

Being an actor / becoming a trainer: the embodied logos of intersubjective experience in a somatic acting process



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Declaration of Originality

I, Christina Kapadocha, understand the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama definition of plagiarism and declare that the submission presented here is my own work. Information derived from published or unpublished work of others has been formally acknowledged.

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Abstract

This practice-as-research thesis documents a sustained period of research grounded in my experience as an actress who has become an actor-trainer within UK-based actor-training institutions. It explores the development of an original somatic actor-training methodology within different theatre teaching and performing environments. This research concentrates on challenging dualistic binaries of mind-body, inner-outer, self-other and the universalizing of the individual actor's experience as problematic logocentrism in Stanislavski-inspired actor-training traditions. It is informed in practice by Linda Hartley's IBMT (Integrative Bodywork and Movement Therapy) somatic approach, which is based upon Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's Body-Mind Centering® (BMC®) principles. I suggest the practical modification of Cohen's developmental process of embodiment in the actor-training context through the shaping of contingent, processual and intersubjective/intercorporeal explorations which I coin as *fluid structures*.

Rooted in the interconnection of theory and practice, or praxis, this thesis is based upon the original notion of each actor's *embodied logos*. This term is inspired by Merleau-Ponty's theoretical understanding of *logos as flesh* that allows the perception of logos as an embodied and intersubjective experience. An emergent new somatic actor-training pedagogy contributes to contemporary actor-training practices and languages revisiting the dialogue between the actor and the trainer through the innovative intersubjective role of the *trainer-witness* and the relationally aware *actor-mover/actor-witness*. Following this processual study I articulate and respond to thorny ethical issues in actor training regarding emergent dissonances between therapy and training, training and rehearsal/performance processes, the trainer and the director, the edges of actors' emotional expression and sense of freedom.

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Introduction

What this essay as a whole is about is something to be lived or felt or done in your own body. (Behnke 1995:317)

Being an actor / becoming a trainer: the embodied logos of intersubjective experience in a somatic acting process is a practice-as-research (PaR) study through my experiential development as emerging somatic actor-trainer.¹ My subjective experience as an actress who steps into the role of the actor-trainer through the praxical development of a somatic actor-training methodology is explored as an embodied activity and a process of becoming. I do so through the practical modification of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's developmental process of embodiment in the actor-training context. I apply Cohen's Body-Mind Centering® (BMC®) principles as I have been practising them through Linda Hartley's Integrative Bodywork & Movement Therapy (IBMT) somatic practice and professional training.² Specific to the creation of this somatic acting methodology, which is situated amongst numerous contemporary embodied actor-training pedagogies, is its formulation in practice for and with the actor-trainee in dialogue with a particular acting environment. Grounded in the interconnection of theory and practice through a specific interest in the dialogue between

¹ From now on, PaR will stand for practice-as-research methodology. Specifically this PaR thesis uses Robin Nelson's triangular praxical model which explores the dynamic interplay between 'know how', 'know that', and 'know what' (2013). Nevertheless, I should clarify that I do not take Nelson's model at face value but I elaborate it according to the needs and the identity of my project.

² From now on, BMC will stand for Body-Mind Centering and IBMT for Integrative Bodywork & Movement Therapy. The use of the names of these two interconnected practices in this thesis are informed by Linda Hartley's 'Guidelines for use of the names Body-Mind Centering® (BMC®) and Integrative Bodywork & Movement Therapy (IBMT)' document (see Appendix, pp.173-174). The different stages of my IBMT training in parallel to the development of my praxis are made explicit throughout my writing. Therefore I would like to clarify that I have been developing my somatic actor-training methodology not as an accredited BMC or IBMT practitioner but as an actress and emerging somatic actor-trainer through continuing somatic professional development. I became a certified IBMT practitioner in April 2016. The main reading sources on BMC that are used throughout this thesis are *Sensing, Feeling and Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering* (Cohen, 2012) and *Wisdom of the Body Moving: An Introduction to Body-Mind Centering* (Hartley, 1995).

actor training and somatic movement practices, this research aims at suggesting a response to what I identify as problematic logocentrism in actor training.³

I observe that despite the ongoing and diverse application of embodied pedagogies in actor-training institutions, and the current increasing academic interest in practice-based creative analysis, there is still a gap in the understanding, conceptualization and dissemination of these valuable integrated approaches.⁴ From the point of view of this project this problematic gap lies in the fact that actor-trainers continue to assume and cultivate a practical and theoretical understanding of acting as a logocentric process. The logocentric paradigm in acting is discussed in this thesis through twentieth century scientific thinking and its influence upon Konstantin Stanislavski who is widely regarded as having developed the first

³ Somatic movement practices, outlined in the relevant section of this chapter (pp. 19-21), are usually defined in one word as somatics or Somatics. The term somatics, either with small or capital 's', refers to Thomas Hanna's categorization of body-based practices and experiential research (1976). These practices included movement approaches developed by Gerda Alexander (1908-1994), Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955), Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984), Elsa Gindler (1885-1961), and Rudolf Laban (1879-1958). There are currently discussions and criticisms about whether the term somatics/Somatics is too generic. For instance, Martha Eddy has identified three categories of somatic practices: somatic psychology, somatic bodywork, and somatic movement which are further described as Somatic Movement Education and Therapy (SME&T) (2009:7). Amongst Feldenkrais practitioners, Yvan Joly argues that somatic education should be differentiated from the broader domain of somatics which includes numerous practices that explore the body-mind integration from martial arts to bodily oriented psychotherapies (2000). Within the non-universalizing intention of this PaR thesis, instead of the single term somatics and particularly its capitalized form, I prefer using the phrasing *somatic approaches to movement education* or *somatic movement practices*. They are discussed in relation to movement-based actor-training approaches as well as the burgeoning field of practice-based doctoral research within the contemporary conservatory actor-training context.

⁴ Among landmark recent publications that showcase the rise in academic interest in the understanding of fundamental ideas that underlie the formation and communication of actor-training practices are Alison Hodge's *Actor Training* (2010) and the companion volume *The Actor Training Reader* (2015) edited by Mark Evans. The dialogue between practice and theoretical reflection is evident in written work by contemporary practitioners such as Philip Zarrilli (2002, 2013) and in the analysis of Zarrilli's own embodied actor-training practice (2009, 2014). The practice of pioneers in actor-training traditions since the work of Konstantin Stanislavski is re-approached through the recent series *Routledge Performance Practitioners* (first published in August 2003 on the practice of Vsevolod Meyerhold by Jonathan Pitches), whilst ongoing themes are discussed in academic journals such as *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*. The active interconnection between academia and practice is also manifested in gatherings and conferences organized by working groups such as the TaPRA (The Theatre and Performance Research Association) Performer Training and the Acting focus group at ATHE (Association for Theatre in Higher Education). This new research direction is also connected to Robin Nelson's practice-as-research methodology (2006, 2013) which was further explored in other works such as the TaPRA associated volume *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance* (2011) edited by Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson. The critical engagement with actor-training traditions and contemporary practices seems to flourish at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This trend is crucial to the conceptualization of this PaR project which argues that the understanding of the process involved in the development of an actor-training discourse is necessary for an effective and aware communication between the actor-trainer and the actor-trainee. This understanding includes relevant philosophical ideas, ethical implications, desired outcomes and applications.

systematic actor-training approach in Europe. According to the predominant scientific paradigm in fields such as anatomy, physiology, and psychology, *the human body* appears to be singular, stable, disconnected from its environment and one's intellectual perception. I argue that the application of these ideas in the formulation and teaching of actor-training pedagogies has become problematic for the development of the actor's emergent embodied awareness, individual creativity and expression for two reasons. First they indicate an objectification of the actor's experience perpetuating binaries such as mind and body, inner and outer, self and other. Second, they imply a mechanistic and homogenizing universalization of the human body that denies the actors' multiple subjectivities.

From this point of departure the question that preoccupies this PaR thesis is: how could I formulate a somatic actor-training process in order to respond to the problematic logocentrics of dualism and universalism in contemporary conservatory actor training? I suggest that this practical investigation could be facilitated by Cohen's developmental process of embodiment which explores the subjective understanding of one's embodied experience through intersubjective/intercorporeal dynamics such as movement, touch, and verbal/sound input. Therefore, as emerging somatic actor-trainer, I concentrate on the investigation of the dialogue between the individuality of the actor and the actor-trainer, the actor and the actor, the actor and the group, introducing the original non-hierarchical identity of the *trainer-witness* and the relational awareness of the *actor-mover/actor-witness*.⁵ The philosophy that underlies the shaping of all the somatic acting explorations developed within this praxis is described through a new practical language of *fluid structures* that aims at

⁵ I borrow the terms *witnessing*, *witness* and *mover* from the somatic practice of Authentic Movement which additionally informs my somatic acting process as part of the IBMT diploma training with Hartley. Authentic Movement was formed by Mary Whitehouse (1910-2001) and further developed by practitioners such as Janet Adler and Joan Chodorow. Adler first used the notion of witness inspired by the Jungian psychiatrist John Weir Perry (1914-1988) in order to define the role of an active observer within a dynamic witness-mover relationship (Adler 2002). Usually without moving, the witness 'contains' or 'holds' the moving participant (mover) following the mover's emergent embodied expression through her own embodied experience while observing. On the somatic practice of Authentic Movement see among others the two volumes of essays edited by Patrizia Pallaro (1999, 2007). For my original development of the terms and processes of witnessing in this PaR project see Chapter Two, pp.66-68.

challenging a pre-determined universalising of all actors' embodied experiences and perceptions. For the theoretical conceptualization of each actor's unique and intersubjective experience, I propose the notion of *embodied logos* which is informed by Merleau-Ponty's understanding of *logos as flesh*.⁶

As an actress I have generally explored four ways of thinking and acting through my body: practising movement training for performance such as modern dance and movement improvisation; holistic approaches to voice integrating movement and acting; body-based movement education systems such as Alexander technique, Laban movement analysis, and BMC/IBMT-informed practice; movement-based approaches to actor training such as Stanislavski's active analysis, Grotowski-based explorations, and Meyerhold's Biomechanics. Finally, as a researcher I started exploring the integration of embodied perception, reflection, and theorization of the actor-training process through the PaR methodology employed in this thesis. Within these diverse practices included in the context of my training and research I have identified as a common thread the investigation of the actor's embodiment. Therefore, I should like first to outline this project's understanding of embodiment in the development of contemporary actor-training tradition, situating my practice in this lineage. Following this short overview I will introduce the theoretical framework of this PaR thesis and my concept of *embodied logos*.

A short overview of embodiment in actor training: embodiment in this PaR thesis

Embodiment is a much-debated term in theatre and cognitive studies and it is not the purpose of the following section to exhaust this debate. My intention is to outline the development of the understanding of embodiment as concept and process in actor training. The conceptualization of the actor's embodiment as it is still broadly perceived in actor-

⁶ In Merleau-Ponty's complicated and unfinished discussion of the carnal perception of logos, it is quite difficult to identify a single definition that could reflect his intersubjective perspective on the notion. My description of Merleau-Ponty's corporeal understanding of *logos as flesh* is based upon Gail Stenstad's choice of words in her article 'Merleau-Ponty's Logos: The Sens-ing of Flesh' (1993:52-61).

training institutions was established in early twentieth century European actor training by the Russian actor and director Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938). Even though Stanislavski's objective was the exploration of embodiment in acting as a holistic experience that connects the actor's inner and outer sense of self, the practitioner's work was inevitably shaped within the scientific paradigm of his time. Reflecting this contemporaneous thinking, which was characterized by Cartesian body-mind dualism, Stanislavski's language and practice was infused with dualistic assumptions about mind-body, inner-outer, self-other as well as universal implications for the objectification of the actor's single body. His discourse was based on the assumption of an objective and universal verbal language (Zarrilli 2002:10).

On a practical level, the objectification of the actor's embodied experience could be identified in Stanislavski's perception of actor training as a combination of *experiencing* and *embodiment* (Stanislavski 2008, 2010, my emphasis). Whereas experiencing refers to the actor's 'inner theatrical sense of self', Stanislavski's embodiment was initially defined as the physical training that cultivates the actor's *mechanical apparatus*.⁷ His objective to train the actor's body in order to move *correctly* was actualized through practices such as Swedish gymnastics, acrobatics, dance, flexibility of movement, and Dalcroze eurhythmics (Stanislavski 2008:356-364). This rigorous physical training, as has been discussed in several studies, emphasized the cultivation of the actor's body through principles such as discipline, technical skills, transcendence of discomfort, and efficiency (see Keefe and Murray 2007, Evans 2009, 2015, Pitches and Popat 2011). The 'scientific' and 'mechanistic' approach that objectifies the actor's body as an 'instrument' of expression is still largely dominant in actor training, even in embodied pedagogies such as Laban movement analysis and Alexander technique.⁸

⁷ See *Figure 17* Carnicke 2009, Pitches 2006:38, Whyman 2008:40.

⁸ Laban's concern with an objective human movement analysis into simple and complex bodily actions is visible in his early publications on his movement language and system of notation (1926, 1928), as well as in his later work (1950, 1960). For instance, in *The Mastery of Movement* (1960) Laban's objective is 'to give the student of movement an introduction to exercises designed to train the body as an instrument of expression' (1960:25). This movement expression consists of 'one of the various combinations of the subdivision of body,

Within the development of Stanislavski-inspired actor-training legacies the actor's embodied process was approached either as representation of emotions (mainly through the American Method acting), or through its idealization suggested by avant-garde actor-training approaches (such as Grotowski's objective for the actor's transparent consciousness). According to Erika Fischer-Lichte's semiotic interpretation, the actor's body became a text 'composed in the natural language of emotions' or 'a text with the "raw material for sign processes"' (Lichte in Ramirez 2011:24). However, in line with recent studies and contemporary embodied actor-training practices, I argue that the actor's embodiment is a process beyond the training of an external mechanism or the representation of an internal process: 'the actor is constructed through not one body, but many' (Evans 2009:170). Current movement-based approaches to actor training, within which I situate my praxis, stress the nature of embodiment as an intersubjective process through a dynamic interconnection between mind and body, inner and outer, self and other/others.

Actor-training processes developed by practitioners such as Eugenio Barba (1936 -), Anne Bogart (1951 -), Włodzimierz Staniewski (1950 -), and Phillip Zarrilli (1947 -) cultivate the actor's 'bodymind', self-awareness and spontaneity. The practitioners combine the objective of their practices to transcend dualistic binaries between the actor's internal and external expression with the use of terms such as bodymind or mindbody. According to Anna Fenimore 'advances in technology and science, and also in philosophy, are breaking down binaries of *the body* in modern thought...and terms that conflate the historically opposed binaries are becoming naturalized' (2011:20). I argue though that this 'naturalization' in actor

time, space, and muscular energy' (1960:52). However, at the same time, it is important for the student 'not only to become aware of the various articulations in the body and of their use in creating rhythmical and spatial patterns, but also of the mood and inner attitude produced by bodily actions' (1960:25). On the contemporary preservation of the 'scientifically' informed Labanotation see Davies 2006. Moreover, despite Alexander's underlying principle of 'psychophysical unity', implications of 'mechanistic' objectification of the actor's body can be identified in his notion of 'primary control' (Alexander 1995:207, 148). According to Alexander's term of primary control, the head is the central mechanism of human organism and its 'right direction' allows the development of physical and expressive efficiency: 'if we get the right direction from this primary control, the control of the rest of the organism is a simple matter' (1995:148). Alexander integrated his 'mechanistic' understanding of the human organism through a right or wrong primary control with the notion of 'sensory appreciation' in one of his 'teaching aphorisms': 'Sensory appreciation conditions conception- you can't know a thing by an instrument that is wrong' (1995:206).

training when used without clarifying the aspect of actors' multiple subjectivities and context-specific experiences can become problematic. This view corresponds to Maria Kapsali's ideas on the practical and ideological integration of embodied practices in actor training such as Feldenkrais, tai chi, and yoga (2013). Kapsali draws from Philip Auslander's 'distinction between transcendent and resistant practices' pointing out that 'Auslander's approach necessitates the abandoning of the modernist ethos that initially shaped these disciplines and consequently presented them as ahistorical and a-social events' (2013:83). She, therefore, suggests that 'a degree of reflexivity needs to be inserted in the way these practices are conceptualised and taught' (2013:83). This reflexivity is explored in my praxis through the understanding of each actor's and actor-trainer's embodiment as intersubjective/intercorporeal experience.

In order to introduce the definition of embodiment as intersubjective experience, I concentrate on Zarrilli's investigation of the actor's embodied process through a combination of Asian movement practices (Chinese *taiqiquan*, Indian *hatha yoga*, and the martial art *kalarippayattu*) and phenomenology (Zarrilli 2009). Zarrilli as an actor and actor-trainer notices that '(i)ntention, effort, and the lack of a more complex understanding of the body-mind relationship continue to be the actor's worst enemies' (2009:4). Within an overall acting pedagogy that privileges cognitive understanding over perceiving through the body, the practitioner observes that acting students 'have great difficulty "freeing" themselves from the "mind" to work out from their bodies' (Zarrilli 2002:13). Zarrilli explains that body-mind integration (or in one word bodymind) in his practice derives from a connection between the breath, the body and the immediate environment manifesting an open dialogue of internal and external energy (2009:24). He argues that embodiment in psychophysical acting is not 'a representation of a role or a character, but rather should be understood as a dynamic, lived experience in which the actor is responsive to the demands of the particular moment within a specific (theatrical) environment' (Zarrilli 2007:638). Zarrilli identifies this dynamic, lived experience of acting in the notion of intersubjectivity:

Furthermore, the training of actors and rehearsal processes also take place in the intersubjective/intercorporeal spaces 'between' actor/actor, and actor/director/dramaturg where the (imagined/potential) audience is always already present. In-depth actor training necessarily involves work on one's own embodied process, but simultaneously engages the actor in how to deploy what they are learning psychophysically in the space 'between'. (Zarrilli 2014:113)

The intersubjective/intercorporeal space that I add to Zarrilli's analysis of actor training is the one 'between' the actor and the actor-trainer through the exploration of this dynamic interconnection within the 'becoming' process of this PaR project. Lorna Marshall highlights that when a practitioner designs a training journey (for herself/himself or for students) it is important to understand that the training consists of three elements: outcome, process, and applications (2007:160). She points out that as both students and teachers we need to understand 'the process involved in creating a useful learning journey, or understand what we are actually working with' (2007:164). Marshall also notes that 'people can become emotionally attached to certain systems or techniques, believing that the chosen approach is innately superior, or a universal panacea' (2007:160). I argue that this logocentric debate is not productive and that there is no single actor-training practice which can be perceived as 'superior' or 'universal'. On the contrary, I suggest that the effectiveness of each actor-training process depends on the purposes of its application within an acting context.

Therefore, one of the original aspects of this praxis lies in the fact that I, as practitioner, try to respond to what I identify as problematic logocentrism within different actor-training environments through the processual development of new somatic acting explorations.

The contribution of my praxis is based upon my approach to embodiment which is explored as each actor's subjective process experienced through the intercorporeal dynamics between actors and actor-trainers. I explore embodiment as the fluid dialogue between each actor's mind and body, inner and outer, self and other in the context-specific phenomenon of the actor-training process. However, as mentioned above, this PaR thesis does not claim to

transcend these binaries, but to suggest a process towards the awareness of their interconnection. By no means do I claim that my BMC/IBMT-inspired somatic actor-training methodology is the only pathway towards the support of the actor's embodied awareness, individual creativity and expression. As Ian Watson notes, the emphasis on the actor's individuality has been of interest to practitioners such as Grotowski and Barba since the mid-twentieth century (2001:7). Throughout this thesis I aim at acknowledging limitations and challenges during the applications of my praxis that through critical analysis could propose new refinements, approaches and practices. However, I problematize the common theme in discussions of embodiment in movement-based actor training which describes *the actor's body* as single, fixed, and homogeneous, characteristics that I link to the logocentric problematic of universalism.⁹ My theoretical discussion, rooted in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment and his understanding of *logos as flesh* is outlined in the following section.

Towards the potential of *embodied logos*: introducing my theoretical framework

My first step towards a somatic actor-training practice is to define the notion of logos not only as cognitive process but as a term that simultaneously represents the actor's intellectual and embodied perception. This perception is not linear or predetermined but derives from the emergence of embodied experience through a spontaneous and dynamic interrelatedness with each actor's environment. I identify the intersubjective corporality of logos in the way Merleau-Ponty interrelates the term with his notion of the *flesh* as a further development of his groundbreaking definition of the *lived body*.

In the twentieth century the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) developed phenomenology as a response to logocentric mind-body dualism. In his three books *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962, 2002), *The Primacy of Perception* (1964), and the

⁹ The development of the philosophical perception of logos and its problematic implications within Stanislavski-informed actor training traditions will be discussed in Chapter One.

unfinished *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), the philosopher suggested a methodology of perceiving the world through our immediate experience *in* it, inspired by Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 2010). According to Merleau-Ponty: 'We have relearned to feel our body; we have found underneath the objective and detached knowledge of the body that other knowledge which we have of it in virtue of its always being with us and of the fact that we are our body' (2002:239). Merleau-Ponty introduced the *lived body* (*lieb*) as term to describe a sensible and sentient being which is at once subject and object of perception. This lived body facilitates the expression of the interconnection between mind and body, internality and externality, objectivity and subjectivity, within an open intercorporeal exchange with the world. As Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology offers a means to consider how the actor's process of embodiment extends beyond an objectified representation of efficiency, emotions, or ideas, his philosophy became the basis for the conceptual framework of this thesis.¹⁰

Particularly for the theorization of the notion of *embodied logos* in this PaR project, I use Merleau-Ponty's corporeal understanding of *logos as flesh*. Gail Stenstad gives a concise definition of the philosopher's notion of *flesh*:

Flesh is the elemental movement which gives rise to all carnal, dimensional beings. We, too, are dimensional beings, having depth, an inside and an outside, having a "mind" which is the invisible inside of our visible outside, a fold or hollow in our flesh, in which we open onto the flesh of the world. (Stenstad 1993:56)

Merleau-Ponty discusses *logos as flesh* through the integration of all aspects of embodied and intellectual experience. He reintroduces the notion of logos as something more fundamental than the objective thought and language, a different way to define the same movement of flesh 'as an element of Being' (2002:425, 1968:126-127). For Stenstad,

¹⁰ Merleau-Ponty's intersubjective/intercorporeal ideas have become popular for the support of phenomenological approaches in movement-based practices. Among others see Zarrilli 2002, 2009, 2013, Reynolds and Reason 2012, Pitches and Popat 2011, Reeve 2011, 2013, Evans 2009.

Merleau-Ponty's logos represents the 'gathering of flesh', the interconnection between mute carnal understanding and verbal expression (Stenstad 1993:58).¹¹ Nevertheless, even though Merleau-Ponty's groundbreaking understanding of *logos as flesh* re-examines dualistic binaries in the understanding of the term, he sustains the idea of universalism in its capitalized and transcendental use: 'a system of equivalencies, a *Logos* of lines, lights, colors, reliefs, masses, a conceptless presentation of universal Being' (1964:71). In many ways Merleau-Ponty may seem to provide little acknowledgement of multiple embodied subjectivities:

[T]here is even an inscription of the touching in the visible, of the seeing in the tangible-and the converse; there is finally a propagation of these exchanges to all bodies of the same type and of the same style which I see and touch. (Merleau-Ponty 1968:143)

It is this intersubjectivity that, for Merleau-Ponty, 'founds transitivity from one body to another' (1968:143). However, in the context of this PaR project, which is intended to support each actor's unique individuality in the intersubjective/intercorporeal actor-training process, I question Merleau-Ponty's understanding that all bodies are 'of the same type'. Therefore, I extend his notion of *logos as flesh* to allow the identification of actors' multiple subjectivities through the notion of each actor's *embodied logos*. The practice that in my experience as an actress helped me to understand this unique and simultaneously intersubjective journey was Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's Body-Mind Centering approach to movement education. Cohen's somatic processes, as the practical methodology used for the shaping of this praxis, in combination with Nelson's PaR model, are introduced below.

¹¹ For Stenstad, the word 'gathering' suggests the *between* of the flesh-world relationship indicated in Merleau-Ponty's interconnection between the notions of flesh and logos. She describes Merleau-Ponty's logos as 'gathering of flesh, gathering of comprehension, gathering of words in speech' (1993:58).

Towards a somatic actor-training methodology: BMC and Nelson's PaR in my praxis

The suggestion for the formulation of a somatic actor-training methodology based on Cohen's practice in my research emerged from my somatic experience as a postgraduate acting student at East 15 Acting School (2010-2011). During this year, I explored Cohen's process of *experiential anatomy* as well as the human movement development through a series of *movement patterns* with the somatic movement educator and therapist Fabiano Culora (IBMT/BMC).¹² I found myself revisiting experiential landscapes of conscious embodied awareness and somatic attention that I had started exploring through my previous somatic work on the Alexander Technique.¹³ At the same time I discovered new movement pathways of openness, imagination, creativity and expression through the embodiment of active metaphors and improvisations. More specifically, regarding the investigation of intersubjective embodied dynamics within actor training in this PaR project, Cohen's somatic developmental methodology triggered the exploration of my subjective creative embodied self as coexisting and developing within an environment of relationships with others. Through this relational experience, I was prompted to question the emergence of spontaneous embodied vocabularies while my reflections indicated a potential dynamic dialogue with the acting context. This experiential observation informed and prompted my PaR research on a somatic actor-training methodology.

The word somatic, as used in this PaR thesis, derives from Thomas Hanna's re-conception of *soma*, the Greek word for the *living body*. Hanna (1928-1990) was a philosopher, Feldenkrais method practitioner and developer of the system known as Hanna Somatics. In his book *Bodies in Revolt* (1970) he used the term *soma* in order to identify body-mind

¹² Fabiano Culora is a somatic movement therapist and integrative bodyworker (Dip. IBMT, RSMT). He has taught somatic movement for actors/performers/dancers in Higher Education since 2002. He is currently on IBMT and Northern School of Contemporary Dance faculty while he collaborates with Andrea Olsen and Caryn McHose for Body and Earth International. He also works as somatic facilitator in professional productions.

¹³ Alexander Technique was part of my movement training as an acting student at Greek National Theatre Drama School under the guidance of the somatic educator Vicky Panagiotaki (member of A.T.V.D. / Alexander-Technik-Verband-Deutschland). Panagiotaki is also a dancer (Udk, Berlin) and a Body Control practitioner. She teaches dance, Alexander Technique and works as movement director in theatre.

integration. According to Hanna soma means 'Me, the bodily being' (1970:35). He also coined the term somatics in order to name and unify holistic, body-based practices that emerged in Europe and North America at the beginning of the twentieth century (Hanna 1976, Johnson 1995).¹⁴ Somatic approaches to movement education shared common features such as time dedicated to breathing, and feeling and listening to the body often starting with conscious relaxation on the floor. The student's attention was focused on 'bodily sensations emerging from within' and a gentle movement for a deeper awareness of the embodied self (Eddy 2009:6). Incorporating proprioceptive signals, participants were guided to 'find ease, support and pleasure while moving' (Eddy 2009:6). They 'were also invited to experience increased responsiveness as they received skilled touch and/or verbal input' (Eddy 2009:7).

Martha Eddy, a contemporary academic and somatic movement educator (Center for Kinesthetic Education), starts her article on the dialogue between somatic movement practices and dance by saying that the 'field of "somatics" is barely a field. If necessarily seen as one, I liken it to a field of wildflowers with unique species randomly popping up across wide expanses' (2009:6). She traces the roots of somatic movement education in the early work of practitioners such as Francois Delsarte (1811-1871), Emile Jacques-Dalcroze (1865-1950), and Rudolf Laban (1879-1958), and divides the lineage of somatic practitioners in two generations. According to Eddy, in the *first generation* or 'the somatic pioneers' belong the practitioners F.M Alexander (1869-1955), Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984), Mabel Todd (1880-1956), Irmgard Bartenieff (1900-1981), Charlotte Selver (1901-2003), Milton Trager (1908-1997), Gerda Alexander (1904-1994) and Ida Rolf (1896–1979) (2009:12-16). The somatic pioneers influenced the development of a *second generation* fundamentally comprised by dancers including, among others, Sondra Fraleigh (1939 -), Emilie Conrad

¹⁴ Usually in every study, book or article on somatics there is a definition of the term filtered through each practitioner's individual experience. For diverse identifications of the term see among others Eddy 2009:7, Syers 2015:46, Williamson et al 2014:200, 229-230, 313-314.

(1934-2014), Anna Halprin (1920 -) and Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (1943 -) (Eddy 2009:16-25).

Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen is the founder of Body-Mind Centering, the somatic practice that forms the basis of this PaR project.¹⁵ Cohen describes BMC as ‘an ongoing, experiential journey into the alive and changing territory of the body’ (2012:1). She developed a *process of embodiment* for the study of body systems’ *experiential anatomy* and the exploration of *developmental movement patterns* (my emphasis for clarity of Cohen’s terminology).¹⁶ The embodiment of anatomical *structures* such as skin, the skeletal, muscular, fluid and organic systems happens through an experiential dialogue between the study of anatomy and sensorimotor explorations including breathing, movement, visualization, sounding, music and touch. BMC also experiments with *Developmental Movement Patterns* or *Basic Neurocellular Patterns* (BNP) which represent simulations of movement manifestations throughout the human embryological and infant development from conception to walking (Cohen 2012:4-5, 16-17, Hartley 1995:24-86).¹⁷ In both studies, or, crucially, in their integration, Cohen defines embodiment as an ‘automatic presence, clarity and knowing, without having to search for it or pay attention’ (2012:157). The difference that she identifies in the two experiential processes is that in the embryological development embodiment is about space rather than structure (Cohen 2012:163-164).

Applying Eddy’s categorization in the actor-training context, pre-somatic and first generation somatic practices such as the Delsarte system of expression, Dalcroze eurhythmics, Laban

¹⁵ I have developed my professional training in BMC principles through Linda Hartley’s IBMT Diploma Programme. It is a three to four year-long thorough somatic training with the BMC® practitioner and teacher Linda Hartley. Hartley studied with Cohen in the 1980s and went on developing her own practice which is rooted in the principles of BMC®, Authentic Movement and Somatic Psychology. In 1990 she founded the Institute for Integrative Bodywork and Movement Therapy (IBMT) which runs training programmes in Germany, England, Lithuania, and Russia. The training is an Approved Programme of the International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association (ISMETA), and an Allied Programme of the Body-Mind Centering® Association (BMCA). For more information please refer to the website www.lindahartley.co.uk.

¹⁶ Cohen’s methodology of embodiment as well as its modification within the context of this PaR project are discussed in the second part of Chapter Two.

¹⁷ In the third edition of her book *Sensing, Feeling, and Action* (2012), Cohen highlights that a ‘major language change has been the transforming of the name “Basic Neurological Patterns” to “Basic Neurocellular Patterns” to better reflect their underlying cellular component’ (2012:vi, original emphasis).

movement analysis and Alexander technique are widely employed in conservatory actor training as part of contemporary actor's movement education (see Evans 2009, 2015, Amory 2010, Hodge 2010, Zarrilli 2002, 2013). However, current somatic approaches such as BMC-based explorations have only recently started being introduced to acting students. Through my research I notice that the benefits of BMC-based experiential anatomy and developmental movement within embodied actor training are increasingly explored, but mostly in North America and less in Europe. This new dialogue is rooted in the work of Wendell Beavers and Erika Berland through the MFA in Theatre Contemporary Performance program in Naropa University, Boulder, Colorado, United States (2003). Beavers, dancer, choreographer and founder chair of the program, explains:

A foundation performance training would familiarize students with the complete pallet [sic] of the performer without reference to the technical lines traditionally drawn between acting and dancing. The sources of space, time, shape and line, kinesthesia, image and story worlds, and emotion would all be treated inherently as equal and available...Somatic work provides the means for students to experientially thoroughly investigate the anatomical systems of the body, their roles in movement and generating forms. (Beavers 2008:131)

The work has been further developed and applied by Naropa alumni such as Kate Kohler Amory (2010) and Taavo Smith (2010).¹⁸ However, the relevant literature is limited to articles and it is not particularly concerned with the dynamic dialogue between somatic practices in actor training and scholarly interrogation. This PaR project fills in this gap through a critical

¹⁸ In the development of her work as a somatically based teacher and performer, Kate Kohler Amory trained under Dr. Martha Eddy in the Dynamic Embodiment - Somatic Movement Therapy and Education Training (DE-SMTT) which is a blend of BMC™ and Laban/Bartenieff. She also received an MFA from Naropa University where Somatic Movement is part of the training pedagogy taught by Wendell Beavers and Erika Berland. Under these master teachers she studied the principles of BMC and includes the DE-SMTT and BMC perspectives in her teaching (Kohler Amory 2010:5).

Taavo Smith is an actor, playwright, dancer and teacher. He is a graduate of Naropa University's MFA Theatre: Contemporary Performance, and is a founding member of performance companies One Continuous Mistake and Convergences Theater Collective. He is currently a resident artist with Mabou Mines in New York (Smith 2010:21).

investigation of the processual development of an original BMC-inspired actor-training methodology. It concentrates on how such a developmental study facilitates the understanding of challenging issues that arise in actor training identifying emergent problems, underlying philosophical ideas and ethical implications. At the same time this ongoing formulation allows the gradual identification of the practice's potential applications and outcomes. During this journey, I focus on the modification of Cohen's developmental process of embodiment in order to support each actor's understanding of training as intersubjective/intercorporeal process using movement, touch and sound/verbal input.

Within the exploration of Cohen's ontogenetic metaphor of human movement development, I concentrate on the pre-vertebrate patterns of *cellular breathing* and *navel radiation* (before the formation of the spine in the watery environment of the womb). I combine them with the development of the spinal movement towards the embodiment of a *yield and push/reach and pull* expression that simulates the movement of the birthing experience (my emphasis, Cohen's terminology). Resonating with Cohen's developmental patterns also alluding to the intersubjective experience of actor training and rehearsal environments, I name this process *from the conception to the birth of the role*. Through this embodied return to a preverbal stage and early movements, I attempt to support the individual actor's expression that originates in an emergent physicality, language and sense of self. My intersubjective role during this journey is introduced in this praxis through the notion of the *trainer-witness* who aims at facilitating each actor's expression based on the understanding of actor training as an environment of shared experience and ideas, mutual sensitivity and vulnerability. Within the same relational awareness the actor is invited to revisit the process of yielding into the self and reaching out to the connection with the environment and others combining the intertwined experience of an *actor-mover* and an *actor-witness*.

The pedagogical ground of the interdisciplinary dialogue between Cohen's process and its modification to a somatic actor-training methodology in my practice is based upon the perception of acting explorations through the individuality of each *actor-mover/actor-witness*.

My argument on the development of multiple experiential languages and acting experiences that are not predetermined by the trainer and the suggested discourse is discussed in this thesis through my notion of *fluid structures*. These fluid structures (which will be unpacked in Chapters Two, Three and Four of this thesis) are informed by the BMC methodology as summarised in Cohen's words:

In BMC we are the material, our bodies and minds the medium of the exploration.

The research is experiential as is the material. We are each the study, the student, the teacher. Out of this research, we are developing an empirical science- observing, contrasting, corroborating, and recording our experiences of embodying all of the body systems and the stages of human development. (Cohen 2012:1-2)

Going through three steps of self-preparation, individual and group processes, I situate this thesis in the field of movement-based conservatory actor-training pedagogies.¹⁹ More precisely my training and research project is shaped in the environment of three mainstream drama schools: the Greek National Theatre Drama School (2005-2008), East 15 Acting School (2010-2011), and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (2012-2015).²⁰ The first two have constituted the basic framework of my actor training whereas in the third I developed this PaR project participating in the current increasing academic interest in the practical processes of actor training. Hence, my research contributes to further applications of current somatic movement practices in the contemporary actor-training process, suggesting (through the example of my own practice) ways in which they might be refined,

¹⁹ Conservatory actor training is provided by drama schools that may or may not be part of a university. It includes the actors' daily practice in diverse acting, movement, and voice classes and it expands from one to four years, depending on the level of the education (undergraduate or postgraduate). A full conservatory training lasts for three to four years and it includes the actor's development from a first year foundational level to the final year participation into rehearsals and productions that simulate the transition to the professional context and integrate the wholeness of the actor's learning process. For instance, in the website of Drama UK the Three-year BA (Hons) Acting (Acting Pathway) course at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama is described as follows: 'The course will teach you to become self-determined creative actors capable of working in theatre, television, film & radio. The training exists within a thriving university/conservatoire environment with a diverse faculty of specialist, expert staff' (<https://www.dramauk.co.uk>, accessed 25.06.15).

²⁰ From now on, GNT will stand for Greek National Theatre Drama School, East 15 for East 15 Acting School, and RCSSD for Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. GNT Drama School is the Greek equivalent of RADA in the UK and it is aligned to the National Theatre in Athens.

and more thoroughly integrated. I argue that the intersubjective embodied experience that underlies these practices is deeply beneficial for the re-examination of the problematic logocentrism embedded in traditional and industry-oriented western actor-training practices. As part of this line of argumentation, I claim that somatic education should not be restricted to workshops, studios or the actor's movement training but should be viewed in direct dialogue with the acting context.

Since mainstream drama school training includes student performances and devising projects, my practice explores ways in which my work might be combined with other projects and processes such as production rehearsals. I investigate the congruence or dissonance of training and intended performance outcomes, as well as the dialogue between the roles of the director and the trainer. This research is not concerned with a particular aesthetic outcome, specific roles and theatre genres but with the expansion of the actor's individual embodied creativity, expression and intersubjective sense of self. Nevertheless, as will be evident in the following chapters, the somatic nature of my practice and its first shaping in relation to Euripides' tragic heroine Medea impacted on the further applications of the practice. Finally, my phenomenological approach to the articulation and writing of my research situates this study of somatic practices and actor training in the broader formal discussion on embodiment in both fields. The use of phenomenological and critical reflection in this PaR project adds to Cohen's developmental process of embodiment as the practical basis of my ongoing research. The imbrications of theory and practice (or praxis) through critical reflection in my project are actualized within the context of formal academic research according to Robin Nelson's PaR multi-mode epistemological model (Nelson 2013).²¹

Nelson's model has become an important paradigm in the burgeoning field of actor-training doctoral research in which I situate my thesis. It suggests the evolution of a research project

²¹ I chose Nelson's model because I became familiar with his ideas as a PhD candidate at RCSSD. Nelson was Director of Research at RCSSD from July 2011 until early 2015. He was also the external examiner for my one-year upgrade (17 April 2013) after which I made explicit the dialogue between my research and Nelson's model as an open map.

using the map of three framing dynamic questions: 'know how', 'know that', and 'know what' (see figure 2.2 Nelson 2013:37). 'Know how' concerns the practitioner's experiential or tacit knowledge which represents the trigger and the basis of this research within BMC-informed conservatory actor training. 'Know-how is sometimes termed "procedural knowledge" in contrast with the "propositional knowledge" of know that' (Nelson 2013:41). 'Know that' in this thesis as 'the equivalent of traditional "academic knowledge"...drawn from reading of all kinds' derives from philosophical and particularly Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological discourse combined with writings on actor training and somatic practices (Nelson 2013:45). The dynamic triangle of Nelson's research is completed with the 'know what' which 'resides in knowing what "works," in teasing out the methods by which "what works" is achieved and the compositional principles involved' (2013:44). The clarity and simplicity that I find in Nelson's model and his three intertwined questions became very helpful for the beginning and shaping of my praxis. Throughout the development of my research I expand on his propositions in a more nuanced and fluid way responding to different teaching and performing environments. In the same way I modify Cohen's methodology so it relates to the actors' experiences and explorations. Hence, I come up with an original interdisciplinary dialogue between BMC and actor training within Nelson's epistemological model as an ongoing intersubjective process.

The dynamic interrelation between Nelson's model and Cohen's methodology in this thesis is underpinned by critical, phenomenological and reflective writing combined with documentary material of the practical explorations. Critical reflection becomes crucial for the identification of problematic areas and challenges that inform the further development of my process. It also facilitates the emergence of new experiential languages and the terms of *fluid structures*, *trainer-witness*, *actor-mover/actor-witness* and *embodied logos*. Through the same critical awareness and choice to resist the logocentric universalizing of all actors' experiences I develop the use of Cohen's ontogenetic metaphor in my praxis. I approach her conceptualization of human development or the embodiment of ontogenesis as an open

metaphor that could prompt the exploration of actors' multiple subjectivities in the training environment. My expansion upon BMC language and my new terms resonate with Nelson's observation that language in practice-based research has shifted into poststructuralism through the use of conceptual metaphors which allow openness in the expression of plurality, change and interconnection (2013:54). In my somatic praxis the exploration of the cell metaphor combined with the *navel radiation* pattern set the foundation for this openness through the support of each actor's unique *embodied logos*.²²

The source of new knowledge in this PaR project is tacit embodied experience explored in studios, rehearsals and workshops as documented in recordings and communicated in this writing. This experiential ground has been discussed as challenge for PaR documentation (Barrett and Bolt 2010, Kershaw and Nicholson 2011, Nelson 2006, 2013). The documentation of my project includes audiovisual recordings and writing from or about the practice. Due to the pedagogical aspect of my praxis, apart from the challenge of capturing the tacit experience in video recordings and still photographs, I also came across ethical issues. For instance, I chose not to film or photograph the first step in the group environment as I believed that this would have had a negative impact on the actors' processes. Within this same ethical framework during the actors' phase of integration/reflection, I did not mean to force specific responses for the purpose of this research project using methods such as questionnaires. Therefore, this thesis has been informed by various kinds of actors' reflections such as sketches, written accounts and contingent verbal sharing documented in video recordings. Nevertheless, due to the concentration on my own ongoing learning as emerging somatic actor-trainer in this research, I focus on self-critical reflection that is complemented with a DVD and modes of experiential writing discussed in the following section.

²² The navel radiation represents the embodiment of the relation and movement of all the extremities of the body around the navel.

Witnessing this praxis: experiential writing and complementary DVD

As Evans points out: 'Writing on movement training struggles with the difficulty of communicating the lived experience of the exercise and the process of its integration into the student's nervous system, into their very way of learning' (2009:12). He uses as examples of alternative models of experiential writing 'the feminist writing practices of Helene Cixous, which attempt to remain open to the physical presence of the writer and to marginal "other" experiences of the body, as well as...the writings of somatic body practitioners such as Miranda Tufnell' (2009:13). The objective in experiential writing is the interconnection between embodied experience, the written words, the documentation and dissemination of the process. In relevance to the scope of my praxis, Konstantinos Thomaidis suggests a PaR methodology 'that unfolds as a triangular continuum between logos-as-reason [written exegesis], logos-as-language [voiced dissemination], and practice [both the creative process and documented material such as websites, reflexive blogs, and audio-visual DVDs]' (2014:82, 85). In this thesis, apart from the wider context of *critical writing* or *logos-as-reason*, I combine two writing modes in order to invite the reader to connect their intellectual and embodied experience with practical explorations that took place in the past but are still part of my own experience and ongoing process.

The basic format for this is *phenomenological writing* in present tense and in italics. Occasionally, it alternates with moments of standard layout, including present *reflective writing* that represents my current evaluation of my role as emerging somatic actor-trainer. Both modes are informed by reflective notes that I kept after the explorations, my embodied memory and its recollection watching the documentary material. They are also at times connected to the actor-trainee's experience which is embedded in the text as quotes. Phenomenological writing as a means for appropriating the value of the practitioner's embodied experience, either in italics or in a standard format, is a common approach in body-based performance practices (see Reeve 2011, 2013, Behnke 2009, Fraleigh 1996, Griffiths 2010, Zarrilli 2009, 2013). However, it is usually connected to the performer's

experience rather than the trainer's perspective as it emerges within the intersubjective/intercorporeal actor-training environment (see for instance Zarrilli 2009:43-44). In my phenomenological writing, I focus on the interaction between new steps and emerging challenges within my process of becoming a somatic actor-trainer.

My experiential writing is in dialogue with video recordings of the process included in the DVD *Developing a somatic acting process*, which is suggested to be viewed alongside Chapters Two, Three, and Four of this thesis.²³ It includes the chapters 'Self-preparation', 'Individual environment', and 'Group environment', following the ongoing development and structure of this PaR project. Video tracks reflect my attempt as practitioner-researcher to disclose key moments of my embodied witnessing and intersubjective/intercorporeal communication with different somatic actor-training contexts that informed (and continue to inform) the development of my praxis. Sarah Whatley, working on the creation of choreographer Siobhan Davies' RePlay digital archive, acknowledges the importance of the audio-visual documentation of the choreographer's and dancers' creative processes (2013, 2014). She discusses '*ways in which a digital archive can be seen as an extension of the artist's work reflecting back on the artist's creative methods and influencing future projects*' and pedagogies (2013:83-84, original emphasis). Drawing on Whatley's ideas on the interconnections between the function of an archive and the documentation of an artistic process, I will briefly outline the main problematics and new findings throughout the audio-visual documentation of my praxis.

Whatley notes 'the availability of simple-to-use capture technologies' as well as the 'ease by which these digital films can be posted to sites such as YouTube and Vimeo, for personal archiving or for wider distribution' (2013:145). Nevertheless, during the documentation of the development of my somatic actor training, this 'ease' was frequently hindered by either

²³ For the electronic version of this thesis I use YouTube links that direct the reader to the same videos. They are part of the playlist *PhD Thesis Videos* in my personal YouTube Channel. Additionally, the four figures that complement the documentation of this PaR project are embedded in the main text instead of the Appendix, according to the conventional academic approach in written theses. Through these choices I attempt to further facilitate the reader's integrated view of the process based on the praxical nature of my research.

practical or ethical considerations. From a practical perspective, apart from unexpected moments of running out of battery or digital memory, I had to deal with occasional challenges emerging from the fact that I was simultaneously the practitioner and the video-documenter of my research. As a result, I had to learn (new to me) processes for the most effective documentation of my praxis. Apart from practical technicalities, the filming of my praxis was also affected by ethical factors as it had to be non-intrusive for each actor's expression during the intercorporeal dissemination of my practice. Whatley refers to video recordings of rehearsals as providing 'invaluable access to what is largely an unseen and private process' (2013:91). I found that at times this 'private process' during my PaR project was not 'ready' to be captured. In these cases, I relied on a multimodal documentation such as reflective/working notes, feedback, sketches and emails. As a result, a selective process and editing of the documentary material was necessary in order to share the suggested new knowledge and a critical engagement with the development of my praxis.

Through my attempt to document my ongoing process, I also generated new ideas and ways of working. One element in the documentation of my PaR project is that I try to capture and disseminate the actors' and trainer's intersubjective *processes* instead of an outcome-in-Nelson's vocabulary the ongoing experiential journey from 'know how' to 'know what'. Within the actor-training context, examples of DVDs that aim at communicating embodied actor-training approaches are Zarrilli's complementary DVD for his book *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavski* (2009), and Alison Hodge's *Core Training for Actors: The First Steps* (2013).²⁴ Both are very helpful as for several reasons, including geographical distance and workshop expenses, the work of contemporary actor-training practitioners is not easily accessible to all actors and actor-trainers. Nevertheless, in these examples the practitioners tend to share a developed version of their explorations, instead of the 'making' of their intersubjective actor-training processes which is the objective of the documentation of my practice.

²⁴ For more information and audio-visual material on the work of Phillip Zarrilli, see also <http://www.phillipzarrilli.com/> and for the work of Alison Hodge see <http://www.hodge-actortraining.co.uk>.

In the BMC context, the documentation of Cohen's teachings has been an inextricable part of the dissemination of her process through DVDs and YouTube links.²⁵ They can be particularly useful for a somatic educator/therapist that has not been trained with Cohen and would like to access and experience in some way the BMC principles as communicated and continuously interrogated by the founder of the practice. Due to this pedagogical objective, BMC DVDs and YouTube videos concentrate on Cohen's figure instead of the relational environment of the process. Even though the practitioner shares the process through a present connection with her experience, this documented sharing is usually combined with a rather logocentric perspective through concentration on Cohen's verbal analysis of the practice and the explanation of its principles, without including the intercorporeal experience between the trainer and the group of participants.

Whatley points out that the 'strengths' of the RePlay archive 'would lie in providing access to the full collection in an unmediated, non-didactic way, to encourage the user to find his or her own engagement with the archive' (2013:86). Even though I filter the videos included in this thesis through my own critical engagement with the development of my somatic actor-training process, I do so concentrating on the intersubjective/intercorporeal 'doing' instead of a logocentric 'exegesis' of the process (see Thomaidis 2014). Finally, among the currently available BMC DVDs and videos, the application of the practice is presented only in dialogue with a dance context.²⁶ This PaR project suggests a development in the applications of BMC principles through an original dialogue between Cohen's approach to embodiment and the actor-training process.

Chapter outline

The intersubjective argument of this thesis is structured in chapters based on the three basic questions of Nelson's dynamic model (know how, know that, know what) regarding its

²⁵ For Cohen's DVDs see <http://www.bodymindcentering.com/store> and the BMC YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/BodyMindCentering>.

²⁶ See the DVD of Cohen's workshop on Weight, Space and Time at the Dance & Body-Mind Centering® conference in Brussels (Cohen 2004).

conceptual content and praxis. First, I situate dualistic binaries and the universalization of the actor's experience within the theoretical framework of problematic logocentrism in actor training. Hence, I locate this PaR project in a philosophical context as well as in embodied actor-training lineage (know that). Second, I outline 'how' this research intends to re-examine logocentrism in actor training through a BMC/IBMT-informed somatic actor-training methodology and the implications of *embodied logos*. Third, I unpack the formulation of a somatic actor-training methodology in practice concentrating on examples of embodied intersubjectivity through critical reflection (know what). Each chapter combines the examination of these three questions guiding the reader from a conceptual understanding of my argument and research question to practical exploration and critical reflection upon this, completing Nelson's triangular model. The somatic acting methodology is introduced through self-explorations and further discussed in individual and group intersubjective environments. The documented material of these experiments is indispensable for illuminating the practical element of my argument as well as the formulation of an intersubjective/intercorporeal somatic acting process.

Chapter One identifies problematic elements of *dualism* and *universalism* in conservatory actor training in the philosophical notion of *logocentrism*. I justify the emergent problematic points, drawing connections between the actor-training process and the development of the philosophical perception of logos. Through this outline of the philosophical roots of problematic logocentrism I introduce my concept of each actor's *embodied logos* based on Merleau-Ponty's perception of *logos as flesh*. The beginning of the critical review of logocentrism in actor training is situated in Stanislavski's formulation of an acting process influenced by the scientific paradigm of his time and a mechanistic objectification of human experience. I also outline how modern embodied actor-training discourses, often informed by or referencing Stanislavski, despite challenging logocentrism tend to maintain a problematic universal understanding of the actor's embodied experience as singular and homogeneous. Finally, I suggest my response to these problematics through the multiplicity indicated by

Cohen's cellular embodiment and the openness that I explore through my practical *fluid structures*.

Chapter Two discusses the development of my somatic actor-training methodology as an intersubjective experience developed for or with the other, when 'other' represents the future actor-trainee. It underlines the significance of my personal experiential investigation as emerging somatic actor-trainer prior to the sharing process so the dissemination derives and develops from my contingent and ongoing experience. I introduce the actor as becoming the agent of an emergent discourse and perceptual knowledge that derives from the openness of the intersubjective dialogue between intellectual and embodied perception. In the first part of the chapter I outline the dialogue between my process and somatic practices currently used in UK-based actor training, in order to critically introduce BMC and IBMT as my practical ground and the original contribution of my praxis in the field. I focus on various processes of intersubjective witnessing in my project, indicating the explored identities of the *trainer-witness* and the *actor-mover/actor-witness*.

In the second part I move on to the practical foundation of my process discussing key moments of how I began the modification of Cohen's movement development into an actor-training methodology. The case studies offered in this chapter are drawn from my self-preparation as an emerging actor-trainer. The focus is on examples of intersubjective embodied experience through movement, verbal/sound input and touch that simulate the 'presence' of either the actor-trainer or the actor-trainee. I concentrate on the first two patterns of cellular breathing and navel radiation in Cohen's ontogenetic metaphor for the facilitation of the understanding of each actor's embodied experience as unique, ongoing and intersubjective process. The embodiment of the role and the text are explored using Euripides' Medea as a case-study character. My critical, phenomenological and reflective writing is supported by the video tracks included in the Chapter 'Self-preparation' in the DVD *Developing a somatic acting process*. In the last part of the chapter I conceptualize the

methodological ground of my praxis expanding on Cohen's developmental process of embodiment.

My argument in embodied actor-training pedagogies is further explored in the third chapter through the first steps of the dissemination of my praxis in the individual environment. The chapter follows three different processes through which I explored the application of my practice in various acting contexts. I concentrate on emerging challenges such as ethical implications in the dialogue between the actor and the actor-trainer through the awareness of a mutual embodied vulnerability. I also discuss my first attempt to complement a rehearsal process supporting an actress's individual journey while acknowledging potential limitations in the dialogue between my practice and rehearsal/performance processes, as well as potential disjunctions between the intentions of the trainer and the director. In each step of the individual process I focused on the experience developed between the actor and the actor-trainer, aspects of which I have included in Chapter Two of the DVD on the 'Individual environment'.

The dissemination of my practice within the context of this PaR project is integrated in the group environment as an introduction towards the classroom experience in an actor-training institution. I analyze this new phase of my research in Chapter Four of this thesis through two different applications. I explore the shift in my role as required within the group dynamics according to the objective of each context, either as choreographic material or experimental embodied methodology. I continue to identify ethical implications of my praxis and challenges stemming from its processual nature in relation to time. I also discuss emergent problems in the application of the process working with a director for an intended performance outcome, and how actors' openness to intercorporeal embodied experience may also become challenging both for the actor and the actor-trainer. I associate this intercorporeal challenge with the relatively common connotation of primitivism in the exploration of Greek tragedy and myths as well as necessary distinctions between

therapeutic and actor-training practices. The documentary material on the group process is included in Chapter Three of the DVD on the 'Group environment'.

The conclusion of this thesis revisits the process of this PaR project concentrating on new, unexpected and unresolved questions arising from my original research. I reflect on the examination of my findings in relation to my initial instincts, as well as on the development of my awareness as emerging somatic actor-trainer throughout the evolution of my practical explorations. I combine my experiential development with the original contributions to knowledge made by this project. I also reiterate emerging challenges and potential limitations in the applications of my praxis. I recognize the existence of ongoing questions in my research and the continuous development of my role as inextricable characteristics of my process of becoming a *trainer-witness*. I finally outline my current ideas regarding the next steps of my research as well as the identification of my praxis within contemporary actor-training institutions.

Chapter One

Logocentrism in conservatory actor-training tradition

Your body is not your instrument
Your body is you
(Schechner 1973:145)

No man is an island,
Entire of itself
(Donne 1624, Meditation 17)

Introduction

This chapter investigates the concept of logocentrism as problematic element within the field of conservatory actor training. It sketches Platonic/Cartesian *dualism* and Aristotle-inspired *universalism* as the fundamental philosophical and historical logocentric manifestations that this PaR thesis seeks to challenge. Dualistic binaries of mind-body, inner-outer, self-other and the universal premise that we all understand and embody a practice in the same way are identified as the assumptions of the twentieth century scientific thought. The scientifically based objectification and uniformity of human experience is examined through contemporary approaches in European philosophy that inform the argument of this thesis. More specifically with regard to actor training, I trace the origins of this problematic logocentrism back to Konstantin Stanislavski's early formal organization of an acting discourse that he began to develop in 1906. I discuss how, despite Stanislavski's groundbreaking integrative vision and the continuous development of his practice towards the exploration of embodied approaches to acting, the practitioner inevitably grounded his praxis on the dominant scientific paradigm and a mechanistic objectification of human experience.

Due to the simultaneous mechanistic analysis of human experience in the newly established fields of behavioural psychology and physiology, Stanislavski's language was based on the assumption of an objective science (Zarrilli 2002:10). Dualistic binaries such as mind and body, inner and outer, self and other emanated from his early insistence on a text-based logical and truthful analysis: 'the purpose of analysis is a detailed preparatory study of the

proposed circumstances of the play and the role' (Stanislavski 2010:104, Benedetti's emphasis). The twentieth century scientific paradigm additionally infused his practice with a single/universal perception of all actors' embodied experiences through the idea of the *one body* or *one instrument/motor apparatus*: 'From today on we shall be working on *the bodily apparatus* we use for *physical embodiment* and *its outward technique*' (Stanislavski 2008:352, my emphasis). Universalism in actor training according to Stanislavski's first formal 'universal "grammar of acting"' implies that all actors perceive and embody acting in the same way regardless their personal context (social-cultural), multiple subjectivities and their individual connection to an acting environment (space-present time-others) (Stanislavski 2008:539).

I argue that logocentrism still persists in contemporary actor training through Stanislavski-inspired traditions.²⁷ This project identifies how the paradigm of the single/universal understanding of the actor's experience has remained a logocentric gap even in the dissemination of integrative embodied actor-training approaches within which I locate my somatic acting process, and which I will discuss later in this chapter. Movement-based approaches that added to Stanislavski's last work on physical actions and active analysis were pioneered by practitioners such as Chekhov, Meyerhold and Grotowski. They are

²⁷ When I refer to contemporary actor training, I predominately concentrate on Drama UK accredited schools such as RCSSD and East 15 in which I further developed my acting experience, this PaR research and the dissemination of my practice (see Introduction, p.24). They are modern actor-training institutions which prepare skilled actors for the diverse twenty-first century performance industry, including text-based classical or contemporary theatre, devised theatre, film, TV and radio. However, this project has been focused on live performance contexts. Even though my direct experience of contemporary UK-based conservatory actor training was formed in relation to the two aforementioned mainstream drama schools, the general ideas articulated within this thesis are supported by relevant bibliography (among others see Evans 2009, 2015, Pitches 2012, Zarrilli et al. 2013), the practitioners' original handbooks (i.e. Stanislavski 2008, 2010, Chekhov 2002, Meyerhold 1998, Grotowski 2002), and the course details described in the schools' websites. For instance, according to the Drama Centre London's website, the school's distinctive approach includes the Stanislavski method: '(t)he most famous and detailed of all systems and the point of departure for more subsequent developments' (<http://www.arts.ac.uk/csm/drama-centre-london/about-drama-centre-london/the-methodological-approach/>, accessed 28.11.2015). However, there is no intention for this thesis to be a comprehensive survey of actor-training institutions within the UK. When not part of my experiential knowledge either as an actress or actor-trainer, I do not discuss the institutions' practices per se but the way actor-training pedagogies are conceptualized in order to contextualize and elaborate my own approaches. Nevertheless, the findings of this research could have wider applicability in actor-training contexts outside my particular experiences at RCSSD and East 15.

currently used in both mainstream (conservatories, universities) and independent (workshops) actor-training environments.

Embodied actor-training pedagogies in contemporary drama schools, when included in the actors' daily practice, are usually part of movement training and perceived as separated from the text-based acting process. Under the deep influence of logocentrism in western culture and pedagogies, even intersubjective/intercorporeal practices are usually communicated in ways which retain elements of logocentric problematics. The teachers' language tends to disregard actors' multiple subjectivities, and/or the conceptualization of their practices is misinterpreted by the trainee-actors. One pertinent example in both actor-trainers' and actors' languages is that actors' bodies are their *instruments* or *creative tools*. Among others David Zinder introduces his book on actor training and the Chekhov technique saying: 'this is a book about Training: the development-or formation, in the more evocative French term-and fine-tuning of *the actor's instrument* and *basic creative tools* through the systematic acquisition and maintenance of techniques' (2009:xiii, my emphasis). By contrast, towards the end of the twentieth century Richard Schechner pointed out: 'Your body is not your "instrument", your body is you' (1973:145). My argument resonates with Schechner's view which I aim at exploring in practice not only in the development of somatic acting explorations but also in the articulation/communication of each actor's and my own integrated embodied experience. Through this experiential investigation I wish to highlight that the impact of problematic logocentrism upon actor-training languages should not be overlooked by both actor-trainers and trainee-actors.

A number of studies within contemporary actor-training research have pointed out the influence of underpinning logocentric theoretical principles, ideologies and social-cultural norms within body-based actor-training pedagogies.²⁸ In Mark Evans' groundbreaking work on modern movement training practices for actors within UK-based institutions, the author

²⁸ Among others see Hodge 2010, Evans 2015, 2009, Zarrilli 2002, Kapsali 2010,2013, Pitches 2006, 2012, Pitches and Popat 2011, Keefe and Murray 2007.

identifies as dominant practices those developed by Matthias Alexander, Rudolf Laban and Jacques Lecoq 'because they offer approaches which are compatible with the demands that western professional theatre conventionally makes on the actor' (2009:4). Building upon Mauss' three main characteristics for body-based practices as *technical*, *traditional* (in terms of their educational nature), and *efficient*, Evans argues for a contingent understanding of training and knowledge. For instance, he highlights the lack of this contingency in the scientifically-influenced notions of *efficiency* and *self-improvement* embedded in the discourses of Laban and Alexander techniques as well as in Lecoq's concept of the 'neutral body' (2009:15-68, 70-119). By focusing on the contingent understanding of training, Evans helps me to conceptualize my argument within actor-training processes suggesting an emergent, processual and intersubjective practice.

Evans' observations can be combined with Alison Hodge's two key questions on actor-training pedagogies emanating from Stanislavski's initial objectives: 'Firstly, could a *single, universal system* be achieved which would contain a complete method for actor training?... Secondly, could the *fundamental techniques of one acting system* be applicable in the creation of any form of theatre?' (2010: xxiv, my emphasis). Modern conservatories attempt to answer these questions through teaching a combination of diverse movement, vocational and acting approaches. Nevertheless, the potential emergent tension between these practices (i.e. between text-based and movement-based processes) could become problematic for the development of each actor's interrelational awareness. Within the scope of this investigation I suggest that the ongoing impact of logocentrism upon contemporary conservatory actor-training discourses influences the integrative expression of each actor's individual exploration of creativity and language. Based on this view, this chapter outlines the need for further examination of actor training through the intersubjective and at the same time unique relation between each actor and the relevant acting environment.

Rooted in the interconnection of theory and practice or *praxis*, this PaR thesis follows Merleau-Ponty's corporeal understanding of *logos as flesh* in which I identify the

intersubjective dialogue between mind and body, inner and outer, self and other. I attempt to distinguish Merleau-Ponty's universal implications in his analysis of logos from my specific argument about the expression of actors' multiple subjectivities through the original notion of *embodied logos*. I recognize that similarly to the rest of embodied actor-training approaches my somatic-based work could be criticized for a universal *soma-centrism* that tries to re-approach the actor's experience through a single and a-social perception of *one soma*.²⁹ I do not claim that my practice aims at resolving the problem of logocentrism in actor training. Nevertheless, I explore my own response as emerging actor-trainer by shaping alternative modes of practice through a simultaneous interrogation of their strengths and weaknesses. I do so by exploring intersubjective/intercorporeal dynamics such as movement, verbal/sound input and tactile communication. Throughout my own ongoing process I intend to facilitate the co-development of actors' multiple individual creative processes within an interdisciplinary dialogue between BMC-informed somatic methodology and contemporary actor training.

This chapter supports the development of my interrelational argument in two parts. In the first part I attempt to define logocentrism and its relation to this thesis. I concentrate on *dualism* and *universalism* as the main problematic logocentric characteristics that I identify in the actor-training environment as well as the choice of Merleau-Ponty in order to support the conceptualization of *embodied logos* in my research. In the second part I look at the origins and perpetuation of the problem of logocentrism within Stanislavski-inspired and Stanislavski-challenging actor-training traditions. I focus on the dualistic binaries of mind-body, inner-outer, self-other, and the one instrument-like universal unification of all actors' embodied experience and perception, as logocentric problems that unhelpfully narrow the potentials of the actor's individual creativity.

²⁹ Soma-centrism or somatocentrism emphasizes the importance of human organism as the source of one's expression and identity. For a soma-centric and 'neural basis of the self' see Damasio 1994. Despite its integrated body-mind basis soma-centrism can be criticized for a single understanding of one's embodied experience that makes the individual unable to imagine that others may experience things in a different way.

1.1 Logocentrism: an overview of the problematic characteristics of the term

Since this PaR project aims at exploring the acting process as intersubjective/intercorporeal experience, logocentrism becomes one of my key terms. Dualism and universalism as the two main historical logocentric manifestations that triggered the argument of this thesis are discussed as they appear in key works of Plato and Aristotle, combined with the early modern philosophical revolution of seventeenth century Cartesian dualism. The twentieth and twenty-first century re-examination of logocentrism is introduced through the discourse of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, returning to Merleau-Ponty's embodied phenomenology as the most appropriate philosophical ground for my thesis.

Logocentrism as a twentieth century neologism commonly associated with the philosophy of Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) represents a structuralist philosophical method that prizes rational thinking and the existence of a universal language as an external form of logical pre-determined thoughts. Logocentric characteristics often manifest themselves in binary oppositions and the idealization of a single unified truth. They are ingrained in our culture and daily life through hierarchies established by ideologies that were developed around the superiority of a solid centre such as the Christian logos of God, the author's text, the privileged position of the male.³⁰ Logocentrism can be also seen as the foundation of the European scientific and epistemological tradition (Ritzer and Ryan 2011:359). It informs the development of natural, human and social sciences, and it is present in educational environments, including actor-training institutions, that concentrate on the acquisition and dissemination of an objective knowledge. Scientific and epistemological logocentrism is

³⁰ The philosophical examination of logocentric social and cultural forces gave rise to sub-logocentric neologisms including theologocentrism and phallogocentrism. Theologocentrism is sometimes used to assert the key logocentric aspects of Christian theology such as the importance of a written Testament and the 'appearance' of a male God which subsequently determined the superior identity of the males over the females in modern society. The social male superiority as a privileged signifier is defined by feminists as phallogocentrism: 'Like all postmodernists, postmodern feminists reject phallogocentric thought, that is, ideas ordered around an absolute word (logos) that is "male" in style (hence the reference to the phallus)' (Tong 2009:270). Thus, even though not directly related to this study, Christian theology contributed to our current sense of logos as hierarchical, authoritarian, textual, and male.

mainly expressed through a disconnection between one's intellectual and embodied experience, excluding the factor of individuality, diversity and a context-specific approach.

The logocentric problematic of dualism or the division between embodied and intellectual perception that concerns my thesis begins with Plato's classical philosophy (427-347 BC). Plato's view of logos has been associated with his theory of forms.³¹ According to Plato the world is divided into two realms, the imperfect visible world of appearances and the perfect, eternal, unchanging world of ideas or forms: 'in the visible realm it [the form of the 'sun' outside the 'cave'] is the progenitor of light and of the source of light, and in the intelligible realm it is the source and provider of truth and knowledge' (1993:243-244 [517b]). In his argument in the *Republic* the philosopher described the invisible human soul, aspects of what we think of today as the mind, like a tripartite immaterial form which is governed by the intellect or logos. Language or discourse becomes the means through which this solid centre of thought or logos is expressed. In *Theaetetus* (360 BC) Plato defined logos as structured, linear and universal language that can convey knowledge (episteme) through the combination of primary elements and rational explanation:

[A]s the elements are woven together, so their names may be woven together to produce a spoken account [logos], because an account is essentially a weaving together of names. This explains how although the elements are unaccompanied by a rational account [logos] and are unknowable (but perceptible) yet the complexes are knowable, accessible to a rational account, and susceptible to true belief [logos] (202b)...anyone who can't give and receive an account of something is ignorant of it (202c). (Plato [trans. Robin Waterfield] 2004:115)

Embedded in Plato's dualism is the second logocentric problematic that this PaR project aims at revisiting within the actor-training context, the element of universalism. I identify universalism as the pedagogical and philosophical presupposition according to which we all

³¹ For Plato's view on logos and his theory on forms see Cross 1954.

analyze, talk about and experience knowledge in the same way. Plato's universalism sprang from his belief in the supremacy of a universal set of innate intellectual forms. Within this universal concept there is a single language and a single socio-political context that excludes ethical implications of diversity. The philosopher who epitomized universalism, especially in the way it is introduced in actor-training pedagogies through the assumption of a single embodied experience, was Aristotle (484-322 BC).

Unlike Plato, Aristotle did not separate the physical matter from the immaterial realm of mind or soul and he believed that human senses are the fundamental source of knowledge (Baracchi 2014:94). Aristotle's universalism was founded upon the hypothetical authority of fixed external forms that human perception filters in a single way. Two of these external forms for Aristotle, relevant to universalism in actor training, were a single structured language and a text-based unity according to the author's unequivocal meaning. In the *Poetics* (335 BC), Aristotle additionally equated the existence of a universal language with the significance of a rational understanding of the human voice. He described logos as *phone semantike*, the signifying voice (Heath 1996:32-33 [9.2], Cavarero 2005:34). In the metaphysical tradition of logos as rational discourse, the adjective *semantike* (signifying) prioritizes the semantic aspect of logos.³² Aristotle combined his phonetic and text-based universalism with a single understanding of goal-oriented human behaviour and reason-based creative activity, analyzed in his practical philosophy (*Ethics, Politics, Rhetoric*). His ideas on ethics and morality did not involve a claim to intersubjective validity, but he argued for the existence of a single truth for every individual of whatever culture and time (Crisp 2000:3-4 [1094a]).

³² The importance of the rational human voice is also described as phonocentrism. Phonocentrism is another logocentric sub-theme according to which speech is prior and superior to writing. Based on the twentieth century French philosopher Jacques Derrida, whose thinking is introduced later in this part of the chapter, phonocentrism serves logocentrism 'by tying meaning to that which is present to the consciousness of the speaker. According to phonocentrism, writing is a mere shadow of speech, at one remove from meaning' (Magill 1999:913).

Logocentrism in classical thinking, as re-encountered in Stanislavski-based actor-training discourses, can be summarized in the dualistic opposition between each actor's intellectual and embodied perception, in conjunction with a single understanding of human experience according to a single language, single context, single cognitive and text-based analysis. This acquisition of a predetermined knowledge concerning our relation to the world established the study of metaphysics which was re-introduced to the modern European thought by the work of the French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes (1596-1650).³³ His method, known as the Cartesian paradigm, was the epitome of logos as the universal and rational thought articulated in Descartes' groundbreaking work *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641).

Building particularly on Plato's theory of forms, Descartes fundamentally argued for two doctrines. First, he valued incorporeal reason (*res cogito*) over the sensory experience of the human body (*res extensa*) as the only source of universal knowledge. Second, he saw the natural world, including the human body, as machine-like object, which follows the mechanistic laws of nature. The mind, on the other hand, was described as a separate entity that influences the body through a causal but hierarchical and distinct relationship:

[S]imply by knowing that I exist and seeing at the same time that absolutely nothing else belongs to my nature or essence except that I am a thinking thing, I can infer correctly that my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing. It is true that I may have (or, to anticipate, that I certainly have) a body that is very closely joined to me. But nevertheless,...it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it. (Descartes 1996:54)

During the end of the twentieth and the turn of the twenty-first century, Cartesian metaphysics became the target of the philosophy of deconstruction and the metaphysics of

³³ Throughout a long period of time after the Stoics (ca. 300 BCE) and during the so-called dark ages of European medieval philosophy (from 5th to 16th century CE), logocentrism came to be mainly related to Christian theology and the logos of God.

presence in the discourse of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). The problem of mind-body dualism in Derrida's discourse is broadly implied through the relation between speech and writing: 'writing, the letter, the sensible inscription, has always been considered by Western tradition as the body and matter external to the spirit, to breath, to speech, and to the logos' (1997:35). The belief that speech is superior to writing, a concept identified as phonocentrism, was the main subject of Derrida's deconstruction (Tymieniecka 2011:207). Derrida's definition of logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence is 'the exigent, powerful, systematic, and irrepressible desire' for a transcendental signified (1997:49). Through his deconstructive process he argued against this persistent partiality for a meaning, concept, or thought that transcends all external signs. Derrida identified logocentric universality as a paradox inherent in language claiming that it is an insufficient concept which overlooks the plurality of various contexts and subjectivities (2008:60-61).

Regarding dualistic binaries and the single understanding of human experience in actor training, Derrida's views can be used in order to validate actors' self-creativity and intersubjective expressions. His idea of *différance* questions acting as imitation of life as well as the presence of the author against actors' freedom, a hierarchical image that Derrida equates with the idea of God (2001:235). Interconnecting presence and absence, *différance* can be interpreted as referring to the dynamic dialogue between the actor's inner and outer, self and other, intellectual and embodied experience.³⁴ However, Derrida's deconstructive ideas do not offer much insight into the actor's and trainer's experience as fully embodied. This gap in the theoretical ground of my praxis is filled in by Merleau-Ponty's embodied phenomenology and the philosopher's experiential understanding of logos.

Given that this PaR thesis is grounded upon the presupposition of an intersubjective dialogue between our logos and embodied experiences, I identify the conceptual framework

³⁴ For instance, Philip Auslander drawing on Derrida's deconstruction and *différance* argues that 'an examination of acting theory through the lens of deconstruction reveals that the self is not an autonomous foundation for acting, but is produced by the performance it supposedly grounds' (Zarrilli 2002:54). Auslander's criticism brings into light the tension between the actor's self-identification and the authority of each actor training context.

that primarily helps me to inform my criticism in Merleau-Ponty's corporeal discussion of logos. I draw on Merleau-Ponty's embodied phenomenology because it offers one of the profoundest challenges to Cartesian body-mind dualism, emphasizing the significance of embodiment in human perception. At the same time I further develop the philosopher's transcendental or universal single perception of embodied experience and corporeal logos, arguing for the emergence of actors' multiple subjectivities within intercorporeal communication between the actor and the trainer, the actor and the actor, the actor and the group.

The immanent embodied nature of the integrated, emergent, and interdependent quality of experience was established by Merleau-Ponty's concept of the *lived body*. Merleau-Ponty's *lived body* built upon Husserl's notion of *intentionality* through the influence of Heidegger. Adding to Husserl and Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the experience of the world through a body which is simultaneously object and subject of perception: as 'we are in the world through our body' and 'we perceive the world with our body' we also rediscover our self as both a natural self (an object) and a subject of perception (Merleau-Ponty 2002:239). The most important aspect in the connection with the world for Merleau-Ponty (that also pervades the actor-training process) is the communication with others 'taken as similar psycho-physical subjects' (2002:411). This relation is described by the philosopher through the notion of intersubjectivity:

Someone is making use of my familiar objects. But who can it be? I say that it is another, a second self, and this I know in the first place because this living body has the same structure as mine. I experience my own body as the power of adopting certain forms of behaviour and a certain world, and I am given to myself merely as a certain hold upon the world; now, it is precisely my body which perceives the body of another, and discovers in that other body a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions, a familiar way of dealing with the world. (Merleau-Ponty 2002:412)

This interrelation is expressed more fully in the philosopher's concept of the *flesh*. The relational engagement suggested by the porous quality of the flesh as a 'feeling' or concept allows a simultaneous dialogue between internal and external perception resembling actual characteristics of human body structures such as the organ of the skin. Merleau-Ponty invites the reader to think of the flesh not as a union of contradictories but as 'an "element" of Being' (1968:147, 139). Inspired by Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* ([1943] 1989), Merleau-Ponty's flesh represents the *exemplar sensible*, the body that is at the same time sensible and sensate (i.e. the body I touch, the body that touches) (1968:135). An extension of the relation with the embodied self is the world which, as it is perceived by the flesh body, it also *reflects* the element of the flesh (1968:248, 255). According to Merleau-Ponty, the embodied dynamics that connect the flesh of the self and the world are manifested through logos.

In *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty integrates his perception of logos with the notion of the flesh. He attributes to the intertwined logos all the aspects of the embodied experience beyond cognitive processes and verbal language. According to the philosopher *logos as flesh* represents the pre-language of silence, sound, breath, rhythm, of the senses and the movement. Through this embodied or carnal participation, Merleau-Ponty suggests, we develop a sequential sense of self in relation to the world and the other. Merleau-Ponty's discussion of *flesh* and *logos* allows me to explore a response to dualistic binaries between mind-body, inner-outer, self-other within intersubjective/intercorporeal dynamics in actor training. Valuable as I think the philosopher's contribution, what is lacking in his account of intersubjectivity is a more contemporary recognition of diversity in relation to the existence of multiple embodied subjectivities. I acknowledge that the problematic element of universalism that arises from Merleau-Ponty's transcendental aspect of logos can be articulated as *the problem of the one body*.³⁵ If we accept that the flesh is a 'connective tissue of exterior and

³⁵ Contemporary philosophical criticism has identified the problem of the one body and its objectified mechanization that disregards the relational and at the same time uniquely individual nature of human experience. Among this discourse that has activated a dynamic dialogue with contemporary embodied actor-training praxis I identify the work of Dan Zahavi (2001), Richard Shusterman (2012), and Adriana Cavarero (2005). Among other practitioners, Philip Zarrilli supports his understanding of acting as

interior horizons' which transcends the boundaries of time, space, movement, and bodies, then we end up talking about not an individuated but a continuous, sole experience (Merleau-Ponty 1968:131). Hence, I revisit Merleau-Ponty's discourse, adding the notion of multiple subjectivities through the understanding of each actor's *embodied logos*.

Acknowledging the danger of potentially universalizing implications in my own practice, I should like to repeat that I do not advocate the substitution of a *single logos* with the centering of a *single body* or soma. I use what I identify as problematic logocentrism in actor training in order to have a starting point and an ongoing reference to the issues I try to challenge throughout the development of my praxis. Based on this critical awareness, in the following chapters, I resist the temptation to collapse all actors' processes and problems that I encounter into the single/universalizing category of logocentrism. Instead, I aim at facilitating every actor's individual experience through dynamics of communication that could support a permeable embodied interconnection between the trainer and the actors within a shared context. My intersubjective ideas, grounded on the notion of *embodied logos*, are intended to infuse not only my practice but also my verbal input to the actors developing new languages and terms that explicitly respond to the emergent problems. I will now connect this philosophical outline with an overview of how dualistic and universal logocentric principles in actor training are mediated to contemporary conservatories through Stanislavski's praxis and legacy. I attempt to challenge the origins of the problem not by simply choosing a different actor-training tradition but focusing on Stanislavski-originated legacies of conservatoire training.

intersubjective/intercorporeal process through Zahavi's ideas on phenomenological intersubjectivity. He uses Zahavi 'in arguing for a multi-dimensional view of intersubjectivity that draws from several phenomenological approaches' (2014:121). Rebecca Loukes identifies an association between the modern popularity of body-based theatre practices which may express the need for a personal reference in a rapidly changing and technological world, and Shusterman's observation of an early twenty-first 'somatic turn' (2013:197). Konstantinos Thomaidis draws on Cavarero's vocal ontology of uniqueness in order to argue for the performer's vocal intersubjectivity (2014:77-87).

1.2 Logocentrism in actor training: from Stanislavski to legacies

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Russian actor and director Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) was the first practitioner to systematically explore the dialogue between the actor's intellectual and embodied expression in the actor-training studio. Stanislavski formalized what is considered to be the first systematic actor-training approach in modern Europe, the early phase of which he defined as *psychotechnique*: 'subconscious creation through the actor's conscious psychotechnique. (The subconscious through the conscious, the involuntary through the voluntary.)' (Stanislavski 2008:18, Benedetti's emphasis). He began the systematization of his process by identifying a dualistic problem in acting: the split between the actor's internal and external experiencing, which is also part of the problematic dualism that this project investigates.

Overall, Stanislavski developed a practice in order to overcome innate dualistic binaries in acting such as mind-body, inner-outer, self-other as well as the mechanistic perception of actors' experience. However, through this investigation Stanislavski unintentionally perpetuated problematic logocentrism of dualism and universalism, introduced through the philosophical overview in the first part of this chapter. Stanislavski's separate training of the actor's *experiencing* and *embodiment* re-introduced oppositions of internal-external, mechanical-organic, physical-mental.³⁶ At the same time, due to simultaneous scientific achievements such as the investigation of behaviourism and physiology, he theorized his

³⁶ Experiencing is related to the actor's 'inner theatrical sense of self', the cultivation of emotional responses, concentration, and imagination. Regarded as *organic*, the actor's inner self is trained through exercises such as the *magic if* and *given circumstances*, *muscular release*, and *emotional memory* (Stanislavski 2008). The development of the actor's inner perception is the focus of Stanislavski's early work on psychotechnique and the centre of his first rehearsal technique known as *affective cognition* or *cognitive analysis*. Cognitive analysis was based on long intellectual and text-based discussions 'at the table' and the actor's internal individual preparation (Stanislavski 2008:273-348). In this early phase of Stanislavski's work, embodiment is defined as the development of the actor's 'outer theatrical sense of self' through exercises for the physical or *mechanical apparatus*. Benedetti clarifies that the 'Russian term "Voploshchenye" is difficult to translate. Literally it means "incarnation", "embodiment". Both terms in English, however, have irrelevant overtones' (2008:79). In his last rehearsal approaches of *physical actions* (1933) and *active analysis* (1934-1938) Stanislavski redefined embodiment as a process during which the actor, the role, and the text become one.

practice as if it could be validated 'scientifically'.³⁷ Stanislavski's objective was to create a 'universal "grammar of acting"' for the cultivation of the actor's *second nature* or *apparatus* in the community of the acting profession (Pitches 2006:6, Stanislavski 2008:xv,539).

The relationship between Stanislavski and science has been a subject of rigorous investigation in acting theory.³⁸ For instance, Joseph Roach suggests that Stanislavski's system 'cannot be comprehended without his science' (1985:206). Whyman points out that remarkable changes in scientific thought occurred throughout Stanislavski's life and his system 'though he wished it to be rooted in nature, developed in a period of shifting views of natural science, human nature and behaviour' (2008:2). One of these radical and international changes towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century was that analytical psychology began to be perceived as science.³⁹ Simon Watts claims that the history of how psychology became a science is not straightforward. Throughout this historical development, the line between psychology as natural or social science became blurred (2010:23-42). Watts argues that the human alienation caused by the mechanistic perception of universe suggested by the early modern scientific 'method' of Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and Charles Darwin (1809-1882) opened the door to psychology (2010:24-25). Nevertheless, psychology maintained the principles of objectification and uniformity in the understanding of human experience.

The materialistic perception of mental events encouraged by Marxist Russia was reflected in Stanislavski's initial focus on text-based linear analysis and machine-like improvement of the actor's *efficient*, single physical apparatus. Concerning the centrality of the author and the text in Stanislavski's process of cognitive analysis, actors had to go through specific cognitive steps: breaking the play into bits, identifying all the actions according to the given circumstances, connecting them into a score through a logical uniting thread (through-action)

³⁷ The word is used in quotes in order to highlight that Stanislavski's practice was not developed as a formal objective science but followed metaphorically the general framework of a scientific methodology.

³⁸ See among others Roach (1985), Pitches (2006), Whyman (2008).

³⁹ See Fancher and Rutherford (2011), Jones and Elcock (2001).

that resolves the role's *supertask* (Stanislavski 2008:312-321). The process included more details and Stanislavski compared it to an arithmetic problem (Stanislavski 2008:143). In terms of the actor's conscious control Stanislavski developed a set of principles stemming from physiology or behavioural psychology.⁴⁰ Building upon Darwin's correlations between human and animal studies in *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), the goal of behaviourism was the sensorimotor prediction and physical control of human behaviour (Watts 2010:37). It influenced the development of Stanislavski's exercises for the actor's mechanical apparatus including *plasticity of motion, diction and singing, and tempo rhythm* (2008:351-612).

At the same time Stanislavski did not want to exclude the social aspect of psychology as the science of subjective feelings. In order to combine control with the actor's emotional experience, he turned to the twentieth century associationist psychology (Whyman 2008:4). The most acknowledged influence on Stanislavski's psychophysical perception was Ribot's principle of mind-body interconnection. It was combined with the belief that emotional memories have a physical impact initially explored through the *emotional memory* exercise (Carnicke 2009:168). This initial interest triggered Stanislavski's ongoing investigation on the actor's inner-outer continuum whilst in the later stages of his work the practitioner started developing more integrated explorations of embodied actor-training approaches. During the last four years of his life (1934-1938) Stanislavski took further his work on physical actions setting up workshops for his last experimentations on the rehearsal process of active analysis. He revisited his internal text-based focus through improvisations that highlighted the embodied communication of the dramatic actions between actors. Thus, in my understanding, Stanislavski prepared the ground for the ongoing exploration of acting as intersubjective/intercorporeal process.

⁴⁰ Behaviourism was founded in Russia by scientists such as Ivan Mikhailovich Sechenov (1829-1905), Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849-1936), and Alexei Gastev (1882-1939) (Whyman 2008:67-73, Carnicke 2009:162-163, Pitches 2006:23-25).

The problematic retrospective establishment of Stanislavski's acting process as 'logocentric' is rooted in several reasons, including the context of the editions of his books. Stanislavski's written discourse was first published in English in Elizabeth Hapgood's translation as *An Actor Prepares* (1936), *Building a Character* (1949) and *Creating a Role* (1961). Contemporary scholars such as Carnicke (2009), Benedetti (2008), Merlin (2003) and Whyman (2008, 2012) have addressed problematic aspects in Hapgood's editions in terms of translation and time gaps, various interpretations as well as Soviet censorship particularly regarding Stanislavski's relation to yoga. One main difficulty emerging from the way Stanislavski's written work was published is a lack of a sense of the psychophysical continuum in his actor-training process and language. This issue became obvious through the two-part edition of Stanislavski's work on actor training as *An Actor Prepares* (1936) and *Building a Character* (1949). Benedetti highlights that the two books 'were intended as a single volume, outlining the first two years of a three-year course' (Benedetti 2008:56). He adds that Stanislavski reluctantly agreed to two volumes but he was dissatisfied with the consequent 'body-mind split' (Benedetti 2008:56).

Most importantly, Stanislavski-informed teachings are still dominant in rehearsal processes and the curriculum of the majority of contemporary drama schools in Europe and North America (Gordon 2009:87-88).⁴¹ They have been filtered through the actor-trainers'

⁴¹ The majority of Drama UK accredited schools (such as Arts Educational Schools London, Drama Centre, Drama Studio, Guildford School of Acting, Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts) as well as RADA (Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts) in the online description of their acting courses explicitly highlight that their programmes are Stanislavski-based, Stanislavski-informed or Stanislavski-focused (https://www.dramauk.co.uk/drama_uk_accredited_schools, accessed 28.11.2015). Stanislavski's active influence upon contemporary actor training and rehearsal processes is also present in modern scholarship (among others see Zarrilli et al 2013, Pitches 2012) as well as research projects and events. For instance, The Stanislavski Centre based in Rose Bruford College and directed by Paul Fryer, in March 2016 hosted an international symposium named 'The S Word: Stanislavski and the Future of Acting' investigating 'current acting processes and paradigms that incorporate Stanislavski's practices and teachings' (<http://theatrefutures.org.uk/stanislavski-centre/cfp-the-s-word-stanislavski-and-the-future-of-acting-18-19-20-march-2016/>, accessed 01.12.2015). Regarding the American reception of Stanislavski's practice, known as the Method, it was established by Lee Strasberg (1901-1982), Stella Adler (1901-1992), and Sanford Meisner (1905-1997). The three practitioners initially collaborated in the Group Theatre (founded in 1931) but they gradually displayed differences in their approaches and exercises (Krasner in Hodge 2010:144-163). The most famous Method training environment is the Actors Studio in New York run by Strasberg until his death (see Frome 2005). The Studio is currently in collaboration with Pace University after establishing the Actors Studio

idiosyncratic interpretations, the continuous evolution of Stanislavski's practice, and log-bound actor-training institutions. Therefore, I should highlight that all the practices discussed here have been and continue to be extremely valuable for the understanding of the acting process within various contexts. I do not criticize the practices themselves, but the way they are usually conceptualized and communicated/taught, or the way they may be perceived by actors due to social and cultural norms such as goal-oriented and industry-informed actor-training institutions. For instance, there has been confusion between Stanislavski's 'system' and its interpretation by the American Method established at the Actor's Studio in New York.

The Method trains the actor to stress the importance of the role's psychological 'truth' according to the meaning of the text based on Stanislavski's early ideas on cognitive analysis which travelled to the United States through his students in the First Studio Maria Ouspenskaya (1915-1949) and Richard Boleslavsky (1889-1937). Stanislavski's psychological views on actor training were received with enthusiasm by American actor-trainers due to interest in behavioural and analytical psychology in the United States. 'This included the work of Pavlov, Ribot, and William James, as well as behaviourist John B. Watson, who had also influenced Stanislavsky. In addition came the influence of Freud and psychoanalysis' (Zarrilli et al 2013:187-188). However, American psycho-centric interpretations of Stanislavski's approach could be explored as disconnected from the actor's physicality and through the universal-symbolic paradigm of analytical psychology.

Responses towards Stanislavski's initial cognitive concentration in Europe, within which I situate my praxis, put *the actor's body* in the *centre* of the actor-trainers' attention. In a further exploration of the alternative methodologies indicated by Meyerhold and Chekhov, a 'new generation' of twentieth century avant-garde theatre practitioners took up Stanislavski's

Drama School MFA program in 2006 (<http://www.pace.edu/dyson/academic-departments-and-programs/asds>, accessed 15.10.2014). Nevertheless, the Method is also present in the UK actor training as, for instance, the online description of MA Acting-Classical at RCSSD includes the examination of 'Stanislavski, the Method and "Realist" Theatre' (<http://www.cssd.ac.uk/course/acting-classical-ma>, accessed 05.02.2016).

quest for the actor's psychophysical continuum. Among the practitioners in this group who have been described as 'post-Stanislavskian' are Jerzy Grotowski (1933- 1999), Peter Brook (1925 -), Eugenio Barba (1936 -), and Philip Zarrilli (1947 -) (Zarrilli 2009:8).⁴² These practitioners tend to emphasize the development of *universal psychophysical principles* that aim to bring in dialogue all actors across periods and places. For the exploration of the actor's body they usually draw on non-western and particularly Asian performance or psychophysical practices.⁴³ For instance, Grotowski expressed an interest in 'oriental theatre- specifically the Peking Opera, Indian Kathakali, and Japanese No theatre' (2002:16). His practice built upon Stanislavski's physical actions, Meyerhold's biomechanical training and Vakhtangov's synthesis (2002:16).⁴⁴ Grotowski's response against Stanislavski's analytical and deductive technique (i.e. an accumulation of skills) was the universal inductive technique of the holy actor (Grotowski 2002:35). He looked for the 'true creation' that starts from the actor's embodied transparency, the 'effort not to hide oneself and not to lie' (Wolford 2010:202). The actor starts from a state of passive readiness and through the conscious elimination of psychophysical blocks (*via negativa*) reaches a non-habitual state of transparent consciousness (Grotowski 2002:17, Slowiak and Cuesta 2007: 47).⁴⁵

In embodied actor-training practices, therefore potentially in my practice, I identify the logocentric trap of universalizing actors' multiple embodied subjectivities, alienating them from their social/historical context and their unique bodily experiences. Therefore I argue that there is a need for contemporary modification in the way these approaches are conceptualized, taught, and practised within actor-training institutions. As Maria Kapsali

⁴² Among others see: Grotowski 2002 edited by Eugenio Barba with a preface by Peter Brook, Brook 1989,1995,1996, Barba and Savarese 2006, Barba 1995, 1999, Zarrilli 2002, 2009,2013.

⁴³ See Pavis 1996, Nascimento 2009.

⁴⁴ In 1955 Grotowski went to Moscow to study Stanislavski's system at the State Institute of Theatre Arts (GITIS) under the guidance of Stanislavski's actor Yuri Zavadsky (1894-1977) (Barba 1999:24-25).

⁴⁵ The research of Grotowski's Polish Laboratory continues in the Workcenter that Grotowski founded in 1986 in Pontedera, Italy. The Workcenter is currently under the direction of Thomas Richards (Artistic Director of the Focused Research Team in Art as Vehicle) and Mario Biagini (Associate Director of the newly formed *Open Program*) (Schechner and Wolford 2001:368).

points out in her criticism on the required alertness to ideological assumptions within movement practices for actors such as yoga, Feldenkrais, and tai chi: 'the effect that these disciplines may have on the trainee depends a great deal on the actor-trainer and the latter's ability to teach them in a socially sensitive and ideologically aware manner' (2013:84). In my attempt to develop this awareness I formulated this PaR project focusing on my journey of becoming a somatic actor-trainer within UK drama schools. I do not perceive my praxis as a process towards the resolution of what I identify as problematic logocentrism in actor training but as my choice and suggestion in order to respond to implied dualistic binaries and the uniformity of actors' multiple processes. However, I do not only highlight the prevalence of these problematics but I introduce new terms and somatic modes of approaching actor training which deliberately aim at countering some of their strongest effects.

My somatic actor-training methodology is specifically grounded upon BMC principles and Cohen's developmental process of embodiment. I suggest that the exploration of one's subjective experience as intersubjective process through BMC-informed dynamics (movement, verbal/sound input, and tactile communication) as well as the multiplicity embedded in Cohen's ontogenetic metaphor could facilitate the awareness of each actor as unique embodied self and permeable entity. The development of the individual embodied self as a continuous integration of oppositions has its roots in the beginning of human life as one-celled organism, explored in BMC through the embodiment of the cellular breathing pattern. Cohen highlights that since the beginning of our life, our being-in-the world, we embody polarities: 'The first cell is two. I love that. We are communicating already; we have different polarities immediately' (2012:164).⁴⁶ Hartley adds:

⁴⁶ Cohen here refers to the union of the egg cell and the sperm cell during the biological process of conception: 'After a process of 12-24 hours, the instant the genetic material from the sperm and the egg (one half each) determine the unique genetic code for the new individual, two cells are formed. The first cell of the new person is two, from which all other cells and tissues will form' (2012:164). Cohen supports this concept using the following two main sources: *Beginning Life: The Marvellous Journey from Conception to Birth* (1996) by G.L. Flanagan, and *Life Itself: Exploring the Realm of the Living Cell* (1996) by B. Rensperger (ibid).

The cell does not self-reflect or know itself as an individual separate from other individual and objects. Yet it is responsive to its environment and both influences and is influenced by other cells...Each cell of the body has its own innate intelligence, its own sense of presence, and its own unique life process. (Hartley 1995:8)

The openness that arises from the cellular metaphor inspires the combination of the authority of the self with a constant flow through the world. Movement improvisation on the cellular 'mind' of 'being' through visualization, self-imagery, touch, verbal/sound input, sounding, and words, in my experience, supports an embodied and intellectual sense of openness filled with endless creative potentials. The unrestricted embodied dialogue between the differentiation and the wholeness of the self continues in the revision of the embryological journey through the navel radiation pattern: 'The fetus experiences no boundary between itself and the whole world in which it exists, being integrally connected as it is through the umbilical cord to that world that sustains and nourishes it' (Hartley 1995:14-15).

In my individual somatic acting explorations and the dissemination of the process discussed in Chapters Two, Three, and Four BMC is used as a the basis for my practices that I have identified coining the term *fluid structures*. It provides me as somatic actor-trainer with suggestions and invitations that can potentially hold or map the uniqueness of every actor's experience. The same idea applies to the movement patterns. They are not explored as fixed but general movement forms that can be absorbed and explored differently from every individual. There is no right or wrong, rather there is space and time for personal integration through potential 'ease, support and pleasure while moving' (Eddy 2009:6). The explorations intend to support the awareness of each actor's creative self who is prompted to become the study, the student, and the teacher. Throughout this process I recognize the potential influence of my praxis upon each actor's creativity and expression making explicit the problems encountered. Therefore, from a pedagogical and ethical perspective during the dissemination of my practice, I aim at prompting an ongoing verbal reflection and

conversation with the actors in order to shape new experiential languages and terminology making a contribution to the discipline.

To sum up, in this chapter I have discussed the philosophical notions of logocentrism in order to indicate how it is connected with problematic aspects of dualism and universalism within contemporary conservatory actor-training pedagogies and the praxical development of my research. I identified how the problem emerged within Stanislavski's context-specific practice and outlined how it reaches contemporary actor training through the continuous social and cultural logocentric impact of his legacies. Setting out the roots of the problem I provided a theoretical foundation for the practical explorations unfolded in the following chapters focusing on the logocentric problematics that I aim to challenge. In Chapters Two, Three, and Four I reflect on several periods of practice-based research in different theatre teaching/performing environments to test out ways of working that resist dualism and the universalizing of all actors' multiple subjectivities. I concentrate on emergent problems and pertinent issues that I was able to tease out due to the processual nature of my study and my own developmental journey as becoming *trainer-witness*. These problems concern subjects such as therapy and training, ethics in training, the congruence or dissonance of training and intended performance outcome, emotional freedom and violence in training, the problem of time in preparing for performance.

In Chapter Two I describe how I began the formulation of my praxis and my developmental process through self-preparation. I outline the shaping of the dialogue between BMC/IBMT-informed explorations and my practice modifying Cohen's developmental process of embodiment into a new somatic actor-training methodology. I filter this discussion through a critical introduction to the somatic practices employed in this praxis elucidating the reasons I chose to apply BMC/IBMT in the actor-training context as well as this combination's potential oppositions. I situate BMC/IBMT within the context of other somatic practices that are currently used in UK-based conservatory actor training, positioning myself as a new and innovative presence within this context.

Chapter Two

Grounding the praxis of a somatic acting process

[F]or art and philosophy *together* are precisely not arbitrary fabrications in the universe of the “spiritual” (of “culture”), but contact with Being precisely as creations. Being is *what requires creation of us* for us to experience it. (Merleau-Ponty 1968:197)

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the creative process through which as an actress, emerging somatic actor-trainer, and practitioner-researcher I started developing a somatic methodology for actor training. I outline this phase of the research as a significant experiential preparation towards the sharing of my practice in the conservatory actor-training environment. As I argued in the previous chapter, the impact of logocentrism on actor training can become problematic for each actor’s individual creativity and expression. I identified problematic logocentrism in the conceptualization of acting discourses through the perpetuation of dualistic binaries of mind-body, inner-outer, self-other and the scientifically influenced universal understanding of a single embodied perception and experience for all actors. Situating my BMC-informed praxis in the lineage of embodied actor-training approaches that, rooted in Stanislavski’s method of physical actions and active analysis, revisit the logocentric problem in acting, I aim at contributing to this ongoing exploration. To that end this PaR project approaches actor training as an intersubjective and simultaneously individual experience in which the concept of *embodied logos* represents the integration of each actor’s intellectual and embodied perception.

The following chapter introduces the first shaping of my praxis through my own experience as an actress, developing a contingent interdisciplinary dialogue between the BMC methodology, the embodiment of the role and the text. It situates the intention of this research in the idea of the actress as becoming the agent of her actor-training process

before its communication with the individual actor-trainee and the group. This process of formulating the ground of the practitioner's self-knowledge and awareness is common within both embodied actor-training practices and BMC methodology. For instance, in the actor-training context, the actress Roberta Carreri says about her preparation for teaching a group of participants within an Odin Theatre workshop: 'In order to be able to transmit my experience in a clear and efficient way, I was obliged to formulate it first for myself' (Carreri 2014:20). At the same time Cohen identifies the development of her somatic praxis as continuous dialogue between her self-knowledge and its interrelation with the experience of the others, students and/or teachers: 'My method of study and research...has been to discover myself in the life of the cells of my body...and to share this process with others. In this study, we are each at all times whole, constantly changing, and engaged as the subject, material, and observer' (Cohen 2012:158).⁴⁷ I approach this continuous somatic learning as an intersubjective process that is constantly informed by the diversity of actors' experiences and the context of each situation.

My process of becoming a practitioner-researcher is also described in this chapter as a valid source of academic knowledge supported by Robin Nelson's PaR methodology: 'the dynamics of process characteristics of creative practices with an emphasis on becoming are crucial to my understanding of knowledge production...All forms of research and knowing involve a process' (2013:46). Nelson combines processual research with reflection on embodied subjective knowledge which is taken further through intersubjective dissemination (2013:57). This dissemination is actualized through sensorimotor communication complemented by a language or discourse. The original dynamic dialogue between Nelson's model and Cohen's methodology in my PaR project resides in an additional reflective phase that follows Cohen's process of embodiment. At the same time BMC developmental patterns provide Nelson's research model with a 'know how' practice and an embodied process

⁴⁷ Cohen's continuous self-interrogation can be noticed in her DVDs and YouTube videos in which the practitioner actively participates in the teaching and sharing, almost developing the practice in the moment of its sharing. The understanding of the educator's intersubjective self as in-progress can prove particularly useful to my intersubjective/intercorporeal approach to actor training.

towards the formulation of an experiential language. The methodological ground of my praxis based on Cohen's process of embodiment is outlined in the third part of this chapter.

In the second part of the chapter, I discuss how I began the practical explorations of my research through the modification of Cohen's developmental patterns in a self-preparation context. I analyze this experiential development using examples of emergent intersubjective embodied dynamics such as movement and sensorimotor communication through sound and touch. The case-study character explored during my self-preparation as an actor-trainer is Euripides' Medea. The choice of this particular role is rooted in the experiential inter-relatedness between the development of my somatic awareness and the acting of Medea in my training.⁴⁸ I recognize the cultural, gender, and particular theatre genre/role-oriented implications that arise from my decision to shape the ground of my somatic actor-training process through the exploration of Euripides' role. Nevertheless, in resonance with the dynamic and emergent process of my practice, Medea became a metaphor of fluid embodied experience. The metaphorical aspect of Medea is mingled with the embodiment of Cohen's *cell* in the first phase of my *cellular metamorphosis* exploration. It is discussed in conjunction with actor training as intersubjective/intercorporeal dialogue between mind and body, inner and outer, self and other/others.

Before I begin my discussion on the first phase of my practical research that underpinned the shaping of my methodology, I would like to elucidate the main reasons BMC/IBMT have been used in the actor-training context within this praxis. I do so in order to critically introduce and contextualize my practice through the primary somatic processes used as ground of this project and their connection to other somatic practices currently applied in UK-based actor-training institutions. I do not propose to offer a comprehensive survey but I do wish to briefly give a sense of local context for the emergence and elaboration of my own approaches. Within the scope of this research the sources of general information regarding

⁴⁸ I explored and played Medea in the second year of my training at Greek National Theatre (GNT) Drama School under the direction of the actor, actor-trainer, director, and former deputy director of the school Dimitris Lignadis (1964 -).

other somatic practices in UK actor training are confined to online descriptions of the acting courses (Drama UK accredited schools' websites, including RADA and LAMDA) and available reading sources on contemporary movement training for actors, such as Evan's treatise (2009).⁴⁹ Additionally, I should like to highlight that I identify somatic movement practices based on Eddy's categorization of *somatic progenitors* (such as Rudolf Laban), *first generation* (such as F.M Alexander), and *new generations* of somatic practitioners (such as Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen). My somatic educator on BMC principles Linda Hartley, who studied with Cohen and developed BMC within the context of Movement Therapy (IBMT), is positioned by Eddy within the last generation of somatic training founders.⁵⁰ Through this lineage I can contextualize my practice as an innovative application and modification of contemporary somatic practices in the actor-training context.

2.1 A critical introduction to the application of BMC/IBMT in my PaR

Due to my acting background while focusing on movement-based actor-training pedagogies, I situate my PaR project among various effective modern practices that challenge logocentric problematics in acting.⁵¹ At the same time, my choice to concentrate on somatic movement practices through my professional training as somatic movement educator and the formulation of a somatic acting process within this research puts my practice in dialogue with other somatic practices currently used in UK actor-training institutions. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis (pp.21-22), pre-somatic practices, such as Laban movement analysis, and first generation somatic approaches, such as Alexander technique, are widely employed in the UK conservatory actor-training field. To reiterate Evans' observation, the

⁴⁹ An extensive survey of how somatic movement practices are currently supporting the actors-trainees in Drama UK accredited schools, including RADA and LAMDA, introducing the field of *somatic education within UK-based actor training*, is one of the intentions of the further development of my research.

⁵⁰ For Eddy's map on the founders of somatic movement trainings and their influences, see 2009:24.

⁵¹ Among numerous modern embodied actor-training practices currently taught as workshops or systematically within actor-training institutions are: Alison Hodge's *Core Training for Actors* (2013), Experience Bryon's *Integrative Performance Practice* (2014), Michael Lugering's *The Expressive Actor* (2013), Philipp Zarrilli's intercultural psychophysical approach (2009), Christina Gutekunst's and John Gillett's *Voice into Acting* (2014) practice.

practices developed by Laban and F.M Alexander are dominant in UK actor-training institutions 'because they offer approaches which are compatible with the demands that western professional theatre conventionally makes on the actor' (2009:4). Being part of my own actor-training experience at GNT and East 15 acting schools, I acknowledge that both Laban and Alexander techniques can be extremely useful for the development of the actor's technical ability and language.

Going through the description of undergraduate and postgraduate acting courses within the Drama UK accredited schools, it is easy to notice the dominance of Laban and Alexander practices as part of students' movement training.⁵² For instance, Drama Centre highlights that its teaching program was created around the work of Dr Yat Malmgren whose 'unique contribution developed the theoretical work on the psychology of movement initiated by Rudolph Laban, the visionary innovator in the field of choreography and movement theory' (<http://www.arts.ac.uk/csm/courses/postgraduate/ma-acting-drama-centre-london/>, accessed 28.11.2015). Malmgren, the creator of *Laban-Malmgren System of Character Analysis*, is described as one of Laban's students 'who has had a profound influence on the application of his [Laban's] ideas to the teaching of movement for actors' (Evans 2009:57). Combining Laban's movement analysis with Jungian psychology and anti-Cartesian body-mind motivation, Malmgren suggests a character analysis based on 'physical, movement-based images' (O'Connor in Evans 2009:57).⁵³

The integration between the actor's imagination and scientifically-informed study of anatomy is the foundation of Alexander Technique, the most known first generation somatic practice currently used in UK-based drama schools such as RADA and LAMDA. The objective of the

⁵² Either or both somatic approaches are mentioned in the curriculum of schools such as Arts Educational Schools London, Drama Centre, Rose Bruford College, Drama Studio London, East 15, and RCSSD. Alexander Technique is also part of the BA acting courses in both RADA and LAMDA.

⁵³ For a detailed discussion on Malmgren's application of Laban in actor training see Vladimir Mirodan's doctoral thesis *The Way of Transformation (The Laban-Malmgren System of Dramatic Character Analysis)* (1997). Within the development of my own practice the use of text-based images and metaphors would become the ground of the *breathing the role* exploration, challenging logocentric approaches that prioritize the cognitive analysis of the play.

technique is the support of the actor's ideal physical posture and alignment concentrating on the dialogue between head and spine, what Alexander identified as the principle of 'primary control' (1995:148). It seems that the practice is usually applied within one-to-one sessions between the actor and the teacher, and the practitioner's intention could be characterized as therapeutic.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Alexander practitioners within contemporary theatre and performance education in the UK argue that Alexander goes beyond the actor's technical physicality, highlighting the support of the individual's imagination and psychophysical expression. For instance, Niamh Dowling, who is currently Head of School of Performance in Rose Bruford College, claims that Alexander Technique is 'fundamentally about releasing the imagination...[while] it feeds really well into Stanislavski work which talks about a psychophysical activity' (Niamh in Evans 2009:59). However, there is a lack of literature on whether or how Alexander Technique teachers within contemporary actor-training institutions directly apply the practice in the acting process and the embodiment of the role, and this is where my research comes in.

Reiterating my reflection upon my first somatic experience within a non-UK actor-training institution (GNT Drama School), Alexander Technique also inspired the very beginning of this research (see Introduction, p.19). Through my transition to the UK I recognize both Laban and Alexander practices as pre-somatic and first generation somatic processes that have been challenging dualistic binaries within actors' movement-based training. Additionally, depending on each actor-trainer's ideological approach and intentions, both processes could be used in order to facilitate the perception of each individual actor's unique experience. Nevertheless, similarly to Stanislavski's approach, Laban Movement Analysis and Alexander Technique emerged amongst the unavoidable influence of the early twentieth

⁵⁴ This assumption derives from an article on *The Stage* (Hamley 2010) about RADA's students' protest in August 2010 'against the school's decision to massively scale back its one-to-one tuition in the Alexander technique... from around 80 one-to-one lessons spread over three years to just nine lessons in a single term' (<https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/2010/fury-as-rada-cuts-alexander-technique/>, accessed 29.11.2015). Within the same article RADA alumni refer to the use of the technique in the training as *treatment*. According to the school's current website, Alexander is still part of the actors' movement training without clarifying if it is used as one-to-one or group practice.

century's scientific paradigm. Therefore, their discourses perpetuate an objectification and uniformity of actors' multiple embodied experiences through 'mechanistic' principles, such as Laban's 'effort cube' and Alexander's 'primary control', as part of a series of 'teaching aphorisms' (Alexander 1995:148, 206).⁵⁵

In order to further examine these early developed logocentric principles within contemporary actor-training institutions, I argue for the introduction and integration of latest developments suggested by new generations of somatic movement practices such as the work of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen.⁵⁶ I do not suggest a challenge or substitution of the already effectively used practices but a gradual openness to interrelation with new possibilities offered by more current approaches. At the same time, I should highlight that I do not treat BMC as a panacea but as the process that became the ground for my own embodied awareness, therefore it acquired the validity to contain the phenomenological knowledge within my project. My open and dynamic perception towards the somatic processes employed in this project was also facilitated by my simultaneous identity as emerging actor-trainer and IBMT trainee during the development of my research. This ongoing and parallel learning process intentionally helped me circumvent the risk of experiencing myself through a static identity. Instead, it made me enter the intersubjective actor-training environment through the awareness of the actor-trainee's process.

As an actress and emerging somatic actor-trainer, I identified that a distinctive element in Cohen's practice, which could challenge logocentric problematics in actor training, lies in the

⁵⁵ For the dialogue between Laban's ideas on eight basic movement efforts and the twenty-first century performer see among others Bradley 2009:65-97.

⁵⁶ A gradual openness to the dialogue between other somatic movement practices and actor training within the UK has been also slowly introduced through the use of the work of Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984). Even though Feldenkrais is situated among the first generation of somatic practitioners, such as F.M Alexander, his practice suggests a more integrated approach to the actor's body as a whole. For instance, Evans points out that, in comparison to Alexander Technique, '[t]he Feldenkrais approach does not restrict its intervention to the function of the "primary control" (the head/neck/shoulders relationship)...and may have much to offer actor training away from the head and towards a more grounded physicality' (2009:59). At the same time Evans notices that the use of Feldenkrais instead of Alexander is difficult to be established due to 'the relatively small number of qualified Feldenkrais teachers' (ibid.). One example of Feldenkrais for acting processes, applied outside the context of Drama UK Accredited Schools, is the work developed by Libby Worth, senior lecturer in Drama and Theatre Department of Royal Holloway University (2008).

integrated dialogue between scientific study and subjective embodied experience. This dialogue, which was established by the first generation of somatic practitioners, not only validates the ground of Cohen's process of embodiment but also, in my experience and in resonance with Dowling's observation, it facilitates the release of each actor's embodied imagination and expression. Furthermore, it could be seen as a useful methodological approach in order to challenge *from the inside* the scientifically-informed logocentric problematics in Stanislavski-inspired actor-training traditions.

BMC goes beyond the experiential understanding of the body through basic kinetic principles of the musculoskeletal system, combined with the objectives of efficient posture and alignment, as suggested by Alexander Technique. Cohen's process of *experiential anatomy* is an exploration which aims at the understanding of each body as an integrated whole that generates expression even through systems that are not directly related to movement. The experience of organs, the nervous and fluid systems as potent source of individual imagery and expression, in my understanding, could further facilitate each actor's unique 'meeting' with a role through the awareness of one's own integrated embodied expression. Most importantly and in relation to the application of BMC in this praxis, Cohen's process of embodiment suggests a dynamic and non-objective development of perception through the ongoing, relational, and uniquely individual experience of the ontogenetic metaphor. Linda Hartley writes about this developmental exploration:

The process of human movement development, from the moment of conception to the mastery of movement on the earth, provides a framework for observation and practice. Development unfolds in a series of stages and movement patterns that reflect the evolution of the species from one-celled organism to humankind. The sequence leads us from our "being" to our "doing" nature-from bonding and grounding to developing a sense of self, reaching out in play, creative action, and relationship. (Hartley 1995: xxxi-xxxii)

As outlined in the introduction (p.21), Cohen's ontogenetic metaphor is explored in a series of movement patterns known as *Developmental Movement Patterns* or *Basic Neurocellular Patterns* (BNP). The embodiment of these patterns represents moments within human movement development which at the same time are innately related to the uniqueness of each person based on an individual and context-specific journey. In my perception the revision of these movements in the actor-training environment can offer the individual actor the ground towards a process of embodied self-awareness. Based on this process-oriented practice the actor could allow the exploration of a versatile and open interrelation with the potentialities of the dialogue between the self and the otherness of acting contexts/roles. At the same time, Cohen's ontogenetic metaphor, underpinned by the moving and flexible image of the cell, resonates with poststructuralist languages that indicate the acknowledgment of change, plurality, and interconnection in contemporary practice-based research. Thus, it could prove particularly useful for the shaping of each actor's experiential language, what I identify as *embodied logos*, within the intersubjective/intercorporeal actor-training environment.

The understanding of acting as intersubjective and simultaneously individual process is explored in this praxis through somatic processes of *witnessing*.⁵⁷ Witnessing in BMC and IBMT, as appears in my current practice and discussed in the following chapters, fundamentally arises through intersubjective dynamics of movement, touch, and verbal/sound input. I argue that these processes of experiential interaction can support actors in training to recognize that acting is an inherently relational experience that emerges from simultaneously witnessing themselves and the others as *actors-movers* and *actors-witnesses*. Especially regarding my individual developmental journey as emerging somatic actor-trainer, which is the focus of this research, witnessing identifies my intention to facilitate each actor's unique embodied expression while perceiving this experience through my own embodied process. In other words, I introduce the role of the *trainer-witness* that

⁵⁷ See ft 5, p.10.

revisits the pedagogical dynamics between educator and trainees in contemporary conservatory actor training.

According to Linda Hartley, the practice of witnessing is ‘an embracing attitude, a meta-skill (Mindell) underlying all technique and practice, which both guides and contains the work’ (2004:66, original emphasis).⁵⁸ Hartley also notes that ‘[t]he art of witnessing has a wide range of applications’ as it can be present in all contexts of special *relatedness* (2004:65). The same interrelational openness regarding wide potential applications and a continual learning, not only for the trainee/student but also for the practitioner, is recognized in BMC which: ‘offers no fixed rules and procedures but demands that the practitioner or teacher draw upon her own creativity and personal experience in a way that will be unique for each individual’ (Hartley 1995:xvii). In relation to my experience and perception, I argue that the intersubjective/intercorporeal processes of somatic witnessing apply to actor-training pedagogies. These relational dynamics could potentially support a flexible cooperation between my practice and other actor-training approaches through the openness of the explorations’ *fluid structures*.

At this point I should acknowledge that within the context of the somatic practices employed in this PaR project (BMC, IBMT), the intersubjective/intercorporeal processes of witnessing between participants and facilitators are mainly used for therapeutic purposes. In the field of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), also known as Dance Movement Psychotherapy (DMP) or Movement Psychotherapy in the UK, witnessing through movement, tactile and verbal/sound interrelation, is used in order to support the emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration of the individual in therapeutic one-to-one or group sessions.⁵⁹ Especially in Cohen’s and Hartley’s practices, touch is a pivotal mode of focused embodied attention

⁵⁸ Amy Mindell holds a MA and PhD in psychology and is a diplomate of the Process Oriented Psychology Center of Zurich. In her book *Metaskills: the spiritual art of therapy* (1995, 2001), Mindell defines metaskills as ‘the essential underlying feelings of the therapists to “skills” that must and can be studied and cultivated’ (2003:15).

⁵⁹ Among others see Payne (2006), Meekums in Reynolds and Reason (2012:51-66), Meekums (2005), Goodill (2005), Hartley (2004).

and communication based on the process of *re patterning*.⁶⁰ Cohen observes: 'If I'm working with any area of someone else's body, I will go into that area of my own body to see. In the process I become more open also. It becomes like two bells ringing on the same pitch. We can resonate each other' (2012:55). This emerging resonance for the support of each actor's embodied awareness and communication is explored in this praxis only in dialogue with the actor-training process and without any therapeutic intention.

In my role as emerging somatic actor-trainer, witnessing defines any conscious intention of myself to facilitate the individual actor's expression through the understanding of actor training as a uniquely subjective and simultaneously interrelational experience. For instance, when I use a formalized movement pattern as the basis of a somatic acting exploration, I prompt the actors not to imitate the external form of the pattern but to find the movement in their own bodies according to my pedagogical concept of *fluid structures*. Thus, I aim at attracting each actor's somatic attention to the dialogue between internal perception or inner witnessing and the potential relational support through my active witnessing of the process. Similarly, when using subtle touch as form of witnessing my intention is not to fix the bodies nor is it to judge physical habits that at the same time may reflect aspects of individual expression creating a sense of embodied safety. My objective is once more the awakening of specific attention to a detail (such as the jaw joint), the continuous dialogue between each part and one's physicality as a whole, as well as the inner-outer/self-other communication through the organ of the skin. Finally, the ground of my verbal witnessing and language is Cohen's ontogenetic metaphor that is intended to challenge aforementioned dualistic logocentric problematics of body and mind, inner and outer, self and other, combined with the understanding of acting as interaction between multiple subjectivities.

⁶⁰ According to Hartley, BMC 'involves direct experience of anatomical body systems and developmental movement patterns, using techniques of touch and movement repatterning' (1995: xxix). Repatterning is initiated through touch 'giving specific attention to particular anatomical structures or systems of the body in order to facilitate the ability to initiate and sequence movement freely and allow the full expression of that movement' (Hartley 1995:115). See also the section on 'Touching and Repatterning' in Cohen's DVD *Dance & Body-Mind Centering*® (2004) produced by Contadence.

Throughout the development of my praxis language I should also like to highlight that I recognize and challenge logocentric implications in BMC/IBMT discourses. For instance, even though I maintain the scientific ground of the explorations for my own awareness as educator, I rarely share this information with the actors and I use images that substitute the scientific terminology. The element that I preserve, as I find it particularly pertinent to the logocentric problematics that this PaR project aims at challenging, is the moving image of the cell. However, I clarify that I use the cell as metaphor and the human movement development as map for the support of each actor's unique and intercorporeal awareness. Additionally, I approach through the same criticism somatic vocabulary such as the use of the word *authentic* in the practice of Authentic Movement. In opposition to the terms of *mover* and *witness* that I re-introduce in relation to the dynamic interconnections between actors and actor-trainer, I find the word *authentic* problematic. In my understanding, it is comparable to the metaphors of *efficiency* or *believability/truth* that suggest dualistic objectification and uniformity of all actors' embodied experiences.

Relevant logocentric problematics in somatic discourses are not disregarded by practitioners/researchers in the field. Susan Aposhyan (a somatic practitioner who applied BMC to psychotherapy), in the foreword of Cohen's book *Sensing, Feeling, and Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering* (1993,1999, 2012) points out:

This book speaks the unspoken. The principles were not developed verbally nor are they easily transmitted in words. The name *Body-Mind Centering* illustrates this dilemma. In order to speak of a totality of being which does not dichotomize body and mind, one ends up using two words which do. Not only that, the word *centering* usually implies a single arrangement of periphery around a center. However, instead of emphasizing a single, stationary center, BMC cultivates a dynamic flow of balance around a constantly shifting focus. So reading around the words is essential in approaching this book. (Aposhyan 2012: vii, original emphasis)

Instead of reading 'around the words', I attempt a further investigation of contemporary actor-training discourses according to Hartley's suggestion that the new somatic language 'must reflect a shift in perception and consciousness from viewing the body only as...a material object to be studied scientifically, to experiencing it as a living subjective reality' (Hartley 1995:306). By using practices that could be criticized for logocentric implications, such as a universalizing perception of neurologically defined movement patterns, I aim at pushing Cohen's methodology to its limits in order to reintroduce it through my emergent, processual, and interrelational somatic actor training. Most importantly, within this developmental process, I use my practice of witnessing in order to critically reflect upon pertinent issues and emergent problems in actor training such as the distinction between training and therapy, relevant ethical implications, tensions between performance-oriented rehearsals and process-oriented training, the fine line between the actors' expressive freedom and possibly violent communication.

My ability to develop an ongoing experiential actor-training research during which I am able as *trainer-witness* to observe and respond to challenging issues in training, while understanding the applications of my practice, emergent problematics, potential outcomes and dialogues with other approaches, summarizes the particular value that I identify in my use of BMC methodology. Throughout this experiential process I can support the shaping of actors' multiple experiential languages and suggest original terminology for the communication of complexities in actor-training pedagogies. This ongoing journey of witnessing was rooted in a phase of self-exploration outlined in the next part of this chapter. During this period of practice-based research I concentrated on the initial formation of my praxis and the first exploration of movement, touch, and sound as intersubjective dynamics within a somatic acting process.

2.2 The emergence of intersubjective experience in my PaR: *cellular metamorphosis* through movement, touch, and sound

As introduced above (p.60), during the first phase of my self-exploratory practice, my research was a somatic experimentation on the embodiment of Euripides' *Medea* rooted in my experience as an acting student.⁶¹ My previous formal educational experience in Euripides' play and the role of *Medea* was from a text-based analytical perspective as a student of Greek literature before my acting training.⁶² The somatic urgency that was triggered by my acting experience, and prompted further investigation through my research four years after the performance of *Medea*, is rooted in two fundamental elements according to my later reflection: Lignadis' experimental body-based directing guidance for my main speech, combined with his approach to the contemporary staging of Greek tragedy. According to Lignadis: 'the texts of ancient drama are potential performances not made out of inactive material. Instead of "dead letter", they transmit an ongoing meaning that we are asked to decode taking into account contiguous elements such as the audience, the space, and the modern time' (28.08.2014).⁶³

The memory of this embodied, interrelated, and integrative experience returned to my conscious awareness while practising Cohen's movement developmental patterns as post-graduate acting student at East 15 (2010-2011) with somatic educator and somatic supervisor for the first phase of my research Fabiano Culora. I asked Culora to witness some of my first explorations in order to make sure that my work was consistent with

⁶¹ Euripides' *Medea* (431 BCE) translated by George Chimonas (1989) and directed by Dimitris Lignadis for the second year students of the GNT Drama School in June 2007, was a contemporary performance which combined physicality, modern music, a modern interpretation of the use of mask, various acting styles, interplay between Euripides' poetry and contemporary language. All members of the chorus which was constantly present, the actors made transitions from the group to the individual roles and scenes. The roles of both *Medea* and *Jason* were portrayed in turns by all the female and male actors respectively. My main part was the dialogue in which *Creon*, the king of *Corinth*, asks *Medea* to leave his city and the following speech of the tragic heroine during which *Medea* contemplates and decides upon the killing of her husband *Jason* and his new mistress, princess *Glauce*.

⁶² My studies in Greek literature at University of Patras (Department of Humanities and Social Sciences-Specialisation: Byzantine and Newhellenic Sciences) took place between 2001 and 2005. My graduation happened in parallel to the beginning of my acting training at GNT Drama School in September 2005.

⁶³ Lignadis' opinion on contemporary performance of ancient Greek drama is taken from a personal email exchange in which I asked my former teacher and director to articulate what he used to say in the class.

Cohen's process. Culora's supportive work was complemented by a three-hour experiment with my Alexander Technique teacher at the GNT Drama School, Vicky Panagiotaki.⁶⁴ Going through the phase of the 'beginner's mind' I needed the witnessing and feedback of somatic movement specialists particularly the two who were related to my previous actor-training experience.⁶⁵ Through this intersubjective/intercorporeal dialogue with my somatic movement educators, I started formulating my somatic acting process of *cellular metamorphosis*:

It is through movement that we first learn and establish a foundation for further growth at other levels of our being. As with all acts of creation, the life of a human being begins in the place of unknowing. In the darkness of the womb, a cell accepts the seed that awakens the light of consciousness. (Hartley 1995:4)

The *cellular metamorphosis* somatic acting exploration was first actualized with the presence and witnessing of Vicky Panagiotaki (GNT Drama School, 16 July 2012). Panagiotaki, as somatic educator with some experience in BMC, was able to understand my intention and the structure of my experiment. She facilitated and held my somatic acting exploration using as a basis the cellular breathing and navel radiation patterns. It was really important for me that despite the fact that she is an Alexander facilitator, Panagiotaki acknowledges differences between Alexander and BMC methodologies, especially regarding logocentric technicalities suggested by Alexander Technique such as the concentration on aspects of the mover's physical efficiency and self-development. The exploration was not recorded and the following phenomenological narrative is based on a combination of the notes that I kept right after the exploration and my embodied memory.

After concentrating on the support of my breath and the ground, I visualize the structure, nature, and movement of the cell as the fundamental unit of my physical self. My embodied

⁶⁴ My formal systematic somatic training with Linda Hartley started in September 2012.

⁶⁵ My need to be witnessed by my teachers may also reflect an ethical hierarchical influence of the western educational system that supports the creation of logocentric dependencies between teachers and students.

imagination prompts my transition to gradual movement expression of a subtle expansion and contraction and I integrate the visualization of the navel radiation pattern. I imagine my breath coming into my body from my navel, and radiating throughout all my extremities (head-tail-two hands-two feet). My movements gradually become more active through an infinite dialogue of folding/yielding into myself and unfolding/reaching out to the environment. When I feel my movement becoming effortless, whilst my inner witnessing is present but relaxed, I step into the work on the role and the acting experimentation. I trigger my embodied imagination visualizing Medea's cells meeting my own cells. I allow the development of movement and vocal expression through improvisation, with somatic attention and conscious awareness of my ongoing experience.

When I acknowledged the ending of the exploration, I reflected on my experience sharing my findings with my teacher-witness. I concentrated on the imagery of Medea's cells as deep red with a sticky quality that gave to my movement a particularly slow and non-habitual quality. I embodied an interconnectedness of opposing qualities such as water and earth through an experiential dialogue between my blood flow and skeletal structure. In this dialogue I identified a simultaneous feeling of omnipotence and ultimate weakness.

Embodying the wholeness of Medea's story I sensed a bond with the earth and the sky while I saw my actions being performed in the space in between. Regarding the interrelating intentions of my practice, this witnessing prompted me to further exploration.

I continued my cellular metamorphosis exploration going back to the studio at RCSSD (9 August 2012). In this new environment I had to rely on my inner witnessing combined with a process of self-reflection and examination of video footage as I recorded the whole development of my process. Key moments of this self-preparation can be seen in the four video tracks included in the first chapter 'Self-exploration' of the DVD *Developing a somatic acting process*. I started by revisiting the cellular metamorphosis improvisation through a specific structure in which I felt that I could support the free development of my creativity. Hence, the introductory process was concentration through breathing and physical

awakening-arriving at the rehearsal space (15 to 30 min.). Then I went through the embodiment of cellular breathing and navel radiation developmental movement patterns (around an hour). During the transition into the somatic acting exploration I experienced a moment that I recall as the actual perception of the cellular metamorphosis exploration. I invite you to witness this moment in the video 'Cellular metamorphosis moment' (1'.03") in combination with the following narrative.⁶⁶

As I revisit the cellular meeting with Medea I feel that the transition to the acting process is underpinned by a clearer somatic intention. Lying on the floor in the physical expression of the navel radiation pattern, I see myself as one porous, breathing cell that meets at the core of its nucleus the invisible cell of Medea. I still have the image of the deep red and sticky cell of Medea that I found in the previous exploration. This visualization is manifested as an in-breath that radiates throughout the wholeness of my body (00'.03"). The embodiment of Medea's primary cell suggests its own state of being expressed in subtle movements that gradually separate my limbs from the ground. Concentrating on the role as a whole, my kinesthetic perception prompts the lifting of my hands towards the 'sky' as if I am asking for help. This movement is combined with a guttural sound and a restriction of my breath that gradually lifts my torso from the ground and takes me to the formulation of the word 'I'. I perceive this moment through my body as the transition to the cellular otherness of the role. I also experience it as a mutual 're-birth': of my embodied self through the role, and the role through my embodied self.

During the rest of the exploration I experimented with the integration of Medea's physicality and vocal expression through different physical points of initiation. After following the development of the breath into sounds, and of the sounds into words the first phrase that came up was: 'I saved you'. It was accompanied by a wavy embodied sensation which predominantly stemmed from my sternum. I became somatically interested in the expression

⁶⁶<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fg0wH0dApuA&list=PLngDTJxvOtdC0ggYX4Gq8JwShRmlBxie&index=1>

of Medea through an imaginative connection between my heart and hands. The second phrase that emerged from my embodied perception of Medea was: 'I killed'. The words derived from my pelvic area attributing to my outer expression an instinctive quality. During my reflection the two phrases orientated me towards the integration of the text. I recalled Medea's long speech during her first encounter with Jason, when she enumerates all the sacrifices and the benefits that he gained through her devotion. For an idea of the relevant text I used the new poetic version of Euripides' tragedy translated by Tom Paulin (2010). Without using the exact text and through further improvisations I came up with a short monologue that I embodied for the first open sharing of the shaping of my somatic acting process for the Collisions festival at RCSSD on the 2nd and 3rd of October 2012.⁶⁷ In the video track 'Collisions 2012: embodiment of the text' (1'.45") you can see the way I combined the cellular metamorphosis moment with the embodiment of the phrase 'I saved you' (0'.00"-1'.13") as well as one expression of the phrase 'I killed' as introduced above (1'.13"- 1'.45").⁶⁸

I approached the Collisions presentation not as a performance but as an open witnessing of the formulation of my somatic acting process within a *witness circle*.⁶⁹ *Cellular*

⁶⁷ Reflecting on my choice to integrate text, I see that alternatively I could have trusted the emergence of my own words without feeling the need to relate it to a particular translation or to come up with a version of a monologue due to the sharing of the practice. On the other hand, my exploration could indicate an embodied perception of the role as a whole before any intellectual interpretation of the play-text.

⁶⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prM21DIFLe4&list=PLngDTJxvOtaDC0ggYX4Gq8JwShRmlBxje&index=2>

⁶⁹ I borrow the term *witness circle* from the practice of Authentic Movement. It is 'when one or more movers have several individuals witnessing their movement' (Penfield 2006:141). In my application of the process for the Collisions presentation, I invited the witnesses/spectators to sit in a circle while I as an actress-mover was 'held' from the interaction with this embodied container being within the circle. During my introduction I developed a direct communication with the witnesses giving information about my PaR project and the structure of the presentation. I invited them to concentrate on their own embodied experience and share if they would like some witnessing after the end of the presentation. As within an Authentic Movement session in which the witness indicates the time period of the exploration giving a sound signal, such as the ringing of a bell, at the beginning and the end of the process, I asked a friend to do the same. My intention was to clearly indicate the beginning and the end of the cellular metamorphosis process into the embodiment of Medea as well as the direct transition to my embodied self before and after the acting exploration. 'Authentic movement invites an individual (or a group) to close their eyes and follow whatever movement impulse comes into their bodies' (Penfield 2006:138). In my context, the presentation had a prepared fluid structure. Nevertheless, the underlying principle was the response to my emergent embodied experience within a shifting environment combined with a preset fluid framework. My eyes were closed during the first part and then I experienced a moment of integrating my vision. A witness on the second day expressed that he missed the relation to the actor's eyes during the first part. Others found that it supported the communication of my

metamorphosis: Medea was a somatic improvisation on the embodiment of the role developed within two interconnected parts: the first was experimentation on the text as sound input outlined later in this section, and the second was the transition to the movement-based process introduced above. As you may notice in the video, the improvisation was combined with additional sensual stimulus through the use of sand. This intersubjective dialogue emerged from an experiment on a sandy beach that followed my first cellular metamorphosis exploration (18 July 2012) combined with the focus on the tactile awareness in BMC/IBMT practices.

Touch in BMC is explored as the first chronological sense in human movement development, the foundation of our sensorimotor perception and intersubjective/intercorporeal awareness: 'Through the perception of touch and movement, the cells of the growing fetus are beginning to learn about their own presence and activity and the variables of the world they inhabit' (Hartley 1995:17). Additionally, Cohen metaphorically relates the embodied mind to wind and the body with sand. Through this metaphor she suggests: 'There is something in nature that forms patterns. We, as part of nature, also form patterns. The mind is like the wind and the body like the sand: if you want to know how the wind is blowing, you can look at the sand' (2012:1). Inspired by Cohen's metaphor I was triggered to explore the cellular metamorphosis improvisation in a natural environment, experiencing the 'body' of the sand as the 'presence' of another mover. Merleau-Ponty also focuses on the complexity of the tactile phenomenon distinguishing, for instance, the experience of *artificial structures* as *two-dimensional* and of some *natural structures* as *three-dimensional* tactile environments:

There are 'surface tactile phenomena' (*Oberflächentastungen*) in which a two-dimensional tactile object is presented to the touch and more or less firmly resists

embodied transitions while they experienced a resonance with their breathing and/or the sensation of their heart. An interplay between open and closed eyes as an additional perception of the porous dialogue between internal perception and outer expression became one important invitation during the dissemination of my practice.

penetration, three-dimensional tactile environments, comparable to areas of colour, for example a flow of air or water which we allow to run over our hand. (Merleau-Ponty 2002:368, original emphasis)

Discussing tactile experience Merleau-Ponty says: 'Not only do I use my fingers and my whole body as a single organ, but also, thanks to this unity of the body, the tactile perceptions gained through an organ are immediately translated into the language of the rest' (2002:369). This particular aspect resonated with the main observation that I found in my notes after my exploration in the natural environment of the beach. I experienced that my movement with the sand facilitated the wholeness of my embodied perception. It embraced my body moving with it in a rising and falling action as it created the sensation of holding and being held. The memory of moving in relation to another 'body' prompted me to simulate this natural environment covering with sand the floor of the space for the Collisions presentation. Within the acting context of self-exploration as an already intersubjective/intercorporeal process the sand simulated the relation to the absent co-actor or somatic actor-trainer. At the same time it facilitated the immediacy of my experience particularly because I explored the movement with sand only once before the two presentations. Inspired by Cohen's sand-based metaphor, I invite you to observe in the picture below (see Figure 2, p.78) how parts of my body and my movement journey were marked through my intercorporeal relation to the sand as permeable natural structure.

During the cellular metamorphosis process I also simulated another aspect of actor training as intersubjective experience through the sense of hearing and the use of sound input. Following the human development, the next sense that the fetus experiences in relation to movement and the embodied perception of the environment in the womb is hearing. The ears are directly related to movement through the vestibular nerves. As Linda Hartley points out, according to human neurological development: 'the first nerves of the body to myelinate



Figure 2 *Cellular metamorphosis: self and sand as 'other'*, photographer Alex Murphy.

(a process by which nerve fibers are sheathed in a fatty insulating covering, greatly increasing their conductive ability) are the vestibular nerves' (1995:27). Situated in the inner ear, vestibular nerves are motor nerves that reflect the sense of gravity through the development of righting reactions of the head and equilibrium responses for the maintenance of balance (Hartley 1995:28, 31). Therefore, somatic practitioners frequently use verbal/sound input as fresh stimuli for the mover's embodied experience.

In my somatic acting process, the use of sound input first emerged from my need to simulate the otherness of the facilitator-witness in the movement environment. Thus, for the beginning of the cellular metamorphosis exploration, I recorded myself going through the narrative of cellular breathing and navel radiation patterns. I did so primarily according to the language and the suggestions given in Hartley's book (1995:18-21, 34-37). However, this aspect of the exploration could become problematic since the recorded voice is generally perceived as disembodied.⁷⁰ Particularly for the emergent nature of my practice, it can also represent a controversial aspect of predetermined fixity of which I became aware. I used the input only for my first improvisation and at times during the rest of the process when I felt that I needed support for my concentration. Nevertheless, the idea of creating a verbal input instead of using music for the beginning of the embodiment of Medea became the ground for further experimentation within the development of my practice. Similarly to the support of the sand for my exploration of actor training as intersubjective/intercorporeal process, the creation of verbal input aimed at facilitating my embodied preparation as an actress who was asked to embody Medea. The development of the verbal input process for the cellular metamorphosis improvisation is outlined below.

Using Euripides' text as map for my process of embodiment, my attention was attracted by the Nurse's introductory speech, before Medea's entrance on stage. The Nurse's prologue not only provides a preview of the play but also is full of poetic images that describe in detail

⁷⁰ For the perception of the recorded voice as disembodied see among others Adorno 1990:48-55, Chion 1999, Finer in Thomaidis and Macpherson 2015:176-187.

Medea's somatic state. I decided to experiment with these two elements creating a sound input using the Nurse's speech. The work was divided into three parts. First I edited the text, so it would be a continuous speech.⁷¹ Then I worked on the embodiment of the text based on the integrated physicality of the navel radiation pattern and the image of the breath flowing in and out of my body. This step became the foundation for the development of *the breathing text* exploration in the individual environment. The main aspects of this process are outlined below in combination with the video track 'The breathing text: first form' (2'.08").⁷²

I follow the flow of my breath as experienced in the navel radiation pattern integrating the whole body through a folding and unfolding movement around my navel. I choose one moment of integration of the wholeness of my body and I stay there. Hence, I find myself lying down with my legs bent and the soles of my feet on the ground. My arms are extended to the side of my body. When I inhale my arms stay extended imagining my breath travelling from my navel to my fingertips. On the exhalation, I bring my arms together in front of my chest. My legs follow this folding movement which integrates the wholeness of my body and my breath triggering a humming-sounding. I feel the dialogue between my sounding and folding/unfolding movement which gives me a sense of internal-external vibration. I allow the emergence of different rhythms in my movement which are echoed in my sounding as the shaping of a singing-like tune. I combine the humming with a final 'a' sound. I gradually go back to my breath (0'.55"), the support of the ground and the sense of my navel as my physical centre, in order to slowly find my way up to a sitting position. Keeping this embodied physical and vocal awareness, I integrate the 'breathing out' of the text (1'.42"- 2'.08").

⁷¹ At this point I used the prose translation by James Morwood (1998). The reason for the choice of a prose translation lies in the nature of the following step of my exploration which was work on the recitation of the text based on the flow of breath. For the verbal input based on the Nurse's speech see Appendix, pages 175-178.

⁷² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqtC1_HqnRo&list=PLngDTJxvOtdC0ggYX4Gg8JwShRmlBxje&index=3
The particular video is from the exploration (14 September 2012) after which I went to the studio in order to record the final version of my input as was used for the Collisions presentation. Informed by the development of my somatic process on Medea, I concentrated on the emergence of my voice in relation to the physical dialogue between my hands and my heart.

The third step was the use of the recorded verbal input as stimulus during the step of embodiment in my cellular metamorphosis improvisation. In the first and second steps of the individual environment this exploration became the ground for the *breathing the role* process through the embodiment of the text. After going through the somatic preparation of cellular breathing and navel radiation patterns, I used the recorded input for the development of my improvisation setting up the ground of a somatic acting exploration. In opposition to Stanislavski-informed text-based practices, I somatically explored my intersubjective dialogue with the role through sounds, images, and words derived from the text. With the embodiment of Euripides' poetic images through sound input, I could visualize and somatize *themes* such as Medea's connection with gods, Jason, and her children. I mainly embodied the interplay between these themes through my 'soft-spine' bringing into dialogue my head, sternum, and pelvis/tail through an initiation of my movement from the internal awareness of my organs. This awareness facilitated the developmental embodiment of my spine through my individual perception of Medea's suggested physicality and gradually supported my journey from the ground to the standing position. You can see an expression of the interplay between the embodiment of the text and the development of my spinal movement in the video 'Breathing the role: first form (00'.59)".⁷³

Reflecting on moments (such as the one described above) during which my exploration of Medea supported my general embodied awareness and learning experience as an actress, I realized that the embodiment of the specific case-study character provided me with something more than a role-oriented actor-training process. Overall, Medea helped me to stimulate the formation of my somatic acting process as intersubjective/intercorporeal and at the same time uniquely individual experience. My prior experience of the role as an actress as well as my cultural positioning as a Greek, classically trained actress now working in the UK may have provided this fertile ground for my somatic understanding of Medea. Within the general context of ancient Greek tragedy, the original performance of which is associated

⁷³<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXC26Ch5yAw&list=PLngDTJxvOtdC0ggYX4Gq8JwShRmlBxje&index=4>

with the integration of the actor's physicality, voice, and the embodiment of the natural environment in an open space theatre, I could identify an easy resonance with my intersubjective exploration. Even though in this phase of my PaR project I used my personal experiences as an actress and early IBMT trainee as a productive point of departure, the element of intersubjectivity was deliberately fostered through tactility (sand), sonic interaction (sound recordings), and different witnessing processes (work with somatic movement educators, Collisions witness circle). Movement-based acting explorations helped the inner witnessing of my individual creativity and expression, whilst the integration of touch and sound simulated the absence of the facilitator and the future student.

Due to a normative interpretation of the role that suggests the exploration of a wild, animalistic, and uncontrollable embodied experience, I should recognize the potential limitations for the application of my somatic actor-training process resulting from the decision to shape it through the exploration of Medea. For instance, my work on Medea unintentionally defined the development of the individual dissemination of my practice in which I was invited to work with actresses on other tragic roles such as Oscar Wilde's Salome and Euripides' Agave. On the other hand, in my experience as an actress within the first phase of my practice, I approached Medea as an additional cell or flesh-like metaphor that allowed me to simultaneously embody oppositional qualities or themes such as the role's intellectual and embodied expression, Medea as saviour and killer, mortal and immortal, mother and wife, through my own embodied perception. My embodiment of Medea was accompanied by integrated images from the natural environment such as the earth and the sky, to which Medea escapes, the earth and the watery environment of Medea's journeys. Euripides' role evoked different *others* in me, relating my actor-training process to Gordon's definition of 'acting as personal encounter' (2009:6).

My *cellular Medea* was intended to represent neither a universal aspect of *the actor's* expression nor a final performance outcome. Instead I suggested the communication of my preparation as somatic actor-trainer through the development of the foundation of a somatic

methodology for acting. During this preparation I experienced actor training as intersubjective and individual experience that develops with and for the other even in the other's absence through intercorporeal dynamics. I embodied these dynamics through the modification of Cohen's ontogenetic and embodiment process into acting, primarily through 'permeable-cellular' movement combined with concentration on the experience of touch and sound.

In the same dynamic context Medea supported the ground for the dissemination of my practice. This PaR project approaches the work on every role and/or acting score as an interrelation between each actor's unique intersubjective experience facilitated by the embodied presence of the somatic actor-trainer. I do not suggest that my practice responds equally or through a fixed form to all the roles and theatre genres. In general I aim at providing the actor-mover with a fluid and open process that could complement or respond accordingly to each context through the actor's multiple subjectivities, creativity, and expression. The methodological foundation of this process as formulated in the transition from my self-exploration to the dissemination of my practice in the individual environment (discussed in the following chapter) is outlined in the last part of this chapter.

2.3 Shaping the dialogue between BMC/IBMT methodology and my PaR

The whole process of dynamic witnessing in my PaR project is rooted in Cohen's ongoing and experiential *process of embodiment* that offers me both a somatic methodology and a suggested structure for my somatic acting explorations, workshops, and rehearsals.⁷⁴ I should reiterate that my practice is not merely an application of BMC in actor training but also involves a critical witnessing of the used somatic approaches as they are modified in the actor-training context. Cohen's methodological process is comprised by three basic steps: (1) *visualization*, (2) *somatization*, (3) *embodiment* and Cohen describes it as follows:

⁷⁴ For a brief description of Cohen's process of embodiment and relevant examples see Cohen 2012:157. Here I am drawing on Cohen's writings combined with my personal experience as emerging somatic practitioner and researcher.

The process of embodiment is a being process, not a doing process, not a thinking process. It is an awareness process in which the guide and witness dissolve into cellular consciousness. Visualization and somatization provide steps to full embodiment, helping us return to preconsciousness with a conscious mind. (Cohen 2012:157)

‘Visualization is the process by which the brain imagines aspects of the body and, in so doing, informs the body that it (the body) exists’ (Cohen 2012:157). The important element during visualization as well as within the whole BMC practice is the awakening of the mover’s *inner sensory or inner kinesthetic vision by direct cellular attention*.⁷⁵ This awareness is triggered in the step of visualization usually through the use of an image or an object that Cohen defines as *director* or *guide*. The director/guide can be, for instance, a picture of a particular anatomical structure in the body such as the heart organ, and/or a moment in the human embryological development such as an image of a eukaryotic cell that represents both a human anatomical structure and the first stages of human development. In other words, the director/guide is a source of interest that represents the *external* stimulation of the mover’s active imagination and embodied experience. Nevertheless, Cohen highlights that the focus should be on the mover’s embodied experience rather than the guiding images. The images are offered as map towards an experiential perception developed in the next step of Cohen’s process of embodiment, the phase of somatization.

For Cohen, somatization ‘is the process by which the kinesthetic (movement), proprioceptive (position), and tactile (touch) sensory systems inform the body that it (the body) exists’ (Cohen 2012:157). It is underpinned by the mover’s sensorimotor perception which can be further supported by sounding, such as humming, in order to awaken the direct dialogue between movement and sounding, non-verbal and verbal expression. In the pre-verbal state of somatization Cohen introduces the role of the *witness*. According to Cohen, in this stage

⁷⁵ By cellular attention Cohen refers to concentration on primary emergent sensation occurring in the cells that precedes cognitive aspects of the brain. See Cohen 2004, section on ‘Weight’.

the witness fundamentally represents the development of an inner awareness of the mover's embodied self. The process is facilitated by the somatic practitioner through particular exercises or movement patterns combined with touch, sounds/words, or suggested questions such as: '*What do you notice? What are your sensations, feelings, perceptions? How does this affect your movement and your consciousness?*' (Cohen 2012:157, original emphasis). The mover's conscious embodied awareness is directed to two key elements: the initiation and the sequence of the movement. Cohen explains that: 'the key is where the movement is initiated from and how it sequences through the body. Another key is one's attention, and another key is one's intent' (2012:100). Sensations, feelings, and images combined with embodied awareness gradually allow the mover's free expression in the third and last phase of Cohen's methodology.

Cohen's process of embodiment culminates in the actual phase of embodiment during which somatic awareness and cellular consciousness render porous the boundaries between *guide* and *witness*, conscious and unconscious experience. According to Cohen, embodiment is 'the cells' awareness of themselves. *You let go of your conscious mapping.* It is a direct experience; there are no intermediary steps or translations. There is no guide, no witness. There is fully known consciousness of the experienced moment initiated from the cells' (2012:157, original emphasis). Embodiment in BMC is an ongoing experiential learning process that brings into dialogue the mover's inner perception and outer expression, her embodied self and the otherness of the environment. The mover is free to interact with the environment as prompted by her/his personal experimentation based upon the facilitator's invitations introduced in the steps of visualization and somatization. In my experience within the context of somatic practice the final step during the process of embodiment is usually expressed as a free flow improvisational dance and embodied expression that, depending on the particular moment and the nature of the exploration, could be supported by music soundscapes.

Through the development and support of my own embodied awareness, creativity, and expression as an actress practising Cohen's process of embodiment, I discovered that I could use this methodology as a broader creative process towards the composition of my somatic actor training and its dissemination based on the embodiment of the role. I added to Cohen's three basic steps one preparatory and one concluding phase ending up with a structure generally comprising by six steps: (1) concentration/arriving 'warm up', (2) embodiment of pattern/patterns, (3) visualization in acting, (4) somatization in acting, (5) embodiment in acting, (6) integration/reflection. Every exploration does not have to include all the steps which can be done cyclically and in any order depending on the acting context.⁷⁶ The basic characteristic of this sequential process is that it follows the two developmental steps that Carnicke identifies in Stanislavski's training: 'the actor's work on the self and the actor's work on the role' (Carnicke in Hodge 2010: xx). This dual phase does not imply a dualistic binary between the actor's self and the role as 'other' but the actor's self-awareness as a preparatory process for the support of one's individual creativity and expression.

In my modification of Cohen's process of embodiment the preparatory step includes two phases. The first is a concentration/arriving 'warm up'. Depending on my embodied state starting my self-exploration as an actress or the actor's preference in the dissemination process, this step may include a combination of free movement and breathing concentration/meditation. The free movement in the space is based on the idea of becoming aware of a present embodied state in relation to the environment. The combination with light breathing concentration can remind the actor of a continuous support of the ground and the breath according to the somatic processes of 'grounding' and 'centering'. 'Grounding' is related to the embodied awareness of a 'simple presence' through the dialogue between the actor's body and the support of the ground in a sitting, lying, or standing position (Hartley

⁷⁶ Parallels could be drawn with Anna and Lawrence Halprin's RSVP cycles, even though the concepts of Valuation and Performance seem more pertinent to devising rather than an actor-training process (Worth and Poyner 2004:111-113).

1995:13). Through the awareness of the rising and falling movement of the lungs without any particular breathing pattern, I invite the actors to become aware of a present sense of centre that could be anywhere in each individual's body. This is the process of 'centering' which Cohen identifies as 'a process of balancing, not a place of arrival' (2012:1). According to this approach, in my current somatic acting process the only exploration which starts from a specific sense of the actor's physical centre is the navel radiation pattern. Even in this case the actors-movers are prompted to observe the shift of their 'centering' moving in and beyond their kinespheres. Other embodied actor-training practices define a particular and continuous physical centre for every actor's body such as the chest (Chekhov 2002:7), the solar plexus (Gutekunst and Gillet 2014:63), or the perineum (Bryon 2014:100-101).

The second step of the actor's 'warm-up' is the embodiment of one or more movement patterns based on Cohen's process. The visualization of the pattern is followed by its somatization through movement and/or sounding, touch, and its embodiment through the actor's free movement improvisation. As a somatic actor-trainer, in this phase I included aspects of my witnessing introduced above such as moving with the actor, facilitating her/his embodied awareness through subtle touch combined with my input based on Cohen's ontogenetic metaphor, or only through my 'active focusing' on the actor's experience. I occasionally facilitated the actor's free movement expression in this step of embodiment using music such as Ludovico Einaudi's atmospheric piano pieces. I did so as relatively relaxing music facilitates some actors to find the transition from the conscious following of the movement suggested by a specific pattern to free improvisation. I also used music as a suggested introduction to a particular acting context. For instance, in the first step of the group process working on a *Bacchai* chorus workshop discussed in Chapter Four (pp.131-144) I used some African drum music for the group's initial free movement in the space. I made this specific choice inspired by Euripides' continuous association between the cult of Dionysus and the dance to the beat of the drum. In any case, I invited the actors to choose if

they would like to take in the suggested music impulse highlighting the awareness of their own rhythm 'in between' the given rhythm.

In my suggested process, the transition from the actor's 'warm-up' to a specific somatic acting exploration through the development of a movement pattern into an acting improvisation happens through the step of visualization. Therefore, after the work on the actor's self, I introduced the actor's visualization of the wholeness of the role and/or the acting score. In this modification the role and the text are used as the director/guide in Cohen's process. Using the play as a map, the actor does not concentrate on logocentric cognitive aspects of the play-text such as the identification of actions and given circumstances. On the contrary, the actor starts a somatic acting process of embodiment mingling her/his self-imagery with kinesthetic elements derived from the play such as images and metaphors. For example, in my self-exploration of the embodiment of Medea discussed earlier in this chapter, I used images from the Nurse's introductory speech as ground for my somatic acting process: 'She will not look up, will not lift her face from the ground, but listens to her friends as they give advice no more than if she were a rock or a wave of the sea' (Euripides 1998:2). This physical dialogue emerges from the actor's own embodied 'cellular imagination' and continues during the step of somatization.

Within my somatic acting process somatization is the phase during which the actor starts 'meeting' the role or the acting score through the dynamics of intersubjective/intercorporeal experience such as movement, sound, and touch related to the developmental movement pattern/patterns used in the 'warm-up'. During my process of self-preparation, in the step of somatization I started exploring simulations of the 'presence' of the actor or the actor-trainer as 'other'. From this self-exploration I came up with specific processes that I further developed during the dissemination of the practice analyzed in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis. Through my support of the actor's embodied awareness and imagination using movement, verbal input, touch, and more formalized integrated exercises such as *the breathing text*, the actor was invited to witness the development of visualization into a

particular physical expression, sounds or words that shaped her/his first experiential understanding of the role. The objective in this step of my somatic acting process is not the acting of the role but the actor's gradual 'meeting' with the role through an ongoing experience that is rooted in my first somatic acting exploration of *cellular metamorphosis*.

In my further development of Cohen's process the step of embodiment resonates with what she names as *peaceful comprehension*: 'Out of this embodiment process emerges feeling, thinking, witnessing, understanding. The source of this process is love' (2012:157). To me, the embodiment of the role/text is the moment of the actor's individual creation and expression that emerges from the previous somatic preparation and is expressed through free movement-based improvisation. In my somatic language embodiment is the source of each actor's *embodied logos* which is informed by a fluid dialogue between the actor's intellectual and embodied perception allowing the element of embodied spontaneity and surprise. During my self-exploration, embodiment was the phase in which I grounded the creation of new knowledge. Within the dissemination it is the time I witnessed the actor's expression through my 'holding' experience and observation as facilitator. The actor goes through an experiential journey of the embodiment of the role that is not fixed and can vary from constant movement to stillness, from silence and sounds to the emergence of words or a fluid and direct delivery of text. Within this environment I invited the actor to explore her/his own embodied perception of the role/acting score that could ideally remain present in the context of any external to the actor input such as the director's vision. I occasionally facilitated this step through my verbal suggestions and impulses such as the integration of context-specific music.

The final step that I added to Cohen's process of embodiment, additionally inspired by my IBMT somatic training with Linda Hartley and Nelson's *know what*, is a necessary phase for my PaR thesis: the integration of the actor's embodied experience through critical reflection. From my perspective as actress and somatic actor-trainer, reflection supports the actor to identify specific findings during the process of embodiment, developing a unified intellectual

and embodied perception. In the somatic training context the integration takes place during activities such as making notes, free writing, drawing, articulation of the experience through sharing, or any other way that feels right for the mover. According to Hartley: 'This can bring you gently back into ordinary awareness again, and can also help to make conscious and integrate any important feelings or insights you may have had' (1995:21). As researcher, reflection on the nature of my acting experience also helped me to identify the problematic Stanislavski-based logocentrism within the actor-training environment and to develop a theoretical framework rooted in Merleau-Ponty's understanding of *logos as flesh*.

Through reflective process as an actress, emerging somatic actor-trainer, and practitioner-researcher, I started forming somatic acting explorations identifying at the same time issues and challenges that gradually informed the communication of my practice. The dissemination of my somatic actor training began in three individual environments discussed in the following chapter of this PaR project. This sharing was rooted in the emergent intersubjective/intercorporeal relation between three actresses and myself as somatic actor-trainer. My focus was to bring my practice into an open dialogue with processes that could support each actress's subjectivity as embodied, relational, and ongoing experience. I concentrate and highlight problems encountered within my own developmental process as somatic actor-trainer related to themes such as my first practical perception of my ethical responsibilities, the distinction between the support of each actor's emotional expression and therapeutic processes, as well as potential dissonances between training and rehearsals within an actor-training environment.

Chapter Three

Actor and actor-trainer: grounding intersubjectivity in the individual somatic acting process

And henceforth movement, touch, vision, applying themselves to the other and to themselves, return toward their source and, in the patient and silent labor of desire, begin the paradox of expression. (Merleau-Ponty 1968:144)

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss and analyze the development of my praxis in the emergent environment of the dissemination of my somatic acting process. My writing follows three steps of this processual development while sharing my practice in the individual somatic actor-training context. Each step in this process is rooted in the premise of actor training as an intersubjective/intercorporeal embodied experience developed between the actor and the actor-trainer, the actor and the potential witness/spectator. From the reflections discussed in Chapter Two, I developed the communication of my PaR project which modifies Cohen's embodiment of developmental patterns for contemporary conservatory actor training. Through this dialogue between actor training and somatic movement practices I aimed at creating a new actor-training pedagogy that privileges somatic practice, especially BMC/IBMT-informed principles. Within this process the actor-trainer's and each actor's body is perceived as permeable, relational, and at the same time uniquely individual. I approached this interconnected embodied experience that prompts a fluid dialogue between mind and body, inner and outer, self and other, based on my concept of *embodied logos* which is informed by Merleau-Ponty's perception of *logos as flesh*.

In Chapter Two I explained how I grounded my practical response to dualistic binaries and the universalizing of each actor's experience during a process of embodied self-exploration. I concentrated on intersubjective examples of somatic acting improvisations that combine

movement, touch, and sound. I rooted this process in movement-based experiments inspired by Cohen's ontogenetic metaphor which is underpinned by the embodiment of the living, moving, and porous image of the cell. I facilitated my self-experimentation in the actor-training context using Euripides' Medea as case-study character due to former experience as an acting student (see Chapter Two, p.71). During this process, the role of Medea became an additional cell or flesh-like metaphor that allowed me as an actress to simultaneously explore the embodiment of oppositional qualities or themes such as the role's internal and external activity, Medea as saviour and killer, mortal and immortal, mother and wife, through my subjective embodied perception.

In this chapter, I focus on *how* I began to communicate my somatic acting process in three processual steps involving individual work with three actresses: (1) a preparatory workshop on Medea (30 March 2012, RCSSD), (2) a two-day somatic rehearsal process on Salome (06 and 08 April 2013, East 15), (3) eleven meetings on somatic actor training and the embodiment of Agave during parallel rehearsals for Euripides' *Bacchai* (11 meetings from 10 June to 22 July 2013, RCSSD).⁷⁷ In discussing these steps, I particularly concentrate on key moments and challenges in my process of becoming a somatic actor-trainer through examples of intersubjective/intercorporeal experience between the actresses and myself in the role of the somatic acting facilitator. These problematic moments brought into light aspects of my role that indicate general challenges in actor training such as my ethical responsibilities as emerging *trainer-witness*, the experiential understanding of the actor-training environment as a space of mutual sensitivity between each actor and actor-trainer, differences between training and therapy, potential tensions between actor-training and rehearsal/performance processes, imbalances between the objectives of the trainer and the

⁷⁷ Throughout this chapter when I refer to these three steps I use the word actress and relevant female pronouns. I shift into the word actor due to the hierarchical generic use of masculine grammatical gender when I discuss in general the intentions of my PaR project. I would like to highlight that my process is not gender oriented but its evolution was affected by my self-exploration and the choice of Medea as case-study character. At the same time, I would like to clarify that my practice is in line with updated pedagogical regulations in conservatory institutions according to which the genders are not only confined to male and female but the pronouns 'they' or 'them' are increasingly used for students who would like to identify themselves as transgender.

director. My practice was intended to support a dynamic bidirectional communication between the actress-mover and her environment through each actress's individual embodied expression of the texts and the roles they were working on. Developing themes already discussed in Chapter Two, I continue to examine aspects of the actresses' emergent embodied experiences through movement, touch, and sound/verbal input.

Through the combination of somatic attention and phenomenological awareness, this PaR project is informed by emergent embodied experience and experiential reflection both of myself as somatic actor-trainer/researcher and that of each actor, the experience of whom I had to 'hold' and witness. My focus is the dynamic embodied characteristics that may distinguish my role as emerging somatic actor-trainer who becomes a *witness* of the trainee's experience. As introduced in Chapter Two (pp.66-68), witnessing in my practice means that while my attention is focused on 'holding' or 'containing' the embodied experience of the actor, the group, and the actor within the group, at the same time I perceive this experience through my own embodied process.⁷⁸ According to Linda Hartley, 'the witness enters into the mover's experience, whilst simultaneously maintaining awareness of her own; in this special moment of relatedness, both can see and be seen' (2004:65). Nevertheless, I recognize that despite my intention to preserve each actor's individuality in this *relatedness*, as the author, researcher, and initiator of this project I filter the actors' experiences through the trajectory of my praxis and my own embodied perception.

In my attempt to witness each actress's unique expression within the individual context of this PaR process, I aimed at approaching the actress's movement-based acting improvisations through embodied *attunement* or *vibration*.⁷⁹ Cohen describes the concept of vibration as 'the degree of attraction or repulsion that underlies all movement, perception,

⁷⁸ On the notion of *witnessing* within the practice of Authentic Movement, see also ft 5, p.10 and ft 69, pp.75-76.

⁷⁹ Somatic attunement or resonance defines the integration of the somatic practitioner's own embodied perception in the shared educational or therapeutic process (McCarthy 2008:47).

intuition, organization, and relationships' (2012:5). In dialogue with the intertwining ideas that underpin this PaR thesis, I identify the process of somatic witnessing in Dan Zahavi's analysis of phenomenological approaches to intersubjectivity (2001). According to Zahavi, phenomenological intersubjectivity illuminates an experience that is beyond empathy in the sense of identification and already established normative relationships. Instead, it lies in the simultaneous relationship between the subjective self, the others, and the world. Thus, I revisit the universal aspects of Merleau-Ponty's perception of *logos as flesh* in order to reconsider the understanding of the actor-training process as intercorporeal dialogue between multiple subjectivities.

Following the intersubjective principles of witnessing in each individual process, I highlighted the importance of phenomenological reflection for each actress's own embodied process giving options such as conversation or responding to particular questions, drawing, and writing. Through this suggestion I aimed at facilitating a unified experience of the actress's embodiment and reflection, her individual creativity and expression. In general my invitation was: *Is there something from your experience that you would like to share?* In that way I tried not to direct particular responses, preserving each actress's space for free expression. I never meant to force any kind of reflection for the purpose of this research project as I felt that this could undermine the underlying emergent philosophy of my praxis. Therefore, I have collected various kinds of embodied reflections that have informed this chapter such as sketches, written accounts, and contingent verbal sharing documented in video recordings with the actresses' permission.

The practical material that complements the reading of this chapter is included in the chapter 'Individual environment' of the DVD *Developing a somatic acting process*. As in Chapter Two the video tracks are suggested to be watched in combination with my phenomenological writing.⁸⁰ The actress's written reflection is embedded in the text as indented quotes. I continue to concentrate on my embodied experience as somatic actor-trainer in relation to

⁸⁰ On the two modes of my phenomenological narratives see Introduction, pp. 28-29.

the intellectual engagement that formed the development of this praxis. Through critical reflection, I focus on moments of insight that derived either from new steps or challenges and problematic areas during the ongoing development of the dissemination of my practice. This intersubjective/intercorporeal process started with an experimental workshop on Medea based upon the embodiment of verbal-input and the introduction to *cellular metaphorosis* process in the beginning of my self-exploration (Chapter Two, pp.72-83). The first step of the individual somatic actor-training process is discussed in the following section focusing particularly on emerging complexities regarding my experiential perception of ethical aspects of my role that I was able to notice through the processual development of my praxis.

3.1 Setting the ground for a somatic acting process: Medea workshop (RCSSD)

I facilitated a three-hour workshop with the actress Kitty Paitazoglou who undertook a MA in Classical Acting at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (30 March 2012, 2-5pm, Embassy Theatre, RCSSD). I grounded the workshop plan in Cohen's process of embodiment discussed in Chapter Two (pp.83-86). I followed five sequential steps: (1) concentration/arriving 'warm up', (2) visualization/integration of touch through the use of objects (3) somatization using the patterns of *cellular breathing* and *navel radiation*, (4) embodiment using the verbal input of Euripides' text, (5) integration/reflection with the use of sketches. I invited the actress to experience my exploration because I had known her since she was a first year student at the Greek National Theatre Drama School. I was additionally tempted by the fact that she is an actress who combines the experience of acting and dance training. Nevertheless, through this choice I did not mean to make the process easier for me as somatic actor-trainer. Part of my objective was to test the ground of my somatic acting with an actress who has already developed a sense of embodied awareness and could easily question my practice.

Despite the actress's Greek nationality, the language used throughout the process was English. Of course I made clear since the beginning that she was free to use Greek

whenever she felt necessary for her expression. Regarding my role, as I had started developing the language of my practice in English I preferred to use only one language for the facilitation of the process.⁸¹ Nevertheless, my initial concern about not being an English native speaker, developing an actor-training pedagogy within an English actor-training environment, formulated the synthesis of this first experiment. I asked for the support of an American colleague in order to deliver Euripides' text as verbal input during the process of embodiment.⁸² Thus, I ended up working with two actresses, an *actress-mover* for the main explorations and her relation to an *actress-witness* during the embodiment of the text. However, I did not equally integrate in the process the presence of the actress-witness and my concentration on the actress-mover, especially during their intercorporeal dialogue, proved problematic. Nevertheless, this issue helped me to become aware and reflect upon some of the actor-trainer's ethical responsibilities within the relational training environment.

For this first shared actor-training experience, I worked with the actress-witness on the recitation of the text the day before the workshop according to the *breathing text* process described in Chapter Two (pp.79-80). The text used was again the Nurse's introductory speech based on Morwood's translation. Within my process the actor's engagement with the text always begins with the awakening of her/his embodied awareness. Through this choice I aim at challenging the logocentric hierarchy of the text's cognitive perception. After I guided the actress through the experience of her embodied integration starting from a semi-supine position opening and closing her arms, I asked her to embody the text following the flow and the rhythm of her breath. In the second step of the individual environment *breathing text* became a separate exercise for the actress in order to overcome the cognitive perception of the author's words making them part of her embodied internal-external flow. Moreover, the text-based verbal input turned into another aspect of my intersubjective/intercorporeal role

⁸¹ Currently and in combination with my professional somatic movement training I am able to facilitate my practice only in English. It would be a process for me to identify the relevant vocabulary even in Greek as my first language.

⁸² Rachel Scurlock undertook with me the first year of her two years MFA postgraduate studies in acting at East 15 (2010-2012). She additionally supported this first workshop helping with the video-recording of the process. She does not appear in the documentary material but you can hear her voice.

as somatic actor-trainer. In the following section on the embodiment of the verbal-input in the first step of the individual process I outline how I came up with these further steps.

Verbal input using Euripides' text: ethical challenges in actor training

On the actual workshop day I concentrated on the actress-mover's 'warm-up' combining the cellular breathing and navel radiation patterns.⁸³ After this preparation I invited the actress-witness to the stage in order to communicate Euripides' text based on the way we had worked the day before.⁸⁴ The actress-witness sat in a kneeling position having the text in front of her on the side of the stage. My aim was for her to create a kind of soundscape for the actress-mover in order to facilitate her embodiment of Euripides' text. Nevertheless, I unintentionally asked the actress-witness to do something very difficult by inviting her to join the process without the relevant preparation in the present moment and environment. On the other hand, the actress-mover by that point (almost half way through the process) had entered the phase of embodiment, which Cohen defines as 'direct experience' (2012:157). In my somatic actor-training process this represents the moment the actor forgets cognitively imposed dualistic binaries between mind-body, inner-outer, self-other, and she/he develops

⁸³ At the beginning of my practice I used to combine them in one exploration. My objective was to merge the embodied oneness of the cellular 'mind' with the tangible differentiation and re-integration of all the limbs (including head and tail) around the centre of the navel that emerges through the navel radiation exploration. At the same time, the navel radiation pattern supported the transition into more active and diverse movements aiming at establishing an infinite communication between the actress's openness and her communication with the environment. However, after this experiment, I observed that I should allow the pure cellular embodiment to be fully experienced by the actress-mover before introducing the next pattern. The actress's integrated movement expression allowed me to witness and invite the integration of the navel radiation physicality. Nevertheless, at the end of my reported experience after the first step in the Individual Environment I wrote: 'Despite the openness and great response of the actress, I felt that I needed more time in order to establish the ground of the cellular exploration with her. Working further on the cellular embodiment I sensed that she could be facilitated into deeper levels of exploration, avoiding literal or descriptive expression' (reflective notes, 30.03.2012).

⁸⁴ The space provided for our exploration was the Embassy Theatre at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, a theatre with a capacity of 234 seats. As spacious proscenium arch theatre, Embassy was not the most suitable place for the intimate nature of our experiment both for its size and the sense of the spatial division between the stage and the audience seats. The size of the space and the strong sound of the ventilators became an additional issue for the video documentation of the process, elements that you can notice in the video track Embodiment of the text (3'.36"). At the same time it provided us with an empty stage which became the space where we could develop the work. Moreover, a proscenium stage is the space which is commonly connected to the actor's traditional performance experience. Part of the actress-mover's 'warm up' was a sensorimotor familiarization with the environment. On the other hand, I made the mistake of not including the actress-witness in this 'warm-up'. She joined us in the main action on stage only for the process of the embodiment of the text after she moved the camera to a new position.

an experience of non self-judging emergent individual expression. Within the particular environment I witnessed the actress-mover expressing a personal understanding of the process, without trying to act out something particular for me or without questioning if her experience was 'right'. She had her eyes closed and I did not intervene into her decision.

In direct opposition to my focus on supporting the emergent experience of the actress-mover, I became a kind of 'conductor' for the actress-witness trying to direct her input through my movements. My intention was to use the Nurse's introductory speech instead of music for the preparation of the embodiment of Medea by the actress-mover, based on the relevant process during my self-exploration (see Chapter Two, p.81). Nevertheless, without revisiting the facilitation of the actress-witness's embodied preparation, she went back to a more normative cognitive-based communication of the text instead of following the flow of her breath. As an outcome, the text did not have the fluid quality the actress-witness had found the day before, something that also affected the actress-mover's process of embodiment. In the video 'Embodiment of the text' (3'.36"), I invite you to observe the challenges that emerged from this exploration and how they impacted upon the intersubjective dialogue between the two actresses and myself as somatic actor-trainer. I combine the video with the following phenomenological narrative.⁸⁵

The actress-mover has developed an active physicality and I invite the actress-witness to the stage.⁸⁶ I notice a moment of pause in the actress-mover's embodied expression, and I make a signal to the actress-witness to start the communication of the text. This moment indicates a completely different attitude from me as somatic actor-trainer towards the two actresses. Whilst I try to facilitate the actress-mover's free expression, I direct the actress-witness's participation in the process. I witness the actress-mover's instant connection to her right arm that has been present as well during the previous steps of the process. I recall

⁸⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKg77CYgqfs&list=PLngDTJxvOtdC0gqYX4Gq8JwShRmlBxje&index=5>

⁸⁶ The actress-witness sat in a kneeling position having the text in front of her on the left side of the stage (as you watch the video). She had already moved the camera but she is not in the video frame. Absorbed by the process, I did not pay the required attention to the documentation of the process.

my own embodied exploration of Medea and the experience of the connection between my arms and my heart. I hear that the actress-witness follows more the fragmented logic of the text instead of the flow of her breath. I observe that the actress-mover embodies this separateness of the words developing a kind of staccato and descriptive movement. I am concerned that this form of intercorporeal dialogue between the two actresses will not allow enough space for the actress-mover's individual expression.

*I move closer to the actress-witness in order to eventually facilitate her role in the process and to attempt a more sequential flow of the text. At the same time, (from 2'.05") I see that the actress-mover starts developing a more abstract embodied expression of the text. I do not want to stop the process in order to work on the flow of the text. This is the moment I realized three things. First that I could not restrict the expression of the actress-witness in favor of the actress-mover, second that the verbal input could become part of my role as somatic actor-trainer, and third that the complexity of the *breathing text* experience required the development of a separate exploration, (the results of this realization will be discussed further on). My suggestions are received by the actress-witness as change into faster rhythm that also matches the literal content of the text (at 2'.51": 'hurry quickly into the house...'). Nevertheless, I observe that with the passing of time and the faster rhythm of the input, the actress-mover starts reducing the pauses in between her movements developing a less descriptive or dependent connection to the verbal input as 'other'.*

After two recitations of the text that lasted for almost twenty minutes together and two hours of continuous exploration, I found it was time for the actress-mover to rest concluding the movement-based part of her process. I made this suggestion not because the actress looked tired or because she asked to, but as facilitator I found that she had gone through a 'rich' experiential journey that it would have been helpful to be acknowledged and revisited through reflection. At the same time I did not mean to cause her physical exhaustion that, in my understanding, may disregard the limits of the actress's self while might also disrupt the

fluid dialogue between her intellectual and embodied perception. We used the rest of the time (around an hour) for the last step of integration/reflection and free discussion.

For the last step of the process of embodiment within this individual environment, I gave the actress-mover drawing paper and colours in order to draw whatever she wanted to, based on her experience. At the same time I gave her two papers on which I had drawn in advance a simple cell-like sketch: two circles, one big (like the membrane), and one small inside the big one (like the nucleus of the cell) (see Figures 3-4, pp.101-102). I invited the actress to indicate either through drawing, writing words, or both, the main aspects of her experience before the verbal input of Euripides' text (Figure 3, p.101), and after the embodiment of the text (Figure 4, p.102). She decided to use the given sketches instead of drawing something different and she expressed herself through words. The 'nucleus' of the sketches indicated the main experiential theme and the area in between the two circles the peripheral aspects of the actress's experience. Some words were originally written in Greek.

From the actress's reflection, I should like to concentrate on words that, in my understanding, imply the importance of the actress-witness's presence and the intersubjective dynamics within our somatic acting process. For instance, the word 'follow', before the use of the text, could indicate a conscious connection to either internal or external impulses that created an inner-outer dialogue perceived through the actress's body. These impulses became more precise during the phase of embodiment and the verbal input. For instance, the actress named them as 'music-rhythm', and the 'relationship' to 'another person there', 'addressing', 'giving'. The two arrows the actress drew above the words 'link (bond)', 'including', 'sharing', and below the word 'awareness' may symbolize this bidirectional relationship. At the same time, I sensed the threshold towards the actress's first embodied experience of the otherness of the role in the phrases 'first exposition (consciousness of the risk)', through a 'change', 'developing' a 'link (bond)'.

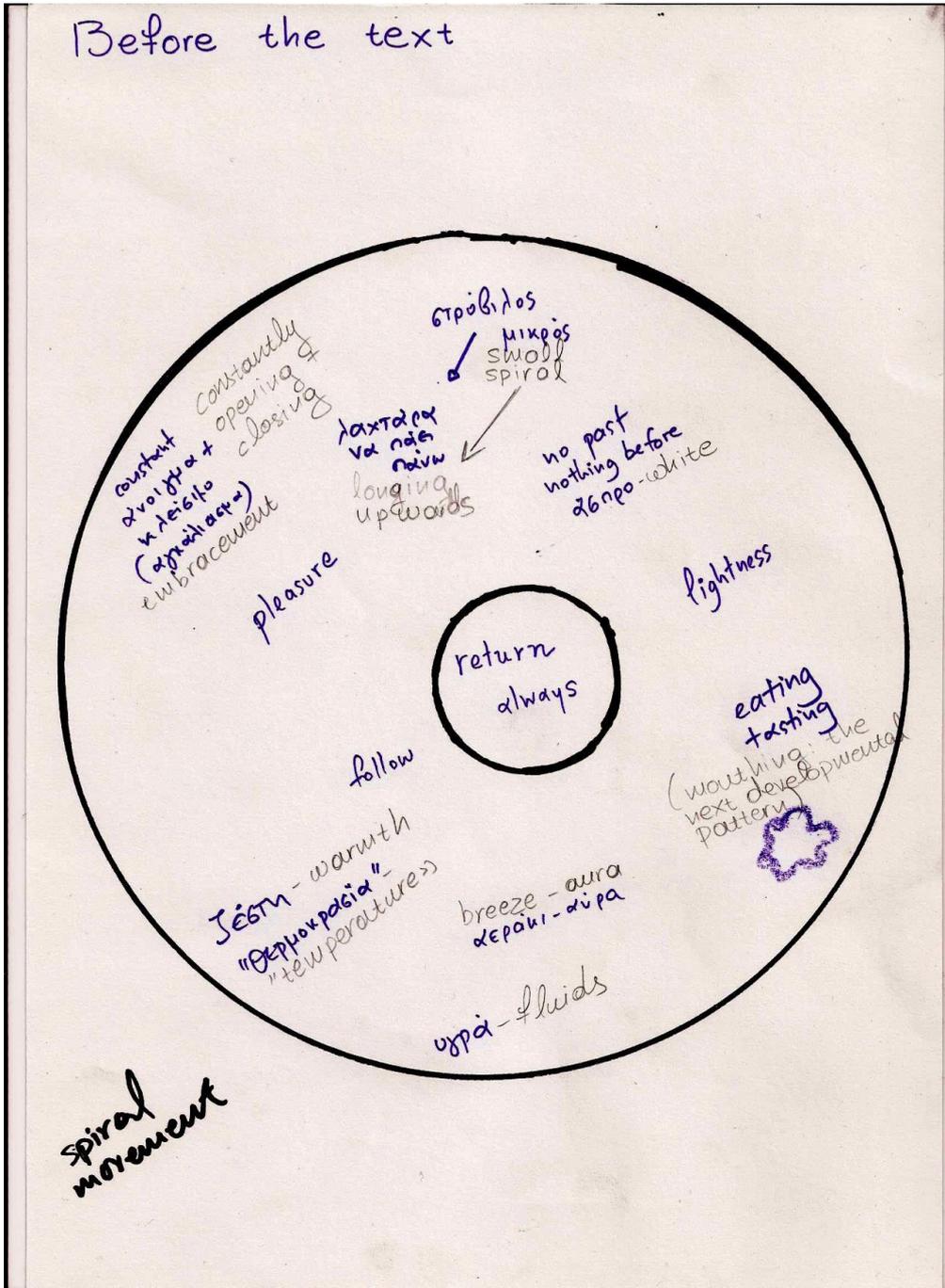


Figure 3 Sketch 1: before the text Nucleus theme: return always. Peripheral themes: small spiral-longing upwards (I added *spiral movements* indicating the connection to Cohen's interpretation of human developmental process as a non-linear process that happens in overlapping waves), constantly opening and closing (embracement), warmth-"temperature"-breeze-aura-lightness, fluids, no past-nothing before-white, eating-tasting (I added my association to the mouthing pattern), pleasure, follow.

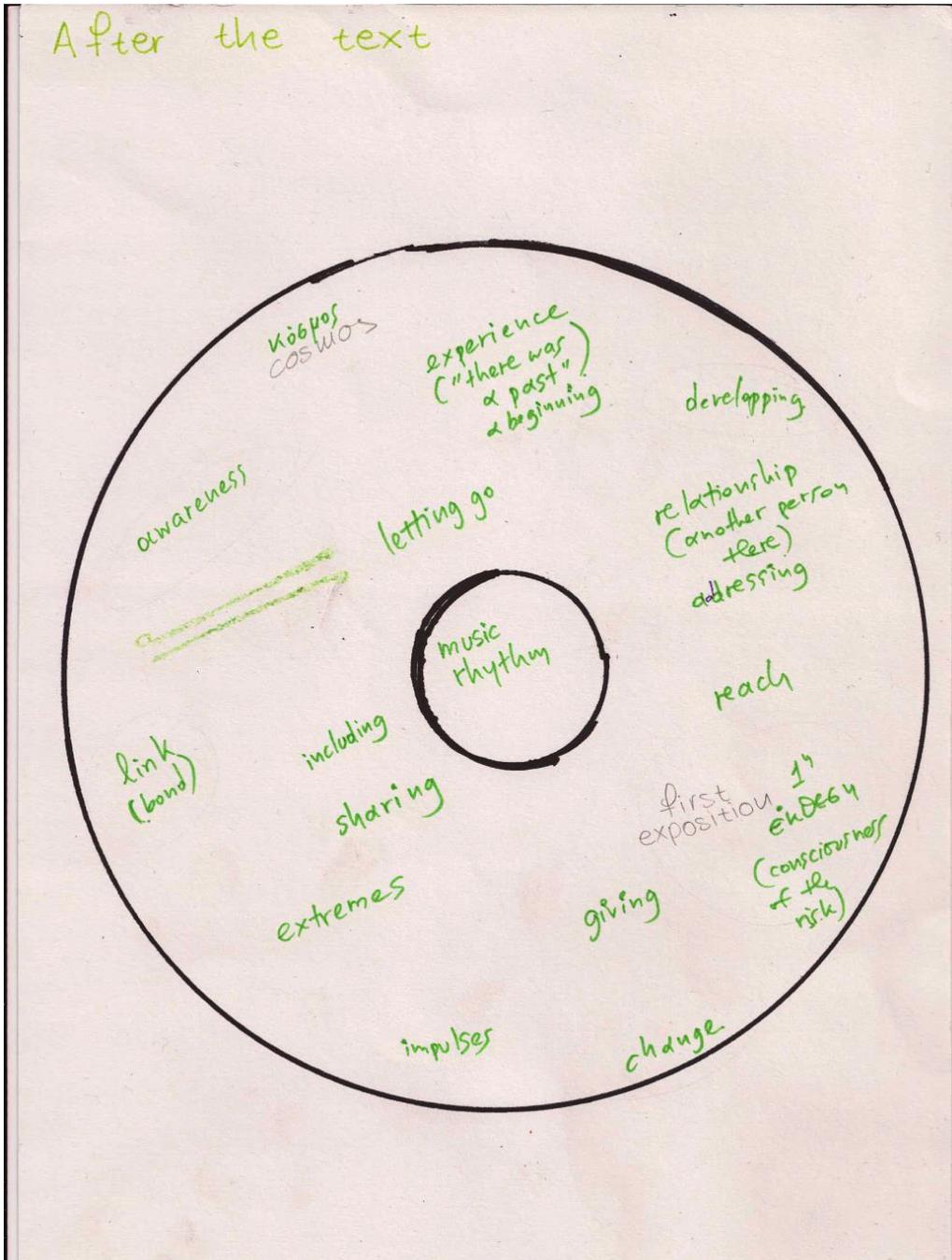


Figure 4 Sketch 2: after the text Nucleus theme: music-rhythm. Peripheral themes: cosmos, awareness, letting go, including-reach-extremes-relationship (another person there)-impulses, sharing-giving-addressing, first exposition- (consciousness of the risk)-change-link (bond)-developing, experience ("there was a past")-a beginning.

To summarize aspects of my role in this first step of the individual environment, I identified problematic areas and elements that introduced following steps of my PaR process regarding my ethical awareness. I understood that unintentionally, including two actresses in the verbal input exploration, I had gone beyond the context of the one-to-one intercorporeal connection between the actress and the actor-trainer. The problematic point in this choice was that I had disconnected the two actresses' preparation and the actress-witness from the present moment of the experiment. Therefore, in the next step of the individual environment I kept the clarity of the one-to-one process between the actress and myself, exploring among other aspects my concerns about language both in terms of English as my second language and the shaping of the language for my practice. I discuss this step in the following section, concentrating on the actress's emotional expression within my understanding of actor-training as an environment of intersubjective/intercorporeal sensitivity.

3.2 Somatic acting process and co-directing: Salome rehearsal (East 15)

The second step of my somatic acting process in the individual actor-training environment emerged from an actress's proposal to facilitate her short rehearsal process (06 and 08 April 2013) for a monologue based on Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (1894). In this section of my writing, I use Maria Alexe's written reflection on her experience as a pivot for my discussion on the essentials of my role as emerging somatic acting facilitator and witness/co-director. There are several reasons I decided to include this step in the process of my PaR project. First, the basis of this work was completely different from the context of the first individual environment for which I had generally framed the process prior to the exploration. Instead, in this context I had to witness the actress's previous work, respond to her emergent experience, and facilitate the co-creation of a performance outcome. A second important reason that made this step important for the intersubjective intention of my practice was the actress's strong

thought-based perception of the acting process according to her former actor-training experience.⁸⁷ She describes how:

My first contact with the acting world has consisted of a solid training through *classical methods*.⁸⁸ The notion of *Thought* was always emphasized by my tutors as opposed to *Body*. Having become so used to and engrossed into this comprehensive *thought-based method* and having from that developed my own technique and routine in the approach of any role, I ended up being sceptical and even cynical when it came to any *alternative methods*. Gradually I loosened up to some of these *alternative approaches*, but still had my doubts. Sometimes I felt them working, but there was always something missing. Certainly, my own *thought-based technique* often felt like it rendered incomplete results, but I perceived that to be my own fault rather than a flaw in the approach. (Maria Alexe: 08.04.2013, my emphasis)

Based on the actress's writing, through her first actor-training experience, she had associated *classical, thought-based* acting methods with an emphasis of *Thought over Body* as well as a normative and habitual acting process for all roles. Having known the actress as a colleague during my postgraduate actor training at East 15 Acting School (2010-2011), she was particularly sceptical and occasionally defensive during the BMC-inspired movement explorations which were part of our training. Therefore, her request for my support for her rehearsal process made me feel nervous about her potential response to my somatic input. However, at the same time, I could anticipate her possible positive reaction to acting invitations which would openly lay out the interrelation between her intellectual and embodied perception as an actress. In the last phrases of the actress's writing cited above

⁸⁷ Prior to the one year MA Acting International course at E15 Acting School, the actress had undergone a three-year BA in Acting program at the Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania. According to the brochure of the university: 'The curriculum of this program includes disciplines such as Art of Actor, Artistic improvisation, and Stage Dance, Stage Speak, Artistic Expressivity, and Analyze of the Stage Process but also The World History of Theatre, Theory of the Theatre, The Management of Theatre Projects a.o.' http://www.spiruharet.ro/en-redenumit/brosura_arte.pdf (accessed 12.05.15).

⁸⁸ In a recent email (12.05.2015) the actress clarified that by classical methods she meant Stanislavski-informed Method acting approaches.

(‘Gradually...a flaw in the approach’), the reader may identify this potential space for her perception of body-mind integration in the acting process.

A third reason this step became important for the general dissemination of my practice, lies in the fact that it gave me the opportunity to establish the foundation of fundamental elements within my praxis, including the use of language. Based on the concept of somatic *witnessing* outlined in Chapter Two (pp.66-68), I was able to name and test out specific somatic acting explorations such as: *cellular metamorphosis*, *breathing the role*, *breathing text*. Due to the restricted rehearsal time (five hours), on the second day I introduced a concise version of *cellular metamorphosis* and *breathing text* explorations, observing that they can additionally work as a somatic acting ‘warm up’ before the actor’s performance. Moreover, I faced the challenge of finding for the first time a suitable language for specific somatic acting explorations such as the phrasing ‘the first meeting with the role’ in the transition from cellular breathing to the *cellular metamorphosis* process.⁸⁹ It was interesting to me that the challenge of a new somatic acting language interrupted my own internal-external flow as facilitator expressed in elements such as gaps in my narrative, hesitations, and mistakes. I also started noticing how deeply logocentrism has informed the generic use of language through concepts such as the ‘mechanistic’ understanding of our cells as ‘building blocks of life’. Practising the development of my language I observed a problematic to me common understanding of our bodies through a breaking down process instead of a continuous dialogue between the part and the whole of our embodied selves.

The documentation of the first rehearsal day also suggested an additional manifestation of ‘witnessing’ the actress’s process. When I saw the actress freeing her movements beyond the obstacles of self-judgement and the awareness that she was observed by me, I asked

⁸⁹ The phrasing ‘first meeting with the role’ echoes Stanislavski’s ‘first acquaintance of the play and the role’ (2010:4). Stanislavski explains that the ‘moment of getting to know a role can be compared to the lovers’ or spouses’ first meeting. It is unforgettable. For me these first impressions are of decisive significance. At least they have always seemed so in my personal experience’ (2010:5). The ‘cellular metamorphosis’ process in my practice suggests how this ‘first acquaintance’ between the actor and the role can happen not through cognitive or psychological processes but through each actor’s direct embodied experience and imagination.

her if I could use my camera in order to record the process. After I got her permission I was concerned with not interrupting both her concentration and our communication taking time to set up the tripod. As a result, I ended up holding the camera trying at the same time to keep its 'presence' as discreet as possible. I did not record the whole rehearsal in order to preserve our intercorporeal communication and I was ready to stop the camera at any point. Nevertheless, holding the camera, I realized that unintentionally I documented an aspect of my *witnessing* incorporating the potential spectator into my visual spectrum and my physicality, including changes of my position, movements into the space responding to the actress's embodied expression, as well as moments of forgetting the fact that I was holding a camera.⁹⁰ Most importantly, through my ongoing development as *trainer-witness* I continued to observe ethical aspects of my role which also heightened my awareness of the required intersubjective sensitivity between the trainer and the actor within the actor-training environment.

A new aspect of my role that further supported this ethical awareness and emerged during the first day of my meeting with the actress, was the integration of some subtle hands-on work as an additional pathway towards our intersubjective/intercorporeal communication (see Figure 5, p.107). My spontaneous response to the actress's physical expression in order to further support her embodied process (always with her permission) came up due to the development of my training as somatic movement educator/therapist.⁹¹ The fact that I negotiated in advance this potential tactile communication, made me realize an ethical aspect of my role as emerging somatic actor-trainer which I had embraced through my training as somatic practitioner. I started using what in BMC/IBMT practice we identify as

⁹⁰ You can observe these elements in the video track 'Breathing the role' (4'.01'') which complements the reading of the next section.

⁹¹ At that point (April 2013) I was about to finish the second year of my IBMT training.



Figure 5 *Collisions 2013: hands on/cellular touch*, photographer Yiannis Mouzakis.⁹²

⁹² This picture was not taken during the rehearsal but during the *Collisions* festival of New Research in Performance Practice (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, 28 September 2013). I facilitated an open workshop on the dissemination of my PaR project (*From the conception to the birth of the role: a somatic approach to acting*) with the support of the actresses Maria Alexe (front of the picture) and Charlie Lonsdale (back right) the work with whom I discuss in steps two and three of this chapter. The picture indicates a moment of contacting the actress's body at a *cellular level*. Placing subtly my whole palm at the top of her spine in the neck area and the top of the actress's back I intend to indicate the connection between her head and the rest of her body. I have to acknowledge though that the experiential subtleness of this tactile communication and the fact that I respond to the actress's own movement is not obvious in the picture. On the contrary, I seem rather commanding or even controlling. This 'reading' of the picture can be also supported by the aesthetics of the image that can be related to a 'classical' actor-training environment. For instance, regarding the outfits, both RCSSD and East 15 acting students are asked to wear all black during classes. I could have invited the actresses to wear any colour. Instead, I also wore black, without taking in consideration potential logocentric interpretations of this choice.

cellular touch or contact at a *cellular level*.⁹³ Linda Hartley refers to contact through cellular awareness as receptive, unobtrusive, one of simple presence and attention (1995:127-128). However, I should like to reiterate that when using tactile communication in my practice my intention is not therapeutic. I meant to draw the actress's attention to specific physical points and their connection to the wholeness of her embodied self in order to facilitate her integrated acting experience. Distinctions between therapy and training as well as my practice in relation to psycho-centric approaches to actor training are discussed in the following section which outlines the first sharing of the *breathing the role* somatic acting exploration.

Breathing the role: emotional expression and intersubjective sensitivity in training

Breathing the role was the development of the embodiment of the verbal input explored in the first step of the individual process (pp.98-100). It was intended to support the actress's individual perception of the embodiment of Salome through an experiential understanding of the text and my input. Moreover, in this particular context, it also became the ground for me as co-director in order to come up with suggestions attuning my somatic witnessing to the actress's embodied experience. The actress reflects:

Christina suggested a different (to thought-based) approach that began with the physical exploration of the character from the inside onwards. By starting from simple notions such as breath and senses, I gradually began to discover not how Salome moved, but what moved her and why she moved...The body experience then developed into the story experience - not thought, but story: *Salome hears something, she smells something, she sees and then she wants*. As simple as that. That's all there is to it. And from that I felt the story grow within me and *merge* with

⁹³ Cellular touch is a further aspect of the cellular breathing exploration during which the facilitator contacts the skin of the partner-receiver through a mutual concentration on the visualization of the living, porous, and moving cell.

my own stories. Salome's demons *met* and *became one* with my own demons up to the point where I couldn't tell the difference. (Maria Alexe: 08.04.2013, my emphasis)

The embodiment of Salome, the integration of dualities and the actress's individual perception of the role were supported through verbal input from me as somatic trainer-witness based on the use of Wilde's text as *director*, *guide* or *map* (see Chapter Two, p.88). Through this communication and the navel radiation 'mind' the actress developed an embodied expression of Salome mainly inspired by the following metaphors: 'She is like a woman who is dead. She moves very slowly' (indicating a sense of Salome as a whole), 'Her little white hands are fluttering like doves. They are like white butterflies' (concentration on the hands for the dialogue between the physical part and the wholeness of the role), 'Her feet are of silver. She is like a princess who has little white doves for feet' (concentration on feet as the other pair of physical extremities). However, I should acknowledge that this experiential use of the play cannot happen easily with all the texts and the roles. Poetic texts such as Euripides' *Medea* and Wilde's *Salome* include a plethora of embodied metaphors and images that could trigger the text-informed somatic perception of the role. On the other hand, as briefly introduced in the second part of Chapter Two (p.83), this does not apply without modifications to all the roles and texts.

The openness to these modifications according to my process's *fluid structures* emerged during the further development of my practice within the group teaching environment. I should like to integrate at this point a brief example of a developed version of the *breathing the role* exploration working with the MA Acting students at East 15 (academic year 2014-2015) in order to indicate the interrelation between the experience of the process and the actors' multiple subjectivities. The actors were invited to choose any role they wanted to explore and their preparation was to find in the play-text (if their role was text-based) images/metaphors they were interested in embodying. I gave them in advance examples such as the ones from Wilde's text and I explained that the process of forming a verbal input could vary according to the chosen context. Their 'warm-up' was the embodiment of the

navel radiation pattern and they worked in pairs comprised of the *actor-mover* and the *actor-witness*. The actor-mover was invited to give the actor-witness the verbal-input of her/his choice introducing elements she/he was interested in exploring. The actor-witness had to 'feed-in' her/his partner with this input when the actor-mover had developed an integrated physicality based on the navel-radiation 'mind'. In other words, the actor-witness was invited to become a kind of somatic *trainer-witness* for the partner.

Regarding the applications of the process, during the final group sharing, the actors' experiences varied. For instance, an actor shared that witnessing his partner working on a Shakespearean role whereas he had chosen a contemporary one, he felt that he wanted to revisit the process through the embodiment of a classical character. On the other hand, an actress who explored a contemporary realistic role found that through the exploration she was able to identify deeper layers in her perception of the role that she was not able to find before through a cognitive approach. This year (2015-2016) I worked with both undergraduate and postgraduate students on an individual version of the same exploration. As somatic *trainer-witness* I acknowledge all the actors' experiences and I explicitly indicate possible variations and/or limitations of the process. My awareness of the need for clear communication of the practice's qualities in order to hold each actor's creativity within the dynamics of a group was rooted in the first steps of the individual environment discussed in this chapter.

Returning to the internal 'meeting' between the role of Salome and the actress's embodied self I focus on a specific moment in order to include into my discussion the actor's emotional experience as a theme that I avoid mentioning or concentrating on in my practice. To me emotions, feelings, memories, thoughts are all part of the actor's internal perception that is interconnected to her/his embodied experience. Supporting each actor's continuous embodied awareness I try to keep her/his expression in an interconnected dialogue with the emotional realm without indulging in it. My intention through this choice is to situate my praxis in opposition to psycho-centric actor-training approaches that focus on evoking the

actor's emotional expression.⁹⁴ Additionally, it gives me the opportunity to point out differences between somatic therapeutic contexts and my practice. Specifically, my aim is not to release each actor's emotional expression but to support their aware dynamic dialogue between internal perception and physical/outer expression in relation to the embodiment of the role.

In the video 'Breathing the role' (4'.01") I invite you to witness a short extract from the actress's embodiment of my input regarding my aforementioned objectives.⁹⁵ My ongoing concern was to remind the actress of her physical connection to the present experience so she would not lose the integration of her embodied awareness and potentially pre-impose emotional expressions to her final performance. I chose as the beginning of the video a moment that I assume the actress indicated in her reflective writing: 'Salome hears something, she smells something, she sees and then she wants' (Maria Alexe, 08.04.2013). The actress was already an hour into her process and had found an embodied interrelation between the navel radiation pattern and the metaphors mentioned above (p.109).

I introduce the 'presence' of John in Salome's story through the actress's sensorimotor perception: 'she hears, she sees, first she hears, she wants...because she hears, she sees'. I try to combine input on the role's internal-external dialogue playing with verbs provided by the text, and when the actress makes a transition to standing, I go back to the metaphor of Salome's feet like 'white flowers that dance upon the trees'. My intention is for the actress to embody the transition from this image to the image of Salome dancing in John's blood. I combine again the last input with more general information about Salome. When I repeat the

⁹⁴ The actor's emotions as the subject of enquiry in Method-inspired actor-training approaches in my understanding causes a problematic logocentric binary that emphasizes the hierarchy of 'emotional truth' over embodied expression (on the current discussion about acting and emotions see among others Konijn 2000, Woolson 2010, Flacks 2015). Analytical psychology as the inspiration for acting psychotechniques tends to unify human experience through 'a universal symbolic language valid for all human beings' such as Freud's study of dreams and Jung's archetypes (Kaufmann 2009:xlvi). By contrast, my work could offer each actor a process of exploring her/his unique embodied interconnection with the role, without feeling the pressure of concentrating on a particular emotional state. In my understanding embodied openness in the actor's exploration could result in more flexible, diverse, and integrated communications of the role.

⁹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7FroghBQM&list=PLngDTJxvOtdC0gqYX4Gq8JwShRmIBxje&index=6>

image of Salome dancing on blood and the actress receives the input seeing and touching the imaginary blood on the ground (2'.56"), I see as well a potential image for the physical staging of the monologue.

I trigger the dialogue between the actress's intellectual and embodied perception in relation to Salome's story, adding the question: 'Why is she (Salome) going to dance on blood?'

After a couple of movements and for many potential reasons such as the actual content of the play in dialogue with the actress's vulnerability and openness I observe that she is about to cry (3'.16"). Witnessing this twist in her emergent experience I choose as somatic actor-trainer to communicate through my input the integration between the actress's emotional state with embodied aspects of the role (Salome's hands, feet, body, eyes) in order for the actress not to lose the internal-external flow of her expression and her present awareness.

When I re-introduce John's 'presence' in Salome's story through their intercorporeal relation and the imaginary perception of 'his voice, his eyes, his hair, his body', the actress responds with a deep breath (3'.42") and physical shaking. I stop my input, I give her time to be aware of her personal resonance with the moment and I am wondering if I should have stopped after her first emotional response. I see though that she remains present to her embodied awareness concentrating on her hands and the surface of her body.

The actress's emotional response in this step of the individual process revealed an additional challenge for my role as emerging somatic actor-trainer. I started becoming aware of my overall responsibility in the intersubjective dialogue between the actress and myself which mainly fostered in my experience a sense of intercorporeal sensitivity. I began to perceive actor training in practice as emergent intersubjective negotiation across the individualities of the actor and the actor-trainer in a way that is not intended to reinforce the normative 'breaking' or suffering of the actor usually applied in Method-based approaches.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ The Method's most indicative exploration towards the actor's emotional 'breaking' is 'Affective Memory (the recall of emotional moments in one's personal past)' (Carnicke 2009:63-64). The practitioner who made Affective Memory the Method's cornerstone was Lee Strasberg. He claimed that 'actors must confront their deepest fears as they learn to act...because these fears arouse their most powerful reactions; "they oil the

Once more I came across the ethical context of actor-training processes and my own choices in this intercorporeal negotiation through the awareness of a reciprocal engagement between the actor and the actor-trainer. With this approach both the actor-trainer and the actor may equally be moved in new ways and towards new understandings of one's acting experience. For instance, in this second step of the individual environment the actress had the space to re-approach her normative logocentric understanding of acting and I had the opportunity to facilitate this process developing my praxis and its further applications towards the co-creation of a performance piece. Nevertheless, this specific resonance between my training and the intended performance outcome of *Salome* did not assert a similar congruence with every rehearsal process. The potential dissonance between my practice and the preparation for a performance is an issue that emerged in the third individual environment of my praxis as analyzed in the last practice-based part of this chapter.

My choice to shape my practice through the embodiment of *Medea* combined with the embodied nature of my work triggered the further steps of my process. Even though my purpose working on Euripides' *Medea* as case-study was a process of self-preparation and a first formulation of my somatic acting experience before its dissemination, I had to acknowledge that this was shaped in relation to a specific kind of role and theatre genre. The actress in her reflection wrote explicitly that she asked for my help since her 'chosen character was one of the most complex and intriguing tragic heroines of the European drama' (Maria Alexe: 08.04.2013). For a similar reason I was invited by Zachary Dunbar, the director of Euripides' *Bacchae* at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (29 July-1 August 2013, Embassy Theatre-RCSSD), to contribute to the rehearsal process through a chorus workshop (discussed in Chapter Four) and individual somatic acting work with the actress Charlie Lonsdale who played *Agave*. Our work on *Agave*, which informed the third

entire instrument''' (Strasberg in Carnicke 2009:64). Carnicke points out that while 'Strasberg was accused in the press of practicing psychotherapy without a license, his attitudes reveal a specifically American reading of Boleslavsky's teaching' (2009:64). She adds that 'Strasberg's sometimes cruel attempts to break down actors' inhibitions seem a far cry from Stanislavsky's own belief that Affective Memory serves as a gentle "lure" (SS II 1989:318) for the creative imagination' as well as from Stanislavski's later approaches of physical actions and active analysis (2009:64).

step within the individual context of this PaR project, especially in regards to potential tensions between training and performance processes, between trainer and director, is discussed in the following section.

3.3 Complementing the rehearsal process: somatic Agave (RCSSD)

The somatic acting explorations of Agave were developed within eleven meetings (10 June-22 July 2013) of two hours each (apart from the first meeting which was an hour long). The imposed aim of my individual somatic acting work with the actress who played Agave was dual, having to do with the actress's self and the work on the role. Regarding the actress's individuality, I was asked to concentrate on the facilitation of the awareness of her body-mind integration according to the relational aspects of my practice. Concerning the embodiment of Agave, the director highlighted the physicality of the role, based on a transformative journey from her possession by Dionysus to reality. In the first email to the actress in which he introduced the beginning of my contribution to her process he wrote: 'The Agave character is quite a physicalized phenomenon. Apart from the research I want you to do with the Gloria Swanson icon, the basis of that role qualifies as a "re-birth" from possession to reality. Quite a phenomenal transformation' (Dunbar 31.05.2013).

Within the development of my praxis I identified this 'phenomenal transformation' in the embodiment of the ontogenetic metaphor. The dialogue between the actress's self and the otherness of Agave included different steps of the *cellular metamorphosis* somatic acting process. For instance, during our fifth meeting (2 July 2013), we combined the pre-spinal movement and the flexible response of the actress's 'soft' spine to internal-external impulses, with the embodiment of *cellular Pentheus* and *cellular Dionysus*. The actress, supported by my verbal-input and drum music, was invited to track her embodied experience visualizing the development of Agave's story through the cellular image of Pentheus and then of Dionysus. We integrated concentration on the change of the role's visual sense (the idea of not being able to see reality), and we further explored the process of embodying both

Pentheus and Dionysus through the interconnection of the organs of brain, heart, and uterus (6th meeting, 3 July 2013).

The 'birth' and 're-birth' of Agave based on the director's idea and my interpretation of its relation to my practice was explored during the whole development of my modifications of Cohen's movement process, from *cellular breathing* to the *spinal patterns* that in BMC/IBMT practices represent the simulation of the pre-birthing and birthing movement. The only extra introductory information I had as actor-trainer about the particular context of this production, was that the play was set up in the beginning/mid of the twentieth century, and that each character represented a movie icon of that time. As referred to in the director's email cited above, the icon for Agave was the American actress, singer, and producer Gloria Swanson (1899-1983). In order to include this rather logocentric Method-inspired element in the actress's transformative journey I suggested a particular sound-input for the final phase of embodiment in the actress's first *cellular metamorphosis* experience (2nd meeting, 15 June 2013).⁹⁷

The number of my meetings with the actress, and the time of our work together, gave me the opportunity to go deeper into our somatic acting explorations identifying more potential links to the acting process and the embodiment of the role. I also had the chance to develop aspects of our intersubjective/intercorporeal communication through the use of movement, touch, and verbal sharing. Having experienced the positive impact of the *cellular touch* upon the actress's embodied awareness in the second step of the individual process, I decided to keep it as an aspect of my somatic actor training, always having been given the actress's permission and in relation to her acting experience. Another form of communication, also informed by the somatic context, was verbal sharing at the beginning and the end of the

⁹⁷ I used Gloria Swanson's song *I Love You So Much That I Hate You* (2'.14") from the movie *Perfect Understanding* (1933). I did not ask in advance for the actress's input into this choice as my aim was for her to experience it as 'fresh' stimulus during her exploration. Thus, I intended to support an experiential integration between the actress's 'cellular perception' of Agave and the director's vision which, as I understood later on, included extra work on Swanson's voice offered by a voice coach. Based on this extra focus, I could have prompted a more fluid integration of her icon research with our process.

process through reflection on the actress's embodied experience. I found this reflection and discussion a necessary process not only for the support of the integration of her embodied and intellectual perception, but also for the evolution of her individual creativity and expression. Simultaneously through our discussion I was able to continue testing out the use of language in my somatic acting process noticing that unintentionally I kept coming across mechanistic vocabulary within the understanding of a *universal actor-training language* such as the word 'tools' for the description of the actor's 'skills' or means of expression. Hence, I started challenging more directly the use of words and concepts that imply the objectification of the actor's experience.

Through the first two meetings with the actress, we developed an overall structure that was comprised by seven sequential steps based on my modification of Cohen's process of embodiment and the IBMT methodology: (1) 'check-in' the actress's present embodied state/sharing of observations related to the previous somatic acting explorations, (2) breathing concentration/arriving 'warm-up', (3) embodiment of pattern/patterns, (4) visualization in acting, (5) somatization in acting, (6) embodiment in acting, (7) invitation for integration/reflection. For the rest of our work together (nine more meetings), I applied variations of the same methodology, trying to respond to the actress's needs in relation to her experience of the parallel rehearsal process. I kept concentrating on the integration of dualistic binaries and the support of the actress's individual expression based on intersubjective dynamics emerged through movement, tactile information, verbal and/or sound input. Nevertheless, a problematic element that emerged particularly towards the end of our process and the transition from the rehearsals to the *Bacchai* performances (six in total), was the lack of my personal witnessing and direct awareness of the actress's rehearsal experience.

The fundamental difference in this step of my PaR project was that my work with the actress took place in parallel to the development of the performance rehearsal process. The problematic element in this new context was that I did not know that I should have clarified

from the beginning that I could assist the actress's experience only through my direct witnessing of at least part of the rehearsal process. However, my complementary role as somatic actor-trainer never became present within the rehearsal context. If I had known that before the beginning of our work together, I would not have agreed to participate in a process that was grounded upon a predetermined binary between the actress's training and rehearsal experience. I sensed that this disconnection, particularly closer to the opening of the show, confused the actress and obstructed her somatic integration. During the open discussion at the end of the Collisions festival presentation of my praxis the actress referred to our work and the director's approach as two separate processes (RCSSD, 28 September 2013).

As has been broadly discussed by practitioners such as Richard Schechner (1977), Eugenio Barba (1986), Phillip Zarrilli (2002, 2013), Ian Watson (2001, 2015), and Alison Hodge (2010), training is a continuous process that prepares the actor for the rehearsal and performing experience. Even though the somatic acting explorations with the actress started prior to the *Bacchai* rehearsals as the embodied preparation for the actress's performance experience, the two processes never mingled. My objective was the support of the actress's embodied awareness through a processual somatic development of her experience of the role. The director had a specific aesthetic vision including heavy costume, props, and particular icon-inspired work with a voice coach. In order to integrate both processes it was necessary for me to identify the dialogue between my role and the rehearsals. The actress had already developed her individual 'warm-up' based on our explorations but I could understand her difficulty in sustaining this awareness in the rehearsal/performance environment without my support in both contexts. That could have happened through my 'witnessing' of the whole or part of the rehearsals for *Agave*. Through this interrelation I would have been able to develop what is identified as 'production-specific training', forming somatic acting explorations according to the director's concept (Watson 2015:12).

Ian Watson points out that '[p]urpose would seem to be transparent in the case of production-specific training because there is a clear link between the learning and its function' (2015:12). In order to indicate the need for this link in the somatic work on Agave I will use a combination of material from the last meeting with the actress and the relevant documentation from two different performances. The interplay between the last training and the performance material is used in order to point out the relevance between the two contexts which could be clearer to the actress if I had had the chance to work within the rehearsal process. Additionally, watching material from two performances during which there are changes in the actress's interpretation of Agave, I would like to acknowledge the ongoing nature of both the director's performance process and the actress's experience. My focus was the support of the actress's expression which I tried to facilitate through a specific new approach to her. Therefore I could understand that she needed some extra help in order to combine our work with the director's own vision.

'Birth' of the role: emergent dissonance between actor training and rehearsals

In the last meeting with the actress (22 July 2013), a week before the opening of *Bacchai* (29 July-1 August 2013), I tried both to relax her from the fast rhythm of the rehearsals and to complete our somatic acting process through the final step of Agave's 're-birth'. I concentrated on the embodiment of the role and Agave's text through the concise physicality of the *spinal reach and pull patterns*. In Cohen's developmental process, the spinal movement is initiated either from the head or from the tail supporting our sense of attention (2012:17). The spinal reach and pull patterns from the head/from the tail simulate the infant's reaching out to the world through the movement of the birth. They complement the spinal yield and push from the head/from the tail that represent the urgency of pre-birth and birth. Therefore, I named the acting application of the spinal patterns *birth of the role*.

Within the acting modification of the spinal reach and pull patterns we explored Agave's transformative journey and the integration of the role's text from the moment of possession

throughout the transition to reality. We used the fluid structure of the pattern in order to 'contain' the wholeness of this transformation based on the impact of different relations between the actress's body and the space. There was still the element of improvisation but not with the 'freedom' of moving in the space as we did for instance with the cellular breathing and the navel radiation patterns. In that way I tried to give the actress a more structured embodied understanding of Agave's journey integrating images from the text and the previous steps of our explorations. Through that, it became clearer to me the processual and developmental aspect of my work confirming in practice Cohen's observation that development 'is not a linear process but occurs in overlapping waves with each stage containing elements of all the others' (2012:16).⁹⁸ The final step of our process was the transition to the standing position and the 'breathing' of the role through the simplicity of the actress's stillness or very subtle movement.

In the video 'The 're-birth' of Agave' (14'.31") you can follow extracts from the embodiment of Agave's transformative journey through the spinal reach and pull patterns.⁹⁹ At the beginning (0'.00"-1'.42") I moved with the actress through an intercorporeal relation trying to facilitate her preparation using movement, verbal input, and the support of eye contact. Triggering this inner-outer awareness I aimed at challenging the perception of the more structured movement as only an external physical form or exercise commonly used in actor training through a mechanistic and dualistic perception of the actor's body. Moreover, I noticed that I had to re-examine the potentially problematic fact that embodied synchronicity between the actress and the actor-trainer could trigger a mimicking response by the actress possibly reactivating imitating processes instead of supporting her emergent embodied individuality. The 're-birth' of Agave process started from a preparatory position which is called diamond shape or baby position (Hartley 1995:58).

⁹⁸ A similar awareness of the experiential creative development as spiral instead of linear process is also applied in Halprin's RSVP cycles (Worth and Poynor 2004).

⁹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZOU1lzYh50&list=PLngDTJxvOtdC0gqYX4Gq8JwShRmIBxje&index=7>

The actress folds her body on the floor resting on the support of her feet, forelegs, forearms, and hands. At the beginning she kept her head up in order to see my movement but soon she realized (0'.13'') that she could follow her own physicality through her previous awareness of the exploration and my verbal input. She tries a bit the yield and push from head and tail as the preparation for the reach and pull from the head which will work as the position that indicates Agave's possession. The actress and I initiate movement from our heads. With the physical support of our hands and our eye contact we pull our bodies along the floor. We end up in a curvy extension of our spines reaching up with our torsos similarly to the seal pose in the practice of yoga. I invite the actress to explore all the potential movements within this posture, how they may affect her embodiment of Agave, and her verbal communication of the text. What I find particularly interesting in relation to Agave's state and her possession by Dionysus through this posture, is a frontal openness of the actress's body that could be experienced as available and, at the same time, strong embodied state. I mean to attract her embodied concentration to the dynamics of Agave's hands with which she killed her son Pentheus while possessed by Dionysus and how this physical 'memory' could be part of her journey to the awareness of reality.¹⁰⁰ The actress echoes some of my movements but soon after that I give her space to develop her individual exploration.

In the second part of the process (1'.43''-3'.04'' in the video) the actress explored her own understanding of the embodiment of the text through the physicality of the pattern. During this phase I tried to support her exploration saying the lines of the chorus and Cadmus, Agave's father, with whom she shared the scene. The third part (from 3'.05'' until the end of the video) was the phase during which I insisted on the detail in the somatic perception of Agave's text and the transitions in her journey within the spinal reach and pull from the head and from the tail.

¹⁰⁰ In Euripides' *Bacchae* Agave, the mother of the king of Thebes Pentheus, possessed by Dionysus kills her son with her bare hands believing that he is a lion. Pentheus cries out for his mother's mercy but she cannot recognize him and she kills him. She puts Pentheus' head on her thyrsus and she celebrates her victory.

The actress after my invitation has found an uncommon way to look 'up towards the heavens' as indicated in the text during the dialogue between Agave and her father Cadmus. I remind the actress of the mouthing and pre-spinal patterns in order to maintain a flexible movement through the upper part of her body.¹⁰¹ I stop her when she says as Agave that she feels 'clearer' (3'.49") as I would like her to experience what that might mean in her body and I give her options through previous explorations of our process and my own understanding. I add the potential perception of Agave's thoughts through her 'soft-spine' and the integration of the three organs (brain-heart-uterus) that we had explored during our sixth meeting. Then I concentrate on the sensorimotor perception of the role and the transition of the actress's concentration from her vision to her hearing. I refer to an exploration during which we had explored the internal connection between the two ears through an eight-like figure movement of the head and its sequence to the rest of the actress's body. I try to facilitate the actress's embodied memory through my physical participation (7'.08"-7'.19") whilst the actress remains present to her own experience. I repeat my participation through the embodiment of the image of a serpent and a sense of pulling from the ground again based on a previous exploration (8'.13"-8'.18").

The next important moment for me in terms of Agave's transformative journey comes when Cadmus asks Agave to look again at the head she is holding in her arms (8'.57"). I invite the actress to make a transition to a quadruped position and to create a new relationship with the ground. I do not explain the process of reaching from her tail because we had gone through the details of the pattern during the 'warm-up'. However I sense that I had to repeat the initiation of this physical transition and prompt the actress's awareness since her movement is quite sudden. In this new position she relaxes her organs and I draw her attention to her navel as during our third meeting she had found an expression of grief through the navel radiation pattern. I am aware of the fact that she is been doing a specific

¹⁰¹ Mouthing pattern is the awareness of the initiation of the movement of the spine through the release of the lower jaw and the opening-closing movement of the mouth. The pre-spinal movement is the integration between head and tail initiated in the awareness of the 'soft spine' through the visualization of the spinal cord, the organs, or the notochord.

voice work through a formalistic understanding of her role and Greek tragedy but I try to support the integration of her own voice. I use the expression 'I want...' in my input, meaning 'I' as spectator, something that of course includes my personal aesthetic understanding of Greek tragedy. I should have clarified that in order to avoid any potential confusion with the director's role. Agave's line 'It seems that I hold the head of my son' is the next pivotal moment for me and I prompt again its full embodiment through the awareness of the actress's womb as the connection between the mother and the son, and a sort of triangle internal connection between her heart, hands and eyes.

I articulated quite a few times during this phase that this part could be quite tiring and/or frustrating for the actress and of course that she had the choice to stop at any point. I also tried to recognize and, by implication, approve according to my witnessing the moments of her embodied connection with the text of Agave usually through my own habit of saying 'exactly'. My overall objective was to communicate as clearly as possible the underlying intentions of the wholeness of our process and the integration of previous steps in order to give the actress enough information for her own combination of our preparation with the director's vision. My insistence on the integration of the actress's somatic acting experience also stemmed from my insecurity to preserve qualities of our work as I had no awareness of the rehearsal process. According to the actress's input during the Collisions presentation (RCSSD, 28 September 2013), she needed further somatic work before the integration of the somatic training and the performance process in order to establish her own choices within this combination. From my perspective, as already mentioned, a problematic point was my absence from the actual rehearsal process and my failure to pre-emptively realize that this might be problematic. I was able to attend the dress rehearsal (27 July 2013) two days before the opening of the show during which I was allowed to record Agave's part and I had the chance to offer the actress some 'witnessing'. I concentrated on her embodied connection to her prop which was a simulation of Pentheus' head made out of film tapes. Nevertheless, at that point, I am not sure to what extent the actress was open to my input.

In order to indicate first how I could have supported the actress and second the development of her acting within the performance experience and the director's process I include two videos from the part of Agave's role outlined above.¹⁰² I invite you to observe elements such as the size of the Embassy Theatre (in the second video), Agave's costume, and most importantly the prop used for Pentheus' head.¹⁰³ My role, for instance, could have been the facilitation of her engagement with it as an extension of her physicality instead of something external to her process. Our previous concentration on the actress's hands and vision would underlie this awareness. You may also notice the connection between the final stages of our work and the actress's physical transition to the ground, as well as a sense of metaphorical 're-birthing' of Pentheus through the dragging of the tapes in between her legs. The icon-based voice work is pretty clear and quite fixed during both shows. The evolution of the performance process could be noticed in elements such as the rhythm between the two actors and more clearly during Agave's moment of realization (at 1'.49" in the first and 1'.32" in the second video). My actor-oriented observation is that in the second video Agave's realization has been slightly combined with a transition to the actress's own voice instead of the embodiment of the icon. This subtle change could reflect the actress's choice, potentially helped by our work, as her individual response to the director's role suggested through a rather logocentric vision.

My experience during this third step of the individual environment in my PaR project gave me some first insights regarding my role as emerging somatic actor-trainer within contemporary actor-training institutions. The key insight was rooted in my need to recognize potential differences between the intentions of my practice and rehearsal processes towards a specifically visualized performance outcome. I had to reconsider the objectives of all the other processes and individuals involved and interacting with my own process, developing

¹⁰² The first one is from my own recording of Agave's part on the dress rehearsal (27 July 2013, 2pm) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joJh_CqvAKA&list=PLngDTJxvOtdC0gqYX4Gq8JwShRmlBxje&index=8 (2'.29"), and the second from the director's footage later on in the process https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mo4_VcSsitQ&list=PLngDTJxvOtdC0gqYX4Gq8JwShRmlBxje&index=9 (1'.50")

¹⁰³ On the space of the Embassy Theatre see ft 84, p.97.

clear distinctions but most importantly pathways for a 'permeable' communication between the actor, the director, or other practitioners within a performance production.

In my role as *trainer-witness* who tries to support the actor within the director's context, it became crucial for me to be present in the rehearsal process either as somatic actor-trainer or as somatic movement educator through the development of 'warm-ups' or production-specific movement training. My contribution to the actress's process got disrupted by my disconnection from the rehearsals which subsequently created in me a sense of insecurity and inefficiency for the support of the actress's embodied experience within the director's purpose. I now understand that I should clarify that my process is an actor-oriented preparation for the rehearsal and performance experience aiming at facilitating the actor's own creativity and expression. Therefore it requires my occasional or ongoing relation to the rehearsals. Additionally, I realized that my intention matches more with rehearsal methodologies that use improvisation and experimentation instead of clear pre-determined directing guidelines that indicate the conceptualization of the director's role as auteur (author), in other words as an embodiment of the director's own logos.

3.4 General reflection on the individual environment

Overall, the main themes and pertinent issues that emerged from the first individual environments within the shaping of the dissemination of my practice were related to my ethical responsibilities as somatic actor-trainer. I concentrated on the awareness of intersubjective/intercorporeal sensitivity between the actresses and myself, fully acknowledging every individual that interacts with my practice, including aspects of tension or dissonance with performance-oriented processes. The importance of the actress's individuality and presence in the development of my practice emerged as a common thread throughout all the three steps of the process. It started as a challenge in the first step through the presence of the actress-witness and it gradually began to inform my ethical responsibilities and choices in an intersubjective/intercorporeal practice. My intention to

support the actress came up as a sense of intersubjective sensitivity identifying elements such as the complexities of my explorations as well as the understanding of the cognitive and/or psychological hegemony in her acting experience. Through this development of my practice I also started recognizing distinctions between somatic movement therapy and my intentions as somatic actor-trainer in the use of tactile communication, my movement participation in the actresses' explorations, and my verbal input.

My verbal input was inextricably related to the challenge of the use of language in my praxis. This was not only connected to the fact that English is my second language but most importantly to the intertwining philosophy of my praxis that aims at challenging the scientific Stanislavski-informed linguistic objectification of the actor's body as 'an articulate instrument of expression' (Watson 2015:14). Verbal communication also became fundamental for each actress's reflection and sense of choice in our shared context. My own reflection included the recognition of potential limitations in the application of my process due to its shaping in relation to a particular role (Euripides' Medea) and theatre genre (Greek tragedy). However, I attempt to communicate that an actor-training process which is open to a continuous development and the actor's present intersubjective/intercorporeal experience could inform various aspects of her/his embodied expression.

To conclude this chapter on the individual environment of my PaR project, the beginning of the dissemination of my praxis can be perceived as the first step in my choice to complete my 'full training cycle' as an actress, becoming a somatic actor-trainer. According to Watson:

The full training cycle encompasses a performer's professional career and in its fullest iteration (which not all actors are exposed to) contains at least five overlapping components: foundational training; experiential training; production-specific training; vocational training; and the training of others. (Watson 2015:11)

Watson adds that teaching others is not something that all actors do but when it happens it 'informs their understanding of their own training' (2015:13). He uses the examples of Odin

Theatre's actors Torgeir Wethal and Roberta Carreri who, prompted by Eugenio Barba, discovered that teaching gave them ownership of their training. Carreri's reflection resonates with the underlying process of this PaR project: 'In order to be able to transmit my experience in a clear and efficient way, I was obliged to formulate it first for myself. Teaching allowed me to take possession of my knowledge. This understanding was to accompany me throughout the course of my professional life' (Carreri in Watson 2015:14). In my praxis I aim at formulating a somatic acting process based on what I found supportive for my creativity and expression as an actress during my training, my professional experience, and ongoing development.

The formation of this practice as an actor-training pedagogy required communication with the actor. This communication was grounded in the individual context discussed in this chapter. Nevertheless the regular classes in a contemporary drama school are group processes developed upon the dynamics between the actor-trainer and the actor, the actor and the actor, the actor and the group. Therefore the next step of my praxis was a transition to the group environment analyzed in Chapter Four of this thesis. The group somatic actor-training process emerged from the *Bacchai* rehearsals as a two-day somatic chorus workshop. It continued to inform the evolution of my praxis as an intersubjective process elaborating upon ethical nuances of my role as *trainer-witness*, the resonance or dissonance of my practice and performance-oriented processes, the relation between the trainer and the director, the potential emergence of violence as part of actors' free expression, as well as further clarification of differences between therapeutic and actor-training environments.

Chapter Four

Group environment: exploring the beginning of a group somatic actor-training process

[If] knowing can only take place in 'the living present' through the actions and conversation of bodies, then the bodies of teachers and students both contribute to the formation of the vulnerability that is to be known and mutually recognized. (Seton 2010:14)

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss and analyze my praxis based on the first two applications of my explorations in the group actor-training process. This critical writing is informed by new practical research elements and challenges that emerged from my ongoing experiential development as somatic actor-trainer within two different acting contexts. Reflecting on new (for my PaR project and personal experience) intersubjective/intercorporeal environments, I focus on the embodied dialogue that arises between the actor and the actor, the actor and the group, the educator and the actor within the group. I continue to concentrate on the development of my role as somatic *trainer-witness* through the interrelated potentials of Cohen's metaphorical ontogenetic language, movement practice, and hands on support to suggest my choice for a potential response to dualistic binaries and the universalizing of each actor's experience.

This chapter is concerned with my transition to group dynamics that simulate the regular drama school classroom context. I explore how I could modify my means of intercorporeal communication with the individual actor and the group in order to support each actor's expression within the group and to explore to what extent this is possible working in specific environments such as during a rehearsal process. I also test out how and whether my work could facilitate both the director's vision and the actor's individual creativity, facing at the same time emerging ethical challenges that lie in the intercorporeal nature of this practice.

The development of the group process in my research was grounded in reflections and practical explorations tested out throughout the development of the individual environment discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis. My key observation within the group was a circulation of dynamics between every actor's individual embodied awareness and actor-training experience, the group of the actors-movers and my own embodied participation as the facilitator of the process. This permeable, relational, and at the same time uniquely individual experience based upon my concept of *embodied logos* was explored through the actor's sensorimotor dialogue (integration of movement, vision, hearing, and touch). The simultaneous dialogue between the individual and the group through my *witnessing* as somatic actor-trainer was the most exciting and at the same time the most challenging aspect of my process.

The group process in my research is discussed through two developmental steps: (1) a two-day somatic chorus workshop during rehearsals for Euripides' *Bacchai* (2-3 July 2013), (2) a workshop inspired by the embodiment of the myth of Dionysus' birthing process, as a further development of the somatic chorus workshop (27 May 2014). Basic issues that emerged within the first group step were related to themes such as the potential dissonance between training and intended performance outcome, between my intentions as trainer and the director's plans, especially regarding the aspect of limited preparation time. The actors who participated in this group process were postgraduate acting students of the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama's MA Acting Classical course. They comprised the cast of the *Bacchai* (29 July-1 August 2013, Embassy Theatre-RCSSD) directed by Zachary Dunbar, which I introduced in Chapter Three in the third individual environment (pp.114-124).

In Step Two I worked with students from the Devising Theatre and Performance course at the London International School of Performing Arts (LISPA).¹⁰⁴ My work complemented their

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix (p. 179) for the abstract of the workshop *Re-enacting the beginning: from the conception of Dionysus*, a short version of which I facilitated for the 29th Annual BMCA U.S. Conference (June 25-29, 2014, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York). From now on, LISPA will stand for London International School of Performing Arts.

collaborative and devising research project. Eventually the students had to come up with a devised performance piece based on a theme of their choice but our process was not performance-oriented. The participants of the workshop had named their project *Rewilding*, inspired by the cult of Dionysus. According to the performer who briefed me about their process prior to the workshop they were interested in exploring Dionysian themes within embodied experience such as the return to nature and an internal sense of self. Problems that I encountered in this group exploration, continuing to inform the communication of my processual study, included the negotiation between actors' expressive freedom and emergent violence in training in combination with oppositions between therapeutic intentions of somatic practices and the application of my somatic actor-training pedagogy. Both steps also revealed additional ethical aspects of my role based on the intersubjective principles of witnessing in acting outlined in Chapter Two (pp.66-68).

The critical reflection on key moments and challenges for myself as emerging somatic *trainer-witness* in the group environment is informed by the director's or actors' feedback and my retrospective examination of the process watching video recordings. In the first step of the group environment, the visual documentation of the workshop is confined to three pictures that the director took at the end of the second day. The ethical reason for my conscious decision not to record the work, even though I had my camera with me, was a general sense of its 'misfit' in the process. I was particularly concerned by the fact that the actors had not experienced similar somatic explorations before, and I felt that they would be affected either by the 'presence' of the camera or by their potential refusal to be recorded. Thus, I did not even bring up the possibility of video recording. Extra practical reasons such as the use of two different spaces in which I would have had to reset the camera brought up more difficulties that could have affected my own concentration, adding to my concerns for my first formal group workshop.

My deliberate decision not to use the camera emerged from my first experience of the 'mind of the room' when I entered the studio witnessing for instance that none of the actors was

preparing for a movement-based exploration through activities such as embodied concentration or physical stretching.¹⁰⁵ My choice not to record the development of my PaR project in the first step of the group environment brought to my attention additional ethical elements regarding my process of becoming a somatic actor-trainer and the nature of my practice. Hence as researcher I started understanding that my priority was to support the actor's creative exploration instead of ensuring the audiovisual documentation of the practical research. At the same time I realized that I started experimenting with an attempt to offer actors what I felt that I had missed from my acting classes while I was a drama student. Marc Cariston Seton, discussing the ethics of embodiment within actor training, identifies the importance of the notion of vulnerability emerging through various forms of actors' interaction 'with the audience, other actors or the text. The sense of connection and emotional vulnerability was something that needed to be known and recognized by teacher and student alike' (2010:13). I began to understand how important for me as actor-trainer would be the acknowledgement of the vulnerable inter-subjectivities within the connection between the trainer and the actors, something implicitly missing from my own training.

Due to the lack of video material from the chorus workshop I formulate my discussion of this first step based on the footage of the *Bacchai* performance in order to indicate the parallels between the workshop explorations and the way they were integrated into the final choreography as embodied movement material. The track of the chorus video is included in 'Chapter Three: Group environment' in the DVD *Developing a somatic acting process as 'Bacchai Chorus III' (1'.30")*. I also use alternative modes of documentation, such as the director's re-worked script of *Bacchai Chorus III* and notes, and a short post-workshop reflective email exchange with the director. Another outcome of the non-documented chorus process was my plan to revisit some of the somatic acting explorations after the *Bacchai* workshop.

¹⁰⁵ The 'mind of the room' is an expression used in BMC in order to define the level of a shared embodied awareness of the movers in a working space. For instance Cohen explains: 'when I present an exploration in class, as soon as I feel the "mind of the room" resonate the consciousness or mind state central to that exploration, I'll move on to another exploration' (2012:13).

This revisit took place almost a year later. A LISPA student from the *Rewilding* devising project, introduced above, knew of my work for *Bacchai*. She thought that my practice could facilitate their collaborative research project and she prompted me to circulate information on the workshop to the rest of the group.¹⁰⁶ In the workshop abstract I highlighted the need for the actors' consent in order to record the explorations.¹⁰⁷ As a result, it is suggested that the analysis of the second step in the group environment be read in combination with the video track 'Moro reflex-based exploration' (3'.02") in the chapter 'Group environment' of the DVD *Developing a somatic acting process*. In my writing from a phenomenological perspective I continue to use the same formats for the integration of the two major modes of my past and present experience as in Chapters Two and Three (see Introduction, pp.28-29).

4.1 Somatic chorus workshop (*Bacchai* rehearsals, RCSSD)

The opportunity to begin the development of a group somatic process was given to me by the director of Central's *Bacchai* production (and at that point first supervisor of my PaR project) Zachary Dunbar. The chorus Dunbar asked me to work on was Chorus III in Colin Teevan's translation of Euripides' play (Euripides 2002:36-37).¹⁰⁸ In Teevan's translation of Euripides' *Bacchai* Chorus III, Dionysus' Asian followers (*Bacchai*) who comprise the chorus (after the third episode in which the king of Thebes Pentheus denies Dionysus' divinity) praise the river in which Dionysus was born, turn against Pentheus and Thebes which represent the western world, and evoke Dionysus' appearance in order to revenge Pentheus' disbelief. Dionysus' 'presence' was the theme of my work with the actors as was summarized by the director during a phone call in which he outlined his ideas (22 June 2013).

The director told me that he was particularly interested in exploring two aspects of the chorus: the use of a repeated swapping between two genders (male-female) as movement

¹⁰⁶ A second reason for the revision of the chorus workshop was my personal need to refresh the explorations as preparation for my participation in the 29th Annual BMCA U.S. Conference.

¹⁰⁷ See Appendix (pp.180-198) for the participants' signed consent forms.

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix (pp.199-200) for the initial form of Euripides' Chorus III translated by Teevan.

metaphor inspired by Dionysus' 'gender ambivalence', combined with a sense of excitement and fear relating to the god's 'appearance'.¹⁰⁹ Based on this conversation I set up the general structure of the first day of the workshop inspired by two somatic explorations discussed in this section: the embodiment of *yolk and amniotic sacs* for the gender-related idea and the embodiment of the *Moro reflex* in order to evoke an experiential sense of risk-taking and excitement. As complementary preparation I used the *cellular metamorphosis* (based on cellular breathing pattern) and *breathing text* (based on navel radiation pattern) processes discussed in the previous chapters. An additional reason I meant to facilitate the embodiment of navel radiation was that the director told me he was using the idea of 'navel breathing' inspired by the previous steps of my research project.¹¹⁰ I wanted to make sure the actors' 'navel breathing' experience included the embodied awareness of an intersubjective internal-external dialogue. This was of course my concern based on the underlying embodied philosophy of my role as somatic actor-trainer and not necessarily the director's or the actors' priority.

During a short introductory meeting between the director, the assistant/movement director and myself, right before the beginning of the first day of the workshop, I found out that the director's gender-related idea was directly connected to the chorus text. The director shared his own alteration of Teevan's script in which he had specifically divided the verses into female and male. For instance, the beginning of the chorus was as follows: 'Sweet river (f) river (m) off (f) spring (m) of the (f) river (m) god'.¹¹¹ I sensed that this very specific and quite formalistic instruction suggested a contrast between the process-oriented intention of my work and an indicated choreographic structure. Nevertheless, I felt that it was not the right time for me to express such concerns. Instead, I thought that the director's concept could be

¹⁰⁹ Later I found out that Dionysus' descriptions as androgynous in ancient Greek mythology was an underlying theme in the director's concept according to which the role of Dionysus was portrayed at the same time by an actor and an actress.

¹¹⁰ See Appendix (pp.201-203) for the director's alteration of Teevan's text including directing notes and the phrase 'navel breathing'.

¹¹¹ In the used verses (f) represents the word female and (m) the word male.

combined with the exploration inspired by the embryonic front and back support of *yolk and amniotic sacs* I had planned to work on with the actors. At the same time I decided not to 'sacrifice' the contingent nature of my work and my objective to support the emergence of a potentially choreographic material through every actor's unique and simultaneously intersubjective creative process. One example of this contingent nature was the way I started the workshop which was not how I had planned to.

When I entered the rehearsal space in order to warm up and set up my laptop in case I needed to use music, I witnessed that most of the actors were rehearsing their individual roles as they were all chorus members and at the same time they had to portray a specific character inspired by an early twentieth century movie icon.¹¹² I sensed that I should challenge, even temporarily, this role-centric concentration if I wanted to support the actors' multiple subjective processes within the intersubjective chorus context. Hence, instead of beginning with the planned gathering in the circle in order to invite the actors to introduce themselves and sequentially being introduced to my role and process, I left this part for a bit later. When it was time to start and the actors were still in a scattered pre-rehearsal mood, I did not say something like 'ok, let's start'. I put on some African drum music and I started walking in the space playfully interacting with them indicating the beginning of our process.¹¹³ When the chattiness faded out, I kept moving for a while in the space inviting the actors to freely rediscover the room through their movement and senses while gradually opening their awareness to the others. In that way I tried to bring the actors' attention to 'the living present' intercorporeal relation to the space, the others, and myself as the somatic acting facilitator (Seton 2010:14). The actors were a bit confused and hesitant at the

¹¹² See Gloria Swanson for *Agave* (Chapter Three, pp.114-115).

¹¹³ As mentioned in Chapter Two (pp.87-88) the reason I used this specific music was Euripides' continuous association between the cult of Dionysus and the dance on drum beat, as a context-specific preparation.

beginning but soon they got engaged with this sensorimotor transition to the beginning of our somatic chorus workshop.¹¹⁴

Along with the sensorimotor introduction to the emergent, intercorporeal, and improvisational basis of our work, I wanted to verbally introduce myself, the general workshop plan, and the underlying ideas of my somatic acting process. Right after the alternative 'warm-up', I invited the actors to gather in the circle. First, it was very important to me that they introduce themselves. I recognized that this bit could seem quite weird to the students as they had known each other for almost a year. I explained that it was for me as I did not know them while at the same time it could work as each actor's refreshed re-introduction to the group. At the end I introduced myself and the somatic acting process. The fundamental information of this part was to share the underlying philosophy of my practice. I concentrated on the individual uniqueness of every actor's embodied experience within the awareness of the group process and I suggested that they challenge their self-judgment and/or the judgment of the others. I highlighted that they were invited to an open communication with myself as trainer, the movement director, and their partners throughout the whole process if something did not feel comfortable, if they wanted to share something or ask questions.

The fact that I communicated these ideas from the beginning of the process did not mean that they would be necessarily followed by the actors or that I would be the 'perfect' facilitator. I articulated my intention as somatic actor-trainer while acknowledging my own vulnerability to the contingent nature of the actors' experiences. The exploration of 'free' and 'emergent' expression in my somatic acting process had already been questioned by the director's logo-centrally formalistic alternation of the chorus script. The movement director's

¹¹⁴ I repeated this free movement in the space when during the very first breathing preparation a girl started to cry. During the break the movement director told me that the specific girl had to deal with some psychological complications and she apologized for not letting me know in advance. However, in my experience I did not find this release negative, neither for her nor for the group process. Instead, I sensed that through this particular reaction a general tension within the group was revealed. I tried to discharge it inviting the actors once more to free sensorimotor engagement with the environment. I chose that instead of opening a conversation that would lead the process to a completely different direction. At the same time, I did not mean to ignore the personal response and I made sure that everything was all right checking with the actress.

goal-oriented aspirations during the yolk and amniotic sacs-informed improvisation, discussed in the following section, would trigger further ‘creative mismatches’ for the further understanding of my practice. Thus, I started clarifying the intentions of my process especially in regards to potential tension with the specific vision of some rehearsal processes and the relevant use of the rehearsal time. I will also outline the Moro reflex-based exploration as the additional new research and workshop material the application of which can be discerned in the final choreography of Bacchai Chorus III.

Yolk-amniotic sacs/Moro reflex-inspired explorations as choreographic material

When the director first told me his gender-related concept I recalled my experience of self-support evoked by a pre-embryo phase through the embodiment of *amniotic and yolk sacs* during the first steps of human development in my somatic movement training.¹¹⁵ I found that the exploration was particularly relevant to the content of the chorus on Dionysus’ birth and the watery environment of the river which saved the embryo Dionysus as described in Teevan’s translation of Euripides’ text and the myth:¹¹⁶

Sweet river,
Offspring of the river god,
In your waters
You cooled the son of Zeus,
When he was snatched
From his mother’s burning womb,
So that Zeus could then place him
In his thigh and sing:
‘Come my child of fire

¹¹⁵ The early embryo is a relatively flat arrangement of cells which is called the *embryonic disc*. During its third week of life, it floats in between two fluid vesicles, the amniotic and yolk sacs. The amniotic sac on the back of the pre-embryo creates a kind of cushion filled with amniotic fluid. The front, belly side is supported by another flexible cushion, the yolk sac, which additionally nourishes the early embryo and is the forerunner of the umbilical cord. See Drews 1995:154-155.

¹¹⁶ The development of movement through the visualization of a watery environment was also relevant to the word ‘fluid’ indicated at the very top of the director’s script.

Be born from this male womb

You shall be made manifest

As a god to all world.' (Euripides 2002:36)

In BMC/IBMT, the embodiment of yolk and amniotic sacs is explored through a fluid front to back pre-spinal movement based on the image of a balloon at the front and a balloon at the back of the mover's adult body that offer equal support: 'The yolk sac and the amniotic sac are like two balloons touching' (Cohen 2012:165). Apart from the fact that at this stage of human embryological development there is no gender distinction, the interplay between the two genders was elaborated in my first experience of the exploration through the association of the back amniotic sac with the support of the father (male) and the front yolk sac with the mother (female). Reflecting on this particular point in my somatic movement experience I tried to respond to the director's process and his gender-inspired vision.

I invited the actors to an individual exploration based on the image of a fluid cushion or balloon that supports the wholeness of the front part of one's body and a same fluid structure for a back support. I used only the imagery of the watery balloons/cushions without making any connection with the actual embryonic state, the yolk/amniotic sacs terminology, and its use in therapeutic processes. I prompted the actors to move through these images in any way each one of them understood according to each one's body. In this process I highlighted the continuous support of the ground and their breath, aspects of the somatic acting process that had been already introduced through the preparatory *cellular metamorphosis* and *breathing text* explorations. An extra suggestion was the physical expression of a front to back flexion and extension through the wholeness of their bodies.

Standing somewhere in the middle of the rehearsal space among the actors I initially combined my narrative with the development of my own movement. At the same time, I tried to explain that I did so in order to move with them not in order them to imitate my movements as there was no right or wrong in their improvisation. Through this suggestion I challenged

both myself as somatic actor-trainer and the students. Myself in the sense that I prompted the unpredictability of the actors' diverse expressions instead of a potential comfort that usually derives from the external repetition of each trainer's physicality. However, I was concerned that potential mimicking of my movements would re-inscribe logocentric notions of the teacher's hierarchical 'mastery', limiting the diverse emergence of every actor's unique response to my input as well as the fascinating for me element of surprise.

The element of individual freedom in expression within a shared exploration was something that I had found particularly helpful as an acting student for the development of my creative process and improvisational awareness in the somatic movement context. Nevertheless, as somatic actor-trainer I started witnessing that this 'freedom' was not an easy place for all the actors. Some of them instantly released their individual expression, some others seemed vulnerable and needed more structure, others went straight to the imitation of my physicality. As a response I started walking among them while they were moving trying to facilitate each actor's physical expression through very subtle tactile support combined with my verbal input. It was very important for me to resonate with every actor's experience negotiating this contact. I noticed if the actors were open or not to hands on input before the contact usually through the expression of a sudden muscular release or tension respectively. The movement director who was present throughout the whole process started offering the same tactile support.

As the chorus workshop was movement-based, the person who was present throughout both days was the assistant and movement director of the show. Her presence was very helpful for several reasons. Regarding myself I felt that I had the support of a movement expert during my first formal group experience. As for the students, she was familiar to them indicating an interrelation between my work, her role as their movement teacher, and her identity throughout the wholeness of the rehearsal process. Her relationship with the students also facilitated their first experience of a somatic-based practice, since somatic

movement education was not part of the actors' postgraduate training.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, her input at some points made me think that the actors were not particularly familiar with the concept of expressive 'freedom' introduced above or that there was no time for such exploration. An example of this input emerged in the sequential transition to the second part of the yolk and amniotic sacs-inspired exploration.

In the second phase of the process towards the director's gender-related vision and the chorus text, I invited the actors (without stopping their movement) to imagine that the back balloon was the support of Semele (Dionysus' mortal mother) and the front balloon the support of Zeus (Dionysus' immortal father). I shifted the gender association in comparison to my original somatic exploration due to the transition of Dionysus from Semele (female-back) to Zeus (male-front). Thus the actors met the 'support' of Semele extending their whole body to the back and the 'support' of Zeus flexing their body to the front. Gradually they started developing a front to back, back to front movement expression. At that point I decided to introduce the integration of the text. I wanted them first to find their own connection to the text through their movement rather than the director's predetermined gender identification. I shared though how that could happen through my body and the way I had imagined it, shifting from the one bit to the other while keeping a front to back, back to front wavy movement.

The movement director's problematic input, from my perspective, at that moment was a suggestion for the actors to 'look at how' I was moving which prompted an external imitation of my expression. She identified this 'how' concentrating on the quality and the choreographic 'semiotics' of my movement, something that prompted me to stop and to concentrate on subtle verbal and tactile individual support based on each actor's physicality.

¹¹⁷ According to the 'MA Acting: programme specification and units', the actors up to that point experienced movement-based practices such as Lecoq-based physical training, work on the neutral mask, clowning traditions, and Stanislavski-informed contemporary embodied explorations including the work of Anton Chekhov. https://www.cssd.ac.uk/sites/default/files/courses/ma_acting_2013-2014_version1-3.pdf (page 20, accessed 20.05.2015)

The next image described in the director's script ('when he [Dionysus] was snatched from his mother's burning womb') combined with the sense of fear/excitement relating to the director's requested second theme, triggered the other new exploration within the chorus group process. Reflecting again on my own experience during my training on the developmental patterns, I had decided to use an exploration based on the embodiment of the *Moro reflex*.¹¹⁸ In BMC/IBMT practice we revisit it in order to re-awaken the spinal response, the embodiment of self-support and the support of the other, the sense of bonding and separation, the balance between flexion-extension, opening out-coming in. Additionally, it could support one's sense of concentration, awareness, and openness moving from the edge of surprise and fear, to the support of the other and the self through intercorporeal communication.

In practice the Moro is explored in groups of three: the mover, the receiver, and the supporter.¹¹⁹ The mover finds a comfortable sitting position, if possible kneeling with the legs folded under the thighs. Then the mover releases the weight of her/his torso to the hands of the supporter. The supporter concentrates on the two physical points of head and sacrum, and makes sure that her/his knee is not behind the mover's head as the exploration might cause a collapse. The receiver is ready to support the mover from the front and she/he may have her/his arms extended like she/he is ready to receive the mover in her/his hug. When the supporter makes sure that the mover's spine is released, she/he leaves suddenly the support of the mover's head and torso but she/he is ready to support it again if the mover will not go instinctively to the frontal support of the receiver. Even though there is a rough structure in the exploration, from extension through the loss of the back support, to the flexion through the receiver's hug and the return to self-support, every individual's reaction is unpredictable and unique. The essential element in the process is the alertness and

¹¹⁸ Moro reflex is the infant's startled reaction when she/he loses back support. It is one of many reflexes present at birth and it usually disappears after three or four months of the baby's life. The Moro is manifested in two phases, first the extension-opening of the limbs accompanied by a cry, followed by a second phase of flexion-gathering of the limbs towards the infant's midline. For the scientific definition of the reflex see Menkes et al 2006:11.

¹¹⁹ These are the terms that I use in my practice in order to differentiate the three roles in the exploration.

presence of the supporter and the receiver in order to respond immediately to the mover's experience.

In the acting application of the Moro reflex within the chorus environment, I made an association between Dionysus' 'traumatic' transition from the female to the male womb. The actors-movers were invited to maintain the sense of Semele (female) at the back of their bodies, finding the new support of Zeus (male) at the front. I kept the role of the supporter (Semele) throughout all the explorations, in order to comfort any potential anxiety of the actor-mover (chorus member/Bacchant), before finding the support of the actor-receiver (Zeus). In that way, I came up with an intercorporeal context which attempted to integrate the emergent dynamic experience between two actors and the somatic acting educator. My objective was for the actors-movers to embody a sense of losing back support with an immediate integration of movement and out-breath, the memory of which they could express through the future embodiment of the text and the director's gender-related instructions: 'when he was [losing support/out-breath] snatched from his mother's burning womb (awakening from female to male)'.¹²⁰ Once more, I approached the exploration only from an actress's perspective for the embodiment of a sense of urgency in acting.

We combined this exploration with the embodiment of urgency expressed in the Bacchai's calling for Dionysus' presence and revenge at the end of the chorus. After the actors-movers' self-experiences of the simulation of the reflex in the first attempt of the exploration, they were invited to revisit it for a second time as chorus members/Bacchai combining their reaction with the breathing-out of the verse: 'Dionysus don't you see/How your children suffer?' (2012:37). Then the process was repeated with the switching of roles between the actor-mover and the actor-receiver. In opposition to any therapeutic somatic application of the Moro-inspired physicality, I focused on the embodiment of qualities that the actors could then integrate into the text. After the completion of this exploration and towards the end of

¹²⁰ The text in the brackets is mine and the director's note is in the parenthesis.

the four and a half hours we combined the embodiment of both processes with the text in a simultaneously individual and intercorporeal group movement expression.

In the video '*Bacchai* Chorus III' (01'.30") in the chapter 'Group environment' of the accompanying DVD, I invite you to observe the way the movement choreographer integrated the explorations described above into the final chorus choreography as an embodied movement material.¹²¹ The front to back movement underlies the piece through a gradual development of its dynamic expression and an acceleration of the rhythm. The choreographer did not keep the partner work in the 'cooled' repetition (starting at 00'.28") but she preserved the embodied vocal expression that had come up. In the 'sweet river' repetition (at 00'.40") you can see the gradual transition to the loss of support as explored in the final yolk-amniotic step and was further developed in the Moro process. I witness it clearly in the actor on the very left and the fourth from the right, less in other actors. This is not a negative thing to me as I can see the actor's individuality and choice within the intersubjective/intercorporeal connection to the group. The same individual choice and expression can be observed in the Moro-inspired expression in combination with the following lyric (from 00'.57") changing the dynamic of the rest of this chorus part.¹²² However, could practically four and a half hours be used for every minute of the performance? The processual, experimental, and time consuming aspect of my somatic actor training within the context of a time-limited and performance-oriented rehearsal for an acting school production proved problematic.

Reflection: training and performance-oriented processes

My work for the *Bacchai* production was a complementary process through which I briefly tried to support the work of the director and the movement director of the show through the embodied nature of my work. The evocation of the actors' embodied awareness through the

¹²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cavtnYrt0A&list=PLngDTJxvOtdC0ggYX4Gq8JwShRmlBxje&index=10>

¹²² The last bit (01'.05"-01'.30") was the part we worked on during the second day of the workshop through a short embodied simulation of the movement of the birthing process.

chorus and the experiential emergence of the text, along with the support of their individual expression within the group, were my fundamental objectives. At the same time I tried to stimulate the ground of their experience through amplified expressions that could then be minimized by the director and the movement director of the production. In other words, I tried to facilitate a preparatory process for the rehearsals even though, as mentioned earlier, I was not aware of the actual group rehearsal stage. As Richard Schechner points out: 'Rehearsal is a way of setting an exact sequence of events. Preparations are a constant state of training so that when a situation arises one will be ready to "do something appropriate"' (Schechner in Zarrilli 2002:189). Hence, I realized in practice as emerging actor-trainer a contingent dissonance between the ongoing/ processual character of my work and the nature of a particular rehearsal process which aimed at a short-time presentation of a specific performance.

In the somatic context during a recent workshop Cohen pointed out: 'There is nothing to do but be in your own process. And to recognize others are in their process' (27.03.2015). From my perspective as somatic actor-trainer I find this awareness crucial in relation to my respect for each actor's learning process and the director's/movement director's 'sequencing' performance composition. In addition, it allows me to respect the underlying philosophy and nature of my practice. Instead of trying to change or adjust the processual/preparatory and embodied character of my work in relation to underlying logocentric principles of some rehearsal contexts, I could clarify in advance what my practice can bring to a rehearsal process, how long this would take, and what the probable outcomes might be. In that way, it would be clearer whether my somatic training could be integrated or not into the intended rehearsal and performance outcome. For instance, in the *Bacchai* context, I should have clarified in advance that the embodiment of the text through the actor's individual and group process is an inextricable part of my somatic training. The director's feedback regarding this embodied aspect of my practice and the clash with the short rehearsal time frame included:

'...as you said, time is limited and making the chorus text evolve from embodied processes might be a bridge too far' (Dunbar, 04.07.2013).¹²³

Despite the imbalance in the training-rehearsing intentions and the problem of time that emerged during the *Bacchai* chorus workshop, I am glad that both the director and the movement director embraced my contribution and integrated somatic material in the final performance, as discussed above in combination with the Chorus III video. At the same time, having the opportunity to be in a simulation of a regular group-acting class environment I started seeing the potential integration of my work in the curriculum of contemporary acting institutions as an ongoing somatic acting/movement training and/or performance-specific complementary support. In the second step of the group process discussed below, I was able to revisit a version of the first day of this chorus workshop outside the context of production rehearsals. I will concentrate on ethical challenges within the contingent nature of my work as they arose through the workshop with the LISPA students and the Moro reflex-informed exploration.

4.2 Re-enacting the beginning: from the conception of Dionysus (Bacchai-inspired workshop with LISPA students)

Between the *Bacchai* chorus process in July 2013, and the revision of its first day in May 2014, I further developed my group-class experience as assistant somatic movement educator for the first year BA acting students at East 15 Acting School (October 2013-March 2014). I was invited to co-facilitate the students' learning process by my previous somatic educator and ongoing somatic supervisor Fabiano Culora. The main focus of my role within the class was to indicate the connections between the somatic explorations and the actor-training process. During the first academic term (October-December 2013), Culora's somatic movement classes were informed by Cohen's process of *experiential anatomy* through movement-based and improvisational explorations of the body systems. The second term

¹²³ I quote from the director's response to a post-workshop reflective email.

(January-March 2014) was developed around the BMC developmental movement patterns which inspired this research. My main witnessing during this first extended experience in the contemporary London actor-training environment included the students' uniquely individual and ongoing responses to the student-centred and improvisational pedagogical aspects of the work. Culora aimed at the development of the actor's subjective embodied experience as relational and intercorporeal through elements such as expressive movement, embodied imagery, partner tactile communication, partner and group verbal sharing.

Between March 2014, when I completed my assisting experience at East 15, and the new group exploration with LISPA students in May 2014, I was at a crucial point in my writing process, trying to clarify the dialogue between the theoretical and the practical aspects of my PaR thesis. In other words, according to Nelson's triangular model, I experienced a tension in the dynamic interconnection between the 'know how', 'know that' and the reflecting 'know what' in my PaR project. In my experience this phase resonated as a dualistic binary between my practices of writing and somatic actor training. Hence, I was concerned about not communicating this anxiety to the new group process. An additional concern was the almost year-long time gap between the chorus workshop during the *Bacchai* rehearsals, and its secondary development. As a somatic acting educator I had to trust my own embodied experience and the emergent relational dynamics with the new group because only my intercorporeal and present engagement with them would allow the development of multiple and intersubjective new connections and insights.

Regarding the new group, I had several elements that could counterbalance my worries. For instance, I had familiar people in the group as two of them were previously students at the Greek National Theatre Drama School which was my first actor-training environment. I found that the international nature of a group comprised by nine theatre and performance artists from different cultural and artistic backgrounds easily created for me a familiar, free, and experimental space. In contrast to my first individual environment in which my language anxiety defined the synthesis of the process (see Chapter Three, p.96), now the overall

absence of a shared first language could potentially support the integration between our verbal and non-verbal/intercorporeal communication. My sense of familiarity with the group was also fundamentally supported by LISPA's body-based training pedagogy.

According to the LISPA's Initiation Course pedagogy, the centre is the awareness of the artists' Poetic Body, and the creation of new performance languages through its access.¹²⁴

The Poetic Body (originally *Le Corps Poétique*) was the title of the French acting practitioner Jacques Lecoq's (1921-1999) book translated in English as *The Moving Body* (1997).

According to Lecoq's teaching method, the poetic body is the essence of the students' universal awareness:

Here we are dealing with an abstract dimension, made up of spaces, lights, colours, materials, sounds which can be found in all of us. They have been laid down in all of us by our various experiences and sensations, by everything that we have seen, heard, touched, tasted. All these things are there inside us, and constitute the common heritage, out of which will spring dynamic vigour and the desire to create. Thus my teaching method has to lead to this universal poetic awareness in order not to limit itself to life as it is, or as it seems. In this way the students can develop their own creativity. (Lecoq 2009:47)

Lecoq's approach to the students' creativity and expression, beyond the imitation and cognitive perception of life, turned his attention to the actor's body as a universal or collective experience. This universal understanding in Lecoq's training is explored through the use of mask and relevant mask-based theatre traditions such as *commedia dell'arte*, and Greek tragedy chorus work. Despite the fundamental difference between Lecoq's unification of all actors' embodied expression and my suggestion for the significance of each actor's subjective experience as relational and co-developed, the importance of my chance to work with LISPA students lay in their embodied awareness, their experience in improvisation and

¹²⁴ The information is taken from LISPA's official website and the description of the Devising Theatre and Performance course, to which the participants of the workshop belonged.

experimentation. It was highlighted by the dialogue between my *Bacchai*-based workshop and the Dionysian inspiration for their *Rewilding* research collaborative project. My chance to explore the workshop within an experimental instead of a rehearsal actor-training context brought up positive but also challenging provocations for my role as somatic actor-trainer.

In an already experimental environment, I tried to keep the balance between my somatic acting invitations, my embodied engagement with the group, and the space for the individual actor's free embodied creativity and expression that could potentially induce the element of surprise through emergent relational experience. As supportive element towards this objective I used the continuous development of the process through a fluid three-hour experiential journey, checking of course if the group was alright with that. Words in the actors' feedback such as *continuity*, *'sped-up' evolution*, *different time*, seemed to reflect that this choice was positively related to a sense of overcoming *logical* and cognitive *judgment*, as well as the boundaries of *personal space* and *ego*. To the question: 'Did you embody any difference in your relation to the "other"? (where "other" is the partner/the group)' an actor responded:

A lot of judgment in the beginning and also a defensive feeling of personal space, but I realized that *the time* changed everything, the more I was in it the more I felt detached from my ego and part of a more neutral organism. (28.05.2014, my emphasis)

As additional time-related element that facilitated the development of their process, the actors referred to the relation between my rhythm and the required 'space' for the evolution of their embodied experiences as they were exploring a new embodied practice for a first time. Regarding the sense of rhythm a change that I made was the non use of music. Through this choice I intended to attract the actors' attention to individual embodied rhythms and the dialogue with the rhythms of the group trying at the same time to avoid potentially imposing connotations based on specific music choices.

My role as somatic acting educator was gradually developed from verbal input that combined the chorus material with Cohen's ontogenetic metaphor, to the integration of my movement within the group. In reference to my voice and the use of metaphorical language, I received positive responses especially for the cell metaphor and the watery balloons inspired by the yolk and amniotic sacs through the embodiment of the simultaneous maternal and paternal support. However, I found really helpful an actress's observation according to which at times she felt the suggested embodied metaphors *too solid*, as if she had to 'hit a certain image' (28 May 2014, my emphasis). This sharing made me realize my underlying longing for the actors to resonate with the material, combined with my concerns about the amount of detail and information I should give in order to allow plenty of space for multiple embodied imagination, understanding, and expression. Going back to Seton's ethical observations within actor training: 'Each site of training produced particular experiences in and through the bodies of the students and the teachers' (2010:14). In other words my vulnerabilities as actor-trainer are already intercorporeal, therefore they can possibly affect each actor's creativity and expression.

Regarding my concerns about the potential limitation of the actor's individual expression through the imitation of my physicality (see pp.136-137), my movement participation within this group felt much easier than in the first group environment. I had my own space to step at times into the group experience, without the sense that I imposed my presence and personal physical expression. Nevertheless in that way, based on some actors' experiences, I was not noticed until half way through the process, especially through my clear participation into the yolk-amniotic sacs and Moro reflex-inspired explorations. An actress wrote:

I felt your physical involvement opened up a lot in us and feel it could have come earlier. I felt perhaps there was a bit of a *physical barrier* in the beginning between you and us? (28.05.2014, my emphasis)

It is interesting that my intention to facilitate the actors' experiences without direct movement from the beginning was perceived from the actress as *physical barrier*, the opposite of my objective and maybe an additional evidence of how deeply subjective the embodied experience is. The new challenge that emerged within this environment regarding differences between free expression and crossing intercorporeal limits emanated from a combination of the participants' long-term embodied familiarity with each other and my over-trust as actor-trainer to this tacit relation. What I now recognize as an important omission from my perspective was that even though from the beginning I pointed out the importance of communication throughout the whole process, I did not share the underlying ideology of my practice as I did with the RCSSD's students (see p.134). At the same time, despite the fact that we started by introducing ourselves, I relied on what I was already told about their research, instead of asking each actor what she/he would like to explore within the dialogue between their project and our process. I think that these omissions in combination with my experimental intention, contributed in the emergence of the problematic challenge discussed below. I explicitly focus on a moment that helped me to reflect upon the limits between expressive freedom and violence in actor training, informing further the ethical aspects of my role.

Moro reflex-inspired somatic acting exploration: freedom and violence in training

The embodiment of the Moro reflex as a group exploration in which I could test out the intercorporeal dynamics between actors and myself as *trainer-witness* was introduced earlier in this chapter (see pp.140-141). My experiment with this group was to facilitate the emergence of the actors' experiences without giving them all the prior information on the process as I did in the first group environment. My intention was to allow more space for each individual's unique expression within intersubjective communication. Apart from the fact that I did acknowledge the exploration as an invitation to a sense of risk-taking and mutual trust combined potentially with an openness to playfulness, I relied on my memory of the *Bacchai* chorus workshop during which there was no indication of 'crossing boundaries' in

the intercorporeal communication between the two participants. However that was problematic since, as I have already observed, those students were operating within a very different training and institutional context.

The introduction of the Moro reflex exploration in the first step of the group environment included: (1) the mutual physical arrangement of the actors in the space, (2) introduction of the potential physical response of the actor-mover and the actor-receiver in relation to their roles, (3) the development of the exploration within two phases. First the actors who did not participate in the main action were invited to create a circle around the two actors-participants and myself who were located in the middle of this circle. Second I allocated the roles of the actor-mover and the actor-receiver who sat facing each other in a kneeling position. I, as the supporter, was next to the actor-mover. However, I did not introduce the embodied participation of my role as a supporter for the actor-mover. During the first phase of the explorations, the actors experienced the process as themselves. The second time we made the transition into the chorus context in which each actor-mover embodied a chorus member/Bacchant, each actor-receiver Zeus, and I represented Semele's support.

In this workshop, when I first introduced the process with two volunteers, we went straight to the initial physical position of the two participants facing each other and the identification of their roles as actress-mover and actress-receiver. I only said at the beginning that their potential physical response could include flexion and extension indicating the physicality through my movement. I shared that I did not want to give more information in order to allow the emergence of their instinctive responses and I took my position as supporter receiving the weight of the actress-mover's head and torso with my hands. When the actress-receiver responded to the actress-mover's loss of back support with the 'expected' reaction of wanting to hug her, I introduced the physicality of the Moro reflex as the inspiration of the exploration and my identification of the process with the embodiment of urgency in acting. Then I invited the actress-mover to integrate whatever sound and/or word she wanted to,

before I suggested the embodiment of the verse from Teevan's *Bacchai* translation 'Dionysus don't you see/How your children suffer?' (2012:37).

The positive outcome for me as actor-trainer and researcher of this more fluid and open structure, was the emergence of a new creative dialogue between the actress-mover as Bacchant and the actress-receiver as Dionysus through the development of an embodied improvisation. What I did not anticipate as I allowed the continuation of this dialogue with all the participants were the potential embodied aspects that both roles could trigger, particularly working with actors who were exploring a research theme (*Rewilding*) that indicates possible 'rewild' responses. I put the actors and myself in an already vulnerable hierarchical intercorporeal dramatic relation between a mortal and an immortal, a servant and an instinct-related god that could stress the limits between their emergent and uncontrolled expressions. Thus, a somatic-based exploration which is supposed to urge the sense of self-support and trust in the support of the other was open to become 'a matter of negotiating and renegotiating power between bodies that can never be independent from each other' (Seton 2010:10). In the track 'Moro reflex-based exploration' (3'.02") I invite you to witness the improvisation that brought to my attention these concerns regarding the potential risks of violence and ethical limits within my practice.¹²⁵

In the acting development of the exploration I release the actress-mover's weight and I support her almost immediately as she collapses. This is not a problematic response and many movers tend to enjoy this sense of trust. After helping her to find her self-support I move back to the circle in order to allow space for the development of the improvisation. The actress-Bacchant reduces her distance from the actor-Dionysus who gradually flexes his torso and starts looking at her in a sarcastic way. When the actress moves closer to him asking the question, the actor slaps her (01'.03"). I did not expect that and I instantly start

¹²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuflwG7byE0&list=PLngDTJxvOtdC0ggYX4Gq8JwShRmlBxje&index=1>
1

having concerns about the further development of the improvisation. At the same time I do not mean to restrict the exploration. I become even more alert to the actors in the main action and the group in order to sense how I should respond to this expression while I physically remain still trying to conceal my concerns. The rest of the actors-witnesses stay also still, apart from an actress on the left who nods as if she agrees with this twist.

The actress-Bacchant responds with another slap and embodied expression of frustration towards the actor-Dionysus. I sense a lack of corporeal awareness in her communication with the actor manifested in sudden and non-clearly intended physicality. Her frustration turns into giggles prompting a similar response from some actors-witnesses. The actor-Dionysus responds to the laughs coming up as sarcastic god holding the actress's hands, something that frustrates even more the actress-Bacchant. The actor-Dionysus enjoys his physical authority prompting the actress's screams and struggle for release. At 01'.54" there is a shift in the actress's expression and her frustration turns into a sense of surrendering to the 'god's authority'. Even though I sense that this moment (02'.03") could be the beginning of a new phase for the improvisation, I rush into its completion due to the actors' previous overloaded intercorporeal communication. I also rush into giving my input feeling the need to articulate the required, in my perception, sense of mutual care in between the actors. I am not sure if I am ready to clearly articulate my concerns and beliefs regarding limits in the intersubjective acting process (i.e. 'every kind of movement can be perceived as a stroke') without making it sound like personal judgment towards the actors. I try.

Watching the video I make several observations on my input in this particular moment. For instance, I feel like I favour the actress even though they were both involved in this intercorporeal 'power negotiation'. I hear myself suggesting that actors' intersubjective communication should not awaken potentially traumatic experiences. It seems like I contradict myself in a process for which I argue that there is no 'should' and 'should not'. Nevertheless the freedom in actors' expressions I refer to derives from a place of mutual respect and awareness of the difference between crossing the limits and negotiating

communication through the permeable boundaries of our embodied selves. On the other hand, the challenge of limits in the intersubjective dialogue between actors is an element that may be prised in other actor-training contexts and it could have been part of the participants' previous actor-training experience.¹²⁶

In order to awaken the awareness of intercorporeal negotiation towards the Moro reflex-based improvisation I facilitated two hours of explorations on the porous embodied intersubjectivity based on movement within various 'cellular-like' kinespheres (the metaphors of the cell, the navel radiation, the watery-yolk and amniotic sacs-balloons), relevant verbal-input and communication with the group. However, I realized that in the last exploration before the improvisational phase I should have clarified the three sequential steps (see p.150) and the responsibilities of each 'role' in the process, including of course mine. Once more, this does not guarantee that there will not be potential emergent tension as the process is simultaneously deeply subjective and dependent on each actor's personal interpretation. Nonetheless, introducing each individual's role in the process, I identify that I should have stressed communication as a matter of mutual responsibility and embodied negotiation between the actors and the trainer.

Later on in the process I shared that the awareness of negotiating my intercorporeal communication with the other as an actress and somatic actor-trainer was something that I personally found in the dialogue between my acting experience and my training in somatic movement education as well as an aspect of my ongoing exploration. This is an awareness that, in my understanding, could prevent any potential communication of intercorporeal violence without inhibiting the actors' free expression. The problem was that I took for granted within my experiment that the participants were in a similar process. Additionally, as a somatic actor-trainer I started experiencing not only the productive dialogue between somatic movement practices and actor-training but also potential oppositions. For instance,

¹²⁶ For instance, Zarrilli refers to the extreme 'preoccupation with emotion' in American method approaches, whilst Evans notes 'the extreme physicality and the authenticity of exhaustion' in approaches such as Roth's 'Five Rhythms' and Grotowski's actor training (Zarrilli 2009:17, Evans 2009:156).

the expression of any sort of violent embodied communication is something against the code of ethics of somatic practices. However, the acting process includes all the aspects of human expression embedded within dramatic texts and situations. Nevertheless, this wholeness in the range of the actor's expression, within the context of my practice, should not be misunderstood as an exploration disconnected from the actor's awareness and mutual communication.

Since in the actor-training process the ethics and limits are identified by each actor-trainer, I understood that it would be my responsibility to ensure that prior conversation and embodied preparation would allow actors to trust their emergent expression through intersubjective awareness and support. At the same time the amount of given information that I started exploring in this second step of the group environment had become another ongoing question throughout my development as trainer-witness. I understood that in resonance with each actor's unique individuality, for some the extra clarity provided more security while by others it was translated as expectation for particular expression. My responsibility was to be attentive to the individual within the group offering my input in response to each specific intercorporeal communication.

4.3 General reflection on the group environment

To sum up, combining the experience of a rehearsal and an experimental context in the group environment of my research I confirmed the processual instead of an outcome-oriented nature of my actor-training practice. Subsequently, an emergent issue was its likely affinity to improvisational processes and its potential dissonance with logocentrally-informed specific preparations for performance. At the same time, I observed that through flexibility and adequate pre-communication with all the practitioners involved within a process my work could offer complementary support such as performance or rehearsal-specific explorations and preparations. Hence, in the first step it came in dialogue with a rehearsal process and it became the ground for a choreographic synthesis. I discussed that

in this case, through a process of misunderstanding the purpose of the context, I found it necessary to establish a clear communication about what is expected from my work with the actors, in relation to the director's vision, the movement director of the show, and the sequence of the work undertaken. Thus, I would be able to examine whether my somatic acting process fits or not within the rehearsals, the overall aspirations and aesthetics of a production.

In the second step time turned from an 'enemy' to a beneficial aspect of my practice because I did not have to facilitate the production of a particular outcome. Instead, I tried to support an experimental research process which overall seemed in sympathy with the emergent and improvisational nature of my somatic actor training. For instance, during the last Moro reflex-inspired exploration I witnessed nine unique intercorporeal improvisations on the embodiment of the dialogue between every Dionysus and Bacchant. However, the same exploration through an evocation of risk-taking and hierarchical vulnerability revealed potential ethical problematics of contingent intercorporeal communication within my practice. Clearly identifying my intentions within a mutually respectful verbal and non-verbal intersubjective communication would become the basis for my further development as somatic actor-trainer. The idea that every actor always has the choice to negotiate her/his participation and intersubjective exploration under my simultaneous continuous witnessing would inform my practice.

Both group environments allowed further steps in the development of my ongoing learning process, particularly in relation to the potential integration of my work within conservatory training institutions. For instance, my work with LISPA students gave me the opportunity to test out the potential dialogue between my practice and Lecoq body-based training. During this brief experience I witnessed the performers' openness to embodied playfulness and improvisations, characteristics that could indicate resonances between my somatic acting process and Lecoq's tradition. Based on this observation I could position my work within embodied actor training and movement improvisation practices that facilitate the

development of each actor's individual creativity and expression. An additional aspect of my work could be the support of the performer's awareness towards multiple and permeable (instead of unaware-'penetrable' or violent) intercorporeal negotiation. Concerning porosity and multiple subjectivities within my practice, the mixed group environment also helped me to reclaim the seemingly gender-specific orientation due to work with actresses during the three steps of the individual process.

Finally, the exploration of Greek tragedy and myths remained a context that could facilitate the embodied, developmental, and intersubjective/intercorporeal premises of this PaR project. Nevertheless, similarly to the integration between somatic processes and actor training in my practice, this dialogue was not intended to evoke the actors' emotional release or any kind of therapeutic healing. At the same time the expression of aggressive or primal embodied dynamics brought up again the directors' and actors' potential underlying assumption in the interrelation between my somatic acting explorations and the context of Greek tragedy. Regarding my critique on dualism and universalism as the logocentric problematics that I try to challenge, connotations of primitivism could be seen as new form of universalism that could potentially take away from the emergent intention of my somatic acting process. I assume that this expected interconnection partly derives from the twentieth century theatrical revival of Greek tragedy inspired by Artaud's atavistic approach to acting.

In *The Theatre and its Double* (1938) the French actor and director Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) argued against the logocentric paradigm of representational theatre in the context of *Occidental* civilization. He situated the problem in the traditional convention of theatre to represent life combined with the dependence on the speech and structured language of the theatrical text. Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty suggested a 'physical language', 'a language in space and in movement' 'that has first to satisfy the senses...[and] the thoughts it expresses are beyond the reach of the spoken language' (1994:37, 45, 119). It would consist of gestures, sounds, words, and screams expressed by an actor 'athlete of the heart': 'a kind of affective musculature which corresponds to the physical localizations of feelings' (Artaud

1994:133). Since then, Artaud's beliefs have been influencing embodied approaches to actor training, including the work of Grotowski, Barba, and Staniewski, as well as body-based productions of Greek Tragedy that are related to the actor's more aggressive or primitive expression. One of the most characteristic examples is Schechner's *Bacchai*-inspired performance *Dionysus* 69. What Schechner aimed at exploring was the *vulnerability* and *openness* of the performer who in each performance 'risks freshly not only his dignity and craft, but his life-in-process' (2003:54).

The ethical implications in Schechner's Artaudian ideas are different from my approach to the actor's free intercorporeal creativity and expression as well as from the use of Greek tragedy in this praxis. To reiterate, the reason I chose Medea as case-study character in the first step of this research was the support of my own *embodied logos*, my embodied awareness, creativity and expression through a role-inspired revisit of dualistic binaries in the actor-training process. This approach was intended to trigger my somatic transformative journey through the meeting with the role, instead of unleashing in me extreme or aggressive qualities. The same facilitation of the actor's embodied awareness and intersubjective communication was my intention in the further applications of my practice that remained within the context of Greek tragedy and myths. Nevertheless, I realized that in potential future collaborations I should clarify during preliminary discussions that the dialogue between Greek tragedy and the early steps of my practice did not aim at the exploration of universal connotations such as ritualism or primitivism. Even though I cannot exclude the possibility of the actors' relevant experiences, I should like to clarify that they are not the intended outcome of my practice whilst Greek tragedy is not a context that necessarily complements my current work.

Overall, the issues that I encountered through the shaping of my praxis in the group environment helped me realize and reflect upon important challenges that arise in actor training, especially regarding the dialogue between training and intended performance outcome, training and rehearsals' timeframe, the trainer and the director/s. At the same time,

I developed my awareness upon ethical and practical edges between actor training and therapeutic processes, the actors' emotional freedom and potential violent expression during intersubjective/intercorporeal explorations. This knowledge would not have emerged if I had not gone through the processual development of my actor-training methodology within this research, experiencing the very essence of this journey from its beginning to its gradual formation and communication. Being clear and critical about problems, challenges, potential applications/outcomes, ideological and ethical implications in my practice throughout its developmental process I am able not only to become more helpful *trainer-witness* for the actors I am working with but also to offer an original material that can be useful for the actor-training discipline. The transition from my critical self-witnessing to the general contribution of my praxis to contemporary actor-training pedagogies is outlined in the conclusion of this thesis.

Conclusion

There is nothing to do but
be in your own process.
And to recognize others
are in their process.
(Cohen 2015)

This conclusion aims to summarize the argument and fundamental insights of this PaR thesis, making a case for its contribution to new knowledge and practice. By no means does it serve as a final answer to this investigation but rather as a reflection on the beginning of my ongoing research journey and training. Here I concentrate on emergent problems, unexpected issues, and unresolved questions arising from the processual nature of my study. I also focus on the types of new knowledge this research project offers to the field of contemporary actor-training pedagogies whilst I indicate future steps that I currently identify as the potential further development of my praxis. I should like to highlight that the development of my somatic actor-training praxis was not preconceived but it was created in dynamic relation to different actor-training contexts while a work in progress. My practice is not complete and is still a work in progress particularly regarding its practical and ideological place within contemporary actor-training institutions.

I used this research as a transitional process within my experiential journey of becoming a somatic actor-trainer and I came across challenging issues of disjunction between therapy and training, training and rehearsal/performance practices, the trainer and the director, ethics in training and actors' expressive freedom. This ongoing development of my research also suggests the originality and contribution of this PaR project to the wider actor-training field offering a new understanding of the aforementioned thorny issues and the processual nature of actor-training through the shaping of a new BMC/IBMT-informed somatic actor-training pedagogy. I propose a re-introduced conceptualization and communication of actor training through new practical explorations, intersubjective pedagogical principles, and experiential language inspired by my intercorporeal relation to the individual actor and the

group. Hence, I contribute to the understanding of actor training as a non-hierarchical process of mutual sensitivity and vulnerability between the individual actor and the trainer. The awareness of each actor's experience as a unique and intersubjective process that is not pre-determined by fixed principles and logocentric hierarchies, is introduced and facilitated by emergent original terminology such as every actor's *embodied logos*, the explorations' *fluid structures*, the relationally aware *actor-mover/actor-witness* and, most importantly, the intersubjective pedagogical role of the *trainer-witness*. Through my terms I extend and develop extant discourses on the basis of my research process, paving the way for further valuable explorations.

To recapitulate this research, I argue for the potential of actors' *embodied logos* to integrate Body-Mind Centering somatic methodology and actor training in order to suggest an intersubjective/intercorporeal response to what I identify as problematic logocentrism in contemporary conservatory actor training. In Chapter One I focused on persistent dualistic binaries and the universalizing of actors' experiences as the main manifestations of logocentrism in Stanislavski-informed acting discourses. Based on this theoretical ground, I discussed oppositional binaries that separate each actor's perception of mind and body, inner and outer, self and other, as Stanislavski's ongoing influence upon actor-training pedagogies. I argued that despite Stanislavski's integrative intention within the development of the first systematic acting approach in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, the practitioner unavoidably worked in dialogue with the predominant Cartesian paradigm of his epoch which suggested an emphasis upon the actor's intellectual, analytical, and oppositional sense of self.

The problematic binaries that imply a distance between the actor's intellectual and embodied expression in Stanislavski-inspired actor-training traditions were introduced in the same chapter as being inextricably intertwined with a universalizing understanding of each actor's embodied experience. I identified universalism in actor training as the objectification and unification of all actors' bodies. The perception of all actors as *one body* that remains the

same throughout the passing of time, acts in isolation to its environment and according to mechanistic principles, was discussed in dialogue with the twentieth century Cartesian scientific paradigm. Laying out this logocentric ground of Stanislavski's practice that is still dominant in the conceptualization and communication of contemporary actor-training practices, I highlight and articulate a problem that has not been discussed within actor-training discourses and its understanding could be valuable to other actor-trainers and actor-trainees. The perception and challenge of this problematic ground could become widely beneficial for contemporary acting students and actors who continue to struggle with the fluid inner-outer communication of their individual creativity and embodied sense of self.

In order to explore the facilitation of each actor's fluid inner-outer intercorporeal relatedness in contemporary actor training within the context of a formal research investigation, I set up practical encounters according to Robin Nelson's Practice-as-Research epistemological model (2006, 2013). Nevertheless, similarly to Cohen's methodology in my praxis, Nelson's model was used as a supportive map for the facilitation of my research and it was further developed according to the specific needs and nature of my project. Grounded in my embodied experience as an actress and actor-trainer, I developed a dynamic dialogue between theory and practice (*praxis*) through the integration of somatic movement practices and actor training. My conceptual framework and critical reflection were informed by Merleau-Ponty's understanding of *logos as flesh* that indicates the perception of logos as both an intellectual and embodied experience. Inspired by Merleau-Ponty's integrated perspective, I proposed the notion of *embodied logos* to describe my specific interest in the multiplicity and ongoing development of each actor's embodied experience. The cellular embodiment as the ground and underlying metaphor within Cohen's ontogenetic process was presented as being particularly helpful for this fluid and multiple perception of each actor's embodied experience as porous interconnection between mind and body, inner and outer, self and other/others.

The first phase of my PaR project, which informed the discussion in Chapter Two, concerns my somatic self-explorations as an actress, and the beginning of the process of *becoming a trainer-witness* through my parallel professional training as somatic movement educator. The first step in the practical exploration of my somatic acting process was introduced through a critical approach to the somatic processes employed in this praxis and their relation to other somatic practices currently used in UK-based conservatory actor training. My preparatory phase was outlined as a fundamental element in both somatic movement educational processes and some actor-training practices (see pp.58-59, 125-126) that prompts the development of the practitioner's self-inquiry and ongoing self-exploration in order to engage with others from a place of personal embodied attunement and relational openness to different environments. This awareness, that challenges actor-training pedagogies that are conceptualized and articulated based on the assumption of acting experience as predetermined, fixed and objectified knowledge, informed the original contribution of my praxis as it allowed me to acknowledge and discuss emergent issues in training regarding ethics, differences to therapeutic practices and logocentrally-informed performance processes.

My self-preparation evolved from my somatic acting improvisations as an actress to a shared process as emerging somatic actor-trainer, through the exploration of Euripides' tragic character Medea. I sensed that Euripides' role, within the highly embodied and physical ancient context of Greek tragedy potentially combined with my Greek nationality and classical actor-training background, allowed me the openness of individual physical expression while I was engaged with the embodiment of the role. The findings that started to emerge in this first experimental context of my PaR project helped me to start identifying the embodied, processual, and intersubjective/intercorporeal aspects of my practice. My objective was not the communication of a final performative or practice outcome but the first phase of an ongoing experimental process. Most importantly, during my self-explorations I encountered the need to simulate the presence of the other which was mainly manifested

through my intercorporeal responses to specific recorded verbal input, tactile experience of sand, and the combination of my inner witnessing with the witnessing of others (either somatic educators or the Collisions 2012 witness circle). Thus, I explicitly set up the communication of actor training as an already intersubjective process.

Through my experiential reflection, I developed the awareness that a role-specific process may inform more general aspects of the actor's embodied creativity and expression. This understanding supported both my transition towards the dissemination of my somatic acting process and the gradual shaping of a new somatic acting methodology. I started forming the intersubjective/intercorporeal relation between the actors and myself as somatic actor-trainer through various processes of *witnessing* and the introduction of relevant terminology through the roles of the *trainer-witness*, the *actor-mover* and *actor-witness* (see pp.66-68). I also gradually modified Cohen's developmental process of embodiment into an original somatic actor-training methodology for the development of acting explorations, rehearsals, and workshops. Through the development of BMC/IBMT and Nelson's PaR model according to the identity of my praxis, I highlighted the importance of the integration between the processes of each actor's embodiment and critical reflection which also informed the development of experiential/phenomenological narratives and the use of body-based language in my praxis. This dynamic dialogue between experience and reflective language in actor training as part of my suggested methodology and terminology could also inform the support of actors' embodied perception in other actor-training contexts.

The actual intersubjective communication with the actors and the further development of my practice continued in the individual actor-training environment analyzed in Chapter Three of this thesis. The question that took me to the second phase of my PaR project was whether and how I could actually communicate my own embodied findings in a way that would support the other actor's individual creativity and expression. I rooted my experiential witnessing of the actor's own process in three individual actor-training environments working with three different actresses. The first step of the individual process emerged as a

workshop during the exploration of Medea, whereas in the other two steps I was invited to complement the actresses' rehearsal processes towards a final performance of Salome and Agave respectively. In all the three individual environments I was able to support to a greater or lesser extent the actress's embodied expression, while simultaneously refining the explorations of my somatic acting process. I focused on verbal and non-verbal ethical challenges that emerged from my responsibilities as becoming trainer-witness towards the actors' emotional individualities through an awareness of intercorporeal sensitivity.

Within this intercorporeal sensitivity unexpected problems came up during the development of the third step of the individual process, in which I was asked by the director of Euripides' *Bacchai* to support the embodiment of the role of Agave. Regarding the interrelational argument of this thesis, I retrospectively realized that I was invited to combine my practice with a Stanislavski-inspired rehearsal process based on the director's logos. This problematic aspect was combined with the fact that my work was not part of the actual rehearsals. As a result, I found myself disconnected from necessary communications with both the director and the movement director of the show. At the same time, this separation brought misconceptions to the student I was invited to support regarding the objective of our process. Therefore, as actor-trainer I was not able to fully facilitate the actress's own process of embodying Agave in relation to the director's specific vision, the performance space, the role's costume/props, and the other actors in the group.

Through my self-reflection I focused on the potential disjunction between training and some performance-oriented processes, as well as possible differences between the director's and the trainer's role. I now know that my continuous interrelation with every process involved in a performance project I am asked to support is necessary for effective communication with the actor. Helpful production team discussions would either inform my process in order to be closely integrated with the wider project or would reveal potential mismatches. This understanding is not confined within the context of my practice but applies to the broader awareness of an integrated dialogue between training and performance/rehearsal

processes. Similarly, in the group environment discussed in Chapter Four, the main challenge I faced within the *Bacchai* chorus workshop was a confusion regarding the desired outcome of my work with the actors and my intentions. The fact that I omitted necessary preliminary discussions regarding my role in the *Bacchai* rehearsal process brought up a productive, to me, collision as I was able to experience practical and time-related differences between the process-oriented ideology of my work and performance-oriented objectives in the work of the director and movement director of the show.

Within the group environment of my PaR project, I also started identifying deeper characteristics of my praxis related to a more extended sense of time within which each actor is invited to explore released and playful expression. These intentions brought up ethical problematics of tension between somatically-informed actor-training practices and therapeutic processes as well as general ethical issues in training possibly valuable for other trainers in the field. More specifically, my suggestions for the individual actor's free expression, playfulness, and eradication of inner-outer judgement within embodied intersubjective communication were innately combined with aspects of unpredictable risk-taking. This unpredictability of contingent intercorporeal communication clearly emerged in the violence expressed in the second step of the group environment. Even though it was only one moment in the process, it helped me identify thorny ethical challenges in training summarized in the notion of intercorporeal vulnerability between the actors as well as between the actors and the trainer. Due to the potential of 'crossing boundaries' within a somatic acting exploration, I became aware of the need for clarity in the intentions of the suggested explorations within the awareness of actor's and actor-trainer's mutual vulnerability, responsibility, and embodied negotiation. Part of this clarifying communication became as well the dialogue between my practice and the exploration of Greek tragedy due to directors' and actors' underlying assumptions of universal problematics such as the expression of primitivism or animality. Similarly, I recognized gaps between the ethical scope

of somatic therapeutic practices and all the aspects of expression included within the acting context.

Regarding the dialogue between somatic movement practices and actor training in my praxis, it is important for me to recognize that BMC/IBMT somatic movement explorations do not stay within the technical awareness of one's movement, but are developed in order to awaken deeper levels of the mover's experience through a therapeutic concentration. At this point I should reiterate that my rigorous, almost four year-long training in BMC, somatic psychology, and Authentic Movement principles emerged from the original integration of somatic movement practices and actor training in my praxis combined with my personal need to develop professional awareness in both fields. Despite Linda Hartley's therapeutic focus, for me the IBMT training worked as experiential ground in order to introduce new pedagogical principles in actor training not as somatic movement therapist but as ideologically triggered educator. Within this dialogue, I do acknowledge that BMC/IBMT-inspired acting explorations may awaken unknown, trauma-related experiences, or heighten potentially violent aspects of plays/characters that could confuse or intimidate the actors-movers. Hence, I was prompted to undertake further exploration of the communication and articulation of my practice, finding the most appropriate vocabularies and embodied ways of sharing the explorations prior to each actor's 'freedom' during the improvisations.

Stepping into the actor-training environment through somatic movement education from the actress's perspective, I contribute to the development of a new ideologically attentive movement-based language and terminology in practice that I missed from my own actor training. From my perspective, the trainer should combine the acting explorations with ways to make clear certain ideas and limits within actors' intersubjective communication without though revisiting logocentric iterations of what is *better*, *correct* or *believable*. In order to highlight each actor's embodied agency, understanding, and sense of choice in my practice I coined the term of *embodied logos* and I highlighted the openness in the explorations through the notion of *fluid structures*. At the same time, one of my main self-observations as

actor-mover was a great shift in my awareness of the other's personal space and sensitivity through a mutual negotiation of intercorporeal distance and communication. The dialogue between my professional acting and somatic experience informed both my role as somatic acting practitioner and my dynamic relationship with the actors which was highlighted in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis.

As emerging somatic actor-trainer I started developing a sense of inner-outer witnessing trying to hold the actors' explorations through a connection to my own embodied experience. My aim in my ongoing process of becoming the somatic acting-movement educator I wish to be, the overall subject of this thesis, is to hold a space for each actor's freedom and playfulness within processes of embodied awareness, concentration, and communication. I do not invite the actors I am working with to become more *efficient*, *functional*, or *neutral*, but to fully embrace all the potentialities of their individual embodied self or *embodied logos*. The term I am introducing for this non-hierarchical and interrelational role of the actor-trainer is the identity of the *trainer-witness*. Within the same intersubjective/intercorporeal awareness, each actor is prompted to experience subjectivity as an already interrelated process of expressing and receiving, being simultaneously an *actor-mover* and an *actor-witness* of the self and the other.

The dialogue between somatic movement practices and actor training in my PaR project also helped me recognize that a process of the actor's self-exploration is quite common ground within contemporary drama schools. As Mark Evans (2009) eloquently unpacks, analyzing the underlying ideology of modern movement training for actors, the acting students are often asked to embody notions such as *efficiency* and *neutrality* in order to improve their movement, to overcome social inscriptions and physical tensions. However, this deeply inner process tends to be facilitated as external, disconnected from the actors' internal vulnerabilities and as a single objectified experience. On the other hand, the support of the individual actor's embodied sense of self as unique inner-outer process is the basis of my BMC/IBMT-informed praxis. In this way, the dialogue between my professional

experience as an actress and early career somatic movement educator within my practice, without conflicting with the existing movement training for actors, suggests a revisited conceptualization and communication of actor training through the indication of challenging ideological issues.

The philosophical and practical ground of my role as emerging somatic acting-movement educator within contemporary UK-based actor-training institutions became clearer to me in the last two years during which I started to systematically teach somatic movement for actors at East 15 Acting School. Through my communication with the students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, I observed how the implied logocentric unification and objectification of their bodies as one *instrument, apparatus* or *tool* of expression pervades their perception and language. Therefore, I am wondering to what extent my practice and somatic language can challenge such deep-rooted problematic presuppositions. I also make further observations regarding clarifications in the teaching of my practice as I identify a potential understanding of the scientific ground of the process as universal, therefore logocentric. Hence, I question whether it is possible for body-based practices not to have a universal ground. Relating this question to the philosophical context of my practice I end up highlighting the connection between generalized information and the importance of continuous individual experiential references in my teaching. All these questions and observations would not have emerged if I had not gone through a demanding research process, which has involved challenging some of my own earlier assumptions and an ongoing interrogation of my teaching.

My transition from the research to teaching environment through the development of my PaR project indicates refinements in the communication of my practice as well as regarding the dialogue between somatic movement practices and actor training. Hence, even though I preserve the emergent and improvisational character of my work's *fluid structures* and continuous development, I sense the need to contain it with more clarity responding to the educational needs of each group of individuals. I currently share the systematic ground of

my practice in order to facilitate the communication of the process not only with the actors but also with other educators or directors. I focus on my modification of Cohen's *somatic process of embodiment* as my pedagogical and acting methodology, combined with the acting applications of *experiential anatomy* and *human movement development* in my practice.

In my present teaching experience, I introduce my modification of Cohen's *somatic process of embodiment* not only as the actor-training methodology that underlies my meetings (classes) with the actors-trainees, but also as a process towards the formulation of their own movement-based acting explorations and devising outcomes that they share at the end of each term. Their material is either acting expression through the embodiment of body systems (such as bones, muscles, organs) or the dialogue between human movement development and the embodiment of a role. I have slightly simplified the language of the steps into: (1) I concentrate-arrive, (2) I see-visualize, (3) I move-physicalize, (4) I embody-improvise, (5) I reflect-integrate (see Chapter Two, p.86). The dual nature of my methodology as actor-training and devising process for the further support of every *actor-creator* first emerged from the initial dissemination of my practice in the individual process through the co-direction of Salome's monologue and developed within the group environment as choreographic material for the *Bacchai* chorus (see Chapter Three, pp.103-114, Chapter Four, pp.135-144). My aim is for the students to enjoy their creative process of embodiment through the awareness of acting as ongoing, emergent, and relational experience between multiple subjectivities.

East 15 as my main current working environment gives me the space to further develop my somatic acting process, gradually identifying its place within contemporary actor-training institutions. It is pivotal for me that even though Stanislavski-based, East 15 supports the process-oriented and research-informed nature of my practice, as it is a drama school that grew from the experimental work of the actress and theatre director Joan Littlewood (1914-2002) (see Leach in Pitches 2012:110-138). Despite the goal-oriented modern influences of

performance industry and commercial theatre, East 15 has managed to preserve its improvisational and experimental identity building upon Stanislavski's last rehearsal technique of active analysis. For instance, the basic characteristic of the movement department, of which I am part, is the diverse combination of various embodied practices such as Laban, Grotowski, Lecoq, Chekhov-based work, dance (including jazz and ballet), stage combat, and my teaching which is grounded upon Hartley's combination between Cohen's practice and Authentic Movement. Within this diverse context, it is clear to me that my ongoing intention is to open fluid conversations between my practice and a range of other practices indicating intertwined communications rather than oppositions.

My further research will remain in the actor-training context as this is my field of expertise, work and study. It would be oriented by an extensive survey of how somatic movement practices are currently supporting actors-trainees introducing the new field of *somatic education within UK-based actor training*. I will continue to focus on the pedagogical impact of somatic awareness in training through underlying principles of mutual sensitivity, vulnerability and responsibility. Further research questions could be related to what is somatic and what is not in contemporary actor training further investigating emergent interconnections between movement-based actor-training practices and somatic movement education. Within this discussion I would be interested in adding upon the current interest in the practical communication of ethical and ideological implications in training in relation to the support of each actor's individual creativity and expression as well as a sense of self that could inform the actor's transition to the professional context (Evans 2009, Kapsali 2013, Keefe and Murray 2007, Seton 2010).

I should keep my concentration on the philosophical ground of modern actor-training processes in order to indicate potential reiterations of binaries and universal ideas that would add upon already existed logocentric problematics and hierarchies. For instance, this criticism could address underlying dualistic and universalizing assumptions in the contemporary discussion on the interrelation between scientific neurological inquiry and

modern actor training through focus on the connection between the actor's brain and expression (Blair 2008, Bryon 2014, Gutekunst and Gillet 2014, Rick 2012). At the same time, it would come in dialogue with new ideologically sensitive actor-training pedagogies such as Rosemary Malague's feministic approach to American interpretations of Stanislavski (2012). My examination could question if gender-oriented pedagogical awareness, despite its invaluable contribution towards the challenge of the logocentric male hegemony in training and the acting world, would possibly introduce new binaries and hierarchies instead of supporting each actor's identification.

Reaching the end of this PaR thesis, I recognize this project as a transitional step within my own ongoing process of artistic creativity, expression and communication. I acknowledge that my argument and engagement with contemporary actor-training practices is not an easy and immediate process. It requires time, commitment and *fluid* intersubjective communication with other practices in order to trigger small, few, or maybe no changes. However, this project has identified and communicated logocentrism as an ongoing problematic aspect for each actor's embodied and unique expression within modern, mainstream actor-training institutions. At the same time its original contribution to knowledge suggests new practical explorations, movement-based language and terminology through an innovative dialogue between somatic movement practices and actor training which focuses on the intersubjective/intercorporeal awareness of each actor and actor-trainer. Thus, regardless its potential impact upon other actor-training methodologies, it became a stepping-stone in my personal process of becoming a *trainer-witness*. At least, in trying to hold each actor's experience in resonance with others and my own embodied process, I will be holding the openness of my awareness within the challenges of a constantly changing environment of actor training and shifting definitions of the actor's nature.

Appendices

Appendix 1.

Institute for Integrative Bodywork and Movement Therapy

Training & professional development with Linda Hartley & Faculty

Guidelines for use of the names Body-Mind Centering® (BMC®) and Integrative Bodywork & Movement Therapy (IBMT)

As you progress through your training, and each of you will begin to use IBMT principles in your work at different stages, I would like to clarify the use of the names. Please read this carefully and comply with these requirements.

A: Body-Mind Centering® is a registered trade mark and can only be used by those authorised by the SBMC; this is a legal requirement and misuse of the name can lead to prosecution. As far as has been agreed, you can describe the work you do as '**Integrative Bodywork & Movement Therapy (IBMT), based on or influenced by principles of Body-Mind Centering® (BMC®)**', but not as being Body-Mind Centering®.

When you write the name you should use the letter ® after it.

There is usually an agreed exception to this in books or articles; what I suggest is to put the ® there the first time, then you can leave it out thereafter. If your publisher refuses to do this I suggest you get them to sign a statement agreeing that they take legal responsibility for the omission - just to safeguard your self.

BMC® is also trademarked, and should be written in this way.

B: It is considered good practice to reference the main sources of your work, and this principle is now encoded in ISMETA's **Code of Ethics: G** – see www.ismeta.org - Standards of Practice & Code of Ethics. This means that if IBMT is a significant influence upon your teaching or practice it should be named in your own marketing material. It is not enough to state '...based on principles of BMC®' without referencing IBMT. I ask you all to respect this principle, as the work I have developed as IBMT draws upon many other sources, research and experiences alongside the foundation in BMC® principles and practice.

C: Once you have received a Diploma in **Integrative Bodywork & Movement Therapy** you can call your self a 'Practitioner of Integrative Bodywork & Movement Therapy (IBMT)' or an 'Integrative Bodywork & Movement Therapist' if you prefer. For some of you it will be appropriate to use the term Educator instead of Therapist. The letters **Dip IBMT** can be used after your name, providing that you join the IBMT Register and Directory of practitioners.

Once you have completed all courses and are working towards completing requirements for the Diploma, you can say that you have trained in IBMT; you can use the letters **Cert IBMT** after your name, providing that you join the IBMT Register and Directory of practitioners.

Whilst you are still completing courses you can say that you are training in IBMT; if you have taken some courses but not the whole training you may say that you have studied IBMT.

D. Teaching IBMT and Authentic Movement: You are, of course, encouraged to use whatever you have learnt within your own practice and teaching, referencing IBMT appropriately.

If you have the **Dip IBMT**:

- ~ you may teach workshops using IBMT in the title if you wish
- ~ you may integrate IBMT into your teaching on other training courses
- ~ you may not teach IBMT curriculum courses at a training level without discussion with the Institute. In future, it may be possible for those suitably qualified to do this on a license basis. Please be aware that IBMT course titles and curriculum are copyrighted 'intellectual property'.

The module in **Authentic Movement & Therapeutic Presence** that is part of the training, and other short courses, are not qualifications to teach Authentic Movement. A generally accepted principle is that when a teacher and student both feel the student is ready, they may begin to teach Authentic Movement. The deceptively simple forms require many years of personal practice to fully embody; most teachers are also either psychotherapists, dance movement therapists or somatic movement therapists.

A new pathway towards becoming a Teacher of the Discipline of Authentic Movement has been initiated by Janet Adler. For anyone interested in this, details are now available: www.disciplineofauthenticmovement.com

In the meantime, if you wish to use Authentic Movement principles in your work, please credit it as one of your sources, but choose another title for your course.

Thank you, and we wish you all the best in the development of your own work.

Linda Hartley and IBMT Faculty

@ Institute for Integrative Bodywork & Movement Therapy. July 2014

Appendix 2.

Nurse's prologue: verbal input

How I wish that the Argo had not flown through the dark Clashing Rocks on its sea-journey to the Colchians' land- that the pine had never fallen, hewn amid the glens of Mount Pelion, and furnished oars for the hands of those heroic men who went to win the golden fleece for Pelias. Then my mistress Medea would never have sailed to the towers of the land of Iolkos, her heart unhinged in her love for Jason, she would not have persuaded the daughters of Pelias to kill their father and would not now be living with her husband and children in this land of Corinth, gladdening the citizens to whose country she has come in her exile, a woman totally in accord with Jason himself. And this is the greatest security of all-when a wife is not in disharmony with her husband.

But now hatred has corroded everything and dearest love Grows sick. Jason has betrayed his own children and my Mistress and beds down in a royal match. He has married the daughter of Creon who rules this land. Unhappy Medea, thus dishonoured, cries out, 'His oaths', invokes that weightiest pledge of his right hand, and calls the gods to witness how he has repaid her. She lies there eating nothing, surrendering her body to her sorrows, pining away in tears unceasingly since she saw that her husband had wronged her. She will not look up, will not lift her face from the ground, but listens to her friends as they give advice no more

than if she were a rock or a wave of the sea-save that
sometimes she turns away her pale, pale neck and bemoans
to herself her dear father and her country and the home
which she betrayed to come here with the man who now
holds her in dishonour. Schooled by misfortune, the poor
woman has learnt what it is to be parted from one's father-
land.

But she hates her children and feels no joy in seeing
Them. I am afraid that she may be planning something we
Do not expect. Her temperament is dangerous and will not
Tolerate bad treatment. I know her, and I fear that she may
Go silently into the house where her bed is laid and drive a
Sharpened sword into their heart, or even that she may kill
The princess and the bridegroom and then meet some greater
Disaster. For she is fearsome. No one who joins in conflict
With her will celebrate an easy victory.

But here come the children. They've stopped running their
Races. They take no thought for their mother's sorrows. A
Youngest's mind makes no habit of grieving.

I have come to such a pitch of distress that a longing swept
Over me to come here and speak of my mistress's
Woes to the earth and sky.

Her sorrows are at their outset, not yet halfway run.

I saw her eye just now glinting at them like a bull's as
If she meant to do something to them. And she will not
Give up her rage-I

Know it clearly-before she swoops down on someone. But
May she choose her enemies for some mischief, not her friends.

Your mother stirs her heart, stirs her rage.
Hurry quickly into the house
And do not approach near her sight,
But be on your guard
Against her wild character, the hateful temper
Of her wild mind.
Go now, go quick as you can inside.
It is plain that soon she will make
the cloud of her laments which now begins to gather
flash forth as her passion grows.
Her heart is full of spirit, not easily to be soothed-
Stung by these injuries, whatever will she do?
Cruel woman!
What share do you think your boys have
In their father's wrong-doing? Why hate them?
There is no house. All that is over now.
A royal marriage keeps my master elsewhere,
While in her bedroom my mistress wastes away her life,
And her heart finds no comfort, none,
In the words of any of her friends.
Do you hear what she says, how she cries out upon
Themis, goddess of prayers, and Zeus,
Acknowledged the protector of oaths among mortals?
Certainly it will be by no trivial action
That my mistress will lay her anger to rest.
Yet she darts on her servants
The wild glance of a lioness with young
Whenever any of them goes near to say something.

You would not be wrong if you denounced our ancestors

As fools and ignoramuses-

They discovered songs for festivities, banquets and feasts

To charm the ears and enhance our lives.

But no one has discovered how music and songs

With rich accompaniment of strings can put an end

To men's hateful sorrows-which lead to deaths

And dreadful misfortunes that overturn the house.

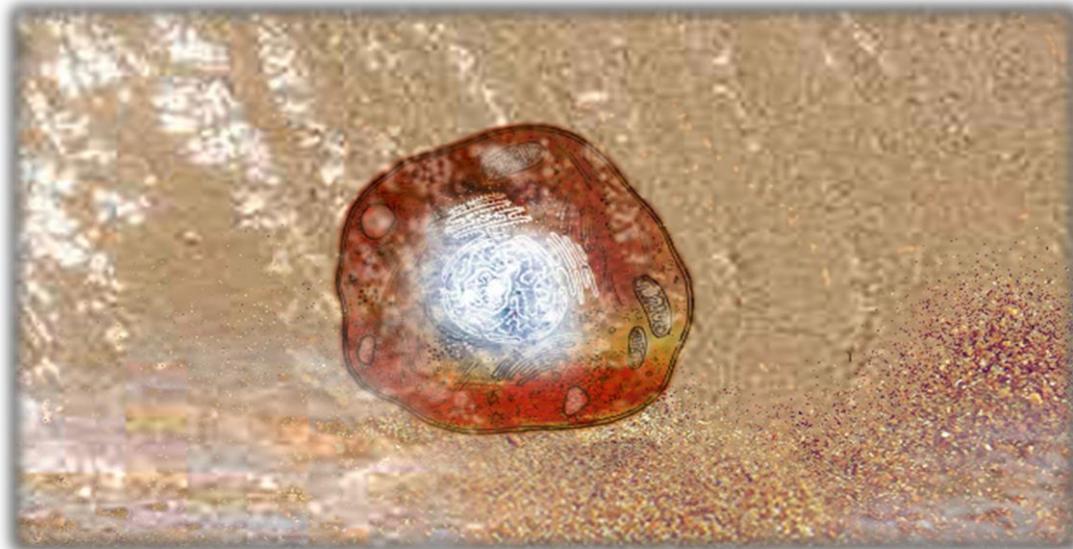
And yet it would be a gain if men

Could cure these things with music.

Appendix 3.

Group environment: abstract of the workshop

Re-enacting the beginning: from the conception of Dionysus



This is an invitation for participation in the preparation of the workshop that I am going to deliver as part of the 29th Annual U.S. Body-Mind Centering Association Conference. The work is a re-approach of a chorus workshop that I developed for the Euripides' *Bacchae* production at RCSSD (02-03.07.13). It explores the myth of Dionysus through the somatic approach of Body-Mind Centering. The workshop is experimentation on the dialogue between elements of Dionysus' birth process and Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's 'movement developmental patterns'. It incorporates aspects of Euripides' text translated by Colin Teevan (2002). The process is formulated out of my Practice as Research project at RCSSD which consists of a somatic approach to acting.

Where: Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (meeting at the reception)

When: Tuesday the 27th of May, starts at 6pm and lasts for two to three hours

Facilitator: Christina Kapadocha

Bio:

Christina Kapadocha is an actor, somatic educator (IBMT) and practice-based PhD candidate at RCSSD. Her research explores the formulation of a somatic approach to psychophysical actor training. Greek National Theatre Drama School and E15 Acting School alumni, Christina teaches somatics and actor training, she directs workshops and performs in London. She has also trained and performed in Bali (ISI) and Moscow (GITIS).

NB

The participants will be kindly asked to approve the recording of the process as part of the documentation of my practice.

Appendix 4.

Group environment: signed consent forms

Informed Consent Form
Date: 27/05/2014

Title of Research: Being an actor, becoming a trainer: the transition from subjective to inter-subjective experience in a somatic acting process

Researcher:
PhD candidate Christina Kapadocha (email: contact@christina.kapadocha.com)

Brief Description of Research Project:

This practice-as-research thesis explores the formulation of a somatic approach to psychophysical actor training. My intention is to generate an embodied practice and language that diminishes the distance between the intellectual and the embodied perception, and through this re-explore the intersubjective relationship that connects the actor and the trainer. Through practice I re-visit the paradox of the dynamic relationship between 'mind' and 'body', 'inner' perception and 'outer' expression, as well as the notions of 'self' and 'other' embedded in the concept of psychophysical acting process. The practice is underpinned by Linda Hartley's IBMT (Integrative Bodywork and Movement Therapy) somatic approach, which is developed along the lines of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's somatic technique of Body-Mind Centering. The workshop you are invited to participate aims to explore intersubjective dynamics in a group environment through the application of Cohen's 'movement developmental patterns'. Based on a chorus workshop that I developed for the Euripides' *Bacchae* production at RCSSD (02-03.07.13), I experiment on the intersubjective dynamics that connect the individual and the collective, the actor and the acting score. This research has been funded by the Greek States Scholarship Foundation (IKY) and the Elsie Fogerty Studentship awarded by RCSSD.

Uses, Publication and Presentation of the Research: This practice based research is undertaken for the completion of a PhD research degree at RCSSD. The purpose of the research is educational and any further publications will be within academia.

How Information will be Stored and Confidentiality Protected: All information, observations and footage collected are stored in a safe private place under the researcher's surveillance. I do not intend to use the participants' names.

I have read and understood this Informed Consent form provided to me. I agree to participate and I am aware that I may withdraw this consent at any later date if I wish. I am over 18 years of age.

I agreed to assign copyright to the researcher Christina Kapadocha and to waive my moral rights in any oral statements, written statements, photographs or other audio-visual recordings given as a part of the research. I agree that all of this information can be

processed in order to facilitate the research being undertaken. I agree that this will be for educational purposes and in perpetuity.

Participant Name: ANNA KRITIKOVA

Signature: 

Date: 27/05/2014

Informed Consent Form
Date: 27/05/2014

Title of Research: Being an actor, becoming a trainer: the transition from subjective to inter-subjective experience in a somatic acting process

Researcher:
PhD candidate Christina Kapadocha (email: contact@christina.kapadocha.com)

Brief Description of Research Project:

This practice-as-research thesis explores the formulation of a somatic approach to psychophysical actor training. My intention is to generate an embodied practice and language that diminishes the distance between the intellectual and the embodied perception, and through this re-explore the intersubjective relationship that connects the actor and the trainer. Through practice I re-visit the paradox of the dynamic relationship between 'mind' and 'body', 'inner' perception and 'outer' expression, as well as the notions of 'self' and 'other' embedded in the concept of psychophysical acting process. The practice is underpinned by Linda Hartley's IBMT (Integrative Bodywork and Movement Therapy) somatic approach, which is developed along the lines of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's somatic technique of Body-Mind Centering. The workshop you are invited to participate aims to explore intersubjective dynamics in a group environment through the application of Cohen's 'movement developmental patterns'. Based on a chorus workshop that I developed for the Euripides' *Bacchae* production at RCSSD (02-03.07.13), I experiment on the intersubjective dynamics that connect the individual and the collective, the actor and the acting score. This research has been funded by the Greek States Scholarship Foundation (IKY) and the Elsie Fogerty Studentship awarded by RCSSD.

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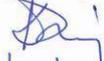
How Information will be Stored and Confidentiality Protected: All information, observations and footage collected are stored in a safe private place under the researcher's surveillance. I do not intend to use the participants' names.

I have read and understood this Informed Consent form provided to me. I agree to participate and I am aware that I may withdraw this consent at any later date if I wish. I am over 18 years of age.

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processed in order to facilitate the research being undertaken. I agree that this will be for educational purposes and in perpetuity.

Participant Name: Katerina Tassy

Signature: 

Date: 27/05/14

Informed Consent Form
Date: 27/05/2014

Title of Research: Being an actor, becoming a trainer: the transition from subjective to inter-subjective experience in a somatic acting process

Researcher:
PhD candidate Christina Kapadocha (email: contact@christina.kapadocha.com)

Brief Description of Research Project:

This practice-as-research thesis explores the formulation of a somatic approach to psychophysical actor training. My intention is to generate an embodied practice and language that diminishes the distance between the intellectual and the embodied perception, and through this re-explore the intersubjective relationship that connects the actor and the trainer. Through practice I re-visit the paradox of the dynamic relationship between 'mind' and 'body', 'inner' perception and 'outer' expression, as well as the notions of 'self' and 'other' embedded in the concept of psychophysical acting process. The practice is underpinned by Linda Hartley's IBMT (Integrative Bodywork and Movement Therapy) somatic approach, which is developed along the lines of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's somatic technique of Body-Mind Centering. The workshop you are invited to participate aims to explore intersubjective dynamics in a group environment through the application of Cohen's 'movement developmental patterns'. Based on a chorus workshop that I developed for the Euripides' *Bacchae* production at RCSSD (02-03.07.13), I experiment on the intersubjective dynamics that connect the individual and the collective, the actor and the acting score. This research has been funded by the Greek States Scholarship Foundation (IKY) and the Elsie Fogerty Studentship awarded by RCSSD.

Uses, Publication and Presentation of the Research: This practice based research is undertaken for the completion of a PhD research degree at RCSSD. The purpose of the research is educational and any further publications will be within academia.

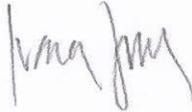
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I agreed to assign copyright to the researcher Christina Kapadocha and to waive my moral rights in any oral statements, written statements, photographs or other audio-visual recordings given as a part of the research. I agree that all of this information can be

processed in order to facilitate the research being undertaken. I agree that this will be for educational purposes and in perpetuity.

Participant Name: Irving Schick.

Signature: 

Date:

Informed Consent Form
Date: 27/05/2014

Title of Research: Being an actor, becoming a trainer: the transition from subjective to inter-subjective experience in a somatic acting process

Researcher:
PhD candidate Christina Kapadocha (email: contact@christina.kapadocha.com)

Brief Description of Research Project:

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I have read and understood this Informed Consent form provided to me. I agree to participate and I am aware that I may withdraw this consent at any later date if I wish. I am over 18 years of age.

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processed in order to facilitate the research being undertaken. I agree that this will be for educational purposes and in perpetuity.

Participant Name: VIKRANT DHOTE

Signature: V. Dhote

Date: 27/05/14

Informed Consent Form
Date: 27/05/2014

Title of Research: Being an actor, becoming a trainer: the transition from subjective to inter-subjective experience in a somatic acting process

Researcher:
PhD candidate Christina Kapadocha (email: contact@christina.kapadocha.com)

Brief Description of Research Project:

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Participant Name: Sotiris Bakoulas

Signature:

Date:



27/05/2014

Informed Consent Form
Date: 27/05/2014

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Participant Name: chelsey lee

Signature: lee

Date: 27th May

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U wooooo @

Informed Consent Form
Date: 27/05/2014

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Researcher:
PhD candidate Christina Kapadocha (email: contact@christina.kapadocha.com)

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Participant Name: Lizzy Jankowski

Signature: Jankowski

Date: 27/05/2014

Informed Consent Form
Date: 27/05/2014

Title of Research: Being an actor, becoming a trainer: the transition from subjective to inter-subjective experience in a somatic acting process

Researcher:
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Participant Name: *Andrea Basave Ferrer* (ANDREA BASAVE FERRER)

Signature: 

Date: *27. May 2014*

Informed Consent Form
Date: 27/05/2014

Title of Research: Being an actor, becoming a trainer: the transition from subjective to inter-subjective experience in a somatic acting process

Researcher:
PhD candidate Christina Kapadocha (email: contact@christina.kapadocha.com)

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Participant Name: Chrysanthi Antoniti

Signature: 

Date: 27/05/14.

Appendix 5.

Group environment: Teevan's original script

CHORUS [III]

Sweet river,
Offspring of the river god,
In your waters
You cooled the son of Zeus,
When he was snatched
From his mother's burning womb,
So that Zeus could then place him
In his thigh and sing:
'Come my child of fire
Be born from this male womb
You shall be made manifest
As a god to all world.'
Silent flowing waters,
When I come now to your banks
And wear the wreath of ivy,
And worship him in dance,
You shrink back from the shore.

City of the West

Why do you turn from me?
For by the taste of his dark wine
You'll come to know the truth.

What rage had this man of earth,

This Pentheus descended
From the earth-sown serpent's teeth,
This son of Echion the snake-skinned!
Wild-eyed, he seems
More animal than man.
Soon shall we too be bound
And, like our priest,
Thrown into the dark.

Dionysus don't you see
How your priest is wronged?
Dionysus don't you see
How your children suffer?
Come with your golden shaft,
Come down from Olympus,
From the sacred woods where Orpheus
Made the very trees resound with song
And led all wild animals
In the mountain dance.
Come down from your heights
Which ring to the Evox
And crush this too proud man of earth.

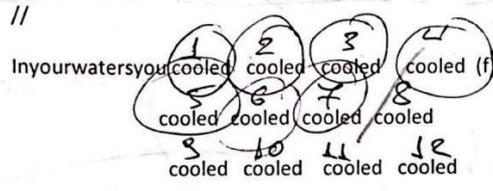
Come make the river dance once more with joy.

Appendix 6.

Group environment: the director's re-worked script

Fluid *to the screen the image embodied memory. images providing empathetic*

Sweet river (f) river (m)
 Off (f) spring (m) of the (f) river (m) god



In your waters you cooled cooled cooled cooled (f)
 cooled cooled cooled cooled
 cooled cooled cooled cooled
 the son of Zeus... (m)

//
 Sweet river river
 Off spring of the river god

//
 when he was snatched from his mother's burning womb [awakening from female to male]

So that Zeus could then place him [female to male]

In his thigh and sing: [female to male]

2nd time couples

'Come my child of fire be born from this male womb
 You shall be made manifest as a god to all [the] world' *all together*

//
 [Smaller unit]
 Silent flowing waters, [female]
 When I come now to your banks
 And wear the wreath of ivy,
 And worship him in dance,
 You shrink back from the shore.

[SHOW] City of the West
 Why do you turn from me? [female to male]
 For by the taste of his dark wine
 You'll come to know the truth. [female to male]

Mico (in trance)
 What rage had this man of earth,
 This Pentheus descended
 From the earth-sown serpent's teeth,
 This son of Echion the snake-skinned!
 Wild-eyed, he seems
 More animal than man.
 Soon shall we too be bound
 And, like our priest,
 Thrown into the dark.

connect to mico's
 chorus II.
 not solo
 navel breathing
 all know words
 connect to it

SHOW Ewa: Dionysus don't you see
 How your priest is wronged?
 Marco: Dionysus don't you see
 How your children suffer?))

[Feeding female to male, and male to female]

Come with your golden shaft,
 Come down from Olympus,
 From the sacred woods where Orpheus
 Made the very trees resound with song
 And led all wild animals
 In the mountain dance.

Come down from your heights
 Which ring to the Evox
 And crush this too proud man of earth.
 Come make the river dance once more with joy.

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