

## **Embodied Landscape: the place of geography in the actor's creation of character**

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### **ABSTRACT**

It is a commonplace to acknowledge that the living body is part and parcel of its immediate living world. An actor's embodied understanding of that world – that interpretation which has been incorporated into the actor's very physicality and sensate being – will reflect in the initial choices made in the interpretation of a part in rehearsal, and will echo through to the actor in performance. Performance (of any kind) is always, amongst other things, a performer's embodiment of the climate, architecture, and geography of the places in which the work is created. An actor's performative interpretation, then, can be expected to manifest elements of embodied place – yet there is remarkably little participant-observation analysis available to discuss just how it will do this. In this paper, ethnographically based participant-observation research conducted in Oslo and Sydney is used to present evidence of the impact of landscape and climate on the actor's creation of character, and to discuss the importance of embodied place on performative choices.

## **Embodied Landscape: the place of geography in the actor's creation of character**

The beginning point of this paper came from personal experience gained working as an actor in theatre and film in Sydney, Australia and Oslo, Norway. The overriding methods used in rehearsal and performances were of a familiar style. Methodologically, the techniques used were the same: actors and directors in both countries drew from the same general system of practice and terminology. The way they did this, however, was quite divergent: the decisions made by actors in the first days of theatrical rehearsal, the parameters of directorial control of physicality during rehearsal or filming, even the amount of directorial control of vocal delivery, was significantly different.

The other immediate notable difference, from a personal point of view, was the physical nature of being. Oslo, in Norway, is defined by mountains, fjords, woodlands, and extreme seasonal variations that include major shifts of climate and light. Sydney, Australia, is visually comparatively flat (notwithstanding Sydney's hilly aspect if walking), and moderate-to-hot in climate, with relatively small seasonal variations of temperature and light. My own sense of bodily presence in each place was markedly different; my own ways of approaching a method of living had to re-define itself. My *embodiment* in each place was sometimes unnoticeable (in the case of the Australian context, where I grew up), and sometimes incongruous, forced to clash or change (in the case of the Norwegian context).

That the physical embodied variances of being and the different approaches to the application of acting methodology might be linked, seemed worthy of consideration. A series of racial clichés immediately came to mind: laconic Australians, humourless Lutherans, easy-going lifestyle, depressive winters – and an immediate refutation suggested itself: difference in approach to a working pattern is surely more linked to tradition and culture than to nationally-based, ubiquitous embodied responses to landscape and climate. Both these immediate responses suggested an either/or approach: one a response that begins to define people by their nationality, leading eventually to the dangerous grounds of Social Darwinism and eugenics; the other a definitive separation of 'tradition and culture' from landscape and climate – and both responses my own<sup>1</sup>. In 2007, therefore, I began a participant observation research project to attempt to find a way of assessing the cause of difference that I felt I had experienced.

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Oslo, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2007. I had been observing rehearsals of National Teateret's production of Ludvig Holberg's *Erasmus Montanus*, directed by Gábor Zsambeki. Per, the actor who played Jeppe, was in his 27<sup>th</sup> year with the company. I questioned him about the rehearsal process.

Per complained about the director:

This man is Hungarian, he doesn't understand Holberg, we have done Holberg in school, it's like an English man with Shakespeare. He doesn't know it.

And saying to that young man he hasn't learnt his lines! It is difficult, it is not plain Norwegian it is a mix of Danish and Old Norwegian and something in the middle this dramaturg girl has made, and the young guy has only had 2 rehearsals in five weeks!

But he is not an evil man, he's nice, but the communication is too weak. He is not Norwegian (Hope, 2007).

Later into the rehearsals this issue of language and familiarity came back during a note session between actors and director, actor Anne Marit expressing a fear that all the actors were feeling confused, that they were not connecting on stage. Gábor asked why. Per explained that it 'is the language, it is so archaic, it is very difficult for people to learn'. Anne Marit agreed— 'Det er ikke muntlig'—it is not organic, it doesn't fit well in the mouth. Gábor argued that it should be like Shakespeare to them, but Per and Anne Marit disagreed—it is nothing like Shakespeare, it is the nature of the Norwegian language, Gábor is not Norwegian and cannot hear the subtleties. Actor Finn disagreed:

I do not think it is the language, speaking for myself, the language is something you need to get used to, for me I need to drill in what I am doing and when, I need *that* kind of rehearsal (Hope 2007)

Fast forward to rehearsals for the new play '*King Tide*' by Katherine Thompson, being rehearsed for the Griffin Theatre Company, Sydney, Australia, with director Patrick Nolan. The rehearsal room had been 'marked out' with tape to represent the stage and set design, and the first thing Patrick did was take the actors onto the space to 'map out' the geography of the imaginary setting: the placement of the house, the rooms, the beach and the rocks referred to in the play. The actors referred to various houses and beaches they knew to try to create a mental, agreed picture of the space. Actor Masa began to draw the space as he understood it, and they all went through it again, positioning themselves on the taped-out space and 'pointing' to the areas of sea, rock, house, etc.

Three and a half weeks later, they moved into the Theatre, and the same process was repeated. Masa climbed into the seat racks to give himself the elevation he believed the character would have in the 'real' of the imaginary space, explaining: 'I really need to see what it is I am looking at or it won't make sense'. Patrick joined him, and they used the theatre space now as the 'true' space of reference. The other actors—Tony, Russel, Kathryn and Anita joined in, comparing the 'imaginary' space to other places all knew—the cliffs at Bondi, the

Northern beaches, one of the Southern beaches, until all had agreed on a known location.

In both cases, the concern of the actors was to access and establish familiarity—with language, with movement, with real and imaginary space. Per and Anne Marit, in *Erasmus Montanus*—a play with an elaborate and realistic set - consistently spoke of the difficulty of making the *text* 'muntlig'; and Finn, questioned about his want of '*drilling*', advised that he always felt more familiar with a role once he was comfortable with the 'blocking' involved – the physical actions and placements.<sup>ii</sup> One of the actors, Håkon, arranged to change his costume because his personal experience, as the son of a farmer, told him that the character—a farm overseer—would be less 'dressy' than the costume department suggested. Masa and the actors in *King Tide*, working with a set that was largely empty, concentrated on getting a common visual idea of the *imaginary* space—as Masa said, it wouldn't make sense otherwise. Tony spent time practicing the physicality of stepping over the (imaginary) rocks of the cliff-tops surrounding the (imaginary) beach. The building/shaping/performing of a character appeared, in both plays, to be hung on the creation of a solid backing of familiarity with place, setting, habitual movement, 'organic' control of language, and personal links with referential character points.

This, it became apparent, was because all the actors were using a generalised Stanislavskyan-style entry point that looked toward personal identification with the character to be portrayed. It allowed them to feel familiar with the role and the imagined place; to 'make sense' of it, as Masa said, to 'know it' as Per said; to 'find the truth of it', as both directors said. The Stanislavsky system was their common training background; their common template. It allowed them to understand how they would act, or why they might act in a certain way, in a similar situation, by marrying character and situation to their own understanding of life.

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From personal experience of developing a character through a rehearsal process, and from discussions with acting compatriots, this journey of 'marrying' character and situation to an understanding of life is akin to finding one's cognitive, corporeal balance in a world whose level of unfamiliarity is on a sliding scale, depending on the nature of the text, and the daring of the casting process. The words, moves, and relationships the character has are not those of the actor-as-person; the world inhabited and endowed on stage and in rehearsal is usually not the actor's lived-in world. Rehearsals become a process of exploration, often clumsy and generalized at first, hopefully gaining in confidence and precision as they continue. The actors learn to 'live' in their endowed world, and their adopted personality, by finding a personal truth that will resonate with both acted character, and self. This demands knowledge, implicit or otherwise, of self and place and self-in-place, both imagined and lived.

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Kant defined the body as the thing that defines place; that gives directionality to the world and, therefore, gives us our *perception* of the world. The body becomes the source of our interpretation of the world—and, by extension, our interpretation of self. Husserl proposed that the body is central to being-in-the-world. 'Thanks to my body, I am at the center of things.... place is realised through kinesthesia, in which the character (das Was) of the place is optimally experienced.' (Husserl in Casey, 1997: 218/219). Husserl's *lived body* defines the world it is in by experiencing it, living in it, perceiving it.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, specifically through *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible*, took Husserl's notion of the lived body further. He addressed a way of viewing the world and the 'I' in the world through a mediating lens that allowed for a cross-over between immanence and transcendence, subject and object, 'I' and other, and 'I' the conscious being and 'I' the body. He developed a model of *reversibility* that placed the 'subject' in direct and necessary inter-action with the 'object'; and built an ontology of 'being-in-the-world' that incorporated an ever-developing understanding of phenomenon and self-in-the-world-of-phenomenon, that reflected the changing nature of existence, and the temporality not only of life but also of the world *and* its phenomenon. This world is opaque, not transparent: all phenomenon is 'matter pregnant with its form' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 15), continually revealing itself to perception through time and space. Merleau-Ponty's work sets up a theory of existence and knowledge of existence, which has at its basis the epistemological thesis of the Primacy of Perception:

The main thrust of the thesis of the primacy of perception is that the perceptual world is the foundation of all knowledge and action, truth and value, science and culture. It is the ultimate source and the final referent of human cognition (Dillon, 1988: 52).

Merleau-Ponty's work suggests a way of viewing the self and existence that parallels Stanislavsky's system for creating a dramatic character.

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Benedetti, commenting on Stanislavsky's Method of Physical Action, writes:

I am an actor. My job is to appear to be someone else. But I cannot actually be someone else. The only feelings or thoughts I can have are my own. I cannot actually experience anyone else's emotions any more than I can eat and digest anyone else's meal. If I really believe I am someone else then I am, in Stanislavsky's words, a pathological case and need psychiatric help (Benedetti, 1998: 2).

The actor is faced with the task of appearing to be someone other than he or she is; an assumption which presupposes that the actor is aware, in the first place, of what it is that distinguishes the 'I' of the actor from the 'You' of everyone else—how he/she operates as a specific individual separate and identifiable from others, yet with actions, reactions, and emotional realities readable by others. The actor is supposedly hyper-aware of their existence in the world, and of how to transform it to communicate a different, equally understood, existence to a watching public. The actor, then, perceives and is aware of being perceived: he/she is, at best, a conscious manipulator of perception: able to shape a sympathetic response in an audience who accept that this response and the elicitation of it are specific to a performance. There is a contract: the performance – a manipulation of perception - happens for an audience—who perceive it—and neither the performance *as a performance* nor the perception of it can happen without the performers, or the audience. There is a reciprocity involved, a form of reversibility: the performer sends out a series of intentional actions to an audience whom he/she also perceives, and between them—performers, audience, and performance—meaning—a form of reality—is created.

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In Merleau-Pontian terms, a sense of self is developed within an interworld of shared intersubjectivity, and will always be adaptive in order to retain that self-sense within a developing world, and to retain the ability to measure self against the response of the world. This also applies to Stanislavsky's approach to character development in his Method of Physical Action—indeed, Stanislavsky compared the creation of a character to gestation and birth:

*Our type of creativeness is the conception and birth of a new being—the person in the part. It is a natural act similar to the birth of a human being (Stanislavsky, 1980: 294).*

But the onstage creation of a world carries with it significant interpretive assumptions. As Gay McAuley writes:

'It is now widely accepted that the body is enmeshed in culture from the moment of conception...that the way people use their bodies at any moment of their daily life even when asleep, is the product of their cultural 'habitus'...and that this habitus can vary significantly even in societies that are geographically and developmentally close' (McAuley, 1999: 116).

Actors, then, presumably carry the emplaced history of culture and place; and this will be reflected in their physicality.

Knowledge, writes dancer/philosopher Jnana Parviainan, is 'in the body'—learnt via bodily movement, motility. Movement, she writes, quoting Maxine Sheets-

Johnstone, is the 'mother of all cognition; it forms the I that moves before the I that moves forms movement' (Sheets-Johnstone, in Parviainan, 2002: 14). Our first experience of the world is tactile-kinaesthetic; as infants, we explore ourselves and our surroundings through our body. Our first major impressions, our developing sense of meaning and being, are mediated through movement and touch. Knowledge of the world arises (first) through non-linguistic, non-propositional movement: an animate interaction with the world that provides a form of cognition about ourselves and the world.

Parviainan references the work of Michael Polanyi, who writes that expertise in a skill involves the ability to do that skill without reflection: the knowledge becomes tacit. He argues that all skills operate with a level of tacit knowledge—not only physical skills, but also linguistic and abstract knowledge skills, such as playing chess. Parviainan suggests that the way in which the body works to 'imbibe' or embody that knowledge, is a function of the body's tactile-kinaesthetic interaction with the world; the body as 'doer' and the body as 'reflective' operating together in the development and extension of knowledge and interaction with the world:

Our understanding of a thing is not a conceptual covering up of the real, but a revelation of the given essence of the thing by the moving, sensuous body (Parviainan, 2002:19).

Cognition and the development of self is placed squarely in the realm of the Merleau-Pontian lived body.

Marya Schechtman of the University of Illinois adds to this picture in her essay *The Brain Body Problem*. Schechtman suggests an alternative view to the mainstream duality of mind/body separation. She re-considers the brain-as-mind concept in the context of what she terms a distributed-mind hypothesis:

The phenomena which make up the human mind—sensation, cognition, emotion, etc.—involve a broad range of physical activity, and so can be viewed as distributed systems of a human being rather than as the activity of a single organ. On this view the brain is the central organ of mind—just as the heart is of circulation or the lungs of respiration—but the mind is not taken to be *located* in the brain (Schechtman, 1997: 152).

Schechtman makes reference to body memory—the idea that certain bodily skills are remembered partially or mostly in the muscles that perform them (such as typing, playing an instrument, swimming, etc)—and to autobiographical memory and psychophysical interactions. Autobiographical memories, she points out,

...are evoked by attitudes or circumstances of the body (Schechtman, 1997: 159).

Physical posture, visual references, smells, touch, sound, the very *feel* of place or person or event is important, and often a trigger, for the memory. It is the

whole body that is operating in this sense. Similarly, the hormonal/chemical interactions occurring between brain and body are of immense importance in the psychological state of a person: their moods and emotional swings. This is a function of the body/brain operating as a unit in continual communication with itself and the world: the 'self', or 'mind' as being located in the body as a whole, and that body being located and defined by its immediate and remembered world.

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Take the examples of the actors in *King Tide*, attempting to locate a visual image of the coast according to their own shared local images; or Per and Anne Marit in *Erasmus Montanus* arguing that the director had no idea of Norwegianness. The actors are drawing on shared memories to construct their performances. Watching rehearsals of *The Glass Menagerie* at National Teateret in 2006, I noted that in the first run of any confrontation scenes, the actors chose to create as much personal space as possible between themselves, and to turn away from each other and speak in low voices. Norwegians I spoke to recognised these choices as 'normal' confrontational behaviours; but these were not bodily or attitudinally recognisable in *my* memory or sense of confrontation. Similarly, the Sydney Theatre Company's version of *Hedda Gabler*, which I saw after an extended period of living in Oslo, had me struggling to accept the physicalities presented by the Australian actors: there was something overtly non-Norwegian about the looseness of limbs and the informality of stance within the formal setting of Hedda and Tesman's house.

Evidence of this difference in physical presence was apparent throughout the 2007 participant observation project. I will concentrate on the unique difference in the general sense of applied weight in the body, as considered in Laban terminology.<sup>iii</sup> This first became discernible when the Hungarian composer, Lazslo Sary, arrived to work with the *Erasmus Montanus* company. Lazslo was a slight man, his arms held close to the sides but not locked in at the elbows. His gestures were short, the arms never quite stretched all the way out, his fingers in constant motion:

Seeing him in pit & AM & Per on stage—physical presence so different—composer small, held, little space taken; AM & Per larger, physically more open, arms, legs, facial gestures take more space (Hope 2007: 08/08/2007: 12.10pm).

An hour later Lazslo worked with Anne Marit on a musical section:

AM stands with hands on head and explains it is difficult, she is unsure—composer asks her to 'try' and waves his hands and fingers at her, his hands twirling in little circles—AM stands still, hands on head....

1400 - AM talks with composer again, her gestures strong, weighted, his flighty, floating—like deaf language (Hope 2007: 08/08/2007: 13.48/1400pm).

Lazslo, in Laban terms, came across as a *light-weight flicker*, and his presence alerted me to the fact that I had not seen any light-weight actors on the stage. I began to look at the actors in terms of how they carried their weight, totally bemused by the way the Hungarian composer had shocked me with his inadvertent demonstration of qualitative difference in the weight and spatial presence of his body.

My suspicion was confirmed. Finn, in a final scene of humiliation, adopted a posture bent at the waist and knees, but still maintained a solid, heavy stance in his legs and feet. His exit from stage—as a disempowered chicken—maintained a heavy, stomping physical presence. Håkon, whose character was in lower status to those around him, nevertheless had a strong-weight pressing quality, moving forward from the hips in a straight, steady gait, with careful, planted steps. Thorbjørn, who had been asked to be open and light, was instead heavy in his walk, which continually returned to a bow-legged gait that brought with it a stamping footstep, heavily swung arms, and a pressing-from-the-hips stride. The cast choices—or natural tendencies—all leant toward a strong-weight pressing quality, especially in contrast to the visiting composer. As rehearsals continued, there was an increase in the adoption of wide legged stances, longer steps, and greater personal space—much of which Gábor tried to rein in. All were using the same sense of weighted presence, and it pervaded their physicality, showing itself in space-taking physical stances and walks.

In contrast, on the evening of the twenty fourth of September 2007, Kathryn from the *King Tide* company told her Japanese-born, Australian resident co-actor Masa that she had been asked to wear more solid clothes and shoes in order to become more grounded. Masa replied that Patrick had asked him, too, to become more grounded. ‘We’ll be a bunch of grounded people,’ said Kathryn. These actors were being asked to change their *light-weight* body presentations.

This light-weight quality became apparent amongst all the *King Tide* actors in the second week of rehearsal, as the actors began to work physically. During the readings, Anita had developed a ‘slashing’ arm and hand movement style that she used when gesticulating; once standing and moving, her body took on a swaying motion that suited the use of her arms:

14.10: A stands slightly bent @ knees, elbows held tight but forearms flicking and flitting, fingers loose, body swaying from held-together knees and from waist (Hope 2007a: 28/09/07).

Gillian also swayed, but from foot to foot, and her arms flicked and floated around chest level, the hands making circular motions as she spoke, giving her a light and sharp presence. Masa would often fidget, hands playing with his clothes or hair, and he made rapid choices between sitting, standing, or moving around the rehearsal area. Kathryn gave the impression of constantly floating. Her hands

would sail into the air above her head when she spoke, and her legs would twine around each other or be held behind her back—

14.25 K @ line ‘what this country needs’—has previously been unsure of this line, questioning intent—she stands on one leg, raises the other behind, holds onto her foot (Hope 2007a: 24/09/2007).

Toni used a lot of facial, hand and finger gesticulation. She would jog on the spot and raise herself on tiptoes to find the energy and/or intent of the moment—to ‘rise into it’, as she put it. On the fifth October 2007 she discussed with director Patrick her difficulty in finding the weight in the character of Sal. She too decided to rehearse in heavier shoes, to give herself a sense of groundedness.

The *King Tide* actors all initially manifested a lightweight Laban physical presence compared to that of the *Erasmus Montanus* company—and it affected how they approached their roles. In both cases, the physical presentation of character—and therefore the messages sent, received, and negotiated between actor and audience—were in part defined by the seemingly inherent choices of bodily presence.

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Håkon from *Erasmus Montanus*, asked about the physical presence of the cast, stated that there was a propensity in Norwegian actors to be strong and direct in their physicality. This, he continued, came from the fact that they grew up on the land; their solutions to life were direct and physical, and it fed through into their physical being. Anne Marit stated that the land and the sea were ‘in our (Norwegian) genes’; Norwegians were a people utterly connected to the land.

The iconic representation of Norwegians feeds into the image of the capable, self-sufficient individual, historically living in a harsh environment without recourse to large communities; and the leisure activities of Norwegians reflect a desire to conduct themselves in such a way. Nature as a concept reverberates throughout Norwegian society, as a construct of Norwegian national identity in literature, film, and political processes. An examination of past and contemporary writing on the subject indicates the existence of a particular ‘hale and hearty’ projection of Norwegian landscape and lifestyle as a major component of Norwegian-ness (Sorensen, 2001; Stråth, 2004; Vittersø, 2007).

This is reaffirmed by a consideration of *hytte-liv* (hut life): the widespread practice of spending leisure time in a simple, near amenity-free hut in the country. The back-to-nature idyll bloomed around the turn of the last century with Fridtjof Nansen’s promotion of *friluftsliv* (outdoor life); and the simple life outdoors is reflected in the continuing popularity and use of the holiday hut, with associated lifestyle choices. Three quarters of the population choose to holiday in rustic huts in the countryside;<sup>iv</sup> whilst the local saying ‘born with skis on your feet’ refers to

the fact that almost everyone learns to ski from an early age: the harsh climate is engaged with from infancy, rather than avoided. There is a strong physical connection to the geographical landscape that, it would seem, feeds into the corporeal cognition of the population; that the Norwegian actors were Laban Strong Weight in their physical presence is unsurprising in that context.

The Australians, as noted, were by contrast all Laban lightweight. Kathryn from *King Tide* echoed Håkon in referencing a bodily connection to landscape and/or climate to explain physical weight presentation. She claimed that her lightness, exhibited in the way her arms seemed almost to float into the air, came from the weather and the sky: she spent a lot of time outdoors and liked to wear light clothes, and that made her floaty. Most of the others saw themselves as city and beach culture people. Gillian at one point referred to her experience of the landscape of the Kimberley Mountain Range as 'feeling like being in touch with the real Australia, the age, the earth', and claimed that she was, in a sense, a foreigner to that place: the 'real Australia' belonged to the indigenous people. Masa, a Japanese immigrant, described the people of Australia as 'free and open, like the place, you know, flat and open and spacious, not closed like Japan'. Asked about his work there, he talked of a very different style of rehearsal used by the company he had worked with, one that used physical duress techniques to develop performance. Masa claimed that his acting style had changed since moving to Australia. His approach, I suggest, showed how he interpreted Australian culture in performance. The Laban lightweight quality and the close proxemic space he used in rehearsal reflected that of the Australian cast members. The *King Tide* cast, asked about preferred places to live, answered beach, inner city, and Europe, in that order, and conducted their living and leisure activities around these choices. Throughout the cast, there was no leisure-time rustic connection to the ubiquitously understood iconic Australian geographic landscape of the desert, and no defined sense of belonging to the greater landscape of the continent.

Understanding an Australian relationship to climate and landscape, and an Australian urban/rural attitude, is complicated by the colonial discourse that permeates the country. That discourse muddies the popular view of history, nationality, identity, settlement patterns, land use and so on. Where Norway as of 2009 had an immigrant population of 10.6%—just over 9% of that number arriving in 2008<sup>v</sup>—24% of Australians in 2006 were born overseas, whilst a majority of the population have foreign ancestral roots.<sup>vi</sup> A European colonial historical impact is evident in the country's national identity. In the past couple of decades a change in immigration from a mainly European to a growing Asian background has begun to alter that national perception, and an institutional, cultural and media-supported image of a multi-cultural state has been promoted (Martin, 2009; Markus and Dharmalingam, 2009; Horin, 2010). In 1989 Prime Minister Bob Hawke officially introduced the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia. Whilst the 1996–2007 Liberal government of John Howard worked toward re-generating a more singular vision of nationality, the Multicultural tag,

although no longer extant as political policy, seems to remain strong in media, governmental, tourist and cultural missives—if lacking desperately in theatre, TV and film representations (Martin, 2009; Horin 2010; Lewis 2007). Multiculturalism as an adopted part of the national discourse has, I suggest, been instrumental in partially re-defining the national identity, but given its adherence to a cohesive unity still based on a Euro-centric ideal, it continues to feed into and from what I would call the Landscape as Other cultural paradigm that has been part of the colonial settler image of Australia. This reflects in the way the *King Tide* cast viewed themselves in terms of physical presence and engagement with the land. Even Masa, the displaced actor, striving to replicate the cultural differences he perceived in Australian character, potentially created his own sense of alienation from adopted place. All the *King Tide* cast were Laban light-weight, and disconnected from their own understanding of what the land they lived in was. The landscape understood as representing Australia was desert, central, and Other; the landscape lived was either (inner city) densely populated and elsewhere-focussed, or (beach and water) light and buoyant (see Rofe 2004; Shaw 2006; Carter et al 2007).

I propose that the difference in bodily-cognitive response to landscape and climate was reflected extensively in the difference exhibited between the casts in terms of Laban weight presence. The contrast of growing up in two climatically and geographically dissimilar countries, combined with the respective socio-historical engagements with those climates and geographies, manifested itself in the physicality of the performers and therefore in the choices they made. The body/self they brought to rehearsal, formed by their tactile/kinaesthetic learnt self-in-the-world, became the starting point for the physical representation of the characters they portrayed.

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When using a Stanislavsky-inspired method of character creation, the actor is consciously, actively drawing on their own embodied responses and attempting to relate them to the given circumstances of text and character. Stanislavsky's system mirrors to some degree Merleau-Ponty's model of reversibility, whereby the body-self is part of the world-as-whole, and vice-versa. Our world is and must be our world-as-lived, and we are and must be ourselves as lived-in-the-world—world and self in a continual state of dehiscence, or unfolding: a developmental feedback loop. Yet our beginning point is the pre-reflective, tactile/kinaesthetic body that first begins to learn body, self, and world, and then codifies that learning within the socio-cultural constructs of culture and language.

Our embodied responses and interactions to climate and landscape manifest themselves in the choices and interpretations we make as actors in rehearsal and performance. If the lived body is part of its immediate lived world, and vice-versa, then actors as performers emplace that immediate world in their embodied selves. Geographic, embodied place, then, surely has a large and as yet

relatively unnoticed role in the creation and interpretation of theatrical performance—and mis-performance—within the performance studies field.

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<sup>i</sup> Though also the responses of interviewees throughout, including Gábor Zsambeki, various actors and colleagues.

<sup>ii</sup> 'Blocking' in theatre is the establishment of the 'map' of movements of the actors on stage.

<sup>iii</sup> For a summary on Laban notation, see Hutchinson, Ann: 1970. Laban terms are often used in acting training to define movement styles. As part of his system, Laban identified four basic effort elements each with two manifestations – Space (direct/indirect), Weight (Light/Strong), Time (Sustained/Quick-Sudden) and Flow (Free/Bound), with eight basic Effort Actions: pressing, punching, wringing, slashing, gliding, dabbing, floating, flicking - all capable of being applied via a combination of the first three effort elements. So 'wringing' could be defined as Direct, Strong, Sustained; dabbing as Indirect, Light, Quick-Sudden.

<sup>iv</sup> Source: Sentralbyrå, Norge: [www.ssb.no](http://www.ssb.no)

<sup>v</sup> Source: Statistics Bureau Norway. Immigrant here refers to people born outside of Norway or with parents born outside of Norway.

<sup>vi</sup> Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

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