A 'PARADOX OF EXPRESSION': MERLEAU-PONTY AND THE INTERTWINING NATURE OF BRECHT'S 'NOT...BUT' PROCEDURE

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[F]or the first time, through the other body, I see that, in its coupling with the flesh of the world, the body contributes more than it receives, adding to the world that I see the treasure necessary for what the other body sees. For the first time, the body no longer couples itself up with the world, it clasps another body, applying itself to it carefully with its whole extension, forming tirelessly with its hands the strange statue which in its turn gives everything it receives; the body is lost outside of the world and its goals, fascinated by the unique occupation of floating in Being with another life, of making itself the outside of its inside and the inside of its outside. And henceforth movement, touch, vision, applying themselves to the other and to themselves, return toward their source and, in the patient and silent labor of desire, begin the paradox of expression.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible* (1968, 143–144)

In one of his last writings before his death in 1961, Maurice Merleau-Ponty makes the case that one's flesh is the vanishing point of the distinction between subject and object, self and other, and the individual and the world. He argues that to look at oneself through the eyes of another necessarily blends the divide between one body and another and, by applying one's senses to another's, one engages in a "paradox of expression," or a double-agency between both oneself and another. I borrow Merleau-Ponty's phrase as my title because it is particularly apt regarding a performance technique that German playwright, director, theorist, and co-founder of the Berliner Ensemble, Bertolt Brecht, called the procedure of "fixing the 'not...but'," which produces a *Verfremdungseffekt.*[1] The *Verfremdungseffekt* creates a sense of 'defamiliarization' in the spectator's

consideration of a character. I use Merleau-Ponty's "paradox of expression" as a way of considering Brecht's call for the co-presence of the actor and their character in a stage performance. I borrow Nick Crossley's approach to phenomenological intersubjectivity and consider the apparent theoretical implications in the performance of the 'not...but' procedure. I argue that in order for the actor to successfully perform Brecht's 'not...but' procedure in performance, the actor must play into their character while occasionally playing out of the character—employing what I call a 'reflective block'—in an alternative attitude so the spectator will notice their comment on their character.

In his essay "A Short Description for a New Technique of Acting Which Produces an Alienation Effect", first written as a prefatory note in 1940, Brecht states that the "aim of this technique was to make the spectator adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism in his approach to the incident... [t]he actor must invest what he has to show" (Brecht 1964, 136). There are many techniques for creating *Verfremdungseffekte* in the theatre that are achieved with music, technical, staging, and design choices. I will remain focused, however, on the actor's role in creating the effect. One Berliner Ensemble member, Ekkehard Schall, asserts that although other stage devices can aid in creating *Verfremdungseffekte*, "the best means of *Verfremdung* remain those which pull the contradiction out of a performance's unity" (2015, 65–66). Brecht argues that the actor's intent and opinion is as important as their portrayal of the character's psychophysical experience. I argue, however, that this critical reproduction cannot exist as a seamless, simultaneous series of actions, but rather as an interconnected double helix: first performing toward a complete transformation, and then stepping out of the character's psychophysical experience and showing the character performing a contradictory act—something they would not do. By picking up Brecht's line, I too have explored the process of working with actors to produce distancing effects in their acting in a 2012 performance project, *The Galileo Experiment*, some results of which I chronicle here. Brecht was not suggesting a completely new type or form of acting. He was arguing for a kind of double-agency: a perception of character that leaves room for the presence of the actor whose consciousness and opinions surface, disappear, and reappear throughout the performance.

Brecht wanted the actor to not only perform the role of the character, but to be dexterous enough to show the audience that he is showing them an alternative action to that action which the character actually performs in the play. To further his illustration, Brecht addresses the 'not...but' procedure. This idea was central to my query when entering the first rehearsals for *The Galileo Experiment*. What does it look like, I wondered, for an actor to imagine his character behaving in one attitude, but instead perform in an alternative attitude?

> When he appears on the stage, besides what he is actually doing he will at all essential points discover, specify, imply what he is not doing; that is to say he will act in such a way that the alternative emerges as clearly as possible, that his acting allows the other possibilities to be inferred and only represents one out of the possible variants.... Whatever he doesn't do must be contained and conserved in what he does. In this way every sentence and every gesture signifies a decision; the character remains under observation and is tested. The technical term for this procedure is 'fixing the "not...but"'. (Brecht 1964, 137)

Performing the 'not...but' procedure is the performance process at the heart of my argument and will remain my central example of producing a *Verfremdungseffekt* in acting.

In December 2012, I staged four scenes of Brecht's *Life of Galileo* in a 200-seat black-box space on the University of Montana's Missoula campus. I pared the script down to nineteen pages and eight characters. I worked with five actors, a stage manager, a costume designer, a composer, and a vocalist. A public audience of about eighty people witnessed the performance on December 10, 2012. The actors performed in a twenty-foot diameter white chalk circle

Fig. 1. Floor plan for The Galileo Experiment.

drawn on the black stage floor. Chairs were arranged around the circle leaving four aisles for entrances and exits (fig. 1). The pianist played at an upright piano set at the end of one aisle just outside the circle. Galileo's table sat in the center of the circle for scenes one and four.
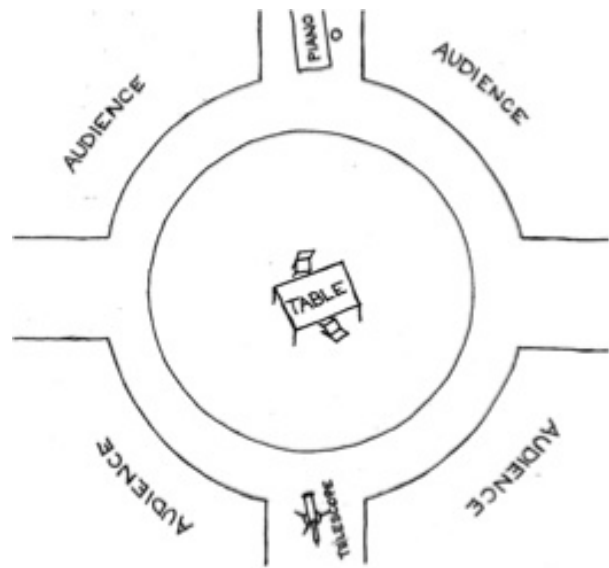
This essay seeks not only to investigate the practical applications of the 'not...but' procedure, but also to interrogate the philosophy such a process inherently performs. Although Brecht's desired *outcomes* of inspiring a conscious experience in the theatre, the illumination of the power structures that distort our perceptions of the world, and a generally Marxist philosophy that is deeply embedded in the text of his plays themselves are deeply relevant to my aims, in this essay, I am admittedly interested in focusing singly on the phenomenological nature of the *Verfremdungseffekt,* an issue with which I doubt Brecht himself was particularly concerned. Moreover, David Barnett argues, "[i]f practitioners use the innovations without reference to the reasons why Brecht developed them, they will ignore the political starting point and offer performance that no longer provides insights into the workings of the world in favour of mere theatrical effects" (5). While it is not my aim to divorce Brecht's political philosophy from his (or my) practice as a theatre-maker, I feel it permissible to explore other philosophical underpinnings of Brecht's practice without devoted reference to his Marxism because, as Barnett later makes it clear, Brecht's contributions do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they ongoingly present newly relevant findings within evolving contexts. Furthermore, if Brecht's political philosophy led him to develop a theatrical aesthetic that "encourages spectators to pick out contradictions in society and seek new ways of reconciling them" (Barnett, 4), which I agree did indeed, then an in-depth examination of the phenomenological contradictions inherent in performing the 'not...but' procedure seems like a valid and important contribution not to "mere theatrical effects," but to a piece of the very political and philosophical project to which Brecht was so devoted. Finally, this essay seeks to chronicle my journey as a practitioner in quest of a deeper understanding of precisely *how* to capture contradiction in an actor's performance, and the reader will find that by the end of my

journey, I arrive at a discovery different from that of my hypotheses, one that I think fits nicely into both Merleau-Ponty's and Brecht's deeply holistic and context-specific philosophies.

In *Intersubjectivity: The Fabric of Social Becoming* (1996), Nick Crossley defines two contrasting phenomenological perspectives on intersubjective relationships: egological and radical. In a reading of Edmund Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* (1931), Crossley articulates that egological intersubjectivity "involves an empathic intentionality which experiences otherness by way of an imaginative transposition of self into the position of the other" (1996, 23). In this mode, the self intellectually distinguishes self from other and subject from object in order to assess their own position in relation to the world and others. In a reading of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945)*,* Crossley clearly illustrates the departure Merleau-Ponty took from Husserl's assertion that (egological) intersubjectivity is reflective, self-aware, and experiential. Crossley suggests that radical intersubjectivity, in contrast, "involves a lack of self awareness and a communicative openness toward the other, which is unconditional. Self engages with other in this modality but has no experience of them as such" (1996, 23). In this modality, Merleau-Ponty is not arguing for an *a posteriori* demonstration of the facts, but rather a simple acceptance that the world is merely available to the subject to be lived in—reflectively or otherwise.

This article takes the approach of two articulations of phenomenological intersubjectivity between self and other. I do not argue or imply that the actor engages in an intersubjective relationship with their character. Such an argument would be impossible because the actor and character share a physical body and the character is itself a conceptual construct of the actor's conscious mind. Both modes of intersubjective perception and relation between actor and character exist co-presently and the 'not…but' procedure is simply a moment of reflective clarity in which the actor steps beyond their character and takes stock of their present experience. The sensible and the sentient aspects of experience are neither mutually exclusive nor one and the same. Both radical and egological intersubjectivity are, in fact, reliant upon one another. In order to perform the 'not…but' procedure, the actor must break away from the radical mode in which the actor's perception of their character is pre-reflective, and consciously sense the character—which shares a body with and was conceived by the actor—in the egological mode. To "contain and conserve" what he does not do in what he does, the actor must perform in both the radical and egological modes of intersubjectivity. It is, like Merleau-Ponty's project, a holistic process that is by its very nature paradoxical. By breaking away from the radical mode in which the actor's perception of their character is eventually pre-reflective, and considering an egological mode in which the actor's perception of their character is conscious and reflective, I argue that phenomenological intersubjectivity—be it the radical or egological mode—is an ongoing, fluid process of uniting subject and object, actor and character.

Radical Intersubjectivity: Towards a Phenomenology of Brechtian Acting?

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology posited a pre-reflective, ongoing, interactional relationship between subject and object. In order for the actor to show an alternative, unexpected attitude of the character, the actor must first build a character and play into the character until they can perform their character in a pre-reflective manner. This kind of intuitive, instinct-driven performance of character requires actors to open themselves to all available influences in the world around them. Human subjectivity is not a private affair. In order to have a basic understanding of their ontology, individuals must engage with the world and others in order to be reflected back onto their consciousness. In the radical mode of intersubjectivity, human consciousness is simply an opening onto otherness. Crossley argues that for Merleau-Ponty, the self is 1) unaware, 2) communicates with and responds to others on the basis of their perceivable actions, and 3) that perception is pre-reflective (1996). Because the actor has a body, they are in constant sensuous, embodied engagement with the character with whom they share that body. The character is, of course, a conceptual construct of the actor's conscious mind; therefore, the character has no autonomous agency as such because whatever the character does, the actor does as well. "Radical intersubjectivity," Crossley writes, can be conceptualized as "an irreducible interworld of shared meanings" (1996, 24). In other words, whatever phenomena are available to the individual as a sensing being are available to be engaged with. Whatever the means of engagement, the intersubjective connection is sub-conscious. Like the subject's pre-reflective experience of objects and others, the actor's perception of their character too is public and, therefore, intersubjective.

The radical mode of intersubjectivity is an *a priori* given state that, as individuals in the world, we take for granted. In the radical mode, actors do not take conscious stock of the literal, physical images of the goings-on in the world around them. Their perception of the images skips directly to meaning and, subsequently, actions and reactions. The character's world "is neither contemplated nor observed. It is participated in" (Crossley 1996, 28). However, an actor must first contemplate and observe the facts and literal images in order to put the pieces back together to form the character's whole world. Only after locating the source of the meaning of the images in the character's world can the actor let go of their reflective, conscious awareness and engage in a pre-reflective, radically intersubjective interplay with their character. In order for the actor to also "imply what he is not doing," as Brecht insists, the actor must first be able to perform the character in the radical mode.

In *The Galileo Experiment*, we took a physical approach to building a character and finding a way into a character's psychophysical experience. Before the actor can begin to successfully develop and build their character's physical bearing, they need to become consciously aware of their own comportment. An individual's comportment is more than just their physical gait, but an outward, physicalized expression of their inner state. In other words, the word comportment is a concise label for a person's entire psychophysical process. In order to fully explore this phenomenon, I developed a rehearsal workshop titled 'Becoming Aware of Comportment'.[2]

The workshop included a series of walking exercises in which actors observed one another's movements, took notes on their comportments, and held short discussions. There were many discoveries in the workshop, including one actor who noticed another actor who vigorously swung her arms tightly to her sides. The actor responded to her spectator's note by admitting that she was conscious of her weight. She articulated that perhaps her unconscious tendency was to walk quickly and swing her arms close to her sides in order to make herself appear more slender. In a journal entry about the workshop, another actor wrote, "[t]he exploration of my physicality strips layers from me and shoves me into a state of vulnerability. From this state, I am able to analyze myself more freely and mostly without attaching imagined meaning to my own perceptions of my physical self" (Hodgson 2012). This simple experience of looking at their own bodies and asking why they move the way they do seemed to help make room for the actor to build their character's comportment. Making the actors conscious of their own comportments and why they move the way they do was an important first step because rather than assigning imagined meaning—as they would for their characters—they uncovered actual possible meanings behind their own comportments. This step gave them the tools with which they would build their characters' comportments.

Just as the actors had deconstructed their own comportment and articulated some of the reasons why they may carry themselves the way they do, in another workshop, I asked the actors to work the same way in reverse for their characters. Based on their characters' social circumstances, I challenged the actors to move around the space experimenting with making specific physical choices that seemed right for their characters. Each actor was working with a wide range of character traits and social circumstances: Galileo, a financially struggling scientist; Young Andrea Sarti, Galileo's landlady's son, a boy of about ten who Galileo schools in order to help pay his rent; Virginia, Galileo's daughter who, later in the play becomes a nun and spends her life taking care of Galileo under house arrest; Ludovico, a wealthy young man sent to study with Galileo because science is a popular conversation topic; and Federzoni, the poor, illiterate lens-grinder who assists Galileo with his experiments. All of these characters offered the actors multiple possibilities to comport their characters with a range of qualities that demonstrated their social class and circumstance.

Fig. 2. Stephen Hodgeson as Galileo

In rehearsals, we explored a number of exercises to gather ideas for the characters' comportments. Throughout, the actors honed and crafted their character's comportment, including their walking gait, repeated gestures, the qualities of those gestures, and the specific ways in which they engaged with objects. After having specifically and consciously built the comportment of their character, each actor was now in dexterous control of two distinct comportments.

This image of two distinct beings sharing the same body harkens to a remark Brecht makes in *The Messingkauf Dialogues.* Brecht's Philosopher says,

> In future you actors can depict your characters so that one can imagine them behaving differently from the way they do…. You can set about outlining your characters much as when a bolder and more experienced engineer comes along and corrects his predecessor's drawings by superimposing new lines on old ones…. (2012, 53)

An actor cannot completely extinguish his or her own personal comportment to make room for an entirely new psychophysical bearing. In Brecht's image, the actor/engineer makes changes—sometimes vast—to the original comportment, but the old lines remain, fixed upon the paper's memory like a line that cannot be completely erased. The old lines in juxtaposition with the new are another example of the actor's and the character's social circumstances and behaviors remaining exposed and interlacing throughout the performance. Even though the actor can never completely erase his or her own comportment, which is neither necessary nor ideal, the character's comportment is as fully detailed and justified as the actor's.

In the radical mode of intersubjectivity, the actor/character dialectic is a phenomenologically interactional relationship that occurs prior to any cognitive distinctions between an actor and their character. The performance is pre-reflective and the actor develops their character based on physical representations of the character's potential inner states. The performance is in a constant state of pre-reflective communion between the actor and their character. Sometimes the spectator is witnessing more of the actor, sometimes more of the character, but always a combination of both. Because the character is the actor's construct and because the actor and character share the same body, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the flesh functions as a useful way of thinking about the inherent mutability of the actor/character relationship.

The first step in Brecht's 'not…but' procedure is a pre-reflective, interactional relationship between the actor and their character. On the one hand, the actor must perform the character in the radical, pre-reflective mode; meanwhile, on the other hand, the actor must find ways of allowing an alternative attitude to emerge. Like Brecht's drawing analogy, some of the old lines emerge more clearly than the new and some of the new lines read more clearly than the old. The two sets of lines are not simply those of one character who changes its mind back and forth. Brecht is writing about the relationship between actors onstage with their characters. He writes, "[w]hen reading his part the actor's attitude should be one of a man who is astounded and contradicts…The conduct of the man he is playing, as he experiences it, must be weighed up by him" (1964, 137). Brecht is arguing that the *actor himself* must do the weighing up of the "man he is playing." In his description of "fixing the 'not…but'," Brecht writes, "[w]hatever he doesn't do must be contained and conserved in what he does." (1964, 137). In the analogy, the old lines represent what the character does not do and the new lines represent what the character does.

Thomas Baldwin makes it clear that, although it was not yet a fully developed idea in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty was pointing to the flesh as the point at which subject

and object are no longer distinct. In his analysis of the final, unfinished chapter of *The Visible and the Invisible,* "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," Baldwin argues that "the relationship is reversible: the hand that touches can be felt as touched, and vice-versa, though never both at the same time, and it is this 'reversibility' that [Merleau-Ponty] picks out as the essence of flesh. It shows us the ambiguous status of our bodies as both subject and object" (2003, 248). The flesh of the actor's body upon which the audience fixes its gaze is in fact a kind of 'vanishing point'—the actor/character dialectic is the ambiguous status of the actor's body as both actor and character.

Borrowing the image of the Greek letter *x* (*chi*), Merleau-Ponty developed a new concept of the body that he called the 'chiasm', the crossing-over and combination of subjective experience and objective existence. The flesh, Merleau-Ponty argues, provides access to both perspectives. He argues that our experience is both that of the touching subject and as the tangible object.

> The body is lost outside of the world and its goals, fascinated by the unique occupation of floating in Being with another life, of making itself the outside of its inside and the inside of its outside. And henceforth movement, touch, vision, applying themselves to the other and to themselves, return toward their source and, in the patient and silent labor of desire, begin the paradox of expression. (1968, 144)

Since the actor's body is inhabited by and under the influence of two sets of social circumstances, when performing "with a definite gest of showing" (Brecht 1964, 136), there is necessarily a continuous conversation between what the actor is doing, what the character is not doing, what the actor is not doing, and what the character is doing. Remember the metaphor of the engineer's drawing: at certain points the old set of lines seem to emerge as the bolder of the two. To perform in two opposing attitudes back and forth, from the perspective of the character to an alternative perspective of the character, as imagined by the actor, and back again, would seem to create a paradox, not necessarily a diametrical paradox, but as Merleau-Ponty suggests, a paradox that takes as its point of departure the flesh of the same body. In this way, the actor and their character co-exist in oneness with each other and their real and imagined worlds. "[F]or the first time, I appear to myself completely turned inside out before my own eyes" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 143). Although he is talking more generally about one's own body in engagement with another separate body, I am adapting Merleau-Ponty's concept of a body revealing itself to itself via the observation of another body's observation of that original body.

The case of Brecht's 'not...but' procedure is similar: in one instance, the character's attitude is absent and the actor's present, whereas in another instance the opposite is the case. Another way of imagining it might be that an actor/character braid (or chiasm) is drawn before our view and as one disappears beneath, the other arises from below. "For the first time, the body...clasps another body, applying itself to it carefully with its whole extension, forming tirelessly with its hands the strange statue which in its turn gives everything it receives" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 144). This communion between bodies coming together to form a "strange statue," I argue, is what Brecht is effectively asking of the actor in his 'not...but' procedure. He asks the actor to share a body with a character and to be able to show when the audience is to hear from the character or from himself.

The relationship that is developed by the joint actor/character Being is inherently corporeal because in order to show either side of the coin, the coin itself must be physically turned over just as the actor must physically turn himself over from the character's body and into his own or into another comportment in order to show both perspectives. Although the character cannot be released from its containment within the perceived illusion, it maintains only one half of the relationship the spectator witnesses onstage.

Egological Intersubjectivity: Bracketing Out Another Perspective

Rather than engaging in a pre-reflective, ongoing interactional relationship with their character as in the radical mode of intersubjectivity, the actor also has the option to rely on their imagination to theoretically put them in the shoes of their character. In this way, the actor is not inextricably bound to the character simply because they share a body. From this perspective, rather, the actor can go through the same process as described in the previous section, but maintain a poised readiness to detach themselves from their character and perform the final step in Brecht's 'not…but' procedure. In Crossley's terms, this is egological intersubjectivity. I argue that the actor can foreground the reflective aspects of the egological mode in order to "discover, specify, imply what he is not doing" (Brecht 1964, 137). "Through imagination," Crossley writes, "we are able to detach ourselves, in part, from the world of shared perceptions and thus to (partially) escape the intersubjective world" (1996, 47). Although he qualifies this use of imagination as a *partial* detachment because it is impossible to remove oneself from the world's phenomena, Crossley is suggesting that by imagining ourselves in the shoes of another (even a fictional character), we can put ourselves in their position via a series of mental operations. "Embodied simulation is conceived of as a basic functional mechanism of our brain, enabling not only a direct bodily access to the actions, emotions and sensations of others, but also the possibility to imagine similar self- and other-related contents" (Gallese and Wojciehowski 2011, 14). In other words, we are not bound to the world and others just because we have a body whose senses mediate one hundred percent of our experience. There is, however, a private space—an egological space, which is theoretical, not real—in which the self can create and maintain an intellectual distance from the world and others.

Another difference between this mode and the radical mode might be to say that in the radical mode, the self *feels* the other and their mutual world; while, in the egological mode, the self seeks to *understand* the other in order to know how to engage with them in their world. Merleau-Ponty illustrates this point by describing a number of observations regarding imitation in early childhood. He argues that when young children imitate adults, they are imitating the results of the actions or gestures the adult is performing rather than the action or gesture itself. He cites an observation where a child is able to hold a hairbrush to his head and brush his own hair, but is later unable to imitate the gesture of lifting his hand to his head without a brush (Merleau-Ponty 1979). He writes, "[the child] is still unreceptive to the nonconcrete and aimless gesture" (35). In the acquisition of skills, the child is performing an egological moment—a transposition of themselves into the experience of the adult in order to gain an understanding of his own perceptual experience of the world. For Crossley, this phenomenon is significant for two reasons. First, it means "the child is

oriented to and responds to the meaning (*qua* purpose) to the gesture as a whole, rather than to the empirical extension of the adult's body through space" (1979, 52). The child imitates the gesture in a quest to understand *why* the adult performs the gesture and is therefore oriented to the meaning of the action. Second, it "makes a strong case for the notion of a lived sense of corporeal equivalence between body-subjects. It suggests an innate intercorporeality" (1979, 52). This intercorporeality is a useful way of thinking about the ways in which humans step back and take stock of their surroundings in order to make logical sense of the world.

In the egological mode, the actor is not so much feeling the character as they are viewing and thinking about them from various perspectives in order to understand the possibilities for how and why they do what they do. The actor consciously constructs not only the mental concept of their character, but embodies their character's experience in an innate intercorporeal relationship. In the radical mode, the actor is in a deep, immersive, pre-reflective engagement with their character, but when in the egological mode, the actor is stepping away for another vantage point. From the egological perspective, we reduce the other to the consciousness that we have of them. Consciousness, therefore, is the subject of perception as opposed to basic bodily existence as it is for Merleau-Ponty. Throughout another chapter, Crossley argues that the other, in the egological modality, is experienced as 1) a psychophysical object, 2) a subject who experiences and knows us, and 3) an intersubject who sees the world as we do. Notice here that in the egological mode of intersubjectivity, the other is given the same qualities and abilities as the self, but there is not yet any talk of a recursive feedback loop between the two subjects. If I have a body that senses, you must have a body that senses. If I can see you, you must be able to see me. If I see the grass as green, you must also see green grass. This is different from the radical mode because it is a conscious acknowledgement of the other as different from the self, which, in return means that the self is an individually perceiving self. My imagination allows me to draw these conclusions because I imagine myself as you in order to know you as separate from me. By recognizing the other as distinct from myself, I therefore recognize that I too am distinct from them. This theoretical awareness of self as distinct from other comes later in the child's development than the radical mode, with which they are born (Crossley 1996, 50).

From the egological aspect, the self's relationship with the other is less immediate than the radical approach. In fact the whole dichotomy of self and other is a conscious, theoretical concept. "[S]elf and other are objects of our experience," Crossley writes, "and the more reflective and reflexive aspects of our being more generally" (49). In order to understand the other, the relationship is mediated by the self's anticipations and self-conscious performance of the attitude of the other. The self perceives the other as different and, using empathy and simulation, tries to imagine what it is like to be that person by adopting and performing in the attitude of the other. Once this initial step is experienced, the self can step back and look at the other in a new light. In other words, after thoroughly developing the character, the actor is able to experience their character as a psychophysical object: a conceptual 'other' in need of being consciously interpreted, analyzed, and adjusted.[3]

In order to successfully perform the 'not…but' procedure, the actor must first choose moments in the text where their character behaves in a strange, surprising, remarkable, or contradictory manner. When designing our rehearsal process, I took clues from Brecht:

> Before memorizing the words [the actor] must memorize what he felt astounded at and where he felt impelled to contradict…. The actor should refrain from living himself into the part prematurely in any way, and should go on functioning as long as possible as a reader…. Given this absence of total transformation in the acting there are three aids which may help to alienate the actions and remarks of the characters being portrayed: 1. Transposition into the third person. 2. Transposition into the past. 3. Speaking the stage directions aloud. (1964, 137–8)

By choosing specific moments to step back from the character and make their commentary visible, the actor is not under pressure to impulsively maneuver between the radical and egological modes. Rather, they have identified specific moments in the play's text that are appropriate signposts for the actor to abandon their pre-reflective immersion in their character and reflect on their character's behavior.

With strangeness or contradiction in mind, I asked the actors to 'freeze' a scene by raising a hand and narrating their character's behavior or attitude in the third-person as if in a novel. "Speaking the stage directions out loud in the third person," Brecht continues, "results in a clash between the two tones of voice, alienating the second of them, the text proper" (1964, 138). In this exercise, the actor is automatically distanced from their character (and, subsequently, the text itself) simply by shifting into the third-person singular and past tense. The actors became narrators for their characters' actions and behaviors. Without much specificity, I simply asked the actors "after you speak, if you sense a 'remarkable' or 'contradictory' moment in the text, raise your hand, break character, and describe the quality of the character's action." For example, the actor playing Andrea raised his hand at one point following one of his own lines and said, "…he said patronizingly" (Swibold 2012). I encouraged them to keep the scene moving as quickly as possible despite these interruptions, which helped to give the actors a sense of dexterity when it came to flexing between the radical and the egological modes. The exercise also allowed the actors to impulsively re-discover and announce their previously found moments of contradiction. These moments of strange, contradictory behavior varied. For example, actor Katie Norcross:

> Virginia is a mess of contradictions. It's this weird twofold relationship where she wants to both explode at her father and hug him at the same time. These feelings lead to contradictions that manifest physically. She has moments that are both docile and strong willed. One second she's being a "good daughter" and the next she's standing up to Galileo and challenging him. (Norcross 2012)

In a sense, it became a diegetic commentary on their character's behavior not via narrative language, but via physical performance. In another particularly effective example, Hodgson found

a moment of Galileo's behavior that he had found remarkable because it happened to strike a chord with him personally. The Curator (Hugh Bickley) is trying to convince Galileo to develop something useful for the city, but Galileo wants money for his astronomical research:

> CURATOR: We realize you are a great man. A great, but dissatisfied man, if I may say so.

> GALILEO: You're right, I am dissatisfied. I'm forty-six years old and I've achieved nothing that satisfies me.

> CURATOR: I won't disturb you any longer.

Up until this point in the play, Galileo is all arrogance and bravado. His contradictory statement is striking because it is the last thing we expect him to say to the Curator. When Hodgson spoke the line "You're right, I am dissatisfied. I'm forty-six years old and I've achieved nothing that satisfies me," he dropped Galileo's comportment entirely, sat back in his chair, and with a sigh, recited the line in a distanced manner, suggesting that Hodgson himself was speaking the line as it applied to his own life. It was a moment of distanced reflection and simultaneous heartache because it was real not only for the character but also, at least in some aspect, for the actor (Video 00:28–00:45). This kind of narration from outside the physical comportment of the character gave way to the sense of the "outward expression" for which Brecht argues. Brecht argued, however, that the attitude of showing must be an ongoing feature of the actor's performance, not just certain moments here and there.

In another rehearsal, I asked the actors to bring a personal object from their everyday life to rehearsal that had significance in the actor's life and that was small enough to fit in a pocket (a small stone, a lucky pen, a keychain). When they approached the moments in the scene that they had deemed strange, surprising, remarkable, or contradictory—and in which they had previously frozen the scene to narrate—I asked them to take hold of their object and imagine it as a point of connection with their own lives. When they took hold of their object, I asked them to physically release themselves from the comportment of their character and return to their own. Although they still spoke the lines, they 'left' the comportment and world of their character for a brief moment and showed the other half. They switched from the perceived to the perceiver in order to offer the audience a glimpse into what they, the actor, thought was important about this character in this moment and to take note of it. After the moment had passed, they reentered the character's comportment and continued the scene (figs. 3–5 and Video 00:07–00:13, 00:19–00:26, and 00:28–00:45).

Excerpts from *The Galileo Experiment*:

🎥 https://youtu.be/wA_1WdgZ5Lglink

Fig. 3. Actor Katie Norcross in the character's comportment.

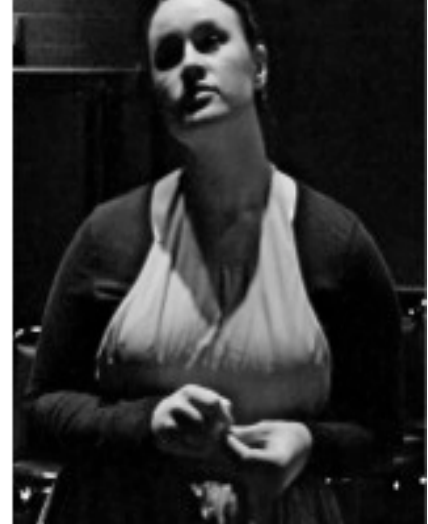*Fig. 4. Norcross shifts into her own comportment.*

Fig. 5. Norcross shifts back into the character's comportment.

Brecht used a similar process with English actor Charles Laughton who helped translate a later version of the play and first played Galileo for the American premiers in Los Angeles in August of 1947 and New York in December that same year. Both avid cigar smokers, Brecht writes about Laughton's work in his 1948 manifesto "A Short Organum for the Theatre": "[w]e find a gesture that expresses one-half of his attitude—that of showing—if we make him smoke a cigar and then imagine him laying it down now and again in order to show us some further characteristic attitude of the figure in the play" (Brecht 1964, 194). Galileo does not smoke, but Laughton does. The actor holds the object while 'showing' a different, unexpected perspective, and lies it down in order to perform the character's expected behaviors and attitudes.

The essence of the personal object (Laughton's cigar or an actor's keychain) has the power to become a critical and emotional link between actor and character. Perhaps the moment of contact between the hand and the object is the phenomenological fulcrum that mediates the shift between the comportments of actor and character. Perhaps the object, in its interaction with the flesh, which the actor and character share, is the fulcrum between the radical and egological modes.

These moments of stepping out of character, however, were not effective as performance choices because they were not obvious enough for a spectator to notice; whereas the moments of stifled decisions carried an energy of something not being said/done that a spectator could feel. Perhaps stepping out of the character's comportment and using personal objects to aid in the psychology of doing so are only useful as rehearsal exercises. In any case, the actors became agile enough to navigate the transitions from within their character, into themselves or a different, unexpected attitude, and back again. This experience gets at the heart of my argument that the actor can successfully perform Brecht's 'not…but' procedure by performing in both the radical and egological intersubjective modes.

Brecht's 'not…but' and Crossley's 'reflective block'

Brecht's 'not…but' procedure is akin to the process of what Crossley calls the 'reflective block', where all pre-reflective experiences of another are suddenly brought to the forefront of reflective consciousness. Crossley describes the swing between the two modes:

> Sometimes we are deeply engrossed with others, too engaged to be aware of either ourselves or of them. At other times, and rapidly, we can become sharply aware of both, constituting them as reflective and reflexive aspects of experience. *All spontaneous actions can be stultified by a reflective block*, only to be undermined later by a genuine and spontaneous communication which collapses the reflective barrier of self and other. (1996, 71, emphasis mine)

In terms of performance, the 'reflective block' is the moment in which an actor suddenly and intentionally becomes aware of their work on the character. At points, actors should allow themselves to be in deep, pre-reflective engagement in their character's experience and given circumstances. However, when considering the 'not…but', this removal of the illusion of the actor as character is the moment when the actor becomes sharply aware of both the radical mode of immersion in the character and the egological mode of taking a reflective step away from the character. In effect, the 'reflective block' that stultifies the actor's fluid, spontaneous co-existence with their character is the alternative attitude for which Brecht calls when performing the 'not…but' procedure.

This swinging back and forth between radical and egological intersubjectivity that Crossley describes perhaps reads as an exaggeration of what really happens. Merleau-Ponty makes this argument in "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," as do contemporary cognitive scientists and philosophers (see Edleman 2005). The stark shifts between the actor's and their character's comportments that the actors in *The Galileo Experiment* made were perhaps also an exaggeration of what Brecht was calling for in his description of the 'not…but' procedure. "It should be added that the egological attitude always necessarily entails the radical attitude as an underlying function" (Crossley 1996, 71). The radical, pre-reflective mode of experiencing the world and others is a given. It is an *a priori* state of being. The egological mode pops up every once in a while and our metacognitive faculties suddenly come to life and make us reflect on our ontology. The actor— once able to perform their character with deep, pre-reflective engagement—is then able to determine when the reflective mode is going to emerge and generate an alternative attitude to their character's perspective.

The actor cannot completely leave the character's bodily experience, as I had assumed in our rehearsal process, and still be performing the possibility of an alternative to their character's actions. "Whenever we are reflectively aware of the other we are still, always, necessarily responsive to their moves at an unreflective level. We are always affected by what they do and say, by their movements and gestures" (Crossley 1996, 71). The actor has to remain in some kind of 'touch' with their character in order to perform an alternative action or possibility. Neither the 'reflective block' nor the 'not…but' procedure are a complete stepping out of character to make

commentary on behalf of the actor. Rather, the actor must consciously choose to do something the spectator would not expect the character to do. The actor's choice to show their process of showing their character performing in an unexpected manner is the 'reflective block'. When the actor chooses to allow their character to perform in a manner more consistent with the spectator's expectations of the character, the block is undermined, reestablishing the radical mode.

Conclusion: The Sensible-Sentient and the 'not…but' Procedure

I created *The Galileo Experiment* because I wanted to know what kind of toolkit the 'Brechtian' actor needs in order to perform the 'not…but' procedure. I had assumed that the actor would need to create a definitive split between themselves and their character in order to show the spectator their social criticisms of the character while performing onstage. I found that not only was Brecht asking for something much more complex and dynamic, but that the actors in *The Galileo Experiment* discovered various ways of pointing to their characters' behavior while performing them onstage. I began this research wondering how the actor performs in one attitude while simultaneously performing with the potential for an alternative attitude to emerge. My theoretical investigation constructed a fairly traditional dialectical framework of two seemingly opposing modes of phenomenological intersubjectivity—radical and egological—as defined by Crossley. However, I admit that, to some extent, Crossley's categories try too hard to simplify Merleau-Ponty's inherently holistic project. I want to conclude, therefore, with a return to Merleau-Ponty and offer a more holistic, interactional, and dynamic transference of reflective awareness and pre-reflective engagement. I conclude that performing Brecht's 'not…but' procedure is not a stark switching back and forth between radical and egological intersubjectivity, but a leaning to one side in order show an alternative attitude of the character. Perhaps there are more than two sides of a character's potential for contradictory or remarkable behavior. Perhaps there are many ways of "fixing the 'not…but'."

Merleau-Ponty conceptualizes the human body's relationship with itself and others in two primary ways. He argues that the body can, on the one hand, be a sensible object—one that actively senses itself and others. On the other hand, the body can be passively sentient, or phenomenal—a body that is sensed by itself and others. Remembering the example I examined earlier from *Phenomenology of Perception*, in "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," Merleau-Ponty describes the ways in which his right hand can perform the touching of another object, while his left hand simultaneously touches his right hand. In this way, he argues, the right hand is both touched and doing the touching—it is a sensible-sentient, or a sensing phenomenon. However, this twofold experience, he argues in his final work, cannot share the stage so to speak; moreover, the experience of touching and being touched cannot be experienced with an equal intensity simultaneously:

> If these experiences never exactly overlap, if they slip away at the very moment they are about to rejoin, if there is always a "shift," a "spread," between them, this is precisely because my two hands are part of the same body, because it moves itself in the world, because I hear myself both from within and from without. I

experience—and as often as I wish—the transition and the metamorphosis of the one experience into the other. (1968, 148)

If I forge this understanding of the human body's experience of itself and others into a lens through which to examine Brecht's 'not…but' procedure, I argue that the 'reflective block' is the actor performing "the transition and metamorphosis" from sentient character being sensed by the spectator, to the sensible actor touching and commenting on the character.

Merleau-Ponty's procedure of performing both the overlapping sensible and the sentient aspects of experience suggests that they are neither mutually exclusive nor one and the same. They are, in fact, reliant upon one another. In order to sense its own body, that same body must be sentient and in order to be sentient, that body must be sensed. In much the same way, in order to perform the 'not…but' procedure, the actor must consciously sense the character, which lest we forget shares a body with and was conceived, at least in part, by the actor. This theoretical examination of both the sensible-sentient that Merleau-Ponty describes and Brecht's 'not…but' procedure does not necessarily divide the actor into a sensing subject and the character into an objective, sentient phenomenon. The relationship is an ongoing, fluid process uniting actor and character as a sensible-sentient being that is merely highlighting contradictory aspects of its shared sets of behaviors. Brecht's 'not…but' procedure requires the actor to become well aware of the intertwining dual nature of human perception and presence. To "contain and conserve" what he does not do in what he does, the actor is performing in both the radical and egological modes of intersubjectivity.

The 'reflective block' produces a brief *Verfremdungseffekt*. It is not necessarily a complete removal from character, but a choice to twist the character around to see what is on the other side, then twisting it back again to further explore the more familiar. "Egological intersubjectivity," Crossley concludes, "is only a relative reflective distancing. It is never absolute" (1996, 71). As in our conscious lives when we have moments of reflection or moments where we question our choices based on the perceptions of our experiences, so the actor has the agency to choose when to consciously show a character's opposite possibilities. Echoing Schall, Mumford argues that the 'not…but', is a procedure Brecht explored in order to "create each character as an unstable unity of opposites…to show that humans are ever-changing entities, constantly shaped by and contributing to the flux of their physical and social environments" (2009, 116). In *The Galileo Experiment,* we explored a handful of these techniques in order to discern what worked and what did not. Some were most effective as rehearsal tools for discovering possibilities, but the most effective performance techniques were those where the actor remained in the character's comportment, stifled the impulse to do what the character wants to do, and instead made a contradicting choice. Choosing which action to allow the character to play into in a given moment of the text, and then contradicting that action and showing their conscious choice to do something else is the phenomenological experience of performing in both the radical and egological modes of intersubjectivity. It is "fixing the 'not…but'." It is the "paradox of expression."

Notes

[1] Translated literally: prefix *ver*=strong; adjective *fremd*=foreign; noun *Effekt*=effect. Because of the historically contested nature of its English translation, I prefer the German noun/adjective *Verfremdungseffekt* in place of 'defamiliarization', 'alienation', 'estrangement', 'distanciation', or any other confusing English variant.

[2] This workshop is an adapted variation on a workshop Meg Mumford describes in her 2008 monograph *Bertolt Brecht* called "Strutting Your Stuff" (143–145).

[3] This reoriented perception of the other by the self is what Husserl called the *epoché*, or 'bracketing'. 'Bracketing' is a cognitive operation in which one theoretically removes consciousness from belief in the real world in order to objectively analyze the conditions of a given set of experiences.

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Biography

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