Fairbairn in Murray, 2002, p. 39)

Lecoq himself would likely agree with this observation on his pedagogy, stating in his own words:

> I am nobody; I am only a neutral point through which you must pass in order to better articulate your own theatrical voice. I am only there to place obstacles in your path so you can find your own way around them. (Lecoq in Murray, 2017, p. 16).

While this no doubt rings true, there is a contradiction. As with Fo's conception of politicisation, Lecoq neglects the fact that every decision is political, and that the shape of his pedagogy, with its strain of developing the student's authorial practice, demands the

student's autonomy- an approach that prompts intellectual and artistic emancipation and liberation.

Les commandes and the 'end'

The final assignment of Lecoq's training (for those who make it through the second year of training) is a 'commission', or an 'order' from the teachers, which arrives in the form of a title. Each student is assigned a title and given two weeks to develop their piece. The titles are often vaguely philosophical phrases, such as '*Il suffit d'y gouter', 'A la croisée des chemins', 'L'innconue*', '*Pas de panique*'.[175] There is a bank of titles that are recycled over the years (it is a great pleasure to find someone who had the same title as your own). Each student may choose how they wish to create their work – will they break out from the *autocours* form and write a script? Develop a more 'devising' style of working through introduction of outside materials and methods? Direct their own piece, or do a one-person performance? The only restriction is a time limit: 20 minutes maximum (and the standard restrictions on space and technical aspects that have come with the space from the beginning of training). The first week of this period is a week for 'writing', the second is for rehearsal, and in the third week the *commandes* are presented one after the other over the course of five days for invited guests and friends of the school (like the *soirées*).

In contrast to all other performances, these *commandes* are presented without prior knowledge of the teachers (even in the *enquêtes* the teachers have at least approved of the subject matter). From the moment they give the student their title until the

[175] 'It's Enough to Taste', 'At the Crossing of Paths', 'The Unknown', 'Don't Panic'. My own was '*C'est un risque à prendre*', meaning 'It's a risk to take'. My piece took the form of a dark comedy/farce with bouffon-esque characters.

performance begins for the greater public, the teacher is entirely unaware of what the student will do. After the performance the teachers give their final critique, and the students' training at the school will conclude. In observing the *commandes* what is immediately clear is the individuality of style that emerges from each performance. In revisiting the school a few years after training, I observed the *commandes* of the class of 2023 and was immediately struck by the experimentation with form. Every *commande* I was able to see (apart from a few strictly clown pieces) were performed with a mixture of multiple styles – from combinations of corporeal mime and mask, to *mystère* and chorus, to LEM-like explorations of materials in a clownish-chorus (Brune, 2022, n. Jun. 8-9 2023).[176] In reflecting on the other *commandes* I had witnessed from my own year and the year before, a similar approach emerged – aside from a few pieces that remained true to a single style (either clown, melodrama or *chœur* specifically), the majority of pieces blended and combined forms from within the pedagogy, while sometimes adding styles from outside of the school (such as musical theatre or styles of dance). Each piece is unique; there is rarely a common thread between them, in style or subject matter. Aside from their collective vocabulary of genres and writing practice, the opportunity to present their own work inevitably allows their individual perspectives and approaches to style to emerge through the work itself.

The inherent authority of students within the *autocours* prepares the student for this final task and serves as a launching point for the individual's professional *acteur*-auteurial practice. If there remains a question as to whether or not the pedagogy is invested in developing the student's authorial practice, the final assignment of *les commandes* should assuage any doubts. In front of a public audience, the school presents

[176] LEM – *Laboratoire d'étude de mouvement.*

the unknown work of their students; after two years of training each student presents original work in a style unique to their experience and expertise, written and crafted to take advantage of the necessary structural elements (rhythm, tempo, space, form, *durée*) to present a point of view, and performed with presence and attention to movement. They will present this work with authority, and if there are failures or mistakes – so be it.

The *autocours* and other autonomous exercises within the pedagogy provide the students with opportunities and training towards the development of their auteurial practice through the expectation that they will present work made through collaborative and interdisciplinary methods, supported by their relationship to the teacher in the unique role of the 'reader'. What emerges is work imbued with originality and authority. Since the work is inseparable from the student's own performance, the 'present author' simultaneously becomes the subject of their training and work, both as 'author' and 'text'. The living 'author' must then be approached as not only representative of their 'text' or performance, but inseparable from it, inhabiting the positionality of an 'active' author, or the *acteur-auteur*.

In considering the pedagogue as 'reader' of the work of the *acteur-auteur* student, the role of the Lecoq teacher becomes clearer as a sort of filter through which the student's work is reflected, providing them with a perspective concerned with the clarity or intention of their work rather than whether they are executing or creating work 'correctly'. The nature of the 'reader-pedagogue's' guidance must maintain an element of distance and impartiality; there can be humour, but there must be honesty, as well as resistance to directorial tastes or personal politics. What emerges from this careful balance of the 'reader's' distance, objectivity, and expectations of the student, and the student's own ability and will, is an exercise in autonomy; the student's innate auteurial ability honed into a practice and enacted through collaboration and the expectation of

created work. Their ‘personal style’ and ‘technique’ emerge from an innately liberatory practice that asserts that they, as artists, inherently contain the necessary knowledge and ability to ‘author’ their own work.

Chapter 7: Conclusions.
Towards 'meaning' and the life of the *acteur-auteur.*

'La vie n'est pas suffisant pour un artiste. Il encre une autre, plus belle pour lui, et pour les autres aussi.'

'Life isn't sufficient for an artist. He writes (inks) another, more beautiful for himself, and for others as well.'

– Jacques Lecoq[177]

I began this research with the question 'Who is the *acteur-auteur* of Jacques Lecoq's pedagogy?' This research has divided itself into two main areas of inquiry based on two questions that are entangled within that main question: first, who is the *acteur-auteur*, and second, how do they emerge from, or appear within, Lecoq's pedagogy? In examining the historical and cultural conditions from which the practices of the *acteur* and the *auteur* emerged, clear definitions of these practices could be established and collated, allowing me to outline the foundations for the *acteur-auteur*. I have established that a clear link between the practices of both *acteur* and *auteur* is a unique relationship to writing, one determined by individual authorship and a practice not necessarily reliant on the development of material text or written word, and flexible to the shifting styles of popular forms; these forms often defined by the power afforded practitioners over their creative work, often in rebellion against government or societal restrictions, or those with power over the industry. Having established the framework of defining elements of practice (outlined in Part II) and aligning them with the Sarris model of *auteur* theory (technique, personal style, and meaning), I moved to seek them out with in Lecoq's

[177] (*Autour de Jacques Lecoq*, 2016 my translation)

pedagogy – to understand if or how they were transmitted by the teachers or exercised by the student within the framework of the school.

I considered how the practice of the *acteur-auteur* might be translated into a pedagogical approach and found a clear distinction between taught elements and expected approaches to creating work built into the shape of Lecoq's pedagogy. The role of improvisation and movement at the core of Lecoq's original pedagogy (pre-1968) presented a clear method of writing, identifying the elements of play, presence (or *neutre*), and structure as a formula from which the students to develop their own writing practice. From the writing practice, I found that the elements of the *autocours* and its latent activist and French-Maoist roots provides the students the chance to refine their work through opportunity, 'expectation', and the unique engagement of the teachers as the 'reader' of their work; establishing a relationship between 'author' and text' as an inseparable entity, existing as long as it is performed in a common present. Through this development of self rather than a classical 'banking' system of teaching, the student is able to evolve their writing practice into something auteurial, refined through a process of collaboration, interdisciplinarity, originality, and the confidence that their work is indicative of a certain quality- claiming their space as an 'author'. Rather than the 'death of the author', in the spirit of Barthes, what becomes evident is a life of the *acteur-auteur*, their text bound to their performance and the relationship of the 'reader' and 'text' becoming one of the 'reader-pedagogue' and *acteur/auteur*/text.

The final circle – 'meaning'

To complete the analysis of the Sarris model of *auteur* theory in relation to this pedagogy, the final element of 'meaning' should be defined. From the writing/improvisation of the 'technique' of the *acteur-auteur*, to the necessity of

collaboration, interdisciplinarity, originality and legitimacy demanded within their 'personal style', the final element of 'meaning' should be the motivation or point of view unique of their work. Nevertheless, the 'meaning' of the work of the *acteur-auteur* cannot to be defined as it must be defined by the student or artist themselves. They may perhaps begin to find a spark of it in their *commande,* but as Lecoq himself states, it may be five years or so before the student will begin to understand the impact of their training (Murray, 2002, p. 38).

As with existentialist thought which served as inspiration to the *auteurs* of film theory, the 'meaning' of this work remains at the behest of the individual and will be defined by the autonomy of that individual to seek it out. **Sartre's existentialist thought exploring authenticity and identity (explored briefly in Chapter 2) maintains that 'man' is defined by their actions, and the authenticity of those actions will define the individual's meaning for life (Sartre, 2007, p. 51).** This concern of 'meaning', which rests at the heart of Sarris's *auteur* theory framework and which Sidiropoulou highlights in her analysis of the director-*auteurs* of theatre (Sidiropoulou, 2011, p. 8), aligns with Rancière's theory of pedagogy and his concern with 'will'. In his reflection on 'meaning', he reveals:

> Meaning is the work of the will. This is the secret of universal teaching. It is also the secret of those we call geniuses: the relentless work to bend the body to necessary habits, to compel the intelligence to new ideas, to new ways of expressing them; to redo on purpose what chance once produced, and to reverse unhappy circumstances into occasions for success (1991, p. 56)

Sartre's position is confirmed – again, the will of the individual leads to action, and then the creation of meaning. If this is the case, then a learning environment which places at its

core the expectation that students take action in, or enact, their learning is in fact creating the meaning at the heart of an auteurial practice.

Perhaps at its base, the pedagogy of the *acteur-auteur* relies on the teacher's 'expectation' of the student and the student's 'will' to meet that expectation. What is unclear for both parties is what exactly that expectation entails. For example, if the expectation is "you will discover and create a 'new theatre'", then the student must figure out what the 'new theatre' is; as if it is 'new', it cannot be taught. While there are no 'geniuses' within Lecoq's pedagogy or classroom, there is the 'will' to work – a desire to discover the 'new work' that might be created by themselves.

When I look at what I have taken away from my training, my material archive of my time at l'École Jacques Lecoq, I have very little. Five notebooks with mainly lists of practical elements, exercises, and brief reflections, a poster of the LEM studio space, various administrative letters from the school, invitations to the *soirées* and *commandes*, DVDs with recordings of certain performances or photos from *soirées*, a beautiful certificate of completion, two paper mâché masks, and a cheap, plastic clown nose. There is always an element of sadness when I view these things, mainly characterized by a rush of frustration that I didn't record more, that I wasn't more rigorous in my note taking or reflective on my experiences at the time. I worry that these things will cease to exist in my body and my memory will fail me. Inevitably, things will be lost, but that is partially the point.

Further research may be done on questions around the 'ownership' of collaboration, since 'authorship' does historically imply an element of legal ownership. However, that is beyond the scope of this project. A few interdisciplinary connections

presented in this project could be further explored, such as Lecoq's relationship to film and its impact on his creative work. A stronger critique from the field of critical pedagogies could be undertaken. There is a great deal more to be discovered in terms of the potential benefits of this pedagogy on the development of future artists and cultural impacts in other parts of the world. All in all, the field of research regarding Lecoq's pedagogy is relatively small and could be broadened exponentially.

What may emerge from this research are new perspectives on Lecoq's pedagogy and how they may be further applied to the project of emancipation or at least strengthening student agency within actor training or theatre making in general. This approach might establish a sense of confidence and knowledge to develop the artist's work no matter the circumstance. In strengthening the student's point of view and ability to communicate that perspective, the knowledge they attain extends beyond their schooling, and establishes a system for continued, lifelong growth and, hopefully, the ability to advocate for themselves and others. They may fulfil Lecoq's 'utopian' desire and become 'consummate livers of life and complete artists on stage' (Lecoq, Carasso and Lallias, 2009, p. 16) – as the *acteur-auteur* who lives!

Appendix

Excerpts from Training Journals and notebooks:

From Personal notebook I: L'École Jacques Lecoq, Première Année, October 2015-May 2016.

- **October 5, 2015**

'From movement (class) we split into two assigned groups and my group went into an improv class. Our teacher… asked volunteers to recreate the same situation of two people walking from different directions into a space, and seeing how they react to each other if they react at all.
Our last class was *autocours*, where for the week, we split into smaller groups and create a short piece of theatre. This week, we were given the restrictions of no words, no props or costumes, and our theme was solely "a place" and "an event".'

- **October 8, 2015**

'Our last class was impro… (our teacher) designed a room for us, told us we were strangers waiting in a space for the same person, and called us up 5 by 5 to enter the room, and see what happens. We all went up, and told her our names. By the time she got to mine she couldn't figure it out, and neither could anyone else. There was quite an uproar. The improv went well thought, and it was somehow easier for me to get up today. Maybe because we were all getting up…Either way, someone complimented me on my expressive face, so I'll take that as a nice sign."'

- **October 9, 2015**

'We were given another *autocours* class where we finalized our presentation. We didn't love it, but it was what we had. We then all gathered in the main room and every team presented their *autocours*. Some groups were stopped, some went through their whole scenes. Ours was stopped very close to the end (which was a blessing really) and our main critique was that our movements were not clear, and that we didn't show humanity since most people on the metro didn't help the woman. It was just criticism and I don't think we did better or worse than anyone really.'

- **November 9, 2015**

'Our assignment this week is to re-create Gare du Nord with neutral mask.'

From Personal notebook II: L'École Jacques Lecoq, Première Année,

May–June 2016.

- **June 9, 2016**

‘We did an exercise we had at the beginning of the year, walking into a fancy room where you are waiting for someone with a bunch of strangers. We then watched more 20 movements.’

From Personal notebook III: L’École Jacques Lecoq, Deuxième Année, October 2016–April 2017

- **October 14, 2016**

‘Our next assignment is to continue working in our companies and represent solitude in the city.’

- **November 7, 2016**

‘We begin to move slowly into the Comédie humaine.

In class… 2-3 people (homeless or otherwise) encounter money and must trick the other(s) into not finding it/ distracting them. They must not outwardly acknowledge their find, they want the other to be unaware of the gain.’

- **November 11, 2016**

‘Our next assignment is to come to school with masks and create an autocours around convincing someone of something/to do something.’

- **January 13, 2017**

‘In bouffon, present an everyday event.’

- **January 20, 2017**

‘A group of people perform something behind a curtain (so the audience can’t see) while another group observes what is happening, and through their act of observing give hints to the audience of what they are seeing, without speaking/directly referencing. – *Autocours*’

From Personal notebook IV: L’École Jacques Lecoq, Deuxième Année, April 2017-May 2017

- **April 14, 2017**

'As a clown, do the last goodbye exercise from neutral mask. This means they can break rules, swim after the ship, get confused, be mad at the person leaving, etc. Do the Long Journey as a clown, again with the liberty to break rules.

Presenting *autocours*- As clowns, perform a perfect number.'

- **April 21, 2017**

'Dancing as a clown. Finding your clown's dance. Trying it to different styles of music, though the dance must stay the same.

Autocours – Create a number that goes wrong.'

From Personal notebook: September 2022- December 2023

***Les Commandes* – Promotion 2021-2023: (notes from performances I was able to attend)**

- **'Thursday June 8th:**
  1. Future men & Alexa (French)
     Mime Corporeal, Bouffon

  2. Violent masks, the downtrodden man (English/Italian)

  3. Bursting through the wall, discovering the movement of paper (silent)
     Mime Corporeal & LEM?

  4. Fragmented seaside melodrama ghost story
     Elements/melodrama (English)

  5. Clown cheating in a math class (French)

  6. Church shooting melodrama/Chœur (French)

  7. Norwegian ship w/ monster- mask/mystère?

  8. Mystere Chœur – "the everyday you must listen for" (English)

  9. A mask goes fishing, catches only garbage (French)
     Mime Corporeal/Mask

  10. Mystère/Chœur w/ chickens (silent)

"The Call"'

- **Friday June 9:**
  1. (female) Mask who wants to go on vacation, plagued by men, leaves them (French)

  2. London dinner party, plateau, Chœur w/ French man (English)

  3. 3 clowns flying a plane (French)

  4. Ball heads & white hands reaching to a timer, piano, feather, curtains (silent) Mystere/ clown(?)/ chœur – "Pas de Panique"

  5. Blue and gold pile, chorus about loss (English) Soundscape

  6. Murder mystery- fake noses, bouffon servants against the dame- Salt & Pepper.

  7. Losing control of body, fractured time (French)
     Movement – genre?

  8. Clown goes camping and tries to seduce, is disappointed (English)

  9. Vrais Pantomime- guy gives girl chicken (live, real chicken…), girl kills chicken, guy kills girl.

  10. Absurd of the path of life (French)

  11. German & others chorus.'

From Personal notes (transcribed): Pedagogical Stage at l'École Jacques Lecoq in Avignon, September 23rd-October 4th, 2024

Monday, September 23

'Just so I don't forget about what we did yesterday. Yesterday was the first day of pedagogical training at Lecoq. There's about 17 of us. We began the day meeting with P. and A., and they just kind of told us… that they just kind of didn't really tell us what we were going to do but sort of said to us, um, we are going to – "number one this is a part of our research as well as it's a part of us teaching, so we're all kind of engaging in in this research and continuing on in this research that Lecoq started". And then they said to us very clearly that the way that – what they were teaching us is they were teaching us how **they** teach, they were showing us how **they specifically** teach, not how Lecoq taught, not how Norman Taylor taught, not how Jason taught, just very much how **they** teach, and that there's ultimately no real right way, it's just what they think is useful. Because

ultimately, we will never be able to teach in any other way outside from our own way, so…

We then kind of all introduced ourselves and then had a brief movement class with A. where we spent the time, you know, walking around the space, and then walking around the space and making eye contact. And A. was really encouraging us to, um, you know, to, to really look at each other and to connect, and so, you know, keep, whenever you make an eye contact kind of hold it as long as it's correct and then when you both decide it's over you move on. We did this from very close up to very far away, to doing it where you just hold it for too, too, long, and you can sense that the time is too long, and it's like kind of boring and uncomfortable, and you know making sure that you are actually, I mean present isn't the right word, but ready to react to whatever happens. … we did it from distance, up close, um and then yeah did it once where instead of both of you leaving at the same time one person leaves first, and then what is that to sort of you know either continue looking after them or holding the space or whatever it is that you end up doing. … Something that felt important was it felt very much like it was, I mean, it's sort of marking the beginning and the end of something and, in the middle, being **ready** for something to happen. Nothing happens, but you're ready in case something does, and it feels very much like setting up a page to write, in the sense of just like creating the space where the writing could happen and then, you know, ultimately deciding not to do it, so the practice of setting up that space and being ready to react.

We then had an improvisation class with P. where we did the… you walk into the room where you're supposed to meet someone and he's not there, and, you know, it's a big it's a beautiful, grand room, and there's a buffet laid out, and there's … a rug, a chandelier, a painting, and a window, and as you wait four other people join you there (ONE BY ONE) and you don't necessarily know them, maybe you do, … and for this P. was saying that this exercise really marks four key things, and I don't know if I'll remember them- one of them is rhythm[178]…you understand when someone enters the room too early, you understand when someone enters the room too late, so figuring out the rhythm of entering… there are three others and I just can't remember them right now unfortunately… But again P. talks about this as we're trying in the first three weeks of training which, it was what we covered yesterday, it's not about making theatre it's about trying to really mimic life and what happens in life… and being ready again to sort of react to whatever happens around you…'

Tuesday, September 24

'We did some neutral mask exercises, primarily just waking up and seeing the ocean- we didn't do waking up for the "first time" and the bit where you kind of "discover your body", instead what we did was just waking up, seeing the ocean, and just having that desire to go to the ocean. I got up and did it, and P. was like "yeah, not bad." ...I did it with a couple of other people. She said …"not bad. there could be more desire though", in what we were doing. In what me and another guy were doing…and there came a point where people would be critiquing other people who were doing the neutral mask, like "ohh like maybe someone's starting was a little farther out so they kind of felt off balance" or like "ohh this person saw the water at their feet and then saw the ocean"

[178] It's clear after the fact what she was referencing were the elements of structure: rhythm, timing, space, and form or duration.

like “they just did it in kind of different ways” and P. was like “yeah, that doesn't matter. Who cares. What matters is that…was the theme there? Was the theme of seeing the ocean and a desire to go to the ocean? Did they wake up, did they go see the ocean? Yeah, they did it, and they did it in the way that's “proper”, so who cares. Sure, at the very beginning you want to sort of point out student’s tensions, but in reality, if they do it, they do it. So again, kind of echoing this thing that A. was saying when we were doing the boat sequence.

So after the waking we did the “adieu”, which is – you walk down, you're walking or… you're on a dock, you see the boat, you run down the dock, you wave the final goodbye to someone leaving on a boat, then you drop your hand- she pointed out the tension of when you drop your hand, that there's that sort of elastic, stretching tension- and then it finally falls… and then you kind back up –you turn around, you walk back along with the dock and then you go on your way. Once we did that one by one and then as a group of seven, and sort of doing it… together as a group, it's really difficult. And again, noting this thing, that if we're doing it together, we don't all have to do it in the same way, but there has to be a thing together. And throughout this there's also been this thing of recognizing the timing. So if someone takes too long to do something, we feel it, the audience feels it, and sometimes the actor feels it, sometimes they don't, but this thing of the “*le temps juste”* is always a thing that that is sort of being trained during these exercises.’

Wednesday, September 25

‘…and P. said “You know, this is something that you should never, do but just because we're in this class, I'm going to give you feedback as you do it”. So, we got to see her give feedback to people as they were going through the various motions, and it was never a thing of directing as it was a thing of just sort of helping. And she told us later never do this… because what ends up happening, and this is the thing that you need to watch as a teacher, is that it will become a -like a directing thing….You don't want to be a director. It doesn't matter what <u>you</u> think, it doesn't matter what you like or what you don't like, it's if they're doing the exercise or not. And that's a really tricky line to kind of balance…Anyway so then back in the last session we sort of all gave G. some feedback, kind of just as a group -it was mostly P. of course- and then P. asked us to get into small groups and to- after T. did his- asked us to formulate feedback for him. So we each, each individual formulated …made a sentence and then she'd sort of critique what we said. And the biggest critique was “Make it simple.” Do not use ‘I feel’ or ‘I think’ or whatever - it's not about you, it's about what they did, so make it very clear. Keep it short. And you'll never be able to give a comment on everything that they've done, so just like choose one or two things, give that feedback and then move on. Make it as clear as possible. So, for example, I said that- “It was a bit short” and she said “OK, well what was short?” and I said “Well, specifically, the forest was short… the time- le temps dans la forêt, n’étais pas juste » and she said “OK, well what do you mean by ‘juste?’” and I was like “It was it was too short”. So, she's like “OK… the forest wasn't big enough. That's what you should say- ‘the forest wasn't big enough.’” …which is interesting because … what I was thinking about was time, and she translated that into space, which is ultimately so much more useful to someone who is in the mask.’

'…And then someone asked - "What do you do if someone is really struggling with this. What do you do when someone just, like, cannot do it?" and P. was like -"You can tell them they're bad. You don't want to be like 'Oh my God!' - you don't you don't make it dramatic, you just say – 'oh! God that was – Oh la vache, c'était mauvais!'" you know? …There should be a touch of humor in it, it's not… she was saying, "it's not serious- there are so many worse things in the world that are going on and we're just we're here doing theater. C'est de la luxe!" We're just- like, it's not important- it's not serious, it's literally play…'

Thursday, September 26, pt. 1

'… we were doing the what I think is called Le moulin (NO, IT IS LES MASSEU) the swinging of the arms up and over the head, and one of the students asked '…when the hand goes to the back of the head is it is it straight up or is it the side?" and A. was like "Who cares ? Who cares- are you doing the movement? Then like yeah, great, it's fine." There's no… it doesn't help to be exact it doesn't help to be… to have a formula that says you are doing exactly what is expected. There is there's so much more - it doesn't matter if you do it a certain way, that's fine, you do it your way. And again, this is so reflective of the pedagogy as a whole; it's not a formula, it's sort of a loose outline of what's going on. it's not an exact science, which is which I think is great ultimately, and also very frustrating as someone who's trying to learn how to teach this thing.'

Friday September 27 pt. 1

'For the boat movement: first session we set out the path, just did the whole thing, just tried it out. Second one, we put in the counts, found the verbs that described it; the third one we tried to find the life in it, put the life in it; and then the 4th one, we did everything, we revisited everything, and then try to put the game in it. And then the last would be finding the pleasure in it.'

Sunday September 29

'Dans le bateau, ils nous ont donné l'histoire, le récit c'est more like a story than a recipe, the story of the thing. The deuxième c'est l'articulation de la phrase.'

Wednesday October 2

'For P.'s class we did improvisation, and we began with, I don't think we did- I think we left melodrama behind, but we moved into Commedia. We didn't have masks, we weren't moving using masks just because the students create their own masks, but you know P. was saying that Lecoq found- it was very important to, what's interesting about the melodrama coming directly before the commedia is that melodrama is so full of belief. They believe in justice, they believe in equality, they believe in…a God, and you know, 'good'. And the commedia, they don't- I don't think they believe in the same way, but the …Commedia is – everybody is – it's similar in the way that…everybody's

suffering, everybody's dealing with something, but everybody's also out for themself. So they are going for their own interests, and they're going to find whatever possible way to do it. however, that being said, they're also super naïve. and they're super full of pride- the comedy humaine – if melodrama is sort of exposing the best of people, or whatever, and commedia is exploring, kind of the worst. So the exercise that we did was …

…and so we did three people sitting on a bench and then a coin is tossed, or a coin is dropped, and lands in front of the three people. so the three people have to figure out 'how do I get it so that the other people don't get it?' So what are the tactics that you use? … maybe one person … gets up to stretch and they go and put their foot on it, and then the other two people have to figure out how do they get that person's foot off it? but again, because they are so… the commedia characters are so naïve, they might … one might say 'Oh my God you have a spider on your back!' and the person will freak out because they have a spider on their back and they'll leave the coin unattended, and so someone else will get the coin. And then … maybe they'll pick it up and they'll take it back to the bench, and they'll sit down, and maybe someone else will say like 'Oh my God, you know it's really hot, some people died yesterday.' like 'oh yeah, you have to … make sure that your shirts not too tight so that you get enough air and that you're cooling yourself down….' and you know maybe the person … starts to do that and leaves their coin unattended and then goes again

... and what was interesting to notice was specifically with the Commedia pieces, you have the situation where people… it's not about winning. and a lot of times what will happen is someone will get the coin and they'll hold onto it for dear life, and that doesn't work because then that stops everybody- that basically stops the play. What you need then, is like, if you get the coin you need to feel a success of it, but ultimately you need to let it go again in order for the game to continue playing…the goal is not to win, the goal is to play the game. and I think that's what's really important. I mean it's important in theatre, it's important in everything, but sometimes …the more competitive actors sort of do kind of get, caught up in that. So it's interesting to watch it's interesting to recognize that.'

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