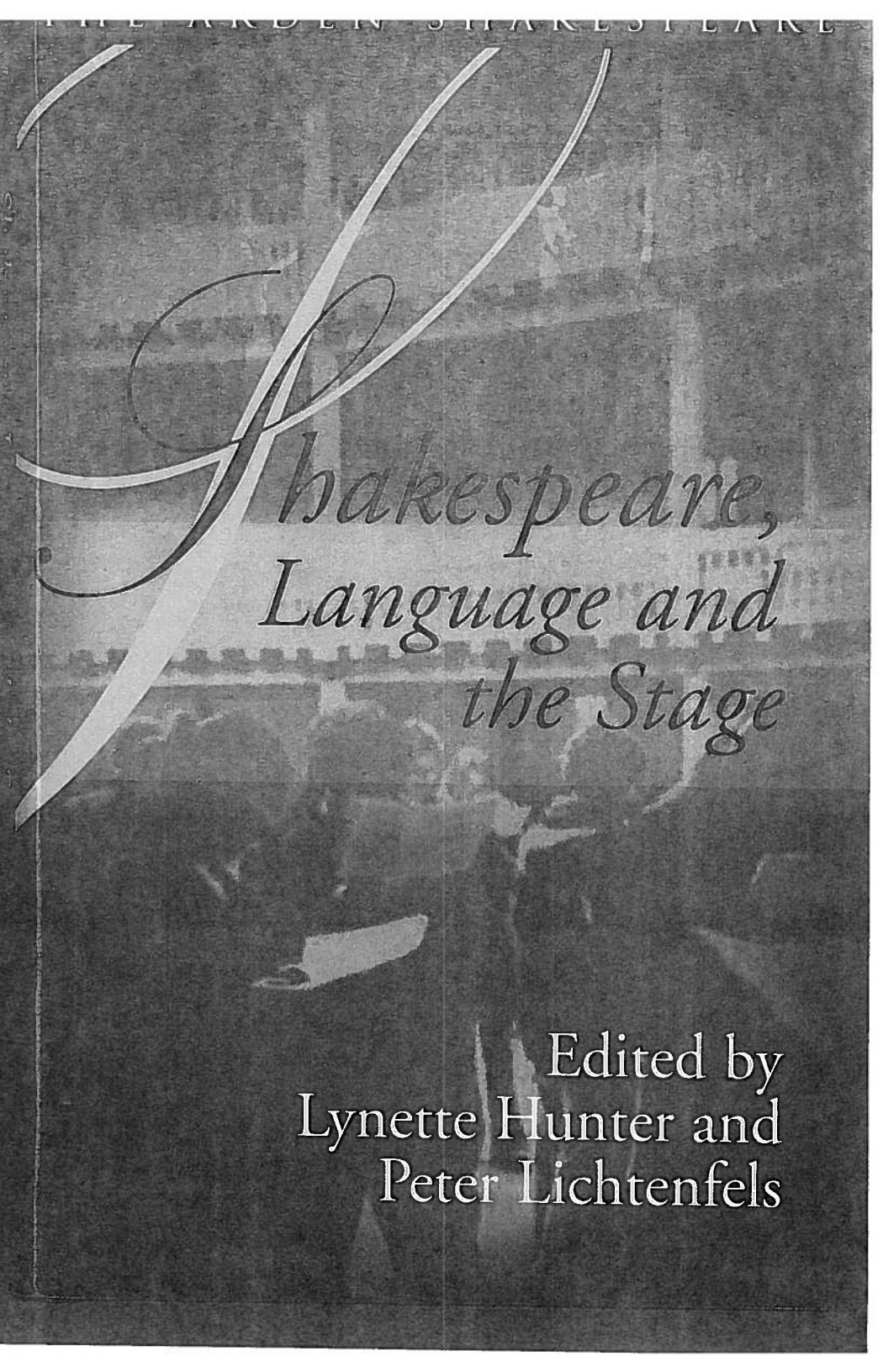
THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare, Language and the Stage



Edited by
Lynette Hunter and
Peter Lichtenfels

THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEARE AND LANGUAGE

GENERAL EDITORS
Lynette Hunter, Lynne Magnusson and Ann Thompson

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SHAKESPEARE, LANGUAGE AND THE STAGE

The Fifth Wall: Approaches to Shakespeare from Criticism, Performance and Theatre Studies

Edited by
Lynette Hunter and Peter Lichtenfels

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CONTENTS

The scholar Lynette Hunter and the director Peter Lichtenfels like to promote and provoke collaboration between scholars and playmakers. They had participated in The Globe's Winter Playing workshops to address staging issues that arise in *Romeo and Juliet*, and their positive experience prompted them to approach Globe Education to host The Fifth Wall symposium.

One of this book's contributors almost ruefully admits: 'in the end, Fifth Wall proved somewhat less antagonistic than I hoped'. The good-natured atmosphere may in part have resulted from Lynette and Peter's choice of contributors, but it also stemmed from the mutual respect that participants had for one another's very different disciplines. No animosity surfaced between 'gown' and 'clown', although people did not always see eye to eye. As another contributor writes, 'for a trained critical reader "what is there on the page" may be quite different from what is there for a trained actor. The skills involved in each training are different but commensurate and each can inform the other.'

Each can indeed inform the other. Like The Globe itself, this book is proof positive that collaboration between researcher and playmaker can help nurture the 'soul of lively action'.

Patrick Spottiswoode
Director, Globe Education

INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this collection of essays is quite simple: the theatre director Peter Lichtenfels and critic Lynette Hunter got together in 1994 to carry out some research on *Romeo and Juliet*. Lichtenfels had some academic background and Hunter some theatre experience, and both thought that collaboration would be a fruitful interchange of ideas. Ten years later this has in fact turned out to be the case, but only after a series of seemingly impossible contradictions in vocabulary and profound disciplinary lacunae were recognised and troubled over.

In the course of learning how to speak sensibly to each other, and giving joint presentations to academic conferences and to groups of theatre practitioners, it became clear that while there is an area of performance studies beginning to address the borderland between the different approaches to understanding dramatic texts, for many others there is a 'fifth wall'. If the 'fourth wall', the barrier between the actor and the audience introduced by theatre conventions, is an invisible artefact between the stage and the audience, the fifth wall may be thought of as the invisible wall between critics or readers and theatre practitioners. Most scholars of Shakespeare's writing, and of other writers for the theatre, although highly sophisticated as audience participators, have not trained for the theatre in any sustained manner. Neither have many theatre practitioners much sense of what is involved in theatre scholarship, apart from a dim memory of secondary school or undergraduate essays. Yet precisely because of that interaction across the fourth wall, each thinks they understand what the other is doing.

There are few occasions when detailed and expansive discussions can take place between critics of Shakespeare's texts and theatre practitioners, partly because there has been an unspoken consensus that there

is no need to do so. But the collaborative work that has gone into this collection of essays has been inspired by a sense among many of the participants that there can be real benefits from exploring new interactions between people working in these different areas. The essays mark a desire for a more substantial dialogue than programme theatre notes or directors doing pre-performance talks for audiences, and a feeling that the dramaturge's role of bringing intellectual and critical material to the theatre could be more public and open out wider debate. Many of the contributors are also involved in new and innovative programmes being developed within universities that attempt to bring together the different practices. More widely, these changes are further indications of a growing understanding that greater collaboration and exchange of practice can not only enrich both worlds but also the appreciation and engagement of the general public.

At the start of the process, when the theatre practitioners and the critics began their conversations through the mediation of the performance theorists, most of the contributors found that there was little common vocabulary for the discussion. Yet several of the theatre practitioners felt that if they were able to speak to critics about the detail of their practice, then they would begin to get a handle on ways of talking about this to others as well. In a parallel move, some of the critics, although not all, voiced their hope that if they could speak to directors and actors about the complexity of their art, then they might also be able to open up what is often a rather solitary engagement with the texts of Shakespeare to a much wider audience. Readers of this collection have the opportunity to engage with these interactions, to compare and possibly extend their own interdisciplinary practices, or to explore an entirely new way of thinking about the language of Shakespeare's plays that self-consciously breaks down that invisible fifth wall.

A few examples may delineate the construction of the fifth wall in more concrete terms. One of the first contradictions in vocabulary experienced by Hunter and Lichtenfels was that around the word 'character'. As a well-trained post-deconstruction and subject-constitution critic, Lynette Hunter found it difficult to accept the description of actors drawing on *authentic personal experience* as a basis for identifying the essence of character, not 'a character', but character that involves others on stage. Even the word 'essence' proved problematic for her in a critical world where 'essentialising' signified the blind acceptance of social representations as 'true'. On the other hand, it turned out that this was not in effect what was being signified when Peter Lichtenfels used the words 'character', 'experience' and 'essence'. An actor may work on a set of lines and find anger or grief being released in them because of their personal body memories, but this is not a copying of a type (or stereotype) they have 'experienced before'. Rather it is a mimetic repetition of context that in the re-hearsal or the per-formance (hyphenated to emphasise the way that acting forms character through interweaving of the text with the body) materialises a particular action in the moment. What this means in practice takes a thorough understanding of acting training to comprehend. An actor may subsequently explain why 'they cried' in terms of private memory or of psychology, but in this they simply reproduce a culturally dominant vocabulary for the construction of character which would be unlikely to engage an audience.

A more pragmatic example emerged from the editorial approach to stage directions such as '[*Aside*]'. Lichtenfels argued that to include this stage direction in all cases where it is conventionally found could be misleading. A particular production might well play the line straight into the dialogue for a different effect, and to fix the line as an '[*Aside*]' would pre-judge a rehearsal practice. Hunter's response was that readers needed stage directions like this because they are not watching a specific production, and may not recognise the implications of a decision to include or exclude the line from ongoing dialogue. Hence '[*Aside*]' would alert the reader to possibilities, not necessarily fix a specific action.

Versions of this debate concerning 'what the theatre practitioner wants' or 'what the reader/critic wants' have a wide impact in other areas of stage direction: for example, do you include a stage direction on the page if it is already clear in the text that such action takes place? The debate also affects punctuation: do you include punctuation, thus imposing syntax to enable a particular reading, or leave it sparse to encourage a variety of readings, even though this may be confusing? Although editing is only part of the critical response and the readers' concern, these questions recognise that producing an edition is analogous to directing a production, with the significant difference that an edition has a much longer shelf-life. On the other hand, even a three-week run of a stage production has an audience far more alert to its production elements than a printed edition that will usually be read

by people with few skills for understanding and interacting with the textual performance it offers.

Even more challenging is the way that those people who take up the different approaches work on the verbal text. Here it is vital to understand the detailed practice of the actor and director on the one hand and the scholarly critic on the other. For example, when Lichtenfels described part of the actor's verse training as an attempt to break down all conventional connection between sound and meaning leaving only the physical sound in the body, Hunter objected that as social creatures who are what they are because they learn how to be so, human beings cannot *not* make these connections. This kind of debate is so prevalent in the essays of this collection that another title for this book could have been Lynne Magnusson's query during the workshop: 'Is it *true* that consonants relate to action and vowels register emotional temperature?' However, having had training in the basic actor's voice exercise that works on vowels and consonants independently, it becomes apparent that conventional and stereotypical associations *can* lose their tether to culturally expected meanings, with the result that their range of reference becomes unstable.

Curiously, the process involved in the breaking down of the sounds of words is similar to the work a critic may do on etymological derivation, a staple of editorial commentary that many readers let alone theatre practitioners frequently skip, and which is often central to extending critical knowledge. Working back through the history of a word, as do a number of contributors to the following essays, we may see the forks in meaning become apparent, the residual significances emerge from centuries of verbal sedimentation into different cultures and eventually different languages. The process can radically destabilise the contemporary meaning of a word, even before one gets to the stage of 'false' etymology, the historically 'illegal' but often highly evocative association of a verbal fragment with a completely different set of meanings.

These issues are familiar, or becoming so, both to critics and to theatre practitioners, yet there are few opportunities to discuss them collaboratively and in depth. The Fifth Wall research workshop was intended to bring theatre practitioners and critics together for exactly this purpose and within the context of Shakespeare's writing. All of the issues mentioned above, and many more, are part of the discussion that follows, and while this discussion is focused on a number of different

Shakespearian plays, the issues to a greater or lesser extent run through the concern with any dramatic language. The format for the workshop was to have one theatre practitioner, one critic and one respondent, in a grouping that would discuss a particular area of Shakespeare's writing, language and the stage. The workshop, which ran over two days, also invited three actors, Alan Cox, Michael Gould and Joy Richardson, the director Leon Rubin and voice trainer Patricia Baillie, and Patrick Spottiswoode, the director of Globe Education, to participate.

The first day focused largely on elements that accompany language on the stage: on gesture (Annabel Arden, Margo Hendricks, Lynette Hunter), on visual and verbal interaction particularly in film (David Bradby, Greg Doran, Russell Jackson), and on the effects of time and space on production (Anne Bogart, William Worthen, Bridget Escolme). The second day shifted the emphasis on to the verbal texture of dramatic language, looking at verse (Janelle Jenstad, Peter Lichtenfels, Lynne Magnusson), text (Calixto Bieito, Maria Delgado, Patricia Parker), script (Tim Carroll, Emma Smith, Martin White), and heightened language (Nicholas Hytner, Janelle Reinelt, Ann Thompson). The order of sessions has been slightly rearranged in the collection to reflect the development of ideas and issues that emerged over the two days.

Each grouping prepared for the workshop in quite different ways, some with extensive prior interaction and some with very little. The workshop was open only to participants and most attended the full two days. After the workshop, transcripts were made of all sessions and circulated to all participants. The respondents, drawing upon their own work, on the transcripts, the preparatory material and post-workshop interactions in conversation or by email, and their knowledge of the wider work of those in their group, wrote the essays. The essays are collaborative productions, with the respondent as the writer, or if you like, the director, each attempting to climb over, or possibly to dismantle or dissolve, the fifth wall.

The collection begins with an essay based on the collaboration of Lynne Magnusson with Peter Lichtenfels, for which Janelle Jensted acted as correspondent and essay writer. Magnusson's recent critical work has been focused on analysing the social interactions that language and dialogue convey. Her interests parallel those of the theatre director Peter Lichtenfels, who also trains actors in voice, body movement and interaction on stage. Demonstrating some techniques with the actor Joy Richardson, and discussing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, they

negotiate each other's practices, having difficulty with the differences in vocabulary, but moving toward an understanding of each other's techniques. Theatre scholar and performance critic Janelle Jensted uses a considerable amount of her collaborators' work to frame the exchange into one about the different kinds of 'text' with which each works, and offers an array of commentary from the workshop that was sparked off by the debate.

Martin White's essay is written with director Tim Carroll, who has worked extensively at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre which has a specific commitment to historical research, and with Emma Smith an academic at Oxford University who researches textual and historical contexts for early modern drama. White is himself an 'academic practitioner-critic' and the work he collaborates on continues to probe the differences between the world of the critic and of the stage, as he posits 'script' as a conceptual tool for talking about the text in performance. In a remarkably frank exchange of doubts about whether either side can ever resolve their 'frictive relationship', the three examine editorial and theatrical issues raised by several scenes in *Twelfth Night*, in particular the 'scenic turns' in 2.1 that was acted for the workshop by Alan Cox and Michael Gould, and pays some attention to the work of Philip Massinger.

Scenic turns are gestures that the text makes to which actors, and arguably readers, need to pay attention. Annabel Arden, opera director and director at Théâtre Complicité, Margo Hendricks, dramaturge and critic devoted to understanding race, ethnicity and gender, and respondent Lynette Hunter, editor, critic and performer, pursued the idea of textual gesture and bodily gesture in studies of both *Titus Andronicus* and *The Winter's Tale*. Drawing extensively on workshop contributions as well as communications among the participants, this third essay takes a detailed look at how actors train, and what kinds of gesture they learn about. Hunter contributes an element missing from the analysis when she argues for the need explicitly to recognise the training of the reader as well, because reading is also an embodied practice. The discussion also considers textual gesture, the critic's skills in understanding it, and the way that the audience's and reader's responses are central to gestural signification, looking both at language and the body (Hendricks) and movement and the text (Arden).

The fourth essay brings together the Royal Shakespeare Company director Greg Doran, Shakespeare Institute Director Russell Jackson, and David Bradby, an eminent theatre and film scholar and critic. In

the workshop itself, this session followed that of Arden, Hendricks and Hunter, and developed the discussion of bodily and textual gesture specifically into visual gesture on the stage and in film. Doran's contribution compares a stage production of *Macbeth* to his film of the same play, analysing the difficulties that film poses to the expansiveness of Shakespearean language and positing a number of technical devices that he used to get his audience to 'listen' to the film. Picking up on this study with an analysis of a film version of *Richard III*, Jackson developed a complex study of the way cultural expectations add to and interfere with filmic gesture. Missing from these contributions was any sense that theatre could use visual, even spectacular, display to engage an audience in listening to the text. However, Bradby, an expert on the physical theatre of Jacques Lecoq in which Arden trained, as well as French theatre more broadly, contextualised this issue through the work of Arian Mnouchkine. He explored her direction of *Richard II*, suggesting that her special approach to actor training develops a range and repertoire of gestural movement that can match the playwright's vocabulary in flexibility and variety.

The concentration of visual image was extended by the extensive discussion of design and dramaturgy in the work of Calixto Bieito, director of the Teatre Romea in Barcelona, particularly in his *Macbeth*. The theatre critic and Spanish theatre scholar Maria Delagdo worked with Bieito and Patricia Parker, editor of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and an exceptionally subtle and sophisticated commentator on Shakespeare's language. Delgado brought extensive interviews with Bieito together with Parker's contributions to highlight the way translation, either within a language or from one to another, can engender resistant political readings that open up convention. Bieito's *Macbeth* recasts not only the language but the structure and physical dimensions of the play so that it addresses the contemporary issues he wants to foreground, often using gestures from film and popular culture. His claim that translation into a foreign language can produce a play that is fully current in the way that a production of a play in Shakespearean English cannot, is implicitly contested by Parker. Although concurring that many fruitful readings emerge from remembering that English is a 'foreign' language, she demonstrates that the modern reader of a Shakespeare text has just as much translating to do.

The issue of resistance is central to the contributions from Anne Bogart, theatre director of the SITI company in New York, and William Worthen, performance studies theorist and Shakespeare critic. As respondent Bridget Escolme, a critic of theatre and performance, notes that each contributor takes 'making things difficult' as a common purpose, and provides a constant counterpoint to their discussion in a reading of a production of *Richard II*. They do so in superficially different ways, as Bogart's contemplation of her working practices and a future production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Worthen's analysis of a performance of the play in Finland, demonstrate. Worthen's theorisation of the understanding of cultural materialism that underlies what productions mean, seems a world away from the shortlist of things 'needed' in a production by Bogart. However, the contributors to this session were remarkably able to negotiate common ground, agreeing that 'sourcework' was not aimed at authenticity but social grounding, that references to the 'body' mediating the text did not imply an irrational or arbitrary expression, and that an attempt to find the energy 'of the original production' was in effect an attempt to put the play into a constellation of social and cultural immediacy today.

The happy concurrence of the theatre practitioners and critics in some sessions was insistently corrected by others. The final session of the workshop, and the final essay in this collection, brought together Nicholas Hytner, director of the Royal National Theatre in London, Shakespeare scholar and a general editor of the Arden Shakespeare Ann Thompson, and internationally recognised performance studies critic Janelle Reinelt. Unlike most other participants, Hytner had not contributed in advance to the discussion, so his comments on heightened language were coming directly from a public perception of Shakespeare's language. As a result, the essay is able to engage with a debate that has not had the mediating influence of conversation and negotiation. Not surprisingly, the essay recounts a series of impasses between the editorial scholar and the public director. But at the same time also finds a number of *rapprochements* about physicality and speech, the need for context, and the usefulness of an understanding of syntax, grammar and semantics.

Reinelt's concluding thoughts on the collection as a whole begin by citing Robert Weimann's suggestion that the writer's pen and the actor's voice may delineate a fundamental disjunction, and move to the distinction made by Arden and Hendricks, the first saying that the body

animates the text and the second that the text animates the body. Following a number of examples from specific sessions, she suggests that institutions encourage practitioners and critics to think quite differently, but that they need each other. Reinelt goes on to argue for a 'doctrine of separate but overlapping spheres' that could generate far more dialogue. We need to do rather more that peer through this chink in the wall, but no one says it's going to be easy.

Lynette Hunter, University of Leeds
Peter Lichtenfels, Manchester Metropolitan University

Both editors are currently working at the
University of California, Davis
October 2004

NOTE ON CITATIONS

Because this collection draws from oral presentation as well as written, many citations are to the transcripts subsequently prepared for circulation among the participants of the workshop, and several are to emails and letters that were exchanged both before and after the event. Each session has an individual transcript with unique pagination. All citations, in brackets following a quotation, to a session transcript are to the page numbers from that transcript; some essays cite transcripts from other sessions, and when this is the case the citation contains the title of that session, followed by the page number from that transcript. Where it is not clear in the text of the essay that a particular participant is speaking, the page number will be preceded by the name of that speaker; this is often the case when a member of the session audience made a contribution, or when a citation is being made to a transcript from another session. Because of the prior preparation and considered practice and research that participants made for the workshop, the oral contributions made by participants are cited in a way analogous to citations to printed published texts for research. Exchanges of emails and letters that took place before and after the workshop, are cited as (Writer, email) or (Writer, letter). Citations from printed published works are cited in the style adopted by the Arden Shakespeare.

24 See Elizabeth Story Donno, The New Cambridge Shakespeare edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

25 Both are held in the British Library.

26 See *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, ed. John Yoklavich (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

27 See Martin White, *op. cit.*, 82–8.

28 Pauline Kiernan, *Staging Shakespeare at the New Globe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

29 William Bagnall, 'The Author's Friend to the Reader', in *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, vol. 1, 17–22. This edition of *The Bondman* was published in 1624.

3

GESTURE, LANGUAGE AND THE BODY

Annabel Arden (Théâtre de Complicité)
Margo Hendricks (University of California, Santa Cruz)
Lynette Hunter (University of California, Davis): respondent

Concerned with the relationships among gesture, language and the body, the essay explores the implications of the statements 'The body animates the text' and 'The text animates gesture'. While focused on what 'gesture' signifies to a critic, and a theatre practitioner, by developing an understanding of textual gesture and specific languages for stage gestures, the exploration investigates the way that each area is based in specific training. The essay brings together many contributions from the main participants and from other actors, directors, editors and critics to argue that both acting and reading are embodied practices.

Gesture and its interrelation with language and the body is an area of practice that at first sight relates more to the theatre than to criticism. The critical vocabulary for talking about how the actor's body works is in short supply, and when actors speak about their bodies they often retreat to a popular psychology version of explanation. The discussion between Margo Hendricks and Annabel Arden started off with this inbuilt difficulty of communication, not between the theatre practitioner and the reader-critic, but with the topic of gesture itself. But Arden, as with directors Calixto Bieito, Anne Bogart and Peter Lichtenfels, has developed a career investigating the expressive potential of the actor's body, and Margo Hendricks has elaborated specific concerns about the reader's body, especially in terms of race, gender and ethnicity. A good deal of the dialogue between them worked on building bridges to an understanding of the other's practice.

Initially Arden argued that 'the body animates the text', and Hendricks replied that if the body animates the text, 'the text animates gesture'. Much of the session circled around the implications of the

different emphases, and the developing conversation led to a number of attempts to debate, to differentiate between and to integrate them.[1] Looking back on the session, it is clear to me (Lynette Hunter), the respondent writing this essay on behalf of all of us, that there was an unnoticed imbalance in the argument: the practitioners spent considerable time laying out the detail of their training to explain how they engaged the body and the text especially in acting, while the critics spent no time whatever on this element in their own training, and mentioned nothing about their education either in reading or about how their criticism was made public. My contribution to the discussion here will address this gap, but the primary function of this essay is to consider the differences between the approaches to gesture taken by theatre practitioners and by critics of theatre and performance. Not surprisingly, given the emphasis in each play on the gestures made by tongues, hands and bodies, the session focused on *Titus Andronicus* and *The Winter's Tale*.[2]

APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE, ACTING AND GESTURE

First, let us turn to the grounds laid down by the two primary participants, Annabel Arden and Margo Hendricks. The director Annabel Arden trained in the physical theatre tradition of Paris' Jacques Lecoq, in which gesture is specifically related to the body. Lecoq represents part of a western theatre tradition that focuses on the interaction between the physical body and theatre texts. Other crucial figures in the tradition include Vsevolod Meyerhold, whose early twentieth-century investigation of movement led him to develop highly choreographed texts for traditional plays.[3] Directors such as Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba worked from Asian theatre traditions and focused more on what the actor can get the body to do, how the actors' body can construct story in itself. Other theatre practitioners have worked with indigenous traditions, such as Tadeusz Kantor's work in Poland. Still others, such as Robert Lepage, have brought together visual and physical theatre, or those like Anne Bogart use physicality to collapse story into unfamiliar bodily structures.

Arden began her contribution to this session on gesture by talking about her training at Jacque Lecoq's school,[4] and how her acquisition of practical techniques had heightened her awareness of her body and its meaning:

> It's the meaning of the body in space, that's what we learnt about. And so I learnt the word '*geste*', '*Les gestes de l'acteur*'. For me, it means something quite different than its connotations in English. Because I think when you talk about gestures in English – first of all you remember Hamlet's advice to the players, that they not 'saw the air' too much with their hands. But by *les gestes* it was always understood that whatever movement is made by the hand and the arm, comes from the centre [of the actor's body]. *Les gestes* are mysterious. They're the part of the actor's craft which is almost the most difficult to talk about. They're highly instinctive: they have the same kind of relationship to the body as, say, *timbre* does to the voice. So that a mark of a great actor is this sort of indefinable, surprising, inventive, eloquent quality of his gesture. I think that gesture is something quite different from action.
>
> (2)

Actors work from their training in rehearsal, and the actor and workshop participant Alan Cox expanded on the kind of practical application that this kind of physicality encourages. He described the way that he had learned about his body through mask-work and improvisation. Mask-work involves developing skills with a variety of full mask, half-mask, *commedia dell'arte* mask and neutral mask, among others – neutral mask being the antithesis or epitome of the concept of mask based on the Japanese mask of 'calm', which is so contained that the most imperceptible tics of the body are revealed (Arden, 20). To carry this mask 'the body must be [simultaneously] at maximum neutrality and physical awareness' (Arden, 20). Japanese theatre traditions such as Noh or Kabuki treat the hands and face as the neutral mask and the body as gesturally expressive. Real masks hide the eyes, whether they cover the full face or only half the face allowing the jaw and lips to move freely, and this has the effect of enlarging the facial area and rendering it static.[5] If an actor cannot use their face then they have to work on body movement and gesture moment by moment, taking apart their physical actions in a manner that resists the conventional reliance on facial expression. This 'playing the moment behind the mask' increases the perception of body size. Because a western audience is trained to look at the face, masking has a twofold effect. First, the audience may be induced to read its own responses to the story more easily onto the mask, and it may look elsewhere for the physical embodiment from which it constructs significance.

The second training element, improvisation, allows interactions or energies in a production to be pulled out of a group of actors (Cox, 20) working collectively, and the director is there to fix that set of interrelations in the actors' awareness. Again, it is the 'awareness' that is fixed or made coherent, not 'meaning' or 'verisimilitude' or exact 'truth to the text', and it is awareness on which the actor will draw in rehearsal and performance as a resource for action. Cox described awareness as 'an improvisatory quality that supports the formal nature of the language' (20): not what language does to the actor, but what the actor can do for language. Improvisation led to a central part of the rehearsal process, what Cox called 'making rituals' that went on 'all the time' (Cox, 21). When asked to elaborate on ritual in acting, the director and acting trainer Peter Lichtenfels described it as working on possibilities for action. If you are not sure what movement, or voicing, is going to be functional, you need to work through the action or speech, trying things out and retaining the elements that communicate, practising them again and again to find out if they can sustain a response. The moment of awareness or 'ritual' is incorporated into rehearsal so that it slowly becomes part of the actor's body memory, the muscles, bones and blood remember it as an action that is appropriate, a resource to draw on.

By implication, the actor works with the ability of their body, in interrelation with the production – especially other actors and the director – to acquire or learn about the possibilities for and a recognition of that heightened movement, which, like heightened language (see Hytner, Reinelt, Thompson), can 'boost' awareness to the audience when performance begins. As an example Arden commented on watching Michael Gambon in Caryl Churchill's *A Number*, a play about family relations, breakdown and divorce (6). At one point Gambon simply glanced at the wedding ring on his hand and the audience thrilled to the suddenly charged air of that small detailed action. It was, said Arden, the 'perfect gesture' for that play. For the practitioner, the body itself is a gesture, and Arden developed this idea by talking about gesture in relation to music. Arden pointed out that 'melos', from which we get 'melody', means 'limb' in Greek, a connection that underlies most of her comments on gesture as musical, and on gesture as especially to do with the hand. Like musical gesture, bodily gesture is to do with phrasing, with creating time and space on stage. It indicates the distance travelled in space and time, and most importantly it allows one to hold the body in 'suspension'. Held in 'suspension', the actor's body

is in imbalance, and the audience is maintained continuously in a state of high awareness because of the unpredictability that results (3).

For an opera singer, gesture is essential because the audience usually cannot see the singer's face or fully hear the words (3), and Arden notes that Maria Callas never moved until she had learned her part, only then did she use her hand as a 'prolongation' of her voice (3). Gestures of the hand carry enormous moral and ethical meaning, particularly for the actor. The critic David Bradby later reminded the workshop that while the poet Keats was represented by a death mask of his face, the actor Edmund Kean was represented by a cast of his hand (19). When meaning travels, asks Arden, 'does it travel from my body via my hand, out there?' (3). For example, she suggested we might think of the difference between greeting someone by shaking hands with them or by using that 'strange kissing movement' that is becoming increasingly familiar. When shaking hands one maintains a distance, possibly even a perspective on people (4).

My own work on gesture in the history of rhetoric has found that during the Renaissance, hand movement on stage, in parliament, in the pulpit, indeed in any public space, was highly coded, probably for the same reason that an opera singer's movements are often coded, if not melodramatic or clichéd. All these performers are working with large audiences from several hundred to several thousand. It is said that up to ten thousand people would go to hear John Donne deliver sermons at Old Saint Pauls in London. During the early part of the seventeenth century several books were published to help ministers of the church understand how to move their hands when taking services.[6] These books were essentially rewritings of Cicero's guides in *The Orator*, to hand and body movements for politicians speaking in public in the first century BCE. The movements formed the basis for actors training in the early modern period, and came into full flower during the eighteenth century when theatres became huge boxes with proscenium arches between the audience and the stage. They were used throughout the nineteenth century, and in the silent movies, only becoming more muted with the advent of naturalism in theatre, film and television, especially in the twentieth century.[7] In the western media the most pronounced use of traditional hand gesture is currently in promotional music videos.

Because of the longevity of these actions, they constitute a kind of physical language, and indeed in the seventeenth century John Bulwer

who wrote on both hand and facial gesture, also wrote one of the first 'signing' languages for people without hearing or voice.[8] The longevity of these gestures gives the impression that they are as Arden initially noted 'instinctive' (2) to each actor's body. The body directs and uses energy in roughly the same biochemical and biophysical patterns, which affect a wide range of movement, so that the tensely knotted fist denotes anger in many cultures.[9] The arm horizontally outstretched in front of the body with a vertically upright palm (the back of the hand toward one's face) often denotes 'stop' because the open palm sends energy out from the body in the direction of the person in front of it, potentially repelling them or bringing them to a halt. The arms held out to the sides but slightly curved in a wide circular embrace with palms facing inward, denote the welcome and comfort of a closed circle (which is of course threatening if one does not want to enter). But as Arden later suggested, they cannot 'just be instinctive' (6) because we have to learn to share them with other people. Just so, the actor's rule of thumb about the relation of the hand to eye and heart (Arden, 6) – if the hand is extended higher than the eye it asks 'who am I seeking?' of someone or thing who exists only as a possibility (a wish, a deity, a prayer), or if the hand is extended below the heart it begs, clings, implores – is only as helpful as the actor's skill in bringing it to our awareness. Not all actors could say with Alec Guinness that 'one gesture above the head is worth a 1,000 words' (Cox, 21). If Hamlet's actors who 'saw the air too much' tell us that gesture was coded on the Renaissance stage, the complaint also tells us that stereotyped gesture was, as it still is, limiting.

At one point in the workshop, Alan Cox commented that handbooks of 'codes' of gestures were useless because they were inorganic, and cited Edwin Booth's early nineteenth-century *Richard II* with its detailed notes on Booth's gestures as an example. Russell Jackson responded that this publication was not something Booth 'followed' but that it had been put together and notated by someone else. Cox replied that it was like 'French's Acting Edition and I can't understand it[s purpose]'. Jackson again responded saying that the book was 'descriptive not prescriptive', to which Cox said, 'but is it practical for the actor?' The exchange was rather like watching trains on different and parallel lines trying to meet at some point. The actor was thinking about the detailed process of training and rehearsal in which coded 'answers' to gesture are meaningless, and Jackson was rightly pointing out that that was not the purpose of the book, that it was simply to record Booth's gestures.

However, it remains a legitimate question: why was anyone recording these gestures? Did someone think that actors *could* learn from this account? Was it intended to revive in the reader's mind a visual image of a performance they may have attended? or indeed to substitute for an actual performance? Was there something so 'aware' about the gestures that after the play finished the audience referred to them, much as Annabel Arden referred to Michael Gambon's glance, as the 'perfect gesture' for a particular play? In other words, the book would have made possible a social and cultural discourse about an interpretation of *Hamlet* important to the contemporary audience. All these books illustrating gesture are also part of the tradition of rhetorical training, and are directly analogous to the handbooks of rhetorical devices that have been written in western culture for over two thousand years. No one is going to be effective simply by copying a device, it has to be re-embodied in a particular moment: this is of course the significance of the word *mimesis*.

Arden spoke at length about the importance of gesture being integrated with the text and shared with the audience – not that it should 'underline' the text, do the same thing as the text (an effect that she later referred to as 'telephoning'), but that it should be functional rather than a simple reproduction of a code. Once more she turned to a musical analogy: the orchestra in front of the opera singer is engaged in a series of functional gestures that produce music from their instruments (5). The opera singer cannot afford to make a coded gesture that is not functional because the context in which it occurs will make it look ineffective. An actor is faced with similar issues in relation to the environment of stage and theatre. Any gesture may have to work alongside the use of voice, and an example that was offered was the Get-out syndrome. If one extends the arm in a dismissive gesture and then says 'Get out', the action is effective. It is almost as effective to extend the arm while saying 'Get out'. But to say 'Get out' and follow the phrase with the action, is almost invariably funny (the workshop audience laughed). Why this is so is difficult to explain. The same effect occurs with 'I'm thinking', with the chin held in the hand and one finger extended up the cheek. Gesture in these cases may not be as strong as the words, or possibly it may be because it is stronger (Arden, 3). But the effect does not always happen, for if one says 'Fuck off' and follows it with the gesture of the left hand slapping down firmly into the crook of the right arm bent at right angles, the gesture reinforces. Yet

there is something in the ritual of following the word with the gesture that is often bathetic. Possibly, it is not shared with the audience and hence disrupts and makes a mockery of its own intentions.

It was at this point in Arden's introduction that she turned to *A Winter's Tale* to elaborate on the way that gesture integrates with text. She opened her comments on the play by talking about the certainty of physical gesture within the ambiguity of language. I will preface her comments with a brief close reading to provide context for her discussion, but would like to point out that Arden herself did not seem to think that her skill with reading was worth commenting on, despite the extensive description of acting and despite her evident subtlety of reading. In the second scene of the play, a field of significance builds around specific words, and focuses on the gestures made by hands and voices. Hermione speaks of 'prisoner' and 'guest' (1.2.51–60), playing at length on the ambivalence of the two words, while the text builds a connotative field around 'limber vows' (mere politeness), tongues and hands. Leontes challenges Hermione to persuade Polixenes to stay, saying: 'Tongue-tied our queen? speak you' (1.2.27), and later congratulates her on her success in getting him to stay by referring to her one previous good deed with words (1.2.89). Reluctant to tell her what this was, Leontes prompts Hermione to ask if she will die 'tongueless' (1.2.92) and without words to embody it. He then confesses that this good deed was when she said 'I am yours for ever' (1.2.105), although it took a long time 'Ere I could make thee open thy white hand, / And clap thyself my love' (103–4). But as Hermione leaves with Polixenes, the growing-jealous Leontes exclaims they are, 'to be paddling palms, and pinching fingers, / ... and making practis'd smiles' (1.2.115–16), and later she is 'Still virginalling / Upon his palm!' (1.2.125–6). Is the apparent friendliness between Hermione and Polixenes evidence of a sexual relationship? The problem here for an audience is that no one knows who or what to believe, so the certainty of the gesture is undone by its context.

The focus of Arden's introduction was on the way an actor trains so that he or she can integrate gesture not only with the human body, but also with the elements around it such as props: for example when Paulina looks at the 'baby' and declares that it is Leontes' child, in 'ninety-nine point nine percent of productions there is no baby. But the gesture to that little object, whatever it is on stage ... You gesture to a tiny object like that and the words do the rest' (5). Another way of saying this is that:

> The body has to support the text. The body is like a bow, and unless it is in tension, the textual arrow will not fly. ...this unique relationship of gesture to text ... should be in order that the text flies, ... the body has not a decorative or an illustrative role, but it has a function.
>
> (5)

The analogy with the opera singer's gesture that is functional, foregrounds the element of time, because a singer's gesture is partly defined by the tempo set by the music, whereas the actor, and certainly the Shakespearean actor, creates tempo through their own gesture (6). Arden also argued that gesture creates space, and that one reason the hand is so important is that it is at a physical extremity of the body and in relation to the body it can build a 'largeness' and 'dimension'. There is a certainty in physical gesture that opens up space and controls time:

> when you create something which is not there with gesture, or indicate a space which is not there, or a time which has been, it is magical. It is potent ... And it's not necessarily always possible to describe what it does in words – *you had to be there.*
>
> (5)

APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE, READING AND GESTURE

If for the theatre practitioners who spoke at the workshop the body itself was a gesture, that mysterious 'suspension of the body' on the edge of calling something into being that supports the text, for critics and readers the text itself is a gesture because the text is a kind of body. Textual gesture, in the introduction made by the literary critic Margo Hendricks, multiplied into the diversity that the word 'textual' signifies: from word to phrase to syntax, and from rhetoric to cultural and social topic. In response to Annabel Arden, Hendricks plunged straight into the text of *Titus Andronicus* without saying anything about her own training, in either reading, criticism or dramaturgy. However, in following correspondence and in response to my concern to fill this apparent gap in the workshop material, Hendricks elaborated briefly on a variety of factors that had led to her skills in reading and criticism. She described the context for her education in terms of the historical

period in which she went through graduate school, a period in which there was a lot of genuinely exploratory thinking about feminism, and detailed research into Marx's writings (Hendricks, private communication). The result was a commitment to historical materialism, especially to issues of race, class and gender. But it was the *process* of training that was central for her development.

Hendricks pointed out that critics and skilled readers are trained 'not to let words mean what they might literally mean', and to 'read below the surface' of any literary text. This kind of training starts in primary school and is reinforced in secondary and further education. The specific elements in one's reading approaches will partly depend on the analytical and critical tools that one is taught at each of these levels, and Hendricks said that for her own part she was 'always [involved] with deciphering "image": what conventions are at work in this image, what can the writer be attempting in that image?' (Hendricks, letter). The process of asking questions about a text is fundamental to her methodology. It is the process of taking 'an assumption and turning it on its head', which means that often we do not know what the answer is, or even if there will be an 'answer', but that the action of asking the question is a material element, possibly the most important element, in the analysis. Reading groups were central to the way she learned her critical skills, because typically they involve a group of people who have chosen to read a text about which they all have questions, and to get together to discuss it.

I would add that classes of all kinds, seminars, tutorials and lectures, all have their own structures for training the process of reading, and instilling the ability to ask subtle and detailed questions about words. A reader has to ask themselves, and the text, what is the appropriate question? for me, here and now? They have to work on the particular task that any one word, phrase, sentence or scene, puts in front of them, and figure out (literally, by working through the figures or images of language) what they might signify. It may not be that we are reading 'below the surface' so much as recognising that the surface is simply a set of assumptions that apply generally, and that if we want to read so that the text makes sense specifically to us, we will have to read by working on those assumptions. For a text to 'make sense' it needs to become valuable to us, we need to be able to play it out within our own environments, a mimesis of reading if you like. This translation of the text through our own contexts, is not only a conceptual act. Most of us learn

to read aloud before we read silently, and the physical vocalisation of words in our musculature and breathing patterns becomes part of the experience. Even when we begin to read silently, and of course silent reading was not common in the west until the last couple of centuries, that physical vocalisation is still going on. Reading is a physical performance that integrates with the conceptual, so that the body is reading the words as we make sense of texts, become aware of words with our senses.

Hendricks agreed that the body reads the text, for her own readings had to be 'literally embodied' to be realised for others. This workshop on 'gesture' focused on training from acute angles, because gesture is a category that describes performance and embodiment, and the topics that emerged in looking at *The Winter's Tale* and *Titus Andronicus* were thematically to do with bodies and parts of bodies. Yet it is the case that the text is a kind of body that defines Hendricks' reading, and it is the skilled engagement with reading that underlies her approach to language and gesture. She stated in the early correspondence that 'as someone who works with texts as historical documents as well as performative texts ... what intrigues me (and keeps me deeply involved) is the fact that for the stage (and thus text) language is protean' (Hendricks, email). Her analysis of both textual and bodily gesture focused on working on and opening out the issues that could inform an actor's performance and its effects on the audience. And her process of analysis consisted of a series of questions with which she invited the participants of the workshop to engage.

Turning to *Titus Andronicus*, Hendricks began with the dominant theme of 'hands'. If Annabel Arden was interested in how 'the body animates the text', for Hendricks 'the text animates gestures'. *Titus Andronicus*, she claimed, engages 'that which is in ourselves with respect to a kind of disrespect for the human body – in times of war and in times of action and in times of revenge' (7). So many scenes in the play concern the act of dying, and use of the hands as gesture works with the text 'to give life to a body at the same time that life is being drained from that body'. This play in particular, with the loss of Lavinia's hands and of Titus' hand, relies on the text to animate the body, either mutilated or dying or dead. The animation of the text by the body is at least partly inspired by Hendricks' long-term commitment to disengage issues of race from the body, in order to re-engage them with the body in less predictable ideologically bound ways.[10]

Hendricks also shifted the perspective of the discussion to the responses of the audience, saying that the play 'forces you to … use your body to understand what's going on. The only way you can truly understand the impact of language on you psychically, on you intellectually, and on you physically is to pay attention to your own body' (7–8). She called attention to the moment in the opening scene when Tamora is told that her oldest son is about to be sacrificed, and asked 'What would it mean for us [the audience] to be at that moment …?' (8). Responding for the first time to this question, a question that surfaced repeatedly throughout the rest of the session, Hendricks said that her approach to working with practitioners as a dramaturge would be to raise questions about 'the possibilities for the actor in terms of the text animating the actors' bodies toward a certain relationship with the audience, with the [words of the] text, with the other characters or with the other persona on the stage' (*sic*) (9). This questioning of how the text forms relations between the actors on the stage, the language they are speaking, and the audience, calls forth a much larger signification of the word 'textuality', but also one that is rooted in language. She went on to say that for her gesture had been rooted in temporal issues, because language takes place in time, but that listening to Annabel Arden she had begun to think about gesture and space, and its construction of 'distance that takes you away from language but also takes you a little bit closer to it' (9). The spatial gesture adds significance and hence takes one away from the language alone, yet in setting up a dynamic tension with language it brings it out, draws one into an engagement with it. I would want to add that spatial gesture also involves time in the process of making the gesture that defines the space – gesture always takes place in time, it is not instantaneous. Just so verbal language, whether it is written/printed or spoken, has a spatial presence, on the page, in the air, within the body.

If she began with the hand as the most dominant thematic gesture in the play, Hendricks then added the 'eye', pointing out that *Titus Andronicus* is, if nothing else, interested in spectacle. The eye is intimately involved with many human interactions, yet when someone looks you straight in the eye, Hendricks argued,

> you're … struggling to remain focused [to] find something else to look at … What is it about looking each other in the eyes that itself gestures toward something and at the same time away from something? It's as though it's a protective device and at the same time a kind of exploratory device.
>
> (9)

In *Titus Andronicus* 'we are constantly being invited, … being positioned as voyeurs. We witness so much that we shouldn't have witnessed. Everything is laid out for us, and it's always done in relationship to the body' (10). Hence the way the text and the body interact 'builds into the way we are expected to see things', and 'sometimes our tendency to look away, look askance, prevents us from recognizing what it is that we are to see'. This poses real tasks for the actors, and she asked 'Can an actor guide us to [what] … we don't want to see?'

This central question released a multiplicity of ways of looking at text, the body and gesture. The first area for discussion was based on Hendricks' suggestion that skin colour is a gesture. She opened out a debate about the character Aaron, saying that depending on how we think about the racial tension between the Goths and the Romans, we will think about Aaron differently (7), adding that the audience must work out what it means that Aaron 'suddenly acquires an incredible amount of importance from … the second act of *Titus*. And then becomes … the way in which we understand all that takes place in this play'. Even in the first scene, in which he is silent, Aaron is there but not-there (Hunter, 12). Silence is also a kind of language, and in this scene it becomes a gesture toward all the unseen and unheard deaths that will occur in the play, specifically to the sacrifice of Tamora's son that takes place offstage at this point. And the fact that this gesture of silence comes from a character with black skin is going to animate the gesture in ways specific to the context of the audience. For the audience, Aaron's 'blackness surface[s] as a kind of gesture in this text: as something that animates the language associated with Aaron and the language associated with Titus and Tamora' (9). For example, Hendricks raised the possibility that for a contemporary audience in the United States, there can be no catharsis because the play does not allow us to walk away from it. Instead of ending with the deaths of Tamora and Titus, and implying that this long-standing conflict between the Romans and Goths was over, the play insists on returning to the remaining personae, including Aaron, who is then put to death even though he is not part of that conflict. This death is but one gesture that creates textual resistance to cathartic release.

Gregory Doran, who directed *Titus Andronicus* in South Africa with Tony Sher as Titus,[11] took up this question and talked about his production which cast the Goths as 'coloureds' and the Romans as Afrikaners, with Aaron and the Nurse as the only two black actors in the play. As a director acutely aware of the political and social contexts of producing *Titus Andronicus* in South Africa one year after the end of apartheid, he was particularly interested in how one black audience from the Anglican Church Society of Soweto responded to Aaron, who was in this context carrying 40 years of apartheid on his back, a very specific grudge. The actor playing the part was the hugely popular television soap star Sello Maake ka Ncube, and every action he took was interpreted as a significant gesture, for example, his silence at the beginning of the play. The audience even cheered him through the rape of Lavinia, but booed him when he chopped off Titus' hand, and cheered him again when he held his own child later in the play. Doran argued that the swings for and against Aaron did produce a cathartic experience for the black audience, themselves potentially locked into a cycle of violence, and that Marcus' words in the concluding scene, 'This scattered corn into one mutual sheaf, / These broken limbs again into one body' (5.3.70–1) were fully resonant with the newly formed Truth and Reconciliation Committee.

The gesture of Aaron's blackness also informs the textual gesture of fatherhood that runs throughout the play. How, for example, do the actors playing Titus and Aaron deal with the different attitudes to 'fatherhood' the text makes available to each of them (Hendricks, 11)? Aaron is initially portrayed as a 'better' father in a modern context because he spends time and energy trying to save his son, while Titus allows 'honour' to substitute for his children. Can the actor or the audience of today reconcile their social and cultural assumptions with those of Shakespeare's time? For example, the post-Victorian western concept of a parent 'willing to absolutely sacrifice for the child, everything' (Hendricks, 11) is an anomaly for the sixteenth century. Can an actor play the fact that Aaron's behaviour is something an 'uncivilised' person would do, that 'his actions are not appropriate to maintaining his honour? And could this be played in the opening scene: where you have maternity, paternity at odds with each other?' (Hendricks, 11). Aaron is further complicated as a character by his willingness to substitute his friend's white-skinned son for his own black-skinned child, in the Emperor's house (4.2.154–63). The action will

prevent the discovery of his sexual relations with Tamora, and save his son's life. But Aaron immediately betrays Tamora and her whole family to the Romans, resulting finally in her death and theirs, and, possibly, her substituted son's. Hendricks suggests the skin colour of the two boys upsets any idea of absolute black or white, and asks 'how do we deal with that white moor who … could have been the Emperor's son' (Hendricks, 11).

Skin colour as a gesture that engages the audience into the text in ways specific to context, overlapped with another of Hendricks' concerns, gender, and provoked her to ask about 'the whole issue of whiteness in terms of the representations of female bodies' in Shakespearean texts (9). Specifically in the opening scene of *Titus Andronicus*, when Titus tells Tamora that he is going to sacrifice her son, there is the question of how we read gender in historical terms, by paying attention to that gesture of sacrifice. It points us toward thinking about primogeniture and the importance of fatherhood in the Renaissance. The gesture prompts the audience to engage with what it would mean for her son Alabarbus to live, especially with Tamora in a captive state. It also by subtle analogy prompts us to compare Titus, and the ensuing sacrifice of his children, to Tamora, and to consider what it means for him 'to be positioned as a mother in terms of his struggles' (9).

Hendricks subsequently added:

> If one thinks about the representations of 'mothers' and war, it is somewhat easy to view Titus' mourning of his sons as emblematic of images of stoic mothers whose sons have died to save the warring nation. More importantly, when we (as spectators) expect Titus to react with anger and seek revenge at the deaths of his two sons and the rape/mutilation of Lavinia, we are given a 'weeping' almost inconsolable, thus effeminate Titus. The question: given the general absence of mothers in Shakespeare's play-texts, is this the text where the horrific events necessitate a maternal figure and Titus becomes both, though not simultaneously? That is, the father who sacrifices his children for the state and the 'mother' who mourns the sacrifice? … it seems to me that there is a physical change, a gestural shift if you like, in Titus at the moment of his two sons' deaths and the rape/mutilation of Lavinia, and that shift is the physical and intellectual awareness that he (Titus) somehow gave birth to that which claimed the lives of his children. And, the critic

> speaks here, perhaps Titus realizes if not understands Tamora's loss when he sacrifices her two sons.
>
> (Hendricks, email)

Furthermore, Titus' statement to Tamora that they are going to sacrifice her son in a sense reduces her to a body that produces children who become soldiers in a war machine: the female body 'is a machine and loses any animation, and it's disconnected from the children' (9). And, again by analogy, Titus himself becomes reduced to a kind of war machine.

The intimacy of much of the play, and the way that it consistently forces large social and political issues into private, domestic space so that we cannot avoid their brutality and violence, is itself a gesture, Hendricks implied, to the irresolvable structure of the play and its never-ending conflict. Once the private world has internalised what society needs from it, it perpetuates that horror. For example, as critic and historian she knows that the Romans did not sacrifice people on return from battle; she also knows that this information was available to Shakespeare who has Tamora say 'O cruel, irreligious piety!' (1.1.133) when Titus has Tamora's son Alarbus taken away to be killed. Here the text is prompting the actor playing Tamora to ask what is to be done with this knowledge, for the words indicate that the character knows that this is gratuitous slaughter rather than potentially honourable ritual. This example also displays the potential overlap between vocal gesture and verbal gesture in a challenging manner. Margo Hendricks asked how the actor playing Tamora in *Titus Andronicus* could infuse 'O cruel, irreligious piety!' with a gesture to alert the audience to its foretelling of all the other deaths in the play (Hendricks, email).

Margo Hendricks concluded her introduction with a comment that in working with actors, she has come across a perception that 'somehow the text circumscribes the body and that actors have to often go beyond the text in order to animate it' (11), they think that it is only a first step. Comparing a Shakespearean play with others that either explicitly or implicitly embed stage directions into the text, she suggested that actors need to establish a relationship that actively accepts that language will never be 'restrictive', it can only be 'liberating', and with that relationship in place 'text and body are almost one' (12). If we keep in mind what Hendricks says about her training as a critic, we could extend that relationship out to the reader, but with a different emphasis. Most skilled readers do treat language as if it will always release something more, be liberating in the sense of opening up significance, but readers could benefit from thinking about this process as one in which the text and body are almost one.

ACTORS AND CRITICS

Underlying all of Hendricks' introduction was a statement she made at the beginning: that she did not want to separate language from the body. From an earlier communication it is apparent that Arden would agree: her fascination 'lies in integrating a "physical text" with what I would call the vocal text in such a way that both action and gesture supply a level of meaning which is NOT POSSIBLE TO DESCRIBE IN WORDS' (Arden, email) – a fusion that ensures that 'movement is content', that there is no distinction between movement and text. What I find interesting about these statements is the word order. Hendricks worries about language and the body, and Arden about movement and text. It is as if each puts their primary training first, so that Arden focused on the actor and the body, and Hendricks on the audience and language. In the discussion that followed the opening introductions, the participants in the workshop moved to and fro between these different emphases, in a series of bridge-building exercises.

Arden picked up immediately on the difference between actor and audience, saying that, 'when you work on a play that you know you're going to perform with some kind of public, you have this time for rehearsal' (15), and in rehearsal although directors may have the audience in the back of their minds, they cannot encourage the actors to think too much about it. Actors 'have to experience, to gestate, in order to give birth' to a performance. She continued, 'There are certain things which in a rehearsal room are sublime, and never get seen because it becomes a reality of a different kind, because no-one's paying to see it' (15). The actors become spectators of their own work, 'It's very curious: you re-enact a drama for yourselves'. Although it was not mentioned during the workshop, I would suggest that the experience of reading groups is analogous. Just as people may have stereotyped views of how actors work, critics are similarly stereotyped as isolated individualists, whereas much of our work happens in communities of readers and writers and the final product occurs in the public space of a classroom, book, essay or conference.

For example, Gregory Doran noted that 'one of the differences between practitioners and, as it were, academics is that practitioners have to make a choice. Academics are lucky to be aware of several choices' (12). However, both critics and actors are aware of choices and can explore them with equal freedom until the public performance, typically in the critic's case, until the lecture, the conference paper, the written essay or book. During the performance both have to make final decisions about which elements they will choose, and for neither are these usually formal and rational decisions at all points, but often decisions that happen in the process, the moments of acting or writing or speaking. And readers or critics often also have their own rehearsal space – the classroom, the seminar, the reading group, or, like the actor, their partners and friends. What is different is that a primary rehearsal space for the reader is the physical activity of skilled reading which many of us do on our own, while engaging with a substantial body memory of previous texts, and that when we make public the mimesis of these readings, it is not always or even often recognisable to us or to others as a performance.

Shortly after the open discussion began, Patricia Parker began to address one of the ways in which critics and readers engage with the gesture of the text: through the families or relationships that words construct by the way they sound, or by their etymologies. Soon after *The Winter's Tale* begins, Hermione gives birth to her baby girl, and must be near the end of her pregnancy since she is 'something before her time, deliver'd' (2.2.25), a detail complicated by Polixenes' first words, that he has been in their house 'Nine changes of the watery star' (1.2.1) or nine lunar months. Her gestation must be quite evident, and in the workshop discussion Parker suggested that the floating play of the hand gestures and bodily gestation, with the word 'gest' (1.2.41) and near homonym 'guest' (1.2.53), is the language itself gesturing toward the ambiguity of Hermione's pregnant state, in which the baby is both guest and prisoner in the womb. At the same time, there is punning play on 'part' (1.2.10 and 1.2.18) and on 'parting' (1.2.42) as if there were some subliminal reference to 'parturition'. This kind of verbal sophistication and knottedness is to do with thoughts happening but not yet being worked out.

Another perspective on how readers and critics engage with this knottedness, was offered by Lynne Magnusson, a specialist in language and discourse. She pointed out the way that figuration becomes a gesture in itself, and offered as an example the scene in *Titus Andronicus* where Titus is drawing Saturninus into a debate about whether one should kill one's daughter if she has been raped (5.3.36–46). He performs an exact logical syllogism, asking the question 'Was it …' and receiving the answer 'It was …', then asking for the 'reason' and receiving the answer 'Because …', from which he concludes that he must kill her – and does so. The passion and tension infused into this dry syllogism provokes a verbal gesture of extraordinarily twisted contradiction that Magnusson suggested might be difficult for the actor to embody. What is the case is that the reader's analysis of the source of that contradiction in the rhetoric could become a tool for the actor's training. Rhetorical device directs the reader and actor to many textual gestures. A reader has to bring to bear all their training in an understanding of rhetorical device, syntax, poetics and punning on their working out of the interrelations between the words. Annabel Arden commented that actors too will bring all their rather different training to these 'seismic thought events' (16), and like the reader, will work on the relations during rehearsal. But she went on to note that the actor has only a moment to decide on how to perform the events, whereas a lecturer can plan in advance how they want to lay out the different elements of the signification.

When asked what kind of physical gesture the actor might make to indicate the pregnancy, Arden replied 'Well, she has to really play that tummy … awful prop. You know it's babies, pregnancies, money, daggers: they're all very difficult props' but in the end 'it's all about hands and sensuality' (17). The implication here is that the actor has to find a way of using the body to play the part; for example the prop has to be played as an extension of the body – but also that the subtle hand gesture may be more telling than the more obvious stage prop. At this point Martin White noted that often 'the unconscious gesture is more revealing', and the discussion moved on to the question of whether a theatre production could introduce a gesture new to an audience, and have them understand what is meant. The performance theorist Janelle Reinelt suggested that gestures always 'hover at the level of intelligibility' and that if they are powerful rather than clichéd, it is because they emerge into intelligibility when they are suited to the word in a novel way. In a subsequent communication Reinelt elaborated:

> How do we ever keep from simply repeating or recycling previous representational strategies? This is the question. I believe that in

> rehearsal, working in creative/investigative, often improvisatory styles, we sometimes stumble on new, powerful images and metaphors or ways of gesturing, or expressions (verbal, for that matter) that then become refined and 'chanced' – risked in performance. If the fit between what is possible to be experienced in a given culture at a particular moment works with the new creative vocabulary of the piece, there is breakthrough and 'novelty' appears.
>
> (Reinelt, email)

In effect the creativity of actors and directors is to 'bring into reception something newly intelligible' (Reinelt, 17). The training procedures of mask, improvisation and ritual, all encourage the repeated practice or rehearsal of body movements that realise significance in performance, that bring meaning into being during the process of acting, that bring gesture into intelligibility – or possibly intelligibility into gesture. A similar insight was offered by David Bradby, who prefaced his remarks with an anecdote about Diderot going to the theatre, watching a play with his fingers in his ears, and pronouncing that he could follow it perfectly because of the gestures (Bradby, 19). Hence, the language of gesture is 'deeply socialised communication' but practised like language with 'extremely individuated means' (Bradby, 19). A register of gestures could be one way into conceptual work with plays, but actors and audiences 'inhabit' plays today with styles of physicality unimaginable 50 years ago, let alone 400. At any particular moment in history the text becomes a formal ideological strategy that allows certain kinds of behaviour to the body which it defines as 'natural' for its time. Just so, the actor's body *because* it is behaving in a particular way naturalises and makes acceptable the text. The actor, faced with a piece of text that is 'difficult' or 'strange', rehearses to make it 'work', develops rituals or energies that make the text appropriate for the narrative action. Hence Bradby's claim that gesture 'naturalises the body of ideological structures' (19). This will happen in every time and place the play is produced. Gesture therefore becomes fundamental to situating the language in a specific context. In that context, gesture becomes a kind of physical proof, which, as Arden noted, is often the case in Shakespeare texts, for example the handkerchief in *Othello* (Arden, 4). But also, because gesture creates time and space, she continues, it can indicate a space that is not there and a time that has not been: you can create something that is not there (Arden, 5). Yet at the same time the

certainty of gesture can be undone by its context, which is why with theatre performance, people so frequently say 'you had to be there' or 'you had to see it, you see' (Arden, 5).

My own contribution to the debate would be to emphasise the fact that the reader or critic is engaged in a very similar project. The textual gestures informing a skilled reading and making it valuable, are precisely those that 'hover at the level of intelligibility', not naturalised yet playing around the edges of the register of gestures that people will recognise. Textual gestures, the words, phrases and structures that prompt significance, are context specific and historically situated because they are by definition at the edge of naturalised communication. But what makes communication naturalised will depend on the cultural and social environment. Russell Jackson noted that *The Winter's Tale* is different from *Titus Andronicus* in that the former uses psychological gesture, while the latter in based is symbolic gesture. The symbolic gestures of *Titus Andronicus* were, he suggested, more readily accessible to people, such as a sixteenth-century audience, trained in symbolic ritual, while the psychological gestures of *The Winter's Tale*, raised problems of interpretation and misinterpretation which were more in tune with a modern sensibility (Jackson, 18). What needs to be added is that both plays have a huge range of rhetorical gesture, which will be more, or less, familiar to a reading audience today.

Yet a twenty-first-century audience has got a range of symbolic gesture, even if it is not the same as the range found within a Renaissance cultural context. The colour of skin, the body of the mother or father, are symbolic physical gestures that are animated by the text into larger rhetorical gestures toward cultural and social topics. Similarly, the limbs of the characters in *Titus Andronicus*, a play in which 'excruciating things happen to limbs' (Hendricks, 7), have a symbolic as well as psychological significance. Lavinia's hands are cut off, her tongue torn out, and she is raped. Literally there is no more gesture possible from hands or voice. The invisible gesture of her chastity as wife to Bassianus, toward her father's honour and family name, can, depending on the play's production context, become invested by others on the stage and in the audience with a symbolic weight of shame. Gestures cannot be 'aware' unless there is reciprocity, an answering gesture, so that actor and audience (or another actor on stage) engage in this process of 'bringing into intelligibility' at their particular location in space and time, their situatedness. With Lavinia the body itself becomes the

gesture to the brutality that infests the narrative, to the excruciating implications of the loss of gesture, to the impossibility of depriving the body of gesture and communication even in death. But her body is also a narrative about the ingenuity of the human body in its need for gesture, when, for example, Lavinia uses the book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to reveal the invisible mutilations of the rape to her body, or when she uses a stick held in her mouth and guided by her feet to write the names of her two attackers. Deprived of its usual means of gesture the body finds others, such as tears.

Hendricks pursued the idea that we all learn gesture, all train ourselves in it by saying of Lavinia:

> How do you create something new and different in the gestures when you have no hands ... You have symbolic hands on some level because you know what it means to have had hands and to have lost them. [But since Lavinia has lost her tongue as well she] has to invent a new way of using the language that people understand without the familiarity of familiar gestures.
>
> (18)

The director Peter Lichtenfels discussed a production he had seen with a cast of actors, some able-bodied and some with a variety of hearing and speaking disabilities.[12] Lawrence Till had received a special grant to develop a production at the Octagon Theatre in Bolton for a mixed-cast company of hearing-speaking and deaf-mute actors. The work provided the opportunity to bring issues of ability into the mainstream, integrating differently abled actors, so that hearing-speaking actors learned signing (as in sign language) in order to work alongside others. The text was spoken by those who could speak, and signed by all the actors. Lavinia was played by a deaf-mute actor and Lichtenfels noted that her mutilation became especially horrific to the audience. Their context and knowledge of the actual absence of her vocal and aural capacity, made the performative rendering of absent communication intensely painful (Lichtenfels, 18), probably because that separation between the acted character and the actual actor dissolved in the mind of the audience. At the same time the actor's manifest skill as an actor to develop other kinds of ability, invested Lavinia's subsequent communication with enormous empathy as the dramatic text became compounded with and involved in the larger political context for people with disabilities in the Anglo-European world today.

A register of genre is socially and culturally shaped and given material presence, and all of us learn how to work with the expectations and contradictions that it enables. Writers use genre as a kind of 'handshake' or introduction to a particular perspective or approach. Register is recognised as such by readers engaging with texts, but this procedure is also recognised by theatre practitioners. Annabel Arden noted that as a director she has to 'create a climate' for a production from the start of the play by helping the actors to realise their 'awareness' of gesture (Arden, 19) and create the detail on which that climate depends. This 'climate' is similar to the 'register' that marks a reader's reading, and is being self-consciously constructed here by the director. Returning to Michael Gambon's 'perfect gesture for the play', Arden explained that while there is no one formal code that will guarantee that the audience is made to look at the hand, a director can chart moments like these throughout the play 'that occur and re-occur with all their musical variations ... like great symphonic writing' (19). The whole production has to support the actor's physical gesture for it to 'boost' meaning out to an audience.

With this observation the workshop concluded with one possible answer to Hendricks' question about the gesture that an actor would use to alert the audience to the significant foretelling of Tamora's 'O cruel, irreligious piety!' Arden described the moment from the perspective of a director:

> The son is taken away from her and so you've got – in musical terms – ... twenty-five bars, and then a fabulous exit. And then the only people left in any kind of focus are her and Titus. And she's got all the time in the world and she's also got an 'O'. She's got an 'O' to start with. And so the whole function of that line must be, the whole production has to help that actress, to do as little as possible but for those words to buttonhole what it means.
>
> (21)

Explicit in this comment is the belief that the entire production must work toward the gesture of the single actor: for example, that Tamora does not 'do' any gesture, others do it for her, as in Deborah Warner's production of *Titus Andronicus* in which the young men return from the murder/sacrifice covered in blood.[13] Also implicit in this comment is an understanding that many practitioners have about the vocal density of 'O', its physical articulation coming from below the solar plexus

region through the core of the body. The sound itself is a gesture, the word becomes a physical action as it moves through the body. In rhetorical terms, 'O' is an apostrophe, a reaching out to something that is not there – possibly questioning why this is happening yet knowing or sensing that no one will be able to tell her, possibly surprised by injustice, and possibly emptied by the sudden recognition of her son's death. But 'O' is a word difficult to carry off onstage, just as it is easy to skim past it in a reading. The register of the text, the climate of the production, has to set the audience toward a particular awareness of significance, so that it slows down and engages, participates in the gesture.

DISCUSSION

For the theatre practitioners, talking about gesture meant talking first about the body, about hands, eyes, voice, but also about props, costume and staging. Getting to grips with gesture and language meant talking about the actors' training in some detail, about their practices and physical preparation, about in this case masks and improvisation, about rehearsal and production. Part of this focus probably came about because the practitioners were not sure that the critics fully understood the kinds of skilled training that they have to do – after all to some extent everyone performs all the time. On the other hand, none of the practitioners present in the workshop felt it necessary to account for their ability to carry out subtle readings of the texts. For a literary critic, gesture is not only physical but part of the textuality. It works from words and phrases, to the larger structures of rhetoric and communication that invoke social, cultural and political topics. As skilled readers, the critics and performance theorists focused on the etymologies of words such as gest/gesture/gestate, on phrases such as the apostrophe 'O cruel, irreligious piety!', on syntax such as part and parting, on logic such as the effect of dry syllogism within a passionate declaration, on topics such as hands and eyes and the themes they generated around love, power, friendship and communication, and around the cultural issues of race, parenthood and ability, and the social structuring of our understanding of time and space.

As indicated at the beginning of this essay, there was however a curious imbalance because the critics and theorists never mentioned their training. They did not talk about their education or their practices, and probably took it for granted that the practitioners would

understand what they did because after all everyone learns how to read in school. But just as many first-year undergraduates think that acting is a simple exercise, so many people can read but do not realise that there are different types of reading. This is one of the reasons that this essay includes the recounting of Margo Hendricks' training as a reader. What that recounting sharply puts into the foreground is another element missing from the description critics give of themselves, that highlighted the fact that critics did not account for their readings as types of physical performance. For a reader or critic gesture is mediated by the text, the translation from the body to the world is via the page or stage, and is not often or necessarily seen as located in one's own body. While for a theatre practitioner, although the translation from the body to the world is still via the text, the text is usually mediated by the actor's body. Readers often if not usually bypass their own bodies when thinking about textuality. Practitioners never do, but they can frequently bypass the diversity of textuality. Neither the practitioners nor the critics discussed how the process of engaging the text into the body and the body into the text has long-term effects on physicality. There was no discussion about how to control those effects, manipulate them, use them; nor any attempt to account, for example, for the pleasure and fear involved in the act of reading or for how the practitioner succeeds in preventing the internalisation of character-parts. There is, in fact, a substantial body of literature addressed to the latter discussion, but virtually nothing on the former that could begin to account for the physical satisfaction that reading can yield.

In this workshop there was a meeting ground of sorts, especially between the directors and the performance theorists, and I conjecture here that this may have been so because both of these kinds of practitioners are self-consciously concerned not only with the production of the gesture but with the reception of the gesture by audiences. Actors rehearse and then perform; skilled and trained readers read and then perform self-consciously as a critic of one kind or another. In fact criticism in western educational settings seems to offer strong evidence for the need for some readers to perform their readings in formal environments. But for gesture to be more than reductive (Magnusson), restrictive (Hendricks), obvious (Jackson) cliché (Arden, Reinelt), it needs an audience, and the kind of engagement with audience that goes on is what lifts gesture into the liberatory (Magnusson, Hendricks), the practical (Cox), inhabited (Bradby), awareness (Arden). Where the two

groups began to talk to each other in positive terms was when they began to address that performative interaction, and the way that performers of any kind have to use gesture to 'bring into intelligibility' significance (Reinelt), for example the ethnic-specific casting in the South African production of *Titus Andronicus* (Doran) or the issues around ability foregrounded by the production in Bolton of the same play in which half of the cast were deaf-mute actors (Lichtenfels). To do so they have to 'inhabit' the language rather than simply rely on register (Bradby), they have to create a climate within which actor and audience can become 'aware' (Arden), or they have to read with their bodies (Hunter).

NOTES

1 An exchange of emails also took place before the workshop, with one email received each from Annabel Arden and Margo Hendricks. References to these communications, and to all other email communications with them and other participants which took place subsequent to the workshop, are cited as: (Writer, email).

2 Line references to the texts of these plays are to: *Titus Andronicus*, ed. J. Bate (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 1995, 3rd edition); and *The Winter's Tale*, ed. J.H.P. Pafford (London: Methuen & Co.; The Arden Shakespeare, 1963, 2nd edition).

3 Meyerhold's techniques have been used by later practitioners as an antidote to Stanislavski's acting methods that experimented with naturalism. However, he himself saw his work as a direct result of Stanislavskian observation rather than an act of contradiction.

4 Perhaps the best introduction to Lecoq's training comes from commentary contributed to the ongoing discussion that followed the workshop, from performance theorist David Bradby. He says, 'Arden explained that her understanding of gesture and movement in this sense derived from her training at Jacques Lecoq's *Ecole Internationale de Théâtre* in Paris, where she, Simon McBurney, and the other founder members of Théâtre de Complicité, had first begun to work together. It may prove helpful, in pursuing the aim of understanding what the actor can bring to the Shakespearean text, to dig deeper into what Lecoq understood by gesture. In the Lecoq School, a major part of the first year's work consists of what he called Movement Analysis, which is applied to the human body and to nature, charting the economy of physical actions. Lecoq says, "The things I had practised as an athlete naturally carried over into action mime. When I started, I used Georges Hébert's 'natural method', which analyses movement under eleven categories: *pulling, pushing, climbing, walking, running, jumping, lifting, carrying, attacking, defending, swimming.* These actions lay down circuits in the human body, through which emotions flow. Feelings, states and passions are expressed through gestures, attitudes and movements similar to those of physical actions. Young actors have to be aware of how the body can 'pull' or 'push' so that, when the need arises, they can express the different ways in which a character can 'pull' or 'push'. The analysis of a physical action does not mean expressing an opinion, but acquiring physical awareness, which will form an indispensable basis for acting".

Lecoq's method derives, not from character study, nor even from the search for a particular performance style, but from athletics. He believed that there are certain fundamental gestures and movements that every human being begins to make as a tiny baby, and that these all differ from one another in small ways, just as physical characteristics differ. Lecoq begins by working through very simple physical movements with the students, and then goes on to the analysis of what he calls "attitudes". By "attitude" he means a particular physical gesture that can be performed (and read) in a multitude of different ways. Through the interplay of such contradictions and variations, an extremely complex physical "score" may be built up, and give rise to a dramatic performance.

In the second year of the course in the Lecoq School, students are confronted with the concept of the "gestural language", characterised as different forms of mime, including what he terms *pantomime, figurative mime, cartoon mime* and the "*image*". He then moves on to the exploration of what he names the four great dramatic territories: *melodrama, commedia dell'arte, tragedy, bouffons* and *clowns*. For each of these, he emphasises the particular movements and gestures out of which they are constructed. In the case of *commedia*, for example, the actor must be able to develop movements and gestures that are acrobatic in the extreme. But although the starting point in the pedagogic method will always be the movement itself rather than its dramatic justification, the dramatic justification remains paramount.' See also Bradby's comments in Jacques Lecoq, *The Moving Body* (London: Methuen, 2002, 2nd edn), 74–5.

5 The technique was used very effectively in Maria Grazia Ciprani, *Romeo e Giulietta* (Teatro del Carretto, Riverside Studios, 1999).

6 Cressolio, L. (1620) *Vactiones Autumnales sive De Perfecta Oratoris Actione et Proununciatione* (Paris: Sebastioni Cramoisy,) and Vossius, G. (1633) *Commentariorum Rhetoricorum sive Oratariarum Institutionum* (Leiden: Joannis Maire).

7 See for example the work of Norma Shearer, playing Juliet in Georg Cukor's film of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1937, who uses her hands in what appear to us now as highly artificial movements. Two scenes from the film stand out in particular: the scene at the window (2.2) and the proepithalamium (3.2). Shearer was an actor who made the transition between the silent movie and the talkie.

8 Bulwer, J. (1644) *Chirologia and Chironomia*, ed J. Cleary, fore. D. Potter (Southern Illinois UP, 1974), and (1649) *Pathomyotania* (London: for Humphrey Mosely).

9 This gesture and others are found not only in Cicero's *Orator* but also in many other cultures, including Chinese physical cultures working with traditions dating from 3000BCE and outlined in early Daoist texts for practical exercise.

10 See for example her essay 'Civility, Barbarism, and Aphra Behn's *The Widow Ranter*', in eds M. Hendricks and P. Parker, *Women, 'Race,' and Writing in the Early Modern Period* (London, 1994), 225–39.

11 Gregory Doran's production opened at the Market Theatre, Johannesburg on 29 March 1995, and toured England later in the year.

12 *Titus Andronicus*, directed by Lawrence Till and Carole Tweedy, at the Octagon Theatre (25 March–10 April 1993).

13 Deborah Warner directed the Royal Shakespeare Company in *Titus Andronicus* at The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, opening 28 April 1987.

4

GESTURES THAT SPEAK: SPECTATORS WHO LISTEN

David Bradby (Royal Holloway, London): respondent
Greg Doran (Royal Shakespeare Company)
Russell Jackson (Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham)

Given the difficulty of matching the verbal density of a Shakespearean text on stage and in film, this study explores 'How a performance can get the audience to listen' from the viewpoints of both criticism and performance. Starting with the concept that a bare stage encourages the audience to listen while a film employs visuals to create its world, the essay turns first to the many strategies used by film to encourage the audience to listen, and then to specific examples of theatre practice which have used the visual image to stimulate an engagement with the text. The discussion contributes to an understanding of the growing range and repertoire of gesture, both in the media and the body of the actor, that can match the textual vocabulary in flexibility and variety.

Following Annabel Arden's exploration of some gestures that are available to the actor, this workshop developed the theme of how Shakespeare's language may be staged, using both gesture and visual image. An underlying problem might be paraphrased as follows: since Shakespeare's text offers a verbal density and complexity that is endlessly satisfying, how can actors hope to match this power and depth in what they bring to their performance? It is one of the oldest critical debates, and it would not be possible to rehearse all the different stages that have been worked through over the centuries. Taking our lead from Greg Doran's contribution, we shall concentrate on his account of the precise character and function of the actors' vocal work, before considering Russell Jackson's analysis of the use of image in the film of *Richard III* with Ian McKellen in the title role, and then returning