

Self-Concept in Theatre:
Defining Character Through the Foundations of Sexuality

Submitted by
Colleen Lynn Miner

Dual Major
Communication & Musical Theatre

To
The Honors College
Oakland University

In partial fulfillment of the
requirement to graduate from
The Honors College

Mentor: Lynnae Lehfeltdt, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Department of Music, Theatre and Dance
Oakland University

March 3, 2014

“I am constantly surprised at how little actors know themselves, since I expect (inaccurately) actors to know themselves better than other human beings do. They should. They must deal in the immediate use of themselves in their work, all the time, all their lives through. But in truth, actors know themselves no better than the rest of us do; their own image of themselves is usually standing in the way of their acting.”

- Michael Shurtleff, *Audition* (1978)

“We are selves only in that certain issues matter for us...

To ask what a person is, in abstraction from his or her self-interpretations, is to ask a fundamentally misguided question, one to which there couldn't in principle be an answer...

We are not selves in the way that we are organisms, or we don't have selves in the way we have hearts, and livers. We are living beings with these organs quite independently of our self-understandings or interpretations, or the meanings things have for us.

But we are only selves insofar as we move in a certain space of questions.”

- Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (1990)

An Introduction

Throughout the history of time theatre has served as a living example of emotional expression in society. Portrayals of love, hate, courage, fear, sadness and elation are all available to us in forms of popular entertainment, from the moment we begin to use them in childhood. In live theatre, these portrayals are the direct result of the work of several experienced actors coming together to perform characters onstage. From the perspective of an individual actor, this work involves drawing from his or her own personal life and placing that within the framework of the life of the character. This is the reverse of an audience member drawing portrayals of emotion from dramatic characters they see onstage and on film; and it is these portrayals of emotion that also create our own life stories -- or, our self-concepts.

In order for us to understand the ways in which actors form the concept for their character's identity, we must understand the ways in which our very own self-concepts are created. For this thesis, *self-concept* can be perceived as the idea we have of ourselves that evolves throughout our lifetime in accordance to social interaction and experience. A person's self-concept is never completely defined, being in this ever-changing state.

The stage actor is given high levels of responsibility, in mentally mapping out his or her character relationships and in being expected to physically and emotionally embody this character's full lifeline many times over onstage. This is where the actor's work becomes difficult: they must create a character completely from their own experiences and emotional range, without perhaps ever experiencing these sensations before.

Behind all these connections of thought is the central creation of two concepts into one:

1. The general populations of society are able to apply the psychological and physiological work of actors to their own personal self-concept.
2. Inversely, the dramatic actors of the world may use the knowledge of social and communication theory to develop any theatrical role they are given.

This thesis covers -- in variations of detail -- five chapters involving the general self-concept, the communicative work of an actor, the physiological approach to this work, the history of ancient Greece -- a completely self-taught society of theatre, and how the actor's work is affected by current societal forces of power. The underlying factor of all this is gender and sexuality; as it is our self-concept that is genderized and sexualized, and is the basis of modern-day communication and love. The work of an actor mimics the work we, as humans, do for ourselves... And so, in order for all people to each use character development for their own benefit, we must look to societal forces and their subjective effects.

Chapter I: Gender and Sexuality on Self-Concept

Beginning with Communication

To explain the most common theories of the self in society, it is important to first define exactly how communication between and among individuals is created. As humans, we are prone to interaction with others and it is through these interactions that we learn how to better express our thoughts and ideas.

Communication begins with the *sender*, who encodes a message to their *receiver*. *Encoding* involves the use of verbal and nonverbal cues, so that the receiver can make sense of the new information in the way it was intended. This message is channelled to the receiver in a variety of ways: through the voice; through a written form or technology; or even through a physical action. It is possible for a message to be sent using no words at all. In turn, the receiver must *decode* the message as best s/he can. Once the receiver interprets the message through the social cues the sender uses, feedback is expected in response. *Feedback* is constantly handed off between sender and receiver, in order to co-create one fully understood meaning. It is common for meanings to be misunderstood, though, from the surrounding context/environment of the communication exchange: from external noise, such as loud surroundings, or internal noise, such as apprehension or fear. (Quintanilla and Wahl 2014). As more people are involved in an interaction, meanings must be more carefully and intentionally encoded and decoded. It is a wonder how communication effectively happens not just between two humans, but among three, ten, or hundreds of individuals.

Social theory examines exactly this wonder. Since the beginning of language, it has been universally understood how people can and should communicate; but how is meaning truly

constructed when each individual is subject to each others' thoughts? In his book *Concepts of the Self*, Anthony Elliot (2014) explains the ideas of social theorists throughout the past few centuries. Elliot calls us to understand that self-concept is created not only through one's own personal thoughts, values and emotions, but through looking toward society as a whole for affirmation and acceptance. Each individual desires *agency*, or free will, to carry out their thoughts and actions without being judged by others. To explain meaning on the most basic level of communication, it is best to first understand his views of *symbolic interactionism*, a theory of social psychologist George Herbert Mead (1863-1931). Mead construed that all meaning begins with language. An emotion is just an emotion until it becomes a thought -- and thoughts become meaningful when they are expressed through messages.

How do thoughts become meaningful? Mead believed meaning is constructed through universal symbols. Symbols are understood meanings that connect our minds to others'. We learn these symbols throughout childhood and beyond, through our relationships with our parents, family and peers. For example, we only know a chair is a "chair" until we are given a label for it. The lingual term for this label of meaning is simply words. Using words, we can create ways of viewing our actions through the eyes of others -- and thus, we learn social norms. Norms are co-created within groups of people so individuals within society work together easily, without question. It is norms that create certainty within ourselves, and norms subconsciously inform our self-concept.

These certainties within our minds inform our agency; our free will; our choice of communication. "Choice," Elliot says, "...means understanding the active, creative ways in which a sense of self is shaped and reshaped, while at the same time acknowledging the

profound influence of other people and of culture upon our thinking about the private sphere,” (85). It is the structure of society that provides the framework for our individuality. This structure of norms, behaviors and morals then defines how we consider ourselves in relation to different cultures, such as gender, race, ethnicity, age and religion. For the matters of this thesis, a focus on gender and sexuality will be of importance. Gender and sexuality are generally confused terms, due to their dealing primarily with differences between men and women; however, there is a much larger scope to be dealt with for each term.

Gender and Sexuality Defined

To begin with, *gender* is defined as social ideals of a man and of a woman, in terms of behavior, roles and activities. *Sex* is defined as a biological and physiological definition of a man being born a man and a woman being born a woman; or it is the action of sexual intercourse. *Sexuality* is a single term defined from many different foci: the way one socially expresses their physical and emotional desires through the use of their body or through social relations with others; not only involving how one actively displays their desires, but unrealized fantasies that inform a person’s actions as well. Both gender and sexuality define our self-concept within society.

Throughout history, social norms of gender have stayed fairly true to the same ideas of men and women: men have always been identified as the more dominant, strong and independent gender, while women have always been defined as the more subordinate, gentle and domestic gender. There are sets of norms for what displays are considered “feminine” and “masculine.” These social definitions are enacted through gender roles. A girl is taught to play with dolls, to care about their physical beauty, and to express emotions through tenderness, sentimentality and

nice words. A boy is taught to enjoy competition in sports, and to use their physicality to show strength and independence. These stereotypes, or categories of thinking, are traditional ways of raising children with built-in identities (Allen 2011). The child identifies itself with these objects/ideals through potential of *psychological space* -- the phenomenon that occurs when a person receives an object or ideal through family, culture, or economics, and creates a personal meaning toward it (Elliot 2014). Thus; a child values their gender as something that makes them who they are.

Today's Western society deems itself as *patriarchal*, or dominated by men in societal positions and institutions. Men have always served as the "breadwinners," working the public realm to support their families, while on the other side, women are given gender roles within the private realm of the home. This is the *ideology of separate spheres*. In modern society, this ideology is very apparent in the clear subordination women must overcome (Allen 2011). However, even though this social dichotomy of superior/subordinate status exists, there is a "tug of war" the two genders may play using power relations, a key factor of social theory.

A Move to Social Theory

As we move later on to the discussion of self-concept in the life of a working actor, it is important to understand how certain social theories uphold a paradox between an individual's internal and external subjectivity. *Individual subjectivity* refers to a person's freedom to internalize and respond to social obligations and expectations (Elliot 2014). This subjectivity of the self within the whole can cause identity confusion. Within the framework of the three theories discussed here, we will see that power relations play a large factor in the development of self-concept.

To many social theorists, institutions play a large part in relating self to society. Michel Foucault (1926-84), prominent figure of social theory, was intrigued by power relations and how microcosmic levels of control existed on both sides of any superior/subordinate relationship. Foucault's theory defines the power of the self to one's self within the societal whole. It is the power of institutions (of politics, education, religion, and the like) to create norms and regulative rules for behavior. These enforce certain behaviors within the individual, so that s/he begins to police themselves within society at large -- conforming to the ideals of these powers. Foucault also entertained the idea of a new type of "ethics of the self" -- ethics of right and wrong cultivated within the self -- and "technologies of the self" -- what we think and do to express these ethics, to become the sort of person seen as ideal (Guanlett 2008). Foucault shows the power relation paradox through juxtaposing institutional policing and individual ethics.

Anthony Giddens' (1938-) theory of *structuration* upholds the notion that the power of institutions at the macrocosmic level is controlled through the human agency (free will) of individuals at the microcosmic level. As long as people repeat the same acts over and over again, acts are directly induced through these institutions. So, even though large institutions may create social norms for individuals, whether or not the individual reflects these ideals is up to him or her. In effect, the people within the microcosm have the power to change the mentality of the macrocosm if they all at once choose not to reflect these widely-accepted notions: "People's everyday actions, then, reinforce and reproduce a set of expectations -- and it is this set of *other people's expectations* which make up the 'social forces' and 'social structures' that sociologists talk about," (2012, 103). This act of adhering other people's expectations to our personal

identities is called *reflexivity*. Giddens shows the power relation paradox through juxtaposing institutional structuration and individual reflexivity.

While Foucault and Giddens both focus on the effects of institutional and global forces on the self, Erving Goffman (1922-82) developed identity theory on the basis of interpersonal interaction. *Interpersonal communication* is the co-creation of meaning between two people, within a communication interaction (Quintilla and Wahl 2014). Goffman's performance theory is of special note to actors. Performance theory is the metaphor of life to the theatre: identity is constructed by adhering to and performing multiple social roles on a daily basis. Roles are created through interpersonal relations (such as mother/daughter, sister/brother, teacher/student) that are socially constructed by institutions.

The individual does, however, have the choice to distance themselves from these roles or to embrace them. This aspect of performance theory holds that a person's self-concept is self-constructed to an extent. The individual is able to use "face work" or a "mask" to portray a certain style of image s/he views as acceptable within the framework of society; while the "backstage" is the individual's sacred time to not worry about their presentation (Elliot 2014). Goffman shows the power relation paradox through juxtaposing performance theory and role distancing/embracing.

Gender and sexuality are most definitely central components of these three social constructs. In today's society, individuals are raised to create their own self-concept within a society largely powered by gender roles and sexuality norms. Institutions such as family, schools, and the media invoke these roles into our personal realities very early in life (Allen 2011). Personal choice is both a generator and an inhibitor of today's gender and sexuality

discourses. We will further discuss these theories of power relation paradoxes later on, in terms of gender and sexuality. For this time, we move on to discussions of the concepts of emotional labor and communication that a professional actor harbors for dramatic work.

Chapter II: Harnessing Self-Concept to Develop a Theatrical Role

Emotional Labor

While the workforce is an integral sector of men's and women's subconscious development, there is more to self-concept than purely gender difference. There exists in the corporate world a difference among people who work in what is called emotion labor. *Emotion labor* characterizes the type of work that involves utilizing one's own emotional endurance. This type of labor usually has to do with customer service: the worker must discover the right "feeling" or emotion within their self to motivate their job performance and induce a good feeling in their customers or clients. Jobs such as salesperson, flight attendant, waitress, lawyer and doctor all entail emotion labor (Allen 2011). The career most characterized as emotional labor would be of an actor. Actors are paid precisely to induce emotions within themselves and their fellows in a believable performance onstage, to satisfy the needs and wants of their audiences who have paid to view their performance.

While Goffman's performance theory is relatable to the general population, it is very applicable to the lives of those in emotional labor. Many people could easily believe themselves capable of forms of emotion labor because their daily lives call for performing their self stories within society among their family, friends, peers and coworkers. However, there is a certain skill set required to sustain the work ethic necessary for emotion labor: "Many people assume that emotion labor involves abilities and little effort rather than skills and considerable effort. Yet, emotion labor can be hard work. A worker who does not genuinely feel the emotion required by the job must conjure up the emotions while suppressing actual feelings," (60). For this reason, there is a difference between people who are able to complete the job tasks of an emotionally

laborious position, and people who are able to complete those tasks on a constant and daily level; the required amount of emotional suppression can quickly cause feelings of pressure on the self, and in turn place the worker in an unhealthy state of affairs.

This risk of instability is a concern of working actors. It would seem that the emotional labor of an actor would cause the demise of all humans who chose the profession; however, most of an actor's work does not -- and should not -- involve the repression of emotion: it rather involves the release of emotion. This release of emotion is what Greek philosopher Aristotle termed as *catharsis*, a "purgation" of emotion. Catharsis occurs when a person imitates (as an actor) or views someone imitate (as an audience member) the actions of a character's personal narrative. The acts the actor imitates may be more extreme or traumatic than what s/he has experienced in normal life; so when they are able to play out these events in a coordinated, safe manner within the theatre, the emotional spirit is cleansed, or "purified" of the negative affects these events would normally entail (Wilson and Goldfarb 2012). After all this emotional effort, how, then, does the working actor induce these emotions in a healthy manner on their own? This section is largely devoted to the answering of this question.

An Explanation of Theatre

To begin answering the question of emotion for the actor, we must first acknowledge where and what the actor is involved with on a daily basis. What is the theatre? And what other lines of work other than an actor's make up the theatre?

Theatre is a form of popular entertainment that begins when seven certain elements are brought together at once: the playing space, or the location of the performance; the audience, or type of people viewing the performance; the performers, the actors and style of performance they

use; visual elements, or scenery, lighting and costumes created by designers to support the storytelling; texts, the subject matter and the form it is presented in, most often as a play written by a playwright; coordination of the elements, through the work of directors, producers, and other crew members; and social requirements, which are defined as the ways society supports theatrical organization, such as available talent, funds, and space (Wilson and Goldfarb 2012).

There are many different forms of theatre: plays, musicals, mime, pageants, and even rock and roll concerts. These can all serve as dramatic entertainment. Each of these forms involves a certain level of emotion labor, and a goal of storytelling. To tell these stories coherently and honestly, actors spend hours rehearsing with the cast and crew of a production. This is necessary to co-create movements for each character and to discover moments in the storyline when each actor can release certain emotions on certain lines in the script. This work is done in a rehearsal space. At the beginning of the rehearsal process this space can be a room or building separate from the theatre; as the opening performance date draws near, the actors gradually transfer their play into the actual performance space they will debut in.

The development of a show does not stop within the space of the theatre, however; the majority of an actor's work is done by his or her self, on their own time and in their own personal space at home or elsewhere. Developing the emotional capacity for a character involves research of all kinds: of the time period the characters live in; the culture the character was brought up in; and the types of personal relationships they encounter within the course of the play. All these elements and more must the actor bring to life through expression on the stage.

Communication of Expression

Character research is the basis for character development. Once the actor sees themselves within the same society, culture, time period, and personal network as the character they must embody, s/he can officially begin work on showing the emotions that accompany these specific circumstances. There are many tactics an actor can use to create and induce a raw character onstage. The basis of these tactics can be explained through the use of verbal and nonverbal expression.

Verbal expression for the actor is identified through the words of the script. What the character says in relation to others is the first place the actor must look to begin character work. Usually, though, the words of a character do not completely reveal what s/he is thinking. This is why the actor must look into the subtext of each line, and define their character's deepest internal struggles and desires. Text is the *context layer* of interpersonal communication, which is used to relay hard facts and information to each other; while subtext is the *relational layer* we use to show another person how we feel about the subject at hand. This fact of subtext is also relative to human interaction in general, not just among actors. A person (or a character's) choice of words can display subtextual emotion. A step further in communicating/releasing emotion is nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal communication is created in ways other than written and spoken word. It is subject to more interpretation, and so there is more involvement on the sender or receiver's end to encode and decode a message's meaning. According to Quintilla and Wahl (2014), nonverbal communication serves to express emotion, convey attitude, present personality, and to accompany verbal communication. While verbal communication takes up the minority of all

communication, nonverbal accounts for 65% to 93%. Nonverbal communication is displayed in numerous ways, which are key to explaining how an actor can display emotion onstage. There are seven codes of nonverbal communication (2014), which we will examine alongside the psychological development of a character role, described in the writings of acclaimed German actress and drama teacher, Uta Hagen (1919-2004).

1. Vocal Expression: *Vocalics* is the use of the voice to express thought and emotion through changes in tone quality, volume, articulation, pitch, rate of speech and the use of silence. This expression gives others certain perceptions of us. The obvious connection with vocal expression the actor forms is through the words of the script. In Uta Hagen's *Respect for Acting* (1973), "The action of the words, how I will send them, for what purpose and to whom, under what circumstances, hinges solely on what I want or need at the moment. This is what must make the words inevitable for my character," (71). The "inevitability" Hagen refers to is how natural the actor can speak the lines as their character.
2. Space: The way someone uses space is important to conveying attitudes about what is around them. For example, if someone we like enters the room, we show we like them by orienting ourselves closer to them; and the reverse if that person is someone we do not like. This effect of space on communication is called *proxemics*, and the actor generates this spatial awareness by becoming familiar with the set and props in the playing space. This develops a relationship of the actor to his or her surroundings, and how s/he may use the space to develop character and relationship more spontaneously onstage. Hagen explains, "Not one piece of "blocking" [movement/spatial direction the actor is given by the director] will be necessary

because your physical life will organically evolve from all the things you have just tested,” (196).

3. Environment: *Environment* refers to our physical surroundings that inform communicative decisions, attitude and mood. Hagen describes the actor’s environment through two ideas: time (circumstantial environment) and place (immediate environment). The time period the characters live in; the social and political implications of that time period; historical events that may have affected their character within society; the laws, fashions and style of the time: these are all circumstantial questions the actor must answer for his/her character. Immediate surroundings are simply the physical set and props that the actor involves him or her self with onstage. The actor must also ask questions about his/her character’s relationship (or lack of) to every item placed on the stage. The more personal the surroundings, the more comfortable the actor will be as their character in front of an audience (1973).
4. Physical Appearance: *Physical appearance* is communication in the way our body and general appearance conveys messages to others about who we are and how we expect to be treated. In theatre, physical appearance is designed for each character through the use of costume, hair and makeup. A character’s costume can be designed to show social status or personal style. Costume, hair and makeup inform the physical reality of an actor. Hagen issues, “Your physiological state of being, your sense of self, as well as the physical manifestation of it, is strongly influenced by what you wear... You must make your clothing particular to likes, dislikes, appearance -- and with sensory awareness,” (70).
5. Body Movement: *Kinesics* is human movement, gestures, and posture. The way a person carries their self or the way a person uses their body to create a certain physical presence is of

high importance to how a person communicates emotion. For Hagen, the use of body movement and physical action is in balance with the verbal actions (vocalics) of a character. The actor can use sense memory to recall the physical sensation of a movement and to recall the emotions that accompany this movement. It can be very obvious when the actor's movements do not match the words and vocalics s/he is using: "Sometimes, by a mere incorrect bodily adjustment we can shatter our faith in a whole sequence of our stage existence," (52).

6. Facial Behavior: Facial behavior relates to the control of facial expression to display our emotions. This can happen through eye contact (that generates sincerity), scrunching the forehead (that generates doubt), etc. Facial expression, like body movement, is easily telling if the expression isn't rooted in honest emotion. In *Respect for Acting*, Hagen explains that the process of creating honest expression (bodily or facially) is through "listening" with the eyes. Often times, actors are mistaken in constantly looking into their scene partner's eyes to display truth; when actually while we talk to someone, we are constantly reading their bodily reactions. Hagen states, "What we see in them at these moments conditions how we continue our tale. In between these moments of eye contact, we contact the inner objects we are dealing with... Listening and looking are linked to the center of our psychological and physical being. Simulated looking and listening must produce bad acting," (64).

7. Touch: *Haptics* is the term for touch. The levels of touch we use with others shows others the extent of our relationships. We touch people we feel love for in closer, more intimate ways than people we merely are acquainted with. Thus, the actor can decide how to touch another character through considering the relationship s/he has to the them. To Hagen, labeling a

relationship involves assessing the circumstances and human needs of an actor's character: personal responsibility, obligation, willingness/unwillingness, assumptions, bias and feeling should all be considered when assessing relationship (167).

The codes listed above, shown in relation to the actor's character work, exemplify all the nonverbal cues s/he may utilize onstage. As daily communicators, these seven codes of nonverbal communication explain much of how we interact as humans and form meaningful relationships. It is the actor's job to form these relationships quickly within the rehearsal process, but to also root each action in honest emotion; otherwise, the performance of an actor is not believable or enjoyable from the audience's human standards. The struggle for an actor, then, is to form their own self-concept while also being expected to rapidly and constantly evolve to the concepts of each new character role s/he is cast in.

The Actor's Struggle

Every time an actor is given a new character, s/he is constantly evolving personal ethics and technologies of the self (as with Foucault); constantly reflecting attitudes and beliefs off the expectations of others (as with Giddens); or constantly deciding which societal roles to embrace or distances themselves from (as with Goffman).

The hardest discoveries the actor must make are discoveries of their internal selves. As critically acclaimed Broadway and Hollywood casting director Michael Shurtleff (1978) states, "The desire for love, to give it or receive it, and preferably both and simultaneously, is the chief propellant in human beings," (41). Shurtleff proclaims that in any given script, the actor should always look to their character's emotional need for love and acceptance as his/her primary tactic in relationship development. "Love" for the actor does not always mean romantic love between

two lovers, since “sometimes the scene is about the absence or the deprivation of love,” (36).

Relationship development calls for the actor to read the script, create subtext for both his/her own character *and* other actors’ in each scene; then to form connections between these subtexts to the character’s personal relationships.

Subtext is used in our daily lives to create meaning in our words, discussed before as the *relational layer* of communication. In accordance to Goffman’s performance theory, we use this subtext to create personal narratives of our own. The actor must create a personal narrative for every role s/he is given. However, there is a fine line the actor walks in developing a role this way: he or she must not confuse the character’s personal narrative to their own. Oftentimes, not all the needs or wants of a given character are the needs and wants of the actor. Or, perhaps, the actor is asked to create an emotion s/he has not experienced yet in life (for example, heartbreak after a break up, or mourning the death of a loved one), and the actor must look to personal narratives of other people they’ve seen exemplify these emotions.

Examples of emotion are widely created by romantic -- not necessarily of romantic love, like Shurtleff upholds, but of the search for love -- and literary narratives. Giddens theorized on the personal narrative people create for themselves. The personal narrative is the summation of all personal challenges over time into our life stories; and it is in our best interest to create the most interesting life narrative: “In other words, all possible ways of living life are played out in the stories that are told in culture, and we learn from stories of greed, lust, hate, love, kindness and heroism, and develop our own narrative of self in relation to these templates,” (Gauntlett 2008, 120). The earliest form of mass media, the novel, was the first form to feed expectations and ideals of love to the general population. Today, however, the range of narratives modern

media present in movies, television and commercial ads is only so wide as what the media *sees as popular demand*. (2012). Ultimately, these templates are rooted in consumerism and limit the range of acting for the modern actor.

It is not the actor's job to imitate previously known performances of emotion. Although these performances may serve as exemplary forms of a certain emotion, it is the responsibility of the actor to find the impulse of these feelings *within themselves*. Unfortunately, many actors simply act "like" they are sad, happy, etc. in the sense that "sad" is an action in itself (while we know it is, in definition, an adjective rather than an active verb). In the case that this happens, more often than not it is because the actor is not listening, both with their eyes and ears, to the actions and words of their scene partner. In order for the actor to create honest messages and reactions, s/he needs to focus more intently on the other actors, and less on their own performance. If they do not, then no relationship is being shown onstage (Hagen 1973). This is the basis of all communication: that if the sender encodes a message, the receiver must decode the message and show their understanding (or misunderstanding) to the sender in the form of feedback. In day-to-day life as well as onstage, when this order of communication does not occur during an interaction, true meaning is not created.

Shurtleff (1978) discusses the importance of communication to the actor in *Audition*. He describes precisely how this miscorrelation of meaning does not serve the actor well:

"We tend to hide feelings and expect others to dig them out of us. Plays are not concerned with this everyday behavior of ours, but with the unusual moments in a person's life when his need to communicate is at its greatest... [Receiving the feelings of

another] requires the investment of real caring; otherwise why will you undertake the formidable task of opening yourself up to true communication?" (89).

The solution of this problem lies in the actor to keep their mind and body generously open to the needs of his/her scene partner. The actor must be selfish with getting to know the needs of them, since this knowledge gives the actor power: the power to get what *they* need from the other character (1978). Needs are expressed through verbal and nonverbal codes of communication.

Shurtleff clearly advocates that communication is the root of all relationship. When the desires of a character are hard to realize within the actor's own self-concept, s/he is a victim of their unknown prejudices and personal limitations (80-81). These psychological issues may be resolved through outlining our own personal relationships like we would with a script, and making new discoveries in our own lives.

Along with psychological openness, a physiological openness of the body can inform the performance of an actor as well. There are certain steps an actor can take in order to become more open physiologically. These steps involve certain mental and body technique.

Chapter III: Physiological Technique

The Use of the Body

For actors of live theatre, it is a responsibility to create, again and again, the same character role for each performance they are expected to make -- for the professional actor, this usually means eight performances per week. Although many tactics of character development for film actors is much the same for stage actors (such as creating subtext, or personalizing the space), there is a difference in work ethic and personal stamina. Film actors may have to embody their roles every time they are expected to come on set; but pauses in the total production process interrupt the “work” of a film actor. They are able to prepare for a mentally taxing scene the day before they are expected to shoot; but for the stage actor, the “work” of acting must be upheld from the moment the curtain and lights go up, to the moment they go down. The stage actor experiences the complete storyline of a character within the entire run of a show: experiencing a wide range of emotion within an average two-hour time period.

The physiological work of a stage actor thus entails that s/he maintain their physical condition, in order to create and re-create the same emotional journey using a constant level of energy and motion. To begin examining physiological technique for the actor, we must discuss Alexander technique, in which the body must be aligned in order to function to its best ability. For a complete definition of this, we look to the Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine:

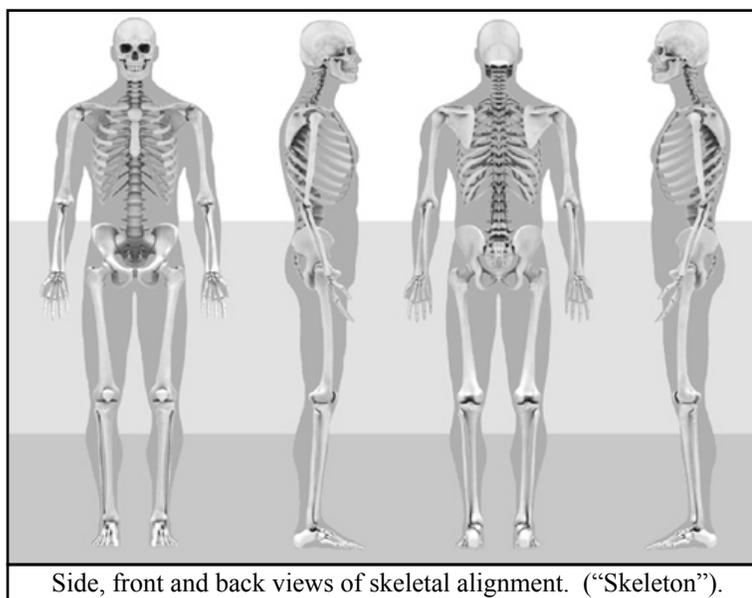
“The Alexander technique is a somatic method for improving physical and mental functioning. Excessive tension, which Frederick Alexander, the originator, recognized as both physical and mental, restricts movement and creates pressure in the joints, the spine,

the breathing mechanism, and other organs. The goal of the technique is to restore freedom and expression to the body and clear thinking to the mind,” (Cushman 2011).

The actor must use the knowledge of how the body aligns itself in action to create a clean, stable and purposeful starting point in character development. The Australian actor and Shakespeare reciter Frederick Alexander (1869-1955) founded the Alexander technique after several medical treatments for his chronic hoarseness failed. He found that no matter how much medication and rest he took, his vocal chords would become strained in the middle of every performance and he would lose his voice. He spent time speaking and observing himself in the mirror, and discovered that in order to rid tension in the body (the cause of vocal strain), it is necessary to redirect the way the mind thinks

(2011).

Even thousands of years ago, the connection between thought and the body was made by ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, in his work *On the Soul* (1936). To Aristotle, the soul is not defined as any one being; it is



the result of one’s thoughts, sensations and movements. He even distinguishes that the soul is made up of two parts: thought and the body. In a sense, Aristotle talks about the soul as if it is, in actuality, a being’s personal expression: he relates all emotional expression such as love, anger, courage, etc. to changes in the body. Sensations of the body create impulse, but that a conflict of

impulses creates complications of movement (1936). These complications are what the Alexander technique begins to solve; however, thought and the body merely consider the motivation and physical action. For the actor, there is another point to consider in the acting of a character onstage. This is the voice.

The Natural Voice

The basis of an actor's work is based in the simultaneous use of two bodily functions: breath and the voice. The link between breath and the voice has been made for thousands of years, as it is the use of breath that moves past the vocal chords, causing the vibrations of sound. Aristotle defines the voice as, "sound produced by a creature possessing a soul," (1936, 115). The reference to "soul" or emotion to the voice is used here, as if one's own being, self-concept, or self-expression is the requirement for vocal production. In this section, we are to display the physiological process of using breath to fuel human emotion into vocal expression.

The voice is a fairly simple mechanism: all that needs to be used is the support of breath channeled through the vocal chords, which causes vibrations to resonate in the body and amplify themselves into the air. World-renowned teacher of voice production Kristen Linklater has written much about her definition of "the natural voice" since the first edition of her book, *Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and art in the practice of voice and language*, was published in 1976. Linklater (2006) was one of the few acting teachers within the past century to provide sound literary advice the actor could seek to combine the psychological and anatomical work of acting into one fluid system of thought. Linklater's technique involves the coordination of emotion, intellect, body and the voice.

To begin explaining what, exactly, the *natural voice* is, we must give an explanation of why the voice would ever be considered *unnatural*. Linklater highlights, “In our perception of our own voices there is a vital difference to be observed between what is “natural” and what is “familiar,” (7). This is because from the time of our birth and through the days of our lives, our voice is constantly altered by our self-concept within society. We may feel fine with how we have always used our voice over the course of our lifetime. As humans, we are all capable of having moments of captivating freedom of speech and thought; however, more often than not, and in the most subconscious way, do the natural neural impulses we initially had as children become silenced through psychological blocks.

These blocks are precisely of the sort explained in Chapter I of this thesis: from the time we are born, society creates in us a control of behavior, “...but much human behavior is unconsciously controlled by habits conditioned in childhood by arbitrary influences, such as parents (or lack of them), teachers, peers, fellow gang members, movie stars, or pop stars,” (19-20). This becomes a concern for the actor, who is concerned with reproducing uninhibited emotion and voice in front of an audience.

From the moment we are born, we feel a constant need that we must fill. This need is induced by signals of the brain that tell us when we’re hungry, exhausted, or in physical discomfort. As infants we unconsciously express ourselves because we do not have the physicality or mentality to feed these life-or-death needs: so we cry loudly to call on our mother through using our *natural voice*. Children openly express just how they are feeling and to what extent -- if they are happy, they may giggle and play around; if they are sad, they can wail and

cry in loss; and if they are angry, they scream and beat frustrations out. At a certain stage in our development as children, we must learn how to “properly behave” within society.

In order to become adult beings capable of selflessness and cooperation with others, we are taught to suppress our true emotions and instead neutralize our emotional displays (Linklater 2006). This is exactly Foucault’s idea of “internalized restraint” and “policing oneself.” Social institutions -- especially that of the media (Guantlett 2008)-- create gender roles and literary narratives that we must adhere to using our individual subjectivity. Our psychological space becomes filled with the masculine and feminine ideals of performance identity.

These ideals block our needs from being manifested. Instead, “Defensive neuromuscular programming develops habits of mind and muscle that cut us off from the instinctual connection between emotion and breath,” (Linklater 2006, 22). For example: when a boy is sad and feels the need to cry, he must “man up” and tense his jaw in order to act accordingly with his gender role of the strong, unwavering male figure in society. When a girl is saddened or frustrated, she must cover her emotions with a sweet, accommodating smile in order to become the caring role of a woman in society. Tension is the body’s physical manifestation of “bypassing” the preliminary impulse; the body is literally stopping and tensing the muscles it would naturally use, so that the secondary, pre-conceived impulse can be acted on instead.

We learn from childhood on to adulthood through constantly creating a self-image that does not contradict what others know us to “be.” As individuals we are capable of changing our image, to distance ourselves from roles we do not want to be -- but what keeps us from this change? As Giddens claims, “A person’s identity is not found in behavior, nor -- important though it is -- in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to *keep a particular narrative*

going,” (qtd. in Gauntlett 2012, 108). The actor’s job is thus made even more complicated, because for each new character s/he must embody, the personal narrative that exists for his/herself must be constantly thrown aside, interrupting their own personal flow of behavior.

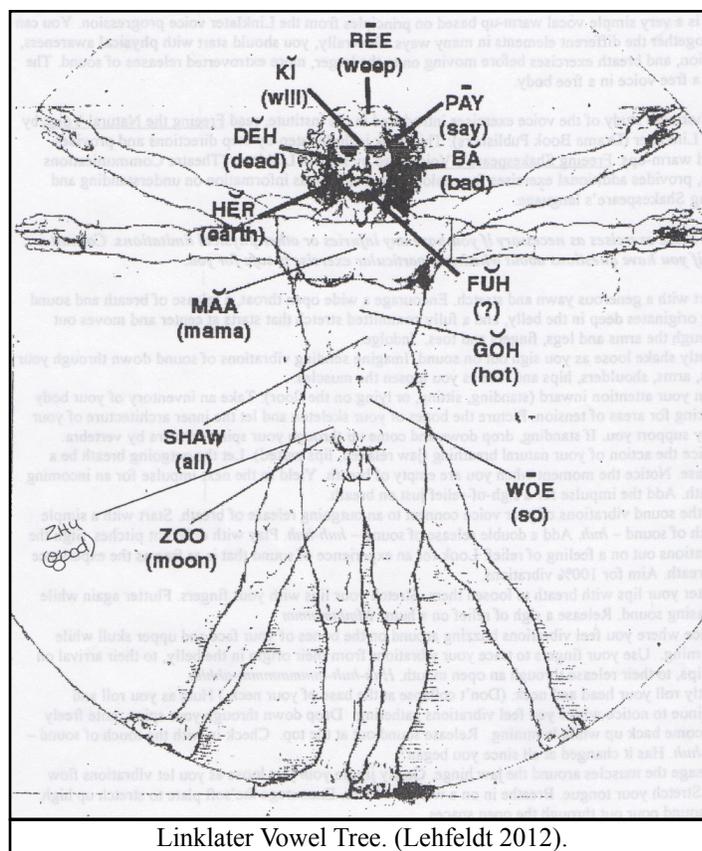
All of this emotional suppression, in the end, causes us to modify our voices using external muscles outside of the vocal channel we wouldn’t otherwise use in a natural, candid moment of expression. The actor must rapidly and frequently adhere to the self-narratives of numerous characters over the course of his/her career. How do we do this in a healthy, respectful way for the mind and body to endure? It is the same term we use to condition the muscles of the legs, arms, or back: exercise.

In *Freeing the Natural Voice*, Linklater (2006) offers a day-by-day exercise routine providing the basic assumption, “...that everyone possesses a voice capable of expressing, through a two- to four- pitch range, whatever gamut of emotion, complexity of mood, and subtlety of thought he or she experiences,” (7). These exercises gradually cumulate in exercise material and length, so that by the end of the nineteen-day course, the actor may complete the full exercise of vocal and emotional range.

Here is a brief overview of the entire exercise:

1. Relaxation of the Body: Laying in and walking within the space; aligning the spine.
2. Regulation of the Breath: Relaxing the breathing muscles: listening to breathing patterns.
3. “Touch of Sound”: Releasing a simple sigh of release; no vocals used.
4. Amplification: Releasing a simple sigh of release; with relaxed vocal use.
5. Freeing the Channel: Rolling up the spine; producing sound.

6. Chest, Mouth and Teeth: Releasing tension in upper body and head; feeling vocal vibrations in these three areas.
7. Calling Out: Using the upper registers and pitches of the voice; calling out to a “friend.”
8. Breathing Power: Feeling the body breathe; creating bigger breathing capacity.
9. Upper and Lower Sinus Resonators: Nasal vocalizing; vocal vibrations in the facial structure.
10. Skull Resonators: Vocalizing through the top of the skull; the highest vocal pitch.
11. Resonating Ladder: One elongated release of the voice; beginning with low pitch, moving toward high.
12. The Vowel Tree: Vocalizing each vocal register of the body; using specific diction of vowels and consonants.



13. Articulation: Vocalizing text and words; exercising full vocal expression (Linklater 2006).

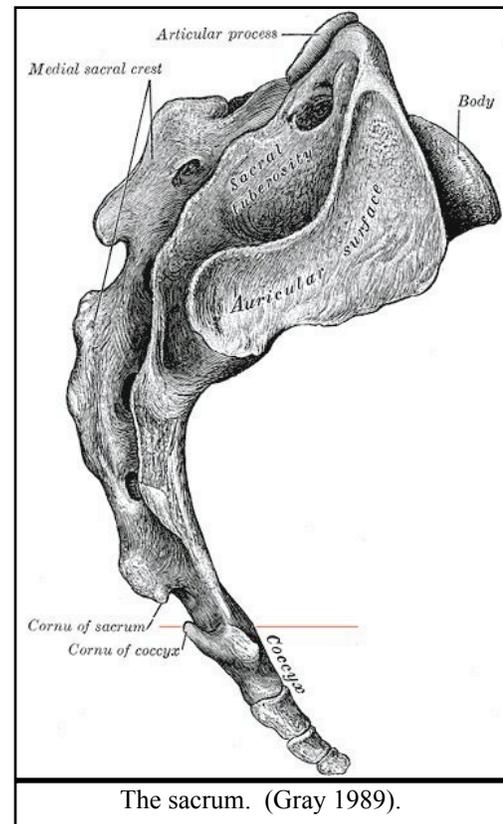
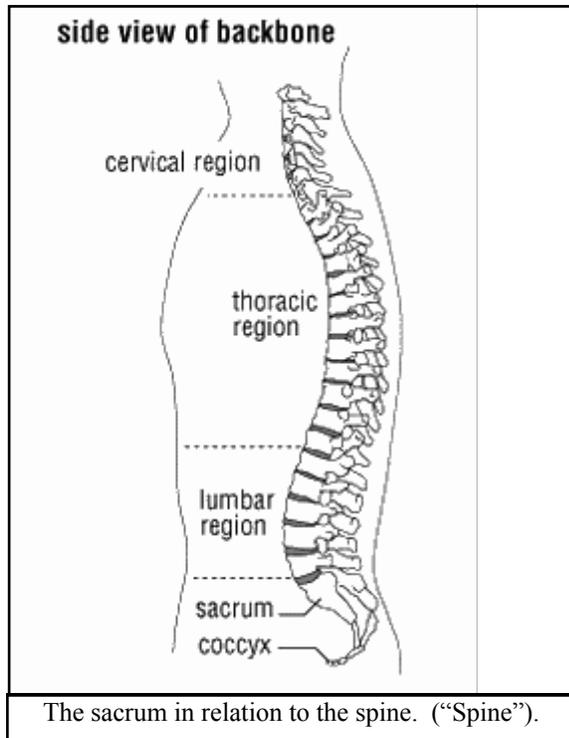
Although this is a brief overview it is valuable in understanding how the actor’s entire body is exercised in order to produce vocal sound and resonance. This involvement with the body is precisely why Linklater relates the natural voice to needs of bodily functions. These functions, as

described before, include hunger, exhaustion and discomfort. There is one more need that has gone unmentioned, and that is central to an actor's -- and human's -- self-concept. That need is sexual expression.

Sexuality in Stage Voice

Sexual expression is a need that, even as children, we all feel. In an article for the popular actor's magazine *American Theatre*, Linklater (2003) explains this: "Children, the object of their own love, explore indiscriminately the erotic potential of the whole body, and that erotic potential expands to the inner organs of the body and is in no wise limited to the genitals" (24). Even though our childhood is relayed in innocence, it is our free and uninhibited imagination in youth that we wish we could experience today, and it is a sensual need. Not sexual, but sensual as in "of the senses" and relating to physiological circumstance. This circumstance is that of the urge to speak: since when we feel this urge and act upon it, the movement of sound through the vocal chords produces waves of sound into the air outside the body, and within the body as well. These waves are felt as vibrations; and they are felt, in a physiological fashion, in every area of the body, "from the pelvis to the crown of the head," (24).

The emotional nerve center of the body is called the solar plexus, or sacrum; it is the region near the pelvic girdle that feeds sexual, instinctive energies and urges in the body. The solar plexus region is the area of the body associated most with our feeling of emotions. We speak because we feel something so much that we have to have it be known. Emotion is what drives the breath, and emotion is what drives the voice (Linklater 2006). Linklater describes how the harnessing of our complete vocal range and ability is inhibited by the rationale



socialization furnishes in our minds. We may not

believe we should involve ourselves completely with

these erotic sensations that accompany vocal production (in public, to a very certain degree, this is true); however, these vibrations are subconsciously felt at all times more than we let on.

Linklater connects the use of the erotic *natural voice* to the texts of classical theatre.

Classical playwrights from the Greek and Elizabethan eras of theatre in particular utilize sexual plays on language (2003). These societies, though structured differently than our modern

Western culture today, created sexual humor and word play that is still relatable today. Sexuality has evolved over time, in openness and in categorization.

We now turn to the ancient Greeks, to realize the sexual and theatrical roots they created are still relevant in the contemporary era. These natural, original roots are essential to understand how we can create our selves in society and in the framework of theatre.

Chapter IV: Foundations of Greek Society and Theatre

Why We Need to Discuss the Greeks

The Greeks are the earliest known civilization to create worldly institutions of government, philosophy, scholarship, science and art. It was the Greeks who, in their quest for thought and art, created the professional organization of live theatre (Wilson and Goldfarb 2012). This “fresh slate” the Greeks had to work on gave them no preconceived notions of personal narratives and emotional expression. As told in Driver (1960): “The first thing to remember about the Greek historical consciousness is that it is, in essence, unhistorical. That is to say, the Greek mind in its search for orientation in the world was not concerned with history as a major component of the world picture,” (19). Rather than history, the Greeks were concerned primarily with aesthetics and viewed life as a work of art. Foucault expressed, “Greek ethics is centered on a problem of personal choice, of the aesthetics of existence. The idea of [one’s body, and one’s life] as a material for an aesthetic piece of art is something that fascinates me,” (qtd. in Gauntlett 2008, 140). It is this appreciation for the beauty of life that is vital to understanding how we mold and manage our own impressions of gender and sexuality today.

Greek Gender Roles

In the times of ancient Greece beginning at around 800 B.C.E., society was very much sectored off by gender. It was important for the men of the state to become scholars or soldiers; if during war time a man was at home, he was a veteran no longer of service. The women, in plain terms, were not supposed to involve themselves with society at large. Women were seldom seen in public, and if they were they had to be under the close eye of a male chaperone. Women’s roles were only involved with the family. Any respectable girl would be raised to

accomplish household tasks and to be quiet and chaste, so that one day when she became able to have children (at around the age of 16 or 18), she would be handed off by her father to a man who would marry her and generate offspring (considered the primary purpose of marriage, along with the male obtaining a dowry from the female's father). Producing legitimate citizens as offspring was the sole responsibility of women in ancient Greek society, and nothing else. They were even sectioned off to a certain area of the household deemed the women's quarters, where the men, when they so desired to be with their wives, would be able to enter and exit freely (Clark 2008).

Women's roles also depended on class. In the time that Athens flourished, only about half of its population were considered citizens; the other half were either slaves or foreigners (2008). To say that women's roles were in the household is to say that an upper-class woman was to be a wife and mother. Servants in the household were also women, but were not considered citizens. These women may have had children of their own or may not; but they did the same household chores as the the wives were expected to do, or oftentimes more -- wives were only left with tasks that involved little effort. Women's gender roles, however did not completely separate them from men in sexuality.

Greek Sexuality

On the reverse end of women servants as non-citizens in the household is the idea of *hertairai* (meaning "companion"), which were considered high-class courtesans whom men could house in their household, rather than *porne*, common prostitutes who worked on the streets. Hertairai lost their intrigue as they grew older, so a man who housed one in his household only held them for so long until they liked another woman better; a hertairai was only

a semi-permanent position (Clark 2008). Indeed, the wife's role was not intended to be the sole outlet for men to involve their sexual relations with; in fact, men only chose to marry once he felt he had passed his time freely covorting with whomever he wanted. He only decided to marry when he felt his time had come; a wife was merely a life necessity whom he could come to when he wanted to have children, since he could seek and find sexual pleasures elsewhere. High-class courtesans, even though not citizens, were who most unmarried men considered intellectually and sexually pleasurable. These were the women men were intrigued by and felt for what the Greeks considered as what we deem today free love (Hunt 1959).

The sexuality of Greek men was asserted through *impression management*, a term Goffman defined in his performance theory. Goffman relayed that people utilize means to adjust their outward appearance, and do this because of fostered illusions of the "right impression" to our "audience." Gauntlett (2008) contends that, "Even cavemen must have adjusted their faces and apparel to encourage feelings of affection, admiration or fear, in those they met," (113). Today we manage our bodily impressions using previously undiscovered ways of manipulation, such as cosmetic surgery. The only source of this for the Greeks was of physical exercise and diet (not in the sense of *what* to eat, but in the *moderation* of it.) This, according to Foucault, affirmed in the Greeks a sense of self-restraint as an art form, as "it was moderation and control of desire that gave a certain beauty to life," (141).

This moderation, in turn, allowed that men's sexual energies could be expressed within contexts not upheld by society today. Even though marriage was mostly for the man to settle down and procreate, the greatest source of honor in sexual satisfaction and aesthetic moderation was a man's release of sexual energies with a wife (Elliot 2014). Along with sexual relations

with women, sexual practices were allowed between men and boys on the premises that it was a form of artistic expression. The sexual practices among males was greatly influenced by the physicality of the gymnasium. There, men were transfixed upon the moderation of the body all among each other, constantly giving a need for attention to and from each other (Clark 2008). If we think about the link of sexual expression to fulfilling emotional needs, this constant mentality would have created the grounds of sexual release and control with each other.



Four Greek men and a youth, competing naked in the foot race of the Panathenaic festival in Athens to honor the Goddess Athena. This vase illustration depicts the ideal esthetic musculature of the Greeks. (Metropolitan Museum of Art 1972).

Another grounds of release and control of sexuality was within the realm of theatrical productions. This was a center of *cathartic* release and control. Although exclusively acted, written, directed, produced and viewed by men, plays had to be written for character roles of women, which were performed by men (Wilson and Goldfarb 2012). This, in turn, implied that male actors had to develop

character concepts for women roles and furthermore allowed them to create new concepts of the feminine gender role and sexuality within their own male perspectives.

Origins and Sexuality in Greek Theatre

For the ancient Greeks, women were not involved with theatre at all. Since they were not allowed to go out in public (if they were a legitimate citizen uninvolved with the work of brothels and concubines), they were not allowed to attend the theatre or to act onstage. Theatre was a form of religious activity, in honor of the Gods; namely Dionysus, the God of wine, fertility, revelry and theatre. Since the practice of theatre was considered a religious activity, dramatic festivals of the state held the most importance at the time they were held, and all other



Maenads and satyrs in revelry. These were the followers of Dionysus. (Metropolitan Museum of Art 1972).

public business took to the wayside (Wilson & Goldfarb 2012).

One such dramatic festival was the City Dionysia, which occurred every spring time in Athens. It was a festival of theatre that involved itself with

neighboring nations who visited and shared in the Greek theatre. The festival included practices of wine, fertility and revelry to honor Dionysus. Most importantly though was the practice of theatre. A theatrical competition among playwrights was held every year, including tragedy, comedy and satyr plays. Playwrights would be chosen to write four plays for the competition, called a *tetralogy*, where three were tragedies (sometimes all linked in story and character) and one was a satyr (comedic) play. These tetralogies were performed within a period of five days.

The organization of festivals like the City Dionysia was upheld by the city-state (Wilson & Goldfarb 2012); of such importance was the production of these dramas.

The audiences of these plays were only of men, mostly veterans of war. Since these audience members identified with stories of war, death and political issues of the state, playwrights in these competitions wrote about such matters so that these veteran audience members would feel emotionally moved by their works. Productions that moved audiences were standouts in the competition and gave these playwrights recognition.

Indeed, all surviving works of Greek plays are written by men such as Aeschylus (*The Persians, Seven Against Thebes*), Sophocles (*King Oedipus, Antigone*) and Euripides (*Medea, The Trojan Women*), who were all acclaimed playwrights during the time of these theatre festivals in ancient Greece (Wilson & Goldfarb 2012). Aeschylus was a champion of these playwright competitions. *The Persians* won him the title because his veteran audiences were astounded to find themselves identifying themselves with the enemy country's story of war, and experienced catharsis -- again, what ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle identified as the release of emotions through witnessing or acting out events similar to one's own life. These stories were written for male audiences; but even though women were not allowed to attend theatre, there is evidence of women audience members in reports of these cathartic performances inducing pregnant women into labor (Clark 2008). Respectable women of the household were not known to be seen in the Greek theatre, but with these reports there is room to question whether women non-citizens such as *hetairai*, *porne* and slaves attended theatre.

For the amount of chastity and quiet women were expected to encompass in ancient Greece, playwrights did not shy away from female characters who displayed their sexuality and

who created political scandal. This portrayal of women in Greek theatre was not without suspect of reason, though:

“To ensure the honor of the *oikos*, or household, Greek men idealized wives who were quiet, chaste, and confined in the women’s quarters of the household. Yet in the plays that Athenians attended in their outdoor amphitheatres, female characters were anything but quiet and passive: Clytemnestra killed her husband for revenge and power, and Lysistrata led a women’s strike against war where they took over the Acropolis and flourished dildos. Greek men seemed to have feared that their chaste wives would easily erupt in uncontrolled desires, and tried to tame this wildness. As art historian Andre Stewart writes, this image of women as uncontrolled therefore legitimated their confinement,” (Clark 2008).

The playwright Euripides was especially known for giving women powerful roles by focusing his works around political issues of women’s rights. The play *The Trojan Women* is notable for portraying the physical and mental torment the women of Troy undertook when they were taken as concubines or raped by Athenian men. His works are not proven to “legitimize their confinement” like stated above, but they may have instead opened up the mindset of Greek society to treating wives and mothers not as objects of the household but as human beings.

The portrayal of women’s emotional fragility is explained eloquently through the reasoning that the feminine portrayal of the Gods (even Dionysus, a man, who was portrayed with girlish physical qualities at times), created men’s perception of women as dangerous:

“The boundaries of women’s bodies are perceived as more fluid, more permeable, more open to affect and entry from the outside, less easily controlled by intellectual and

rational means. This perceived physical and cultural instability renders them weaker than men; it is also all the more a source of disturbing power over them, as reflected in the fact that in the divine world it is feminine agents, for the most part, who, in addition to Dionysus, inflict men with madness -- whether Hera, Aphrodite, the Erinyes, or even Athena as in Sophocle's *Ajax*." (McClure 2002).

Conflict specifically between men and women is seen in Greek theatre. Women, being confined inside the home, need to release their urges from indoors to the outside world, where men walk freely. Gender roles are commonly reversed in Greek theatre, where women take control of the men through overpowering the state, moving from an indoor to an outdoor space (Scolnicov 1994). This is apparent in such works as *Antigone* by Sophocles, in which the daughter of Oedipus rallies against Creon's ruling as king to leave her brother unburied, dishonoring the Gods; or *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes, where one woman creates a sexual revolution of all women abstaining from sex with their men to force them to stop a war.

Greek theatre exists today through educational and professional reproductions. Directors and producers of today's society, in order to keep classical theatre different and exciting with each reproduction, set the show in different contemporary and classical time eras. Each era provides a different background for the social and political issues dealt within the the themes of Greek plays; for example, *Lysistrata*, which deals with the sexuality of women during a time of war, might be reproduced to the time era of World War II. The sexual implications within society at the time of the 1950's were much different than those within the Greek's or within today's society. Different takes on classical plays of the Greeks provide new points of view and entertainment for modern audiences.

It is apparent that gender and sexuality plays a large role in the creation of theatre. Concepts of gender and sexuality from ancient Greece, even though so long ago, are very relatable to today's modern and post-modern social themes. It is now that we finally turn to the ways in which sexuality and gender development in social history has affected the development of theatre and vice versa.

Chapter V: Sexual Repression within Theatre History

Foucault's Theory

As Linklater (2006) suggests, our needs -- no matter how basic -- are inherently sensual. Foucault's ideas of technologies of the self and self-concept also fall into the ideas of satisfying one's needs. In his work *Technologies of the Self*, Foucault contests, "Each person has the duty to know who he is, that is, to try to know what is happening inside him, to acknowledge faults, to recognize temptations, to locate desires," (qtd. in Elliot 2014, 92). This statement paved the way for Foucault to research, in high extent, the underground records of sexual accounts in ancient Greece. This research led him to develop his *theory of repression*.

Foucault's findings entailed that the sexuality of the Greeks was so open because for the Greeks, the sexual norms of modern Western societies did not exist. Greek society, as discussed, had no precedents of human nature: all acts were considered natural and necessary to the art of the self. The terms *heterosexuality* and *homosexuality* were not formed until the mid-nineteenth century (Allen 2011). Indeed, this is the reason why Greek men did not consider sex with younger men "wrong": the word homosexuality did not exist in their society, and so neither did the label of the word exist. Since heterosexual and homosexual forms of sexuality (along with *bisexual* and *transsexual*) have been given labels, like Foucault relates, these labels have created a higher sense of differentiation between these groups of individuals (Gauntlett 2008, 141).

Foucault contended from further research of later societies that around the time of the Victorian era, Christianity served as a repressive institutional power to sexuality. "Sex had been a freely-expressed, unproblematic part of life throughout history until it had been suppressed and hidden from public view within the last couple of hundred years," (Gauntlett 2008, 132). In the

Victorian era, the onset of Christian confession created a structure where when one sinned, it was only acceptable to speak of these sins in the presence of a priest. Oftentimes these sins were of a “deviant” sexual nature according to the Christian teachings of the time. Ultimately, this societal structure of confessional exclusivity caused the individual within society to police themselves (2008). This policing was a reflection off the larger power structure of religion, which led to the conforming of individuals to new social norms.

Even though these social norms were of a repressive nature, Foucault’s repression theory contended that instead of sexuality being withheld during Victorian times, it was simply withdrawn to the inner lives of the home (Elliot 2014). In actuality, the very making of sexuality as a problem caused the topic of sex to become highly analyzed by society. So, the “issue” of sexuality is only an issue because society makes it as such. Sexuality is not repressed; but magnified.

This school of thought is evident today when we read translations and view reproductions of both classic Greek and Victorian Renaissance theatre. Looking at the social themes around which the plays of each era were written on, there is a clear distinction between them. It becomes clear that certain gender roles and sexual acts were considered appropriate to the characters within those times. For example, the writing of Greek tragedies usually involved an epic storyline of vengeance, war, sexual violence, and other catastrophic, fateful events handed to the characters by the Gods, like in *The Trojan Women*. Even Greek comedies involved extreme circumstances, such as that of *Lysistrata*, where the entire state of the city rested in the sexual urges of its men and women. Sexuality in Greek tragedies was openly and brutally tragic;

and sexuality in Greek comedy was openly and unapologetically comedic. The style of language in Greek plays was also very natural, simply-stated and poetic in nature.

In Victorian Renaissance theatre, however, plot lines rested upon the social standards of sexuality at that time, revolving oftentimes around the courting process of youthful lovers. This process gave the comedic background for certain courting norms to be misconstrued. For example: a young man might be mistakenly upset when he is told his lover threw away a gift he gave her, when it was simply misplaced. Situations of sorts require the characters to involve themselves in technicalities of social upbringing and romantic norms. The style of language used was also heightened in the sense that characters spoke with intellect and wit. This language created the grounds for sexual connotations of a more discreet, implying manner than that of the openly sexual matter of classical Greek plays (Wilson and Goldfarb 2012). These uses of language produced different identities in each time era. As Elliot states, “The construction of the self through language results in the imposition of sexual identity,” (2014, 66).

Toxic Post-Modernity

The way of ancient Greek life serves as a clear explanation of why -- even though the world of theirs was very sexualized, like today's -- people's views of society and their relations to it were much less garnered in validation from others, but in the cultivation of assurance in one's own self. The basis of the Greek attitude in history is a certain passion for the permanent. The Greeks, although technologically advanced for their time, were not nearly as invested in these technologies as they were invested in nature. “The roots of Greek culture were agricultural. Her life was, in its earlier period, bound to the rhythm of the changing seasons, the planting and harvesting of crops; and even in the later periods... her festivals were still marked

with the signs of an agricultural community,” (Driver 1960, 21). The City of Dionysia was one of these festivals of nature-oriented time, since it took place at the start of spring, signifying new birth and the pleasures of brighter days. All economical institutions, such as the theatre (which we will consider as such a social power within the lives of the Greeks), were immediately and most affected by the timing and power of nature. The future was, ultimately, closed off because of the cycles of the seasons (1950). Nature’s cyclical permanence rendered the self as only capable of change within its bounds.

In the modern Western world, however, we are surrounded by change. This change, in most part, is the result of rapid technological growth and the social obsessions that are created from constant images of corporations. We are always being sold something due to the consumerist effects of the media. Of primary use in this mentality is the selling of sex: images of attractive men and women, the sexual ideals of them, are manifested in multiple objective manners in order to sell materials like perfume, beer, clothes and cars. Giddens even put into terms how the media openly converses with society to develop ideals of “good” and “bad” sex; like the sexual skills and techniques presented in popular magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and *Maxim* (Gauntlett 2012). So, even the way we create guidelines for our most intimate interpersonal relations are sold to us from an “increasing connection between personal life and globalizing social influences,” (Elliot 2014, 49) Forms of technology produce these images all around us: in movies, ads, television shows, music videos, magazines and online blogs; the list goes on.

These technologies create constant communication among us -- without ever seeing the other person -- through texting, email, and instant messaging, the result ultimately has altered our

perceptions of ourselves. The ways in which we utilize reflexivity and create our own image off others' is affected. Modern technological communication gives us the expectation of instant gratification. Our relationship "needs" -- in actors' terms -- are able to be met at the click of a button; in order to gain feedback on our social performances, we must wait for the replies of others, and thus our self-concepts become as fragmented as our perceptions of time. This, in turn, has a way of fragmenting even our most personal relationships in life: "Moral bonds recede in favor of an overwhelming desire for instant gratification, and intimate relationships fragment into short-term, provisional and episodic encounters." (2014, 46). No matter how much of our lives we construct on our own, all our available resources of living and communicating with the times interject the relationships we have with our selves and others.

Love Narratives of Yesterday and Today

Giddens defined the difference between modern and post-modern ideals. Modern ideals refer to those ideas of gender, marriage and success that were clearly outlined, such as a white collar job and the American Dream. Post-modern ideals refer to those of today, still evolving but centered on the idea of *individuality*: one's free choice to be who they want to be, apart from others.

It seems that the pre-modern world, technological disadvantages were almost favorable to the lessened personal and interpersonal connection we are subject to in the post-modern world. Even previous societies -- like that of the sexually repressed Victorian era Foucault discusses -- seemed to have more personal relations than today's. The idea of Giddens' *transformation of intimacy* comes into play here. The transformation of intimacy is the romantic ideal of a relationship centered in individuality, where each half of the relationship considers each other as

equals in search for mutual satisfaction (Gauntlett 2012). However, post-modern social institutions, such as marriage, control how we are gendered and how, then, we display our affection, and in the end, how our sexual expression is dictated (Allen 2011). This poses problems to the development of individuals' self-concept.

Sexuality is constantly subject to social discourse; romantic relationships being one major interest to the actor. In *Why Love Hurts*, by Eva Illouz (2012), this modern ideal of finding one's "soulmate" did not exist in pre-modern societies (such as the Greeks), where matrimony was based on social status. Illouz points out that during these times of social status, women and men were not so concerned with the validation of themselves through the other, since the initial pull of their marriage was not for love, but status. In today's society, people who define their relationships as "love" are primarily concerned with who they each are within the relationship. This requires a degree of personal separation from the romantic other; there is a level of narcissism that constitutes the post-modern love, called *agency*, or free will (Elliot 2014). For Illouz (2012), we each project our agency through life by forming meaningful relationships that enhance and bolster our self-image. After we project ourselves on the significant other, we receive feedback from our loved ones in the form of recognition. However; at the same time, we uphold the notion of free will in that we do not want to be affected by one person for any great length of time; we must remain individuals. This freedom from being held back is *autonomy*.

The post-modern relationship is not only torn by fragmentation of technological communication; it is also torn by this juxtaposition: that while we long for constant, honest recognition from the person we love, we also long to separate ourselves from them and remain autonomous. This paradox is especially affected by gender roles. While men are easily able to

uphold this autonomy, women internalize this juggle of emotion on a wider scale: “Men can follow the imperative for autonomy more consistently and for a longer part of their lives and, as a result, they can exert emotional domination over women’s desire for attachment, compelling them to mute their longing for attachment and to imitate men’s detachment and drive for autonomy,” (2012, 138). There is an ego inherent in the mindset of men, to stick true to their strong, independent standard of masculinity; and an ego in the mindset of women, who wish to become more independent within a post-feminist, post-modern era.

Both gender and sexuality are affected by the changes social institutions have created for us. These changes are made clear in the ways we interpersonally relate to one another. The technologies of the self, the way we achieve our own set of ethics -- or the ways we form our own personal narrative -- are hindered by post-modern concepts of love.

Concepts of love for the actor, as said before, do not mean they must entail romantic love. The hindrances we encounter through technology and autonomy today are relevant to any relationship that is formed on the satisfaction of each others’ needs. This is why the actor’s greatest help for character development is to realize the limits of the post-modern world and how this affects his/her own self-concept. This knowledge provides for them the power to create a clean slate to start the development of a new character. Once the actor realizes his own needs and how they can be expressed with an open body, intellect, and voice, he is free from any sociological, psychological, and physiological limits. Only then can the actor whole-heartedly begin to personalize a character’s narrative.

Overcoming the Ego

As Shurtleff (1978) says, we must learn our limitations of love and our common ideas of them. Love comes in all forms: love for a lover, for a friend, parent or sibling, role model and ultimately the self. To realize these different types of love, and the modern and post-modern ideals that limit the creation of these loving relationships, is the greatest obstacle we -- both as actors and as human beings -- must overcome.

In order to overcome these pre-conceived notions of gender and sexuality, we must overcome what critically acclaimed social theorist Sigmund Freud calls the *ego*. The ego is that irrational, emotional part of our minds that holds subconscious desires, but that are concealed through self-control and self-restraint. Due to the norms we must adhere to to uphold a personal narrative, we experience anxiety and tension (Elliot 2014); the same tension we experience when our natural voice is stifled. Freud also defines the *split nature of subjectivity*, where “the individual is divided between the narcissistic lures of the ego on the one hand, and the desires and dreads of the unconscious on the other,” (66). Even though everyone has an ego within them, it is still not felt by individuals that their unconscious desires should be kept hidden. Higher powers and institutions ultimately plant a feeling of guilt in an individual who “selfishly” gives into their true desires.

Of course, ways of getting around the ego exist. Foucault believed that power is not achieved through social status, but rather through the *use* of power at the right opportunities. People who are given a powerful position are only so powerful as that one certain context. For example, a bully on the playground is only a bully until he goes home to his controlling mother. Foucault’s theory of power relations easily lends itself to the power struggle women seem to

have in society: even though patriarchal society is structured to uphold men's power, women can easily discover instances where they have the upper hand of power in individual relationships (Allen 2011).

Patriarchy is challenged more and more today by feminism and post-feminism (at one time considered microcosmic movements). For example, the media's portrayals of women in commercial ads has greatly challenged modern standards of women (Guantlett 2008), such as of a "perfect" sexualized beauty, challenged by the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty. The Pantene #ShineStrong campaign, which reveals the double standards women must deal with in comparison to men, exposes these labels (like a working woman being seen as "bossy" in comparison to a man being just a "boss") for the limitations they put on women in society. These expositions of women's strength give all women an image to mirror in their daily, microcosmic performance of self-image. Women's expectations of other women are serving as motivators in everyday, microcosmic interactions within societal, macrocosmic institutions.

Another modern ideal that has been opposed through post-modern power relations is that of the heterosexual norm. Throughout history, the idea of a man and a woman was the societal norm for loving relationships and marriage. Modern and pre-modern institutions such as politics, science and the media have upheld the notion that a man and a man being together (or a woman and woman, and other bisexual and transgender variations of relationship) is wrong in terms of the law, mental health, and common modes of marketing and consumerism. These modes are all fueled by the "bad" connotation societal powers associate the word and label the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered culture with: *homosexuality*.

The more labels we define as a society, the greater a divide is formed between and among individuals who orient themselves one way or the other. Theatre has helped in shattering these common ideals of gender and sexual roles. Contemporary plays and musicals within the past few decades have exposed forms of all human relationships: of both heterosexual and homosexual romantic love (considered in the 1990's musical *RENT*); of the problems women face in defining their individuality (like in *Legally Blonde: The Musical*, 2007); and even the existence of fragmented relationships due to technology (in the 2007 play *Dead Man's Cell Phone*).

These matters of social repression are the subject of interest to Elliot (2014): "The more complex level of social organization, the more advanced the level of culture, the more the repression of desire and emotion, and hence the greater the need for individual self-control of violence and destructiveness," (75). As the Greeks produced many footholds for the future of Western society such as government, philosophy, science, scholarship and art, their level of social organization most definitely fell under this categorization of Elliot's. The "violence and destructiveness" he writes of was precisely the reason Greeks channeled their energies into the art of themselves, since they feared if they did not, their souls would suffer by the Gods (Foucault 1992). As discussed previous, Aristotle's *On the Soul* (1936) formed thoughts about the soul in a manner suggesting its construction was based upon the need for self-expression, a need that is innately aesthetic and managed by impression.

Gauntlett (2008) inferred that Foucault did not suggest, from his research on the Greeks' aesthetics, that today's societal culture should base their doings purely on physical beauty; rather, he suggested that, "certain forms of freedom and choice are possibilities, and that nothing is

‘given’ from the start,” (141). It is this idea that gives today’s post-modern society room for growth in openness of human expression. This human expression is the need we all were born with; and it is this need that is repressed subconsciously because of societal ideas of gender and sexuality.

In order for a society to exist in which all humans are able to openly and forgivingly communicate their true emotions, it is of most importance that we understand the histories of human expression, in terms of human life and in terms of the models (dramatic and theatrical narratives) we use to mold our lives upon. The work of an actor is, perhaps, one of the most critical work a person can create in society: as it is the actor who creates these narratives for the people, and -- ultimately -- for himself.

A Conclusion

This thesis has variably covered the general self concept, the communicative work of an actor, the physiological approach to this work, the history of ancient Greek theatre and sexual impression, and how the actor's work is affected by realizing differences between current and historical societal powers. We have looked to societal powers and their subjective affects on gender, sexuality and the self. Social theory and technique in theatrical performance of emotion and action have been discussed on terms of self concept. The underlying factor of all this is gender and sexuality; as it is our self concept that is genderized and sexualized, and is the basis of modern-day communication and love.

As humans beings, we must overcome labels that put limitations on love. In order to create the best personal narrative for ourselves throughout life, we must form the most human connection as possible. The formation of human relationship induces reflexivity of ourselves in others, and aids our own development of character in life.

We must, to an extent, reapply the ancient Greek ideals of creating beauty and balance, of focusing our energies to moderate our urges through the satisfaction of fulfilling them. Modern and post-modern technology and narratives portrayed in the media that limit our personal relations with others is, perhaps, the greatest obstacle individuals must face in the consumerist Western world.

Although these ideals are all-surrounding and may seem difficult to overcome, we have the powers of individuality to choose what roles we wish to perform in our own personal narratives. This power comes with trusting what we know, but simultaneously keeping the channel open and available, to form our own ideal self. It is our faith in our selves -- and in

others -- that will create a society in which we can live our best life stories; a society without the need of a mask.

“I came looking for the design principles of storytelling, but on the road I found something more; a set of principles for living.”

- Christopher Vogler, *The Writer's Journey* (1999)

List of References

- Allen, Brenda J. 2011. *Difference matters*. Long Grove: Waveland Press.
- Aristotle. 1936. *On the soul; Parva naturalia; On breath*. Great Britain: William Heinemann LTD.
- Clark, Anna. 2008. Sex and the city: Greece and Rome. In *Desire: A history of European sexuality*. 15-34. New York: Routledge.
- Cushman, Sandra B. 2011. "Alexander technique." In *The Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine*, edited by L. J. Fundukian. 130-133. Detroit, Mich.: Cengage Learning. <http://galenet.galegroup.com.huaryu.kl.oakland.edu/servlet?HWRC/hits?> (accessed February 15, 2014).
- Driver, Tom F. 1960. *The sense of history in Greek and Shakespearean drama*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Elliot, Anthony. 2014. *Concepts of the self*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1992. *The use of pleasure: The history of sexuality*. Volume Two. Translated by Robert Hurley. London: Penguin.
- Gray, Henry. 1989. *Gray's anatomy*. Edited by P. L. Williams. Edinburgh: C. Livingstone.
- Guantlett, David. 2008. *Media, gender and identity: An introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Hagen, Uta. 1973. *Respect for acting*. With Haskel Frankel. United States of America: MacMillan Publishing Company.
- Hunt, Morton M. 1959. *The natural history of love*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Illouz, Eva. 2012. *Why love hurts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Lehfeldt, Lynnae. *Linklater vowel tree*. Assessed November 2012.

- Linklater, Kristen. 2003. Vox eroticus. *American Theatre*, April, 24-27.
- Linklater, Kristen. 2006. *Freeing the natural voice: Imagery and art in the practice of voice and language*. Hollywood, California: Drama Publishers.
- McClure, L. (2002). *Sexuality and gender in the classical world: Readings and sources*. Great Britain: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Metropolitan Museum of Art. 1972. *Greek vase painting*. 31:1-68. Assessed February 19, 2014. doi 10.2307/3259007
- Quintanilla, Kelly M., and Wahl, Shawn T. 2014. *Business and professional communication: Keys for workplace excellence*. Canada: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Scolnicov, H. (1994). *Women's theatrical space*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press.
- Shurtleff, Michael. 1978. *Audition: Everything an actor needs to know to get the part*. United States: Bantam Books.
- “Skeleton.” In *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*, 2013.
<http://huaryu.kl.oakland.edu/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com.huaryu.kl.oakland.edu/content/entry/heliconhe/skeleton/0>
- “Spine.” In *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*, 2013.
<http://huaryu.kl.oakland.edu/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com.huaryu.kl.oakland.edu/content/entry/heliconhe/spine/1>
- Taylor, Charles. 1990. *Sources of the self*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP.
- Vogler, Christopher. 1999. *The writer's journey*. London: Pan.
- Wilson, Edwin and Goldfarb, Alvin. 2012. *Living theatre: History of theatre*. New York: McGraw Hill.