

Scanning, Journal

From: libweb@mcmaster.ca on behalf of Phil Rose via McMaster University Library
<libweb@mcmaster.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, January 6, 2021 8:08 PM
To: Scanning, Journal
Subject: Scanning Chapter Request

Categories: To be scanned

Submitted on Wednesday, January 6, 2021 - 8:08pm

Submitted values are:

Library : Mills

Book Title: Reinventing drama : acting, iconicity, performance

Author: Shapiro, Bruce G.

Chapter Title & Number: 2 Acting and Emotion Chapter page range: 71-92 Book Call Number: PN 2071 .P78S53 1999

Your Name: Phil Rose Your email address: roseph@mcmaster.ca

Faculty: is this chapter scan a Reserve reading for your class or are you planning on uploading to Avenue to Learn? No I am a McMaster : Faculty member Barcode (14 digit number on your McMaster ID): 29005005675703



**McMaster University Library
Hamilton, Ontario**

This copy has been made solely for use by a student, library patron, staff or faculty member for research, private study, review, criticism or news reporting purposes only.

You are permitted to print a copy of the attached item and are required to destroy the electronic version. The electronic version must not be stored, forwarded or distributed.

Note that the further copying, scanning, faxing, transmitting, or otherwise making and distributing copies of this item without a proper license or the express consent of the copyright owner is not permitted.

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE THIS COVER SHEET

This copyright statement must be delivered to the end user
with the attached article.

Acting and Emotion

Aristotle advises the dramatist to write from the clutches of imagined emotion, for human emotions are fundamental to drama.¹ In performance, the acting provides a drama with actual, rather than imagined, emotions, thereby giving actors an enormously important position in the dramatic mimesis. However, this position does not entitle the actors to emote randomly or subjectively as if emotion constituted the sole mimetic object of a drama. In fact, the dramatist has established the relevant emotional states as a facet of thought before an actor ever becomes involved with the mimesis. The structure and content of the drama's medium carries this information. Therefore, actors must have an understanding about what emotion is, how it is recognized, and how to perform it in a manner appropriate to the appearance of a drama. By cultivating the emotional or affective iconicity of a role during rehearsal, an actor prepares the neural mechanisms that are responsible for triggering emotion in the dramatic performance.

In addition, emotion is the pivotal factor that draws the audience into an intellectual, as well as empathic, experience of the dramatic performance, forming the primary element by which the audience is able to understand the drama. A performance devoid of emotion or filled with the simulation of emotionalization will leave the audience not only feeling disaffected but also intellectually distant from the drama.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EMOTION

The controversy surrounding the role of emotion in acting and dramatic performance has raged for many centuries. We can easily trace it back to John Hill's *The Actor: or, a Treatise on the Art of Playing*, published in 1755. Hill advocated the idea that "sensibility"—by which he meant the passions and

emotional intuition—was the foundation of the art. But he also wrote, "Playing is a science, and is to be studied as a science."² In 1773, Denis Diderot wrote *The Paradox of Acting*, which advanced ideas in opposition to Hill's on sensibility, advocating instead a controlled and formalized approach. When Diderot's book was translated into English over a century later, the actor Henry Irving wrote the Introduction, taking great exception to the book, for Irving was an advocate of true and natural sensibility in acting. "The exaltation of sensibility in art may be difficult to define," wrote Irving, "but it is none the less real to all who have felt its power."³ This argument between the positions of Diderot and Irving came to a head in the late 1880s, when the latter entered into a literary debate with the French actor Constant Coquelin, who favored Diderot's position. At the turn of the century, both positions began to give way to a psychological alternative as Stanislavski began his investigations of Ribot.⁴ Finally, as a component of his anti-Aristotelian theory of epic theatre, in the mid 1900s Brecht advanced his idea of alienation. Brecht sought to subvert the empathic relationship between the audience and the actors in order to promote a more reasoned response to the political message of his dramas. Because of Brecht's influence and long-held conventional beliefs separating reason from emotion, there has been a certain amount of skepticism about the value of human emotion to dramatic performance. Some directors still consider it a distraction from the intended point of the performance event.

Nevertheless, during this century, the relationship between emotion and human action in the Western approach to acting has been dominated by a Freudian psychological ideology. This ideology favors the notion that impeding the primary drives will trigger negative emotions. Positive emotions would then be the result of uninterrupted drive satiation.⁵ Most modern acting theories express the notion of the drives metaphorically as character actions or objectives that motivate the different people in the play. Disrupting or impeding these actions or objectives triggers a negative emotional response, whereas fulfilling them triggers a positive emotional response.

From outside the realm of the theatre, Silvan S. Tomkins reports that the study of "emotion was in deep trouble and disrepute" by the middle of the twentieth century.⁶ In American psychology, the James-Lange theory of emotion, developed in the 1880s, was still predominant. As Donald L. Nathanson explains, William James and Carl Lange

felt that the mind, which they saw as an apparatus for perception and cognition, *perceived* and assessed something that then triggered a group of physical manifestations, following which the thinking brain assessed a *pattern* of these bodily changes and labeled it as an emotion.

In the James-Lange system I know I am frightened because I see myself running away; I know I am happy because I laugh.⁷

Additionally, according to Tomkins, in the James-Lange theory "the inner bodily responses are the chief site of the emotions," whereas, in Tomkins' affect theory, while bodily responses are certainly significant, they are "of secondary

importance to the expression of emotion through the face."⁸ Naturally, given my earlier discussion about *opsis* in Chapter 1, this distinction is of particular interest to actors.

Tomkins also suggests that the mechanisms of emotion are in the brain rather than in the nerve cells. However, his ideas were not in the mainstream of psychological thinking, for, in addition to the James-Lange theory, Tomkins points out that other perspectives regarding human behavior came to dominate the field:

Behaviorism, psychoanalysis, and cognitive theory each subjected affect to the status of a dependent variable. . . .

. . . Psychologists have not been pioneers in the study of affect. . . .

. . . Psychologists interested in the body have paradoxically tended to stress the drives over the affects, and psychologists interested in the mind have tended to stress cognition over affect. Psychologists interested in neither mind nor body have stressed the behavior, in the extreme case, of an empty organism.⁹

These psychologists based their positions on competing theories of the human being, what affects and influences us.

Nathanson defines another collection of ideas about emotion "involving various types of *transformation of energy*."¹⁰ Like the ideas of Freud, the theories of transformation have also influenced the art of acting. The most significant notions are attributable to Carl Jung and James Hillman, who, as Nathanson explains, suggested "that emotion is instigated when the conscious and unconscious selves are united by a symbol, thus releasing psychic energy and transforming it into experienced emotion."¹¹ This and related opaque notions of transformation are still popular among actors and acting teachers, albeit in an intellectually diminished form. In fact, I know a young actor who recently filed a grievance with his university's academic board of studies because he was dropped from the school's strongly Jungian-based acting course on the grounds that, among other equally obsolete and suspect notions, he was "unable to transform."¹² This, despite the fact that, as Nathanson points out, "[n]o one has found anything even vaguely resembling psychic energy, making the Jung-Hillman theory obsolete."¹³

TERMINOLOGY

Not until the late twentieth century and the advent of modern cognitive science did the study of the emotions truly emerge from what, near the end of the nineteenth century, Charles S. Peirce called "the cloudiness of psychological notions."¹⁴ However, before we can begin to explore some of these more recent developments, it will be helpful to define more specifically a few hitherto synonymous terms.

People generally regard the term "emotion" as referring to a range of notions about what they commonly call feelings. However, according to Tomkins' theory, emotion refers to a specific response to a triggered affect. Tomkins'

observations of infants led him to realize that nature endows the human being with these affects at birth. Shakespeare made a similar observation: "For everyman with his affects is born," claims Berowne in *Love's Labour's Lost*.¹⁵ However, what do we mean by the term "affect," and how does it differ from the terms "feeling," "emotion," and "mood"?

Affect

The term "affect" refers to the innate neural mechanism human beings and other animals have for producing the sensations we call emotions. Modern neuroscience has shown that the affects are genetically transmitted subcortical mechanisms that rely on a variety of neurotransmitters, such as dopamine and opioids.¹⁶ The brain triggers these affects in response to various stimuli. Recall how I applied the explanation of love from Jane's Brain Page to Romeo's feelings for Juliet. In that case, seeing Juliet for the first time at Capulet's feast is enough of a stimulus to trigger the affect for excitement in Romeo's brain.

Feeling

Now we must ask, What did Romeo "feel" when that affect was triggered? In other words, the term "feeling" refers to the sensations one consciously experiences in response to the triggered affect. These sensations involve one's internal biology, one's posture, one's voice and breathing, and so forth; when Romeo sees Juliet, he must feel a variety of these things.

Emotion

Finally, Romeo must have a way of identifying what he feels when he sees Juliet. Therefore, we have names for these feelings that not only designate them but also conventionally categorize the different experiences that trigger them. We call these differing categories of feelings "emotions." Furthermore, an emotion generally refers back to its stimulus. Thus, when Romeo experiences the affect for excitement triggered in response to the stimulus of Juliet, he does not simply designate this as the feeling of love but as being in love with Juliet.

However, Romeo also has to recognize that these feelings constitute love. In other words, Romeo has to have had some previous experience that allows him to categorize what he feels as being love for Juliet; he has to have a history of being in love. Of course, Shakespeare verifies the presence of that history by showing Romeo pining for the love of Rosaline when the drama begins.

Nathanson offers a succinct summary of the process we go through when experiencing emotion:

Every emotion actually consists of a four-part experience initiated by some stimulus, which then triggers an affect, after which we recall previous experiences of this affect, and then, finally, react to the stimulus in some manner influenced by that affective history.¹⁷

Mood

In Anton Chekhov's one-act farce *The Brute*, Mr. Smirnov visits Mrs. Popov in order to collect on her dead husband's debt. Mrs. Popov says she will be happy to pay, only not on that day, for she is not in the *mood*. Nathanson explains that mood is "a persistent state of emotion in which we can remain stuck for hours or days."¹⁸ Some past event or condition that a person cannot forget is the cause of that mood. In Mrs. Popov's case, her condition is that of a widow in mourning, exaggerated by Chekhov's farcical treatment of the play's situation.

Although a mood often prevails over the entire demeanor of a role, actors must think of moods as emotions once removed. They are feelings of affect, often autogenously stimulated by a person's constant dwelling on either a past affective experience, the stimulus for which is no longer present, or a present condition for which there is no discernible stimulus. Because a mood may be pervasive, an actor runs the risk of playing it too exclusively, veiling the other affects and thereby diminishing the sense of immediacy a dynamic performance needs. Thus, actors should treat mood as an underlying habit of feeling or background for the other more specific affects the dramatic situation triggers. For example, an actor playing Trepliov in Chekhov's *The Seagull* must take account of Trepliov's underlying mood of depression when cultivating the iconicity of the line, "I feel insanely happy."¹⁹

Finally, with respect to the musical element of the dramatic medium, moods are like the tempo markings that define the overall feeling of part of a musical composition.

THE AFFECT THEORY OF EMOTION

Having clarified the preceding important terms, we are now able to explore Tomkins' theory of affect and suggest the ways in which it applies to acting and the cultivation of iconicity.

The theory of the affect system of emotions, first presented by Tomkins in 1954, presents affect as one of the innate operating mechanisms of human life.²⁰ As such, it has evolved along with human beings to include a variety of emotionally marked survival and behavioral information. In her Introduction to the anthology of Tomkins' work, *Exploring Affect*, E. Virginia Demos notes that Tomkins was the first person "to argue that affect constitutes one of the five basic systems of human functioning (along with homeostatic, drive, cognitive, and motor systems) and that, as such, affect could occur independently of both drives and cognitions."²¹

Although affect can occur independently, the elements of the system are often auxiliary to drives and cognition. Without this auxiliary relationship, the affects would not be able to integrate the otherwise discrete aspects of human consciousness, which I distinguish as being personality, volition, and cognition.

In recent years, science has provisionally verified many of Tomkins' psychological hypotheses. For example, in his book *Descartes' Error: Emotion*,

Reason and the Human Brain Antonio Damasio provides scientific data that support much of what Tomkins argued, primarily that the existential experiences we call emotions comprise intricate neurobiological and neurochemical properties.

Tomkins viewed "affect as the primary innate biological motivating mechanism, more urgent than drive deprivation and pleasure and more urgent even than physical pain."²² To this, I would also add that affect, more than cognition itself, is the source of interpretive desire. Certainly, our cognitive facility enables us to interpret things, particularly works of art. However, as Tomkins would say, it is an "illusion" that the source of interpretive desire is cognitive.

For example, a common scene in horror movies has a person hear a strange, disconcerting sound. The noise instantly arouses fear; that is, the strange sound is the stimulus that triggers the affect for fear, which, according to Tomkins, is characterized by "eyes frozen open, pale, cold, sweaty, facial trembling, with hair erect."²³ Then comes the desire to investigate, to find out what the sound is and, thereby, alleviate the fear. Thus, the source of the desire to know was the affect fear. In some instances, the person who hears the sound but is not aroused or chooses to ignore it becomes a victim. We would say that person never knew what happened; not experiencing the fear, the person had no desire or motivation to know. This same affective response to a drama is responsible for triggering an actor's desire to perform it, a director's desire to stage it, and a scholar's desire to study it. There are, of course, hundreds of interpretive variations, but all of them have this in common: the source of the hermeneutic desire is triggered affect.

The affect system engages many divisions of the central nervous system, from the main structures of the limbic system in the brain to our sensory apparatuses. It responds to both the external stimuli of the world upon a person's senses and the internal stimuli of a person's physiological condition; it also sends messages to the internal mental circuitry of a person's memory and cognition. Hence, the experiences we call emotions and feelings are produced by, and constitute, the modus operandi of the affect system, which is also a primary mechanism enabling us to sustain the self-awareness we call consciousness.

Details of the Affect System

Although the effects of the affect system begin to emerge late in the rehearsal process of iconicity, they are nevertheless fundamental to it. Hence, the pragmatic incorporation of affect begins during the earliest stages of rehearsal. However, the effectiveness of that incorporation is contingent upon actors' first having a basic understanding of the essential aspects of the affect system, in particular, the nine affects, what stimulates them, and their characteristics.

The Positive and Negative Affects

There are nine innate, universal affects, seven of which are designated as pairs to reflect a heightening of the triggered affect's intensity. The first two pairs are positive affects:

1. *interest–excitement* and
2. *enjoyment–joy*.

The third affect is neutral:

3. *surprise–startle*.

The remaining six are negative affects:

4. *fear–terror*,
5. *distress–anguish*,
6. *anger–rage*,
7. *shame–humiliation*,
8. *disgust*, and
9. *dissembl*.²⁴

The designations positive, neutral, and negative do not reflect value judgments made on either the affects or the stimuli triggering them. After all, some people enjoy empathically feeling fear and disgust, as evidenced by the popularity of so-called slash-and-gore horror films and gross humor. The polarity designations refer to the sorts of situations that trigger the affect. Thus, when one feels very angry, the situation producing the anger is negative. For example, in Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple*, Felix becomes angry when Oscar does not arrive home on time for their planned date with the Pigeon sisters, thereby negating Felix's culinary efforts. On the other hand, when a situation generates constructive possibilities and produces interest–excitement about them, it is positive. For example, Hamlet grows excited when his "mousetrap" snaps as planned.

In other words, for excitement, a positive affect, a person may go to see Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. However, if the cinema projector breaks down during the famous shower scene, the person will experience shame and anger, negative affects.²⁵

Affect Amplification and Magnification

The triggering and production of affect is dependent upon some stimulus. That stimulus may come from inside one's own body, from the physical world outside the body, from the verbal or visual arts, from dreams, from memories, and so forth. It may originate from a source outside the self, or it may be entirely

autogenous. In the case of dramatic performance, the cultivated iconicity includes all the affect triggering stimuli.

The relationship between an affect and its stimulus is not necessarily an equal one. When the stimulus triggers the affect, that affect, in turn, amplifies the experience of the stimulus for the individual. Therefore, if the dramatic iconicity of a scene carries a stimulus triggering the affect for enjoyment, in order for the actor to experience the joy, the affect must automatically amplify the experience of the stimulus. Furthermore, the triggered affect not only amplifies the stimulus but also and at the same time magnifies the iconicity of which that stimulus is a component part. By "magnify" I mean that affect launches the cultivated iconicity to which it is attached into the immediacy of the actor's performance consciousness. In this way, the affects help generate the appearance of the dramatic object.

Take, for example, act 1, scene 2 in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, between Richard and Anne. During the scene, Richard tells the angry Anne that someone else is alive who could love her more than her dead husband could. That idea triggers Anne's contempt for Richard. Richard goes on to suggest that this unnamed individual has a "better nature" than did her husband. Anne asks, "Where is he?" As she asks this, she is apparently moving toward Richard, for she will shortly spit in his face. "Here," says Richard, triggering Anne's dissmell, for she instantly spits at him.

In this scene, we first see in Anne the affect of anger; then this particular exchange amplifies the anger with contempt that turns into dissmell. As Tomkins points out, contempt "is a learned composite of anger and dissmell."²⁶ Her contempt sets up Anne for the spitting, because, "In contempt . . . you move toward the object. . . . [Anne] means to reject [Richard]. That is what contempt is. It degrades the other. . . . The other is judged less than human."²⁷ When Anne spits at Richard and calls him a "foul toad," it is in dissmell, "a very toxic response socially and otherwise, because it says the other is unfit for human consumption. . . . [I]n dissmell you are moving yourself away from a bad-smelling object, . . . away from an offensive source."²⁸

In this situation, Anne's anger has also magnified the ideal imagery of her dead husband. Richard's challenge to this imagery is the stimulus that triggers Anne's contempt. We know that at this point she does not move toward him out of enchantment or interest but rather out of a contemptuous challenge. It is as if she knows what he is about to suggest and is readying herself to spit at him. When Richard says, "Here," his detestable imagery, which obscures the ideal imagery of Anne's dead husband, is the stimulus that triggers the affect of dissmell. This affect amplifies the stimulus and magnifies the dramatic iconicity, so when she spits at Richard, Anne is really attempting to wipe out his image: "Out of my sight!" she cries. Thus, the scene is an example of the composite relations between the innate affects of anger and dissmell together with their auxiliary, contempt.

The staging of this scene is also essentially determined by the shifting of Anne's affective responses. In her sad mourning Anne is quite solitary, but when Richard arrives and invades her solitude, Anne grows angry and contemptuous,

moving responsively toward him. Then, in dissmell, she spits at the offensive "foul toad" and moves away, casting Richard out of her sight.

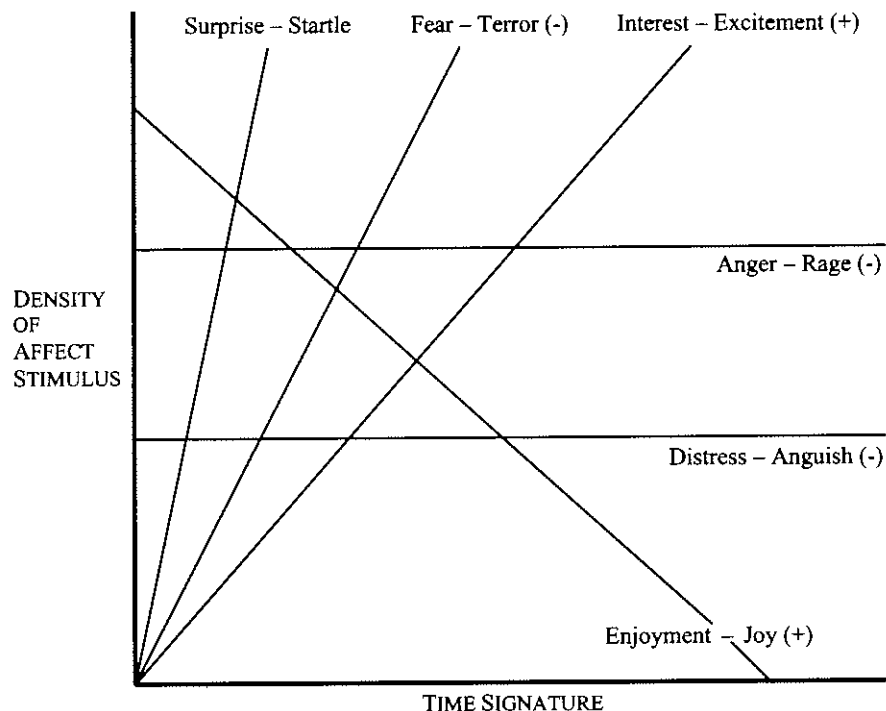
Although anger, contempt, and dissmell are the immediate affects at play in the scene, the actor playing Anne should not overlook her underlying fear. Her knowledge of what Richard has done and what he is therefore capable of doing may even terrorize her. She is fortunately able to hide from him under the veil of mourning for Edward and Henry. The dignity of this act enables her to feel safe, even somewhat empowered enough to spit at Richard when he makes what is obviously a sexual overture. However, that is Anne's very downfall. For many males feel empowered when a female spits in their face after a sexual proposition. They take the female's dissmell as an expression of her fear.

Time Signature and Stimulus Density

Whatever its source or origin, every stimulus that triggers affect has a certain density that determines the degree or the amount of affect triggered. The experience of affect also and equally depends on a time signature, that is, the duration of the stimulus, how long it lasts. See Figure 1 for Tomkins' chart depicting the time signatures and stimulus densities that trigger the nine affects.²⁹ For example, a gunshot, which produces a loud explosion, is a very dense affect stimulus that happens as a sudden, split-second explosion. The sudden high density of stimulus triggers the affect surprise-startle. Hence, an audience feels startled by the unexpected firing of a gun during a play. One must also remember that the triggered affect amplifies the stimulus, which enables a person to feel it.

The time signatures and stimulus density values of the affects are of crucial importance to dramatic performance, because they constitute the musical element of the dramatic medium. Remember, too, that music is that element of the medium responsible for carrying the emotions. By music I mean three integrated things: tonality and melody, rhythm and tempo, and sound and volume. Tonality and melody characterize the music; rhythm and tempo have to do with its time signature; and sound and volume have to do with its perceivable qualities and density. These things equate with the time signatures and stimulus density values of the affects. The affects themselves are like tonality and melody; they characterize the emotions. The time signature of one affect in relation to another affect throughout a situation determines the emotional rhythm and tempo. The various stimuli for the different affects have different perceivable qualities, like sound, and a different density, like volume. Thus, due to the time signatures and stimulus density values of the different affects, the affective aspect of the dramatic iconicity orchestrates the emotions in a performance. This orchestration determines the diversity of emotional cadence and celerity in the performance; it generates the emotional rhythm of the acting and arranges that rhythm for the entire performance.

Figure 1
A Revised Version of Tomkins' "Geographical Representation" of the Time Signatures and Stimulus Densities of the Affects



Anger-rage occurs when a higher than optimal level of stimulus goes on continuously. A lower level of the same continuous stimulus will trigger distress-anguish. Shame is a negative, auxiliary affect to the positive affects. When something impedes the latter, the resulting experience is one of shame. Disgust and dissmell are negative, drive auxiliary affect responses.³⁰

Consequently, the stimulus triggering Anne's contempt in the scene just described lasts longer and is less dense than the triggering of her dissmell, which is sudden and dense, or the triggering of her concealed fear. This in-tandem movement from the feeling of contempt to that of sudden, intense dissmell and rising, concealed fear determines Anne's emotional rhythm for that scene; one could say that her emotional journey constitutes the music of her thoughts.

Emotion and Music

It is very important for actors to regard emotion in a dramatic performance as a musical component of the rest of the performance, not as something to be played unto itself. Otherwise, the emotions begin to focus not on the events but on the people executing them. As Aristotle points out so clearly, drama is not so much about people but the things that they do.³¹

Furthermore, the emotions on their own will appear unlike life, because no recognizable stimuli seem to be triggering the affects that produce them. The only time an actor would want to play an emotion in a manner disconnected from a stimulus would be if that actor wanted to appear to be insane or a comic oaf, for these are the effects such acting inevitably produces.

Many schools of acting have concentrated on producing real emotions at the expense of what that reality is supposed to achieve for a dramatic performance. Remember, emotion is one aspect of one of the three elements of the mimetic object, that being thought. However, it is that part of thought that dialogue can only describe and not, therefore, adequately express. Hence, the second element of the drama's medium is music, which can, somewhat more adequately than words, express emotion. An actor has both the neural architecture to generate the music of emotion and several musical instruments—the voice, face, breath, posture, and so on—upon which to play this music. The actors use these same instruments to render the dialogue. Therefore, both the drama's medium and the manner of its performance intertwine the two elements of language and music.

In addition, both the language and the music of a drama's medium express thought, the same thought at the same time. It is therefore crucial that the actors play emotion in a manner consistent with that thought. In order to achieve this task, during the earliest rehearsals the actor must score the contextually appropriate emotions, thereby rehearsing the musical aspect of the medium in harmony with its spoken aspect.

In order to understand this musical notion of the emotions more clearly, imagine going to see a very sad film, such as one that tells a story of love. Usually, special music plays in the background of such films to underscore or enhance the emotional setting. For example, the theme music from Joshua Logan's film of William Inge's drama *Picnic* is hauntingly sad and sublime. Even forty years later people who saw the film on the big screen still feel the experience of Kim Novak and William Holden's love affair when they hear the music that accompanied it. Now imagine that the music is so loud and overpowering that you can neither hear what the actors are saying nor figure out what is happening. Such is the experience of an audience when they are forced to watch actors play their emotions unmusically, disconnected from the thoughts and events of the drama's object. In other words, while it is important for actors to feel their emotions and to express them believably, that is not their primary goal. It is only a means to the primary goal, which is to produce an emotional consciousness in the audience that triggers their presence with, and their desire to know all about, the drama.

Sites of Action

In the previous discussion about music, I indicated that the actor had all the instruments necessary to play the emotions. Affect theory labels these instruments as sites of action. Each affect produces particular, observable

physical reactions that are its unique characteristics. The parts of a person that these characteristics physically manifest are the sites of action.

In the theatre, each site of action presents an icon of affect, reflecting like a mask an actor's immediate condition of existence. However, unlike a mask, the sites of action are alive, acting as receptors of stimuli that send messages to the brain to trigger affect. Naturally, the face and voice are primary sites of action, but an actor's posture and breath are also part of the mechanism. For example, the face of fear is a frozen stare; the timbre of terror is the unmistakable shrill scream; a gun suddenly going off, may startle the whole body, which jolts in reaction. An affect may become so overwhelming, so all-consuming that an actor becomes a solitary figure on stage, an affectively engulfed body, a total site of action. The actor completely becomes the feeling of an affect.

In 1964 Tomkins published the following list of the primary facial characteristics of eight affects:

1. INTEREST-EXCITEMENT: eyebrows down, eyes track, look, listen
2. ENJOYMENT-JOY: smile, lips widened up and out, smiling eyes
(circular wrinkles)
3. SURPRISE-STARTLE: eyebrows up, eyes blink
4. DISTRESS-ANGUISH: cry, arched eyebrows, mouth down, tears,
rhythmic sobbing
5. FEAR-TERROR: eyes frozen open, pale, cold, sweaty, facial
trembling, with hair erect
6. SHAME-HUMILIATION: eyes down, head down
7. CONTEMPT-DISGUST: sneer, upper lip up
8. ANGER-RAGE: frown, clenched jaw, eyes narrowed, red face

These facial affective responses . . . are controlled by innate affect programs which are inherited as a sub-cortical structure which can instruct and control a variety of muscles and glands to respond with unique patterns of rate and duration of activity characteristic of a given affect.³²

These characteristic responses to affect are not prescriptions for faces actors are supposed to make during a performance. However, as the actor determines the proper score of affects for a scene, playing the appropriate site of action during rehearsal will cultivate the iconicity with the appropriate affect attached to it.

For example, at the opening of Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* Helena would not be smiling when Lafeu says to the Countess, "Your commendations, madam, get from her tears."³³ She will need to be crying during the scene. However, when rehearsals begin, the actor playing Helena will not have cultivated the necessary iconicity to trigger genuine distress. Hence, she should voluntarily arch her eyebrows, turn her mouth down, and breathe rhythmically in order to imprint the dramatic iconicity of the scene with distress. The actor's voluntary manipulation of the sites of action activates them as receptors, thereby autogenously triggering mild levels of affect. However, Tomkins also points out that voluntary "facial responses are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for the conscious experience of affect. . . . [Only] affect *imagery* which was

originally facial, and vocal, can be retrieved from memory and experienced as affect."³⁴

During the process of iconicity, the actor cultivates affect-laden imagery in rehearsal and stores it in the complex of dramatic performance iconicity. Therefore, unlike Stanislavski's affective memory or emotional recall, in this case an actor should not bother with attempting to recall either an affect or a personal emotional experience as a means of reproducing or generating an emotional state. Emotional recall exercises are obsolete rehearsal devices that cannot compensate for an actor's failure to cultivate affective iconicity. The actor can only recall the "affect *imagery*" that was originally cultivated facially and vocally during rehearsal. If the actor has not effectively cultivated this imagery, then there will be nothing to retrieve. Thus, for example, in performance, (if an actor is able to cry), the tears will come of their own volition in response to the cultivated, affect-laden iconicity.

The Cry of Affect

Tomkins also points out "that each affect has as part of its innate program a specific cry or vocalization, subserved by specific patterns of breathing."³⁵ For the actor, the downside of uncontrolled vocal affect is its potential interference with speech, especially where the affect of distress-anguish is dominant. For example, in the last scene of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, the actor playing Honey is required to continuously sob in distress. Many times I have coached actors through this scene in order to maintain verbal intelligibility through the overpowering distortion of vocal affect.

Performance Affect

While the actor actively uses sites of action to cultivate dramatic iconicity during rehearsal, the actor's brain naturally and involuntarily translates affective idiosyncratic imagery into the actor's complex of dramatic performance iconicity. Everyone has some mental iconicity stored for each of the innate affects. During rehearsals, the actor triggers the structurally determined, textually encoded, and musically scored affect of the dramatic iconicity. At the same time, the actor's will instinctively retrieves relevant, affect-laden idiosyncratic imagery that substantially densifies the actor's affective cultivation of the dramatic iconicity. Affect cultivated in this manner is called *performance affect*. Naturally, it helps this process for actors to have a rich store of affect-laden imagery recorded in their cerebral folios of mental iconicity.

Affect and Backed-up Performance

Tomkins suggests "that much of what is called 'stress' is backed-up affect."³⁶ An actor's environmental or social conditioning may cause backed-up affect,

which in turn causes a backed-up, contrived cycle of dramatic performance. For an actor, backed-up affect is a condition that significantly restricts the ability to express affect, especially with the voice. This condition produces a backed-up performance, characterized by the actor's suppression, rather than triggering, of contextually relevant affective iconicity. The result is a performance composed of only a narrow spectrum of emotional expression.

The symptoms of backed-up affect relative to acting are usually technical, often having to do with the actor's face and voice, specifically, the breath. For example, I recently taught a student actor who suffered from backed-up performance. Her primary symptom was that in performance, at frequent rhythmic intervals, she smiled, regardless of the dramatic situation. By smiling, she effectively backed up whatever affect was supposed to be expressed at that moment. Over the years, her performance smile had become a pseudoaffect simulating not happiness but self-satisfaction, for in reality, the actor was not at all self-satisfied. In addition, her performances had little affective variety; hence, her assessments were negative. When the student came to me for a tutorial, I explained to her my diagnosis of her acting problems and advised her not to smile. "Don't smile" seemed rather a too simple solution. However, she had had no idea that she smiled onstage. Consequently, she took my advice to heart. Her improvement was immediate and considerable; she surprised even herself with things that came out in performance that, up to that time, she had smilingly backed up.

I cannot say why this actor smiled, although she indicated that her efforts not to smile affected other aspects of her life. Tomkins suggests that backed-up affect is the result of living in an environment where the free expression of affect is restricted to one degree or another. These environments also produce voices that are habitually restrictive of affect. "Although there are large variations between societies, and between different classes within societies, complete and unconditional freedom of affect vocalization is quite exceptional."³⁷ Hence, an actor with a broad range of affect accessibility is often a social anomaly or someone raised in unusually open social conditions.

Performance Analogue and Emotional Knowledge

The experience of an affect is analogous to its stimulus. Thus, when the sudden firing of a gun startles spectators, their reactions are explosive, like the gunshot. It is also possible for an actor analogously to project the presence of an otherwise unseen stimulus, thereby enabling the audience affectively to know about a stimulus without being directly exposed to it. I call this projection a *performance analogue*. For example, in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, Peer confronts the ominous, unseen Boyg in a scene that takes place in complete darkness. By using his voice to express the distress and anxiety that Peer feels during the scene, the actor also projects a performance analogue of the Boyg. Distress "is a fundamental human affect primarily because of the ubiquity of human suffering."³⁸ Peer is experiencing this ubiquity with the Boyg in a very pure form. "Anxiety," which

Peer also and equally experiences in the scene, "by contrast, is properly an emergency affect. When life and death hang in the balance, most animals have been endowed with the capacity for terror."³⁹ If the actor performs the analogue effectively, upon hearing Peer's voice, the audience should recognize the Boyg as a terrible, distressing, angst-producing entity.⁴⁰

Finally, because of triggered affect, the other actors and the audience via emotional knowledge empathically experience what an actor expresses in a dramatic performance. Emotional knowledge is a persisting affective sensibility that is sensitive to universally recognized expressions or icons of affect, the sites of action, especially the actors' faces, voices, speech, and breathing. Emotional knowledge enables the audience to recognize the Boyg.

The Structure and Rehearsal of Affect

Actors are forever searching for ways to incorporate true and appropriate emotions into their dramatic performances. The answer to this problem, however, lies more in our knowledge of what the emotions truly are than in the methods we use to access them. The affect system goes a long way toward apprising us of this information. Hence, from what we now know, the following key points can be made about how the affects are related to the structure of a drama:

1. As the scene example from *Richard III* demonstrates, the appropriate affects persist in the structure of the drama's object. Hence, emotional feelings are a response to affects triggered in accordance with the drama's set of stimuli, which is how an actor conceives of the dramatic object.
2. The language of the dramatic medium literally signifies the active affects. Thus, the actors do not need to either externally apply or interpretively or analytically determine the necessary emotions.
3. When the actors do not fully engage the affects, the drama will seem emotionally flat and its performance distant and unmusical.
4. The time signatures and stimulus densities of the signified affects establish the musical element of the medium, which is also how an actor expresses the emotions.
5. The affect stimuli continue to persist in the dramatic iconicity once it is cultivated in the complex of dramatic performance iconicity.
6. Affective responses are analogous to affect-triggering stimuli. Thus, an audience is able to recognize a stimulus in an actor's response to it.
7. Triggered affect magnifies the cultivated iconicity of which it is a part, thereby helping to perpetuate the contrived cycle of dramatic performance.
8. The complex of dramatic performance iconicity incorporates idiosyncratic imagery involuntarily during the cultivation of affect-laden iconicity.

In the light of the preceding essential points, we can begin to see how the innate affect system provides actors with reflexive access to whatever emotions they are capable of expressing. The following list presents the basic stages involved in the actor's incorporation of the affect into the rehearsal process:

1. The actors treat the object of the drama as given sets of stimuli that are capable of triggering affect. Recall that when Anne moves toward Richard to spit at him, it is due to contempt. When the actor playing Anne treats the moment as a response to stimulus-triggered affect, the audience will recognize the contempt.
2. The actors discover the affect stimuli as they use the dramatic text to rehearse the drama and cultivate its iconicity. Thus, to begin with, the actors verbally encounter the appropriate emotions. Because of its orchestral nature, I call the affect text an *affect score*. This affect score is musical, whereas the dialogue text is verbal. The actor's performance is dependent on the integration of these two aspects of the dramatic medium.
3. By taking account of the time signature and stimulus density values of the indicated affects, the actors engage the musicality of the dramatic medium.
4. By using the sites of action musically to play the affects during rehearsal, the actors imprint the relevant cultivated iconicity with affect.
5. Once the dramatic iconicity is cultivated beyond its verbal dimension, the actor's performance consciousness assumes the reality of the dramatic iconicity, some of which is laden with affect.
6. Thus, the actor's performance will include the mimesis of triggered affects.

The challenge for the actors involves two principal questions:

1. How do actors keep their affective responses in tune, so to speak, with the performance? That is, how do they keep from going overboard or from being too reserved with their emotions?

The idea underlying the pragmatic application of the affect system to the process of iconicity is that the affects integrate with the reality of dramatic iconicity. Thus, when the relevant iconicity is triggered in performance, whatever affect is attached to it essentially tunes itself according to the dramatic context. However, this process is dependent upon a solution to the second, more complex question.

2. How do actors delimit their affective accessibility in order to respond to, rather than instinctively block, the triggered affect?

Everyone has certain emotional blocks, as is indicated in the earlier statement, "whatever emotions they [the actors] are capable of expressing." Actors must become accustomed to overcoming their personal emotional blocks. A person who cannot do this should probably not become an actor. There is really no way to fake it. Damasio points out why faking their emotions will not lead actors to satisfactory solutions:

The problem has long been recognized by professional actors, and has led to different acting techniques. Some . . . rely on skillfully creating, under volitional control, a set of movements that credibly suggest emotion. Drawing on detailed knowledge of what emotions (their expressions) look like to the external observer, and on the memory of how one usually feels as such external changes occur, the great actors of that tradition fake it,

with great determination. That few succeed is a measure of the hurdles brain physiology poses for them.

Another technique, . . . "Method" acting . . . relies on having actors generate an emotion, create the real thing rather than simulate it. This can be more convincing and engaging, but it requires special talent and maturity to rein in the automated processes unleashed by the real emotion.⁴¹

Unlike the Method, which uses affective memory to generate the necessary emotions, the integration of affect with the iconicity means that the actors generate their emotions consequentially, rather than intentionally, when triggering affect-laden imagery. Thus, as I have indicated, there is no need to recall one's similar personal emotional experiences. This is not to say, however, that the application of affect does not involve memory. Obviously, it does. It just does not involve the actors' intentional recollection of personal, emotionally laden events from their lives. Relevant mental iconicity from such experiences will automatically find its way into the complex of dramatic performance iconicity as idiosyncratic imagery.

Furthermore, if the actors focus on their goal of endowing the reality of dramatic iconicity with its appearance, they will naturally rein in the automated processes involved. The problems arise when actors become too concerned with showing their emotions rather than, or at the expense of, the dramatic object.

"SCRIPT THEORY"

Twenty years ago Tomkins introduced an innovative theory of personality based on his theory of the affects that he called "script theory." He called this theory his "first approximation" in the quest he outlined for the psychological field of personology, which occupied his thinking for much of his life. Tomkins felt that personology

must ground personality in an evolutionary biological base that provides the foundations for a model of the human being at a general psychological level, which is in turn embedded in a historical, sociocultural, and civilizational matrix. The human being is born a biological entity, whose destiny it is to die a socialized, acculturated advocate or adversary of a civilization at a particular historical moment. . . . [Thus w]e must study personality not only the long way developmentally, but also the deep way biologically and the broad way historically.⁴²

Script theory is indicative of the fact that as an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania from 1927 to 1930 Tomkins "explored the motivation of human beings by studying play writing and by writing plays."⁴³ In Tomkins' theory, "the scene, a happening with a perceived beginning and end, is the basic unit of analysis," and the entire catalog of scenes a person lives is "the plot of life."⁴⁴ In addition, "the relationships between scenes, as ordered by sets of rules," define a script.⁴⁵ Despite the correspondence, script theory is not to be confused with dramatic theory or play script analysis. Naturally, Tomkins realized the similarity

and wrote, "Although I am urging what appears to be a dramaturgic model . . . it is sufficiently different in nature."⁴⁶

The importance of script theory for actors has to do with its understanding of what I have called awareness events. As Tomkins explains it, the scene is "the basic unit of analysis for understanding persons."⁴⁷ He then defines several kinds of scenes: exciting scenes, enjoyment scenes, surprise scenes, terrifying scenes, and so forth, all categorized according to the innate affects, which means they are all essentially related to awareness events. In much the same way as I have already described in the Prologue, all of these various scenes are recorded in a person's memory as what Tomkins calls "a set of scenes." When a person encounters a stimulus that triggers a particular affect, the experience may magnify the whole set of scenes. The "script," as Tomkins calls it, deals with "the individual's set of rules for predicting, interpreting, responding to, and controlling a magnified set of scenes."⁴⁸ In his later revision of script theory, Tomkins explained the essential role the affects play: "I realized that each of these scripts, while very complex in affect structure and composition, nonetheless had a primary affect."⁴⁹

One of the most important features of script theory, for our purposes, is the application of something Tomkins calls

psychological magnification, the phenomenon of connecting one affect-laden scene with another affect-laden scene. Through memory, thought, and imagination, scenes experienced before can be co-assembled with scenes presently experienced, together with scenes which are anticipated in the future.⁵⁰

When a cluster of affect-related scenes involving the same person occurs in a dramatic text, "the meaning and impact of one affect-laden scene [are] enriched and magnified by co-assembling and relating it to another affect-laden scene."⁵¹ Thus, while a single stimulus might trigger the anger affect, five or six connected anger scenes will lead to rage.

For example, in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Lear gets angry in the first scene of the play. He continues to experience anger in several subsequent scenes of the play, which eventuate in his rage. Thus, for Lear, the drama is a rage-producing anger script. It is not that the single events themselves add up to rage but that the cluster of scenes, that is, Lear's affect script, triggers the primary affect rage. On the other hand, a deep shame script also determines much of Lear's life in the play. This shame derives from his striving to overcome his infirmity and old age, which have truncated the life of immortality he has enjoyed with his daughters Gonerill and Regan, to whom he now feels inferior. There is apparently no earthly redemption for Lear from his shame. However, his last act, the attempted rescue of Cordelia from the hangman, may redeem him in the eyes of God.

As a theory of personality, script theory represents an understanding of what makes a particular human being an individual person. Therefore, "some scripts are innate, but most are innate and learned. The learned scripts originate in innate scripts but characteristically radically transform the simpler, innate scripts."⁵² An individual's unique life experiences forms these learned scripts:

Through memory, thought, and imagination, scenes experienced before can be co-assembled with scenes presently experienced, together with scenes which are anticipated in the future. The present moment is embedded in the intersect between the past and the future in a central assembly via a constructive process we have called co-assembly.⁵³

Where a drama is concerned, the co-assembly of scenes in a learned script adds a component of history or biography to the complex of dramatic performance iconicity an actor has cultivated for a particular part. Consequently, once cast in a role, an actor is faced with the following important questions:

1. What experiences can I extrapolate *from information in the dramatic text* that will help me to understand who the person is I am about to play?
2. What events in, or alluded to in, the drama have led to this human being's becoming a person?

The Cognitive Response of Character

It is important to establish here that the job of an actor is to play a person, not a character.⁵⁴ The latter is only an aspect of the former. There are other important differences between these two notions. A person is the immediate entity that carries out a set of dramatic events and faces the audience as they watch the play. Cultivating and portraying the consciousness of this person—his or her personality, volition, and cognition—is an actor's primary concern. Character, on the other hand, is an ethical mark that a person's choices determine and reveal. It may influence those choices but it actually develops as a cognitive response to choices. A person's affect script plays a major part in this cognitive response of character because it reflects an understanding or opinion one forms about oneself based on how one feels about what one has done. For example, a woman finds a pocketbook filled with money. Without giving it a second thought, she throws the pocketbook and its contents into the trash and excitedly runs off with the money. Whether she knows it or not, she has made a choice that marks her character. Later she begins to feel guilty about what she has done. This cognitive response, which reveals a facet of her character, derives from a learned aspect of her shame affect script. The point is that character is largely a cognitive response to choices made. It is not a guide to future or imminent choices. Consequently, when an actor opines, "My character wouldn't do that," it reveals that the actor is inappropriately preoccupied with character and, therefore, is engaged in an inverse process of rehearsal.

Because of its intimate connection to choice, character is present as a primary element in the mimetic object of the drama. For the events of the drama would not seem like life if they did not also appear to be the result of people's choices. Thus, an actor can only determine what a "character" would or would not do after the cultivation of the person the actor is playing is substantially under way. However, the character of that person overall is really only appreciable in

performance, as a revelation and consequent determination made by *the audience*.⁵⁵

We can amplify these distinctions further by briefly comparing the sciences of personology and ethology. Personology is the science of how a person evolves, act by act, out of the raw material of a human being. A person is the ever-growing sum of actually played, outward dramatic performance events, particularly awareness events, but other events as well, to the degree that they have an awareness aspect. When we speak of personality, which is an aspect of personology, we generally are referring to a person's manner of behavior, which is determined by, and reflects, that person's "script."

Ethology is the science of how a person's character evolves, choice by choice, from the infinite number of choices a person makes in relation to other possible choices. Character, as Aristotle explains, derives from the quality of deliberate purpose one recognizes in a person's performed actions. Thus, the development of a character is incidental to the cultivation of a person. For it involves the activities of cognition—contemplating choices—and volition—making and executing choices. Like personality, volition and cognition are aspects of a person's consciousness, not character. Therefore, only by cultivating a person can an actor develop and express a character, whereas an inverse concentration on the latter will result in the imperceptibility of the person and, consequently, the events that person executes.

Finally, the "script" of the principal person whose actions make up the events of the whole drama is responsible for the overall affective experience of the dramatic performance. In the case of *King Lear* it is Lear's anger/shame script. However, a play may just as easily be one of distress, terror, or even disgust. As an example, Tomkins sites Eugene O'Neill's autobiographical drama *Long Day's Journey into Night* as "a very powerful play in which the major dynamic is shared disgust of people in love with each other and in disgust with each other."⁵⁶

IDEOLOGY AND AFFECT

In the earlier chapters of Part One, I suggested that actors should develop individual ideologies, sets of ideas about acting to which they are committed and that inform their individual artistic personalities, thoughts, and processes. To begin with, an actor may have only what Tomkins calls an "ideo-affective posture," meaning the actor has a "loosely organized set of feelings" about acting. However, eventually, the actor may cultivate this ideo-affective posture into a true "ideological posture," that is, a "highly organized and articulate set of ideas" about acting.⁵⁷ Only by formulating an ideological posture will the actor be able to cultivate a unique and distinguishing artistic personality.

In addition, in Chapter 1, I explained that each complex of dramatic performance iconicity is partly composed of, or around, an ideology resident in the iconicity of a role. An actor must eventually come to understand and perform a role, in part, according to this performance ideology. The awareness events in a

role express the personality of this ideology. The action events define its character, and the reason events reveal an understanding of this ideology.

Initially, an actor may feel drawn to a part because its ideological posture seems fascinating or familiar, allowing the actor to relate to the role. This feeling for a role constitutes that actor's "ideo-affective resonance" with it, an affinity that leads an actor to feel right for a part.⁵⁸ However, actors cannot rely on this feeling to inspire their acting, because in that case they would wind up playing only those ideological aspects of their roles to which they personally relate. Furthermore, ideo-affective resonance does not always exist. Often as not, an actor can relate to a role only affectively and not at all ideologically.

Unlike actors with only basic ideo-affective postures, actors with strong ideological postures of their own will find fewer roles ideo-affectively attractive. Nevertheless, both types of actors must fulfill the task of cultivating the specified ideological posture of a role. Only a recognizable ideological posture will define the character of the role in performance. In addition, the development of an ideo-affective resonance will allow the actor and the role to "reinforce and strengthen each other."⁵⁹ That is, the acting and the role together grow more effective.

This ideological task is most challenging when the primary affect dominating a role is negative, producing what Tomkins calls a script of "toxicity."⁶⁰ Intense anger, dissmell, contempt, and/or disgust motivate many villains. A set of such scenes can magnify the drama into a script of toxicity, from which equally offensive ideological postures are often developed. One of the most common ideas to emerge from scripts of toxicity is racism.⁶¹ For example, the young and certainly naughty, if not villainous, Bertram in Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* is a role that embodies the racist pride of a toxicity script. In the following dialogue, the King, who represents an ideological counterpoint, berates Bertram for the arrogance of his extreme and undeserved class-conscious ideological posture:

BERTRAM: But follows it, my lord, to bring me down
Must answer for your raising? I know her well:
She had her breeding at my father's charge.
A poor physician's daughter my wife! Disdain
Rather corrupt me ever!

KING: 'Tis only title thou disdain'st in her, the which
I can build up. Strange it is that our bloods,
Of colour, weight, and heat, pour'd all together,
Would quite confound distinction, yet stand off
In differences so mighty.⁶²

The actors playing Bertram and the King must cultivate ideo-affective resonances with these ideological postures; otherwise, the result will be backed-up affect and backed-up performances. Obviously, Bertram is responding to the affect of contempt, and because he is the principal person in the drama, it is a toxic contempt script. Hence, right from the beginning Bertram characteristically turns away from Helena. However, she pursues him throughout

the play, and in the end, Bertram must swallow his pride and shamefully face her with respect.

By concluding this chapter and Part One with another look at ideology, we have completed a circle of ideas that constitute the ideology of iconicity. Consequently, this circle of ideological premises reveals certain biases persisting in iconicity. In the forthcoming chapters, as I explain the process of iconicity, I also reveal further the impact of its ideological biases. These revelations are intentional, for the ideological biases of iconicity are what I personally appreciate about the process. They are part of the reason I prefer it to other processes. Likewise, I am sure it will be on the validity of the ideology it represents that readers will most likely determine whether to pursue the process of iconicity for themselves.