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This essay argues that the relationship between body, intellect, emotion, and voice in an actor's expressivity are not related in an equal fashion, as per Kristin Linklater's "actors quartet," but rather in a hierarchical fashion whereby the trinity of body, intellect, and emotion find their ultimate expression through the voice, united by breath.

Re-imagining the Actor's Quartet

ROB PENSALFINI

The core of this essay is a re-examination of the "actor's quartet" as described by Kristin Linklater in *Freeing the Natural Voice* (9–10) and in more detail in person in numerous workshops. However, with the reader's indulgence, it begins with some personal background and a reflection on my initial encounter with Kristin's work. This, I believe, is important to understanding why I would consider myself qualified to do something as audacious as to suggest any refinement to Kristin's own work, which of course is grounded in decades of acting and training actors at the highest level.

In essence, the central claim here is that what Kristin views as a "quartet" of body, voice, emotion, and intellect, each playing their part in balance and harmony and with none super- or sub-ordinate to others, is better viewed as a trinity of body, emotion, and intellect, integrated by breath and finding its most powerful expression through the voice. Voice is therefore a different kind of thing than the other three components (body, emotion, intellect) and is informed by them.

This is not a radical revision of Kristin's theory. In fact, I hold that this model is more aligned with Kristin's theory and practice.

I first encountered Kristin Linklater's approach to voice and language when I was most of the way through a PhD in theoretical linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I had gone to MIT to study with Ken Hale, one of the first to apply generative (Chomskyan) theories of syntax and universal grammar to Australian indigenous (aboriginal) languages. While I was there I also studied with several other luminary generative linguists, including Morris Halle and Noam Chomsky (considered the father of generative linguistics and still its leading exponent, as seen in works such as his *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, *Lectures on Government and Binding*, and *The Minimalist Program*). My own research was driven by field-work that I undertook with speakers of the Jingulu language in the Barkly Tableland in Australia's Northern Territory. I say this in order to establish my credentials at the time of encountering Kristin's work as a bona fide card-carrying neo-Cartesian dualist, at least when it came to the study of language. Embedded deep in the psyche of generative linguistics is the idea that linguistic structures arise independently of body and emotion, even of "thoughts" in the usual sense of the word, but are determined by a specific component of the mind that we can call the "language faculty." As Bill Stokoe, who helped the world understand that deaf sign languages are fully fledged languages in their own right, expressed it, language is "not mouth stuff, it is brain stuff" (qtd. in Wolkomir).

This language faculty (of the mind) interacts with other components of the mind—such as the articulatory and perceptual systems that control speaking (or signing) and listening, the conceptual systems that reason and intend, and at greater or lesser remove the emotional and other systems of mind and body—but is essentially independent of it. In the generative tradition we were interested in the properties of the language faculty, that common human endowment of mind that gives rise to the diversity of syntactic, morphological, and phonological structure, alone. While it was understood that the impulses that give rise to speech are intimately connected with thought and feeling, and the effects of these impulses are physical (speech being an act of the body, though this was never explicitly stated in my linguistic education), this was considered "noise" that was outside the question of how the language faculty turns impulse into speech.

This is in fact an entirely reasonable way of proceeding. In order to understand how a car engine works, I don't need to know anything about who is driving it or why. Chomskyan linguistics definitely wants to know as much as it can about how the engine works, and I was keen to learn all I could about this.

What brought me to Kristin Linklater's work was my other passion, stage performance. I'd been acting at an amateur level since I was twelve years old, when I played Willy Wonka in our elementary school production of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and throughout high school and my undergraduate studies, though I never studied either acting or drama. I had become very interested in the political and social aspects and applications of theatre by the time I got to MIT. I had never been at all interested in Shakespeare (though I am now the Artistic Director of the Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble), thinking it colonial and irrelevant, mainly because all of the Shakespeare performance I had seen in Australia fell broadly into the category of conventional approaches inherited from England. This conventionalism holds that there's a correct way to perform Shakespeare and the actors' and director's job is to get it right (see Kiernander; Pensalfini).

What originally attracted me to the Shakespeare Ensemble at MIT was the offer of ongoing training, which, although I had arrogantly held for many years that acting was not something that could be learned (the further irony being that I am now a teacher of actors as well as an actor and director of Shakespeare), I was beginning to realize was lacking in me. The training at the time was largely based in European physical theatre, led by the artistic directors of the Massachusetts company Pilgrim Theatre, Kermit Dunkelberg and Kim Mancuso, who had trained extensively in Poland. Their focus on ensemble or group theatre also attracted me, as it spoke directly to my interest in the political and social role of theatre. During this period, I began to formulate a desire to return to Australia and create a theatre ensemble, and while Shakespeare was still out of the picture for me at this stage, these were the seeds that would grow into the Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble, where many of these ideals are still strong.

The training I received in these formative years paid scant and only indirect attention to voice and language, and so my linguistic and thespian pursuits remained quite separate. During my time at MIT, however, the training and mentorship of this ensemble passed over to Shakespeare & Company, and I was fortunate enough to train in the first instance with their artistic director, Tina Packer, and later with several designated Linklater teachers (I am now one myself). This was the first time I heard language explicitly mentioned in the context of acting. The linguist in me pricked up his ears.

Therefore, when I first encountered Kristin's work, as taught by these teachers whom she had trained and certified, I found myself having a rather sceptical, perhaps even cynical, response to it. The focus on the physical experience of speaking, the heavy (one might even say heavy-handed) use of imagery to describe the act(s) of phonation, and the insistence on deconstructing phrases and clauses into component

sounds all flew in the face of what “we *knew*” about language. Let us turn to each of these briefly, and examine the initial apparent contradiction I encountered along with the way in which the two approaches eventually married and complemented one another in my own experience.

The first surprise to me was the way in which the Linklater training encouraged attention not to the sound of the voice but to the physical sensation of voicing/vocalizing. This is shared with many (arguably most) contemporary approaches to voice training, though it was Kristin Linklater and some of her contemporaries who brought about a paradigm shift in voice training in this regard, from an earlier period (up to the latter third of the twentieth century) in which voice training focused on the sound of the voice. Phoneticians, taking the empirical approach to voice, are concerned either with the signal itself (what the ear alone, or later instruments of vocal analysis, could pick up) or with the mechanics of how the signal was made, but rarely and never deeply with the physical sensory experience of the speaker. To re-visit an earlier metaphor, they were concerned with what the driver did, but not with what s/he experienced while doing it. However, when I drive a car, a lot of what I do is informed by the physical experience of the car, the clutch and accelerator below my feet, the vibrations of the engine and chassis in my body, and not just by what I see or know about the mechanics of the vehicle. Voice teachers train drivers, not mechanics.¹

My scepticism on this point was probably driven by the previously mentioned claim that language is not “mouth stuff,” indeed not really “body stuff,” but “brain stuff.” However, the final moment of integration of these approaches came for me quite recently, at a 2009 workshop in Massachusetts led by Kristin for a group of designated Linklater teachers, when Kristin articulated something that I had been moving towards but had not managed to articulate for myself. The Linklater method is rich in physical exercises, physical observations, and discussions of the body, all of which are aimed specifically towards a freedom of thought-body-voice whereby “psychological oopses,” secondary impulses to suppress expression (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural*, especially 21–25), manifest as physical tensions that stifle vocal expression and communication. The exercises work ostensibly on the body, and the entire approach appears to treat language as “body stuff.” What Kristin said at that workshop was that “Freedom is here”—pointing to her temple. In other words, freedom of vocal (indeed any) expression is “brain stuff.” The somatic work, through the body, is “merely” the means of working on the mind. This is not a new idea; adherents of yoga, for example, have been telling us for centuries that the asanas and physical practices are a means of accessing and affecting the psychological state of the practitioner. However, in terms of voice training, it underlies something that is Kristin’s innovation

and at the root of her very genius: vocal practice must never be undertaken as “sound” or “voicing” in the absence of a thought (articulate or otherwise) to be expressed. We are not in the business of freeing a human noise-making device, but freeing human beings to express and communicate their experiences through their voices. While many of the physical exercises and much of the progression of exercises trace their origins to Kristin’s own teacher, Iris Warren, the insistence that conscious awareness be brought to every moment of voice training and practice originates with Kristin.

The second point I originally took issue with was the apparent fancy and anatomical inaccuracy of much of the imagery used in the Linklater work. The instruction to let air come into my lower abdomen, buttocks, or even feet flew in the face of the careful and detailed anatomy of speech I had been taught as a linguist. What I did not realize at the time, but came to value increasingly as I delved further into actor and voice training, was that imagery was the most efficacious, indeed perhaps only, means by which the conscious mind could communicate with autonomic systems of the body.

To lift an object in my hand it is sufficient to send a clear conscious message to the muscles that move my arms to contract. However, no direct conscious commandment to my heart to speed up or slow down will have any effect on my heart rate (other than perhaps through the stress caused by the frustration that my direct commands are going unheeded). However, a few seconds contemplation of something that I find calming will slow my heartbeat, and a moment’s contemplation of something of which I am afraid will speed it up. The muscles involved in respiration and phonation live in a curious in-between world, susceptible to both conscious control and to imagery—I can control the rate and depth of my breathing through direct command (even stop it altogether, for a while), but respiration continues without my conscious control, and in speaking it responds to the demands of the thoughts and experiences that I wish to communicate. The use of imagery when working on the voice stimulates this very system—image/thought gives rise unconsciously to breath and voice. To work on the voice through conscious manipulation of the diaphragm and vocal cords would be to separate the voice from that which it is engaged to express or communicate. The kind of speech that results from this is inevitably “stagey” and reminiscent of the presentational bombastic style in vogue in the early part of the twentieth century, which is not much prized by most actors today, particularly those working in the modern style known as “naturalism,” as well as those working with the heightened realism generally required for contemporary classical performance.

The importance of visual imagery in the training of the voice is treated in detail particularly in the second edition of Kristin Linklater’s *Freeing the Natural Voice*; however, we have not yet justified the practice of instructing students to feel breath in

their buttocks, or their voice coming out of the soles of their feet. This seems not to be “imagery” in the proper sense, but sheer anatomical inaccuracy. Yet it has great value. To take just one example, a common instruction in the Linklater work is to feel breath in the belly. (Many in the Linklater community use “stomach,” but I find myself unable to suspend my anatomical disbelief quite this far yet—the stomach is an organ located rather higher than the area of the abdomen known as the “belly,” but I digress into pedantry.) Yet a deeper understanding of the anatomy of breath reveals the value of this shorthand.

Indeed the breath does go into the lungs, and therefore is entirely contained in the part of the torso above the diaphragm and within the domain circumscribed by the ribs. Why not, then, speak with anatomical accuracy of feeling the breath going into the lungs? The reason is that the lungs are passive participants in the breathing process. The descent of the (centre of the) diaphragm due to its contraction creates a low pressure in the upper torso (above the diaphragm) in comparison with the surrounding atmospheric pressure, with the result that, nature abhorring a vacuum, air will rush into the upper torso through whatever means available (the nose and/or mouth) to equalize that pressure. This is inspiration. When the diaphragm releases and re-ascends, the result is that higher pressure is created in the upper torso than in the surrounding atmosphere, and air is released (again through the nose and/or mouth) back into the atmosphere. This is expiration. However, at no point are the lungs themselves actively engaged, nor can they be, lacking muscle. In the absence of any pathology, we do not even “feel” the experience of respiration in the lungs as such. This process, and the passive receptivity of the lungs, can be demonstrated simply by a beautiful device that a former student of mine, who happened to be a high-school science teacher, built for me a few years ago. This device is pictured in Figure 1.

In Figure 1, the bottomless glass jar represents the ribcage (though rather less mobile than an actual human ribcage, in most cases), the glass tubing inside the jar and passing up through the rubber bung represents the trachea and bronchi, the balloons represent the lungs, and the rubber swimming cap covering the open bottom of the jar represents the diaphragm. On the left of Figure 1 we see the apparatus in its resting state (expired). On the right, with the swimming cap manually pulled down, we see the apparatus with the diaphragm in a state of contraction (inspiration). As is clear from Figure 1, the lungs are inflated through the action of the diaphragm. There is no direct connection between the diaphragm and the lungs, and no active participation from the lungs, which merely “catch” the air that is coming in through the trachea.

What the laboratory apparatus pictured in the diagrams above does not show is what goes on beneath the diaphragm, in the lower torso or abdomen. Underneath the

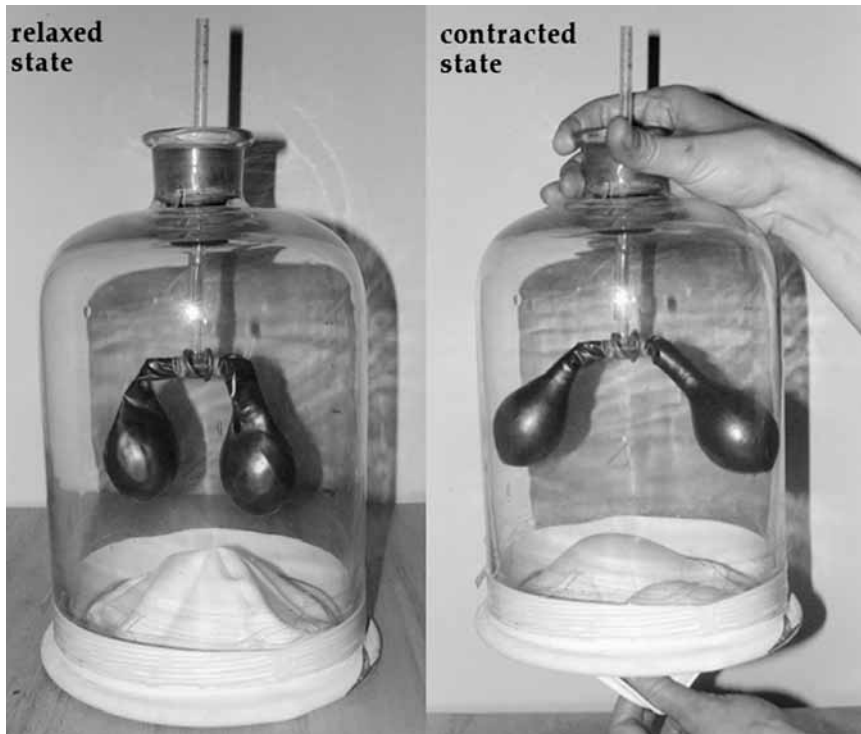


Figure 1: A model of the respiratory "apparatus."

diaphragm are organs. Organs are essentially liquid, and liquids cannot be compressed. In order for the diaphragm to descend, therefore, the organs beneath it must displace (move out of the descending diaphragm's way). For the most efficient operation of the respiratory apparatus, the abdominal muscles, particularly the outer abdominal muscles (but also the muscles of the pelvic floor), must be relaxed enough to allow expansion and mostly lateral displacement of the organs. By bringing conscious awareness to the belly area, this kind of freedom can be achieved.

The shorthand for all of this is to imagine the breath coming into the belly. Is it entirely anatomically accurate? No. However, it is far more effective than attempting to bring conscious awareness to the rather complicated physical process described above, most of which is unobservable, for two main reasons. First, to return to our increasingly belaboured vehicular metaphor, it is more useful for a driver to think of the steering wheel as directly moving the wheels while driving than to attempt to be aware in the moment of the complex interplay of components that translates movement of the

steering wheel via the steering column to the axles via a number of mechanical and electronic parts. Second, and perhaps more importantly, attempting to bring conscious awareness to the air moving in and out of the lungs has a detrimental effect on the muscles involved in respiration. This, readers are invited to try for themselves. When I attempt to think of air moving in and out of my lungs, I tend to tense my abdominal muscles, limiting the displacement of my organs and thereby limiting the descent of my diaphragm, and I begin to engage the sub-costal muscles, resulting overall in a shallower and “tighter” breath and an experience of breathing that is less spontaneous and connected to my moment-to-moment experiences. This also brings tension into my shoulders and throat, which can place great strain on the larynx.

Therefore, the use of “anatomically inaccurate” instructions is better seen as a kind of embodied image, one that puts the conscious mind more directly in contact with the autonomic roots of respiration. A similar case can be made for phonation, resonance, and even articulation, all components of a complete voice training. I will not make that case here, as this was intended to be just one example of my voyage from scepticism to conversion.

Another aspect of the Linklater work that was alarming to me on first encounter was the idea that meaning could be contained in sounds and rhythms, in sub-morphological particles and elements of language. Conventional linguistic wisdom holds that sounds themselves convey no meaning—that no part of the meaning *dog* is inherent in the sounds [d], [o], and [g]. Meaning comes from the conventional and arbitrary association of sequences of sounds with meaning. The sequence of sounds [dog] means *dog* to speakers of English by convention, because we all agree that it does. Other languages have other conventions for the same meaning: speakers of French used the sequence [ʃœ], Italian [kane], Spanish [peRo], Indonesian [anjiŋ], and Walpiri [maliki]. The choice of sound sequences is arbitrary in that there is no inherent relationship between the sounds and the meaning—note that French, Italian, and Spanish, which share a recent common ancestor (Latin) now use completely different sound sequences (though Italian [kane] and French [ʃœ] both derive from Latin [kanIs], French has undergone radical sound changes). The smallest units of arbitrary and conventional association of sound with meaning are called morphemes, and these may be words, such as *dog*, *ocean*, *run*, *yellow*, or they may be smaller, typically grammatical, elements, such as plural *-s* or progressive/gerund *-ing* or past tense *-ed*.²

In the face of this came the idea, propagated by most of the Linklater teachers under whom I studied, that meaning was carried in the sounds and rhythms of the language itself, at the sub-morphological level. I distinctly recall one conversation I had with a teacher who claimed that, for example, the word *ocean* contained in its

sounds a reflection of the sound and quality of the ocean itself: the wide roaring [o], the crashing sibilance of [ʃ], and the calm closure of [n]. Yet, I pointed out, a very very similar sequence of sounds in Japanese ([oʃɪnko]) means “pickle.” This teacher’s response was to say that the Japanese were probably not as deeply in touch with their bodies and the relationship between thought/meaning and substance (sound/body) as were speakers of English!

I also pointed out that the English word *ocean* owes its origins to the Classical Greek *okeanos*, which lacks the sibilant [ʃ] altogether (whose presence can be attributed to regular sound changes that occurred across the board in English with no regard to the meaning of the words but only the sequence of sounds, as sound changes universally do) and contains a whole extra syllable at the end that renders the [n] not a closure (the end of one syllable) but an opening (the onset of another syllable).

There then ensued a conversation about Anglo-Saxon origin words (which, as discussed, *ocean* is not) versus words with origins in the classical languages Greek and Latin. The claim made by this teacher (and subsequently numerous others) was that words of Anglo-Saxon origin are more visceral, while words of Latin and Greek origin are more intellectual, and that this was because of differences in the cultures—English culture was more physical, gut-driven, and so forth, while Roman culture was more intellectual and head-driven. I would invite anyone to spend a few weeks in London and then a few weeks in Rome, and see whether this belief is tenable.

Aside from the obvious racist implications of these theories (which, I should stress, I later learned were not accurate reflections of Kristin’s own beliefs), these claims were made in ignorance of cross-linguistic data and an understanding of how languages arise and change. It seems to be mono-lingual English speakers, or at least those for whom English is their first language, who make claims that English is the most expressive language, the most viscerally connected language, the most . . . To this point, it is a blessing that in recent years large numbers of Linklater teachers have been trained and certified whose first language is not English, and that *Freeing the Natural Voice* has been translated into a number of languages.

However, despite these rather strong misgivings, I applied myself whole heartedly to the training, as there is no other way, in my opinion, to approach training of any sort. I found enormous value in it, and found my capacity for connection and expression as a speaker and as an actor grew daily. My voice changed. My sense of self changed. I changed. I would return to my linguistics colleagues and excitedly share the discoveries I was making about myself in language and speech, and talk about the exploratory, experiential methods that we used in the training room. This was met with stony cynicism and assertions that this was “ignorance,” “fantasy,” even “nonsense.” The Cartesian

rationalism that permeates contemporary linguistics equates “imagination” with “non-sense,” but I continued to believe in the value of imagination, and consoled myself with the thought that the greatest scientists were possessed of prodigious imaginations, and indeed some of the most imaginative people in the world were not (only) great artists, but (also) great scientists. Indeed Kristin describes the creative imagination as the “causal conductor of the actor’s quartet” (*Freeing the Natural* 10).

Over time, through personal exploration, but also eventually through working first hand with Kristin herself, I came to realize that the two approaches had much to offer one another. The science of linguistics could bring a steadying force to exploratory work and avoid its veering off into indefensible claims pointing at racist conclusions. On the other hand, the kind of voice work I was doing shed light on something that linguistics largely ignores, which I call the “urge,” the creative force that underlies and powers the evolution and movement of language, and indeed the need to speak itself.

No, it is not true that the sounds that make up morphemes contribute in a literal and linear way to their meaning. However, it is true that sounds are physical vibrations that move through the body of both speaker and hearer, and physical vibrations have physical (visceral) effects. The words *ocean*, *shit*, and *bashful* are all connected by the vibration of [ʃ], not in some readily accessible way that relates to the meaning of the sound (as it has none), but through an identifiable physical similarity. The choice between the words *oceanic* and *maritime* is not conditioned by meaning alone, but by a less tangible difference that relates to speakers’ and hearers’ experience of the words themselves, through experiential association on physical, semantic, and phonological levels.

Furthermore, after some empirical experiments with groups of participants in my own training sessions, I concluded that there is indeed a difference in a speaker/hearer’s experience of the Germanic words *earthly*, *heavenly*, *hellish* and their Latinate counterparts *terrestrial*, *celestial*, and *infernal*, and that indeed the difference can be characterized in terms of the more visceral (or to use the Germanic, *gutsy*) impact of the Germanic words versus the more intellectual (Germanic *thinking*) impact of the Latinate ones. However, we need to look more deeply at the reason for this difference before concluding that Germans are more gutsy and Latins more intellectual, and here a little linguistic knowledge does not hurt (and it takes but a very little). The contemporary English language, despite the massive influx of lexical items from Latin and its daughter languages, as well as many other languages, remains a Germanic language. Its grammar, its prosody (rhythms and intonations), its basic morphology, and its core phonology are clearly related to Dutch, German, and (more distantly) Scandinavian. The influence of Latin (and Greek), though significant, has been more

structurally superficial, limited essentially to vocabulary. Latin (and Greek) words in English therefore come from languages with a different arrangement of the physical matter of language, the sound patterns and rhythms for example, and they are “super-imposed” on a basic Germanic structure. Words from Anglo-Saxon (and even from other Germanic languages like Old Norse) have a sound structure that is rooted deeply in the origins of the language. This is the reason why Germanic words have a more visceral impact—they come from the same physical matter as the deep structure of the language itself; they have their roots in the physical body of English.³

A similar understanding, integrating both scientific and experiential knowledge, can be brought to the exploration and training of actors in other aspects of voice and speaking. Expansion of this is clearly well beyond the scope of this essay, but one example is the approach to the speaking of classical verse. My approach to Shakespeare’s verse, as an actor, director, and teacher, derives in its majority from the work of Kristin Linklater (as found in *Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice*), John Barton (*Playing Shakespeare*), and Tina Packer (personal communication), but it also incorporates aspects of historical linguistics and the linguistic study of prosody. The result of incorporating the scientific knowledge, as attested by actors who have studied with me as well as followed some of my theatrical sources, is not an intellectual understanding of verse, as might be feared, but conversely a deeper embodiment of the principles as verse. Here we use scientific knowledge to gain deeper access to atavistic structures. My approach to verse differs not a jot from the aforementioned approaches, and so it hardly seems worth noting, but for the impact that the inclusion of one percent of scientific/historical knowledge seems to add to the imaginative/exploratory journey.

Unsurprisingly, the most powerful part of my own journey was when, after five years of studying the Linklater work in depth with a variety of teachers, I finally met and had the opportunity to work with Kristin Linklater for the first time. I was struck by several things in my experience of Kristin that differed from my experience of most of the Linklater teachers that I had worked with. The first was how intellectually keen, sharp, and hungry she seemed. Where many of the teachers I had worked with had a broad anti-intellectual streak, Kristin was intellectually engaged as I have never seen a teacher before or since. She was as grounded and rational, almost urging the primacy of scientific inquiry, where others tended to view intellectual inquiry as a deflection from the primary emotional exploration (indeed many “heady” students would use it as such, so this caution is not without its merits). While lacking any formal training in the approaches to language that linguistics takes (though of course to her theatrical experience mine is a drop to an ocean [o:ʃn]), Kristin is not in principle averse to intellectual exploration alongside experiential, or to the value of the integration and

cross-pollination of the two, as her leadership of the 2009 Santorini Voice Symposium demonstrates. I have long maintained that Kristin is probably the most intelligent person I have ever worked with, including Noam Chomsky.

The other thing that struck me was that, despite her formidable reputation, skill, experience, and intellect, she was for the most part unassuming and undramatic. Her matter-of-fact teaching style and delivery left room for the student's own experience, and valued the variety of responses and experiences, generally without judgment. This was again in contrast with my experience of many of the teachers I had previously worked with, the size and force of whose personalities often directed or shaped the learner's experience and were a dominating rather than supportive force in the learning environment. This was a major lesson for me as, cursed with a quality that some have called "charisma," I must needs be careful that my own personality and enthusiasm do not dominate the class or rehearsal room. Kristin's supportive presence and trust of the student's ability to come to self-awareness in the right environment shifted my approach to teaching and facilitation entirely.

The manner in which the knowledge of Kristin's work is passed on from her to her students and from them to theirs could be described as "apprenticeship," with all of the benefits and disadvantages that this model entails. The benefits are that, unlike a contemporary university education, the transmission learning is thorough, systematic, and relatively pure. It is not only information or techniques that are passed on, but a way of being in the work, an embodiment of knowledge and experience, and a faithfulness to the source.

However, the apprentice model recognizes a master, which Kristin undoubtedly is. But with that identity comes a reverence (on the part of the students) that can verge on dogma at times. To understand this I believe it is necessary to take into account Kristin's own story and the qualities that it takes for an outsider to gain acceptance and respect. In this regard, Kristin Linklater and Noam Chomsky have much in common. Both of them brought radical ideas to an established discipline, ideas that flew in the face of the received wisdom of their time. Both had the tenacity and resilience to hold to their practices and ideals in the face of dissent and even ridicule among the establishment. Both eventually not only achieved respect, but also became figureheads of major traditions within their disciplines, to the point where today one might reasonably say that they represent, if not *the* mainstream, at least a major tributary. Those very qualities that allowed them to achieve this status now make it difficult for them at times to listen to and respect ideas that differ from their own. Both are cursed with prodigious powers of rhetoric to accompany their formidable intellects, which renders them capable of demolishing opposing arguments.

These are not faults, not problems, but vital aspects of their humanity, for which I feel more and deeper love for them.

With all of the foregoing taken into account, as a dedicated practitioner of the Linklater work (it is the backbone of the Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble's training and performance aesthetic) and a fervent supporter of Kristin Linklater's mission and methods, I would like to venture a minor revision to the actor's quartet (*Freeing the Natural* 9–10).

According to the Linklater model, the actor's expressive capacities fall broadly into four components: Emotion, Intellect, Body, and Voice. These four components, according to Kristin, can be thought of (though one shouldn't take the metaphor too far) as instruments in a quartet, which must be in balance in order to facilitate the fullest expression. If any one of the instruments dominates, the impact on the audience is diminished.

In workshops I have had the great fortune of attending, Kristin demonstrates this in a most riveting manner. She may, for example, begin with the young actor trained in the style known as American psychological realism, in whom emotion dominates. Such an actor delivering, for example, Hamlet's "To be or not to be" would clearly be in a state of great psychological torment; the actor is clearly feeling something—but in the absence of an expressive voice and without the clarity and nuance of the intellectual thoughts, the audience does not receive the structure and rhetoric of the speech. We (the audience) can see that the actor is "eaten up" with feeling, but we don't understand why, or what precisely is going on in his mind. If body is also underplaying its part, then there is a good likelihood that the audience, despite seeing clearly that the actor is feeling something, will not care terribly much.

Conversely, the same speech delivered by an actor trained in the traditional British fashion, where intellect, with the linear meaning of the text, is given priority over emotion and body, would have a very different impact. The audience is likely to understand fully the reasons behind Hamlet's conundrum, but the conundrum will remain precisely that, a hypothetical theoretical question, as the person speaking the words remains unmoved by them, and so does the audience. We understand "to be or not to be" as a treatise, not as a real lived experience. If voice is also not playing its part, then this treatise is likely to sound like a lecture delivered by the dullest professor you ever had.

Commonly found in Australia (while I'm making sweeping generalizations about the dominant acting styles of various Anglophone countries) is the actor in whom body is the dominant element. This actor would perform "To be or not to be" with cartwheels and somersaults, and the audience would be impressed, excited, even

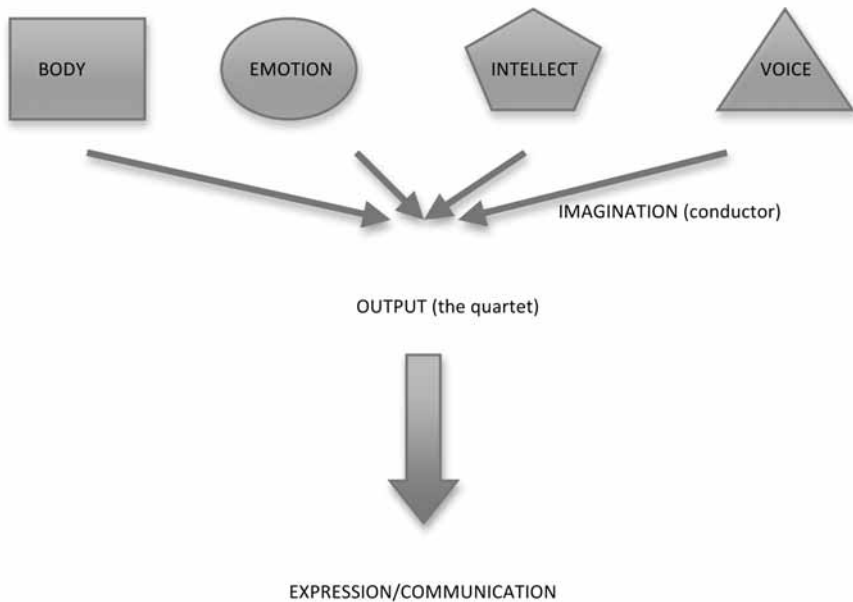


Figure 2: The actor's quartet.

awe-struck by the performance. However, we would not understand the sense of what is being said, nor would we gain an empathic understanding of the psychological experience of the character.

Quite rare among trained actors today, though prevalent in a lot of amateur productions, is the actor in whom voice is the dominant element of the quartet. One may perhaps think of John Gielgud in this respect, though that is rather unfair—Gielgud's voice may have dominated, but the other “instruments” were not entirely in absentia. Quibbles aside, such an actor has a voice that is powerful, supple, with great range in pitch and dynamics; a voice that can soar, sing, whistle, whine, cry, bellow, plead, sigh, squeak, and express every sound that a human voice can. This actor typically has, and prides herself in having, great (conscious) control over her voice. However, the impact on the audience once again is not whole—the audience typically finds themselves impressed by the actor's virtuosity, describing this actor as having a “beautiful voice,” but the level of empathic engagement and even intellectual understanding is limited.

These four archetypes are of course extreme, and most actors find ourselves stronger in some areas and more limited in others (which is why we seek to train), but not entirely bereft of any one or more of them.

The actor's quartet could be represented graphically as in Figure 2. As shown there, the four "instruments" of the quartet are equal in level and status, and essentially independent components of expression and communication (though Kristin would probably be the first to point out that this independence is a convenient fallacy, and that the boundaries, to the extent that they exist, are very porous).

Kristin's model is an excellent way of thinking about the expressive components that make up the discipline of acting, but I believe it could be refined further. My version of this model is one that I call "integrated voice," and it holds that there are three basic components, which I call the three Ps: Passion, Precision, and Presence. These more or less equate to Kristin's Emotion, Intellect, and Body, respectively, with some differences to be noted below. It may seem odd, perhaps even heretical, that a voice teacher and firm adherent of Kristin Linklater's work would exclude voice from this gamut, but as we shall see, voice has its own special role to play in the expression of all three.

Passion is much akin to the notion of emotion but refers specifically to the real emotional connection that the individual feels. It does not refer, for example, to the demonstration of emotion (felt or faked) through technical means. In addition to what we might usually consider emotions, passion includes desires and drives of all sorts. Unlike emotion in the actor's quartet, passion is not separate from the body. This accords with contemporary understanding of emotions from the neurophysiological (Damasio, *Feeling and Descartes' Error*) to the spiritual (Tolle) as the "intelligence of the body."

Precision, akin to intellect, includes the clarity and consciousness of intellectual thought. It includes the understanding of what is being said, how thoughts link to one another, and the reason behind choices of grammar, lexicon, metaphor, and imagery. It also covers the ability to engage with the reality of the image and not just the image of the reality. This distinction, which comes from Augusto Boal's discussion of the principle of Metaxis (Boal 43), is particularly powerful in performing image-rich classical text such as Shakespeare's. Take, for example, Juliet's soliloquy that begins "Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds, / Towards Phoebus' lodging" (*Romeo and Juliet* 3.2.1–31). On a linear intellectual level alone, seeing the mythological reference to the sun as an image of the reality—the apparent motion of the sun is *as if* it were drawn by a team of horses—Juliet is merely expressing her desire that the afternoon would go by more quickly using colourful language. However, if played with utmost precision, the actor playing Juliet engages not (only) with the image of the reality, but with the reality of the image—the sun *is* drawn through the sky by a team of horses that have souls and sense and therefore are potentially susceptible to Juliet's pleas to gallop faster. Juliet is doing more than just expressing her feelings, she is communicating her needs and requests to sentient elements of the universe. This shift in thinking can mean the difference between a performance that is merely engaging and one that is electrifying.

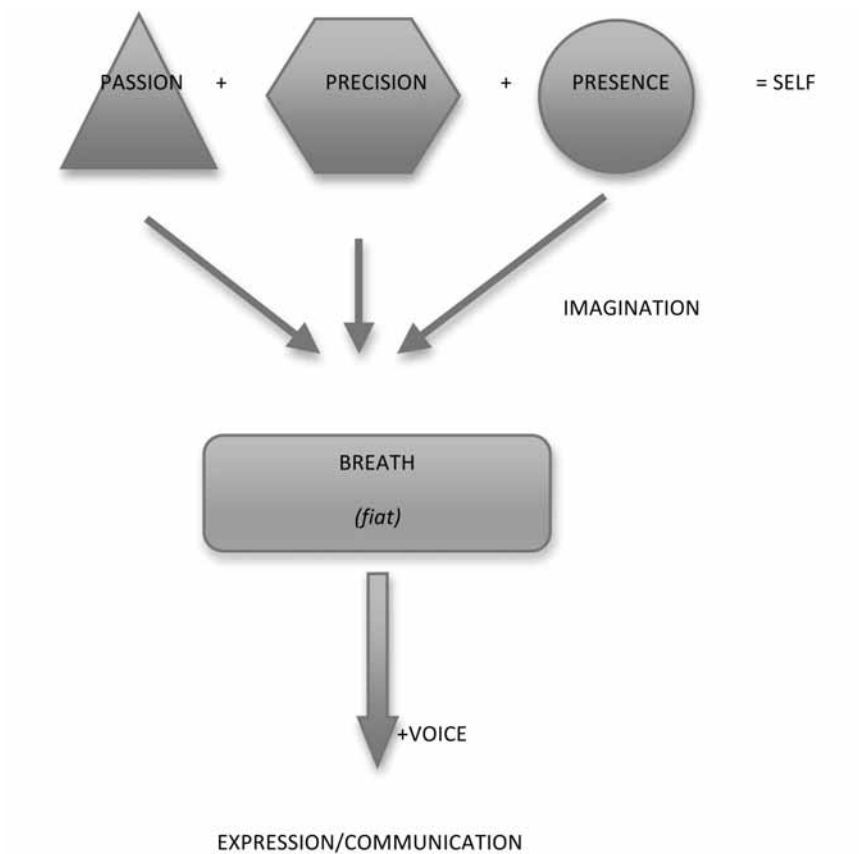


Figure 3: The model of integrated voice.

It could be argued that the imagination is a part of precision, or that the quality of precise attention to the imagination is what frees it. However, I think that imagination is what happens when all three Ps meet. Contrary to Kristin's idea of imagination as the conductor of the instruments, I believe it is generated when they meet.

Presence, in this model, both is and is not equivalent to the traditional notion of *stage presence*, a much-used term with a slippery definition. While many teachers and colleagues of mine have said that it cannot be defined, I prefer to use a very simple and powerful definition given to me by a master Alexander technique teacher, Meredith Page: presence is the suffusing of every cell of the body with consciousness. Therefore, presence is body, not just the ability to move and bend, but the ability to do so with conscious awareness. It is probably more akin to "soma" than to any other

word we have available in English. This is the kind of being that is developed through somatic practices such as the Alexander and Feldenkrais techniques (both of which are deeply integrated into contemporary Linklater practice).

The three Ps—precision, passion, and presence—can be considered components of the self, that which is to be expressed and/or communicated. Under the model of integrated voice, the thing that permits the expression and communication of (these aspects of) the self is the breath, *pneuma*, *spiritus*, *fiat*. Indeed, with tongue firmly in cheek, I like the use of the Latin word for breath, *fiat*, and pretend that it is an acronym for “Fundamental Interconnectedness of all Things” (the linguist in me immediately at pains to point out that this is twaddle; a Latin word could not be an acronym for an English phrase for obvious historical and philological reasons).

Breath itself is, as Kristin tells us, the “blueprint for sound” (see, for example, *Freeing the Natural* 48). The breath, carrying the three Ps, finds its ultimate expression, its manifestation as physical vibration (and all matter is nought but vibration) through the voice. This gives us the following model illustrated in Figure 3.

The major difference between Kristin’s actor’s quartet and the model of integrated voice, as is evident from a comparison of Figures 2 and 3, is that integrated voice holds that voice is not one of a number of equal components in the expression of the self, but rather the ultimate means by which the components of the self, integrated (and given life) by breath, are expressed and communicated. The breath is “inspired” by the imagination, the point of integration of the three Ps.

The question naturally arises now of why this model is preferable, and indeed how it better reflects the philosophy of the Linklater work than the actor’s quartet model, as I have claimed. Let us first consider the examples of the “unbalanced” actors discussed earlier. Contrary to Kristin’s claim, these are not parallel examples. The actor doing backflips and somersaults and not speaking at all is clearly expressing himself through his body, and not his voice. However, the actor who is “all intellect” is actually expressing himself through his voice, his “deficiency” being that his voice is only connected to his intellect, not to his passion or his physical presence. Similarly, the actor who is all passion is expressing that passion through the voice, but the voice is not connected to anything but passion. The example given of the actor who is dominated by voice (the “Gielgud” archetype) is actually a different kind of example of an actor whose voice is connected to the intellect. The performance is pre-planned, thought out, emotion is demonstrated through the voice but is not actually felt, therefore the voice is controlled by the intellect, by the idea/thought/concept of emotion, rather than by real passion.

I tentatively propose that the actor broadly has two “instruments”—body and voice—through which to express herself. That is, a duet, rather than a quartet. These

are both fuelled by the triumvirate of passion, precision, and presence. All three of the Ps can be expressed through the body and/or the voice, and here we are concerned with how the voice connects to the three Ps. Note that presence, while predicated on the body, is not the same as body—all three of the Ps are arguably an expression of “mind” broadly understood, though they are better understood as part of a non-dualistic theory that does not separate body from mind—they are aspects of bodymind, or *self*, to use a more familiar word, provided that self is understood as comprising the integration of body and mind.

Mimes (and other exponents of physical performance) rely on the body alone to express all three Ps, and can do so wonderfully. Actors in radio plays rely on the voice alone, and with the voice alone they can express all three Ps. Actors on the stage (and screen) rely on both, but certainly in the mainstream of text-based Western theatre the voice has a privileged role. One of the reasons is language—Bertrand Russell observed that “No matter how eloquently a dog may bark, he cannot tell you that his parents were poor but honest” (broadly attributed, but no precise reference found). I would go so far as to say that no matter how skilled and determined a mime is, she cannot tell you that her parents were poor but honest either, not with the clarity and certainty that language can. And for most people, language finds its expression through the voice. Sign languages, which have nothing to do with mime but are languages with fully fledged vocabularies and rules of syntax like spoken languages, engage the body in the absence of the voice, but for most of us it is the voice that bears the bulk of the responsibility for expressing/communicating the three Ps on and off the stage.

Within the model of integrated voice, the degree to which a voice is fully integrated has to do with the degree to which the speaker’s emotional connection (passion), intellectual rigor and clarity (precision), and body/somatic state (presence) are available to/expressed through the speaker’s voice. The key to this is FIAT—the breath. Kristin Linklater’s “natural breath” (*Freeing the Natural* 44ff), the state in which the breath is responsive to experiences (thoughts, feelings, sensations, events, etc.) allows for the natural expression of all three Ps on the voice. Learned habits of breath cut the voice off from one or more of these Ps. These archetypes (or pathologies) can be quite complex. Here are the three basic ones:

- The “shallow” breath denies the free expression of passion. The breath does not “descend” into the gut; abdominal muscles are held and the solar plexus stifled.
- The “held” breath denies the free expression of precision. The diaphragm remains contracted for a moment after the completion of inspiration. The impulse “dies” before it is expressed on the outgoing breath. The breath is behind the thought.

- The “controlled” breath denies the free expression of presence. The controlled voice that results is not fully present to the nuances and unexpected flickers of moment-to-moment being and impulse.

Note that the trifurcated model of the three Ps reflects another trifurcation, that between performance practice (theatre), healing (therapy), and spiritual practice (theology). There is a sense in which the three Ps map directly onto these “three Ts.” Passion maps onto theology, presence onto theatre, and precision onto therapy, at least in modern practice: we have the passion of Christ, the love of God, the tears of the mother, the quest for joy (all emotions) in theology; the talk of stage presence and the alternating mistrust of both raw/real emotion and intellect in the contemporary theatre; the mainstream *modus operandi* of “talking about” one’s experiences in a disconnected intellectual way in much contemporary therapy. The integrated self balances the three Ps. The integrated cultural practice balances the three Ts. The integrated voice is available for the expression and communication of all.

Finally, I would point to Kristin Linklater’s own insightful model of how the human voice works (*Freeing the Natural* 13–18). Here the all-important desire to communicate arises from an internal experience (this may be triggered in turn by an external event, but the desire to communicate always arises from within). An internal experience may be a physical sensation (presence), a belief or intellectual thought (precision), or a feeling or desire (passion). The voice itself is the result of this impulse being allowed to engage the physical mechanisms that translate impulse into speech/voice. Therefore, within Kristin’s own account, the voice is not a conspirator with body, emotion, and intellect, but rather the ultimate expression of them.

I would like to conclude by returning to matters of personal reflection. Something of which I have been painfully aware for years, and which was pointed out to me clearly by Kristin Linklater at the 2009 Santorini Voice Symposium, is that I have not yet managed to fully integrate the various aspects of my life, most starkly seen in the apparent conflict between the academic and the artist. This is an ongoing endeavour, one with which I believe I am making slow but trustworthy headway. The challenge is a difficult one—I have already discussed the ridicule that I encountered from academic colleagues when I discussed experiential and creative approaches to language, but it is also true that theatre in Australia (and in this respect more markedly than American theatre) is dominated by anti-intellectualism and a mistrust of scholarly inquiry. I do not intend to burden the reader with further discussion of the difficulties, but rather I would like to point to two areas of synthesis in my work that are emerging.

People are often surprised to learn that my primary area of interest in linguistics is in the structure of Australian indigenous languages, while my passion in the theatre is for the performance of classical text, especially Shakespeare. What on earth could the traditional languages of Australian Aborigines have in common with the high British culture of Shakespeare? Aside from taking issue with the notion of Shakespeare as high culture (which other authors have treated far better than I could—see Linklater, *Freeing the Natural*, and Kott), the answer for many years was along the lines of “Nothing—they have nothing in common, I simply love them both, independently, now leave me alone and stop insisting that I have only one passion!”

However, valid a response though this may be (my idols tend to be people like Chomsky or da Vinci, who successfully carried out independent and non-intersecting careers, rather than the single-vocational life that dominated the twentieth century), I have come to realize that there is a central unifying interest, namely oracy. The word *oracy* (which I had believed to be my own coining, but actually comes from *Spoken English*, edited by Wilkinson, Davies, and Aktinson) is the oral counterpart to literacy, and it refers to the ability to use and understand spoken language. I use it more narrowly to refer to the transmission of culture through the spoken word. Until the arrival of Europeans, Australia knew no writing system, though it had been continuously occupied by human cultures for some 50,000 years. In fact, many indigenous Australians still have limited or no access to Western education and writing, and literacy rates among indigenous Australians are among the lowest in the developed world. Where indigenous cultures and languages have not been entirely eradicated, cultural knowledge is still passed orally.

Shakespeare’s Europe was a different kind of society in flux, one where the principal means of communication was oral, not written. The written word was still seen as a kind of “code” for the spoken, and to give one’s word meant to speak an oath, not to write it. Shakespeare speaks of going to “hear a play” (*Hamlet* 2.2.535), and Shakespeare wrote his plays down not so that ensuing generations could read them (he never sought to have them published in his lifetime), but as a mnemonic code so that actors could speak them. His dramatic works were oral culture, not written.

Nowadays we not only speak of going to “see” a play, but even of going to “see” a concert, where the primary purpose is ostensibly the aural experience. Most of us spend more time looking at words than listening to them. There is a stronger trust placed in something that is in writing than in something spoken.

In terms of the three Ps, however, the written word is principally the domain of precision (one of the things we like about writing is that it is possible to edit, re-edit, and get the expression “exactly right”—we value this over the spontaneity and immediacy of



speech). Passion in writing is of course possible, but it seems to be a specialized area (creative writing) and often concerns itself with the crafted expression of passion, that which in speech is immediate and raw. Presence, in the sense of somatic aliveness discussed above, is by definition entirely absent from writing (a skilled writer can give the illusion of physical presence, but it is a fiction created from the precision of her writing, the intellect).

The specialization of different kinds of expression in writing (for example, the expression of emotion is frowned upon in intellectual academic writing) again mirrors the separation of the three Ps. This separation has reflected back on the practice of spoken language—there are times for passionate speaking (or speaking from the heart), times for speaking from the gut (body), and times for speaking intellectually, and never the three shall meet. However, in fairness it must be noted that within academic discourse there has been a recent resurgence of interest in the body. I am referring to the emerging study of embodiment, from its philosophical explorations by such as Maurice

Merleau-Ponty, through its use by cognitive scientists such as George Lakoff, to recent discussion of the phenomenon in critical theory. In many different scholarly fields, from discourse analysis (a branch of linguistics, considered to be on the fringes by most Chomskyans, and dismissed as not really linguistics by many) to performance studies, everyone is writing about and organizing conferences about embodiment. While these are valid lines of inquiry, I cannot help but be amused that these are all disembodied studies of embodiment. It is an attempt to use the intellect alone to understand how the body contributes to experience, expression, and communication.

What Kristin teaches us is to be embodied in our inquiry. Her method promotes not a study of embodiment, but embodied study. What I have learned from it is to keep my emotions and my body awake and available while I undertake critical analytical inquiry. What I have yet to learn is how to express the discoveries of this embodied study within a framework (academic writing) that does not really fully trust the body and sees it as separate from the mind, to the point where its contribution is not fully valued in its study of itself.

There are some academics, such as Brad Haseman in Australia, who are calling for a recognition of engaged process (such as performance practice) as a form of research in itself. This differs from more traditional “practice-led research” or “performance as research” in that these have traditionally involved a qualitative analysis of practice or performance. In Haseman’s paradigm, which I believe would have Kristin Linklater’s support, the practice itself constitutes the research.

Which leaves me where I started: a linguist and a thespian, richer for both. But now also, and thanks largely to the influence of Kristin Linklater, closer to the integration and enrichment of both, by *fiat*.

NOTES

1/ The car/driver metaphor smacks of “ghost in the machine” dualism, and while I will use the metaphor in order to point out how various essentially dualist traditions have treated voice, I want to be absolutely clear that I ultimately reject this view.

2/ The apparent exception to the notion of sound-meaning relationships being arbitrary is onomatopoeia, where words “sound like” what they mean. The first point to be made about onomatopoeia is that it represents a minuscule proportion of the lexicon of any language. The second is that even onomatopoeia is demonstrably conventionalized, if not arbitrary. For example, in English we say that dogs say “woof” or “bow wow,” while in French dogs say “ouap ouap.” In English, cows are said to “moo,” but in reality, if one listens closely to a cow, there is nothing resembling the [m] sound in their vocalizations. More interesting examples include words allegedly based on noises such as “crash, crunch, crack.” All of these begin with the sequence [kr], which, contrary to popular belief, does not illustrate a commonality in the sound of the action described, but rather a commonality of the source word in the Germanic parent languages. The Italian words with similar meanings tend to begin with the sound [z] (spelled “s”), but again this is

because they derive from the Latin prefix *dis-*, which indicates an undoing. If onomatopoeia represented a non-arbitrary relationship between sound and meaning, we would expect the onomatopoeic elements of the vocabularies of all languages to show far more similarity than they do.

3/ It would be interesting to try a similar experiment with, say, monolingual speakers of Italian, and see what if any differential response they have to Italian words whose origins are Latin as opposed to recent borrowings into Italian with Germanic origins. I would predict the converse result, namely that Germanic words sit “outside” or “on top of” the physical structure of Italian and are therefore perceived as less visceral or more intellectual.

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