

CHAPTER TWO: THE BODY AS ARCHIVE

Memory: Bodily Roots

Steinman, writing from the perspective of performance, claims: '...memory, whether of a mythical past, last night's dream, or this morning's conversation at the breakfast table, begins in the body' (Steinman 1986:11).

There are varied ways of understanding the relationship between memory and the body. One of these ways, which may even be said to be the dominant and popular understanding, is that memory is purely a faculty of the mind. In this understanding, supported by the vast field of research focussing on brain functioning, memory resides in and is controlled by complex brain mechanisms. Cognitive neuroscience, developed through the coming together of 'students of the mind' and 'students of the brain' (Schacter 1996:6) or the areas of cognitive psychology and neuroscience, is an approach driven by and fostering this understanding.

Other models or ways of understanding the relationship between memory and the body, critique such views as restrictive, thereby implying that the body plays an important role in the functioning of memory. The well-documented study of the effects of trauma on the body within psychotherapy and neurobiology signal an acknowledgement of the connections between memory and the body in these respective fields (Ogden, 2006 & Rothschild, 2000 cited in Grassman & Pohlenz-Michel 2007). Somatic responses to trauma are evidence of somatic memory¹ in the way in which memory is embodied or manifest through physical phenomena and thus confirm the possibility of the interplay between memory and the body.

¹ This refers to the ways in which 'dissociation phenomena' manifest physically through the body in multiple ways (Grassmann and Pohlenz-Michel 2007). From a BMC perspective these trauma responses manifest as 'memories of past experiences are stored within the tissues and fluids of the body... tissues are often lost to consciousness as the mind, unable to integrate them at the time numbs itself to their presence by blocking the free flow of energy and movement through the area' (Hartely 1995:106). These 'blockages' lead to an impaired utilization of the body or certain body parts.

Damasio makes this interplay explicit in the way that he foregrounds the bodily role in memory formation and recall. He proposes that a memory is in essence a 'neural record' of many 'organismic changes' that occur in both the brain itself and in *the body-proper* in the remembered experience (Damasio 1994:225). Therefore in the act of recall, memory is indeed triggered in the brain, through the re-firing of neural patterns in the sensory cortices. But these neural patterns correspond to the perceptual representations that had once occurred (Ibid: 101). They are the record of actual changes in the body in the act of perception as it constantly 'modifie[s] itself so that the interfacing' between both the external and (I would argue) internal environment can 'take place as well as possible' (Ibid: 225).

Based on this aspect of Damasio's theory, one could argue that the activity of remembering is based in the body-mind's ability to recreate 'momentary constructions...of patterns that were once experienced' (Ibid:101). These momentary constructions literally re-member² the body-state in a particular situation, moment, thought, fantasy or dream.³ The centrality of the body-mind nexus within the act of perception thus extends into the ways in which we remember, or recall memory, as it is essentially this subjective lived experience through the body, as the nexus of interrelated parts, that is recalled. When Daniel Schacter, a cognitive psychologist, claims that '...memories are records of how we have experienced events, not replicas of the events themselves' (Schacter 1996:6) he draws attention to the importance, and particularly the subjective positioning, of the 'rememberer'.

While he does not overtly address the embodied determinacy of the 'rememberer' his

² I use the phrasing re-member here to draw attention to the corporeal within the word 'remember'. Through memory recall it is the body as a reference point of experience that is brought back together again – it is literally re-membered. Toni Morrison uses a similar notion of 're-memory' in her novel, *Beloved* (1987), to denote the reconstruction of the body dismembered by slavery, through the act of memory. She develops the idea in *"Home" The House that Race Built: Original essays by Toni Morrison, Angela Y. Davis, Connel West, and others on Black Americans and Politics in America today* (1998) so that re-memembering denotes the way in which memory reconstructs the dismembered body.

³ Damasio's theories that foreground the body stand out against the bulk of research on cognition and memory which tend to focus on the physiological mechanisms of brain functioning (Schacter 1996). While he may be a lone and contentious voice in the area of neurobiology, his proposals have much to offer an argument towards the somatic foundation of memory.

focus on the experiential aspect of memory as a record of 'how we have experienced events' is in alignment with Damasio's view of the central role of the body in memory recall. From this perspective the relationship between body and memory is an utterly connected one as it proposes that the body-mind nexus recalls or plays out a memory essentially by remembering itself.

In discussing the subjective nature of memory, Schacter reiterates the relevance of past perceptions, which become memories, in the 'encoding and storing' of new memories (Ibid:6). This speaks to the possibility of the archive as an active and constantly shifting entity. The way in which the archive is enmeshed with or integral to each moment of perception becomes a fundamental reference point towards further perceptions and functioning. Hanna's term, the 'historical present' (Hanna n.d) succinctly brings the archive into the present moment and implicates it as a dynamic entity. For Hanna 'there is no "past" in somas. There is only the presence of already unfurled patterns that underlie and give impetus to its present unfurling...what we take as past is instead precedence' (Ibid).

For Damasio this precedence, or the 'self' as he sees it, is a repeatedly reconstructed biological state (Damasio 1994: 226). He offers that the neural basis of the self is reliant on the constant reactivation of two sets of neural representations, the first is the 'representations of key events in an individual's autobiography' out of which identity is reconstructed repeatedly and the second set consists of: 'the primordial representations of an individual's body...not only what the body has been like in general, but also what the body has been like *late*ly, just before the ...perception of object x' (Ibid 239).

These two sets combined, according to Damasio, give us a basis for the concept of self that becomes a reference point against which current shifts and changes in the

organism are recorded. However, this concept of self or 'historical present', to draw on Hanna's term, is, as Damasio so eloquently states, an 'evanescent reference state' that is 'continuously and consistently reconstructed' (Ibid:240). In this way 'what is happening to us *now* is, in fact, happening to a concept of self based on the past, including the past that was current only a moment ago' (Ibid:240). This 'evanescent' quality disrupts the understanding of the archive as something static and posits the individual within a 'historic present' that is constantly being rewritten. This reveals the archive in flux because as Fraleigh puts it, the body⁴ is experiencing 'a dynamic intersection of three ecstasies, the past and future unfolding in the present'⁵ (Fraleigh 2004:55). For this reason Fraleigh claims that 'our corporeality is never finished' (Ibid). Hanna, Damasio and Fraleigh implicate such a dynamic archive as central in a state of being, or as Damasio and Fraleigh seem to suggest, a constant state of 'becoming'. What is interesting to note is how this constant 'becoming' not only rewrites but also simultaneously reframes the archive from an ever-new 'historical present' perspective.

The somatic centrality fundamental to the notion of 'becoming', in which Physical Intelligence both engages and adapts the archive and thereby constantly re-writes the subject, not only disrupts the treatment of the body-as-object within dualist traditions but also disrupts an essentialist or fundamentalist perspective of the body and the self. This notion of the body-self as an entity in flux further resonates with constructionist⁶ perspectives of the body.

Many discursive constructionist models (particularly within social and cultural theory) have not engaged with a *lived body* perspective (Thomas 2003: 12,62), while those

⁴ Please note that Fraleigh's reference to 'body' here implies the *lived body* concept.

⁵ This is what Heidegger terms 'the mystery of time' (Fraleigh 2004:55).

⁶ Constructionism, in reference to the body, is a general term that captures the views of the body as somehow constructed, produced, shaped or contained.

from the *lived body* or *somatic* perspective, such as Hanna, have not engaged with the ideas of the socially, culturally or historically constructed or produced body.⁷ Although Hanna admits that the *soma* does not exist 'in isolation but in constant adaptation in response to environmental constraints', he argues in *Bodies in Revolt* (1970) that the somatic perspective should be kept separate from social analysis (Eddy 2002:49). I would argue that the constructionist and *lived body* perspective are not mutually exclusive.⁸ In the same way that somatic practitioners post-Hanna take cultural, social and relational perspectives into account within their understanding of the *soma* or *lived body* (Ibid) I would argue that the way in which Damasio describes memory; as a record of the changes registered in the *lived body* 'as it is perturbed by stimuli from the physical and socio-cultural environments and as it acts on those environments' (Damasio 1994:226 Emphasis mine), strongly evokes the subjective nature of the state of 'becoming', or construction, and brings the socio-cultural environment in strongly as a key factor in the subsequent (and constant) rewriting of the archive.

The body as archive therefore not only records the infinite negotiations and interactions between the subject-body and its context, but is in fact constructed through its inseparable interaction with this broader context, which I would extend beyond the physical and socio-cultural environment to include also the political, economic and historical context.

⁷ Merleau-Ponty did however take into account the 'constructed, synthetic nature of experience, its simultaneously active and passive functioning [and] its role in both the inscription and subversion of socio-political values' (Grosz 1994:94).

⁸ Through the suturing of these perspectives I am linking *Körper* (the objective, instrumental, institutionalised body) and *Leib* (the subjective, lived, experiential body) (Thomas 2003:94).

Inscribing the Archive

In order to develop my understanding of the body as an archive I will draw on Michel Foucault's notion of bodily inscription and the creation of a 'historically dense' body (Foucault 1977).

The body is central in Foucault's critique of history that seeks to understand the workings of power in society (Thomas 2003:45). His genealogical analysis aims to reveal the ways in which the body has been transformed by history, as 'the body manifests the stigmata of past experiences' (Foucault 1977:148). His analysis seeks to 'expose a body totally imprinted by history and the processes of history's destruction of the body' (Ibid). Foucault's analysis of history as a 'writing instrument' (Butler 1989:604), therefore reveals the body as the 'inscribed surface of events' (Ibid) that is not merely affected by but constructed through the workings of the forces of power. Social constructionist theorists and feminists who use Foucault's theory to support their claim for the discursively constructed body are influenced by his anti-essentialist perspectives which claim that the body

...is moulded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by rhythms of work, rest and holidays; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistances... Nothing in man-not even his body-is sufficiently stable to serve as a basis of self-recognition or for understanding other men (Foucault 1977:153).

The mechanism through which the body is thus fashioned or constructed rests, according to Foucault, in the 'mutually conditioning' (Grosz 1994:148) relationship between power and knowledge. It is this relationship that further reveals the body not only as the object of power but as its instrument too. According to Elizabeth Grosz, the body is the 'field of greatest investment for power's operations' because its materiality, unpredictability and the way it 'can be used in potentially infinite ways, according to infinitely variable cultural dictates' are essentially threatening to power

(Ibid:146). Knowledge is therefore employed as one of the 'conduits by which power is able to seize hold of bodies' (Ibid:148).

Knowledge devises methods for the extraction of information from individuals which is capable of being codified, refined and reformulated in terms of and according to criteria relevant to the assessment of knowledge. As legitimised and sanctioned knowledge, discourses are then able to feed back into the regimes of power which made them possible and to enable power to operate in more subtle or systematic, more economical or vigilant forms (Ibid).

In this way power does not control or construct the subject through force or through ideologies but in the way that it 'surveys, supervises, observes, measures the body's behaviour and interactions with others in order to produce knowledge' (Ibid:149).

These knowledges, or discourses, that are engineered and manipulated by power, 'intermesh with bodies, with the lives and behaviour of individuals, to constitute them as particular bodies' (Ibid:150). It is within this Foucauldian model of power, where the body and its actions are utilised to create knowledge (which further controls and ultimately constructs it), that the body/subject becomes an instrument of power.

Through his voluminous writing, Foucault outlines and follows the ways in which 'technologies of power' have inscribed the body, observing the shifts in these technologies in various historical epochs according to power's shifting investment in the body. Throughout, Foucault uncovers the 'coproduction of bodies in their materiality and energetic force, and the machineries of power' (Ibid:149). His analyses of technologies of punishment (*Discipline and Punish* 1977) employed to subjugate, control and manipulate the body (Grosz 1994:151); technologies of surveillance (*Power/Knowledge* 1980) enforced to 'control the intentions of the subject' within institutional spaces (Thomas 2003:47); technologies of discipline (*Power/Knowledge* 1980) enforced to produce 'a docile body that may be subjugated, used, transformed and improved (Thomas 2003:48); and the technology of biopower,

or 'disciplinary power over life' (*The History of Sexuality* 1979), which functions through sex and discourses around sexuality (Grosz 1994:152), collectively reveal the ways in which power produces, or constructs the body (Ibid:149).

The complex interrelatedness of body/knowledge/power, wherein power not only uses but produces the 'subject's desires and pleasures' to create discourses which further improve the surveillance and control of the body (Grosz 1994:146), posits the body not only as instrumental in the workings of power, but instrumental and implicitly active in its own construction. While Grosz argues that Foucault perceives the body as a fundamentally passive entity, or a 'black box' for power (Ibid), this is not the same passivity implied by Cartesian dualism. Rather, Grosz is describing the individual body's incapacity to shift broader social and political discourses. Foucault insists on the body's resilience, which due to its materiality holds the potential for subversion or resistance (Ibid).

There are certain feminist critiques of Foucault's theories however that are significant to a conception of the body as archive. Grosz believes that as 'useful' the notion of inscription is in supporting constructionist perspectives of the body, it must also take into account the 'specific modes of materiality of the "page"/body' (Grosz 1994:156). Similarly, Lois McNay finds Foucault's analysis of 'undifferentiated' individuals as 'docile bodies' problematic as it does not account for the individuality of lived experience (Thomas 2003:50). Chris Shilling observes, too, that while Foucault sets out to develop a 'history of bodies', the body 'ultimately disappears because it is constituted as an effect of power/knowledge; as it is brought into discourse, so it disappears as a material phenomenon' (Ibid).

In alignment with the above critiques I would foreground the agency of the body-mind in the processes of inscription, which I see as both a discursive *and* an embodied

process. Through an engagement with the concept of the active and dynamic archive I propose that the body not only archives a particular history, it also archives its own particular positionality within that unfolding history. I contend that Physical Intelligence, integrating the intellectual, emotional, physical, physiological, mental and psychological aspects of the individual, is responsible for the enmeshment between what Foucault sees as power's inscriptions, and the lived moment, which in turn, moment by moment becomes the ever shifting and dynamic personal archive. Furthermore it is this Physical Intelligence in constant dialogue and interrelated functionality with the archive that either reproduces the discourses and knowledges that power manipulates, or acts in resistance to them. What re-emerges in light of the positioning of the subject within a historic field is the notion of the body as an 'unfinished unstable entity' (Thomas 2003:46) as its constant state of becoming is located within a range of discourses and practices that seek to produce or construct it. What becomes clear is that the body, through Physical Intelligence, is indeed instrumental in its own construction whether through an embodiment of the forces of power or through its resistance to it.

Moving the archive

The sense of enmeshment detailed above between the forces at play within the individual's context and their innermost functioning holds particular relevance for the movements produced by the individual. Dance theorist Rudolf Laban believed that all movement has intention – that all movement is initiated to satisfy a need (Finestone 2002:124). Considering the ways in which power, in Foucault's analysis, manipulates and extracts desires from bodies to formulate discourses which further control them, it becomes impossible to separate the movement resulting out of a need from the context which manipulates and constructs those very needs.

Hartley, speaking about the principles that guide the praxis of BMC, claims that 'a very subtle level of movement initiation' is continuously present within the body 'below the threshold of consciousness'⁹ (Hartley 1995:101). Importantly she proposes that these movements are a response to a myriad of thoughts, images, feelings, bodily processes, sensations and sensory perceptions, all of which are constantly arising and changing. It is at this level that our habitual movement patterns first begin to be established, as unconscious responses to our inner and outer environments initiate or obstruct the movement of energy through the body in a particular way (Hartley: 101-102).

Since habitual movement patterns develop over time, I would argue that they serve as a record of the lived experience, capturing the individual's responses to his/her particular context and setting these responses into repeated structures of movement. The contested 'readability' of movement patterns in a logo-centrally biased context that privileges the verbal and the textual over the physical and the tacit, alongside the ephemeral nature of movement, posits such a concept of the archive in motion as potentially unreadable, unreliable or overly subjective. However this research challenges this very logo-centric Cartesian bias in its attempt to elevate the 'subjugated knowledge' of the lived experience and foregrounds the ways in which the moving body reflects the inscriptions of the archive as centrally important. The way in which movement patterns capture the experience of the individual within their context has long been theorised by theorists such as Marcel Mauss and the 'body re-educators' F.M Alexander and Moshe Feldenkrais. Mauss's 'techniques of the body' might be seen to take Foucault's perspective further by putting it into motion. According to Mauss, movement patterns, habits or embodied practices that we take for granted as natural 'givens' such as running, sleeping and walking 'are learnt through formal and informal educational processes within a given culture'

⁹ This strikes a resonant chord between Grotowski's notion of the impulse as introduced in Chapter One which will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

(Thomas 2003:20). Mauss claims that 'we are everywhere faced with physio-psycho-sociological assemblages of series of actions' (Mauss 2007:39). He thereby credits the psychological and physiological make-up of the individual as implicit in the creation of the archive in motion as it intersects with the forces of power within its context.

These actions are more or less habitual and more or less ancient in the life of the individual and the history of the society...one of the reasons why these series may more easily be assembled where the individual is concerned is precisely because they are assembled by and for social authority (Ibid).

The connection between the movement capacity of the individual and their context was further illustrated through the body re-education techniques developed by the practitioners and theorists, Alexander (1910;1923) and Feldenkrais (1972). Alexander believed that 'modern civilisation's' negative influence 'contaminated man's biological and sensory equipment, with a resultant crippling in the responses of the whole organism (cited in Shepherd 2006:3). Feldenkrais, too, developed his system of body re-education based on the assertion that the state of the body relates to the state of society (Ibid). Their work emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century during which time 'cultural interest in bodies...was taken up with a concept of the body as an appropriate complement to a world felt to be modern, machinic, efficient and fast, where the productive worker or the well-drilled army or chorus were paradigms' (Ibid). These two practitioners sought to restore balance and well-being in the human being through a re-education of the body, which was based on restorative capacity of mind-body integration. The need experienced by these two practitioners to develop techniques of the body to counter the destructive affects of these cultural perceptions reflects the workings of power, as outlined by Foucault, in which the body is endlessly regulated through complex technologies of power operating on both a macro- and micro-level.

Grosz reiterates the way in which movement mirrors our cultural inscriptions when she claims that what we come to see as 'body language' (or the body's way of being in the world expressed essentially through its posture and movement), is in fact evidence of 'the ways in which culturally specific grids of power, regulation, and force condition and provide techniques for the formation of particular bodies' (Grosz 1994:142). Her use of the phrase 'body language' captures something of the pervasive and yet insidious nature of power as detailed by Foucault, since when we speak of body language we are referring to something which operates unconsciously or on a subliminal level, below the threshold of consciousness. Yet our ability to read, decode and respond to this subliminal language of others informs and defines each of our encounters with them.

The scholarship in this chapter allowed me to articulate the shift in my understanding of the connection between memory and the body or the body as archive, as experienced through the embodied practice and reflections on *Coming To*. I entered the project with the conviction that memory is literally stored in the body and referred to this as somatic memory. I imagined the body then as an archive in the way it serves as a storehouse or a container of these collected memories.

A deliberation of the ideas within this chapter allow for a more nuanced understanding of the body as archive which dismantles the notion of a stable or finite container or store-house of memory. Instead of simply storing these memories the body-mind is constructed through them. The body-mind *is* an archive in that it is fundamentally a manifestation of the experiences that have fashioned it.

Through the centrality of the body-mind (and therefore the centrality of Physical Intelligence) in the act of perception, somatic memory becomes the *process* that inscribes, or writes experience into the body-mind. It is these inscriptions that

construct the archive. Somatic memory is therefore the process or the means through which the historic present intersects with the forces that shape experience in order to construct the archive. But this construction is not finite or fixed. This is an archive in flux through a constant state of 'becoming'.

Movement and movement patterns gain significance in this reconfiguration of the notion of archive. Through the implicit interrelatedness of the mind-body, movements, though ephemeral in nature, further manifest the experiences that have fashioned them. Movements set into patterns over time, emerging often as a particular body language, reflect the construction of the body-mind as archive.

The central significance of movement and physical expression within Physical Theatre requires that the manifestation of the archive into motion be examined closely in the investigation that follows. Certain pertinent questions arise in terms of a training or preparation method for the performer and how it intersects with the archive in motion. A discussion of how a Physical Theatre training harnesses the performers Physical Intelligence will begin to examine these questions. A discussion on Improvisation as the key tool of material generation in Physical Theatre will also be examined in order to address the way in which personal archives are accessed through the integrated workings of Physical Intelligence. Such a discussion will prepare us for the analysis in the final chapter which will reveal improvisation as a process that engages the dynamic and layered archive.