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ACTING THE AUTHOR: USING ACTING TECHNIQUES
IN TEACHING ACADEMIC WRITING

A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty of The University of Akron

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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August, 2012

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ABSTRACT

The process of becoming a writer – choosing the topic, recognizing the audience, acknowledging the facts and theories of the subject – is similar to that which an actor goes through to design a specific character for a specific role. This similarity, and its inherent potential for effective teaching and learning, has been neglected in the Composition/Rhetoric field's literature and in the college writing classroom. Some students come to First Year Composition (FYC) with the understanding that writing is merely repeating what the instructor has told them, and writing in the way the instructor has told them, not realizing that they, too, have a voice. This is not a new observation, and composition theory has and continues to address the issue of developing a writerly voice, but the problem remains: students too often do not develop their own well-rounded author/character, but stick to a flat stereotype instead, producing writing that is uninteresting, disengaged, and ineffective. This project argues that there are various processes an actor might choose to create each character he portrays on stage or in film, and that understanding these processes could help the student writer develop his own author character during the writing process, thus producing more effective texts and enabling a more fruitful process for future writing.

Method Acting is one of the unique processes which make use of multiple influences and experiences that contribute to the forming and presentation of the self. A clear parallel may be found between the process a method actor goes through to create and present his character within the context of a play or film and the process an

expository writer (journalist to essayist) goes through to create and present his text. Little has been written of this parallel thus far, and it may be useful to evaluate its potential for integration into the traditional implementation of the writing process, as well as the pedagogies used in composition and research courses.

DEDICATION

Acting the Author: Using Acting Techniques in Teaching Academic Writing is dedicated to the students and faculty of North Central State College who continually challenge me to be the best instructor I can be and to the Composition/Rhetoric professors of the University of Akron who continually challenge me to go beyond the classroom discussions and to develop my own academic character – the best Composition/Rhetoric instructor I can possibly be.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In my first year of graduate school at the University of Akron, Dr. Julie Drew posed a question during a Theories of Composition class which inspired this project. This project would not have the scope and depth it does without her asking at a key point in the discussion whether there could possibly be a situation whether a writer could be dishonest and still tell the truth. I suggested a Method acting comparison with the writer embodying a character who is writing. I am grateful to the inspiration, challenges, encouragement, advice, and more of Dr. Drew, as well as UA English Composition/Rhetoric faculty Dr. Lance Svehla and Dr. William Thelin.

Finally, this project would not be possible without the support of North Central State College, beginning with English Chair Deb Hysell, the English faculty – especially the adjuncts who rally support for every new adventure through graduate school. I am also extremely grateful for the friendship, frequent proofreading, editorial discussions, prayers, and calming nature of my friends, Joice and Gus Cating, Sunny and Jim Kirk, Myra Enright, as well as all of my family.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first day of each new term in the First Year Composition course typically produces a whirlwind of expectations and fears for students, as well as names, faces, and expectations for instructors. We would like to assume our students are well prepared in their secondary coursework for the challenges ahead but we know some of them are not. In fact, few of them are ready for what they are about to experience. How could they be? They are transitioning from the familiar world, where they are at once confident, unconfident, and/or complacent with their own writing abilities as experienced in high school, to the not-so-familiar world of varying discourses within the university. Few college freshmen, high school graduates, non-traditional students, or basic writers have first-hand experience with, or a clear concept of, college life, let alone college writing requirements¹. Students have varied experience with the culture of education, but at similarly varied levels. Students also have varied experience writing in an educational setting, also at different levels. Writing is, after all, a recursive experience, “which actually consists of multiple process and sub processes influenced by innumerable factors of context, personality, cognitive development and so on,” researcher Gerald Nelms summarizes (108). And rarely is that process the same for each individual writer or student writer.

Composition instructors easily recognize transitioning students who appreciate that college work is different and make an attempt to write academically, only to misuse vocabulary, overuse punctuation, awkwardly phrase opinions, and illogically organize their presentations. David Bartholomae explains these confusing and transitory writings some First Year Composition students submit to their instructors for feedback in his essay “Inventing the University.”

Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion – invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like history or anthropology or economics or English. The student has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community. (605)

The students are in essence taking on new roles. They are to play the parts of well-studied, highly motivated, self-assured critical thinkers. Often they are fulfilling the analysis requirements demanded of them, according to Linda Flower, but since “cognition mediates context,” we often see writers missing the mark we’ve required. In her “Cognition, Context, and Theory Building,” Flower summarizes the results of one study of first-semester writing students and their interpretations of an assignment: “Students may fail to perform an expected writing and thinking task which they could do because, through their own constructive process of task representation, they gave themselves a different task to do” (289). Students can and often do misrepresent the academic roles they are attempting to play, as Bartholomae argues. They are attempting to embody a role with which they have no experience, disappointing themselves as well as their instructors. At this initial point in their academic careers, the students are inventing their new roles based on their own understanding of, and experience with,

college. Bartholomae suggests that “[Students] must dare to speak it or to carry off the bluff, since speaking and writing will most certainly be required long before the skill is acquired” (*Inventing* 606). In some ways it is a remarkable performance. Writing requires acting, not playacting as a child plays his favorite superhero or familiar high school musical, but the dramatic theatre, or, more accurately, the mimetic theatre. *Mimesis* literally denotes imitation, but since Plato we have understood that *mimesis* also requires more depth than representation of a character. It is a presentation of the self as it functions within its reality – with all the quirks and naturalness reality implies. Where a representational theatrical performance can be flat and lacking in depth, a mimetic performance is a transformation or morphing of an actor who seems to disappear, leaving only the fully embodied character in performance (Stanislavsky 26-27). It is well documented that the ancient Greeks developed the theatre as a means of inaugurating the populous into the dominant social, cultural, political, and religious ideologies of the time. First Year Composition students are firmly in the midst of this transition into comprehension and inauguration into full use of academic rhetoric.

These ancient rhetorical processes are reflected in the philosophy of Plato, but the Aristotelian paradigm has remained a standard (though contested standard) throughout the centuries. Plato contends that “Drama represents human beings in action, either voluntarily or under compulsion; in that action they fare, as they think, well or ill, and experience joy or sorrow” (qtd. in Ley 199). Plato sees the actor as imitating the higher, intangible realm which fosters creation, subjugating the actor. However, Aristotle approaches *mimesis* differently. In fact, “Drama is usually conceived in Aristotelian

terms, as a mimetic art distinguished by its manner of presentation (dramatic dialogue) and analysable in terms of the object of its imitation (praxis action) and its constituent parts: mythos (plot), ethos (character), dianoia (thought), lexis (diction), melos (song), and opsis (spectacle)” (Vince 41). Aristotle’s definition of *mimesis* is a synthesis of aspects of imitation, which appears to contradict his mentor, but which actually resolves Plato’s concern with truth in performance. In Chapter 4 of *Poetics*, Aristotle observes that mutual learning connects an audience and actor to ensure a successful performance, adding that “one’s pleasure will not be in the picture as an imitation of it, but will be due to the execution or colouring or some similar cause” (227). In other words, an engaging performance is not because the actors remember their lines and hit their marks on stage, but in the subtleties of how those actors create, interpret, and embody their character roles, thus making the performance appear as real as possible. Later, in Chapter 6, Aristotle emphasizes that naturalness in the performance is key: “the subject represented also is an action; and the action involves agents, who must necessarily have their distinctive qualities, both of character and thought, since it is from these that we ascribe certain qualities to their actions” (230). While Plato focuses solely on the actor’s development, Aristotle reminds us it is the *audience* whom actors are attempting to please in performance and who ultimately critique the performance.

Students, like actors, arrive at the university recognizing their new roles within new companies. To those roles students, like actors, also bring their personal experiences of education and life in general, individual plans of study, and private dreams of their future. Academia awkwardly supports that. We ask students to recreate themselves as

academics – characters new and often unfamiliar. We require students to discuss their ideas on our terms, not theirs, using our language within our discourse. We expect assimilation as we evaluate their academic performance.

Assimilation at times requires a façade – even if only temporary – which is also not a new concept for the rhetorician – but often is unfamiliar and uncomfortable, even surprising, for our students. Rhetoricians know Isocrates suggests “framing speeches for particular situations” and improvising with content as necessary (69). In fact, Socrates’ description of *kairos* includes a “catalog of the human soul so that he can adapt his discourse to whomever he addresses” (*Plato* 85). Academics are already assimilated – and have been for a long time; our roles are established. First-year writing students believe theirs to be established too, but their experiences – and our expectations – often undercut their belief. However, as Thomas Newkirk argues in *The Presentation of Self*, empowerment is key to developing one’s personal agency as an academic. Further, students, like academics, also need to recognize the fact that the Self we are empowering has numerous constraints rather than autonomy (Newkirk 45). These constraints are played out daily before a variety of audiences.

We are all always performing – taking on a variety of roles every minute of our lives. We become caregivers when someone is ill. We become children when we fight with our siblings or visit our parents, even if we are legal adults. We become parents when our parents can no longer care for themselves or when our friends set out on an ill-advised adventure. We become accountants when we balance the checkbook each month. We become students every time we study new gadgets on the market or how one works.

We become teachers whenever we are asked directions to a local site. Although we may fail, we tend to strive for perfection. Victor Turner, author of *From Ritual to Theatre*, suggests “[Acting] may be the essence of sincerity – the commitment of the self to a line of action for ethical motives perhaps to achieve ‘personal truth,’ or it may be the essences of pretence – when one ‘plays a part’ in order to conceal or dissimulate” (102). At any given moment we are responding in character to whatever role – or roles – we have assigned ourselves or which we have been assigned by another. We become who we need to be for the relationship of the moment. But, as playwright Luigi Pirandello writes:

Do we really see ourselves in our true and genuine reality, as we are, or don't we rather see ourselves as we would wish to be? Through a spontaneous inner artifice, the fruit of secret tendencies or of unconscious imitation, do we not in good faith believe we are different from what we substantially are? And we think, work, and live according to this fictitious yet sincere interpretation of ourselves. (transl. in Casey 51)

Who we are at any given moment may not be who we truly are, but it may yet be an honest vision. We visualize our roles and actions as we embody those roles, in a way using them as rhetorical moves to accomplish or enhance a specific interactive mission¹.

We use visualization techniques more than we might realize. Long before we choose or assume new roles, parents and teachers ask us to visualize our futures: “what do you want to be when you grow up?” or from some, the value imposed “*who* do you want to be when you grow up?” We encourage our students to dream. In applying for the

¹ This study focuses primarily on the parallels and interconnections between acting theories/ pedagogies and composition theories/pedagogies; therefore, I have had to assume a somewhat monolithic field of composition, which does not recognize debates within composition theory such as the expressivist/transcendentalist vs. postmodernist/poststructuralist debate regarding subjectivity and essentialism. These are important and relevant issues regarding my project, but this thesis focuses on performance rather than truth/reality.

dream job, career services blogger Halle Crawford argues “Why dream first? Why turn to the fanciful side of your brain when everyone keeps telling you that a practical plan is the key to success? Because it works. While a practical plan is one of the strongest keys to success, the best-laid plans always start with the dream—a dream that you can trim and shape later to fit your real-life situation” (Crawford). Once hired, business guru Peter Drucker suggests visualization brings clarity not offered in the timeframe of actual experience (Yusoontorn 8). Guided imagery, or visualization, is utilized in other fields as well. A search of the University of Akron web site yields visualization courses in mathematics, computer science, as well as discussions of molecular visualization of DNA and visualization of behavior in space. Visualization has long been common practice in medicine. The American Cancer Society offers cancer patients a large selection of books, articles and other materials to help one focus the mind to enable it to help heal the body, control pain: “Imagery can help to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression; manage pain; lower blood pressure; ease some of the side effects of chemotherapy; and create feelings of being in control” (American). Not only does a diagnosis of cancer create stress, but many of the treatments are painful or stressful for patients, causing reactions in both the body and the mind which could inhibit healing. Recorded evidence of visualization in healing dates to the 13th and 14th centuries, with accounts of followers of Buddha imagining him healing diseases (American). Visualization is studied as effective in determining one’s character, devising one’s moral or value system, or healing one’s own mind and/or body. Who are we when we dream? Who do we hope to model ourselves

after? Entire careers are devoted to assisting people to visualize their own lives – often with successful results.

Creation of the character of the author and its audience is often discussed in relation to personal growth and in developing relationships both as a positive necessity and as a cautionary lesson. In fact, “according to Quintilian the rhetorician must ‘possess, *and be regarded as possessing*, genuine wisdom and excellence of character’” (qtd. in Newkirk 5). However, this relational development is rarely discussed as an essential piece of the academic writing process we encourage our students to utilize. In academia especially, we are expected to present our authorship as authoritative, witty, alluring, and meaningful – something many of our first year college students see as unfamiliar, even foreign. Such nuanced authorship is usually not within their practiced pre-college writing habits.

As in any social context, when we write we control, or attempt to control, what and how information is released to our readers. To that end, Goffman theorizes, “All forms of ‘self-expression,’ all of our ways of ‘being personal’ are forms of performance” (qtd. in Newkirk 3). The product of writing is meant to be a conversation or discussion on paper of a topic of interest to both the writer and the reader. But, as in a verbal discussion, one day that conversation might take one route to its conclusion, and another day another route might end with a different conclusion. It can change from one minute to the next as well. We all mull things over and come to the discussion again with new insight, a different argument or approach, or a varied interpretation of earlier discussions.

In this way, the writer creates and continually refines his character as he presents his case on paper. Ergo, the writer *rehearses*.

What the writer does under the pressure not to write and the four countervailing pressures to write is best described by the word ‘rehearsal’... writers are ‘in a state of rehearsal all the time.’ (Murray *Writing* 376)

Here, in “Writing Before Writing,” Murray quotes Donald Graves, explaining that Graves noticed this “rehearsal” while studying how young children learn to write. The children first drew what they were going to write and then spoke aloud what they thought they might write, all before actually putting pen to paper. Murray noted this occurs in newsrooms and other professional offices. So, too, graduate assistants’ and college professors’ offices are full of student writers talking to themselves while discovering something new in their own research, in their own writing – or in themselves.

What, then, with all this discussion of acting, and multiple roles, and rehearsal, do we do with the time-honored notion of an “authentic voice?” The authentic voice can be seen as that of a socially constructed Self. Foucault and others argue the Self doesn’t exist but is an amalgamation of outside influences and the experience the individual has with those forces. In other words, our individuality is held in the character we create in any given context and any given moment from these influences and, subsequently, the character we present to the world.

Konstantin Stanislavsky’s Method Acting, in its organic definition, is a unique process which makes use of the influences and experiences we have in forming ourselves. There is a parallel between the process a method actor goes through to create and present his character within the context of a play or film, to the process an expository writer

(journalist to essayist) goes through to create and present himself as the author of his text. Bobbi Jo Weiss also points this out in her book *Writing is Acting*. Like actors, “[writers] compose text in our heads, revise it, and edit it, shaping it just right so that it communicates exactly what we want to say at just the right moment” (Weiss xi). The Method Acting process to create and perform a believable character illuminates in some important ways the process a first year college student, or even a high school student, goes through to develop a concept of himself as an author, as a writer, and a concept of himself in those roles relating to an audience . Other acting theories in both western and eastern cultural history could likely provide additional parallels, but here this project focuses on Stanislavsky’s acting theories, and its subsequent interpretations by his own students and their prodigies. The similarities between these developmental processes suggest the possibility of new pedagogical approaches to writing instruction which draw specifically from the teaching and practice of acting.

CHAPTER II

METHOD ACTING THEORY(S)

Stanislavsky and his critics

Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) is both hailed and hated. Actors, directors, and critics chose what they liked of his theories and tossed out the rest. One of his most famous students Michael Chekhov, whom Stanislavsky himself promoted to director of the Moscow Art Theatre, did not agree with all of his mentor's teachings, insisting on fewer conventions in directing *The Seagulls*. Stanislavsky was still, however, impressed with the performance (Stanislavki 74). He was not the tyrannical director of spoofs. He allowed for opposing viewpoints, noting himself that "forcing [art] is our most dangerous enemy" (Stanislavsky xxvii). Vsevolod Meyerhold, and later Yevgeny Vakhtangov, along with American devotees Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler, each added their own voices and interpretations to Stanislavsky's "System," which they taught. However, Stanislavsky argues that his name, or anyone's, attached to the "System" is inaccurate. The Soviet government also co-opted Stanislavsky's work. His theories have been distorted in numerous ways throughout the 20th century, according to experts, including Sharon Marie Carnicke, author of *Stanislavsky in Focus: An Acting Master for the 21st Century*. The "System," or "Method" as it is more popularly known, is distorted by the varying lenses through which one perceives Stanislavsky's teaching. Then, just as a character is created, the "System" is recreated for a specific use or purpose. Such

adaptations often lead to misunderstandings, even misinterpretations. Carnicke explains, “Many who reject [Stanislavsky] actually reject his constructed image, not his fundamental intuitions about acting” (4). It’s these reinterpretations and adaptations of Stanislavsky’s “Method” which are rejected, not the primary exposition of his work. Stanislavsky himself warned of “false disciples” in the original draft preface to *An Actor’s Work*.

Avoid these like the plague. They are dangerous because they approach the system superficially ... Simplistic thinking is dangerous. It springs from narrowness of mind, lack of talent, obtuseness in understanding the human soul and one of the most complex processes of its inner life. Stupid people do all the external exercises for their own sake, forgetting that they are not what matters. (xxvii)

This superficial use of the “Method” was the focus of a classic acting monologue by Danny Kaye (*The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*) spoofing various misinterpretations of the “Method.” Elizabeth Hapgood, Stanislavsky’s interpreter and original translator, expounded on this in her editing notes for *Stanislavski’s Legacy: Comments on Some Aspects of an Actor’s Art and Life*. Some teachers claiming to utilize the “Method” with their students “actually only use a fraction of his all-embracing technique” (Stanislavsky 7). These distortions are also complicated by translation challenges. In her forward to *An Actor’s Work*, translator Jean Benedetti confesses the work has “always presented problems” (xv). From his initial pen to paper in 1888, the draft changed significantly and was transformed from lecture notes into the diary in the late 1920s. Further, one volume became two with Part One being published in Russian in 1938 and Part Two in 1953. Additionally, Stanislavsky feared being misunderstood not only for his acting theories but

also for his politics and his social status. Critics do tend to challenge his views in both areas, tying them too tightly to his acting theories.

Similarly, there will likely be some concerns about adapting Stanislavsky's Method acting techniques to the First Year Composition classroom. If translations of his work are discredited, if his acting techniques are discredited, if his theories are discredited, why would they be applicable in a writing classroom? Stanislavsky insists on the goal of embodiment but theorists disagree about whether that goal can be fully achieved. Those beliefs impact one's understanding of Stanislavsky's theories. Because the organic Stanislavsky, as organically as we can find his work, offers many techniques which could be co-opted to assist FYC students in developing a concept of themselves as academic writers, as authors/writers, and as having authentic voices, as well as offering an understanding of the various roles the Self must play within, without, and transitioning between and among varied discourses. "Acting is above all intuitive," Stanislavsky argues in his in draft preface. "Intuition must be the bedrock of our work, because our constant concern is the living human spirit, the life of the human soul" (xxiv). Teaching is sensitive work, so we must examine the criticisms of Stanislavsky's work before we venture to explore its use. We must know our students and be responsible in our understanding of the challenges to adapting such a controversial figure's work, not just to adapting cross-disciplinarily. Instructing First Year Composition entails assisting students to redefine, renew, and re-evaluate not only their writing but the Self they necessarily must develop in order to articulate their opinions, their research, and their analysis in a new discourse.

It is not a surprise that Stanislavsky's theories are targeted and often labeled as not credible. Beginning in the 1930s, the Russian's writing was co-opted first by Stalin, whose regime created an "official" version of Stanislavsky's work as its primary text for the Moscow Art Theatre's acting school, calling the "System" "the only method for reaching Socialist Realism in the theatre" (qtd. in Carnicke). The school was the model for others inside and outside the Soviet Block. Carnicke explains, "Soviet censorship did more than ban books; it also prescribed what could be said and written" (95). The Soviet regime's manipulation of Stanislavsky's original work did not end until long after his death. In fact, Western journalists filled the news segments with reports of stringently increased censorship in Russia immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union. Further, the censorship of Stanislavsky also extended to his classroom lectures, discussions, and public appearances. Soviet-ordered criticisms also deflected attention from Stanislavsky's original discussions and fed the artistic hero image of the director/teacher. Of course, Stanislavsky was not a lone target. Attempts to skirt the Soviet censors have been well documented. Writers attempted to mask their work with "metaphoric insurrections, allegoric disguises, hidden ciphers, cryptic symbols, ambiguity, paradox, enigma, esotericism, and illicit changes in signs" (qtd. in Carnicke 95). The *Collected Works*, the most recent published edition of Stanislavsky's work, includes formerly suppressed materials. However, according to Carnicke, "With the fall of the USSR in 1991, the archives were emptied of all his personal writings including those that the censor had disallowed" (96). Drafts, notes and letters inform the new edition. Stanislavsky's purposeful connection of the mind, body, and soul was one point

the Soviet censors objected to, as well as any discussion of the economy or materialism. Such censorship changed not only Stanislavsky's writing, but imposed a public persona on the renowned acting coach.

Misreadings, misinterpretations, imposed lexicon, imposed interpretations, and a prescribed public persona opened Stanislavsky to criticism discrediting the "Method" for more than its imposed political subtext. Gender critics have dismissed Stanislavsky for stereotypical treatment of women. As Carnicke allows, "he does at times betray his nineteenth century upbringing in the fictionalized depictions of women students in his acting manual" (5). It is argued that the American version of Method Acting is invested in the sublime forcing actors to disappear into their characters. Critic Denis Salster explains:

Effacing cultural differences in what is often an act of personal sacrifice; you don't stand outside the character, as it were, to explore yourself and your attitudes (emotional, psychological, physical, and ideological) towards it at every deliberately exposed moment of your 'performance.' (qtd. in Krasner 9)

This lack of self-observation prevents actors from evaluating their actions in light of the values or politics of the character they are portraying. Critics contend this forces actors into unyielding stereotypes, objectifications (especially of women), and self-sacrifices. Critics also argue the "System" is based in Freudian psychology, and its gender-specificity. Access to these models differs as well. However, Krasner argues "Method Acting consistently demands an 'intensely autobiographical' approach, requiring actors to

peak from their subjective experiences” (13). It is true, however, that Method Acting is not often favored in academic circles because of these varied interpretations³.

Using practices which develop motivation, justification personalization, affective memory, believability, authenticity, subtext, organic behavior, and subjectivity, Stanislavsky challenged actors to avoid what he saw as hollow, superficial, clichéd gestures, insisting they no longer pretend, offering audiences an untrue, distorted picture of real life. Instead, he argued that “acting is more than seeming to be real ... acting and pretending are utterly different and...the distinction is both subtle and crucial” (Stanislavsky x). Stanislavsky’s organic Method Acting is more fully reliant on the actor’s understanding of the Self than critics contend. Krasner explains “At its root, Method actors find a theme, or interpretation that allows them to build a role from conviction. The Method induces an authenticity rooted in that conviction” (14). Krasner continues pointing out that the Method actor can step outside his character and address the audience, comment on his character or both.

In actuality, Method acting challenges the trite, often offensive, formulaic acting Stanislavsky is accused of perpetuating. Stanislavsky understood the polarization of theatrical theory pulling the actors into the classic argument of content vs. form. Actors were and still are concerned about the importance of the text they are to convey becoming more or less important than how it is conveyed. Form is often too mechanical for Stanislavsky’s stage.

³ Stanislavsky’s main critics were his fellow directors, actors, and students, including contemporaries Meyerhold, Michael Chekhov; Americans Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler and Maria Ouspenskaya; and more recently Joshua Logan, and Sam Tsikhotsky.

Once he is accustomed to reproducing the role mechanically, the actor repeats it without any expense of nervous or mental energy. He not only considers this quite unnecessary but even damaging to a public performance, as every emotional disturbance upsets his control and alters the shape and form of something that has been permanently set. Imprecision of form and uncertainty as to how it is to convey it damage its effect. (Stanislavsky 25)

A common modern theatre example of this is the use of computer recorded music for community theatre productions. It certainly saves the production cost of an orchestra but forces mechanized acting during what are often the more emotionally charged points of the play, when characters need to be free to explore their ‘Selves’ as they live through the play. In *Action in Perception* Alva Noë argues the actor’s “Perception is input from the world to mind, action is output from mind to world, thought is the mediating process;” further, “all perception ... is intrinsically active. Perceptual experience acquires content thanks to the perceiver’s skillful activity, [and] all perception is intrinsically thoughtful” (Noë 3). Without the freedom to experience, the character cannot grow as the author intended and the illusion is gone.

Basically, Stanislavsky expects an illusion of absolute truth and naturalness from his actors. The actor must develop an inner sense of truth “which supervises all his inner and physical activity, both when he is creating in rehearsal and when he is performing his part” (Stanislavsky Legacy 152). This supervision will provide the actor the inner justification necessary to eliminate the mechanical outward appearances, or hollow representations, of the character being portrayed. The key to truth lies in the acting sequence of Action – Reaction – Decision. In *An Actor’s Work*, Stanislavsky shares his theories via a diary of a young acting student who discovers “That is why a role based on

natural forms flourishes, while one based on playacting and amateur ham-acting soon becomes lifeless and mechanical” (33). Stanislavsky notes, just as the physical and emotional are not easily divisible in real life, neither are they divisible in a character on the stage. He compares this to the difference between a painting and a photograph: “the latter reproduces everything, the former only what is essential” (Stanislavski 28).

Similarly, the actor is not divisible from the character.

The actor who doesn't reproduce, doesn't playact but continuously performs actions which are genuine, productive, appropriate purpose, the actor who communicates not with the audience but with his fellow actor, is one who keeps inside the play and the role, with living truth, belief, and the “I am being”. He is living the truth onstage. (Stanislavsky 158)

To accomplish this vision of a living theatre, Stanislavsky suggests the actor not only (re)creates the character the playwright has drawn, but that the idea of “Self” is tied to that character, which is mutually created by the actor and the audience, rather than tied to the actor. It is the text which offers insight into the ethos or true character being portrayed. Stanislavsky insists actors justify the text of the character's motivation in order to inform the actions, intentions, and objectives which then creates a believable performance (Krasner 5).

Stanislavsky's “System” connects the actor's Self directly and intrinsically to the character being portrayed. The actor gives himself to the character, finding its depth in the text, combining it with the actor's own experience to not merely become the character on stage: experience directs the motivation of the character onstage. David Krasner, editor of *Method Acting Reconsidered*, explains that Method acting is not so much a merger of character and Self as it is an act of faith the actor imposes on the role. ... This

choice (conviction) stimulates his will to create, to act, and to live through the role” (15). Although Stanislavsky argues the Self is in a state of continual rediscovery as it chooses elements developing a character for the stage, the “System” is criticized as uncompromising. In recent history, critics are revisiting their challenges to Stanislavsky’s work. Krasner points out: “The Method insists that the actor is a thinking contributor to the production rather than being a puppet subservient to the play and its director” (11). The actor who subjects himself to the authority of the director, or the producer, or the author solely or collectively, without offering his own concept of the character becomes merely a reporter making little connection with the audience. Consider Christopher Reeves’ embodiment of Clark Kent and how few actors since have ventured – or wanted to venture – into that role. Reeves’ classic portrayal of Kent indelibly links the man and the character, as Siegel and Schuster linked Kent and Superman. It is the actor who embodies the role through observation and imagination, and who arguably helps to create the character and perpetuate the actor-character relationship. Carnicke is more adamant, noting that inaccurate co-opting of Stanislavsky’s teachings is the cause of the negative attitude toward the “System”: “Many who reject him actually reject his constructed image, not his fundamental intuitions about acting” (4). Instead, she says, Stanislavsky offers no absolutes. His teaching is non-dogmatic and suggests no single approach to a role or a play. Stanislavsky himself denies his “System” is the ultimate solution. Actors must filter direction, memory, text, and more. Co-opt the “System” for their own uses and purposes while creating characters. Then, develop it further. (Stanislavsky xxv). In fact, spontaneity is a core component of the “System” as Stanislavsky explains it: “Truth and

belief arise spontaneously in the mind or are created by the complex working of our psychotechnique” (160). When one is in character, whether in life or on stage, there are no absolutes. There is no single right way to act.

Elements of the stanislavsky’s “system” or “method”

In summary, the “System” or “Method” offers steps to “the true creative state of an actor on stage” (Stanislavski 20). Stanislavsky lays out the stages in *An Actor’s Work*, going into great depth regarding best practices for success in each stage. Stanislavsky writes, “Artistic forms that are meant to convey the inner life of a role, are difficult to find and are created slowly, and never become wearisome. They are self-renewing; they grow continually, and invariably thrill both actor and audience”(33). The stages of development – of self and role - may appear linear but are actually recursive, paralleling the draft, revision, and product phases of writing. Character development also relies on several practices of self-development which are also recursive, occurring throughout all stages. Method acting “encourages the actor to approach a role as if it were an invitation to reveal himself” (qtd. in Krasner 11). This is not a typically starchy, dogmatic textbook, however; Stanislavsky offers his teachings from the perspective of an acting student and in the form of that acting student’s diary, a student whose first day would rival any First Year Composition student’s first day. The instructor, Arkadi Tortsov, asked for a first day essay – or in this case a first day performance on stage, with lighting and in costume with make-up, of a play extract of the students’ own choosing. But, “the students froze, bewildered ... I felt like going to Tortsov and asking him to transfer ...” (Stanislavsky 5).

This preparation is detailed. Like First Year Composition instructors ask their student writers, Stanislavsky asks his actors to analyze the text and the role from an historical, social, political, literary, and aesthetical perspective, including at every point the relationships among characters – thus delving into “the world of the play” (Farber 18). Originally a two year program under Stanislavsky, the first year focuses on experiencing, the second on embodiment. Adaptations have reorganized the “System” into three stages of learning: preparation, rehearsal, and performance. The first stage of an actor’s work is merely exercising to train an actor to be creative. To do that, however, one must be physically free to control oneself, attentive and alert, listen and observe on stage as in real life, and in a state of belief. Both the conscious and the subconscious must be stimulated directly and indirectly in order to control one’s creative efforts, Stanislavsky argues (17). Exercises engage one physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Preparation is as vital for actors as it is for writers. Like acting, writing requires full engagement – stamina, passion (and control of it), as well as interpretation, analysis, and critical thinking. Author of “Tolstoy, Stanislavski, and the Art of Acting,” R.I.G. Hughes explains: “Underpinning his system of acting is the belief that an actor, by placing himself in imagination in a particular situation, can not only imagine certain feelings, but can be brought to experience them; moreover, these feelings present themselves to him and to those observing him as the feelings ‘appropriate to the given circumstances’” (42). The latter, Hughes explains in a footnote, becomes a rehearsal mantra.

Stage two: Once the actor is in a “true inner creative state” it is possible to comply with the terms of the text of the play. The character is drafted in stage one and rehearsed

in stage two. Rehearsal is a time of continued development and revision. The actor must begin to embody a character and make that character come to life for an audience. Just as one does not mime action throughout one's real life, actors are charged with making their characters appear as real on stage – so real that the audience believes the lines, movements, actions, events, and emotions to be as real for the character as they are in their own lives. According to Stanislavsky, “For these desires to become living, creative desires on stage, they must have become part of [her] very life” (254). Embodiment of a character is more than merely putting on the costume and feeding lines into the actor's brain. As with life, and writing, what is planned in rehearsal does not always occur in that exact form on stage. When this discord happens in real life, we “go with the flow,” or improvise, using knowledge and skills we have stored in the memories and experiences of our years. Stanislavsky, as Tortsov, explains:

In life, because the same working actions are frequently repeated you get what I might call an ‘automatic’ logic and sequence of physical and other actions. The subconscious vigilance exercised by our powers of concentration, the instinctive self-monitoring we require appear spontaneously, and invisibly guide us. (168)

We have a gut reaction and adjust our behavior accordingly. Likewise, in order to be immediately responsive and sensitive to the life of the character she embodies, an actor must learn to improvise. Improvisation, which requires concentration, is the art of becoming the character the playwright intended, and that the other characters are expecting, even if one has forgotten one's lines. Real people don't call out “line” in the midst of living their lives.

Finally, stage one and stage two open the actor to “true organic action” (Stanislavski 20-21). When actors take on a role, the Self is never lost to the role. According to acting coach Vreneli Farber, author of *Stanislavsky in Practice*, “[Stanislavsky] took into account the dual consciousness of the performer, namely his awareness while onstage of being both character and actor. The two never completely fuse” (13). In fact, acting instructors, like Stanislavsky, his students, and his opponents, would criticize a role lacking the actor as mechanical and lacking logic, pathos, and ethos. Instead, Stanislavsky moves his actors from a state of experiencing a role to embodying it, when you are in the proper inner state and that state is almost indistinguishable from life” (296). Everyone is capable of creating, and creating a role or character to embody. According to Farber, the process centers on the same techniques one would use to analyze a role in a play. “Students must discover the organic logic of the character as well as the character’s relationship to the world” (Farber 92). The three central skills Stanislavsky requires actors develop are similar to those which instructors require student writers to develop: Concentration, imagination, and communication.

Concentration - A “full mental and physical immersion” creates what Stanislavsky coins as “public solitude” sharpening one’s senses and emotions – and thereby one’s memories.

Key questions – What did I observe? What do I remember?

Related concepts – Motivation, Justification, Personalization, Affective Memory

Imagination - This is the capacity to treat mental and physical circumstances as real and the ability to visualize and/or fantasize about the character’s world.

Key question – Stanislavsky’s “Magic What If?”

Related concepts – Believability, Authenticity

Communication - Greatly influenced by *prana* Yoga, Stanislavsky’s concept of communication is more of a communion – the energy linking actor and character, character and character, and character and audience. In this communion, both the text and the subtext are conveyed with the subtext being the life giving energy.

Key question – What would my character do here?

Related concepts – Subtext, Organic Behavior, Subjectivity

CHAPTER III

ADAPTATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF STANISLAVSKY'S "METHOD"

Stanislavsky's required core skills of concentration, imagination, and communication are similar to those core skills FYC instructors require, but so are the challenges. Instructors frequently and mistakenly assume their students perceive information and examples identical to the instructors' perceptions. Stanislavsky's *An Actor's Work* reveals Stanislavsky's theories in the diary of an acting student, Nazvanov, studying with the Master, Tortsov. Translator Jean Benedetti notes Stanislavsky's characters are meant to be interpretations of himself – as a student (in combination with his own favorite student, Vakhtangov) and as a mature theatre professor. What instructor does not remind the writing student that his concept of “the ball” the student is writing about is most likely not similar, and definitely not identical to that of his readers and, therefore, “the ball” must be further explored and explained. Stanislavsky had no illusions that his work would not be confused and criticized: “In a word, whatever scientists may wish to make of my book, and whichever way they proceed its [sic] import is purely practical” (xxv). Although often tireless defenders of their instructors' original teachings, Stanislavsky's students – and their students - had their own clear notions of what their instructor was trying to convey, augmenting it with their own theories or attempting to improve it.

Vsevolod Meyerhold

Originally, one of the Moscow Art Theatre's and Stanislavsky's favored actors, Vsevolod Meyerhold eventually became one of the company's directors; however, their relationship was plagued by disagreements in both theory and practice. They reportedly kept their disputes private until 1921 when Meyerhold's published "The Isolation of Stanislavsky," revealing Stanislavsky did not adhere to the Realism theories of acting favored by the Soviet regime. Perpetuating his fellow director's inaccurate reputation, Nemirovich-Danchenko, Meyerhold's acting instructor, himself leaned toward the realist tradition and aimed to push Stanislavsky out of his artistic directorship with full backing of the Soviets (Carnicke 38). Meyerhold focused his criticisms on the Moscow Arts Theatre rather than Stanislavsky's work, but the damage to Stanislavsky's reputation was done and led him to begin publishing outside the country. Meyerhold's criticisms of the "System" reflect the Realist theories influencing his acting study and his own constructivist theories of acting. This constructivist theory draws on scientific movements and biomechanics, but also advocates improvising and masking. These "études" or rules, as Meyerhold labels them, are meant to prepare the actor to handle anything he could possibly encounter on stage (Gordon 106). Ironically, American inventor and pioneer of scientific management study, Frederick Taylor, would call movements such as these configured originally for Soviet factories to be "among the least efficient in the entire factory" (Gordon 108). This biomechanic system was intended to help establish concentration, coordination, and control "establishing precisely the relationship between [the actor's] physical appearance and his own inner nervous feelings" resulting in a

unified performance for the audience (Gordon 111). As one can imagine the tempo set within this method of acting could easily conflict with the natural rhythms of the individual actors, of the scene itself. Stanislavsky does not deny the artistry of this type of performance, but argues

The subtlety and depth of human feelings will not yield to mere technique ... Where there is no awareness of living feelings that are parallel to the character's, there can be no talk of a genuine act of creation (25-26).

This concept of 'mere technique' can be related to Ken Macrorie concept of "Engfish." Audiences who don't see depth of a character or experience understand the beautiful picture placed before them as all important – more important than the character whose life has unraveled completely or experienced positive transformation throughout the course of the play. Consider the plays or movies from which we can only recall actors' names and amazing scenery, but not recall the characters portrayed nor summarize the plot. Consider too if those are the same productions we recommend to our friends.

Similarly, students new to academic writing at the college level tend to treat their subjects superficially, even mechanically, using few but repetitive academic terms and often use them incorrectly or nearly so. They write in Engfish "the phony, pretentious language of the schools" (Macrorie 297). These writers do not put themselves all the way into the experience of writing. These writers do not delve into the emotional, historical, social, political, literal, or aesthetical experience of writing. These writers do not live the experience of writing – they provide a facsimile or representation of writing in the academy from their novitiate perception of it. As Macrorie says, vocabulary is exhibited; inquiry is demonstrated; facts are recorded; and conclusions generalized. These new

writers have included all the required elements and made all the required movements. As in Meyerhold's mechanical acting, the depth and reality are not there. Macrorie would argue these writers are not writing honestly. Stanislavsky would argue the students are still discovering the authorial character they have been assigned, which requires a detailed study of the text to be used and/or analyzed.

Evgeny Vakhtangov

Evgeny Vakhtangov, along with Michael Chekov, Richard Boloslavsky, and Maria Ouspenskaya, was one of the Moscow Art Theatre's First Studio company. An adamant defender of Stanislavsky's "System" of acting in its most organic form, Vakhtangov took public issue with those who would falsely represent the "System" in theory or practice, including Chekov for neglecting to discuss theoretical relevance alongside the practical elements (Carnicke 77-78). However, Vakhtangov did consider three of his mentor's "System" elements, artistry, kernel, strive, to be unresolved. The actor's motivation or justification, Stanislavsky says, should come from the role, as defined by the script. Vakhtangov argues "justification, motivation, and inspiration are not necessarily related to the circumstances of the character" and can be influenced externally. "It is necessary to live your own temperament on the stage and not the supposed temperament of the character" (Krasner 29). The common lack of resolution was a "how to" issue.

Like our first year composition students wonder about the motivation, justification, and inspiration behind certain required writing assignments they have no

interest in accomplishing, the on-command aspect of the three elements was a challenge for Vakhtangov. He writes, “How to reach an ability to become inspired on command is unknown” as is one’s recognition of the kernel – or that one internal or external aspect from which the character grows. “One must believe that having walked onto the stage in costume and makeup, I cannot remain ‘myself;’ one must achieve a new combination of inner and outer characteristics”(100). The actor must be allowed to grow in his character, which suggests the character could be different with each performance (Vakhtangov 100). This requires the actor develop courage. “But, astonishingly,” Stanislavsky writes, “we lose what nature has given us the moment we walk onstage and instead of creating we posture, counterfeit, playact, and represent” (611).

We lose our courage on stage and on paper. Courage is also one of the most crucial tools a student writer needs, yet it is often neglected in the academic writing classroom. Writer Cynthia Ozick explains:“If we had to say what writing is, we would have to define it essentially as an act of courage” (qtd. in Keyes 3). We tend to pass off courage in writing as a developmental issue which we tackle with Basic Writers but expect more from First Year Composition students, even though such anxiety plagues even the most award winning and/or best-selling authors. “I’m convinced that fear is at the root of most bad writing,” Stephen King points out in his memoir *On Writing*. “If one is writing for one’s own pleasure, that fear may be mild – timidity is the word I’ve used here. If, however, one is working under deadline ... that fear may be intense” (127). Student writers are constantly working under multiple deadlines for multiple courses and assignments. First Year Composition might not be their first deadline of the week. So,

they whip something off for one instructor, knowing the writing process has a revision phase built into it, in order to put greater effort into a paper for a course which they see as having greater stakes. But treating fear as a time management issue is only treating a symptom, not the root of the disease. According to Stanislavsky, the conscious influences and controls the subconscious so the two work naturally together to stimulate belief. Without that natural harmony within the actor, the subconscious becomes apprehensive and fear emerges. “So, psychological realism, or even naturalism, is essential for him to stimulate the work of the subconscious and produce a burst of inspiration” (18). Being new to the academy, the work is not familiar and can feel unnatural – student writers’ opinions actually matter – and they fear their opinions will be evaluated rather than their presentation of those opinions. The academy’s conventions and interrelated functions of experience and interpretation are often mystical unknowns for students. Like Vakhtangov’s actors, writing students need a kernel – internal as well as external – of understanding if they are to successfully embrace academia. In her textbook *Conquering Writing Anxiety*, Cynthia Ahrem explains “Students who avoid writing also have missed out on many courses that potentially could enhance their lives and enrich their world perspective, courses in literature, humanities, history, global studies, social sciences, and many others in which essay writing is pivotal” (3). While our students are “inventing the university” to write academically in their First Year Composition courses, are we recognizing their lack of experience in the world with the material we are asking them to critically analyze in their essays? Students may not have that. Bartholomae acknowledges the “slips” of student writers,

It is very hard for them to take on the role – the voice, the person – of an authority whose authority is rooted in scholarship, analysis, or research. They slip, then, into the more immediately available and realizable voice of authority, the voice of a teacher giving a lesson or the voice of a parent lecturing at the dinner table. They offer advice or homilies rather than ‘academic’ conclusions. (605)

Just as actors disappoint directors during rehearsals with lacking performances, student writers disappoint their instructors. Fear of writing in its worst state is that dreaded writer’s anxiety, which can be paralyzing. In the panic, students resort to English or otherwise stilted language, just as actors will slip into playacting or representation.

Vakhtangov explains improvisation in rehearsal will prepare the actor to deal with whatever befalls him onstage. “[An actor] must go on stage as we in life go about having a conversation, or attending a meeting. When we work independently, we should not rehearse the given play but, in general, learn to shift our points of view on the facts” (Vakhtangov 104). Similar to the Toastmasters’ organizations practice of gleaning impromptu speeches from random members during meetings, the one-minute writing practice comes to mind. Student writers must be prepared to improvise as necessary by rehearsing with impromptu analytical writings on academic topics if we expect them to appropriate academic discourse.

Michael Chekhov

A nephew of playwright Anton Chekhov, Michael Chekhov was one of the world’s most celebrated actors in the first half of the 20th Century, having studied at Moscow Art Theatre’s with Vakhtangov, who also provided a rivalry. Chekhov often clashed with Stanislavsky, who admonished him for his performances, but who also

referred to the young actor as his “most brilliant student.” Two key admonishments led Chekhov, who studied the “System,” to take it in a new direction. Stanislavsky once chastised Chekhov for having too much fun with his role in Moliere’s comedy *The Imaginary Invalid*, and following a First Studio acting class’s Affective Memory exercise in which Chekhov dramatized his father’s funeral. Stanislavsky was impressed but later learned that Chekhov had not been “*recapturing* the experience” of the funeral but “*anticipating*” it, which requires more imagination than the “System” uses (Chekhov xiii). Where Stanislavsky focuses on logic, Chekhov eventually incorporated greater focus on the imagination into his own technique of acting. The difference is this: “Instead of the ‘System’s’ two-part Work on Oneself followed by Work on One’s Role, Chekhov made Imagination and Character Work his primary foundation” (Chekhov xii). Seeing Stanislavsky’s “System” as more psychological in nature, in *On the Technique of Acting*, Chekhov’s explains that his own system helps the actor merge the psychological with the physical. To Chekhov one must not only understand a character’s psyche, but visualize and take on the “imaginary body” of the character. He calls this “incorporation,” arguing it can help actors eliminate clichés in their work (Chekhov 96).

Clichés, or presentational acting as Stanislavsky calls it, are the actor’s archenemy, who finds easy prey in the stereotypes of the ingénue, the hero, the elderly, and more stock characters. Chekhov writes, “I don’t think that the actor himself really believes that the whole of humanity can be reduced to so many clichés, but on the stage he very often makes this reduction” (97). Chekhov’s and Vakhtangov’s approaches to this issue are similar. In preparing his own actors for their roles on stage, Vakhtangov is

said to have presented a sketch of the character without projecting his own interpretation of the role. Reflecting on his fellow actor's expertise, he writes:

[Chekhov] did not portray the character in its entirety, he did not play the role instead of the actor himself; rather he demonstrated, indeed played, a sketch, an outline, a pattern of the role...the structure of the character's will, within which I could then position all the details and particulars of the role. (Vakhtangov 95)

Actors should always be looking not at who their characters are as they take the stage but at the potential growth and future goals of their characters. Observation is key, Chekhov argues. Highly detailed observation of individuals followed by practicing or imitating what one acquires during observation will help actors avoid clichés.

This valuable material will be stored in the actor's subconscious and, being forgotten, will appear of itself when needed, in a transformed, individualized way. (Chekhov 98)

Here, the two theories of incorporation diverge. Vakhtangov tells his students to use themselves in creating the character. He expects them to preserve their individuality in everything from who the audience sees in the onstage performance down to the makeup and deeper to the points of view and experiences of the actor himself. "One cannot search for a character on the side, and then pull it onto himself; a character must consist of the material you possess" (Vakhtangov 103). Both Vakhtangov and Chekhov and their teacher, Stanislavsky, require this morphing of Self with the "essence of a given persona" (Vakhtangov 106). We understand the process of taking on a character as morphing in the same way one can mix a photo of a human with a cat in numerous computer art programs. This morphing is internal as well as external. That is the key. It is this morphing which endears Grizabella and the pride of *Cats* to audiences for nearly 30 years

running and provides the clearest example of Stanislavsky's theory. Just as writing demands much of "the entire organism" from internal and external forces, like conception through draft after draft addressing author's concerns, an agent's notes, and an editor's notes to publishing and publicity concerns., Stanislavsky argues: "Acting demands the coordination of the entire organism" (109). A mere external portrayal of an aging cat would not give compelling voice, strength and power to Grizabella's "Memory" nor convince us Betty Buckley understands a withered old cat enough to merit a Tony Award.

It is this morphing that we require of our First Year Composition students. Peter Elbow makes this distinction in *Writing Without Teachers*. Writing requires an "inner commitment" or belief in one's assertions, no matter how challenging they are to one's understanding of the material. He writes: "To do this you must make, not an act of self-extrication, but an act of self insertion, self involvement – and act of projection" (Elbow 146). The acts of self insertion and self involvement are the embodiment Stanislavsky argues is required for successful projection – or this morphing. Stanislavsky's "System" would suggest that students need to make their performance more believable – more truthful for their audience to appreciate their efforts. Every action on stage must be convincing for both the actor and the audience. Every action must be believable, thereby offering the audience a truthful performance. "To check whether your actions are truthful or not," Stanislavsky, as Torsov, writes, "ask yourself another question: 'For whom am I doing what I do, for myself or for the audience, or for the living person standing in front of me, that is, for my fellow actor?'" (158). Expressivists have been repeatedly criticized

for proselytizing focus on the personal, which Bartholomae, Bizzell, and other social constructionists argue limits a student's ability to "develop academically valued ways of thinking" (qtd. in Fishman, McCarthy 648). Personal writing, according to Bartholomae, focuses on the author – the interior - while the academic writing struggles with the external. "There is no better way to investigate the transmission of power, tradition and authority than by asking students to do what academics do ..." (Bartholomae *Writing* 66).

Stanislavsky would agree:

You know that the actor is not his own judge in performance. Neither is the audience. It draws its conclusions at home. The judge is your fellow actor. If you have an effect on your fellow actor, if you oblige him to believe in the truth of your own feelings and there is communication, that means you have achieved your creative goal and lies have been conquered. (158)

Not only does the audience have to believe the performer is the character, the actor himself must believe it too – but more importantly, the other actors must believe. If the actor believes himself to be miming or pretending, then that disingenuous character is what the audience sees. Likewise if the student writer believes himself to be recapitulating a professor's lecture or merely writing to meet the deadline, then that disingenuous student writer is what the reader sees. This belief impacts the personal – thoughts, desires, feelings, words – but requires logic and sequence in every action to be recognized as natural, according to Stanislavsky. Regardless of whether students write from the personal or professional realm, students must believe themselves to be academics, academic writers. The best advice a professor can often give students is: If you want to earn your degree, then act like you already have it. And the "acting" – a process of study and rehearsal and refinement and interactivity – begins.

Lee Strasberg

While Stanislavsky focuses on the actor's use of Self to inform the character he is developing, his student Strasberg argues character development is more deeply tied to the actor's internal state. Witness to the Americanization of "Method" acting, Strasberg and fellow co-founder of the Group Theatre, Stella Adler, studied at the American Laboratory Theatre and became the major influences at New York's Actors Studio (Carnicke 5). According to Carnicke, "Taken together, Strasberg and Adler – the one reflecting early and the other later Stanislavsky – do not represent a radical change in the System as is often assumed, but rather a cross-section of the master's continuing experiments" (67). Strasberg's challenge to the orthodoxy of the "System" was in the oral transmission of Stanislavsky's books to students, along with commentary from his critiques of performances by Strasberg and others, as well as a disdain for scholarly discussions of Stanislavsky's theories (72). Thus, "Method" acting became lore rather than remaining theory to be tested. Stanislavsky's idea of the actor's internal means of character development was through the Self. Krasner argues: "Method acting is not so much a merging of character and self as it is an act of faith the actor imposes on the role" (15). Strasberg challenged this theory arguing the inner consciousness to be the subconscious, reducing the "Method" to an actor's motivation to behave as the character is required to behave within the text. Whereas, Stanislavsky discusses the merger of the Self and the character within the actor to begin the creative process and define the performance. "Strasberg defines inspiration as 'the appeal to and function of the actor's imagination' ... the problem of creation for the actor 'is the problem of starting the inspiration'"

(Krasner 15). To Strasberg, the creative process is a matter of memory and past experience. His adaptation of affective or sense memory offers actors a bridge between the desire to freely interpret a role, and the sensations or thoughts explicitly assigned to the role.

Memory and past experience are also vital for students distinguishing between personal writing – focusing on the inner consciousness – and academic writing – focusing on the production of knowledge. In his conversation with Peter Elbow, Bartholomae points out one key difference is that academics “work with the past, with key texts ... This is not, in other words, simply a matter of reproducing the standard texts, but as using them as points of deflection, appropriation, improvisation, or penetration” (66). First Year Composition students, and especially Basic Writing students, may struggle with having experience to bring to an academic discussion. Additionally, they may not have discovered the bridge to appropriately connect a highly personal experience with an academic discussion. Consider the arguments in today’s college anthologies. In *The Contemporary Reader*, used by North Central State College, Mansfield, Ohio, students are reading arguments on popular topics, such as body art, social networking, and global warming. However, titles like “Tattoo Me, Again and Again” or “Crafting Your 1,000 Friends on Facebook” elicit personal memories, but yet we ask students to discuss those in an more formal forum. Strasberg argues Stanislavsky’s idea of affective memory leads actors to use preordained or stereotypical imagery, which destroys the natural performance Stanislavsky hopes to see in the actor. Strasberg’s theory of affective memory “proceeds from the actor’s associative chain of events that inspire creative action

rather than simply recalling events for the sake of emotion” (Krasner 19). This technique in the writing classroom could provide the bridge for student writers just as it does for actors. Discussing one’s experiences on Facebook or one’s latest inking can be acceptable in Basic Writing or First Year Composition – if it is discussed in an academic frame which offers import greater than an emotionally laden conversation among one’s “peeps.” For example, a student who chooses to discuss “Tattoo Me Again and Again” for a reading response might discuss her own experience(s) in getting a tattoo. If she were not attending to the academic requirements, she would use slang or other familiar language, she would discuss her own experience getting a tattoo but not make any connection between her experience and that of the author she read, and she might discuss the act of getting a tattoo as common act of rebellion. If she were committed to writing an academic response, she would use academic language. She would argue although such experiences may be rebellious, rebellion is a coming of age act while comparing her own experiences to that of the author. She might also argue there is more than rebellion at stake when one ventures to get a tattoo; it is possibly a necessary statement of individuality and a celebration of one’s own Self.

CHAPTER IV

ACTING THE ACADEMIC

When FYC students step onto the academic stage, they have a sense of themselves as students; they've attended and moved through the various levels. Similarly, these students all have different goals for their higher education – different interpretations of their roles – a first career, a different career, a graduate school appointment, and possibly a different time frame they are considering for meeting their educational goals. Students do come to FYC with a sense of identity – who they are in various situations and who they want to be in those situations. In fact, they know the student role quite well in many ways.

With nine to twelve years of rehearsing and performing their roles, they are confident they understand the social conditions of their multiple identities, analyze their successes and failures in playing those roles, and envision their future performances in each role. However, when they step onstage in the university classroom to perform as an academic before an audience of fellow performers, including university students and academics, the role of student is not exactly what they rehearsed. But, as Stanislavsky's actors found in their first few classes, everything is at once familiar, different, and new. For the actors, the stage was bigger, yet more intimate, which demands a more focused performance. Similarly, the academic stage is larger with sub-divisions never realized, majors and coursework never considered. Furniture is no longer in the same position.

University students are often organizing themselves into study groups, or collaborative work groups; likewise, the entire class might require face-to-face discussions, even arguments. Props are different and require more effort to use on the actors end, while the students' reading and writing assignments push them deeper than they perhaps had planned to go. FYC students notice their familiar writing style skimming the surface and restating the instructor's opinions, no longer fit the assignment. Now, they are required to not only have an opinion but express it as well. It is new territory when FYC students take the academic stage. In her "Composing Through the Performative Screen, Translating Performance into Writing Pedagogy," Meredith Love argues a Burkian-like performance screen is required for observing the construction of identity in student writing. Viewing student identity development, she writes, "can help us step away from more traditional constructs of the discursal self and toward more complicated, fluid, and socially responsible writerly characters" (Love 13).

Looking at discourse transitions through a strictly performance frame, as Love suggests, we see Stanislavsky as a model. Returning to Stanislavsky's *An Actor's Work*, acting student Kostya Nazvanov's experience developing a character in his first acting class parallels that of FYC students in some important ways. Instructor Arkady Tortsov assigned him the role of Iago in *Othello* Nazvanov practiced before a mirror in his room all night long before his scene was to be presented. He felt it most important to see what his character looked like on the outside and spent time with make-up and ignoring the script. Recalling his initial performance before an audience of instructor and fellow students, Nazvanov reflects, "I didn't recognize my own voice." Through a week of

rehearsals, the acting student is repeatedly put in multiple staging situations with different audiences. Nazvanov writes in his diary: “I just repeated the old things I was happy with,” as he was increasingly haunted by the script on stage and off. Finally, he recognized that he must improvise, using what he learned about himself as the actor, the audience, and the character. “But I wasn’t in control of them,” Nazvanov realizes, “they were in control of me” (11). Tortsov’s method of teaching forced students to look deeper and deeper into their character, into their character’s relationship(s) to other characters, and into their own personal experiences and figure out a way to work through the performance despite the new situations. “As you can see,” Tortsov explains, “our prime task is not only to portray the life of a role externally, but above all to create the inner life of the character and of the whole play, bringing our own individual feelings to it, endowing it with all the features of our own personality” (19).

This is what Bartholomae is asking of Basic Writing and FYC students when he suggests invention is required. Academia is simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar and if one is to be successful in not only the writing courses but in one’s academic career, one must accept some revision of one’s performance, one’s relationship(s), and one’s identity. Bartholomae writes:

The student has to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse, and he has to do this as though they were easily and comfortably one with their audience, as though they were members of the academy, or an historian or an anthropologist or an economist; he has to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language, finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, on the one hand, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline, on the other. He must learn to speak our language. Or he must dare to speak it, or to carry off the bluff, since speaking and writing will most certainly be required long before the skill is ‘learned.’ (*Inventing* 606)

However, one is rarely without a sense of history, power and privilege to draw from, even if it is not one's own. Depending on their experience with higher educational endeavors, students may recognize higher education traditionally as the place to expand one's mind, explore new theories, and test old theories, and realize more will be expected in academic endeavors or they may see the university experience in the contemporary corporate light of a career training center. Students may already see their own writing as functional or even organic but academic writing as stilted and staged. Students are often much more likely to view academic writing as social construct and therefore be more open to this kind of pedagogy than in, say, a creative writing or personal writing course. Meredith Love also points out the challenges to a position which blurs those traditional academic boundaries. Drawing on Karen Kopelson's Queer Studies research, Love agrees with her when Kopelson notes "Queer and performative pedagogues, then, often take up Butler's call to risk the incoherence of identity. Perhaps more to the point, they are not only 'willing to risk' but actually *work to compose* identities that are inscrutable, troubling, outside the realm of what can be known" (15). As instructors, we need to recognize that our students are coming to academia from the "wider culture" where sentiment and emotion have a greater stronghold (Newkirk 26).

In academia, the image of the cold detached scientist reigns refusing at times to acknowledge the transitional space – or rehearsal stage – between new student writing and academic performance. One cannot write one's name before one is taught how to write letters, that letters make words, that one's name is a word, and which letters it includes. Joy Ritchie, author of "Beginning Writers: Diverse Voices and Individual

Identity,” points out students “leave school conceiving of writing as an act of retrieving a fixed body of information and putting it into a correct form to meet the requirements of the teacher and institution (159). Likewise, in her “Revising a Writer’s Identity,” Nancy Welch argues adding a new identity, one favored by the instructor and not necessarily the student, is confusing and both student and teacher resist. This forces students not to take on the new identity, but to fall into the trap of believing “the unquestioned understanding that learning means pleasing the teacher: ‘*You write to make the teacher happy*’” (46). The understanding that learning means regurgitating information or pleasing the instructor forces the same mechanical playacting performances as actors sometimes give. Or, as the acting instructor Tortsov explained to his acting students: More of the performance is focused on the audience rather than the events of the play and one’s embodiment of a character on critics’ night than in any other version of the performance (95). The students’ imagined, or “invented,” academic writers do not present new information, nor do they create knowledge. Writing, for many students, is not a means to learning, not a tool of research, not a presentation in which they face an audience consisting of more than one evaluator, nor is writing an entrance into a new circle, dually social and professional. The writers students are familiar with tell stories. In the student role, one studies these stories to learn through the experiences of generations of fictional characters. Students have a limited functional view of the expectations weighing on them in the expository writing classroom. Such performances described here are vastly different from the kinds of performances this argument posits for composition: performances in which the student necessarily an active participant. This notion of

performance (using Method Acting) is quite different in terms of student engagement and identity. In fact, using Method Acting theory in the writing classroom would enable students to increase their engagement while knowingly and purposefully developing their identities.

In distinguishing between the academic and the writer in “Interchanges: Response to Bartholomae and Elbow,” Bartholomae points to Peter Elbow’s quandary as a teacher is “whether I should invite my first year students to be self-absorbed and see themselves at the center of the discourse – in a sense, credulous; or whether I should invite them to be personally modest and intellectually scrupulous and to see themselves as at the periphery – in a sense, skeptical and distrustful” (84). Bartholomae argues for the latter, noting that by encouraging students to “trust language” instructors do students a disservice. The status quo school and cultural writing idea should not be reinforced if the expectations for language of the academy are different. “Therefore,” Bartholomae writes, “it seems to me that the most precious thing I can do is provide spaces where I don’t also do their thinking for them (despite the attendant risks of giving more room for the culture)” (*Responses* 91). Negotiating such writing spaces and academic roles can be challenging because it also involves negotiating the relationships on the academic stage.

Negotiation creates tension both between students and instructors, and vice versa, as well as within students and within instructors. In *Writing Relationships*, Lad Tobin suggests the dualism of tensions in both student-to-instructor and instructor-to-student relationships are productive, and, further, we should see these tensions not as obstacles to learning, shying away, hoping not to damage a student experiencing tension, but rather

focus on these tensions because these tensions improve learning. This tension is found not only in the student's writing assignments, but also in the conflicts between his life experience and the instructor's expectation of his student's experience, as well as between the student's concept of Self and its composition. According to Krasner, "Postmodernists reject the notion that actors have control of the will and can pour meaning into a role. Postmodernism bleeds human subjects of meaning removing all traces of agency" (22). In other words, an actor is an empty vessel in the post-modern conception – bled of the Self and its agency. An actor in that situation would not be able to embody a character for performance. Instead, the character would take over the actor. The actor then is a puppet for the character, the author, and the powers behind the production. However, Stanislavsky sees embodiment of a character differently. He argues the negotiation between actor and character diverges from any form of puppetry. Stanislavsky's System or Method requires actors to move from mimicking and/or representing a character through improvisation to full embodiment. Puppetry is never an option. Stanislavsky imbues Tortsov with this turn in a lecture to his students:

But the actor is a human being with the usual human weaknesses. When he goes onstage he naturally carries with him his thoughts, personal feelings, his ideas from the real world. His own humdrum, daily life is still there, and takes the first opportunity to slip into the character he is experiencing. The actor only gives himself wholeheartedly to the role when it takes him over. Then he merges with the character and undergoes a creative transformation. But should he be distracted, he is once again caught up in his own personal life, which carries him away beyond the footlights, into the auditorium or further, outside the theatre seeking some object with which mentally to communicate. At such moments the role is conveyed externally, mechanically. All these distractions constantly break the lifeline of the character and communication. The gaps are then filled by details from the actor's personal life, which have nothing to do with the role he is playing. (231-232)

Negotiation is vital to understanding not only the one role an actor plays but the multiple roles which morph to create that one role – and which of the actor’s many roles he must bring to the character he develops. In her article “Beginning Writers: Diverse Voices and Individual Identity,” Joy Ritchie invokes Bakhtin to argue “Language development for the individual and for the community is always shaped by conflicting forces” (161). It can happen at any level of academia, in any course setting, to students and teachers alike. In fact, Ritchie, via Bakhtin, explains the clash is between unifying normative urge of academic language with the individual’s desire to “stretch beyond the boundaries of language” and of the discourse canon *required* for learning. Tobin, too, is justified in arguing: “We cannot (and should not try to) make writing or teaching writing entirely painless” (45). Learning is not painless, while the brain is fusing new neurons, changing pathways, and making new connections within the brain matter. Deep learning is going to hurt a bit, but that is also the type of learning which one rarely forgets. It is not surprising FYC students, and college students in general, consider this his painful or challenging approach to be exactly what it is: hard work. Such deep learning changes one’s concept of Self. In fact, Linda Flower in *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning* explains instructors have an essential role in guiding students through the necessary negotiated performance “by adding the missing bit the learner needs to perform, through scaffolding a conversation, completing and extending though, or playing a complimentary role (such as prompter or critic) that the learner might eventually internalize” (155). However, she questions whether the discourse, in this case academic discourse, serves as a catalyst or dictates the negotiations.

Students entering academia are not only negotiating a new discourse, but by some theories of instruction, namely social constructionists Stephen Fishman and McCarthy, they are also required to sever ties to the discourse of daily life, or the Self – an indoctrination, in the extreme. In his acting theory, Stanislavsky argues against, as do many Expressivists and Cognitivists, such separation between actor and character emphasizing it will hinder or even destroy an actor’s performance and credibility. Stanislavsky, in the character of Tortsov, writes, “if we transgress the workings of life as a human organism, we stop creating believability on stage. Immediately the subconscious, which is apprehensive, fears it will be attacked and takes refuge once more in its secret depths” (18). As Foucault reminds us, the Self is socially constructed (238). Therefore, one cannot separate the multiple selves required for a performance on stage or on paper. In fact, Ruth Quinn, author of “The Performative Self: Improvisation for Self and Other” offers an acting theory concept: “great actors have a strong sense of their ‘many selves’” which “enables them to manage and build a truthful relationship with their true adult self” (19). If a performer – or student – only copies the external, she will, as Stanislavsky puts it, “betray the art of representation and lapse into mimicry, copying, imitation, which has nothing to do with real creative work” (25). The deep learning – or negotiation of Self – takes place in the improvisational practice of a new role and is ultimately presented in the embodiment of the role in a required or optional performance.

Although I seriously doubt David Bartholomae, Patricia Bizzell and others actually intend students to actually sever ties to their home discourses, Fishman does not make the social constructionist theory appealing. Bartholomae and Bizzell do tend to

temper their own work with juxtaposed terms like “appropriation,” and “invitation.” Therefore, it is not unreasonable that Fishman would push back, reminding us that “Bartholomae says that to teach writing as an expression of individual thoughts and feelings is to make students ‘suckers’ and ‘powerless’” (Fishman 648). To Bizzell, Fishman attributes two ways Expressivists “harm” students: Supporting the language use of popular or general conversation is disadvantageous and limiting for students attempting to develop in academia (Fishman 648). Students are asked to separate themselves from their experience and become independent writers and researchers, which Fishman argues is an impossible task. Yet, when they do disassociate from their personal discourse in favor of the discourse of academia, these students are chastised for making such a personal change. Richard Rodriguez, author of *Hunger for Memory* writes of this transition:

[The student] has used his experience to remake himself ... It bothers his fellow academics to face this. They will not say why exactly. (They sneer.) ... They expect – they want – a student less changed by his schooling. If the scholarship boy, from a past so distant from the classroom, could remain in some basic way unchanged, he would be able to prove that it is possible for anyone to become educated without basically changing from the person one was. (70)

Such a spectrum of expectations, even requirements of negotiation, concern and confound student writers new to the academy. Stanislavsky argues this confusion stems from the underlying confusion with truth and belief. The actor may represent his character with true depictions of outward actions, but it is the “belief in them [that] stimulates our minds” (186). It is actors’ and audience’s belief in that character and his specific actions which gives us the full illusion of the character coming to life. Following

a successful rehearsal in which his acting students finally genuinely lived the roles in their acting assignment, Tortsov explains the phenomenology:

Why has this change taken place? Because previously you sowed the seeds of your imagination on stony ground and they perished. You sensed the truth, but didn't believe in what you were doing ... Now your imaginings are not idle, as before, in a void, not 'in general' but have a considerably stronger base. Now what you imagine has not abstract but concrete meaning. They inwardly justify outward action. (186)

As the conflict grows, and the tension, the confusion, and pressure increase, there inevitably must be an explosive moment in which something new or different is created in the student, in the instructor, and in their relationship.

Considering that the academic role is only one presentation of both the student's and the teacher's identities, embodying the role of the academic is also stressful. Tobin describes the role playing of both teachers and students in the classroom and in writing assignments. He acknowledges that the actor-on-stage image "runs counter to many teachers' self-image. It is too artificial, too dramatic, too unilateral. But it seems to me [Tobin] that at least to some extent this role is inevitable – and healthy" (82). In fact, Tobin suggests teachers' desires to deemphasize their authoritative roles, while placing emphasis on student collaboration, encourages this. But this is not always helpful in moving students from their familiar discourses to academic discourse. Student-to-student relationships impact both a teacher's, and a student's understanding of the academic role. But, first, Tobin writes, We need to pay more attention to how the relationships that students establish with their classmates determine their progress (or lack of progress) as writers. It is natural for students to go to their classmates for help first – a relationship which is likely not wholly academic, nor expected to ever be so (80-87). [Meredith] Love

likewise argues appropriation through negotiation also requires instructors to purposefully bring students together with academics and others – the characters they are intending to perform in their writing – in order to study the character they are endeavoring to become (18). This appropriation follows the negotiation principles Stanislavsky lays out in the System, which Krasner explains: “Imagination, script analysis, articulation, and a passionate belief in the character’s desires as they relate to the actor’s life. The task of the actor is to work out (and work with) the tension between raw authenticity and fluid expressivity” (28). Like their instructors, FYC students are not passive, independent constructions. Each must negotiate construction of the academic relationship with the other.

A model for this negotiation as an academic can be seen in numerous formal and informal debates, arguments, and discussions in our own Composition/Rhetoric circles. For example, Composition/Rhetoric academics continue the Bartholomae/Elbow debate in many forms. Narrative, and its innate emotional expression, must be faced with the grading pen. Thomas Newkirk addresses this in Chapter Three of *The Performance of Self in Student Writing*, concluding, “reading against the grain can help us step outside our own aesthetic and appreciate papers which assume different and more direct conventions for emotional expression” (36). As instructors, even if the student rant turns us off while reading, we must confront the issue within ourselves and work with the student. If we don’t, we are in danger of ranting ourselves – usually in our own little world of “students these days.” As Chekhov suggests “it [writing] is a ‘dangerous’ topic” (qtd. in Newkirk 28). Since emotion, according to Aristotle, is necessary for proving

credible humanness in the writer/orator, we as instructors should illustrate effective use of pathos by not only teaching academic control of this element in writing but also learning to control our own response(s) and helping the student understand the emotional power words have and can convey, and how to precisely control those words in order to be the most persuasive with one's audience. Ergo, what we actually dislike is twofold: that we let our own emotional guard down in reading students' papers, and that we and the paper both lacked control – not only the control which comes with our own mature years but which goes beyond to a sort of laboratory detachment. The latter is an unreasonable request which only a few people can achieve fully, not that total detachment is healthy or desirable as a reader or a writer. Stanislavsky's Method acting techniques teaching control within a character on stage may provide the necessary lessons so too the student. Stanislavsky is frequently spoofed and challenged for his lessons in the use of emotional or sense memory. But, the Method's use of emotional memory requires not only the inspiration from the memory – with all its ties to the five senses – but also justification and motivation for its use: control. Building to a flush of tears or a burst of powerful anger through a convincing and compelling arc to a credible resolution is a choice. "This choice (conviction)," Krasner writes of a Dustin Hoffman performance, "stimulates his will to create, to act, and to live through the role. Ultimately it is what compels audiences to observe him, watching with eager anticipation his unpredictable and persuasive behavior" (15). Likewise, students need to learn to control the passion in their writing as part of making their transition from student writer into academic writer.

Understanding the uses of *pathos* in drama provides necessary transitional lessons for FYC students in understanding and controlling their own passions.

If students do not have a clear understanding of themselves, how can they possibly relate to their first audience – themselves. Students who cannot relate to their first audience are expected to relate to the critical audiences offered in peers, professors, entire classes – and the academy. Like Tobin, Love argues:

Looking at composing through the performative screen entails character development on our part as well, a shifting from the role as evaluator to the role of audience member that our students have in mind for their work. The first-year classroom, in particular, is a space where students who may be unfamiliar with college discourse can try it on and move around in it. They can also begin to investigate the discourse communities they may want to be part of outside of their schoolwork and professions. In fact, they should be engaging in multiple performances and the investigation of multiple academic discourses. After all, you cannot play a role if you don't know the part. (27)

Students are often expected to have either fully taken on the academic role or have completed its construction almost before arriving in the university writing classroom.

Ritchie explains: “We assume that the constituents of the rhetorical situation – speaker (teacher), listener (student), subject (writing) – operate in a static or, at best, linear rather than dialogic or interactive manner” (153). Not only do students need to ‘invent the university’ but they must invent a form of themselves which masks the inconsistencies of non-academic. Students must mask the incoherent, non-unified identity of a teenager transitioning to adulthood, or of a non-traditional student transforming into an academic.

Ritchie argues that writing classrooms are overlooked as being:

like any social situation, multi-faceted, shifting scenes full of conflicting and contending values and purposes, played out by a cast of unique actors – students, teachers, (and observers). These performers view the ongoing

scene from their own shifting perspective within it, as they negotiate their identities amid the cacophony of voices and social roles around them. (153)

In her article “Cognition, Context, and Theory Building,” Flower explains writers construct not one bound purpose in writing, but a “web of purpose – a complex network of goals, plans, intentions, and ideas. The creation of this web is a richly interactive social and cognitive event; however, the way in which people manage or mediate the constraints upon them may depend on whether they recognize the significance of their own choices within this web” (292). FYC and Basic Writing students are often not aware they have choices, what the options might be, or that their purpose is to create the Self and, from there, write.

If we look at acting theories, and use them to help students building within themselves the character of the writer or the character of an author, then perhaps we should focus the interactive vision Flower suggests exists. Ann Berthoff, in *The Making of Meaning*, explains “Composing involves the writer in making choices all along the way and thus has social and political implications: we aren’t free unless we know how to choose” (22). Acting theories, especially orthodox Stanislavsky, frames a writer’s various contexts while enabling negotiation of those contexts, but also helps a writer create goals, develop a sense of the Self as problem-solver, speaker, meaning maker, and interactive being, and learn to control the various parts of the segmented Self, including parts like the dead Self, or lethargia, and judgmental Self, or inner critic, which are most likely to interfere with the creative process. Elbow’s theories of student writer development reflect

a similar understanding. Writing, according to Barbara Tomlinson, author of “Characters As Coauthors, is the result of these segments of the Self interacting with each other.

The different tasks of writing are accomplished by different parts of the self; that any one of these parts can have abilities, desires, needs, and concerns not shared by the other parts of the self; and that writing results from the interacting of different parts of this segmented self.” (Tomlinson 432)

Of course, this takes some management skill to coordinate. In this, Tomlinson echoes Flower and Hays in their cognitive studies of the writer, arguing that the writer assigns responsibilities to various spheres of the segmented self in order to complete a task. This also echoes Murray’s “two workmen” illustration of communication:

The act of writing might be described as a conversation between two workmen muttering to each other at the workbench. The self speaks, the other self listens and responds. The self proposes, the other self considers. The self makes, the other self evaluates. The two selves collaborate: a problem is spotted, discussed, defined; solutions are proposed, rejected, suggested, attempted, tested, discarded and accepted. (Murray *Teaching* 87-88)

The writing workmen are the same workmen which actors employ. This notion of multiple workmen, or segmented self concept of the writer is shared by cognitivists. Flower reminds us of the multiple influences on a writer and that “rhetoric has traditionally affirmed this principle by treating the rhetor/writer as a social actor in a public forum. The art of persuasion is described as creating identity or a shared image with others, and the available ‘means’ of persuasion rely on using those patterns and conventions of thought the audience will find convincing” (287). She’s right. In fact, the workmen of the writing process, or dimensions of the Self, according to Ronald

Kellogg's *The Psychology of Writing*, are intelligence, motivation, cognitive style, and anxiety – some of Stanislavsky's key elements in the 'System.'

The intelligence character is responsible for concentration, organization, and memory (encoding and retrieving). A good actor's focus is so concentrated that she demands, according to Stanislavsky, a "public solitude." In a performance, with a thousand eyes on you, you can always retreat into your solitude (99). In that intimate space, one can be quite productive, observing with precision, detailing the world and its people, and turning one's attention outward. Writing, including that for academia, can be a very internal activity, filled with fear, anxiety, confusion. But if writing students focus outward with the same ferocity, perhaps there will be some escape, as Elbow argues is necessary. Bartholomae quotes Elbow in a response: "Invention in the writing process is more artistic inspiration and students should write freely – implying that one can escape the institutional, cultural, and political pressures of the classroom" (Bartholomae *Response* 64). Although many theorists would argue escape is impossible because the Self can never move beyond its social construction. In fact, the only view of the Self is externally reflected in the views of others. But, more than an escape, Stanislavsky argues the intense focus of concentration improves memory, and its use, as well as logical thought, ordered actions, controlled emotions can mask the Self enough that it appears one can escape into another character, but the character in many ways is another segment of the Self. Using Method acting's concentration exercises, students could learn to use the fear, anxiety and confusion they experience to meet the academy's standards in writing – balancing the relationships of the rhetorical triangle – the passion with which

they write against the evidence and credibility of their argument within an appropriate frame for their readers.

Concentration and organization both require motivation. Motivation seeks meaning within the intrinsic and extrinsic transactional values of the work being done – even if it must mask the task to evoke greater creativity from multiple selves. Stanislavsky defines motivation as a trinity of mind, will, and feeling, composing an inner drive. “[An actor’s] strength,” he writes, “is increased by the fact that each of the inner drives serves as a decoy for the others, arousing the other members of the triumvirate to be creative” (279). It is popularly known and often spoofed that a Method actor’s first question in performance is “what’s my motivation?” In fact, one of the commonly held rules of acting requires that every move before an audience must purposefully propel the plot. Thus, we rarely see extras in the movies. Unlike non-actors in a crowd scene behind a news camera, extras never jump about waving at their friends and relatives who may be watching their debut. We know they are there, but never do their actions outshine the stars. Similarly, the ensemble actors, although the dialog may be rapid fire, rarely talk “over each other” or at the same time, unless it’s scripted. This allows the audience to hear everything – unlike in some general social conversations. Actors scrutinize every thought, motive, action, and behavior, practices which could benefit writing students. According to Krasner’s view of Stanislavsky’s Method:

We acquire an identity and motivate our actions both by observing and being observed, and through this exchange (combined with the acquired ideal of active ‘doing’), self-formation (character) is realized ... We become the role and the self in the actual moment of performance. (24)

If writing students were more aware of the potentially broader audience they are performing for in academia, scrutiny of their own writing in rehearsal could be more directive and lead to a better opening night performance. Additionally, FYC students could also “appropriate the university” from the role of audience or spectator. Cognitive theory allows that audience members, both critical viewers and entertainment spectators, see a performance as an alternate reality which can be mirrored, according to Bruce McConachie, author of “Falsifiable Theories for Theatre and Performance Studies.” Student-teacher relationships could be both academic junior-senior and spectator student-actor teacher. Instructors, who have already embodied their academic role, offer performances of discourse conventions we desire to see in students.

More than organizing the strategies to fulfill an assignment, the character of cognitive style must also evaluate and engage the most effective goal setting and problem solving strategies to keep his collaborators on task. Adaptation, and its companion improvisation, are the problem solving tools of actors. Stanislavsky argues, as Tortsov, that “Adaptation is one of the most important techniques in communication, even when we are alone, since we need to adapt to ourselves and to our own state of mind if we are to convince ourselves” (260). For example, in daily life we sometimes fool ourselves into changing, or adapting, our own state of mind at times of personal crisis, masking our feelings and the crisis from view. Say, we have learned of the death of a close family friend shortly before we are to teach writing class. We adapt our emotional and grieving state of mind, masking our crisis from colleagues and friends in order to go on with our day. We do this even to the point of entering the classroom five minutes later appearing

as calm, cool, and collected as always, having convinced ourselves that we can grieve at another time.

Similarly, FYC students, like actors, are continually adapting to changing conditions and interactions. “This is the place where learning and development of one’s voice can also happen,” Quinn argues, “It is also the true site of *per*-formance (through-form) as opposed to *pre*-forming (before-form) relationships, thoughts, characters, and scenarios. An exciting performance constantly finds its expression through a second-by-second alive (sic) interpretation of form: real performance as opposed to one that is too prescribed and pre-formed”(19). In this sense, Bartholomae’s experimental course introducing students to the university is an effort to teach adaptation. One key to his adaptation is that the students formed the venue – a subject and its discipline, along with all the trappings, like a specialized vocabulary, and interpretive schemes. FYC students have not created the academic stage; rather, they must adapt their performance to fit it. In fact, Bartholomae argues, like Stanislavsky, that the academic must interfere with students’ writing plans, which are *pre-formed* – must force them to adapt (*Writing* 189). Throughout Stanislavsky’s *An Actor’s Work*, his student alter ego, Nazvanov and his classmates are constantly being forced by Tortsov, his instructor alter ego, to adapt their performances. He intentionally puts them in venues, costumes, roles, etc. which require the students to look at their acting, their characters, and their performances from varied perspectives.

No matter how well practiced an actor is for the performance, adaptations frequently are required and actively occur on stage. The party guest character drops her

colored water-filled wine glass so the bartender character reacts, clearing the mess to ensure a dry floor for the safety of his fellow actors. The dancer is momentarily distracted by a cell phone in the audience while spinning and ends stage left instead of stage right. The prima donna recognizes that the alcohol she had at the party last night is still having a drying effect on her vocal chords and opts to not hit the high B favoring a lower note in the chord. The pained lover directed to hold back tears as he sings his torch song lets flow a torrent at the emotional apex eliciting a minute-long ovation from the audience. Tortsov sought mutable performances of characters – like the mutable performances of the Self in life – which requires subconscious cues understood by the character through the actor/Self experience. When Nazvanov questions the complete latitude of subconscious communication, Tortsov explains:

Because when you are performing you need powerful, irresistible ways of influencing people, and most of our biological subconscious Adaptations are numbered among them. They are vivid, persuasive, immediate, catching ... Only our organism and our subconscious have the ability to create and convey them. You can't carry out that kind of Adaptation with your intelligence or your technique. They occur spontaneously, subconsciously when feeling reaches its climax. (263)

Forcing adaptation forces a more credible performance. The characters were not in danger of becoming caricatures because they were imbued with the uncertainty of real life. Students writing for the academy need to recognize when and how to adapt to the flurry of influences on their writing, like the professor, his graduate assistant, the writing center tutor, the sociology professor friend of the family, the roommate, and more. They must be able to choose the advice or combination of advice which would have the most effective results in the given rhetorical situation.

Finally, anxiety can help motivate or paralyze intelligence by evaluating emotional risks while maintaining or neglecting one's pathos barometer. In fact, Kellogg argues "The role of anxiety in writing is an especially interesting issue because emotionally the task can be intensely engaging. A purely cognitive model – or even a social cognitive model – is inadequate for the behavior of writing" (111). Focusing on two different agendas at once can be intimidating, especially when success of both agendas is tied to a single grade. It's no secret that anxiety impairs information retrieval and application, but studies in the 1980s that Kellogg references also point out that anxiety detours concentration, stifles creativity, and endangers emotional stability – all key Stanislavsky "Elements" actors rely on within themselves.

The logical nature of the activity directly opposes emotional requirements of creativity. However, Flower argues that a typical discussion of insight into expert writing is not applicable when it comes to students. Flower writes, "They do not adequately model the *logic of writers in the process of learning to write differently*" (173). There are two kinds of meaning making happening in student writing – rhetorical choices creating a final text, but also relational choices and negotiation in using the assignment instructions. According to Sally Chandler's "Fear, Teaching Composition and Student's Discursive Connections," it is only recently that studies in the connection between emotion and writing have shifted to allow the social construction view to be studied. She explains:

Within this new perspective, emotion, like other social interactions is assumed to be 'not only individually experienced, but also socially experienced and constructed,' that is, emotion is understood as cultural rather than individual and biological, and instances of perceiving, responding to, expressing and containing emotions are (unconsciously)

enacted in terms of discursive forms evoked by specific contexts and conditions. (53)

All of these factors simultaneously impact motivation. Stanislavsky argues that performers must often endure abnormal conditions because the creative state can often be an unstable one. Similarly, Stanislavsky via Tortsov cautions his acting students about “the black hole effect” – the actor’s view of the audience while facing into the theatre lights –

You know that when the human being/actor confronts a packed audience, either out of fear, confusion, shyness, a sense of his responsibilities, his personal problems, he loses self-control. He can’t speak, look, listen, think, wish, feel, walk, behave in a human way ... In such moments the actors’ Elements (sic) split apart and live their own lives. (296)

Tireless, focused preparation, and rehearsal – core to Method acting – are possible relief for actor’s paralysis and similarly for writer’s block.

One common suggestion for curing writers block from professional authors to would-be-authors is to write – write daily, write often. But it is different for beginning college students. Chandler notes that beginning college writers, according to the two instructors’ classes she studied, describe more prescriptive, formulaic writing experiences focusing on grammar and proofreading. It is a familiar argument that students who rely heavily on those formulas for their writing confidence are conflicted when asked to let go of those prescriptions for writing, and further, to change their perceptions of themselves as writers. Chandler observes: “Because writing is bound to conceptions of self, pressure to change the way students write challenges the self engendered by the discourse marked for correction. As a result, students required to change the way they write often encounter intense internal conflict” (60). She suggests a hybrid discourse approach linking

emotional discourse with academic discourse, as well as multiple other discourses, and interactive reflection on work within those discourses will help students transition into academic discourse. Welch argues that a different approach to facilitate learning is necessary. The issue, she says, is not merely identification and imitation, “but rather ‘How do we facilitate the recognition and revision of what we’re identifying with, who we are imitating – and what’s being denied, suppressed, or perpetuated in the process?’” (42). Recognizing the academic, observing his habits both personal and professional, trying on that character, revising it to function as a part of the student’s Self takes some preparation and rehearsal to yield a successful onstage performance. “If students can see their already-developed performativity,” Love argues, “we might then be able to help them harness this performative power and emphasize the social nature of our characters, the responsibility that comes with all performances and the creativity that we exercise each day as we move from world to world, adjusting our linguistic and physical performances through word choice, tone, organization, dress, and style of all kinds” (16).

Considering FYC writing as performance challenges the boundaries of the social constructionist, cognitivist, and expressivist composition theories. Performance theory has obvious insight into issues of writing anxiety, concentration, motivation and more, but performance theory also parallels social construction theory, in that knowledge is created and disseminated offstage; cognitivist theory, in that a recursive rehearsal process is necessary for performance of an embodied character, not a mere representation; and expressivist theory, in that the academic character is drawn in part from one’s personal

experience, which is combined with the multitude of other influences to complement and complete the character development.

CHAPTER V

ACTING THE AUTHOR/WRITER

Composing oneself as an Author/Writer, academic or not, requires one to draw on the same pool of experiences and influences one draws from to successfully perform that role of Author/Writer, academic or not, on stage in the classroom and elsewhere or in a composition. Using a performative lens is also vital to creating a successful relationship between the somatic and the semiotic – the material world and textual meaning. Performative, or speech act theory holds that language does not merely describe; it is a means to action. “All language is performative,” Reed Way Dasenbrock writes in “J.L. Austin and the Articulation of a New Rhetoric. “In making an utterance, one performs an act, or – as Austin went on to say – a number of different acts simultaneously” (295). The application of this theory directly to writing may be better explained through the work of master writer and performer Mark Twain, who considered every aspect of life a performance. In *Acting Naturally*, Randall Knoper observes that Mark Twain once critiqued a written version of the speeches of Robert Ingersoll, responding in a letter to the orator: “I wish I could hear you speak these splendid chapters before a great audience – to read them by myself and hear the boom of the applause only in the ear of my imagination leaves something wanting – and there is also a still greater lack, your manner, and voice, and presence” (116). Considering writing as a performance focuses the writer on the life of the words on the page. Performative theory offers the possibility

for more and multiple analysis factors in studying the orientation and impact of textual discourse – written or oral – on an audience. Knoper’s study extends Twain’s position, arguing that the writing experience should be akin to a physical performance:

These examples must suffice for the moment to support my point – that for Twain there existed a gestural, bodily dimension to words, and that this dimension helped credit utterances with a degree of immediacy inasmuch as they were automatic and unconscious. In Mark Twain’s thinking, especially of the 1880s and 1890s, the gaps of representation might be bridged by linking thought and word, emotion and language, through physical mediums; a problem of realism and reference had a possible solution in this more direct concrete connection. (117)

Knoper describes the physical or bodily connection to writing in Darwinian terms.

Basically, the human mind responds equally whether an emotion, for example, is elicited in an actual event or a simulated one (88). Dasenbrock explains Austin’s view of discourse: “All discourse is simultaneously constative and performative, or, more precisely, propositional, illocutionary and perlocutionary ... All discourse is multifunctional, oriented both towards its subject and its audience” (298). This depth of coherence between the Self and words on the page only reinforces the “stage fright” of many FYC students. Despite the social construction of the Self, expressing any aspect of that Self on paper requires a very intimate engagement with a subject and an audience, even in academic discourse. Consider how often those of us who have already successfully appropriated the discourse become defensive when our own writing is challenged. How many argument responses have we publicly voiced or read in the so-called composition theory wars? It would ease the tension of appropriating academic discourse if FYC students could envision themselves playing the role of the author or writer – and if we as academics could envision students’ role playing as rehearsal for an

eventual embodied performance within their academic writing. Chandler reminds us: “While identity conflicts are highly personal and remain enmeshed in individual psychology and identity development, this uniqueness does not preclude the possibility that anxiety might influence students to express those conflicts in predictable ways” (60). Still, for some FYC students, writing anxiety is so great that they might live with the hope Foucault is correct: the Author is dead, which they may assume will result in eliminating the need for writing courses and assignments.

Generally, students see no distinction between Author and Writer. To them, a Writer records, summarizes, notes, argues, or explains ideas on paper and an Author is a Writer who is published or who gets paid. In fact, Foucault makes a clear distinction between the persona of author and the writer. He argues that the Author is historically situated with the text: “The Author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child” (Barthes 5). The Author bears legal ownership of the work. The Writer, however, “is born simultaneously with the text, [and] is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing” (Barthes 5). The Writer has no history or experience. The Writer is present only during the performance and is gone, while the Author remains and is responsible for the writing. Foucault explains:

Writing transforms the thing seen or heard ‘into strength and blood’ [*invires, in sanguine*]. It becomes a principle of rational action in the writer himself. But, inversely, the writer constitutes his own identity through this recollection of things said ... one must not elaborate on what one retains of an author in such a way that he may be recognized. (Foucault *Writing* 240)

Reflecting on Derrida, Bartholomae pushes back on Foucault's conception of the Writer, changing the end of the performance. "The writer does not write but is rather, written, composed by systems he did not invent and he cannot escape" (*Writing* 185). In this frame, students would agree writers are scribes; authors create – and they are neither. Ritchie, however, frames the writer differently.

When the writing class focuses on language as a productive, generative force for creating meaning and when it provides multiple audience responses to writing, it gives the beginning writer an opportunity to develop new ideas and new forms of writing, but it also allows her to try on new identities through the writing process. (Ritchie 155)

Barbara Tomlinson, author of "Characters as Coauthors," also challenges Foucault's theory that writers – characters writing themselves – disappear when their performance is over. The characters, as Bartholomae observes, once written "cannot escape" (*Writing Assignments* 185). Although she does not distinguish between author and writer – and in direct opposition to Bartholomae's disdain of the narrative in academic study – Tomlinson argues "such metaphorical stories are an important means by which people understand their composing experiences only partly monitored, partly remembered, partly reconstructed" (422). Fiction writers, and all writers, according to Tomlinson, use this metaphorical story as a means of describing their own writing processes. It is often argued that fictional characters actually write themselves into a work, so why not expository writers? Why not FYC students and basic writers? Writing oneself into a work – fiction or non-fiction – is wholly an act of discourse appropriation. While the author lays claim to ownership of a written work, the writer is constantly interacting with the text, solving its problems, interpreting its research, and influencing its style, not only

installing himself in the work but developing himself through its composition. These influences should be considered when discussing theories of composition as well.

Admittedly, Tomlinson makes her case in the fiction writing realm alone. She argues that considering characters as collaborators “reflects a tentative but fruitful segmentation of the self , and that the result is a complicated and integrated description of the process of composing fiction” (424). In light of Foucault’s Author/Writer theories, we may fruitfully consider extending Thomlinson’s argument into non-fiction – the expository composition of professionals and students alike. Acting theorist and author of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Luigi Pirandello also focuses on the independence and influence of characters in writing a text. His work, like Stanislavsky’s Method Acting theory, attempts to describe the construction of a character or “costruirsi” [to construct oneself – a construction which also impacts the actor, the writer, the author, the individual. Pirandello’s direction is simple:

When I direct the actors must study their parts and learn them by heart. They must study carefully, at home, on their own, in silence and meditation. And when they come on stage, they must not be actors any longer, they must be the characters in the play they are acting. That way they will have a reality in their own right that is absolute, not relative: it won’t be the false truth of stage but the positive undeniable truth of life. (qtd. in Casey 51)

But, he argues, the true fusion is that of transubstantiation.

The only solution would be if the work of art could perform itself, no longer with actors but with its own characters who, by some prodigy, took on a body and a voice. In such an instance it could indeed be judged directly in the theatre. But is such a prodigy ever possible? (transl. in Casey 54)

However, Pirandello tempers this with an implied agreement with Stanislavsky, who argues that acting requires that the Self provide the depth of human experience which the actor can draw on to create believable human characters. Method actors, according to Krasner, are constantly struggling between “self-understanding and the burden of choice that follows upon it. Method actors face emotional dilemmas, and their performances achieve power from the inner conflict that surfaces in the actor’s behavior” (33). Neither acting theorist believes one can escape oneself, but one can make an audience believe it has happened. According to researcher Mary Casey, Pirandello argues this “construirsi,” on and off stage, explains “the process by which man constructs the illusion of a coherent and unified identity in an attempt to hide the inconsistencies and uncertainties which lie beneath the surface” (50). This construction of the Self is similar to what Basic Writers and First Year Composition students new to academia are encountering in many contexts. Yes, they must consider this new role of a successful student in the academy and eventually embody it. But that new role does not come from within, according to Bartholomae, who writes: “The struggle of the student writer is not the struggle to bring out that which is within; it is the struggle to carry out those ritual activities that grant one entrance into a closed society” (*Writing* 178) . The commonplaces of the FYC student writers are not yet the commonplaces of the successful student in the academy. Therefore, drawing from within can be dangerously emotional as Chekhov describes earlier, as well as lead to representation.

Stanislavsky’s System or Method acting provides an approach for actors to rewrite the Self to include varied facets – from within and without – by first requiring

them to observe, improvise, create, rehearse, revise, and finally embody a character in performance. FYC student writers could co-opt Stanislavsky's approach in creating their academic characters through their writing – using the tension of discourse transition to enhance their performances. Returning to our performative writing model, Knoper discusses the use of tension in writing: “Mark Twain’s writerly performances took place within tensions between classes, cultures, genders, masculinities, and races. They were acts in the definition of these categories and embodiments of tensions and relations among them” (24). Most importantly, he continues, Twain’s writings are rehearsals of varied identities, as well as negotiations and dramatizations of the uncertainties and fractures within them (24). True, the characters Twain was developing are fictional, but the same issues arise in creating a dual role of character/narrator as arise in creating a character (academic Self)/writer. “To develop such conceptions,” Tomlison argues, “requires more than merely reviewing one’s own writing experiences, for writing activities, like many other cognitive activities, are difficult to monitor and remember” (422). Remembering requires action in the forms of imagination, concentration, control, belief, logic, emotion, and adaptations of each – all elements of Stanislavsky’s System or Method for actors to develop their characters.

Experience is key to the Stanislavsky system. In his alter ego Nazvanov’s diary, Stanislavsky records numerous acting classes and rehearsals, which often focus on one element of experience in order to more fully develop a character, whether in rehearsal or performance. The focus rarely was the entire play or scene. Tortsov, the acting instructor, would frequently change the rules for his students requiring them to stretch their abilities

and talents farther than they imagined they could. Nazvanov and his classmates, as our students do when pushed to achieve, often felt like dropping the class, quitting school, or looking into a different career choice.

But they did not do that.

Tortsov's students stuck it out – completing the entire course. The challenges were admittedly difficult but they kept trying. Their commitment to their craft was deepened with every challenge they experienced and drawn upon for the next challenge. Yet, one of Nazvanov's final diary entries still begins with doubt: "'Should I give up the theatre? I'm hopeless. I can't have any talent,' I thought after today's bad performance ... 'So far, I've only applied a fraction of what I've learned in school. I forgot the rest as soon as I walked onstage ... There's still the question of whether I really mastered the little I did try out onstage'" (605). These self-doubting comments could as easily have come from FYC students. The point Stanislavsky is trying to emphasize here is that this process of becoming a character for a performance on stage is recursive and requires constant intense study. Stanislasky writes:

The sense of being forced, subjected to something alien can only disappear when actors have made something other than themselves ... The 'system' can make you believe in things that do not exist. And where there is truth and belief you have genuine, apt, productive action, experiencing the subconscious, creativity, and art. (611)

This is one point we often forget as experts in composition. We forget we've had years of practice while our students have had one or two academic terms. In the same way a budding actor cannot create the fervor of an ethereal projection of Margaret Thatcher like Meryl Streep can, an FYC student is not likely to end the term having every rhetorical

move or relationship at his pencil tip. Similarly, Meryl Streep likely does not walk into the first table read for her next box office hit firmly and fully in character, nor does a rhetorician draft a final conference paper in his first hour working on it. Both Streep and the rhetorician attempt the authentic behavior of their position using a recursive process drawing on the internal but also the external. The character does not create nor embody the actor. The actor embodies the character the author created or envisioned. It is, as Stanislavsky puts it: “On one side the technique of getting the subconscious to start working. On the other, the ability not to get in its way once it does” (612). Stanislavsky’s System fills a hefty volume. Originally with Hapgood as translator, for commercial reasons, Stanislavsky offered the Method in two parts: *An Actor Prepares* and *Building Character*. But, according to Benedetti, the latest translator, those were edited down for book selling aesthetics and the full compendium of Stanislavsky’s advice is *An Actor’s Work on Himself*, which is divided into two years of study labeled: *Experiencing* and *Embodiment*. Although there is no direct correlation between Stanislavsky’s work and the numerous versions of the writing process, *Experiencing* includes more of the preparation work or invention activities and a transition to improvisation and rehearsal, while *Embodiment* focuses on the transition from improvisation and rehearsal to various states of performance. These are easily translated into something more akin to the writing process, but to emphasize the recursive nature of the System, we will look at a possible writing classroom.

Method Acting, or more appropriately Method Writing in the FYC classroom would focus on experiencing academia and the academic role, before eventually

embodying that role. Both experiencing and embodiment of the academic role necessarily require multiple forms of improvisation and rehearsal. Murray, however, ties improvisation and rehearsal directly to the writing process. He follows a discussion of procrastination in writing with: “What the writer does under the pressure not to write and the four countervailing pressures to write is best described by the word *rehearsal* which I heard used by Dr. Donald Graves of the University of New Hampshire to describe what he saw young children doing as they began to write” (376). Graves’ subjects would draw, then speak aloud, then write. Murray observes: “Rehearsal usually begins with an unwritten dialogue within the writer’s mind ... The writer thinks about characters or arguments, about plot or structure, about words and line” (376). This dialogue takes the forms of note-taking, journaling, outlining, discussions, research, sketches. “In the final rehearsal,” Murray continues, “the writer produces test drafts, written or unwritten” (377). When Stanislavsky’s alter ego Nazvanov began his acting courses, the first assignment was to prepare scenes from plays for performance on the main stage. The student actors’ preparations included discussions of the students’ choices, and consideration of which roles they could handle at their skill levels. The students also discussed and researched not only the plays and roles, but also the acting notes and recalled performances of famous actors and acting coaches. Nazvanov admits he stopped reading the script early on, convinced that he knew the character of Iago in *Othello*, which leads to a lesson in preparedness and representation in his rehearsal performance with the rest of his cast on day two. On day three, he decides he’s ready to rehearse before his classmates, who critique his work. Nazvanov’s experiences are similar to FYC

students in their first few days of writing class in that they frequently fall back on what is familiar, writing as they have for previous non-university courses. Nazvanov, however, has the benefit of Tortsov's lessons – or Stanislavsky's Method. In his introduction, Stanislavsky explains the Method is not only for use in acting. Acting is only the frame Stanislavsky uses in discussing creativity. "So actors and others working in the theatre should create *who* and *how* they please but on one essential condition: that their creative process should not run counter to nature and her laws" (xxviii). The nature of the character being embodied and performed is already known by all who have read the play and the author's other works. This utilization of both internal and external experiences and observations in the Method might become a tool for resolving the theoretical and pedagogical differences in understanding FYC students and their development in the academy through writing.

CHAPTER VI

“METHOD” WRITING IN THE FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

Experiencing

Acting requires believability within false circumstances. If the character an actor is portraying is a rancher with ten thousand head of cattle and the actor has absolutely no knowledge or experience with such things, the actor cannot change that role or the familiarity of it; he must present it entirely as the writer suggested. The actor must adapt, making the audience and fellow characters on stage believe he is who the character says he is – despite the actor’s real life lack of experience with farming or livestock. Acting is not mere external representation of a stereotype. Stanislavsky explains through Tortsov:

Everything onstage must be convincing for the actor himself, for his fellow actors and for the audience. Everything should inspire belief in the possible existence in real life of feelings analogous to the actor’s own. Every moment onstage must be endorsed by belief in the truth of the feelings being experienced and in the truth of the action taking place.
(154)

Similarly, First Year Composition students are required to display this believability. If a student chooses to argue academically against civil disobedience, the reader expects the student to provide relevant illustrations of non-violent protests and provide research of negotiation techniques. This is what an academic does, and the reader must believe the student is an academic – despite the student’s lack of experience as such. These are performances for the actor and the student – performances which require experiences they do not yet have or have not yet internalized. As Tortsov explains, “Truth is

inseparable from belief, and belief from truth. They cannot exist without each other and without both there can be no experiencing or creative work” (154). It is human nature to be comfortable with an external representation of an experience, but it takes practice to internalize an experience. The representational Stanislavsky’s Method trains actors to move from external mimicking to internal experiencing to foster believable, spontaneous, inventive, honest, ergo credible characters in performance.

What does it mean to play ‘credibly?’ Nazvanov asked Tortsov, his acting instructor. “That means thinking, wanting, striving, behaving truthfully, in logical sequence in a human way, within the character, and in complete parallel to it. As soon as the actor has done that, he will come close to the role and feel as one with it ... Our purpose is not to create ‘the life of the human spirit in a role,’ but also to communicate it outwardly in an artistic form. (Stanislavsky 19-20)

That happens, according to Stanislavsky, through a number of simultaneous activities which must be practiced *un*-simultaneously. Consider how one moves across the room. Onstage perhaps one is not meant to be noticed as he moves across the room, or perhaps he is meant to hold the focus of the audience, blinding them to what else may be happening on stage. Breaking up action into skills makes it appear to be like any familiar skill and drill approach, but it is not. It’s rehearsal. This is the type of rehearsal that Murray noted is necessary. Stanislavsky calls one exercise *Waiting Actively*. It stresses the same issue Murray does when he observes: “Writers constantly wait for the *line* which is given. For most writers, there is an enormous difference between a thesis or an idea or a concept and an actual line, for the line itself has resonance” (*Write* 378-379). If Stanislavsky’s actor is required, in character, to collect an object from the opposite side of the stage during a song and dance number, then the exercise Stanislavsky utilizes

refines the actor's concentration on the object and the task – not the whole portrayal of the character. The exercises are preparation of the skill, plus after each practice session there is an evaluation with notes – a self-evaluation, a peer evaluation, an instructor and/or a director evaluation. There is not yet an audience evaluation. This is practice discovering and experiencing. It is only later that those skills play a part in fostering the creation and embodiment of a character performance before an audience. As the character focuses on his task onstage, the audience follows that intense focus. The actor embodying the character refocuses the audience's observation of the action, moving it through the singing and dancing distraction to the object and its collection across the stage. Chekhov writes: "The actor who can concentrate well makes a stronger impression upon the audience because all his acting becomes clearly shaped, sure, and explicit. Vagueness disappears in his behavior on the stage, and his presence on the boards grows more and more impressive" (11). Any FYC instructor would be happy to see the "vagueness disappear" in student writing. Some FYC students tend to go overboard with vague word choices in an awkward attempt to deepen their discussion. Concentration exercises in Method Writing would focus students on their choices mainly through observation. Exercises would question a specific word's or phrase's motive for performance in a given situation, like an actor questioning his character's motive for crossing the stage on this line or that line of text. Such questioning in the Stanislavsky tradition would target the deepest understanding of the specific word or phrase – its etymology, its denotations, its connotations, its familiar usage, its cultural usage, etc. Whether it be a lack of vocabulary

or lack of vocabulary usage, the students sometimes end up making broad, superficial statements rather than refined, analytical comments. Concentration is required.

Concentration necessarily includes observation. Tortsov tells his students that concentration is “so essential for an actor, and reveals what is quintessential and characteristic in life” (114). It is through observing real people that actors can make their characters feel as real. But concentration also serves another purpose on stage: it diverts the actor’s attention from the audience to the activities on stage. Like actors, FYC students become distracted in their writing when they are too aware their papers will be evaluated for a grade. Similarly, they are distracted in their own writing with parallel and subordinate arguments or the multiple positions possible, the inconsequential stories discovered in their research, or their delivery of the information. All those require focus, but not all at the same time. Stanislavsky’s exercises focus actors’ attention through internal observation by creating a *Circle of Attention*. This exercise develops a public solitude state of mind in the actor. Tortov explains: “It is called public because we are all here with you. It is solitude because you are cut off from us by a small circle of attention. In a performance with a thousand eyes on you, you can always retreat into your solitude, like a snail in its shell” (99). In the *Circle of Attention*, Stanislavsky gives the actors different size spotlights to focus their attention increasingly away from themselves or increasingly toward themselves. Writing students have their own spotlights, according to Murray – eight of them to be exact. Murray’s eight principal signals for writer response include: genre, point of view, voice, news, line, image, pattern, and problem (*Write* 377-380). These signals, Murray says, clue in the writer to the fact that she is ready to write,

just as the circles of light tell the actor where and how to focus his attention. These spotlights are well blended with the overall stage lighting in the performance. The reader/audience evaluation then is one of amazement at the actor/writer for drawing attention at just the right moment to just the right point.

Acting also takes motivation – more than merely being motivated to go onstage and give it a try, as we’ve discussed earlier. Motivation is required for an actor to maintain her character consistently at the depth necessary throughout the entire play. One dramatic example of the endurance required is illustrated in David Edgar’s stage adaptation of Charles Dickens’ *Nicholas Nickleby*. A cast of 24 must maintain their characters for two nights of performance – ultimately eight hours onstage. Here, Stanislavsky again might draw Murray’s attention, suggesting more exercises. The one thing actors and writers do similarly is to ask six leading questions about their writing subject or about their character: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. The questions are common in the newsroom as reporters focus their leads and ensure they’ve covered every possible element. Similarly, actors question themselves in performance to maintain their motivation to continue in character: “Who am I? Why am I here? What am I supposed to be doing in this scene?” Motivating First Year Composition students who are wandering off track or displaying signs of disbelief in their skills, their knowledge, their abilities, or their academic character may simply require a refreshing: “What is your point here? Who’s research are you using to support your evidence? Why did you choose this aspect of this topic?” Such questioning reinforces one’s ability to endure – in character - but also helps one re-evaluate the credibility and use of specific evidence.

Throughout the *Experiencing* year Stanislavsky, via Tortsov, offers a plethora of exercises breaking down the overall elements of character development into more manageable skills. The actors can then draw on these skills when developing any characters they play. Stanislavsky's *Experiencing* elements also include: Communication, which for him includes textual analysis of the play and the author's notes, understanding the author's word choices, and creating objectivity through word usage. All of these, of course, are meant to accomplish not the representation of a character, but to allow the actor to experience life as the character and to eventually embody the character. In Bartholomae's terms, these exercises are "individual assignments [that] should be part of a larger, group project" (*Writing Assignments* 181). They are akin to the Tolstoy examples Bartholomae employs in *Writing Assignments: Where Writing Begins* when he argues a connection between the textual and the cultural which is exclusive to a discourse – academic discourse. Tolstoy's exercises focus not on the exercise design or content, "but the working out of the matter," which is exactly what First Year Composition students need to learn about what academics do (qtd. in Bartholomae *Writing Assignments* 184). In this respect, Bartholomae's contention that personal reflection, typically part of pre-writing, does not help move students into their academic characters is accurate. The students have the ideas, they need to be able to use them truthfully while in character. Textual analysis, similar to that suggested by Stanislavsky, changes the focus from brainstorming to finding ideas to expressing those ideas.

Imagining "what if" is central to Stanislavsky's *Experiencing* as well. Often labeled the *Magic 'What If,'* this exercise requires students to again question their

characters, but not about their identities. The *Magic 'What If'* requires students to question what their characters might do in any given situation, or what experiences their characters might have had which impact current behavior, like an academic hypothesizing about the impact or effects of the theory he is currently testing. Another exercise deals with discarding images rather than considering them. By discarding images, the actor determines which representations are caricatures versus accurate characterizations. The FYC student writer can so easily fall into the trap of caricaturizing a major force, voice, or theory with superficial inclusion. In the *Magic 'What If'* approach, instructors have a different way of approaching a student who is skimming the surface of an argument, or ineffectively utilizing data and sources. By questioning the forces, voices, and theories within their research and within their arguments, student writers are enable themselves to argue with their own stronger voice and with greater impact. Such an intimate understanding of the art of revising one's academic argument is sometimes left undeveloped by First Year Composition students. Those tasks cut too close for students who see their FYC writing as personal rather than public, which is the academic's stage. In the American theatre, Stanislavsky is most famous for *Emotional Memory* exercises which require actors to consider some portion or entire memory from their own experience as a familiar spot from which to build their character's memory. Often misunderstood and maladapted by other acting theorists, Stanislavsky explains the intention is to move the actor from his own experience into the experience of the character with some level of comfort (216-217). The character is not expected to relive the actor's memory in its entirety. Various *Emotional Memory* exercises also help actors

with the binary opposite of such intimacy with their character allowing them to see their character's experience and emotional responses objectively. Negotiating believability as a new character requires more than merely attention to the goal and attempts to reach that goal. It requires some negotiating tools. Stanislavsky's *Experiencing* provides those tools and specified practice for actors negotiating the aporia— space of doubt and simulated truth – between mimicry, or representation, and an authentic performance, or the embodiment of a character. Similarly, Stanislavsky's *Experiencing* exercises can empower FYC students to negotiate with more confidence, inner strength, and more successfully critically construct their discursive identities.

Embodiment

Embodying a character requires negotiation. One must negotiate use of that part of oneself which is similar to the character or that part of oneself which can assist in the character's construction. One must also negotiate a field of aporia before finally embodying or, to use Bartholomae's terms, "appropriating," the character. However, Bartholomae advocates for transition into a discourse which has numerous styles and options, simultaneously polarizing the discourse forcing specific identity constructions privileging a particular power structure(s). In contrast, in his *Teaching Composition as a Social Process* Bruce McComiskey challenges such internal polarization. "Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida in particular deconstruct the unified structure of the sovereign and autonomous modernist Subject, positing in its place a space in the aporia between identity and difference where subjectivities construct themselves and each other"

(McComiskey 70). Further, McComiskey deems this power struggle over discursive formations to be an “illusion of sovereignty” (71). The illusion forces FYC students to negotiate multiple discursive identities within one discourse. Once there students face the kind of polarizing power struggle Jacque Derrida warns of: “There is no self-relation, no relation to oneself, no identification with oneself, without culture, but a culture of oneself as a culture *of* the other, a culture . . . of the *difference to oneself*” (qtd. in McComiskey 72). In other words, one cannot be identified internally. One can only be identified externally through the lenses of one’s social construction, which defines oneself in terms of what one is not. Negotiating one’s embodiment of one’s academic writing character could get sidetracked as one clings to one successfully negotiated power ignoring all the others. In Stanislavsky’s terms, such negotiation *is* embodiment. “You must absorb and filter any system through yourself, make it your own, retain its essentials and develop it in your own way” (Stanislavsky xxv). In *Embodiment*, Stanislavsky offers exercises targeting basic underlying or building block skills, similar to those offered in *Experiencing*. *Embodiment* exercises are not meant to help the actor create the character, but to *refine* the character which is already created. “This is beyond the conscious mind,” Stanislavsky explains.

Only nature can do it. Nature is the best creative artist and technical master of all. She alone has the absolute power to control both the inner and outer apparatus of experiencing and embodiment. Only nature herself is capable of embodying subtle *immaterial* feelings (using) the crude *material* of which our vocal and physical apparatus of embodiment is composed. (352)

Michael Chekov, one of Stanislavsky’s acting students, redefines embodiment as “a *Feeling of Entirety (or the Whole)*” adding “An artistic creation must have a finished

form: a beginning, a middle, and an end ... This *Feeling of the Whole* is strongly felt by an audience and must become second nature to the performer” (xl). In other words, the actor’s performance in character should feel as natural as any performance of the actor’s Self. Stanislavsky critic Zarrilli pushes back on this psychology of the Self. He argues that embodiment reflects more of the Greek “psyche” than the “psychological. The key to embodiment for Zarrilli is “*élan vital* or the enlivening quality of the (actor’s) breath/energy” (636). For example, after one lecture on embodiment, Nazvanov (Stanislavsky’s student actor alter ego) recognizes what went wrong with his in-class performance: “I was showing *myself* in the role” rather than showing the character the role required (353). A natural performance is challenging on stage and on paper. As Bartholomae argues “it is not enough to say to them [students] that knowledge is whatever comes to mind” (*Writing Assignments* 190). Preparation exercises ensure the actor can respond to whatever the character might naturally be asked to do, creating a sense that the character is as truly alive as the actor. “Acting should not be viewed as embodying a representation of a role or character,” Zarrilli explains, “but rather as a dynamic, lived experience in which the actor is responsive to the demands of the particular moment within a specific (theatrical) environment” (638). Although Stanislavsky primarily discusses the physicality of acting in *Embodiment*, the conversion to writing instruction is easily accomplished. First Year Composition students should discover writing is not a mere repetitious review – or representation – of a professor’s lecture or an author’s article or a writer’s text. Perception, on both sides of the fourth wall, is key, Zarrilli explains, quoting Alva Noë’s *Action in Perception*. “What we

perceive is determined by what we do (or what we know how to do); it is determined by what we are ready to do ... (W)e enact our perceptual experience; we act it out” (qtd. in Zarrilli 643-644). Likewise, writing’s “primary aim”, returning to Bartholomae, “is to enable students to work *out* something that is inside them: insight, vision, ideas, connections, wisdom” (*Writing Assignments* 177). Writing is a negotiation of rhetorical moves to “work out” the appropriation of real and perceived discursive power.

Maintaining a natural rhythm when acting, the movements, the punctuation, etc., are similarly critical in maintaining a strong writing voice, a logical, sequential, coherent presentation of one’s research, and a truthful, believable – credible – opinion on paper. Stanislavsky’s *Embodiment* exercises begin with physical education, reflecting his interest in Eastern yogas and martial arts. This would transfer to FYC writing instruction as exercises in *Flexibility*. As Tortsov lectures his acting students: “I know that *outward flexibility of movement is based on inner sensation of the movement of energy*” (Stanislavsky 380). Writing flexibly requires the same inner sensation to create the outer display. Here conceptualizing the author/editor character and the writer character becomes not a polarizing line in the sand, but, again, a negotiated position. FYC students are often inflexible, even defensive, about their writing – perhaps because of their former experience with writing in school, perhaps because of their solid command of the vocabulary and grammar they have mastered, perhaps because they do not yet recognize that academic writing (save the narrative) is not always as intimate as they have previously experienced. A division of labor within the roles of the constructed Self would encourage greater flexibility in writing, revision, editing, and performance. Breathing and

movement exercises help the body gain and maintain physical flexibility, along with the side effect of increased mental stamina, just as frequent even daily assigned writing in class and out of class, in multiple styles, would help, too. Students will learn to improvise in their writing similarly to actors learning to improvise in character on stage. Varying announced and unannounced foci on rhetorical moves, as well as writing and editing tasks, would encourage flexible writing, as well as assist students plagued with the proverbial writer's block. Fear of writing also frequently stems from a lack of practice and/or a lack of objectivity; both of which promote a lack of confidence (Chandler 53). Additionally, Stanislavsky devotes time for students to complete their acting exercises – even full scripted rehearsals – with and against a backdrop of music.

It is not uncommon to find FYC students so used to working with their iPod or mp3 players that they feel they cannot write or think without music in the background. Utilizing what they already know, as well as challenging them to be more flexible and critical about such utilization, could be as advantageous in building their characters of the academic writers as it was for Tortsov's acting students building their literary characters. Like flexibility, voice and diction are not new concepts in either acting or writing, even for Stanislavsky.

'To be on voice!' – what a blessing for a singer and for a straight actor!" Tortsov lectures his students, "To feel that you can control it, that it obeys you, that it can convey the minutest details, modulations, nuances in your acting with resonance and strength! . . . 'Not to be on voice!' – what torture that is for the singer and for the straight actor, when it doesn't obey you, when it doesn't reach a house full of people waiting to hear you! When you can't reveal what your mind is creating clearly, deeply, and invisibly. Only an actor can know what agony this is. Only he can compare what has come to be deeply inside with what appears outside, and how it is conveyed by his voice, his words. (Stanislavsky 381)

Writers can know too – especially FYC students transitioning into academic writing. How frequently students claim embarrassment as they read out loud or submit their drafted essay for peer review, or for instructor review. Every composition theorist who makes a case using student writing has an illustration of the student who has not yet found his voice.

Stanislavsky advocates actors, like singers, work on vowels separately from consonants, work on arrhythmic speech with words or phrases beginning slowly and suddenly speeding up, or vice versa. Vocal exercises will look different in the Method writing classroom. “Vocal” exercises for writers build not only an increased understanding of vocabulary, but on dexterity of use as well. Like actors, writers often must manipulate visual images from words on a page. But, Stanislavsky explains through Tortsov that nature orders that – a rhetorical theory dating back to Plato. “Nature has so ordered things that when we are in verbal communication with someone we first see the things we are talking about with our own inner eye and then say what we have seen” (Stanislavsky 405). It is vital for student writers to master translation skills which detail that inner eye image in the words they use so they are not presenting a representational discussion but a real discussion, to use Stanislavsky’s discussion of difference. Bobbi Jo Weiss, author of *Writing is Acting*, juxtaposes these two concepts in a writing exercise. She argues “the art of characterization, whether it be onstage or onpage, consists of two opposing points of view: those of Reality and those of Representation” (Weiss 89). It no doubt will be popular as it involves watching television or one can use texts. Students are to look at an action show, a drama, and a comedy. But instead of attending to the

storyline they must observe the images being presented. “Does an action hero ever tie his shoes, put on deodorant, or wait for the toast to pop up out of the toaster?” she suggests. Weiss focuses on issues of fiction writing, but FYC students could focus on voice, diction, logic, sequence, and more.

Her point is for students to recognize when, why, and how a representation of reality is more or less effective than a broad or ungrounded representation. Sometimes, especially in the fiction writing realm, “a representation of life is much more interesting and exciting” (Weiss 89). FYC students might learn to be less repetitive and more definitive and authoritative – as academics are, or try to be – in their writing. They will consider the *Actions*, *Reactions*, and *Decisions* of the character(s) they are developing of academic writer and author. Stanislavsky explains: “The clearer, more concrete, more precise these actions are, the less you risk weakening your acting” (512). But how do FYC student writers test the character(s) they are developing? Unlike actors, writers only have an immediate response audience during collaborative editing processes. Beyond that, the words must stand alone on the page. Exercises in punctuation – not grammatical skill and drill – but the “dynamism” or emphasis of the text is Stanislavsky’s focus. This way of punctuating or emphasizing requires an audience, whether fictional or not.

FYC student writers should be required at various times during their writing rehearsals to rehearse in front of an audience. An actor’s immediate audience is most often the other characters on stage with her. An FYC student writer’s immediate audience is comprised of classmates. Rehearsing one’s draft aloud – *as the inner eye sees it* – to classmates working with the same topic or doing similar research would create a similar

atmosphere to Stanislavsky's. Small children recognize dull, unenlivened reading as not helpful to understanding the story when they cry, "Use voices, Mama." By reading *as the inner eye sees it*, student writers would learn to appreciate their inner eye but also understand the difference in their student/writer diction – a similar key lesson to that which Tortsov admitted to his students – one which should delight composition instructors in any discursive practice?

I also came to understand that distortions in conversational speech just about get by in our home surroundings. But when resounding verses on noble subjects, on freedom, on ideals, on pure love are delivered onstage with coarse speech, that coarse declamation is an insult and a hindrance. (Stanislavsky 390-391)

Any exercises developing voice and diction require slow, significant work, and much patience, according to Stanislavsky. But this precise, detailed attention to rhythms, definitions, connotations, etc., also has the added benefit of boosting the actor's, and therefore the writer's, confidence as well. As Stanislavsky describes, acting must appear natural. This natural appearance is what Bartholomae is concerned about when he allows that students "must learn to speak our language. Or they must dare to speak it, or to carry off the bluff, since speaking and writing will most certainly be required long before the skill is 'learned'" (605). Through Method acting's character development techniques, FYC students will not only perform more authentically and naturally when acting the academic role and acting the author role, but they may also begin *embodying* their roles on stage. In fact, the Self is informed as much by the character developed for performance, as the character is informed by the Self. The key is control – and polish, or "finish" as Stanislavsky calls it: "The more control and finish acting has, the calmer the

actor is, the more clearly the shape and form of the character comes across and the more it affects the audience and the greater success the actor has” (543). Likewise, the First Year Composition student.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Exploring writing through a performative lens focused on the writer and the text produced offers a new perspective from which to study composition theory and pedagogy. This is not new insight, but exploring the intersections between multiple writing and acting theories, albeit here only one, may offer a fresh conception of the new learning opportunities for FYC students expected to appropriate new roles in the academy. So, too, spotlighting such a theorist integral to modern American and worldwide stage and screen acting as Stanislavsky as an initial research discussion necessarily sheds light on the genealogy and role of acting theories adapted and evolving from the organic “System” or “Method.” Although considering FYC as performance pushes against various composition theories, performance and acting theory intersections also offer fresh, pragmatic connections among these sometimes discordant camps.

Expressivism, Cognitivism, and Social Constructionism each approach the writing act and, necessarily, the academic discourse differently with, however, a similar outcome. While performative theory offers parallels between theories, a Stanislavsky-influenced “Method Writing” performative practice offers intersections bringing theorists together and bridges helping instructors better utilize the varied composition theories to enable FYC students’ transition into academic writing. Students will still need to “invent the university,” as Bartholomae describes, but will have more intensive training from a

broader perspective while doing so. Each student learns differently. Therefore, occasionally it may be necessary for instructors to break from their preferred theoretical approach to gain a new perspective and glean new learning opportunities, just as academics have learned to step back and gain a new perspective on particular research. FYC student writers need such bridges or many ways of seeing their own learning and writing while moving from their home discourse to our academic discourse. In fact, Stanislavsky's "Method" approach to writing would put the Expressivist, Cognitivist, and Social Constructionist characters together on stage to collaboratively problem-solve writing issues with students and requiring a final performance, or essay, for a particular audience, or reader.

Stanislavsky's "Method" acting theory is pragmatic recognizing the polar opposites of superficiality and truth to both be necessary to a successful performance. Declan Donnellan, author of the introduction to the latest edition of Stanislavsky's *An Actor's Work*, points out: "in fact theatre needs both of these extremes to have any life ... Ignoring one pole may help us feel more comfortable in the short term, but ultimately leads to artistic suicide. To live fully we need to negotiate the narrow rim between order and chaos" (Stanislavsky xi). Learning to negotiate is vital to academic success. By holding fast to a particular theory, we as instructors limit our students ability to negotiate – as well as our own. According to McComiskey, students come to their first composition courses well versed in binary opposites (75). Our goal should be akin to McComiskey's: "to help students move beyond identity/difference oppositions that only encourage accommodation or resistance" (75). By limiting our own instruction to one camp of

composition theory, we encourage this resistance. All composition theories should be explored and mined for their valuable tools and insight.

Utilizing the performative, whether Stanislavsky's theories or other theories, we also bring reconnect composition theory with our rhetorical roots. Especially in this digital age when students have numerous composition options open to them, performative guidance is essential for success. A resource which assists construction *and* analysis of one's own identity, as well as one's projected identity(s) and one's performance(s) at increasing depths in any form of composition, academic or not, as "Method" acting does, is worthy of greater research.

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