Theatre, Dance and Performance Training

Embodied Correspondences with the Material World: Marcel Jousse's 'Laboratory of the Self' as a force for creative practice in performer training

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Abstract

Drawing on the French anthropologist Marcel Jousse's notion of the body as a 'laboratory of the self', this article considers the compositional potential of an embodied imagining process starting from a sense of being *with* the material element of rock, more specifically, Haytor located on Dartmoor National Park (2018). In exploring the processes that took place during this research project, I discuss how the trajectory of Jousse's approach to learning might enrich our understandings of a theatre-making process rooted in the relationship between the self-aware body and the substances that make up our environment. I suggest how this process-led model can offer fresh insights into a performer training ethos that welcomes uncertainty and the indeterminate. How might an embodied inner sense of self prompt students to be alert to what the world is telling us, and even, as Rebecca Rupp writes, 'flip the blindfolds off our preoccupied eyes' (Rupp, 2005, p. 130)?

Keywords: Devising, Research Project, Marcel Jousse, '*interssusception'*, Mimesis,

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Introduction

The constant renewal of actor training practice, as theatre professor Mark Evans observes, 'requires that we repeatedly look again at the world from new and different perspectives that are better attuned to the challenges of the world we live in' (Evans 2015, p. xxiii). In the current UK climate, where 'results-led' learning is increasingly prioritised in a progressively cautious and resource-limited educational landscape, this paper makes the case for a more nuanced and process-led approach to the training of contemporary theatre-makers, practitioners and students. The practice-led research project I go on to describe, placed me right at the heart of an unfolding and often unpredictable process, prompting questions about the kind of training that can emerge from a situated and emergent devising process rooted in our unique ways of experiencing and being in the world. In what follows, I argue for the preservation and cultivation of a training environment that encourages curiosity about the forming rather than the formed and which acknowledges confusion and uncertainty as integral and necessary conditions for theatre-making.

Inspired by the writings of the French anthropologist, educationalist, theologian and linguist, Marcel Jousse (1886-1961), this article discusses a solo research project exploring the triangulation of the body, the material element of rock and the lived experience as a springboard for an embodied devising process. *Moving Rock*, funded by Bath Spa University, took place between July and September 2017 and transpired within a specific geographical and geological context: Haytor, a large granite mass on the Eastern edge of Dartmoor National Park in Devon. The 'fieldwork' phase of the project and central focus of this article, involved drawing on Jousse's notion of 'the laboratory of the self' as a somatic model for devising and explored generating possible performance material without, 'a prior imaginal vision of the work that is then merely expressed, duplicated, imagined' (John Sallis 2000, p. 224).

Authors Govan, Nicholson and Normington offer a definition of devising as

'processes of interrogation and sets of creative strategies' (Govan *et al* 2007*,* p. 7). From this perspective, devising can be considered as an evolving practice in which the performance is the outcome of an often elusive and unpredictable process. It involves scrutinising the work as it is being made, imagining how it can be improved, altering it repeatedly, trying out those changes, reflecting on the results and making further adjustments; all of which might very well move the final outcome away from its original premise. Moreover, the conditions need to exist for what poet and literary critic, Samuel Taylor Coleridge describes as, 'a hovering between images' (Coleridge cited Barthes, 2001, p. 27), suggesting both the presence of energy and the absence of a completely defined resolution. Similarly, Professor of Theatre Helen Trenos asserts, 'creativity does not occur in neat, sequential stages' (Trenos 2014, p. 11). Equally, in the role of teacher working within an increasingly risk-averse climate, it can be tempting to fall into a mechanistic approach rather than optimising the learning environment as a space for unforeseen discoveries extending beyond the intended learning outcomes to enrich the learning experience for both students and educators alike.

In my experience as practitioner and teacher, I have noticed undergraduates in institutional settings are increasingly overwhelmed by doubt when trying something new or working without a clear outcome: "What will happen if I make a mistake?" "How can I try if I don't know what I am supposed to do?" These apprehensions reflect the sociologist Frank Furedi's definition of the *precautionary principle*, whereby 'it is best not to take a new risk unless its outcome can be understood in advance' (Furedi 1997, p. 9). I often describe the effects of approaching devising in this way to students as, 'driving with the hand-brake on' or 'sailing with the sails sheeted too tight to respond to subtle shifts in the wind'. These anxieties are highlighted in a recent Guardian article, *The Arts teach us how to express ourselves – and give us freedom to fail.* Writer and teacher Daisy Buchanan observes that because 'Generation Z' struggle with the pressure of perfection, 'it makes sense that they are choosing subjects with definite answers, and they seek a classroom experience where the

rules are clearly delineated' (The Guardian 2018). In teasing out Jousse's 'intussuscepting' process, this research project afforded opportunities to examine a personal devising process from the inside and correspondingly, as a teacher, to revisit some of the concerns outlined above.

Marcel Jousse: 'Intussusception' as a Mode of Learning

I first heard Jousse mentioned as a student at the Jacques Lecoq International School in Paris. *Le* theatre *du geste: mimes et acteurs* (1987), Lecoq's account of the key ideas underpinning his pedagogical ethos, was published during my first year and later translated into English as *Theatre of Movement and Gesture (*2006). In it, he acknowledges Jousse's considerable influence on his training approach. Lecoq's later assertion that 'people discover themselves in relation to their grasp of an external world' (Lecoq 2000, P. 17) and his central focus on the mimetic in relation to the material world as a catalyst for imaginative practice, chime directly with the central focus of Jousse's investigations. Since this publication, it appears that little research had been undertaken to scrutinise the pedagogical connections between Jousse and Lecoq. Indeed, Jousse remains largely unknown in theatre training and pedagogical circles. More recently, in the *Routledge Companion to Jacques Lecoq* (2016) the resonances between Lecoq and Jousse are refreshingly brought to the fore by professor and actress, Claudia Sachs and actor/deviser Jon Foley Sherman. Rick Kemp, co-editor of the book, also refers to Jousse within the context of current research on recent neuroscientific findings related to embodied cognition. It seems timely therefore, to interrogate Jousse's ideas through practical enquiry and to consider the implications of his work on performer training.

Before moving on to the research project itself, it is useful to briefly contextualise Jousse's investigations and to identify the key assertions that serve as theoretical points of departure. Jousse's pioneering and life-long inquiry aimed to articulate a connection between the emerging social science disciplines of anthropology, ethnography and psychology. From

his humble beginnings in a rural town south-west of Paris, Jousse grew up in a community characterised by its oral-style mode of transmission. Indeed, he attributes his work on communication, learning and memory to his mother's singing of ancient *cantilenas* when he was a small child. Jousse's teachings draw on aspects of linguistics, mathematics, biblical, Judaic, Aramaic, Palestinian studies and pedagogy to propose a cosmological, mimetic theory of human expression. His holistic anthropology is grounded in the notion of a dynamic universe in which all constituent parts 'act on' each other and are simultaneously 'acted upon'. For Jousse, all human expression is rooted in gesture and more contentiously at the time, he sought to reclaim the intrinsic values of orality.

While Jousse acknowledged that writing had succeeded in expanding the possibilities of communication and knowledge, it had been used erroneously in his view, to undermine and obstruct learning: 'We have been flattened like dead and dried-out butterflies between the pages of our books' (Jousse 2018, p. 77). As an educationalist, Jousse saw himself not as a mere transmitter of knowledge, but rather as a guide or pathfinder for his students, whose role it was to point towards possibilities. He repeatedly urged his students to operate in a permanent state of action. I suggest that Jousse's work parallels philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey's (1934) notion of action as being involved in knowledge-making, rather than knowledge subordinated to action.

In seeking to discover essential principles of human expression that were common to all human beings irrespective of race, creed, gender, ethnic milieu, education, geographical location, cultural bias, religious persuasion or socio-political status, Jousse's work resonates directly with Lecoq's notion of 'a universal poetic sense', 'made up of spaces, lights, colours, materials, sounds, which can be found in all of us' (Lecoq 2000, p. 47). Universality for both Jousse and Lecoq, is rooted in our sensorial experiences with the external world, which have been absorbed into the body and 'constitute our common heritage' (2000, p. 47). While it is possible to detect a creative tension in Jousse's ideas between universalism and a fluid

interconnectivity between matter, culture, nature and bodies, Lecoq himself acknowledges 'the idea that everyone is alike is both true and totally false' (Lecoq 2000, p. 40). Using his example of a goodbye, this highly personal experience can be concentrated into an 'an act of separation' (2000, p. 40), and this 'essential 'act can also extend to matter, for instance, the separation of ice from an ice shelf, the separation of a lid from a jar or the separation of two sides of Velcro. Importantly, within the context of performer training, a collective discovery of these 'shared references' is intended to reveal the 'permanence' of the act of separation not as a static state, but rather as an underlying dynamic understood primarily through bodily experience and then applied to the personal dimension. In this sense, universality, as Lecoq argues, is not the same as uniformity (2000).

Jousse's forthright opinions garnered widespread interest. Edward Seinaert, translator and editor of Jousse's works observes that Jousse's first publication *The Oral Tradition* (1925), 'seemed so novel in its reconstruction and rehabilitation of orality, so all-encompassing in its possible applications, that it was referred to as, "the Jousse bomb"' (Sienaert 1990, p. 91). Later, in *The Anthropology of Gesture and Rhythm* (1934), Jousse delineates the essential laws that govern his notion of dynamic inter-action between the 'anthropos' (a term originated by Jousse to describe the human being as a unified body-mind-soul entity) and the Universe. I outline these laws briefly below and then expand on them through my account of the research project.

The 'laboratory of the self' as a Mode of Embodied Practice and Training.

Jousse defines his primary law as *Mimism*, or the instinctive impulse to receive, integrate and replay gesturally all the actions played into us by the universe. He articulates this law in three successive stages. The first Objective Stage refers to the universe acting on us: 'The cosmic energy explodes' and 'irradiates' in us. In the second, Subjective Stage we grasp the external world through a process of '*intussusception*', a term he proposes for the

way we absorb the cosmological action into our consciousness through mime so that memory and understanding are embodied. Each of these '*mimismic'* seizings, capturings or *intussusceptions*' of the real constitutes a '*mimeme'* and it is through these successive '*intussusceptions'*, '*mimeme'* by '*mimeme'*, that according to Jousse, we construct and reconstruct ourselves. In this way, the Real of the external world is played through us; it is '**im**-pressed' upon us and then integrated into us. The third and final Expressive Stage, involves '**ex**-pressing or replaying the real at will. In other words, in the process of 'remaking' Jousse argues, we find our own unique expression. Following this line of thought, *mimemes* are in essence, 'the building blocks of a human being' (Jousse cited Sienaert 2016, p. 16).

Bringing these principles together, Jousse observes that the most penetrating and best fashioned tool to analyse the human being is our own performance of our own *gestes*: 'this is surely, he writes, 'the tool to dismantle all other tools' ((Jousse 2000, pp. 26-27). In this sense, the human being is, 'a laboratory of awareness and represents a unique learning model of lived experience' (2000, pp. 26-27)). In adopting these methodological principles in the Moving Rock project, my individual experiences and responses to Haytor would become central to the inquiry.

Points of Departure - Towards a Mimetic Geology

In my secondary school, only four of us studied 'O' Level Geology. On field trips, we explored the Devonian limestones and slates of Hope's Nose in Torquay and Kents Cavern; The Hangman Grits, Pickwell Down Sandstone and the pebble beds of Exmouth (Figure 1), Budleigh Salterton and the Dartmoor tors. Together with our teacher, we would clamber over, touch, compare and observe geological features in all weathers, discovering how all the events that rock has endured since its creation are etched into its surface by processes of sedimentation, fracturing and weathering. Through situated explorations we would discover

the rock's texture, analyse its composition and identify how its features provide a record of the geological events that formed it.

Figure 1. O Level Geology Fieldtrip to Exmouth. Ellie Nixon, 1980. Photo by Lesley Kerman.

For Jousse, the absorption of the real and the strength of memory will correspond to the strength of the reaction to the original gestural activity or play. 'Never forget', he writes, that a child's interest is gripped much more by the name of a plant that he can see, touch, pick, handle, taste, smell than by a word that is written on a piece of paper and that does not correspond to anything living' (Jousse cited Sienaert 2016, p. 90). Back in the classroom, geology text books came to life through our lived experiences of rock.

The 'Laboratory of the Self' as a Preparatory Paradigm for Devising

The capacity to observe, reflect and to act on what is happening inside and outside the body is an essential quality in actor training for both interpretative and devising practices. The field work phase of the research project and central focus of this article, involved a series of visits to Haytor (Figure 2), a rock formation I've known since childhood.

Figure 2 Haytor. Photo Ellie Nixon

It is important to note here, that from the outset of the project, I found myself with similar apprehensions as those students mentioned earlier. With no structure to my investigation, no clear set of rules or guidelines to follow, no problem to solve or linear narrative to pursue, I was anxious to find immediate answers, in a sense to hold on to the reassurance of a predetermined outcome. In his 'situational theory of inquiry', Dewey (1938) observes that when habit and certainty are disturbed in learning, as mine was in this instance, we are thrown off balance. Consequently, we must expect some degree of disorder to occur.

In my desire to diminish uncertainty at the start of the study I clung on to the security of passive observation, convincing myself that the more I looked at the rock, the more I was deeply involved in an active process. While this might be an effective 'way in' to a devising practice, my attention was placed solely on the external appearance of the rock: its texture, shape, hardness, colour and location. Indeed, my 'disembodied' observation only served to distance my relationship with Haytor. This is the challenge of rock. It is already a form and the potential pitfall lies in becoming confined solely to its seemingly impermeable outward appearance. There is a marked difference, Dewey argues, between habitual emotional and impulsive responses to the indeterminate and the more productive, deliberate entertainment of doubt in a way that can lead to intentional action. How then, could I infuse my natural anxiety with a capacity for suspended judgment?

Considered as a somatic mode of enquiry, Jousse's 'intussusception' process invites me to engage in a more porous relationship of being touched and moved by what touches and moves me. In Jousse's words, 'The experimenter is simultaneously the experimented' (Jousse 2000, p. 25). For Jousse, the most important first step in taking hold of something is through connecting to our anthropological deep-rooted urge to become all things, through our mimetic faculty. The anthropologist Michael Taussig defines mimesis, as 'the nature that culture uses to create second nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other' (Taussig 1993, p. 19). Of particular note here, is the way in which mimesis is understood as an adaptive behaviour, before language, whereby humans make themselves similar to their surrounding environments through play and assimilation. Similarly, Walter Benjamin sees experience and observation as synonymous, 'observation is based on self-immersion' (Benjamin cited Jennings and Eiland 1999, p. 720) and 'play is to a great extent its School' (1999, p. 694). In adopting Jousse's affirmation that ''The universe plays in and the *anthropos* plays out' (Jousse 2000, p. 25), I could reframe my inquiry in a way that privileged unfolding experience over outcome, arguably an essential

pre-requisite in the early stages of a devising process.

The American feminist theorist Karen Barad's notion of 'intra-action' considers the process of understanding as inextricably entangled in the external world. Her assertion that 'there is no knowing from a distance' (Barad 2012, p. 52) offers striking synergies with Jousse's 'laboratory of the self'. If everything that is re-played *through* us is *within* us, the question then is not how I can move the rock, but rather, how the rock moves me. Jousse's example of a sponge illustrates this relationship. From the moment a sponge is held, he observes, it makes a geste: 'the sponge moistens my hand; the sponge refreshes my fingers; the sponge weighs in my hand' (Jousse cited Sienaert 2016, p. 128). Building on this 'intussuscepting curiosity,' I take possession of the outside world not by observing the rock or trying to fight it, but instead by being *with* it. The material element of rock then truly becomes the conductor between internal experience and the external world. The anthropologist Tim Ingold's (2013) affirmation that making is a 'correspondence' between maker and the material, exemplifies this relationship.

The importance of paying close attention to the activities of the external world is highlighted by Lecoq in his pedagogical approach: 'Every student has to go and cook an egg, for real, before performing, so that they can see that the yolk falls first, dragging the lighter white behind it' (Lecoq, 2000, pp. 89-90). A such, 'observing the real' is considered an embodied activity. In my role as teacher, I have found that engaging students directly with the real in the first session - materials that wobble: jelly, silicone; materials that corrode or effervesce, fizzy drinks, sweets that fizz in the mouth; elastic materials, materials that bounce, materials with or without echo – as opposed to starting from the imagination, contributes to a more acute, detailed and embodied sense of the specific structural qualities of matter. Equally, I would argue, that in rooting this activity in the real, students and teacher develop an emergent shared vocabulary based on sensations and responses that together, act as a richer impetus for the imagination.

Returning to the 'Moving Rock' project, I sought next to develop interactions which might reduce the distance between the rock and myself. I selected specific Feldenkrais exercises in the location to encourage a more embodied process of attuning and sense-making. When teaching student actors, I regularly incorporate lessons devised by Moshe Feldenkrais, just one of a range of embodied learning techniques that invite students into an intentional state of self-awareness and receptiveness. Working with key international Feldenkrais educators since the early 1980s, and more recently with movement specialist Monika Pagneux, I consider Feldenkrais's approach to thinking through movement a compelling means of accessing Jousse's *intussuscepting* process, particularly in preparation for the '**ex**-pressive stage'. Like Jousse, the method developed by Feldenkrais is based on the notion of 'unity of mind and body' as 'an object reality' (Feldenkrais cited Evans 2015, p. 79). His 'lessons' form the basis for improving movement organisation and are intended to renew a sense of having choices and alternatives.

I would argue that Pagneux takes the Feldenkrais work a step further, in a way that the body is no longer 'an obstacle for the imagination' (Pagneux 2007)[1]. When her students playfully explore lessons such as, 'freeing the upper back', 'moving from your centre, 'twisting and turning' or 'grounding', these activities extend seamlessly into improvisational work. The Feldenkrais exercise 'Feet propelling into action' an audio lesson by Feldenkrais teacher Judit Meixner available online (Feldenkrais Guild), was particularly enlightening in my work with Haytor. Awakening the functional connections between toes, heels, spine and sitting bone, I found a new sense of being grounded and an unfamiliar ease of movement. A subsequent exercise I developed involved filling the natural fissures of the rock, the spaces in-between with my breathing body, encouraging a sense of breathing in and out of the rock as the rock simultaneously inhaled and exhaled me. My breathing pattern shifted. I felt

[1] Mentioned by Pagneux in a workshop I attended in Barcelona (2007). Quoted by Garet Newell, educational director of the Feldenkrais International Centre Ltd, in an ATM session I attended in 2006.

noticeably lighter and sensed the subtle ways my weight adapted with more ease to the demands of climbing Haytor. Instead of clutching and grappling the rock, my hands and fingers were softer in their relationship to it. Rather than a feat to be accomplished, the rock now supported my ascent – almost as if we climbed the heights together.

I propose that when aligned with Jousse's intussuscepting process, the Feldenkrais exercises can sensitise students and devisers to the world in new and subtle ways. Moreover, if the intense focused attention propelled by the Feldenkrais work is experienced 'in situ', students or devisers are drawn to an immediate relationship with a material dimension, in which matter itself can offer a stimulus or driver for generating performance. In her chapter, *Embodying Deep Practice: A Pedagogical Approach to Actor Training* (2013), theatre professor Bonnie Eckard relates this focused attention directly to neuroplasticity, the ability of the brain to change its function in response to environment, behaviour, thinking, injury and emotions. In my own case with the rock, this level of attention was neither experienced as forceful nor intense, but rather as a gentle engagement, analogous to the notion of 'quiet receptivity' proposed by the French philosopher of science and the imagination, Gaston Bachelard. Similarly, Eckard's 'soft focus' for the actor, 'takes the pressure off the eyes as the dominant source of information, and allows the whole body to listen' (Eckard 2013, p. 49).

In these mimetic acts of paying close attention, the rock tests my courage and in this activity, I experience a heightened sense of physical exertion, an expanded scale of effort and force. On the summit, I now take in the landscape through the rock's eyes, absorb how it emerges from the earth and the way it meets the sky. For the first time, I note several rough and well-beaten trails to the tor, like meandering streams. These are ancient tracks now etched permanently into the landscape, examples perhaps of Bachelard's 'desire paths'; informal routes fashioned spontaneously over time by walkers. These paths evolving from

experience rather than a formal pre-determined route, offer a compelling analogy for the devising process I am exploring.

Infused by the Feldenkrais exercises, I am brought into a new embodied consciousness, from which I ask new questions: Does the rock refuse to move or is it content to stay? How does the hardness of the rock reveal the softness of my body? Consequently, rather than a material of resistance, the rock invites me to sense and explore the shades and layers of my own movement qualities, to become curious about new breathing patterns, speed, intensity and rhythm. I engage in a kind of embodied flow of overlapping sensations, responding in a permanent dynamic of weight, and weightlessness, of push and pull, of above and below, of acceptance and resistance, of the miniature and the infinite. In Jousse's terms, I am 'at play' with the rock (Figure 3), a notion that resonates compellingly with Ingold's term 'knowing in being' (2017),

Figure 3. Moving Rock Project, 2017. Photo by Ellie Nixon

I suggest that in giving time to this sensorial experience in the learning environment, students can discover a deeper range of mutable possibilities, instances, images and materialising sensations that can either strengthen into impressions or activate the memory. The temporal dynamics of this activity can be characterised by what Michael Spivey, professor of cognitive science, terms both 'feed-forward' and 'feedback effects' (Spivey 2008). Memory, such an important aspect of the 'intussusception process' is encapsulated by Jousse, as 'the tireless replay of our *mimemes* …' (Jousse cited Sienaert 2016, p. 19). In one particular instance, while negotiating crossing the vertical fracture dividing the tor in two, I experience the following vivid 'feedback effect' or 'replay of *mimemes*'. As a child, our family would regularly visit Becky Falls, a waterfall carved out in the last Ice Age, near Haytor. Leaping from boulder to boulder, my brother and I would challenge each other to leap the furthest, the highest and the fastest – we had no fear, just a playful curiosity. The German philosopher Gadamer defines 'play' as a transformative experience, an active

phenomenon, precisely because in the act of playing, the player, absorbed by the game's movement is also being played by the game (Gadamer cited Torevell, 2007). Our game with the rock generated the self-discovery of what our bodies could do: we defied gravity, our bodies felt limitless and expansive. As the game progressed we became more confident, more agile and more daring. Being 'at play' with the boulders of Becky Falls had opened us up to the world (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Becky Falls – Moving Rock Project, 2017. Photo curtesy of Graham Rich.

On reflection, I realise that in jumping from boulder to boulder, our relationship with the rock was two-fold: In one sense we were 'using' the boulders to change location, yet, in Jousse's terms, the boulders themselves prompted us to jump to them and indeed they were equally responsible for determining our route and the quality of our actions. Some of the rocks were large enough to rest on. Others were so small, it was impossible to stop moving if you wanted to avoid falling into the torrent of water. A kind of tacit rhythmic relationship emerged guided by the boulders and our innate curiosity, much as in the way described by Jousse's description of a child's absorption with the world:

> 'If left to its spontaneity, the child will be in tune with the universe, and as the universe is in incessant movement, the child too will be in movement, and that child is then indeed a *perpetuum* mobile. The child is energy, in the strongest original sense of the term: a force in action, in flow – in *rhythmos*. We are, all of us, rhythm, living-being rhythm, biological rhythm, rhythm that is at once regular and supple. The child is a natural born mimer: the child intussuscepts – takes in and makes it his own – and expresses all that is impressed in it' (Jousse Lecture 2, 1931, Semiotics Encyclopedia Online).

This level of engagement with the rock arguably illuminates Jousse's choice of the verb 'to apprehend' from the Latin *apprehendere*, meaning to 'seize upon', to 'grasp', to

'cling to'. Through actively 'taking hold of' the rock with my body, I move towards a holistic sense of understanding it with my entire being. In Jousse's terms, the external world that I experience, permeates my being as I *apprehend* the reality that reverberates in me.

Developing a Shared Language of Experience for Training

Through the project, I rediscover the language of geology. On Dartmoor, the process of rock formation occurred about 300 million years ago below the earth, resulting in an enormous granite intrusion known as a 'batholith', from the Greek 'bathos' or 'depth' and 'lith': stone. Such geological terms serve as a rich resource for initial kinetic encounters in the studio. For instance, in an exercise I developed: 'Waking Up the Words' I experimented moving the rhythms, sounds, forms and energies of the names of the minerals that make up Dartmoor granite: phenocrysts, feldspar, quartz and shiny mica. Jousse, who developed his own vocabulary for the 'intussuscepting' process, also notes the significance of etymology in articulating his work, arguing that the origins of words are often in themselves, vocal gestures: 'For each sound there is a meaning: *'to grasp', 'to scratch', or 'push', etc.*' (Jousse cited Sienaert 2016, p. 95).

Correspondingly, in adapting the body to the movements of these words I become receptive to unfamiliar movement qualities. This stage of the 'intussuscepting process' articulates what dance critic and philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999) defines as a language of kinetic experience, a way of sensing the relationship between the body and the external world whilst avoiding, in the first instance, the filter of subjective opinion. New rhythmical movement patterns – bursts of energy interspersed by fixed points of suspension and stillness - are embedded in the body before the overlaying of emotion and personality. This is not to suggest an exact reconstruction of life as it is, rather, in Lecoq's words, 'as an essential step towards feeding off all these experiences in order to create something new (Lecoq 2000, p. 48). In starting from the real, rather than the imagination, a shared and

embodied vocabulary emerges, defined by Jousse as '*verbalisation*' or a connection to the real, as opposed to '*verbigation*', a term he invented for words that have no connection to concrete reality. Within the context of training, this approach to words challenges the notion that language is merely a conduit for exchanging information.

Capturing Experience

In giving more time to sensing instances of Spivey's 'feedback' (reflection) and 'feed forward'(projection), I realise that my own unique responses, emotions, memories and feeling are intricately intertwined in a multidirectional web of associations and correspondences. Interestingly, Jousse associates shifts in the transference of bodily weight with the activity of thinking, with each modification indicating an embodied extension of a thought or a change in its direction. The American psychologist William James compares this unceasing movement of consciousness to a bird's life, 'made of an alternation of flights and perchings' (James cited Varela and Shear 2002, p. 145). Quite often, in this perpetual state of reception and expression we are in danger of overlooking and filtering emerging material too early. Strategies for documenting such instances might include taking photos and video footage, making drawings and take notes, which, in the case of the Haytor research project are then cross-referenced with geological surveys, historical accounts, stories, legends about the tor and of the miners who worked the nearby quarry. In the following table, I list just some examples of Jousse's 'intussuscepting' process as I experienced it.

Haytor Research Project: Exploring Jousse's 'Intussuscepting' Process		
OBJECTIVE STAGE The rock **im**presses upon me	SUBJECTIVE STAGE Bringing the rock into consciousness	EXPRESSIVE STAGE The explosion of human energy
GEOLOGY: Tor granite Feldspar Megacrysts Quartz Phenocrysts Xenolyths	Constant force moving in vertical plane Directions – vertical thrusts and breaks in the movement Restlessness	Powerful forces forces at play Melting – the rock exhaling Past/present Perceiving the sensorial, Effort.

Vertical fracture Fissures A junction between granite types Continental collision Magma Cooling and contraction Remnants of a batholith roof	Melted magma – the rock exhaling Softness and shade protecting Gravitational pull, Process of constant flux, Emptiness and fullness, Underneath/above.	The hidden and the visible Resistance and acceptance Push and pull Wounds and attack Spaces for hiding Expansive spaces
TOUCH Coarse crystalline granite above Fine-grained red granite below Lichen Polished by passing feet Footholds Handholds	Roughness – coarseness Patches of heat absorbed from the sun Coldness in the shadows Softness of lichen	Resistance of rock to touch Being hit by rock White fingers from the cold Arriving – departing Being helped by rock
SPACE Summit of 457m View from the summit Gaps between rock Scale	Expanse and smallness Playfulness, lightness 360 Degree perspective People from above, people from below	Play – lightness Expansions – contraction Secret spaces
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS Weathering Erosion Human intervention	Weathering of horizontal rock joints Overhang Rounding of slabs Discoloured by weathering - brown iron staining Periglacial weathering Chemical weathering by subtropical vegetation Iron handholds Steps cut into it	Battered by the elements The fight to stay vertical Fear of looking down Weariness of the rock Efforts of pull and push, tension and release Advancing, retreating, Rhythm, The external effects of earth, air and water on an action.

Table 1. The 'Intussuscepting' Dynamic - Moving Rock Project, Haytor, Dartmoor, 2017.

The 'ex-pressive' Stage: Towards a Material Practice of Devising

In the studio, I begin to shape the work. I explore embodying the gentle light warming the rock, the wind's forceful movement around it and against it. Centuries of erosion reveal its defiance in the face of natural and non-natural intervention. It has been buffeted, battered and bombarded from all sides. Steps have been carved into it and iron railings have been drilled into its core to make it easier for us humans to climb. Yet, despite its apparent dominance, the tor appears to emanate a certain stoicism and even resignation. Back in the studio, I am struck by these emerging anthropomorphic qualities. Why do we believe rock is impassive and impermeable? What we often take to be solid and inanimate is suffused with

movement and feeling. Barad refers to this as the 'liveness' of the world: 'Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers' (Bared cited Dolphijn *et al*. 2012, p. 48). I agree with Jane Bennet, who in her publication, *Vibrant Matter* defends the notion of anthropomorphism as working positively against anthropocentrism: 'a chord is struck between person and thing, and I am no longer above or outside a nonhuman 'environment' (Bennet 2010, p.120).

While it may appear that 'the laboratory of the self' as a mode of enquiry is introspective and self-absorbed, I would argue that self-awareness is revivified in relation to the external world. In small and sensitive ways, we are invited to experience the landscape differently, to look at the world from new standpoints, to become aware of the 'liveness' of landscapes. My practice is now imbued with what I would term, an 'embodied geology'. Rather than thinking of Haytor as a repository for the collection and analysis of data, the tor is more aptly understood as a habitat for creative possibilities, 'wherein we learn not *about* but *from* its manifold human and more-than-human inhabitants' (Ingold 2017, p. 32).

As I advance in the structuring process I am aware of an assemblage of overlapping material, 'constituting a kind of stratigraphy of layers: of text, physical action, music and/or soundtrack, scenography and/or architecture (and their subordinate moments)' (Pearson and Shanks 2001 p. 24). Building on this notion of geological layering, I would describe the logic of the performance I am currently developing as one of polyvalence, where all the constituent unfolding material is being interwoven into a whole, with converging and diverging resonances and centres of focus from moment to moment. Writing on performance design, the author Maaike Bleeker articulates a practice that resonates strikingly with my own exploration of devising, as one that 'proceeds through setting up intra-actions that allow matter its due in the performance's becoming' (Bleeker 2017, P.128). While I play a significant role in generating material, structuring and shaping the outcome, the rock and I effectively undergo a devising process of co-collaboration, pointing, as Bleeker concludes, to a 'post

anthropocentric approach'. Correspondingly, I would best describe the evolving devised performance as a 'poetics of resistance'.

Jousse's 'Intussuscepting Body' – Towards a Pedagogy of Life

I have suggested ways in which Jousse's 'laboratory of the self' can bring us back to our bodies, deepens our understanding of the material world and exposes us to different ways of seeing, doing and being through material engagement, but what new perspectives can it offer for current performer training in a results-led learning environment? It is widely held that students transitioning from a 'teach to the test' mode of learning and dependence, struggle with the transition to higher education, which advocates the very distinct qualities of autonomy, initiative, curiosity, confidence and critical awareness. These key aims can be supported and enhanced by Jousse's model of 'intussusception' whereby learning is valued as a form of extended engagement of the self. Clearly, Jousse's approach is just one example of a vast range of related embodied pedagogical approaches successfully embedded into contemporary performance training that encourages receptivity to new ways of doing, to take gentle risks and reflect in practice.

Educational theorist and teacher, Elyse Pineau's model of 'critical performative pedagogy' offers a useful framework for evaluating Jousse's 'intussuscepting process' when applied to performer training. Rather than considering the body as a tool for representation or inquiry, Pineau proposes a shift from 'the body-on-display" to the "body as a medium for learning" (Pineau 2002, p.50). Jousse's 'intussuscepting process' offers a similar dynamic. Attending to the multiple resonances and repercussions that emerge from an encounter between human and non-human matter does not depend on past experience, is not hinged on preconditioned assumptions or expectations, but instead offers a space in which personal discoveries emerge as the game unfolds. In this regard, the 'laboratory of the self' reasserts the individual learner as active participant in the knowledge acquisition process. In

reaffirming critical self-awareness in an unfolding devising process, theatre-makers and students might reclaim more assertively their unique creative potential in the performer training environment and place more value on the significance of their own individual imminent meanings.

With current advancements in embodied cognition, Jousse's writings may appear outmoded and self-evident, but this overshadows how radical and controversial his position was at the time. Sadly, after his death in 1961 his work fell into relative obscurity and in the English-speaking world his studies are almost unknown and unavailable in print. I would argue, that while his writings arose from his study of oral cultures, they also having a tangible bearing on contemporary notions of embodied experience as a whole. Indeed, Jousse's dynamic anthropology can be considered a pivotal precursor to embodied modes of inquiry and remains apposite in current discourse around contemporary performer training.

Jousse called for an education that 'forms' individuals rather than 'de-forming them by *disindividualising* them' (Sienaert 2016, p. 76). While achieving learning outcomes is a necessary requirement in institutionalised performance training, the 'laboratory of the self' brings experimentation, analysis and reflection, from the periphery of the learning process, back to its core. Moreover, I would argue that Jousse's dynamic of 'intussusception' can offer a broader intercultural recalibration of the learning experience. In his terms, pedagogy should be 'a perpetual drama: make see, make feel, make touch' (Jousse in Sienaert 2016, p. 164). Reaching out to the world in this way might inspire 'an imaginative leap into other bodies, other ways of being in the world' opening up 'concrete and embodied possibilities for resistance, reform and renewal' (Pineau, 2002, p.46).

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