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Puppet bodies: reflections and revisions of marionette movement theories in Philippe Gaulier's Neutral Mask pedagogy

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This article examines two aspects of Philippe Gaulier's pedagogy in relation to the development of Neutral Mask pedagogies in twentieth-century French mime training, specifically those responding to nineteenth and early twentieth-century marionette theories of movement. The first is his strategic use of disorientation through lack of instruction (*via negativa*) in order to make visible inculturated embodied habits; the second is his emphasis on the performer embodying genuine 'pleasure' as she pretends to have a different emotion. The paper examines these techniques in the context of Neutral Mask training, and its development during the twentieth century in France, in order to consider the ways in which they both reflect and revise nineteenth- and early twentieth-century marionette theories of performer movement as espoused in particular by Heinrich von Kleist and Edward Gordon Craig. It considers the ways in which constructions of the 'natural' body as pursued by Jacques Copeau and later Étienne Decroux and Jacques Lecoq respond to these marionette theories which seek to do away entirely with interior states such as consciousness and emotion, and in placing these responses alongside Gaulier's deployments of disorientation and 'pleasure'. It suggests that Gaulier's techniques of disorientation serve a similar function to donning the neutral mask in stripping away learned habits of movement, and that his emphasis on experiencing and demonstrating 'pleasure' in the pretence of performance both reflects marionette theories by replicating the puppeteer/puppet dynamic, and revises them by foregrounding emotionality.

Keywords: Lecoq, Copeau, Kleist, Craig, *übermarionette*

This article examines two aspects of Philippe Gaulier's pedagogy in relation to the development of Neutral Mask pedagogies in twentieth-century French mime training, specifically those responding to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century marionette theories of movement. The first is his strategic use of disorientation through lack of instruction (*via negativa*) in order to make visible inculturated embodied habits including those designed to please a teacher. The second is his emphasis on the performer embodying genuine 'pleasure' as she pretends to have a different emotion. While both techniques can be found throughout Gaulier's pedagogical system beginning with Le Jeu and ending with Clown, I examine them in the context of Neutral Mask training, and its development during the twentieth century in France, in order to consider the ways in which they both reflect and revise nineteenth and early twentieth-century marionette theories of performer movement as espoused in particular by Heinrich von Kleist (1810/1972) and Edward Gordon Craig (1908).

In *Movement Training for the Modern Actor*, Mark Evans (2009, pp. 78–80) traces the development of Jacques Copeau's *masque noble* (noble mask) pedagogy, a precursor of the *masque neutre* (neutral mask), as it connected to the idea of the 'natural' body freed from constraints of habituated and learned movement habits (). Evans (2009, pp. 71–78) delineates the multiple and contested ways the cultural construction of the 'natural' body was deployed in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly as it intersected with constructions of class, race, gender and nationality. He positions Copeau's development of the *masque noble* in the 1930s as a key moment in the history of European movement training, as it brought together disparate practices aimed at cultivating the natural body and framed them as neutrality (Evans 2009, p. 78). I am interested here in considering the ways in which constructions of the 'natural' body as pursued by Copeau and later Étienne Decroux and Jacques Lecoq respond to marionette theories as articulated by Kleist and Craig, which seek to do away entirely with interior states such as consciousness and emotion. These responses, I argue, can be mapped alongside Gaulier's deployments of disorientation and 'pleasure'. I suggest that Gaulier's techniques of disorientation serve a similar function to donning the neutral mask in stripping away inculturated habits of movement,[1] and that his emphasis on experiencing and demonstrating 'pleasure' in the pretence of performance both reflects marionette theories by replicating the puppeteer/puppet dynamic, and revises them by foregrounding emotionality.

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[1] I use 'inculturation' here as defined by Eugenio Barba, who described it as what performers 'have absorbed since their birth in the culture and social milieu in which they have grown up. Anthropologists define as inculturation this process of passive sensory-motor absorption of the daily behaviour of a given culture' (Barba and Savarese 1991, p. 189). Barba sets this against 'acculturation' which is 'a secondary "colonisation" of the body, but a deliberate and planned one' (Murray and Keefe 2007, p. 140).

'You have not given your guts': interiority's shift[2]

The seven bodies onstage jerked and flailed, filling the room with echoing thuds. The low thump of a hand drum sounded above the din, marking the end of the exercise, and the students removed their masks, stood up and waited for the verdict. Feedback was characteristically grim; only one student had 'a little something, maybe'. The rest, including British student Stephen, were 'bad, horrible'. As Gaulier's pedagogical approach omitted any specific demonstrations or direct references to gestural movement, [3] Stephen asked for clarification:

Stephen: I understand everything I did was bad. But how was my movement?

Gaulier: You have not given your guts. If you don't give your guts, we say 'bad'.

Stephen: But can you … can you be a bit …

Gaulier: You have given something *commensurant*, and we do not see something beautiful from you. We see *classique* actor.

A couple of themes jump out in this exchange: Gaulier's use of 'guts', which points to a positive value placed upon the 'natural', understood here as visceral, body. Additionally, his mention of the '*classique* actor' references the idea of traditional, text-based theatre and its corresponding acting training that can prioritise textual meaning over physical spontaneity, as well as the 'mannered' classical actor deploying set gestural systems. His evocation of this perceived dichotomy – with the physical placed in the superior position against the textual – can be linked to a shift that occurred in the early twentieth century in the understanding of the 'natural' body and its relationship to the mind and to knowledge generation.

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[2] I draw my observations of Gaulier's pedagogy from a three-week Neutral Mask workshop at his École Philippe Gaulier in Sceaux, France in November 2007, in which I participated as both student and researcher. Students were drawn from France, England, Spain, Greece, Japan, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Canada and the United States. All student names have been changed. Classroom observations are drawn from my direct experiences during the workshop and interviews with students, at École Philippe Gaulier on 27 November 2007, and with Philippe Gaulier. Classes were conducted in English. Classroom quotations are paraphrased; interviews are verbatim.

[3] The pedagogical approach commonly referred to as *via negativa*, discussed in greater detail later in this article.

This understanding of the natural body's relationship to the mind can be traced through nineteenth-century reactions to the Enlightenment emphasis on reason and the role of the intellect, or the will, in mastering instinct. These included the marionette theories of Kleist and Craig, who maintained that the ultimate potential for graceful and controlled movement was to be found in a body predicated on the model of the marionette or puppet that could be fully controlled by a puppeteer (Kleist) or a director (Craig). The first few decades of the twentieth century saw a shift in the value assigned to instinct in mime theory and practice, as French mime practitioners including Copeau began to privilege the idea of an innate wisdom buried deep inside the body, accessible through training techniques that stripped the body of inculturated habits. This was partly due to the increased importance placed on the unconscious as repository of fundamental truths about the self that were not directly accessible to the conscious mind, as constructed by Pierre Janet's (1889) late nineteenth-century theory of automatisme. Freudian psychoanalysis rigorously mapped out this architecture of the self, with the unconscious realm positioned below the surface of conscious reality, capable of spilling through seams and gaps in the supposedly stable ego in the form of physical neuroses.

This understanding of the dual conscious/unconscious nature of the self was reinscribed through Copeau's mime training, which was predicated on the notion that a deeper, more essential truth lay beneath the rigid outer surface of the persona and physical habits. It was during the early decades of the twentieth century that theatre practitioners including Copeau came to see the body not just as a machine to be controlled by the will, but also as a sedimentation of socialised habits that distanced the body from its natural state (Roach 1985, pp. 218–219). The idea of the 'natural' body became sought after by mime practitioners committed to the reinvention of mime as a twentieth-century art form. [4]

In 1920 Copeau opened his school and laboratory for training actors, L'École du Vieux Columbier, built upon principles articulated seven years earlier in a manifesto entitled *Un Essai de Rénovation Dramatique* (An Attempt at Dramatic Renovation). He wished to explore a new kind of pedagogy for actors, one that approached the 'instinct' for theatre as fundamental, that sought to strip down the accretion of socialised habits that he believed engendered simplistic acting based on imitation. One of his greatest concerns was the freedom of the actor's body. In his *Réflexions d'un Comédien sur le*

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[4] In the first few decades of the twentieth century, mime artists in Paris including Copeau set themselves to reinvigorate and reinvent the mime form. The form was widely considered to be in serious decline, and fault was largely placed on the gestural system it employed, which was felt by many to be both too literal and not naturalistic (Felner 1985, pp. 15–21).

Paradoxe de Diderot (Reflections of an Actor on Diderot's Paradox) (1929, p. 16), [5] he explores the ways in which the actor finds himself at odds with his own body on stage: 'The sculptor's struggle with the clay he is modelling is nothing, if I compare it to the resistances to the actor from the oppositions of his body, his blood, his limbs, his mouth and all his organs'. [6]

Copeau's use of masks for pedagogical reasons developed unexpectedly when a student in his class found herself frozen onstage – what Copeau (1929, p. 16) described as a freezing of the blood, or *sang-froid*. Copeau's choice of language redefines the term that had referred to the quality of detachment so admired in nineteenth-century mime performances, such as in mime critic Jules Janin's praise of the *sang-froid* displayed by Pierrot mime Deburau *fils* to which Janin (1881, p. 69) ascribes the latter's 'superiority'. This use reflects Denis Diderot's (1830/1949, p. 36) assertion that *sang-froid* 'tempers the delirium of enthusiasm' (my translation), reflecting a preoccupation with keeping emotional excess in check through cold dispassion. In Copeau's deployment of the term, the goal remains that of detachment, but the imagery of the body's interior has shifted. No longer is the blood to be frozen; rather, the 'natural' body is to be released, freed from the constrictions of performing learned movement patterns. In his search for techniques with which to free the actor from the kind of self-consciousness that froze the blood and paralysed the body, he describes stumbling upon a key realisation: that if the actor's face is covered, her body gains more expressive capabilities. Copeau (1979) writes, 'So, in order to loosen up my people at the School, I masked them … the wearer of the mask acutely feels his possibilities of corporeal expression. It goes so far that, in this manner, I cured a youngster paralyzed by a morbid timidity' (cited Rudlin and Paul 1990, p. 51). The 'possibilities of corporeal expression' had to begin, for Copeau, from a state of openness unhindered by an implied mandate to perform learned movement patterns with mechanical proficiency.

Marionette theories of movement

The image of the frozen, immobile actor that Copeau conjures bears similarities to an image described in the early nineteenth century by Kleist in his essay 'On the Marionette Theatre' (1810/1972), a work that most likely influenced Craig, with whom Copeau had had early contact as he was developing his pedagogy (Evans 2006, p. 14). Kleist structures his essay as a dialogue

[5] Denis Diderot's famous 'paradox of acting' is the duality between the actor's personality on stage and the role he or she is performing; the seminal question that Diderot poses in his *Le Paradoxe sur le Comédien* (The Paradox of the Actor) is whether the actor actually experiences the emotions s/he is representing on stage.
[6] My translation.

between the author and a dancer, in which the dancer explains to the author the superiority of marionettes to human dancers in the former's ability to execute perfect movements from a precise centre of gravity, unhampered by consciousness. In an image that Copeau's description of the youngster 'paralyzed by a morbid timidity' evokes, the author describes an incident in which a young man attempted unsuccessfully to repeat a spontaneous artistic gesture with his foot: 'An invisible and inexplicable power like an iron net seemed to seize upon the spontaneity of his bearing' (Evans 2006, p. 25). The dancer, who attributes this difficulty to the presence of consciousness in humans, describes an incident in which he found himself fencing with a bear whose minimalist movements, likened to those of the marionette, allowed for superior fencing skills (Evans 2006, pp. 25–26). The dancer concludes by stating that physical grace 'appears most purely in that human form which either has no consciousness or an infinite consciousness. That is, in the puppet or in the god' (Evans 2006, p. 26).

A century later Craig famously put forth his own marionette theory of theatre with a proposal to replace fallible human actors with *übermarionettes*. 'The Actor and the *Über-Marionette'*, written in 1907 and published in *The Mask* in 1908, begins by asserting that the actor is not fit 'material' for the theatre chiefly due to the unpredictable effects of emotion upon his movement and voice. While the true artist has 'winds of emotion' swirling around him, he remains balanced (an echo of the nineteenth-century ideal of *sang-froid*). The actor, by contrast, cannot maintain this composure; Craig (1908, p. 3) describes the effect using an image of possession: 'emotion possesses him; it seizes upon his limbs moving them whither it will'. Craig (1908, p. 9) puts forth the puppet, or marionette, as superior material precisely because the puppet has no emotion: 'The applause may thunder or dribble, their hearts beat no faster, no slower, their signals do not grow hurried or confused'. The issue is one of organic interiority – emotion, a heart that speeds up or slows down. This type of interiority for Craig stands in the way of the full control necessary for theatrical material.

Copeau agreed with the necessity of a neutral starting point for movement, of moving away from the nineteenth-century gestural system that produced heightened performance styles which Craig was in part reacting against. He differed from Craig, however, in that he believed it was possible to develop teaching techniques that would allow a fully human body to achieve neutrality through the actor's 'gracefulness, his airs, his acting and delivery' (Copeau 1990, p. 19, cited Evans 2006, p. 14). He developed the *masque noble* (noble mask), so named because Copeau based its design – and, in part, its function – on the masks worn by eighteenth-century aristocrats who wished to remain anonymous in public (Rudlin cited Hodge 2010, p. 57). He foregrounded two functions of the mask in

his work: the hiding of the face which allowed for freedom of expression, and the playing of the mask itself, which was meant to encourage neutrality – complete balance, a state of physical readiness – in physical bearing. A subtle but important link connects the two: if neutrality is what can be found when the self-consciousness of facial visibility is removed, then neutrality is what is imagined to remain after physical habits that perform one's role in society have been stripped away. This links neutrality with the early twentieth-century idea of the 'natural', that which exists both prior to and beneath socialised habits of physicality. It was an idea that later inspired Lecoq's pedagogical use of the *masque neuter* (neutral mask) to enable an experience of neutrality as a state of receptiveness prior to action (Lecoq 2001, p. 36). [7]

Decroux's expansion of Copeau's *masque noble* also drew on Craig's *übermarionette* theory, as Decroux's system of training was based in the performer achieving absolute control over his body through 'practicing a specially applied form of gymnastics' (Decroux 1985, p. 7, cited Leabhart 2007, p. 52). 'Involuntary' physical movements, linked in this age of psychoanalysis to the unconscious realm of instinct and emotion, had to be brought under voluntary control, which Craig had believed to be impossible. Decroux took up the challenge posed by Craig and attempted to create a mime form in which a human performer could encompass the qualities of a marionette. His *gymnastique dramatique* focused on the isolation of body parts, following the keyboard analogy of the instrumentalist playing upon discrete keys, and prompting Eric Bentley to comment 'In his [Decroux's] presence … we glimpsed the *übermarionette* in the process of creation' (cited Felner 1985, p. 65). While Craig disagreed with this assessment, possibly due to his vision of the *übermarionette* as a human body encased within a puppet (Le Boeuf 2010, pp. 112–113), it connotes an understanding of the *übermarionette* in twentieth-century performer training as the human body fully in control of its own movements – the puppet to the mind's puppeteer.

Neutrality as pursued by Copeau and Decroux lionised the 'natural state'; practitioners developed extensive training regimes aimed at breaking down the calcified habits of the body in order to access the pure, balanced, natural state beneath. The view of neutrality as the freeing of the natural, pre-inculturated self was closely tied to changing understandings of how knowledge was generated. The marionette theory espoused by Craig and taken up by Decroux left the rational mind at the centre of knowledge generation. When Lecoq entered the mime scene in France in 1956, precise movements and absolute control over the body were at the centre of mime pedagogy. Marcel Marceau, disciple of Decroux, had created a gestural system that brought to life an invisible world of objects before

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[7] For Lecoq (2001, p. 20) this was a pedagogical gesture towards an unattainable absolute, as he believed that a fully realised, universal neutral state was merely a 'temptation'.

the spectators' eyes. Lecoq, finding this style of gesture too literal, based his pedagogy on the premise that knowledge is generated primarily through the body. [8] Decroux had positioned the body as that which imitates thought (Felner 1985, p. 149). Lecoq's divergence from Decroux on this point altered, slightly but significantly, the way in which each defined neutrality. For Decroux, the neutral body was a disciplined body, from which the mime's self had successfully dissociated to the point where the body itself was merely an imitation of thought. Lecoq, by positioning thought as a *result* of movement rather than its instigator, merged the body with consciousness. In order to achieve a state of neutrality, or physical freedom, Lecoq's mime performer played with movement in order to discover physical inculturated habits and shed them in an erasure of pre-existing (embodied) knowledge. In this *mime naturel* (natural mime) the neutral state was no longer a dissociated one, but one of openness and availability (Lecoq 2001, p. 41). Thus in Lecoq's Neutral Mask pedagogy the mind was reframed as an impediment to knowledge rather than knowledge's source.

In the next section I return to Gaulier's Neutral Mask workshop to examine his own participation in twentieth- and twenty-first-century revisions of marionette theories, looking in particular at his pedagogical techniques of *via negativa,* what I term a 'pedagogy of disorientation', and of his emphasis on the performer experiencing 'pleasure' in performance.

Disorientation and learned habits of movement

Gaulier's use of disorientation was an approach to revealing socialised habits that attempted to bypass the habits of learning that many of us had brought with us to the workshop from other actor training experiences. These habits had ingrained in us the idea that new ways of engaging with our bodies could be learned analytically. I say 'many of us' advisedly; the students came from a range of backgrounds in actor training including very little at all, and the 'learned habits of movement' were drawn from a wide range of cultural movement vocabularies. The construction of 'neutrality' as a universal starting point for human movement has been critiqued by disability scholar Carrie Sandahl (2005). Gaulier's approach to movement in his Neutral Mask workshop both elided cultural differences in movement which reinscribed universalising assumptions about neutrality, and at times avoided what Sandahl calls the 'tyranny of neutral' through refusing to provide us with a definition

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[8] For detailed accounts of the development of Lecoq's pedagogy, see Felner (1985), Lecoq (2001) and Murray (2003).

of 'neutrality'. Another critique of the universalising assumptions behind Gaulier's pedagogy comes from Jon Davison (2013), who in his discussion of clown training argues that the body produced through Gaulier's pedagogical use of failure and the flop can become as habituated as the body that preceded it. In this analysis I focus not on the body that is 'produced' through the training, but on the moment of disorientation which reveals habituated movement patterns. This, I suggest, links Gaulier's use of techniques of disorientation to the use of the Neutral Mask to reveal habits of movement and thereby to 'free' the body from them, even if only momentarily before new habits are established.

On first day of the Neutral Mask workshop I found myself entering an existing community. Most of the students had been working together for a month, having just completed the first workshop in Gaulier's annual progression, *Le Jeu* (The Play/The Game*).* This initial workshop, for which I was not present, was described by students as 'difficult', 'disorienting', 'impossible', 'frightening' and, perhaps surprisingly, 'fun'.[9] Students were thrown up on stage with directions as minimal and vague as 'Be funny', and quickly learned that every technique they had brought in with them to please – to please an audience, a teacher, fellow students – did not function as anticipated or intended. Colin, a recently graduated university theatre major from the US, described feeling like he was madly regurgitating every performance technique he had ever been taught, until he was left with 'nothing'. And it was this 'nothing' that Gaulier was apparently after: Colin recounted the teacher telling a group of exhausted, demoralised students that the point was to move through a 'tunnel of failure', shedding each of their acquired habits until they emerged open and 'beautiful'.

This notion of shedding acquired habits is tied to the pedagogical method of *via negativa*, originally articulated by Jerzy Grotowski, which, though not explicitly named as such, is widely practised in both the Lecoq and Gaulier schools (Murray 2003, pp. 49–50). The teacher does not tell the student what to do, does not demonstrate; rather, he or she witnesses the student try various strategies, with feedback limited to variations on 'No, that wasn't it', often colourfully embellished in Gaulier's classroom with suggestions for how the audience might like to 'kill' the student for his or her 'horrible' performance, and an occasional 'Yes – beautiful' – likewise with little or no explanation of why. John Wright (2002 pp. 72–73) describes Lecoq's *via negative* as a strategy aimed at avoiding prescription and generating a sense of urgency amongst students. Simon Murray (2003, p. 50) links the technique in Gaulier's pedagogy to a concern with long-term over immediate results, as while students may not immediately grasp what they are being taught, their bodies absorb and process

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[9] Student quotes paraphrased from written classroom notes, November 2007.

the learning over a longer time period than the moment of the classroom event. *Via negativa* is rooted in understandings of the physical body as a calcification of acquired habits which have misshapen its 'natural' state. The method attempts to avoid teaching the student by piling on yet another physical habit or technique; rather, the student's 'natural' body is understood to be located underneath the body of habit, buried beneath layers of what Pierre Bourdieu terms cultural habitus.[10] Accessing this natural body requires the student to do it him- or herself so as not merely to take on yet another learned technique; the teacher can only serve as a witness who guides the minimal amount necessary.

The playing of neutrality was initially approached by many students in the Gaulier course as a style of movement that had to be learned, an understandable assumption given the close relationship between the development of the Neutral Mask pedagogy and the use of intensive physical training techniques in early twentieth-century mime training. During a break on the second day, a British woman named Anna quietly asked a small group of students whether any of us knew how we were 'supposed' to be moving as the Neutral Mask. 'Are we supposed to be graceful? Big? Beautiful? What? I feel like we're supposed to be graceful, like dancers – he seems to like people who look like they're dancers when they move', she explained, then added with a hint of desperation, 'But I'm not a dancer, I can't move like that.'

Anna's question was an attempt to understand technique, to grasp the correct style of movement for the Neutral Mask. Hers was not a unique query; one of the common side effects of the *via negativa* pedagogical approach is confusion among students as to what the teacher wants, what is the 'correct' way to perform. Importantly, *via negativa* is not about an absence of specific technique, an 'anything goes' approach. The philosophy behind this approach reflects an explicit engagement with a pedagogical paradox: there is no one 'right' technique that can be demonstrated to the student by the teacher, yet there are many 'wrong' techniques that the student might attempt. The students in Gaulier's workshop had decided that they needed to perform in a certain way in order to garner a rare positive response from the teacher; questions asked between exercises and at the end of class reflected our attempts to piece together the knowledge we needed to perform the 'correct' technique. Wright (2002, p. 73) terms this a 'culture of correctness' which the *via negativa* approach is designed to counter.

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[10] According to Bourdieu (1984), cultural habitus is 'the "taking in" of values, dispositions, attitudes and behaviour patterns which become part of our daily, apparently individual conduct … [It is] deeply embodied and not merely a mental and cognitive construction' (cited Webb et al.2002, p. 37). Bourdieu draws on Eugenio Barba's concept of 'inculturation', discussed earlier.

One of the effects of *via negativa* is disorientation, as students tend to expect a more straightforward teaching approach and are often thrown when they do not receive it. Gaulier embellished his straightforward *via negative* approach of not giving clear instruction with additional techniques of disorientation including his affected broken English, his frame drum which he would hit suddenly if a student's performance was not pleasing him, and confusing and often contradictory instructions for exercises and responses to student questions. Questions requesting clarification on a specific criticism were quickly abandoned as a strategy by most of the students once they realised they were unlikely to receive a satisfactory response. After the first day of the workshop when Gaulier continually offered specific feedback on physical technique ('Nose higher, lower, one millimetre, bon'), exercises were conducted in silence apart from the bang on the drum, and post-exercise feedback ranged from 'Pam I kill'[11] to 'Helena is beautiful, no?'[12] Most students in the Neutral Mask workshop had been in the prior *Le Jeu* workshop, and had learned the futility of asking Gaulier for specific feedback. Gaulier encouraged questions and always answered them, but did so in a deliberately opaque style, often drawing on metaphorical turns of phrase. The task of untangling his poetic yet confusing phrases was more arduous due to his broken English, which made it difficult to know how specific his terminology was.[13] Having described nearly every student's performance as 'horrible', for instance, he responded to Japanese student Dai's question 'Was my movement bad?' with 'The rule of the school is we don't say it was horrible'. Did this mean that 'horrible' was not a viable term in the school – a point contradicted directly by the word's frequent appearance following an exercise – or was he referring specifically to Dai's performance? Gaulier's explicit 'rule' ('The rule of the school is we don't say it was horrible') contradicted one of his implicit 'rules' of the workshop (students were meant to consistently fail). This contradiction itself fuelled another of the implicit 'rules': the students were meant to be confused by their exchanges with the teacher. After a confused pause, Dai made another attempt: 'But was it too much water?' which was answered with, 'Yes, and too much baby'. Dai gave up questioning. Gaulier's expressed intention in this strategy was to prevent students from expecting and receiving

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[11] Gaulier's use of 'kill' was meant not in a literal sense, obviously, but as a connotation of absolute dismissal of the performance. When Gaulier said he 'killed' someone, he meant that their own individual beauty had not manifested anywhere in the performance; they had drawn merely on convention.

[12] Similarly, his use of 'beautiful' was not meant in a conventional sense, but to indicate the visibility of the student's unique internal beauty in the performance: 'An actor is beautiful when he doesn't hide his soul beneath the personality of his character, when he allows us to perceive, behind the character, the face he had when he was seven' (Gaulier and Mayazaki 2006, p. 12).

[13] Gaulier's use of broken English is deliberately affected, a point supported by his son (who was taking the course at the time I attended) who told me his father's English at home was much more fluent.

answers that would intellectually clear up their confusion; his pedagogy was experiential and predicated on disorientation.[14]

A similarly non-traditional approach to the question-and-answer session can be found in Gaulier's pedagogical writings. Gaulier's *Le Gégèneur: jeux lumière théâtre/The Tormentor: le jeu light theatre* (2007) lays out the pedagogy that informs his school, alternating between practical exercises and theoretical passages. The latter are structured as interviews, in which Gaulier splits his voice between himself as teacher and the *Interrogateur,* whose italicised questions mirror those posed by students at the school, both in their searching after clear, logical explanations and in their frequent ability to (mockingly) infuriate the teacher:

> I listen to your question with no ill will.
> *Why, at the beginning of our interview, did you immediately get into the subject of tragedy when teaching at your school starts with Le Jeu?*
> 'Interrogator'! You throw me off course again. Who asked the first question? You did. How was it phrased? I repeat, word for word, 'What is your definition of a tragic actor?' (Gaulier 2007, p. 189)

These playful exchanges allow Gaulier to theorise his pedagogy within a framework that distances him from the words he uses to explain his methods; his apparent insistence on literal communication ('I repeat, word for word…') ironically confuses the subject while seeming to insist on clarity.

In Gaulier's class we quickly learned that our techniques of performing the 'free', 'spontaneous' body were just as habituated as the techniques we had shed in previous movement classes in order to achieve this freedom. One of the chief effects of Gaulier's hyper-critical pedagogy – accompanied by a near-constant glare as he slumped in his chair, caressing the drum in anticipation of hitting it to mark a student's failure – was to make apparent to us the physical strategies that we brought with us to please a teacher in an acting class, strategies that often had become naturalised through years of corporeal training. When Gaulier (2007, p. 183) describes the pedagogy of Neutral Mask, he focuses on this making visible of habituated movement patterns:

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[14] Purcell-Gates interview with P. Gaulier, École Philippe Gaulier, 15 November 2007; the link to 'disorientation' is mine.

There is an obvious gap between the demands of the Neutral Mask and the 'abnormalities' (or peculiarities) under which the student has hidden themselves [sic]. It is the Mask which reveals these abnormalities. It uncovers the shrunken spaces, the aggressions, the fears and the shame. The teacher points these things out.

Gaulier's statement that the Neutral Mask 'divulges' the 'anomalies' under which the student has hidden himself points to the shift discussed earlier in the way the body was viewed in the early twentieth century. This shift was from the idea of a machine that could be controlled – to virtuosic effect – by the mind or the will, to a calcification of socialised habits; to use Joseph Roach's (1985, p. 218) phrase, seeing our bodies 'as damaged by the kinds of lives we have lived'.

Pleasure and the puppeteer/puppet body

In the *via negativa* pedagogical approach, what criterion does the teacher use for determining whether a student's performance merits a 'Yes' or a 'No'? In Gaulier's case, it is the presence of 'pleasure'. In her analysis of Gaulier's pedagogy of games, Lynne Kendrick (2011) identifies Gaulier's concept of pleasure with the sudden rush of feeling experienced when the student is released from the rules of a difficult game. Theorising Gaulier's use of games as intentionally ludic or rule-bound, she draws on Roger Caoillois' play theory to link pleasure with the play instinct *paidia* which is marked by exuberance and energy release. She suggests that Gaulier intentionally uses students' failure within to the fairly strict rules of his ludic games to release this play instinct of *paidia*, or pleasure. I find this analysis useful for theorising the pedagogical uses of pleasure within Gaulier's classroom, and in this section build on it by suggesting that the *paidic* aspect of pleasure, through its association with loss of self-consciousness, can also be linked to constructions of neutrality that participate in twentieth-century revisions of marionette theories of movement.

In the Neutral Mask workshop, the student's innate beauty was connected to an idea of the 'natural' body following its own instincts, set against the intellectualism of the mind. When Brazilian student Ivone attempted to incorporate text into her fire movement during one exercise, her eyes squinted as she spoke, drawing attention to the movements of her facial muscles. Gaulier described her performance as too 'academic', and reiterated the importance of prioritising 'pleasure' in the movement. 'Pleasure' and 'fun' were linked frequently in feedback to students; when a student 'lost the fun' of the movement her movement became 'boring'. This was illustrated during the animal exercise of the third week. At the end of the second week Gaulier had instructed us to visit the zoo

over the weekend and find an animal to observe, which we would explore with movement the following week. British student Matt's experience on Monday was not atypical: he attempted to exactly replicate the movements of the animal he had chosen – the sea turtle – but this literalism caused him to 'lose the movement' when he stood up. He described his frustration in terms that revealed acting techniques based on intellectual control of the body, acting out images one has in one's head:

Matt: I don't know what to do – I have the images in my head, I went to the zoo, it's just how my mind works.

Gaulier: You do the rhythm on the floor, and when you stand up it is absolutely not the same.

Matt: So sometimes the movement is good on the floor?

Gaulier: Yes.

Matt: Is it that the rhythm is too human, and you lose the animal? [This statement pointed towards an idea that he was supposed to literally recreate the animal's movements, to present a realistic animal to the audience.]

Gaulier: It's that you don't have the fun in the animal.

Matt's focus on the 'images in [his] head' and how his 'mind works' (an echo of the focus on the controlling mind in marionette approaches to movement) highlights an approach that most students had to representation as an embodied translation of a mental image. Matt's insistence that he went to the zoo underscores this approach: he physically experienced an event that was translated into his mind in the form of a memory, which he was now drawing on in class to translate the image of the animal into the movements he performed. When Gaulier critiqued his standing-up movement, Matt interpreted this as a failure on his body's part to accurately translate the image of the animal; what Gaulier was after, however, was not the literal accuracy of the movement, but a quality within it: 'pleasure'.

My own experience with this approach was shared by most students I spoke with: once I had become accustomed to being 'killed' rather than praised, I ceased to care quite so much when I did an exercise badly, found the exaggerated criticisms a bit of a relief because both their frequency and their hyperbolic quality cushioned their impact. I also became better at discerning when I had performed 'beautifully' and when I had been 'boring', a distinction that for me lay in a nebulous quality of self-consciousness. When I was extremely aware of my movements and worked to control them, I fared poorly, whereas when my body seemed to 'take over' and lead me through

what I perceived as spontaneous movements, the feedback was positive. This detachment from self-consciousness was described by Australian student Emily as 'pleasure':

> To me, I think, pleasure was more about being comfortable, and that was something that took a long time to feel. As soon as I started feeling comfortable, I started to have more pleasure. So the two of them kind of combined. The ease to be on stage, or the desire to stay onstage … I think it was whenever you stopped thinking about yourself … whenever your drive is not you, when it's someone else.

This notion of focus shifting from oneself to something external was common among the Gaulier students I trained alongside, and in its attempt to free students from the constraints of self-consciousness is a pedagogical lineage of Copeau's *masque noble*. The injunction to 'have fun' onstage placed students in the predicament of genuinely enjoying being on stage within the structure of a class that made one absolutely terrified to perform, a pedagogical technique that produced a disorientation with implications for self-consciousness reminiscent of Copeau's early-twentieth-century pedagogical work to mitigate the effects of *sang-froid*, the self-conscious 'freezing of the blood'.

The following passage by Gaulier reveals both his alignment with the twentieth-century view of the body as comprised of layers of socialised habits, and his focus on a performative distance marked by an elusive inner quality of 'pleasure':

> If the teacher corrects the student, hoping to change the person in his entirety, the teacher is making a big mistake. The teacher corrects the student hoping that, maybe one of these days, the student will have fun with their 'disorders'. The teacher doesn't change anything but rather teaches how to use these things. How? With enjoyment. (Gaulier 2007, p. 183)

Significantly, Gaulier does not propose to do away with these 'disorders' through his pedagogical method, but to teach the student to 'have fun' with them, to use them 'with enjoyment'. This was part of a focus on performing with 'pleasure' that lay at the core of the workshop. Gaulier frequently used this word to connote a quality of movement he was seeking. 'Pleasure' quickly became elided with 'emotion' as the students spent an end-of-class question and answer session fixating on this question of what one was supposed to be 'feeling':

Student: Are you supposed to *show* emotion or feel it inside?

Gaulier: You don't need to show emotion, just have the moment, fixed … Emotion is you in front of the audience, but not you with an emotion.

Student: But do you *feel* an emotion?

Gaulier: No. You pretend to feel emotion in front of the audience. You are a magician with your feelings. If you are presenting your emotions, you can't be free and play.

This idea of 'freedom' linked to *le jeu* resonates with the idea of freedom from socialised embodied habits that marked the mime explorations of Copeau; Gaulier's deployment of the concept, however, associates it not with a freedom from particular habits of movement, but a freedom from a supposed injunction to perform 'real' emotions on stage. Emotion here is devalued, replaced by an elusive idea of 'pleasure' that is linked to an emotional state in the minds of most students, frequently causing confusion. This illustrates a key point for Gaulier: that actors are always engaged in deception, and that the game, *le jeu*, is to allow the audience to participate in the fun of that perception through a (usually metaphorical) 'wink':

> Actors' voices equal liars' voices. They have inflections, modulations, tonalities which veer slightly towards the high-pitched. They are not natural. When the voice is natural it sounds wrong. The game is not reality. It is its dress rehearsal, 'for pretend'. (Gaulier 2007, p. 201)

Once again, Gaulier warns against the collapsing of the distance between performer and that which is being performed; emotions should not be 'real' onstage; the 'natural' is 'wrong'. When Gaulier responds to a student's question about whether the actor should actually feel the emotion he or she is playing with a vehement 'You do not feel the emotion, you take pleasure in pretending to feel emotion', a shift can be discerned between early twentieth- century mime practitioners' quest for the sincerity of the natural and an embracing, following Roach (1985, p. 137), of the actor's 'professionalisation of two-facedness'. Yet the emotion of 'pleasure' remains.

Conclusion

A common analogy used by both Lecoq and Gaulier is that of the pleasure the child takes in playing, which involves a full commitment to the game, always inflected by a clear distance between the child and what he or she is pretending:

> When we played at cowboys and Indians, or being d'Artagnan, or had battles with lead soldiers, *we didn't have feelings*. We enjoyed the story and its heroes and protagonists. Everything was filtered through the 'Game' which allowed a transmuted reality to pass, a reality *without the weight of sorrows*. (Gaulier 2007a p. 196, emphases added)

Gaulier's assertion that when playing 'we didn't have feelings' reveals the status of the 'we' as the distanced persona of the performer, while the 'feelings' are understood to reside in the bodies that performed the characters. In the classroom, students' confusion was rooted in part in their linking of emotionality to the natural that students brought with them to the workshop, which hit up against a pedagogy that required a distinct separation between performer (identified with cognition) and performed (identified with the body and expressivity).

Gaulier's focus on 'pleasure' within the performance of neutrality, alongside an insistence that this pleasure marks a distance between performer and performed, can be understood to represent both reflection and revision of marionette theories of movement that can be traced through twentieth century French mime training. While Decroux's approach to mime training drew clearly on Craig's *übermarionette* in its attempt to create a strong distinction between the performer's mind and body (the puppeteer/puppet analogy), Copeau's approach to the neutral body interwove the idea of a natural, pre-inculturated body into neutrality, blurring the lines between the mechanised and the natural. Lecoq further confused these boundaries by making the body rather than the mind the source of knowledge. Gaulier's use of disorientation to confound student expectations about pleasing a teacher participates in the pedagogies developed by Copeau, Decroux and Lecoq that aim at stripping away inculturated habits of movement. His emphasis on visible (and genuinely felt) pleasure participates in Copeau's and Lecoq's revisions of the marionette model that foreground the organic through inserting emotion, pleasure, into the performance of neutrality, while simultaneously reinforcing the puppeteer/puppet dichotomy through his insistence that the performer never actually experience the emotions she is performing.

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