

Accounts of martial arts in actor training: An enthusiast's critique

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Genuine knowledge must be open to disproof, or else it is simply dogma in disguise.

Ken Wilber, *The Eye of Spirit*. (87)

Since the sixties the notion of "martial arts for actors" has gone from being alternative in every sense of the word to being mainstream. Edwin Wilson, in his introductory text, *The Theatre Experience*, mentions "martial arts" as actor training tools (121) and discusses tai chi in some depth; (119-120) you can't get much more mainstream than that. David Boushey, in the Spring and Summer 1999 issue of *The Fight Master*, reports that "Martial Arts [sic] will be introduced [during the Summer 1999 National Stage Combat Workshops] at which students will learn to *blend* martial arts and western European styles of fighting." (37)⁽¹⁾ This broad acceptance both pleases and concerns me.

It pleases me because I am an apologist, an enthusiast. I have made, in fact, a life-long study of martial systems, particularly the Japanese *budo*⁽²⁾ and have striven to apply lessons learned in that study to theatrical matters. Furthermore, I have always promoted the idea that (1) nothing in the universe--including stage combat-- is possessed of *only* intrinsic or *only* extrinsic value,⁽³⁾ that stage combat is therefore of value to anybody at all deeply involved in it regardless of whether they will ever take even a fall on stage or not and that (2) stage combat *is* a martial art already.⁽⁴⁾ I therefore encourage acting students to train in whatever form of "combative" discipline their time, money, geographic location, and inclination might allow. I admire actor training programs that have adopted martial studies whether integrated with stage combat or not. It concerns me because spurious information and muddle-headed thinking still mar many accounts⁽⁵⁾ of such training. Accounts thus weakened hamper the relatively simple task of bringing martial arts, stage combat, and actor training together and hamstringing the more abstruse task of genuine integration. Like Daryl Chin and James Brandon, quoted in the introduction to *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training* (Zarrilli, 12) I fear the power of superficial knowledge to distort and deform any efforts at deeper discourse, dialogue, incorporation, integration. On these grounds alone, "martial arts for actors" and martial arts as adjunct to stage combat training, as a subject of serious and responsible discourse, demands re-examination.

In a 1995 article, which we will revisit below, in *Theatre Topics*, Phyllis G. Richmond and Bill Lengfelder of Southern Methodist University expressed the hope of "opening up a dialogue among movement faculty." (167) I have taken Richmond and Lengfelder at their word. This article addresses attempts to describe, propose, or defend martial praxes in actor training.

I want to start by suggesting that **martial systems cannot be integrated into actor training or stage combat programs without careful adaptation or modification.** They are far too cumbersome, complex, and embedded too deeply in specific worldspaces to be profitably brought, willy-nilly, into the movement or combat studio and stitched onto the fabric of training as if out of whole cloth.⁽⁶⁾ Regardless of whether or not movement, combat, and acting teachers deem martial arts of value to actors, the question of exactly how martial praxes might be transformed into theatre praxes remains.

Richard Nichols⁽⁷⁾ enthusiastically compares martial arts outcomes to actor training outcomes (Nichols, 1991) but offers no solution to the basic problem of integration. His article lists "development of focus (concentration); staying in the moment, the 'here and now;' placement of images; focus of energy and economy in action/gesture; playing one action at a time; expanding the horizons of self-image; development of a flexible, controlled, and balanced body; unification of mind and body; appreciation and development of discipline" (44) as outcomes of actor training that are commonly sought.⁽⁸⁾ Nichols then suggests that "martial arts" likewise emphasizes these outcomes and that actors benefit, therefore, from martial studies.⁽⁹⁾

There are of course other movement disciplines that may benefit actors, though. As McGaw and Clark state in what is arguably the most popular beginning acting textbook, *Acting is Believing*, "no universal agreement prevails as to just what program of body training the actor should employ, so the student is faced with a considerable range of choices. Each [Tai chi is listed as one.] approach has its

exponents and its detractors, and each will yield some benefits *if the actor commits himself consistently to practicing it*[my italics]." (63) Martial training (stage combat included!) thus becomes a choice, no more nor less available or valuable than, say, Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement.⁽¹⁰⁾ The "martial choice" *must* share goals with actor training or it is not viable in the first place. The central issue of how acting training programs, movement or combat teachers, or individual acting students will integrate this "valuable and available resource" (Nichols, 43) into their training lives remains--in these accounts at least-- unanswered.

Phillip Zarrilli, in his introduction to *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training* attempts an answer to the problem of integration when he offers "four ways of integrating Asian martial arts into the training process:"

1. Students are immersed in long-term study of one or more martial disciplines. . . .
2. Selected exercises from one or more martial arts are integrated into a comprehensive program of acting/movement training.
3. A teacher trained in martial arts uses his own experience as an inspiration or taking-off point for his own teaching, allowing it to influence how he attempts to approach and solve acting/movement problems.
4. The student is advised to seek martial arts training under a master outside of the prescribed course of study in acting/movement. (16)

But careful reading reveals some problems here: Number one doesn't *integrate* martial training into actor training it makes of it an adjunct only. Number two seems awfully haphazard; number two and three *taken together* amount to the same thing but number two ignores the all-important role of an expert in choosing Zarrilli's "selected exercises." Number four amounts to a generic recommendation and, like number one, does nothing at all to *integrate* martial and actor training again making it a *possible* adjunct only. It also depends very much upon the kind, type, and quality of martial experiences available in whatever region the student finds herself. I suppose "New American Kick Boxing Aerobics" *is* better than nothing. Number three, in fact, appears to be the only truly integral methodology available--to Zarrilli, Nichols, me, or anyone!

An active rethinking seems called for. Zarrilli writes, "The specific martial techniques utilized and how they are integrated into actor training depend on how the individual teacher understands acting, and the process used to actualize a particular paradigm of acting." (16) This makes a fatal error: it presumes martial expertise. An integral solution for bringing martial arts fully into training programs depends, not upon "how the individual teacher understands *acting*, and the process used to actualize a paradigm of *acting*," but primarily in a prospective teacher's *martial* qualifications, understandings, and motivations coupled in a secondary but still important way to a particular understanding and approach to acting pedagogy.⁽¹¹⁾ The other way round just will not work.

Practical issues impinge on integration as well. Nichols' is willing, at least in Chapter Seven of *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training* to admit this basic problem into his general consideration. He repeatedly states in the chapter the caveat that *kendo*⁽¹²⁾ and *iaido*⁽¹³⁾ are not suited for actor training. He writes, "both *kendo* and *iai-do* [sic] require a large outlay of money" (106) and that *kendo* is "clearly not for everyone" (110) and admits to elements which can be "counterproductive to the actor who zealously practices all tenets of the form" (110) and finally adds that "*kendo* and *iai-do* are highly complex forms which, with their particularly demanding techniques and equipment, are best practiced in the *dojo*["way place," a training hall]" (112)

In short, he first admits that *kendo* and *iaido* are at best problematic adjuncts to actor training and then proceeds to offer *kendo*-based exercises (requiring *kendogu*⁽¹⁴⁾, and a knowledge of *kendo*) and follows that with two descriptions of *iaido kata* as an "introduction for those who do not know *iai-do* [all emphases added]" (111) When Nichols writes, in his *Theatre Topics* article, of his commitment to *iaido*⁽¹⁵⁾ he does not mention that going rates for the required practice weapon, an *iaito* or "iai-sword," span the range from \$300 to \$3,000, that the *required* training costume costs at the very least close to \$150, and that training in one of even the most popular forms of *iaido* from a bonafide teacher is hard to come by.⁽¹⁶⁾

I agree wholeheartedly with Nichols' appraisal of the benefits available in disciplined study of swordsmanship--*any* swordsmanship including the swordsmanship taught through SAFD, I would add, though. Generalizations about the value of such training aside, I have serious doubts about *iaido* or *kendo*, per se, as a technique to be integrated into actor training or as a generic valuing model for the lives of my acting students.

However, *kendo kata* (prearranged formal exercises) training is another matter. Nichols nowhere makes mention of the standardized *kata* of modern *kendo*. His emphasis throughout the *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training* essay is upon *shiai*. *Shiai* is Japanese for competition or contest. But *shiai* or "sporting" contest *kendo* is less than half of bonafide *kendo* training and, for all the reasons Nichols gives, the least suitable part for actor training. The standard *kata* or "forms" of modern *kendo*--there are ten, seven with long sword and three involving short sword--are two-person exercises developed over the last century by *kendo* organization governing boards and based in classical exercises. Properly done they are very safe. Wooden swords (Japanese=*bokuto* or *bokken*) and the elimination of traditional *kendo* training costumes would make *kendo kata* practical for actor training praxes. Given a relatively high level of expertise (in theatre *and* *kendo*) on the part of the instaurator, it seems to me that *kendo kata*, adapted and integrated into theatre techniques, would be an excellent training tool.

Richard Nichols' exuberant idealizations of all that is *budo* (Robert Benedetti can't resist admitting that "they begin to sound like a snake-oil pitch"! [Zarrilli, *Asian Martial Arts*, 9]) nowhere appears more clearly than in his rarified descriptions of *kendo* and *iaido* practice.⁽¹⁰²⁾ In reality *kendo* is often brutally competitive and *iaido* downright dangerous. Mark Jones of Napa, California, fifth degree black belt in *Hombu Aikido*⁽¹⁷⁾ and fully certified instructor, under Sugawara Tetsutaka, of *Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto-ryu*⁽¹⁸⁾, tells about the *iai*

student who went to the hospital with his iaito sticking out of his upper left chest. Lucky for him, this was an iaito (a replica weapon designed and made specifically for iai training and not very sharp) and not a "live" and sharp sword. I understand and appreciate the clarity created under the burden of such relentless and actual danger and the consequent seriousness which results but I doubt very much that my acting students' parents would. Nichols does warn that any "lapse in concentration, a moment of sloppy technique or undue tension of the wrist can result in a nasty cut."⁽¹⁹⁾ (112)

Dangers perceived or real notwithstanding, availability and consequent applicability is indeed a tricky issue. Most of my acting students are in rehearsal when the local *taekwondo*⁽²⁰⁾ club is in session. They *may* take a tai chi, judo, fencing, or taekwondo class through my university but these offer limited availability and only introductory value. The credit hours are expensive as well and can add precious time to an already overburdened degree program. Proud to say that each year some few of my students do take advantage of this resource, at least for a semester or two. If students or instructors are to take advantage of Nichols's "valuable and available resource" practical details of availability will have to be dealt with or it will no doubt continue to be "largely untapped." (Nichols, 43)

One way to "tap" the resource of course is to design and instigate programs that integrate it (Zarrilli's numbers two and three above.) Programs that bring in recognized experts to design and teach Asian discipline-based courses including martial practices, succeed though only *to a degree that varies with the skill and credentials of the instructor* That is a big variable. Furthermore, there exist no wealth of martial experts who are *also* theatre proponents. Extant examples of such programs and instructors are thus quite rare and likely to stay so. One such program is that of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Another may be found at the University of Kansas at Lawrence. UW-M includes "Asian Disciplines" in its available degree programs and these include tai chi and Indian martial disciplines.⁽²¹⁾ UK-L makes use of aikido and karate-do.⁽²²⁾ In the words of Professor Zarrilli, the UW program trains actors in part "through" martial art ("Between Theory[es]," 115) not *in* martial art. That is an important though easily overlooked distinction.

Nichols writes of tai chi as an actor's "Way." (44) But tai chi is not one thing but many and, in any one of its styles, it requires many years of study for anything like mastery. Qualified instruction (in the form of someone who has given those many years to the study of tai chi), especially in the vast space between New York and L.A, is still hard--even though far from impossible--to find. Plus, this art, like all martial arts, is embedded in a complex social and cultural framework *unique to it* which cannot be easily, nor always profitably, stripped away. Again, the problem is not in the values of tai chi as an actor training tool (as Robert Benedetti, no doubt, would quickly point out⁽²³⁾) but in *how* the general run of actor-trainees and actor trainers will avail themselves of it.

Nichols offers *aikido*--a Japanese family of martial systems which is, for some aikido teachers at least, much more "warlike" than Nichols (44) or Craig Turner (*Asian Martial Arts*, 88-101) seem to believe--along with tai chi as "attractive teaching tools for movement specialists." (44) Again, though, I am unsure exactly how, short of specializing in a specific member of this family of complex and demanding disciplines *over a period of many years*, movement specialists who are not already long-term aikido students will manage to make use of aikido in their classes.

Craig Turner defines aikido as "a Japanese martial art" (*Asian Martial Arts*, 88) and Professor Nichols calls it "a relatively new form." (Nichols, 44) However, there are now a plethora of officially recognized aikido styles and systems worldwide with a wide array of stated goals, methods, and trappings. No less a martial scholar than Donn Draeger (one of the first truly scholarly Western explicators *and* exponents of Asian martial disciplines and involved particularly with those of Japanese origins) wrote, back in 1974, that

The word "aiki-do" [I prefer the "aikido" spelling.] is a generic term coined in the twentieth century. It is representative of a group of modern disciplines that have broad aims, such as spiritual discipline, religious cultism, physical education, self-defense, recreational activity, and sport. More than thirty different sects of aiki-do exist today. [In 1974 that is and in Japan alone. The numbers have continued to grow, especially in America.] . . . It is most unrealistic to take the position that there is only one aiki-do . . . (*Modern Bujutsu and Budo*, 137)

Each of these aikido "sects" or styles require years of disciplined study for basic mastery, many more for depth. The uniforms and equipment associated with the art are expensive. Qualified instruction remains moderately rare in the Midwest. (Many colleges and universities have "clubs" but high-level instruction is still rare between L.A. and New York.) Aikido, depending on instructor or style, will immerse the student in a complex and specific worldview, complete with all sorts of Japanese and, sometimes, pseudo-Japanese "trappings" which are more or less part and parcel of the art.

Without those trappings, just as with tai chi, aikido begins to lose its *unique* character and become something else. (For one thing, "martial" aspects get more deeply submerged into "theatrical" ones, do they not?) **And this is absolutely essential, necessary, and positive if we are, in the words of Zarrilli, to train actors in part "through" martial arts.** In other words and as I will say again and again, true integration transforms martial study into something new with emergent qualities not present before. It does not just translate it. Syncretism is not integration. A merely translational cobbling together of worthy disciplines is no assurance of an integral or even worthy result. A martial system, truly integrated into movement training for actors, is simply no longer that distinct martial discipline.

That "something new" doesn't rise out of idealized generalizations no matter how well intended. On that basis, I find it extremely problematic that Nichols lumps tai chi and aikido together in the first place. They do not have all that much in common, after all, even though their general spirit may be, in some few and specific instances, similar. Certainly to imply that everything true of aikido is equally or nearly equally true of tai chi would be a fundamental error. The two are as different in origins, practices, and goals as apples and oranges are different in flavor and color. For instance: Tai chi has Chinese origins. Aikido originates in Japan. Tai chi is almost totally a solo practice. Aikido training, speaking in very general terms, involves more use of partnered, "attack-defense" exercises. These are far from "soft" (Nichols, 44) even in the "gentlest" of schools and aikido training can be, again in certain schools or styles under certain teachers, quite harsh, athletic, and, yes, even competitive.⁽²⁴⁾ Aikido places great emphasis on falling and rolling techniques. Tai chi

nearly none. Tai chi requires no special costume, aikido does. Tai chi has pretty much lost--except in certain schools and with certain teachers--many of its combative applications in favor of a Taoist-flavored and broadly defined "spiritualism;" tai chi systems are mostly "about" self-discovery, wellness, and self-expression. Aikido, in any one of its many guises, may or may not be "known for its gentleness of spirit, its vision of harmony and unity in the universe, and for its fundamental tenet that conflict must be avoided whenever possible." (Nichols, 44) Meanwhile, it still embodies, even among its most "spiritual" proponents, the Japanese warrior spirit--powerful, aggressive, even warlike. There is nothing gentle, metaphysics aside, about taking a wrist shear, shoulder lock, and throw. Being dropped onto the mat from three or four feet in the air is indeed a "spiritual" experience and when *sensei* then applies a *sankyo*⁽²⁵⁾ lock, conflict has indeed been (a)voided.

While aikido or tai chi training may be available, the parameters and quality of such training must, given the number of entities involved, vary. Just because tai chi (and to a much lesser extent, aikido) has earned a place in actor training does not mean that "martial arts" has earned such a place. Ideas of a generic unity or uniformity in martial matters have no basis in fact. There is even less hope of finding a uniformly high degree of *quality* in generic "martial arts." Overzealous idealization and generalization notwithstanding, a wide variety of values, of qualities, of types and kinds of experience, is what is actually available in Nichols' "valuable and available resource."

For instance, the Society of American Fight Directors, in the brochure advertising their 1999 Winter Stage Combat Workshop, offers, to quote the copy, "Stage Combat Training for All Levels" which, according to the list provided, includes "aikido" and "tai chi" [sic] along with *nine* other disciplines (including "theatre games") during *a one week* training session. This necessarily slight exposure to aikido and tai chi, through teachers whose affiliations and credentials are left unclear, may indeed benefit the students that attend this ambitious and no doubt intensive week of training. Clearly, there exists a very real and viable movement to integrate Asian martial studies into stage combat. Clearly, these students will get, at least, a working introduction to the disciplines which might lead, indeed, to further and deeper study.

But an introduction to some unspecified styles of aikido or tai chi cannot go very far towards proficiency, towards the "technical and spiritual superiority" which Nichols rightly says comes "only after a lifetime of continuous work." (55) Phillip Zarrilli writes, with a baffling illogic, that "minimum periods of study in a martial discipline range from four to seven years, but the lifelong study of a martial art is most typical." (*Asian Martial Arts*, 13) It seems to me that minimum periods of study could range through any number of years and that lifelong study, *of the best quality, might* result in profound life transformations but is far from being "typical." Typical life expectancy of classical Japanese martial artists in America is, in my experience, between one and three *lessons*.

Short-term and introductory level work in stage combat, aikido, or other martial or movement disciplines indeed *might* help *perhaps* to *maybe* form a foundation that *might*, as Nichols says, "lead one student out of ten to a deeper understanding of the place of discipline in an artist's life" (55) or become key to their future employment. Thus, "the martial arts [may] prove their worth in actor training." (55) Yet I must insist that all those "mights, maybes, and perhapses," all those variables, be fully honored and taken into any accounting of the possible or probable benefits of martial training for actors. While introductory exposure to martial systems indeed offers no doubt useful *translations* of experience I doubt very much that *true transformation* is likely to occur from such exposure with anything like regularity.⁽²⁶⁾

It ought to be clear by now that instauration of "martial arts" training for actors creates a formidably complex set of pedagogical, practical, and technical problems for the average college, university, or conservatory movement/acting teacher even when he is already a martial specialist and doubly so when not.⁽²⁷⁾ Martial arts may be a valuable set of resources. In its sheer complexity though, it is a resource of widely varied value and availability⁽²⁸⁾ for most acting instructors and their students.

To come at the same thing from a different angle, **generalizations about "martial arts" are, at best, problematic.** The heart-felt assertion that "martial arts" is a "valuable and available resource" is simply far too broad a generalization to be of much value. As Zarrilli writes, "Asian martial arts comprise a diverse group of specific fighting forms unique to each Asian country." (*Asian Martial Arts*, 12) In fact, "martial arts" are a vast and varied *array of resources* of sometimes *questionable* value and are certainly not limited to Asia. Nichols' admittedly exuberant idealization of martial arts--four martial arts explicitly and specifically it turns out, tai chi and aikido in the *Theatre Topics* article and kendo and iaido in Chapter seven of Zarrilli's book--and the correlated implication that "martial art" is always, everywhere, and uniformly "available" cannot be reasonably championed except as journalistic expletive. Nichols' argument deduces general principles from broad generalizations; one way or the other there simply aren't enough particulars or specifics to make a solid argument. Perhaps better, but certainly more precise, titles for Nichols' article might have been "Tai Chi and Aikido: Two Ways for Actors," or, "What Actors Might Learn From Tai Chi and Aikido." Likewise, the book *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training* might have been much more precisely titled, *Tai Chi, Kalaripayattu*⁽²⁹⁾, and *Three Forms of Budo in Actor Training* since the book covers no other martial arts at all. Even those changes, as we shall see, are still too general.

Martial practices, writes Phillip Zarrilli, "are context and paradigm specific," they are, he writes, "variable and provisional." They are never "absolute." ("Actualizing Power[s]", 13) He finishes a discussion of Indian martial practices by writing that

practice itself and the subjectivity it helps create are not static, but rather open to manipulation and interpretation in the interplay between the constantly altering horizons on individual subjectivities; the interplay between the metaphors, images, and representations of the body culturally available; the interpretation of the body, experience, and practice articulated by individual masters; and the socio-political and economic environments. Sometimes the "self" crafted and the use to which that self puts its martial powers and practices are for a larger good--all too often today they are *not*. ("Actualizing Power[s]", 45)

There are *many* styles of tai chi and aikido, many teachers of tai chi, many schools of aikido. All are more or less individual, even

idiosyncratic. Martial arts, tai chi, aikido, none of these are one thing. They are all many things. Not every martial school or teaching will be the repository of the wisdom-lessons Nichols suggests are offered by "martial arts." Martial arts simply don't "share the same dream of harmony" (Nichols, 56) except in the most general sense. The generalized, idealized, and romantic awe through which Nichols sees "martial arts" is clear in his statement that "Practitioners of kendo and *iai-do*, great athletes and actors all possess this inner peace in the heat of the moment of combat, competition or performance." (Zarrilli, *Asian Martial Arts*, 103) They *all* do? Always? Only "*great*" actors and athletes possess these magical abilities but all "*practitioners*" of kendo and iaido do?

Faulty generalizations and overcredulous idealization marks our use of the term "martial arts" itself and exacerbates the air of confusion surrounding the whole subject.⁽³⁰⁾ The cloud might be partly cleared away by simple agreement that "**martial arts" is far too broad and imprecise a term to be used in serious discourse on the subject.**" This kind of misapprehension of specifics and generalities, this imprecision, can be seen in Sally Harrison-Pepper's "The Martial Arts: Rites of Passage Dramas of Persuasion," which forms Chapter 3 of *Asian Martial Arts and Actor Training*. Harrison-Pepper writes that *kata* is "form practice in the martial arts." (43) Not, strictly speaking, so. *Kata*, "form" or "to form," is a Japanese idea. It is part of a special pedagogy called *kaho* or "teaching methodology based upon form." More precisely, *kata* is characteristic of all traditional Japanese arts from some schools of acting to flower arranging to tea ceremony to swordsmanship. There is, in fact, no "form practice" common to all martial art.

"Martial arts," write noted martial scholar John Donohue and his colleague Kim Taylor, "is a term useful for the general public, but not for serious scholars of these systems (unless they are referring to the stereotyped ideas of the general public)." (13) Martial scholars of the status of Hunter B. Armstrong acknowledge the term's currency in popular usage to mean any fighting art but especially those of Asian origin. (Donohue and Taylor, 13) In attempting to give Asia primacy through such uses of the term it becomes obvious that

writers are attempting to make an argument for an East/West dichotomy in fighting arts [and, not incidentally, spiritual and artistic disciplines] that gives Asian culture the moral and aesthetic high ground: Asians are profound, insightful, and refined . . . as opposed to Western warriors . . . It is an interesting argument, revealing perhaps more of the predisposition of the researchers than of a grasp of history. As fashionable as it might be to portray the Western military tradition as a vast, technological juggernaut, it is not an accurate assessment of history. Personal weapons were *the* most important element in combat in European history for millenia. . . .

The argument for some sort of cultural aesthetic sense in Asia alone that led the members of its various societies to emphasize personal weapons requiring great skill is charming, romantic, and wrong. It is however, an idea that is extremely difficult to eradicate . . . All fighting is dirty, destructive, and practical. Complex social, historical, and economic reasons account for the disparate development of fighting systems between East and West, not the intrinsic moral superiority of Asian culture. (Donohue and Taylor, 13-14)

We have indeed mystified and romanticized the East. As good liberals all, our distrust of conservative morality, religion, and art has lead us towards an open-faced and overcredulous embrace of all that is Eastern.⁽³¹⁾ It seems clear to me that "**martial arts" as metaphysics, exotica, and esoterica is baggage best jettisoned.**" "Martial arts," wonderful as they are, possess no special powers or properties, are, in fact, very straightforward and mundane affairs though they often come couched in metaphysical language and dogma. I do not have to "know kung fu" to teach a stage combat student how to deliver a theatrically effective kick to the head. The real world of martial arts is no more like David Carradine's *Kung Fu* T.V. shows than the world of theatre is like a Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney movie. Martial arts exotica and esoterica has flowed down through the sixties' radical search for all that was alternative; through the popularity of Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Chuck Norris, and Steven Seagal; and into a mythology of the East that has often passed for understanding. Martial arts exotica and esoterica has, in fact, become a barrier to understanding. It has become nothing more nor less than extra, and cumbersome, baggage we bear on our journey across the borderlands between "martial" art and "theatre" art.

Confusion seems a natural byproduct of too much reliance upon esoterica in all its forms. What once, perhaps, may have seemed exotic (and in the sixties at least, therefore, attractive) in martial arts now seems merely to contribute to obscurity. We must, for the sake of serious martial scholarship and discourse--and for the practical needs of actors seeking employment in a global job market where superficial knowledge can be a real handicap--reframe all our explication and remove the schroud of esoterica we have tended to throw over martial practices--and, of course, actor training practices as well.

Now, I applaud Phyllis G. Richmond and Bill Lengfelder for their work in bringing together Alexander Technique, tai chi, and stage combat in their movement classes at Southern Methodist University and for their express openness to dialogue. I think their students are very lucky to have such inspired, imaginative, courageous instruction. But if they want to truly integrate "use, somatics, and skills," (168) *through* their three disciplines (their expressed aim in the article) they must recognize that tai chi, stage combat, and Alexander Technique must then vanish into a larger, emergent unity free to a greater or lesser extent from esoterica in all its forms.

Unfortunately they all too easily, even glibly, fall victim to "martial arts" esoterica in claims that do not support emergence. For instance, they claim that students learn, in part through study of tai chi, to "listen through" their "body and blade" and to do all sorts of things with "energies" among them "sharpen their use of 'animal energy.'"⁽³²⁾ (170-171) I believe in the importance of direct experience (a useful definition of mysticism.) I am, of course, perfectly in favor of any work that might expand an actors' sensitivity. I also know how hard it sometimes is to translate lived experience into words. Yet, while I am no literalist, materialist, or positivist, I demand, like Ken Wilber, "confirming truth" drawn from "the total web of evidence" beyond "pet contexts and ideology." (*Eye of Spirit*, 132) In essence I simply want to know *exactly* how a student "hears" with his hand and "through" his blade so that I may test, confirm *and repeat it*.⁽³³⁾

I admire Craig Turner's attempt to demystify *ki*. He writes that *ki* is best defined "as the feeling of mind and body in harmony. It is not mystical." (*Asian Martial Arts*, 91) Well and good, as far as it goes. He agrees with aikido luminaries Saotome Mitsugi and Gozo Shioda.

Shioda calls ki simply "the mastery of balance." (Shioda, *Total Aikido*, 17) Saotome declares that

Many aikido students search for a special kind of magical energy streaming from the end of their extended hands, believing that their progress depends on its mystical development. The term [however] represents something that extends into the most ordinary aspects of daily life. (Saotome, *Aikido and the Harmony of Nature*, 149)

In reading Dave Lowry's *Sword and Brush* I note that the *kanji* character used to write this idea is composed of a symbolic pot of boiling rice and the vapor that rises from it. "Ki refers," writes Lowry, "to an organic force that may take myriad forms; it may describe the climate, an individual's personality, or those vague sympathies and sensations we have all experienced." (*Sword and Brush*, 42-43) For budo exponents ki is nothing more than a matter to be attended to in regular, hard training.

Turner wants, it seems at first blush, to demystify ki. Why, then, in an article entitled "Aikido: A Way of Coordinating Mind and Body," does he then spend eleven-plus pages on "ki exercises" and only a tad more than two on a discussion of the nature and value of aikido itself?

I suspect that part of the answer is that Turner's primary connection to aikido comes through Ki Society International. *Asian Martial Arts*, 127) Koichi Tohei, the founder of that organization, instaurated ki as a separate doctrine within aikido and first taught exercises designed to promote ki awareness and development among *non-aikido students*. Tohei and his followers developed a set of demonstrations of the power of ki that rivals and critics sometimes labeled as parlor tricks. Parlor tricks or not, (34) these are properly known as *kokyu-ryoku* or "breathing power" exercises. If ki was indeed Turner's specific concern in the present article he ought, perhaps, to have better fit his title and thesis to that specific purpose. The article actually has, again, very little to say about aikido.

Turner gives some unusual examples of what he styles as "ki exercises" in any case and tends as well towards broad generalizations in their explication and support. He presents a version of the "unbendable arm" exercise I have never seen. (*Asian Martial Arts*, 90-91) Nothing wrong with that but a more common way is to rest the "unbendable arm" on the shoulder of the "bender" who places both palms just above the elbow and pulls down from there. In trying to bend the unbendable arm the "bender" is supposed to learn about correct breathing, posture, and balance. "Bending" the arm per se was originally *beside the point*.

Ranging further outside the point, Turner offers a scene from *Seven Samurai* as illustrative of the functioning of ki. (*Asian Martial Arts*, 92) In the scene in question, the character "Kyuzo," played by Miyaguchi Seiji, indeed outfights a loud, blustery, and clearly inferior swordsman in a virtuoso display of swordsmanship. That this display is due to Kyuzo's "extension" of ki is, as far as I can tell, simply an assumption Turner asserts, since there is no mention of the idea in any of the dialogue. Such "examples" do little to enhance understanding of the complex idea that is ki.

Turner's "Extending ki beyond the body" (*Asian Martial Arts*, 91) exercise uses, it seems to me, many of the same principles as contemporary Chinese "Shaolin" monks who demonstrate "martial" abilities to crowds of tourists and earn, just like American Six Flags performers, a paycheck at the end of the month. In point of fact, the bending of metal spikes and bamboo spears against bare throats or stomachs; the breaking of boards, bricks, and ice with and across limbs; demonstrates the mundane principles of physics and the effort-rooted development of personal confidence *even if the expression "ki flow" might be used to explain the complex biomechanical and physiological and psychological processes at work*. Turner's figures 6.3 and 6.4 simply show the importance of good posture and of carefully posing photos. (Zarrilli, *Asian Martial Arts*, 92) I would, for anyone interested in learning about ki as such, suggest a close study of the exercises offered in Payson Burt's article, "Proximity: The Consequences of Conflict and Distance, Part I," found in the Spring and Summer 1999 issue of *The Fight Master*. This treatment of the search to "find a truthful process for the actor to discover appropriate reactions" (25) is all the more valuable in coming to an understanding of the idea of ki since Burt never mentions the word!

On the other hand, Turner's "one-point" exercises complicate matters (93-99) while they simply demonstrate the purely physical difference between lifting one, solid mass and a loose, disconnected one. I doubt that student actors need notions of "one-pointedness" or the Japanese term *itten*, no matter how well-understood or explicated, in working out the problem of relaxation. True one-pointedness imagines the mind, something like "gut" awareness, settled into the bodily center. Again, this notion need not be linked, through association or explication, with notions of ki as a magic or mysterious "force." Burt, and others like him, gets at the same ideas without reference to any mysterious force.

Although I would suggest other seated positions than *seiza*, (35) I find Turner's meditation exercises, except for the ever intrusive ki and "one-point," to be sound. Nichols refers to similar exercises as "*mokuso*" (*Asian Martial Arts*, 107) but that word actually just means something like "be still and quiet" and is not the name of an exercise at all. It is more of a command or request. *Shikan taza* is the Japanese phrase for pure or unconditioned contemplation. Breath following or watching meditation is *zuisokukan*, breath counting meditations are called *susokukan*. The generic word for contemplation is *kan* as in "inward seeing" or "seeing with the eyes of mind or spirit." These exercises are usually *not* performed in *seiza* however. The various lotus postions are traditionally preferred but seated in a chair, providing the hips are higher than the knees, or even lying down, providing the meditator uses enough will to stay awake, will work just fine. Also, most meditative practices in budo or Buddhist style do not involve fully-closed eyes; eyes are to be shaded by relaxed eyelids. We wish to go deeper into the world not remove ourselves from it. (36)

Richard Nichols misrepresents the concept of *bushido*. (Zarrilli, *Asian Martial Arts*, 104) It is little wonder. Bushido resides as much in the realm of exotica, legend, myth, and, it turns out, W.W. II Japanese nationalistic fervor, as it does in any simple "code." The idea has a complex but instructive history. Early Japanese warriors might claim to follow what came to be called *kyuba-no-michi*, the "Way of the Bow and the Horse." They were, after all, the country's "proto-knights," mounted on horses and armed with bow and arrow. (37) In later years and in various locations warriors spoke and wrote of *bukyo* the "Warrior's Creed" and *shido* the "Gentleperson's Way." In 1615 the *Buke-shohatto* or "Laws of the Military Houses" was formulated by the shogunate. In 1685 Yamaga Soko wrote a military code which

was widely followed. In the early 18th Century, Yamamoto Tsunetomo, a retired military man who had worked as a government official (he was not primarily a warrior himself, an important fact) wrote a little book, *Hidden Among Fallen Leaves* or *Hagakure*. Writing a martial code in the most unmartial of times, Yamamoto laments a partly mythic ("retro-romantic" Ken Wilber might call it) past in which fighting men *fought* and fought *honorably*. Never mind the brutality, that was, to him, what life *should* have been like. Finally, in 1900, Nitobe Inazo published an account of warrior manners and mores entitled, *Bushido: the Soul of Japan*. It is important to note that he was Christian, European-educated and thus at least somewhat Western-minded. In it he writes, with I presume a straight face, of young initiates into manhood going out to test their first swords upon rocks! This book, probably as much as any other, created and maintains to this day, the popular notion of some ancient written or unwritten code which "historically guided the practical or philosophical life of the bushi, or warrior." (*Asian Martial Arts*, 104)

In the first place there is simply no justification for the idea that there was or is one and only one Japanese warrior to be guided by one and only one code; "samurai" and "bushido" are metonymic or tropeic terms in contemporary Western usage and, like "martial arts," weakly used to suggest precise ideas. In the second the notion of *bushido* is primarily a modern one with modern roots and modern implications for Japanese nationalism. Bushido as a generalized historical concept won't hold water and like all such exotica it is best jettisoned.

An integral approach to martial and theatrical disciplines demands that so-called "martial" terminology be clarified and demystified too. To do that requires first the realization that **the native language of a martial discipline has simply no special powers or significance, that all history needs constant reevaluation, and that jargon in all its forms is the enemy of clarity**. These complex, foreign signs and signifiers, these kinds of jargon, offer *translations* of the martial experience. They by no means automatically lead, in or of themselves, to *transformations*. Martial training is certainly *mystical*, that is the student is asked to immerse herself, through direct experience, in questions that may have no simple answers. Yet, dogma founded upon belief alone and shrouded in obscure language has no justifiable role for the intellectually responsible student or teacher beyond our pleasure in something exotic. Acting students can do without fancy foreign terminology when ideas like "centering" or "posture" will do just fine. Professor Zarrilli nicely sums up the case.

I believe that "better" practice results from being clear, articulate, and concise about what we are doing and why we are doing it--and from taking into account the implicit ideological and power dynamics at work in both intercultural borrowing and the pedagogical process. I intentionally demystify practice of non-Western techniques so that the students do not project romantic misconceptions about the "orient" or "mysticism" onto the bodily-based materiality of the hard work of daily practice. Even though I have studied extensively with traditional "gurus" for a number of years, I intentionally do not construct myself as a guru but rather as a particularly positioned Western teacher who has had a particular set of experiences studying in India and the United States. I place responsibility for learning on the student. [See the quote from Onuma Hideharu below for an extension of this last point.] ("Between Theory[es]," 115)

We might be well-advised to follow Zarrilli's lead and demystify martial-based terminology and pedagogy wherever and whenever possible. [\(38\)](#)

Indeed, the widespread use of martial jargon offers more mystique than clarity. For instance, I might remind Nichols that there were no 'samurai' aside from "Japanese samurai." (55) Also we might want to add that surely not all samurai "spent each day constantly involved in a struggle to improve."(55) Perhaps one or two were indolent, lazy, inept, stupid?

By supposing that all Japanese fighting men formed a single group united by common principles and ideals it is easy to ignore the fact that throughout Japanese history, men of combat have stemmed from different social strata, entered military service for different reasons, utilized different weapons (and thus different fighting techniques, strategies, and tactics), been guided by dissimilar ethics, enjoyed different rights and privileges, and exercised different political positions. Because these are group differences, they are not to be ignored. And in the interest of accuracy, they must not be lumped together under broad generalizations. (Draeger, *Classical Bujutsu*, 16)

Very few "samurai" pursued martial training in the "budo" sense. They were too busy making a living. During wartime most "samurai" relied on basic training and personal experience to survive combat--just as the "grunts" have always done. During peacetime they worked or managed farms, ran the country, engaged in trade, and otherwise attempted to make a living. All members of the warrior class were not martial artists. Some were but they are the exceptions and not the rule. Becoming a "martial artist" has been and will always be a matter only for those with the leisure and funds to permit it.

The word "samurai" itself is problematic for martial historians. Donn Draeger says that "it is an error to refer to all warriors as samurai or to assume that the samurai, as a group, ruled the nation of Japan either during its periods of military government or at any other time." (*Classical Bujutsu*, 16) *Bushi* is the correct term for "warrior," *bujin* might be said to mean "knight," and *bugeisha* can be translated into "martial artist." Samurai literally means "one who serves" and was used to designate only a specific set of ranks within the warrior class (*buke*) during specific, limited periods of history. The use of terms like "samurai" has become so shrouded in myth and magic as to make them next to useless in anything but popular discourse and as metonym or trope.

The matter of *metsuke* or "gaze" in budo gets confused in some accounts. Nichols declares that "one of the indelible imprints of the *kendo* experience" is "unceasing, penetrating eye contact." (*Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training* 108) While the beginning *kendo* student is well- advised to look at his partner's face and sometimes, when possible, make eye contact, this is only a starting point. Anything rigid in gaze, weapon position, posture, or mind is impuned in *kendo*. More advanced students are expected to allow their gaze to move from the opponent's weapon-tip and back to the face and so on as conditions dictate. Constant eye contact in stage combat or acting contexts clearly becomes a problem. Advanced budo students are advised to use "enzen no metsuke." That is, just as in sport fencing in the West, to look at the opponent as a whole, as in "looking at a distant mountain."

The lexicon of martial arts includes historical figures as well and these names (and the "histories" that go with them) likewise deserve careful attention. Nichols' treatment of legendary figure Miyamoto Musashi (*Asian Martial Arts*, 103) is hagiography pure and simple. We have to be very careful in dealing with this figure. Disputes still rage about the details of his actual life. The source of popular accounts of his life may, actually, be several different people. He may have killed Sasaki Kojiro with an oar or not. He is very much a "Robin Hood" kind of figure. The headmaster of my style, Otake Risuke, points out that, legend or not, Musashi didn't wash, slept on a board, had no children (that we know anything sure about) and left only legendry and a questionable association to what is accounted his ryu, *Niten Ichi-ryu*.

The idea of "inner peace" has entered the jargon of martial arts and Nichols' comments about it exemplify this mostly unexamined idea. First off, kendo and iaido do not "possess" any "combination of discipline over self and a concomitant inner quiet." (*Asian Martial Arts*, 103) They *may* encourage a devoted student to come to possession of these qualities but they may also encourage the idea that violence is an appropriate answer to conflict. There is also, in considering issues of wellness, the problem with injuries. Aikido in particular, among arts systems claiming wellness as a goal, seems plagued with joint injuries.

I cannot begin to understand why Nichols, a person of no small knowledge and accomplishment in this field, should state flatly that "inner peace must always have been an implicit part of the earliest sword practice." (*Asian Martial Arts*, 103) The earliest forms of sword practice probably had more in common with Daddy showing Junior how to keep from being whipped by the neighborhood bully than with any implicit or romantic "inner peace." This notion is mythic and pretty far from what must have been the realities of the battlefield. As a point of fact, post-modern martial instruction, I think in order to compete for attention and resources, right along with the film and television industries, often promotes more competitive, violent, and aggressive tendencies in its students. We must be very careful, if we are seeking ways of peace, in selecting teachers, styles, and schools.

The retro-romance associated with mythic martial arts goes on and on. Nichols' notion that the Japanese swordsman's body was "directly exposed and inviting attack" (*Asian Martial Arts*, 103) is romantic, Asian-centric, nonsense with no basis in historical reality. "The warrior left his body exposed to the opponent. His goal was to let the opponent make a wrong move and react decisively with his own blow. *In combat one cannot worry about death or injury*[my italics]" (*Asian Martial Arts*, 105) Avoiding weakness or *suki* in posture is essential in classical and modern swordsmanship; unless, in classical times, the swordsman felt suicidal or, in modern times, the swordsman wishes to lose every match. *Suki* is a matter of tiny increments of time and space and few who have not practiced an authentic form of classical swordsmanship will understand just how tiny. The Japanese sword is handled with *either* one or two hands not because of some strange idea that it is braver to face the enemy frontally but probably because the earliest aristocratic soldiers in Japan were archers first and swordsmen second. When arrows were spent or the last bowstring broken then both hands could be used on the sword.

It is likewise unlikely that any decent kendo player would exchange a flurry of "ten or fifteen blows" in "seconds" (*Asian Martial Arts*, 102) unless they were showing off. The referee looks for that one telling blow and he and teacher look harshly upon such waste of energy. One blow, correctly done, is all it takes. [\(39\)](#)

I might also point out for the sake of clarity and completeness that Phillip Zarrilli's generalization that all karatedo is based on "linear movements. . . . Hard, percussive, and angular" (*Asian Martial Arts*, 15) is simply not correct. Among many examples of karatedo that are light, circular, and projective I call the reader's attention to *Wado-ryu*. Founded by Otsuka Hidenori (pictured in action, at the age of eighty-two, on page 148-149 of Donn Draeger's *Modern Bujutsu and Budo*), it combines *jujutsu* ("pliancy technique") with Funakoshi Gichin's "original" karatedo to form the "Harmony Way" style of karatedo. Also, although karatedo originates on Okinawa and has roots in China it has been thoroughly, except in rare instances where Okinawan masters have managed to keep their teachings more or less intact, "Japanized." Okinawa is and has been for centuries a part of Japan, in any case. Again, karatedo is a family of many styles and many kinds and many methods. Generic assertions and faulty or mythic generalizations of power and grace and elegance and speed and peace and provenance just don't hold up under scrutiny.

All martial claims and historical assertions ought to be subject to such scrutiny. Stage combat has already been clarified and historical connections solidified by careful reference to evidence and historical sources weighed and examined carefully. This work is ongoing. We must do the same with Asian martial history and not settle for the esotericism, jingoism, and hagiography that often passes as history. I can only wonder why Richard Nichols repeats himself exactly on pages 28 and 105 of *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training* Shissai Chozan was not primarily a noteworthy "swordsman-teacher" as Nichols asserts. (28 and 105) He was primarily an author and apologist for neo-Confusian principles. (Kammer, 12-38)

So the confusion fostered by a "special" attitude towards a mostly-imaginary world of Asian martial arts continues. When it is clear that my grasp (and subsequent communication) of a principle in my native language is somehow not adequate alone, then, and only then, should I make substantive use of non-native terminology. There are no "aikido terms"[\(40\)](#) or "tai chi terms" as such just Japanese or Chinese words and phrases with no special or inherent powers. Furthermore, Japanese and Chinese, are "ideographic" and "inflected" languages and are thus VERY difficult to render precisely into English without close grasp of the written characters involved and a deeply cultural and contextual comprehension. High-ranking budo instructors who speak English invariably use that language in classes in America *as much as possible*. American instructors who speak even a little Japanese often--with sometimes comic seriousness--insist on the use of Japanese in even non-technical contexts within their training halls. In the name of clarity and precision we might wish to follow the lead of our foreign teachers and reject all self-serving jargon, striving to avoid getting lost in our own secret code, as popular writer Kathleen Norris recently wrote, "the jargon that speaks only to the converted." (8)

Richmond and Lengfelder evidence an attachment to foreign terms. Lengfelder (I assume, since he is the tai chi instructor of the two) jumps from Chinese terminology to Japanese *without further explanation*. After mentioning such Chinese concepts as *T'ui Chi Sh'uo*, *Da*

Lu, Wu Wei, and Sung [capitalization is Richmond and Lengfelder's] he then moves on to *Seishin Kai* and *Kime* [again, capitalization is not mine.] (170) These terms need no capitalization; they are all common philosophical or descriptive terms and not proper names or titles. They would, in the first place, have been much better abandoned in favor of clear, simple English equivalents. A much more glaring problem exists here, though. The last two terms are not Chinese. They are out of place in a discussion of Chinese/tai chi philosophy; *they are Japanese terms*. If Richmond and Lengfelder know this they make no explanation. Such inexplicable and unexplained lexicon leaping does not inspire trust.

Zanshin does not mean what Richard Nichols seems to think it means. His "Exercise 4. Zanshin Flow" (*Asian Martial Arts*, 110) gives little or no explication of the term nor, even, it seems to me, of the exercise in question. It amounts to dressing up in *kendogu* and pointing bamboo swords at one another while going through the inner monologues of a scene. We are instructed to "just let the *shina's* energy and your own movement do the 'talking'" (Zarrilli, *Asian Martial Arts*, 110) No other explication is given even though Nichols makes some sweeping claims about its value to actors.

What any of that has to do with "alertness-remaining-form," "lingering spirit," or *zanshin* I am left to tease out for myself. I define *zanshin* as "followthrough;" that term alone is fine for dealing with acting students. *Zanshin* "remains," tangible after a well-completed action. It is visible in posture and sensible in the "frozen moment" at the end of a technique but it permeates any well-practiced action in just the sense that followthrough exists within the total and complete execution of, say, an expert golf swing. Dave Lowry suggests that

The concept of *zanshin* is a complex one, integrating physical presence, technical skill, and emotional attitude. Vigilant calm. Action in repose. Mentally, *zanshin* is the quality of diffusion, a steadfast awareness of all that transpires without focusing on, and so being distracted by, any one phenomenon. Bodily, *zanshin* is expressed through a posture that is relaxed yet resonant with potential power. When an accomplished bugeisha [student or exponent of martial art] moves decisively, his technique appears to vibrate past the conclusion of the action. Facing multiple opponents, his concentration is never arrested by one of the many. . . .

The beginner is apt to mistake a fierce grimace and stance of rigid aggression for *zanshin*. But such artifice is only a caricature that cannot be maintained for very long. It is too exhausting and it misses the point. True *zanshin*, developed over a lengthy period of rigorous training, is never so concentrated a force. (*Sword and Brush*, 93)

It is strange that Nichols goes no deeper into *zanshin* since one of the concerns expressed throughout his present writings is the young actor's weak or absent powers of focus. I think there can be no doubt that this is central: Young actors struggle constantly with concentration, focus, and their correlate, "finish" in scenework. Like Lowry I would equate *zanshin* and concentration. Unlike Nichols, however, I would bring the notion of *zanshin* more clearly into line with the actor's world and out of the realm of myth, magic, and mystery associated wrongly with "martial arts."

For me concentration means "mindfulness," a wide open attention that is general but not vague. Out of this mental state we may freely determine upon *what*, at this moment, we ought to *focus*. Lowry called this "steadfast awareness." Hard training in budomight indeed lead to deeper understanding of followthrough, of finish, of concentration, and of focus; but, then again, so will such a disciplined approach to tennis. The term *zanshin* itself has no special power to communicate these ideas and, I think, has no special place in actor training contexts except maybe as interesting trivia.

Trivia or not, esoteric "martial arts" terminology can and often does get in our way, both as teachers and as expositors of movement. Confusion results. Nichols makes a telling error in calling the *chiburi*⁽⁴¹⁾ portion of an *iai kata* a "*zanshin* position." (*Asian Martial Arts*, 112) It should be very clear that there just is no such thing; all the fully developed positions of an *iai kata* are *zanshin* positions. The point is that *zanshin* is about physical and mental followthrough and finish, concentration and focus. While these are essential skills of acting they are not, perhaps, best taught through "kendo" exercises. We might, teacher and student, learn something about them through a study of kendo. Again, just how that learning is to be applied to acting or acting instruction is another story. In any case and at the very least, we ought to be careful and sparing in our use of terms like *zanshin*.

I confess to being somewhat at a loss as to Sally Harrison-Pepper's confused use of terms in Chapter 3 of *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training*. She writes of *ki*, the Japanese term we have already encountered, of *kata*, the Japanese term for the practices of formalization associated with traditional art instruction, and she puts *ki* with "*hai*"⁽⁴²⁾ to form something she calls "*ki-hai*." But the word for "unification" (*ai*) of the "energy of intention" with the "energy of action" (*ki*) is *kiai* not "*ki-hai*." A misspelling, let us say, and leave it at that.

A more troubling problem surfaces as she confuses Japanese terms with Korean martial practices. Now, if (and I think only if) Harrison's teacher, a Mr. Kim of an unnamed system, was a Korean practitioner of a Japanese martial system the confusion would have been easily eliminated by a simple explanation of that fact. However, no such explication is forthcoming. The reader is, therefore, forced to conclude that Harrison-Pepper or her teachers simply don't know the difference. There is also that troubling spelling error in the use of the term *kiai* which does not simply or only mean "shout."⁽⁴¹⁾ In Korean the "way hall" is called *adojang*, in Japanese *dojo*, the Korean word for a formal exercise is *hyung* not *kata*, and so on. Likewise, except in popular and advertising usage "karate" is not a Korean martial system. The Korean national sport, arguably the most popular form of martial discipline in the world today, is called, generically (there are various styles and schools), *taekwondo*. Some other Korean martial systems are known as *hwarangdo*, *mudukwan*, *tangsoodo*, and *hapkido*.

Lexicography and its use (or abuse) is, of course, not the only area where martial arts as esoterica or exotica, as mythic level belief system, becomes problematic. **As a special badge of authority and skill the "black belt" is simply a twentieth century myth which actually confers no universally recognized status upon teachers or students outside of specific, limited, and quite prosaic contexts.**⁽⁴²⁾ Consider this: Belt rankings⁽⁴³⁾ were first invented by the Japanese at the turn of the century. Kano Jigoro, the father of

modern judo and Funakoshi Gichin, the father of modern karate were both instrumental in the adoption of belt ranking. Ranking served, in part, as a method of ordering and ranking public school pupils. In the then-new Japanese public schools, modeled after European and American school systems, students would "take" kendo, karate-do, and judo much like our students take "P.E." Belt rankings, then and now, represent only levels of achievement within specific organizations. They have no universal meaning. The assertion that T.S. Okuyama, slated to teach aikido at the International Paddy Crean Stage Combat Workshop, is a *shidojin* (a member of a sort of teacher's union in a number of budo organizations; the term does not denote a rank per se) and a 5th *dan*, according to the brochure copy, would carry more weight if the name of the aikido organization certifying the rank and teacher affiliations were also mentioned. There is really no meaning explicit to "*shidojin*" or "5th dan" *alone*. All ranks are context specific within a specific organization. "5th dan, All Japan Karate-do Association, under Nakayama-sensei" is a *meaningful* statement of credentials. "5th dan" by itself might indicate a rank earned in the "St. Cloud Martial Arts League" or the "Boone County Ryu of Tiger Kung Fu."

Belt rankings were never adopted by some arts. Arts of classical origin or more tradition-bound praxes, never adopted them. Those of non-Japanese provenance have only sometimes adopted the practice but these are innovations, not ancient rituals.

Some arts have rigorous and demanding standards others are more loose. Some systems award belts on a standard schedule: "Six Months to Black Belt, Free Uniform!" Still others relate financial considerations⁽⁴⁴⁾ to rankings in perhaps less than mystical ways.

Mr. Lengfelder's assertion that he holds "four black belts" (168) would mean more if we knew in what arts, from whom, and when these ranks were earned. It is also important to know what "degree" of black belt is meant since the more traditional styles use as many as ten ranks. Possessing a whole closetful of first *dan* rankings suggests a lot of relatively short term and diffuse experiences. Holding one fifth *dan* earned under the tutelage of a bonafide master in a recognized and respected organization, suggests a longer-term, more singular, and more intense kind of experience. Belt ranking is always and everywhere context specific.

All demystification, not to put too fine a point on it, can help to reduce **avoid reductionism and elevationism of martial arts and martial terms**. Might it not also, along with a general improvement in the depth of understanding, go a long way towards improving the simple trustworthiness of accounts of martial-based actor training techniques?

Richmond and Lengfelder may or may not be guilty of reductionism in their use of tai chi to assist Alexander to assist stage combat. I find their articulation of their program somewhat confusing in that regard. Granted, as they suggest, combined terminology, coming from three disciplines to the student dealing with singular and individual problems, may have a greater cumulative effect. That effect *itself* is not necessarily integrative however; translation adds signifiers, it *might* clarify referents. Using tai chi, Alexander Technique, and stage combat to fill gaps left by one another truly integrates. A new whole, with emergent properties can result.

However, heaps, as Ken Wilber has put it, are not wholes; syncretics is not integration. Tai chi may be *translated* as "somatics." but that is merely an arbitrary label, a translation. "Skills" is simply a label we might arbitrarily assign to stage combat. Reductions of this sort, carried too far or too "fast and loose," easily become anti-integrative as disciplines are not *interwoven* but merely *interchanged*. It is, in fact, the necessarily *partial* natures of each discipline that must be fully honored in integral thought: What stays and what goes? What gap will be filled in tai chi for theatre students by Alexander Technique? What gap filled in Alexander Technique by tai chi? And so on, melding, intraweaving, marrying.

Richmond and Lengfelder do not, I believe, actually wish to reduce tai chi to "somatics," stage combat to "skills," and Alexander to "use." Nor are they actually teaching "somatics," "skills," and "use" through tai chi, stage combat, and Alexander. Their article actually presents the idea of teaching somatics, use, and skills with *selected exercises drawn from* the three disciplines. But things are not that clear at first reading for fairly straightforward reasons. First, more specifics would help clarify their integral thinking. Second, the use of "posture" as illustrative of integral praxes confuses the account for posture is one area that is *not partial at all*. The posture Richmond and Lengfelder show in their illustrations (173, 175) could just as readily have been corrected by good tai chi or stage combat instruction *in the first place*. Each of the three disciplines attends so nicely to posture that one may *substitute* or stand in for the others. In matters of posture the three do not need one another to plug gaps. They are merely interchangeable. While this approaches and begins integration, deeper integration will mean uprooting gaps, falsenesses, and "tyrannies" (Wilber, *Eye of Spirit*, xv) in each of these three truths *as each and all reflect upon actor training* and each and all plug gaps in the others.

Integral approaches to movement training cannot simply interchange one discipline for another. Martial art cannot simply "stand in" for stage movement training.⁽⁴⁵⁾ All wholes are also parts and all parts are also wholes. In other words, tai chi doesn't have any special agency without a correlated communality, no special rights without correlated responsibilities, no special or prior or isolated intrinsic value alone without extrinsic value as well. Integrating "partial/wholenesses" must honor commonality, identify partiality, and eliminate gaps. Integral thinking is profoundly holistic, unifying, inclusive, and all-level. Reductionism, useful as it is in empirical investigation and analysis, carried too far, arrests integral development.

Elevationist readings of martial disciplines are also best avoided. Where reductionism prevents deep integration by imposing narrow labels and contexts, elevationism stymies integrative progress by demanding a too-overawing status, too broad a context. Elevation of this sort roots in faulty deductions based in overgeneralizations, dogma, and myth.

With martial myth and dogma set aside, the simple hard work at the heart of martial disciplines, comes to the fore. Martial art simply has no inherently elevated status, is in fact just another set of tools among tools. One of Japan's preminent martial artists, archer Onuma Hideharu, has written

Kyudo [Japanese archery] cannot really change [teach?] us, we can only change [teach?] ourselves. Kyudo is a metaphor for

life. Shooting is merely a reflection of our true selves; how you are in life is how you will be in shooting. Someone who is sloppy and careless will have problems with the shooting procedure. One who is competitive and aggressive will compete with himself and others and fight with the bow and arrow. People who have a tendency to focus their attention on one subject at the expense of all else will focus on hitting the target and ignore form and etiquette. Excuse-makers will make excuses. Boasters will boast. Kyudo itself cannot change all this, but it can make these things much more obvious to us. It then becomes our responsibility to recognize the problems and make the necessary changes. (*Kyudo*, 144)

Compare Professor Nichols' comments to that passage and it becomes clear that Nichols may have elevated martial practices to a status it does not deserve. After calling actors "the laziest of all artists," Nichols suggests that "practice of a martial art leads, sometimes slowly and painfully, to an awareness that discipline is not a negative word." (55) Precisely because in my experience many actors, including me, are indeed "the laziest of all artists," I have found few actors that are ready, at the drop of a value claim, to get enthused about martial training outside of the requirements of the movement studio.⁽⁴⁶⁾ It is hard enough to just get some twenty-year-old actors to quit smoking, drink less, and get some daily exercise, much less to invest in fencing classes, yoga, tai chi, or stage combat. I wonder how, for Nichols, the "martial arts," even a specific martial discipline, will magically lift "the laziest of artists" into a self-motivated, committed, disciplined, and hard-working lifestyle.

Elevate them though we might, martial arts cannot magically create discipline. They are not panacea nor autopoeitic miracles. It is true that the more disciplined our practices are (whatever those practices may be) the more discipline may grow in us. It is not true that martial art will have a universal or automatic effect on the actor's level of discipline, even among those rare ones who will commit some effort, money, and time to them. There are simply too many variables involved. Again, an actor will get from martial art training only a context-specific and limited set of outcomes. For some it may be just the ticket--given, again, the "right" level of commitment and discipline. Others will never even go into the dojo in the first place. Some will find the elevated value claims of martial disciplines or teachers (or National Stage Combat Workshops!) off-putting. Some will just believe (and they are, of course, always partly right) that these elevated claims are just too good to be true. Martial arts, including stage combat, then become simply unattainable or merely unworthy. Reduction in elevationism (the pun is intentional) brings martial practices like stage combat down to earth where we may more clearly see them for what they are (and aren't) and more readily integrate them into the broader range of theatrical practice.

My last concern is a complex one that can be expressed quite simply: **Zen Buddhism and martial practices are not identical.** Any assertion or implication that Zen and martial arts are one is at best an oversimplification and at worst misrepresentation and myth, pure and simple. Even so, the idea that Zen Buddhism⁽⁴⁷⁾ is somehow directly and automatically and always related in some verifiable way to martial practices has proven almost impossible to eradicate.

Phillip Zarilli's assertion that the *do* forms of Japanese martial disciplines are a "logical development of Zen Buddhist belief" (*Asian Martial Arts*, 15) shows just how deep and far this myth can reach. The *do* forms of martial practice resulted from a confluence of many cultural and social forces over many centuries. Taoist, neo-Confucian, Shintoist, and Mahayana Buddhist influences all impacted budo practices. In *Sword and Brush*, Dave Lowry writes that *do* or *tao*

is a contribution of the Taoists, those ancestral savants of China whose philosophy of the Tao--Do in Japanese--urged a life attuned to the currents of nature. . . . the traces of the Way are very old. It took form the first time an individual engaged in some activity with a consciousness beyond the utilitarian, past the restrictions of ego. (19)

Zarilli here supports faulty assumptions about Zen that don't only not hold up under scrutiny but actually promote ongoing confusion about martial arts, Zen, and both. In a sense, the *do* forms gave birth to Zen and not the other way round!

Now, there may in fact be a "Zen way to the martial arts," as Taisen Deshimaru titled the book from which Professor Nichols gets one of his opening quotes. (43) There may in fact be a "martial arts way to Zen." The first path would use Zen to get to a goal *other than liberation*. This would be "first stage" use of Zen; Buddhist meditative practice for the sake of improved life function. In the second, martial practices would become adjuncts to meditation practiced for the sake of ultimate and universal liberation from suffering. That is the highest state of Buddhist practice. Both of these paths may finally come to the same thing but the distinction is important when we consider the practical roots of martial practices: fighting men need immediate, pragmatic, practical benefits; monks can afford to devote a life to contemplation aimed at ultimate liberation.

Where fighting men were in fact Buddhist they tended to practice more practical and action-oriented Buddhist forms. For instance, my martial style, *Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto-ryu*, founded c. 1390, has maintained a relationship with "True Speech" or *Shingon* Buddhism. The basic faith of Shingon is that humans can be liberated "at this very moment" and that meditative rituals and practices of mind, speech/breath, and body can secure better functioning for the practitioner "right now." However, my martial tradition requires no member to practice the rituals and contemplative practices associated with Shingon. On the other hand, the closing ritual that culminates a training session in Katori-ryu is heavily influenced by Shinto traditions.

For perfectly obvious reasons Japanese warriors must have had a wide array of experiences with Zen Buddhism not just "one." It was, for various periods, the state religion. It was, at different times, fashionable and unfashionable. Fact is Zen Buddhism has shared an influence over Japanese (and consequently martial) culture with many other forms and schools of Buddhism (Soto Zen, Rinzai Zen, Shingon, Tendai, Kegon, various forms of "Pure Land," etc.), classical and neo-Confucianism, mainland Chinese Taoism, indigenous Shinto, and even, from 1549, Catholicism and, later, Protestant Christianity. The trappings of modern karatedo, though certainly influenced by Zen, are mostly Shintoist. There is simply nothing remarkable or unique in Zen's influence, however considerable or minor, over *some* martial practices.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Modern teachers of martial art and modern martial artists are no more likely to be practicing Zen Buddhists than they are to be Christians or Agnostics. Some modern teachers, schools, and forms of martial practice use meditation or spiritual practices and ideas, some do not. It is hard to imagine much contemplative, nonegoic religious or spiritual practice associated with a kick-boxing school! Zen is not the basis or foundation of martial practices, it is not a requirement or a condition of martial practice; where it is connected in some measure to martial practices its quality varies greatly.

Few martial proponents of Zen, in my experience, are actually deeply knowledgeable of Zen Buddhism. Yet popular consciousness suggests that "martial artist" means Zen adept.⁽⁴⁹⁾ With all due respect to his experiences in China, the late professor, A.C. Scott ("Reflections on the Background of the Performing and Martial Arts of East Asia," Chapter 2, *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training*), distorts the role of Zen in performing arts and martial culture. The word "Zen" appears again and again in his essay. Martial arts and performing arts get much less attention. The obvious implication of connection thus manages to further obscure an already cloudy explication of Zen, martial arts, and performing arts.

In the first place Professor Scott shows very little basic understanding of *Zen as a form of Mahayana Buddhism* when he declares that "a Zen practitioner outside of monastery walls is a paradox." (*Asian Martial Arts*, 31) Mahayana, the "Greater Vehicle" in the sense of larger and more inclusive, insists that the Buddhist "community" (sanskrit: *sangha*) include *all sentient beings inside or outside of monastic communities*. Professor Scott later writes that "Zen monastic communities dispensed with prayers and penances which were replaced by manual labor and physical tasks." Not in all cases. Services at Shasta Abby, for example, the American home of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives in California, while certainly not based in egoic petitions, remain ceremonies of prayer and penance. Some Zen is removed from the world, some is engaged, some communities practice various forms of labor, some labor only in contemplation. The variety of Zen experience is limited only by the number of schools, teachers, and styles in the world.

Scott discusses Zen, on the other hand, as if it were a singular phenomenon. Then, mostly by leaps of faith, I think, he links Zen with Kabuki, Noh, Indian dance, tai chi, gesture on the Asian stage, and so on. The problem is that he is writing throughout of a particular "spirit" deduced from a generalized understanding.⁽⁵⁰⁾ There is nowhere in his account any substantive or substantiated connection made between Zen, martial "arts," or performing arts. This kind of generalization is clearest in the statement that "The history of physical exercise developed as mental discipline did not originate with Zen, but its emphasis on action to obtain a freedom of the mind became peculiarly applicable to the actor." (34) It did?

The results of Professor Scott's search for "peculiar applications" are now and then beautifully insightful ("Zen counters this realization by treating language not for what it has to say but for what it can do." [32]), now and then obscure and unfounded--and still debated in Buddhist communities--("Zen precepts . . . held that reality is dynamic and that beyond this nothing is comprehensible . . ." [34]), and now and then simply muddled

Zen precepts⁽⁵¹⁾ hold that movement is the daily assertion of life because movement is reality, and the swing of an arm, the gesture with a sleeve are understood in this way. Reality is not necessarily violent expression, however, and the most subtle and restrained movements are equally powerful in assertion as the swing of an axe or [sic] the wielding of a sword. The arts of performance and the methods of combat are therefore reconciled within a system which is both dynamic and quietistic. Combat forms are found in most Asian countries' dance repertoire,⁽⁵²⁾ the sword dance and sword play are characteristic of both the Chinese and Japanese theaters. (*Asian Martial Arts*, 34)

Somehow we go from a vague generalization that "movement [in Zen thinking?] is reality" to a subtle claim linking "the" (not any specific or particular arts but "the") arts of performance and combat to and/or "within" Zen. In his essay Professor Scott soon drops the subject of Zen more or less completely and ends his essay with a lament for the fading of "old sustaining values" (37) among East Asian performers. What those old sustaining values were, precisely, remains unclear. Professor Scott's efforts to link Zen Buddhism with a general Asian aesthetic covering martial arts and performing arts fail on several levels. For one thing, as far as I can tell, very few Asian performing artists, given the rigors of those disciplines, have been or are martial artists. *Wushu*, the Chinese stage combat-like performance art, is a theatrical discipline first. The fact that Beijing Opera actress Yen Lu Wong spoke to Robert Benedetti about her prolonged search for "tranquility" (*Asian Martial Arts*, 10) or, as suggested by Professor Scott (*Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training* 10) to "stand still while not standing still" by no means implies a Zen connection nor a martial one. Ms. Wong was not, according to the essay in question, a martial artist at all. That martial artists or theatrical artists might indeed be questing after the same things, again, suggests nothing more than that itself. Zen or Zenistic praxes is not the only way to get to tranquility or concentration; Ms. Wong's search for tranquility does not link her with Zen.

Professor Scott does not, furthermore, anywhere actually address basic Mahayana tradition; instead he relies on implied connections between Buddhism, Asian performance art, and martial disciplines. Zen Buddhist thought linked to martial practice must first and at the very least account for Buddha's recorded admonitions against violence and killing. Some few, in Japan and elsewhere, have successfully done just that--many teachers of modern kyudo and iaido for instance.⁽⁵³⁾ The simple fact is that most Japanese, Chinese, and Korean martial teachers do not promote any particular religion or spiritual practice.

Then from where do these ideas come? I suspect they may originate in the latter writings of D.T. Suzuki. Suzuki was the first popularizer of Zen in the west. His ideas have stuck with us. It was he that promulgated the modern generalization, beginning in the 1930s, that Zen and swordsmanship (and by extension, martial arts in general) are one.

But the vote, it turns out, was not all in. In his review of two books in the Summer 1998 issue of *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*--Brian Victoria's *Zen at War* and Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking*--Josh Baran neatly sums up the problem.

Chang recounts the following incident:

"In teaching new Japanese soldiers how to behead Chinese civilians [The Rape of Nanking], Tominaga Shozo recalled how Second Lieutenant Tanaka instructed his group. 'Heads should be cut off like this,' he said, unsheathing his sword. He scooped water from a bucket with a dipper, then poured it over the blade. Swishing off the water, he raised his sword in a long arc. Standing behind the prisoner, Tanaka steadied himself, legs spread apart, and cut off the man's head with a shout, 'Yo!' The head flew more than a meter away. Blood spurted up in two fountains from the body and sprayed into the hole. The scene was so appalling that I felt I couldn't breathe."

With this image in mind, consider the following passage that D.T. Suzuki wrote at the time of the Nanking massacre:

"The art of swordsmanship distinguishes between the sword that kills and the sword that gives life. The one that is used by a technician cannot go any further than killing. . . . The case is altogether different with the one who is compelled to lift the sword. For it is really not he but the sword itself that does the killing. He had no desire to harm anybody, but the enemy appears and makes himself a victim. It is as though the sword automatically performs its function of justice, which is the function of mercy. The swordsman turns into an artist of the first grade, engaged in producing a work of art of genuine originality."

In the light of Nanking, Suzuki's writing is grotesque. The Spiritual justification for killing and mass brutality is undeniably the worst perversion of religion imaginable. It is truly deplorable that Zen could devolve from the great meditation tradition of the Bodhisatva⁽⁵⁴⁾ Path into a glorification of slaughter as a great work of art. (95-98)

In the hands of some "spirituality" can easily be coopted to allow murder and "the search for selflessness and the art within" (Nichols, 56) can easily become the search for selfishness and the art of winning. Calling a certain practice a martial art cannot in itself raise that practice above mere violence.⁽⁵⁵⁾

Finally, it is all too easy to confuse ideas of a generalized Japanese or "oriental" aesthetic with Zen and to confuse Zen with a general Japanese or oriental aesthetic. The so-called "Zen aesthetic" has influenced Japanese culture and Japanese culture has influenced Zen but they are not, in any generalized way--budo included--one and the same.

In conclusion I suggest that "martial arts for actors" has reached a developmental stage out of which something new must grow. That emergent entity will integrate martial arts (meaning specific disciplines from around the world and not some populist, mythic, generic, and necessarily fuzzy notion of a mysterious Asian practice) with theatrical arts in new and exciting ways. That this transcending and including of the martial by the theatrical is already well underway is clear in Michael Chin's 1998 NSCW report (36) and David Boushey's 1999 Advanced Workshop promotion (37)⁽⁵⁶⁾, the appearance of aikido and tai chi chuan in the offerings of regional stage combat workshops, as well as the ongoing work of integrating historical and modern fighting methods with the theatre arts in that which we call stage combat. Nurtured and explicated by people like Zarrilli, Nichols, Richmond, and Lengfelder, Scott, Harrison-Pepper, Turner, Andrew Tsubaki, Julia Rupkalvis, Payson Burt, and David Doersch, "martial arts for actors" has begun to fill the worldspace created for it. Tai chi and aikido can now be found integrated into college theatre programs and SAFD regional workshops. Future developments and maturity will of necessity grow into a new-founded and new-formed worldspace, the worldspace we are even now creating. In that space we will move beyond current praxes while deepening understanding into new and emergent territories of thought and practice. That development will transcend mere syncretism of exotic sounding words and ideas and reach towards true integration. It will abandon romanticism, mystification, and myth in favor of something deeper.

And it will do this in several ways. It will be, in the light of serious study and reflection and responsible discourse, adopted, adapted, and fully integrated into the work of the movement studio by "martial artists" who also train actors; contemporary stage combat and China's wushu become worthy models, fully integrating martial practices into theatrical practices. Its exotic and esoteric sounding languages will be lovingly augmented with clear, empirical, experiential injunction, data-illumination, and verification. Shallowness will be its enemy and depth its ally; its highest ideals will be pursued into its depth and shallowness supplanted wherever and whenever possible.

And *nothing special*⁽⁵⁷⁾ will come of it.

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Endnotes Please hit your BACK button to return to the text.

1. Dare I suggest that the worldspace of *Xena, Warrior Princess*; *Hercules, the Legendary Journeys*; *Martial Law*, and *Walker, Texas Ranger* has, at least in part, inspired this kind of acceptance. Note though that what Boushey seems to be talking about is the addition of Asian martial practices, unspecified at this point, to the standard, Western-based curriculum of the SAFD; in this way of thinking and speaking and writing "martial arts" means some thing or things Asian. Such exposure, I would venture to guess, it is hoped will allow actors to compete in a market saturated with Jackie Chan, *Highlander*, and *Mortal Combat* and thus keep SAFD in the market and mainstream. I would also note that various workshops, associated with SAFD have advertised such offerings as tai chi, aikido, and "katana for the stage." I explore some of these ideas in what follows. However, I have to suggest here that *no special Asian-based training is a necessity in giving a Hollywoodesque Asian or Hong Kongesque flavor to stage or screen fighting*. Once a few "moves" have been adopted from Bruce Lee movies or a *taekwon-do* instructor they must then only be integrated into stage combat practice. This stage combat (just as the integration of modern fencing technique and historical smallsword technique with safety and theatricality principles is stage combat) pure, plain, and simple and not some new and emergent discipline.

It seems clear to me that there are a whole range of intrinsic and extrinsic values being honored in all this.

2. The word means "martial way." It denotes a life path, a way of self-development, using martial studies and practices. In the later twentieth century budo has split into two main lines, those practices that avoid competitions and those that are practiced as sports. Judo, karatedo, kendo, and aikido are probably among the best known of the modern budo.

The notion that *bujutsu* ("martial technique") and *budo* ("martial way") are two entirely different things is misleading. Budo may be, and often is, used as a generic term for "martial arts." My own style, strictly speaking, is classed as a *ko-bujutsu* or *ko-bugei* (*ko* means "old" as in "antique," *gei* translates as "art") but I refer to what I do as "budo." The terms *bujutsu* and *budo* reflect two emphases in martial study, nothing more. The term *bujutsu* suggests something more pragmatic, more "combative," practiced first for its intrinsic value, a classical ideal of practice, the *technique itself*. *Budo* suggests a passtime or a pursuit, a personal discipline followed for extrinsic reasons, a modern ideal of practice as the *practice itself*. In formal usages things get more complicated. Different teachers and different organizations freely use one or the other suffix in the formal name of their style or system. For instance *Shindo Muso-ryu* has officially referred to their brand of stick fighting first as "*jojutsu*," later as "*jodo*," and, more recently as "*jojutsu*" again. Most Japanese martial systems have undergone similar changes in name over the years. The idea that *jutsu* forms *all* have no actualization orientation is absurd. The idea that *do* forms are *all* ethereal or "meditative" is also absurd. More often than not the title used for an art is a matter of the vagaries of taste, fashion, and preference on the part of authorities. These are, after all, just words.

3. . . . just as there are no rights without responsibilities, no agency without communion, no individuals that are not also members of a group. For a very basic look at my idea that stage combat is a martial art possessed of intrinsic and extrinsic values beyond "technique" see my *The Fight Master* article listed below.

4. Regardless of the popular lexicography of the phrase as meaning "Asian combative disciplines" the phrase, strictly speaking, means "arts associated with the god of war." Clearly, Okinawan *te*, or fist arts, originating mainly from the agrarian sector of Ryukyuan society has more to do with "boxing" than with warfare. Yet, we consider these "arts" as martial without further thought. Why then do we not consider stage combat, which includes many historical arts associated with battlefields, as martial art? Tai chi has lost, almost entirely, its connection, strictly speaking, with "martial" things as in "combative" or "warlike," yet we have no trouble considering it as a martial art. A letter published back in 1995 in *The Fight Master* in response to my article (again, see the bibliographic listing) proposing only that we expand our thinking of martial art to include stage combat, epitomizes this issue. In it Mr. Richard Pallaziol extols a position that "martial arts" are somehow about "pain and fear." (7) He states even that ". . . foil fencing is so far removed from this principle that it is no more a martial art than is table tennis" (7) at the same time stating flatly that ballet was developed "directly" from fencing. (6) But wait, does that mean that modern judo is not martial? And what about all the injuries and even deaths associated with Olympic fencing? And Pallaziol had obviously not heard of the Japanese martial art of *jigai jutsu* as practiced by the classical, *Takeda-ryu*, the art of signaling with conch shell trumpets! Oh and I guess, modern *kyudo* or Japanese archery is not to be considered martial since the elements of pain and fear are so minimalized. No, it seems to me that what it is that ". . . appeals only to the latent adolescent within . . ." is the notion that, in martial art, the litmus test is fear first "mastered in the dojo" then "mastered in the street." (7) *Martial art* as such is not simply or only or uniformly somehow about *fighting*, much less do bonafide martial masters encourage *street fighting* (whatever that problematic phrase might actually mean.) I practice the oldest extant form of Japanese martial art, the *Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto-ryu*, designed and practiced first by professional soldiers but I have never and will never engage in combat with classical weapons. Otake-*shihan*, master-teacher of this system, itself widely recognized as among the most martial of martial arts, suggests that training in these disciplines is about, first-last-and-always, character development. I should also submit, once again, after all these years, that, like it or not, stage

combat *is* fraught with danger and that overcoming fear *is* for many students just as much a part of the training as it would be for someone undertaking study of kick-boxing (or *kyudo* for that matter or tai chi or . . .). As Donohue and Taylor have suggested (see the listing below) there is simply no final point to any attempt to separate martial arts that are combatively oriented from those that are philosophically or ontologically oriented. The goals and purposes bag is much too mixed.

The rest of this article examines such fuzzy thought with the hope of encouraging a re-think of the whole issue in terms of integrative philosophy and effort.

Let me quickly and strongly assert here that I have nothing but respect for tai chi and I do understand that some teachers emphasize the combative connections found in tai chi. Likewise, we might say that aikido in a general way is associated with a philosophy of personal triumph over violence and not itself much concerned with what Pallaziol would style "actual" combat--I must contend that while I might train in a martial art in order to become a better fighter, so-called actual combat is about as far from martial art training as, well, sport fencing is from actual duelling--it seems much more likely to me that I will become a better person from rigorous, long-term training in a martial discipline than simply some sort of imagined street fighting hero. As I note elsewhere, one only has to be thrown across the mat to feel the "martial" history behind modern aikido and who among us hasn't known some young person who learned something about courage in the context of stage combat training. My point is that there simply is no clear line between martial arts and stage combat since martial art includes within it a whole long list of pursuits with goals and techniques in common with it. Greco-Roman wrestling is certainly a martial art if judo is!

5. It may seem unctuous to here speak of "many accounts." After all there just aren't that many "accounts" out there. It might also seem a bit disingenuous to be commenting upon accounts that are a decade old. However, since these accounts amount to the accumulated literature on the subject I can see no other logical or meaningful way to proceed. These accumulated accounts exist as a standing record of martial arts in actor training. Like it or not, martial arts in actor training as a concept and a practice has been thus *and only thus* recorded.

The fewer the accounts though, the more careful we need to be in monitoring their quality. Ideas about martial practices used in theatrical training are widespread among those, like Edwin Wilson, who probably have little or no direct knowledge or experience of the disciplines in question but who, like David Boushey, want the best for their students and thus promote competition in an already cutthroat market in which a nebulous notion of "martial arts" demands attention. My concerns are centered upon our *accounts* and our *accounting* of martial arts in actor training. I have no basis for a critique of, say, Phillip Zarrilli's actual teaching of Indian martial arts to his actor-trainees and no desire to do so. I honor and respect Andrew Tsubaki's work with Ki Society Aikido at the University of Kansas-Lawrence. If "Pops" Doersch wishes to teach his stage combat students a safe way to do a spinning back kick, great!

My interest is not in detracting from this work but in contributing to it. My approach is to offer specific critiques of this material in a regulative, normative, and prescriptive manner and without rancor of any kind. Nothing more nor less than that will do.

The text looks at Richard Nichols' 1991 account of martial arts in actor training published in *Theatre Topics* and entitled "A 'Way' for Actors: Asian Martial Arts." Within the past decade it represents, in my experience at least, the first such an accounting. The article is re-printed in editor Phillip Zarrilli's 1993 journal-cum-book, *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training* as Chapter 1 but I treat the article primarily as it appeared first and "on its own" in *Theatre Topics*. I also look at four of the Zarrilli book's seven chapters: A.C. Scott's Chapter 2, "Reflections on the Background of the Performing and Martial Arts of East Asia;" Sally Harrison-Pepper's Chapter 3, "The Martial Arts: Rites of Passage, Dramas of Persuasion;" Craig Turner's Chapter 6, "Aikido: A Way of Coordinating Mind and Body;" Richard Nichols' Chapter 7, "Out of Silence . . . Action: Kendo and Iaido;" plus Professor Zarrilli's own Introduction. The text also examines the 1995 *Theatre Topics* article entitled, "The Alexander Technique, T'ai Chi Ch'uan, and Stage Combat: The integration of Use, Somatics, and Skills in the Teaching of Stage Movement," authored by Phyllis Richmond and Bill Lengfelder.

6. That is most definitely not to say that actors did not benefit from the morning tai chi and aikido sessions which became a regular morning ritual at the 1994 NSCW and would not benefit from similar exposure at other venues. The point of these sessions was purely extrinsic to the other work of the National Workshops; aikido and tai chi were taught here as adjunct and for their own sakes. Probably most of those hard-working folks went no further with these studies but for some these disciplines might indeed have become a regular part of their lives.

7. I have a great deal of real respect for Professor Nichols and his work in this field. I greatly admire his very apparent enthusiasm. He is of course one of the great proponents and promoters of martial arts in training programs. The fault I find with Nichols' presentation--let me be very clear--centers upon (1) an air of grand generalization I sense breezing through the writings we are about to reexamine, and (2) his seeming belief, spelled out in the present article, that "martial arts" are somehow lying about waiting for theatre folks to pick them up. It is not that simple.

8. There are, besides "martial arts", many other techniques and practices that will teach these things. The game of charades, well-taught and played with discipline and gusto, will surely do it. Also, we might recall that not all students respond equally well to any given praxis. Some will learn what they need from one thing others will not. Some will excell in the movement studio and never make use of those lessons in rehearsal. Others will. Many prospective students, in traditional Japanese and Chinese ways of thinking, are simply not worthy to be taken in and sweated over. Translations of praxis into other forms is *fundamental* if acting teachers wish to reach more students. Efforts to integrate and transform praxes through those translations are, however, *significant*. Without the former the latter is not possible. Without the latter no enduring or emergent depth is possible. We ought to strive for both.

9. Let me emphasize once again my faith that stage combat is already a martial-theatrical art.

10. It is interesting to note that Moshe Feldenkrais brought a respectable judo career to bear on his praxis. He is credited, informally, with introducing judo to Israel.
11. We would surely never propose that an acting instructor teaching stage combat as a "way" towards better acting should have only a "secondary" expertise in stage combat. "Billy, you should always point your sword right into his face. It looks more aggressive." While such a teacher might get away without a lawsuit surely what is required is (at the very least) a *balance* between an understanding of acting pedagogy and an understanding of combat methodology.
12. The "way" of the sword expressive of the "technique" or "collection of techniques" of swordsmanship *kenjutsu*. Note please that kendo, in its *shiai* or "contest" aspect, uses specially designed protective gear, a specially designed set of weapons, and artificial rules and regulations which govern sporting competition. It is *fencing*, Japanese yes, but fencing nonetheless. The lessons learned in European fencing, when the discipline is practiced assiduously, *are arguably the same as those to be learned in kendo* Also note that kendo is *modern*. It is no more ancient than epee fencing, itself an outgrowth of smallsword fighting which is related to rapier fighting and so on back into the past. Idealizations of kendo are misfounded and preferential.
13. Iaido is hard to define. The word means something like "total-person-in-environmental-context" (い), "united" or "harmonized," (あい) "way" or "path" (道). This modern technique is based upon use of the Japanese sword from an "at rest" position and praxis is generally aimed at character and self development. In response to symbolic attacks the proponent draws the sword, delivers a number of attacks and counterattacks specific to the particular technique, and scabbards the weapon and returns to an "at rest" state. Actions are carried out with as much precision as possible and with a high degree of formalized attention. *Iaijutsu* is "sword-drawing" technique.
14. Kendo equipment. A full suit of armor (\$200.00 minimum!) and a bamboo sword (\$50.00 minimum) plus the training costume.
15. We are not told which style and there are many. The two most widely practiced are *Muso Jikiden-ryu* and *Muso Shinden-ryu*. They are quite similar but also very different in detail. Nichols offers no specifics beyond mention of the "Omori school." (111) My point is that such generalizations really don't carry us very far or very well.
16. My nearest source of top-quality iaidoinstruction is in Minnesota!
17. "Headquarters" style aikido. Mark trained in Japan under such luminaries as Saito *sensei* and even lived at the Iwama aikido shrine and training compound for many years. This is the style of aikido that purports, rightly or wrongly, to be closest to that of the founder.
18. Japan's oldest verifiable and extant martial *ryu* (a "stream," school, or tradition).
19. I hope that it was not mere sloppiness that earned me 16 stitches in my left hand in the Spring of 1997. My 400-year-old warhorse of a sword went through my hand doing a technique I had practiced for nearly twenty years. Two of the stitches were *internal*. Iai training is a serious business.
20. The highly athletic and competitive Korean martial form. It is partly related historically to Japanese forms of karatedo. I think most every town in America now has a taekwondo club of some kind.
21. I recommend Chapters 4 and 5 of Zarrilli's book *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training* These chapters give specific details about the integral processes and thinking that resulted in the Asian disciplines-based programs. My only quibble is that these are no longer purely or solely "martial" arts; Zarilli has reformed (not deformed) them into theatrical arts. The late Professor A.C. Scott delineates his efforts to integrate tai chi into his program and Zarrilli does a masterful--precise, concise, specific, detailed--job of demonstrating the ways and means he has used to integrate Indian martial arts fully into the theatrical curriculum.
22. Phillip Zarilli recently left his position at UW-Madison and moved to England. The future of the Asian Disciplines-Theatre programs at that institution is, as of this writing, uncertain. With the retirement of Andrew Tsubaki from the faculty of UK-Lawrence the future of that program remains also uncertain.
23. Though he might be more cautious in assigning specific goals to general "Oriental martial arts such as T'ai Ch'i Ch'uan." (Benedetti, 23.)
24. Little known in the West, Inoue Yoichiro styled his system of aikido *shinwa taido*. Contrary to Nichols' and Turner's generalizations about the "non-competitive" nature of aikido, this style is "a blend of self-defense and sport." (Draeger, *Modern Bujutsu and Budo*, 162.) This is not that strange, even given aikido's general aversion to sporting competitions. Modern iaido, its overt emphasis on "self/character-development" notwithstanding, now incorporates contests of skill within some organizations and styles. In the budo, one exception is worth a thousand generalizations.
25. The third ("san") standard wrist/hand locking technique. Like much of budo terminology, or tai chi terminology, such terms, when translated, prove very prosaic.
26. Are we not all in danger of falling victim to sheer cynicism after years of reading the copy in theatre conference program schedules? The number of times that "transformation" has been offered me in such copy is simply astounding. If such programs could really transform us then why have we not seen evidence? Why aren't hordes of theatre students, teachers, and practitioners emerging clearly changed from these experiences? In large measure it is simply because we have so cheapened the concept of transformation. Like Ken Wilber I take that word to mean the shattering of my comfortable and reliable world and the emergence of something radically new. I have little stomach, much as I might profess otherwise, for such changes. No one does. Transformation, true transformation, demands courage. Even when it is a consumation devoutly to be wished, even though we might say we wish for it, still we must not lie to

ourselves about it. Transformation is hard.

27. That is not to mention the obvious difficulty of difficulties: How to get budget and technical support for courses in these disciplines in the first place!

28. That said, let me again drive home a central point: Stage combat, beyond its status as skill or technique or whatnot IS a "martial art" already and certainly no less so than aikido or tai chi. Like stage combat, they have less to do with fighting and more to do with *extrinsic*, self-development and expression goals. Furthermore, stage combat is already taught from a martial point of view: matters of "combative" technique and form, "historical" and "traditional" or both, integrated with matters of theatrical and acting applications rather than purely "combative" ones (whatever the flavor or attitude towards combat that might exist in a particular martial system) and taught by a master-teacher (the Japanese say *shihan*, *renshi*, *kyoshi*, or some other title, or maybe the generic and honorific *sensei*, SAFD folks say *maistro*.) Stage combat is, in fact, a perfect example of the integration I am talking about throughout this article—martial arts like fencing, historical swordplay, and various kinds of fisticuffs fully translated, transformed, and integrated into theatrical practice. The same is true of contemporary *wushu*. This Chinese performing art represents a stage combat-like integration of martial elements into theatrical ones and, I venture to guess, is the source of much of the "Shaolin"-style training currently being offered in connection with some SAFD workshops.

In terms of its use as a martial adjunct to actor training, stage combat has the advantage of being already fully integrated into theatrical training. Stage combat is *another* study which can teach all that martial art can teach *without* many of the problems that authentic martial study might entail. Certainly stage combat requires the same kinds of commitment that in-depth study of an Asian martial discipline will entail. However, stage combat has, *always* and *prior*, the advantage of being a theatrical discipline first and a "martial art" second. Finally, I must also again insist that stage combat can be (witness the article by Payson Burt listed below) a most potent tool for the kind of self-exploration and personal growth associated with a variety of body therapies and disciplines like aikido, Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement, and tai chi. The benefits-surface of long-term study of stage combat, for actors and other human beings, has been barely scratched.

The inclusion of stage combat under the rubric of martial disciplines seems only logical.

29. Phillip Zarrilli's martial art. It originates in India.

30. Within a one-half hour period of channel surfing just the other evening, on two separate infomercials, I was told that so-and-so held so-and-so number of black belts in "martial arts." On another infomercial Billy Blanks promotes his martial-art-reduced-to-fitness-program (Nothing wrong with that; in a sense tai chi is the same sort of thing!) "Tae Bo" (The name, it turns out, merely looks esoteric and Asian, it is really an acronym.) in part with reference to his being "seven times world martial arts champion." Never mind that no such thing as a "world martial arts championship" exists, realize that nothing specific or really meaningful is being communicated by such statements. Billy Blanks no doubt won various tournaments, large and small, but many "martial arts" host no tournaments and there simply are no unified, standardized, or universally ranked or recognized national "martial arts" championships.

In a similar vein, I recall with chagrin that Michelle Pfeiffer, in referring to her prep for the role of Catwoman in the second Batman movie was quoted as saying that she studied bullwhip, gymnastics, kick-boxing, and "martial arts." Serious advocates of martial training for actors cannot afford this kind of nonsense.

But the issue is complex. I heard Maistro David Boushey, during the 1994 summer workshop, speak of an unusual pose with a European sword as "martial arts" in what I interpreted at the time as a scoffing manner. I suppose Maistro Boushey was exactly right in sneering at haphazard "mixes" of styles in historical swordplay. Perhaps no European *ever* held a sword in just that manner. Perhaps. However, it seemed odd to me that Maistro Boushey had drawn some imagined line between stage combat, historical European swordplay, and martial arts. Clearly--see the Spring/summer issue of *The Fight Master*--Boushey still believes that such a line exists but now wishes to integrate the martial arts with stage combat. The line (I submit a very fuzzy one all along) will thus be removed once and for all.

31. As I suggested above, Maistro Boushey rejected only, I hope, the haphazard addition of what he perceived as "that [Eastern] martial arts stuff" with Western styles. Even in that, though, he seems to have granted the Eastern world a special, separate, monolithic, and unique status *it does not actually warrant*. Again, Maistro Boushey and others, I would suggest, are actually engaged in an effort simply to be more global and inclusive (and competitive for market share!) in their philosophy and practice. For stage combat at least, things Asian are, well, still foreign after all.

And that is precisely why something more than an apparent generic understanding of the martial arts idea is warranted. In generic and popular modes of thought "martial arts" is well enough understood. In specifics it is often not. Therefore, in serious treatment of the subject, specifics are very much in order. If the (*imagined*, I insist) line between Eastern and Western martial traditions as integrated with stage combat disciplines is to be cleared away specifics are essential. What styles, provenances, teachers, traditions, countries, skills, techniques, etc. are to be taught and integrated with stage combat? Is "kung fu" a subheading of unarmed or something special? Will *dern dao* become another discipline alongside rapier and dagger? In my opinion anyone teaching "katana for the stage" ought in both scholarly and practical terms be able to answer the same questions of provenance as anyone teaching "rapier for the stage." I think the gist of the matter is specifics of provenance, in fact.

I direct the interested reader to Ken Wilber's *The Eye of Spirit* for a discussion of both the dignities and tyrannies of the liberal and conservative views of the world and our life in it.

32. What other sort of energies would a *Homo sapiens* use? Apart from pseudo-ancient or New Age notions, there are only two types of energy (they appear in many forms) in existence. Kinetic energy is the energy of motion. Potential energy is the energy stored in water

when we lift a bucket and put it onto the top of a ladder. The most readily useful definition of energy that I know of is "that which makes things move or change." According to *Webster's Third* it is either the "equivalent of" or the "capacity to do work "associated with material bodies or having an existence independent of matter," like light or X rays. There is nothing, I repeat, nothing, mystical or esoteric about energy. Yet, we do not have to abandon all mythic approaches to energy. Instead we might transcend and include mythic understandings of energy in rational understandings. Wilber and others have, in fact, postulated that emotions are the conflux or convergence or both of biological, social and psychological energies given "direction" (i.e.: "from me to you.")

33. I direct the interested reader to my own discussion of "seeing" with the eyes and heart found in the bibliographic listing under the title *Kan Ken*. I think I make it clear that the two "kinds" of sight implied by that Japanese term become metaphors for heightened sensitivity and confidence that results in a transcendent kind of perception. I nowhere suggest that "seeing with the heart" is actually what happens. Throughout the discussion I make clear that what really happens is much less mysterious and much more miraculous than esoteric ideas can ever capture. Martial arts training is not magic. Any real benefits accrued through martial training will be empirically verifiable, subject to tests of validity, and *repeatable*.

I am no pragmatist. But a touch of pragmatism does have a way of clarifying things, of sobering us "artistes" up just a bit as we deal with such ethereal, emotion-shrouded, and (seemingly) esoteric subjects as mental and physical "energies" and associated "metaphysical" experiences such as "hearing" with the hands. Poetry aside, people just don't hear with their hands or "blades." The sense of touch is located in one area of the brain and the sense of hearing in another. Such things are specific. While a blind man can be said to "see" with his fingers, what is really implied is an extended sense of touch, nothing more nor less. As Johannes Muller (1801-1858) pointed out, when you press your closed eye, the pressure does not create sound, smell, or taste but flashes of light. (Hunt, 110) Another great pragmatist (perhaps THE great pragmatist of America!) William James (1842-1910) put it quite neatly when he wrote, "If we could splice the outer extremity of our optic nerves to our ears, and that of our auditory nerves to our eyes, we should hear the lightning and see the thunder." (James, 12)

I do not deny the power of metaphor in communicating the potentials of human experience. However, clear and meaningful dialogue about training praxis demands the explication of a *verifiable* and *repeatable* injunction or paradigm. Mere esotericism will never do. Martial arts are not magic.

34. I do not, personally, denounce ki as parlor tricks. In the right hands, the teaching is useful and worthwhile. In fact, it has been my experience that the top Ki Society teachers and students are *not* the ones promoting cheap or unreasoned explications of the term ki. As in all things those who really *know* never reduce ki to anything magical nor even all that mysterious. That does not mean that ki, as a subject of deep study, is not a *mysterium*. Finally, we must also remember that some aikido teachers rarely even mention the word while some (by no means a majority) might make much, much more of the idea. The central thing to remember about Ki Society Aikido is that the term is stressed in the title of the organization!

35. The Japanese culture's "formal seat" commonly used during certain kinds of occasions not because of some extrinsic value but because the position is conservative of space and movement. It is traditional to Japanese social and cultural life and therefore appears at beginning and end of many budo classes. *Seiza* is not a meditation position. Budoka are commanded "Mok'so!" or "M'so!" (*mokuso* = "be still and quiet") usually at the end of a class *after they are formally seated in seiza*. Usually this quiet sitting lasts no more than five minutes. Budoka sit formally when listening to sensei or watching seniors demonstrate technique and it is the position from which the most formal of bows are given.

36. I am an advocate for meditative practices in theatre training. They are of direct and indirect benefit, especially for actors and directors and teachers. Their direct benefits are related to general health and wellness issues: dealing with stress, improving abilities to relax, learning better concentration habits, learning to better deal with disappointment, learning to deal with greater clarity with our habits of subjective experience, increasing self-awareness and decreasing self-consciousness. Their indirect benefits are mostly surrounding the idea of "present moment" acting and "present moment" awareness. That being clear, I would only add that the meditative practices of budo and Buddhism need not be taught using esoteric or exotic terms or concepts. In fact, there are many non-Asian meditative traditions that use exercises similar to those found in Asia. Besides, basic meditative practice is easy to translate into Western terms.

37. See my *The Fight Master* article on classical Japanese martial systems listed below for an introduction to this historical phenomenon.

38. I'm certain that fight directors Chuck Coyl and Scot J. Mann (listed in the ad copy for the November 1999 "Turkey Shoot Workout" as offering instruction in "Katana for the Stage," and found on page 11 of the Spring and Summer 1999 issue of *The Fight Master*) know that the word *katana* means simply "sword" and is an alternate reading of the *kanji* that may also be read as *to*, as in *iaito*. If I show one of my Japanese students a European-styled sword and ask them the Japanese name they usually will say, "katana." Other Japanese terms for "sword" are: *tachi*, and *ken*, also pronounced *tsurugi*.

While the phrase "katana for the stage" is clearly meant to suggest Japanese swordsmanship I would submit that the phrase "Japanese swordsmanship" would be more germane (and more "correct" for an aging academic like me) on several counts:

First, it abandons exotic-sounding jargon in favor of a clear, English translation.

Second, it honors the fact that there is no such thing as a single technique for the use of the Japanese sword. There are many, very different, classical and modern, Japanese approaches to swordsmanship with longsword, shortsword, and combinations of various kinds and types of long and short swords. No monolithic or standardized use of a standardized *katana* exists and no standardized *katana* exists in terms of size, shape, or mounting in the just the way that rapier and rapier training could have many historical European

meanings. Japanese swordsmanship may be styled *kenjutsu*, *kendo*, *iaido*, and many other appellations. There simply is no single *katana*-way or -technique to be taught. The term for the longsword in classical Japanese martial systems parlance is usually *yo-dachi*, that is, "great" or "big" sword. No classical or modern system uses the term *katana* for their training. Even the term "Japanese swordsmanship" is generic.

Finally, the phrase, to paraphrase Hamlet, would be more germane to the matter, *ikatana* training of a *specific* type or kind was meant and could be clearly spelled out. Coyl and Mann offer no specifics as to what style or kind of swordsmanship in the generic Japanese manner they will teach, upon what standards the teachings will be based, nor what qualifications in terms of affiliations and ranks they will bring to the teaching. I have no doubt that these folks are fully qualified to be teaching stage combat. In truth *that fact alone* is qualification enough *as long as they are not attempting to teach a specific historical or traditional style of Japanese swordplay or some combination of traditions or styles without bonafide credentials and verifiable experience in a verified tradition or traditions*. If they claim some actual connection with an extant style then it would be really helpful to be told that. *Maniwa-nen-ryu* for instance is very old, very rural, and emphasizes practical matters. The many branches of the *Itto-ryu* are much more modern, urban, and self-development oriented. As in much ad copy then, merely sticking in the term *katana* does not really say much. Perhaps that is O.K. but it still does not say much.

On that ground alone they would be much better off with the simple English phrase, "Japanese Swordsmanship." Thus, involved as I have to assume they are with an unspecified, probably generic approach to bringing a Japanese idiom to stage swordplay, they are rightly freed from specific stylistic affiliations and the credentials (beyond SAFF status) that would of course be demanded if they claimed to be teaching some specific style or system. For me at least, offering a course in *katana* raises more questions than expectations. In the final analysis in any case, we all might be more careful in our use of jargon and of seemingly specialized but actually just exotic-sounding terminology. *Katana* just means sword.

39. Why should we consider such a flurry of blows as an ideal in the first place? I guess that there is no dearth of young actors who could throw a whole bunch of martial-looking punches in a couple of seconds and thus get through one part of the audition for a role in *Hercules*. I also would venture though that there are really very few who could actually stop a real enemy with one precise blow. I suppose Nichols is writing in praise of speed. But numbers of technique repetitions seems, on a second glance, hardly a measure of real skill. Splitting an enemy

down the middle with a sword, ripping peoples' beating hearts from their chests, killing with a touch, breaking blocks of ice with the bare hands are all mere stunts, mere displays of speed or power, and of more entertainment value than deeper martial meaning. They emphasize a flashy and superficial kind of skill or a sort of idealized strength and mythic power with little relation to the mundane world.

It is clear from any account of *kendo* competition--pragmatic as it gets--or careful observation of an actual match that it is the one pure and well-timed blow and only that decisive blow that will score a point (unless the judges miss it.) There is a kind of strange overlaying of what Stanislavski might call "trashy" gestures visible in Nichols account and in much of what passes for martial skill in film and television and stage depictions.

The kind of thing that shows up in *Xena* and *Hercules* and *Mortal Kombat* seems to me, for the most part defensible on the grounds that it is not meant to be taken seriously. However, when I, for one at least, see some of the silliness that is clearly meant to be taken as serious martial art in *Walker, Texas Ranger* or *Highlander* (or the local Shakespeare festival for that matter) I have to consign much of it to Stanislavski's trash bin.

Consider carefully the following example of bass-ackward storytelling and the trash gesture in a recent episode of *Walker*. Walker is confronted by a LARGE enemy. He strikes his best "karadi" pose and proceeds to "hit" the guy with a series of spinning kicks, fast punches to the face, and body blows--hey, this is "martial arts" fighting after all! Our hero then pauses, looks frustrated at his failure to damage the guy in any decisive way, and tries again, only harder and faster and more-of-the-same. Doesn't work and more "comedy" as he is shown to pause and then decide to try harder. Then, having exhausted I presume his "best" techniques, he punches the guy in the throat and kicks him in the side of the knee and thus brings him down.

Seems to me, grumpy old academic that I am, that Walker is, in fact, just plain stupid or not very well trained or both. As a *trained fighting man he ought to have done what he did last, first*. I, furthermore, would propose that the entertainment value of such a fight would be increased and not decreased by such actual "realism" as we would see Walker actually use his martial skills in a tactical way that actually makes sense. (Never mind that he knocked the guy down and then danced back to allow him to get up when he ought to have, of course, made sure he stayed down. He is the hero after all.)

But when it comes down to it, flash, though it may be a valuable thing for an actor in certain contexts, is not the "point" of real martial training. Flurries of fast and flamboyant technique are not in and of themselves inherently "good" nor "martial art." In fact, simple, in any real struggle that has devolved into physical violence, is probably best.

40. Richard Nichols calls *seika no tanden* the "aikido term" (57) for the center, the "one point." But "one point" is simply *itten* and *seika no tanden* means something more like "the seating place of the bodily and spiritual center." Fact is, these are common terms based in Taoist philosophy and related to Neo-confucian and Buddhist thought. It is just a Japanese phrase for the idea of spiritual, mental, and bodily "center" and used all across the budo and in many other arts and crafts, including flower arranging and tea ceremony and acting and carpentry.

41. All *iai kata* have a moment of "finish" rather like a fencing salute that symbolizes, in very non-realistic terms (Cleaning blood off a blade doesn't really work like that!), the slinging off, knocking off, or dripping of blood to clean the blade. The Japanese term for this

family of movements, different for each style, is *chiburi*. *Chiburi* have important symbolic and virtual meanings beyond "cleaning" blood from a swordblade. While a *chiburi* requires follow-through it requires no more nor less than the "finish" of each technique in the *kata* and the finish of the total, collective "moment" of the whole set of movements. *Zanshin* is concentrated finish and followthrough into full, ongoing, and balanced awareness. It is not a pose.

42. Saying someone is a "black belt" is simply, in serious discourse, meaningless. The term has no more power to communicate anything specific than the statement that So-and-so is a "martial artist." *No specifics are communicated by these terms and they, in and of themselves, grant no special status.* In fact, among folks with some knowledge of martial culture and history, such vague claims to status are cause for suspicion. *All* status claims, vague or specific, are subject to proof and the mention of a specific teacher or organization does not automatically insure real status or ability. Actors beware: Charlatans abound! Part of my point here is that we should take all martial arts claims with a grain of salt or two and be doubly aware of the esoterica often obscuring such claims. Official status in an actual organization can be checked. It does not, however, prove anything about teaching ability, values, or applicability of martial training to theatre. My rule is: Take nothing for granted. Actors might wish to carefully select teachings and teachers on the complex basis of what they need and want. A good place to begin is with reference to credentials.

43. Called *kyu* ("levels") and *dan* ("degrees") in Japanese.

44. I note that for \$600.00 we can purchase the "American Kempo Black Belt" program on videotape and submit, for a further fee, our progress, shown on video tapes, to a "panel" for ranking. Never mind the untidy business of finding a teacher or school and committing to that program of study, never mind the fact that I will never know the identity of my "panel," simply purchase the teachings through the mail. Of course everyone knows now that it is possible to simply order a black *obi* through the mail. What values are we, as theatrical artists, willing to back, after all? As Mr. Miyagi was heard to say, "Belt for holding up pants." Or something to that effect.

45. Defining stage combat as the theatrical martial art in no way attempts to reduce one to the other. It merely suggests a place in a particular category of experiences ("martial arts") for a specific family of practices ("stage combat.") Calling stage combat "martial arts" suggests for me ways of thinking, teaching, and practicing that embrace intrinsic and extrinsic valuing, a strong emphasis upon personal discipline, and long-term relationships with specific master-teachers and specific organizations. This simple shift in classification, this categorization, for me and my students, seems clarifying and even elevating. It is not reductive.

46. Wouldn't the master-teachers of SAFD be thrilled if more actors, just a few more even, would get more deeply involved in stage combat? Wouldn't it be cool if more actors did stage combat (or aikido or kendo or tai chi) as a sort of personal recreation for self-development, fitness, growth? I suppose it is enough to hope that more would seek out just the skills they need to compete in this strange and wonderful profession but who among us would not like to see more actors become stage combat "martial artists?" Do we really have to be so damned pragmatic? Oh well!

47. While zenistic meditative practices may be adopted by persons of any wisdom tradition (Most of those, including Christianity, already have strikingly similar meditative traditions.), Zen, as such, is very definitely a form of Mahayana Buddhism.

48. Need I say that martial praxes of non-Japanese provenance claiming a relationship to Zen might need to be cross-examined to see what is meant by that claim? Zarrilli of course nowhere makes that claim. His martial arts have Hindu and Sufi Muslim connections to sort out and no connection to Zen anywhere unless Buddhist origins in India were to be stretched to the breaking point. Tai chi is of course related to Taoism with some later Buddhist influences.

Certainly Japanese Buddhism is available all across the world today but Zen has had of course the greatest impact on Japanese Martial forms. Chinese "Zen" is called Ch'an and predates the Japanese forms by many, many years. Korean "Zen" is called Son. Taoism and Zen are related through historical and evolutionary developments but legends of Bodhidharma and the Shaolin monks are best understood as hagiography and not history. The matter is far too complex to be well summed up with the popular notion that "martial arts and Zen are one." This would also imply, problematically at best, that Zen is all one thing. Not so. There are many forms, interpretations, styles, even controversies in and around authentic Zen practices. There is even a tradition known disparagingly as "Do Nothing Zen."

49. Joe Hyams' (Nichols, 55) *Zen in the Martial Arts* and *The Zen Way to Martial Arts* by Deshimaru Taisen (Nichols, 37) do not seem to me to be completely adequate sources upon which to base an intellectually responsible understanding of the relationship of Zen to martial practices and, let me hasten to say in Professor Nichols favor, that he does not seem much concerned with such an understanding. Nonetheless, he does open his article with a quote from a teacher that, at least implies a connection between Zen and martial arts.

A much more common saying among Japanese martial artists than Nichols' "Today, I am better than I was yesterday; tomorrow, I will still be better," (55) is simply "Shut up and train." This does have a zenistic flavor, in its attention to life as a "Right Now!" experience. While ideas of "getting better" may not be the best way to approach martial practice, they definitely do not aid in Zen practice. "Just train!" is, partly, what I imagine Hyams suggests by titles like "Process not Product," and so on. Given that I am correct so far, it follows that there is an important, though unintentional, contradiction in Nichols' discussion here. Nichols juxtaposes, in the same paragraph, what he calls a saying common among martial artists and the Hyams' list of titles. One purports to be Zen-based, the other is clearly in the "self-improvement" vein. Zen is not self-improvement. It is closer in flavor to a method aimed at radical self-acceptance. Any martial art that is truly linked to Zen will reflect that stance.

The Founder of the Soto school of Zen Buddhism, Dogen Eihei (1200-1253) wrote, "Just understand that birth-and-death is itself nirvana. There is nothing such as birth and death to be avoided; there is nothing such as nirvana to be sought. Only when you realize this are you free from birth and death." (74)

I might also say, without rancor or enmity, that Hyams is far from being a Zen adept. Anyone that gives Bruce Lee status as a promoter or teacher of Zen is underinformed. The chapter headings listed by Nichols [55] could just as well be found in any New Age motivational seminar. Hyams believes without reservation in the myth that Zen is part and parcel of martial practices. I find his Zen ideas interesting but lacking in depth. The essence of Zen, sitting quietly and doing nothing, *over many hard years*, is a contemplative search for the Self in Buddhist terms. Hyams simply translated martial ideas into zenistic terms.

Deshimaru Taisen (d. 1982) on the other hand was a Zen practitioner of some note. In his later years he lived and taught in France where his teachings were considered by some within the Japanese establishment to be open to question. He was not a budoka. Thus, he treats martial arts, as Zen-in-action. He translates Zen ideas into martial terms.

50. And so have many stage combat teachers who profess a Zen "feeling," whatever that might be, in a certain technique or teaching.

51. Professor Scott should have known that the "precepts," strictly speaking, are a code of behavior individual to each group within the larger sangha. Zen includes praxes, philosophies, teleologies, epistemologies, and even theologies the exact shape of which depend on individual school, style, teacher, and are always open to interpretation. It is not possible to include them all in one universal claim about Zen "precepts."

52. And surely in Europe as well. The sword dances of England and France are well known. Oh, and there was also that little European tradition called the tournament that combined theatre with things martial. Asian theatre has no monopoly upon this kind of spectacle.

53. Notably, Otsubo Shiho, Zen priest and master teacher of the *Edo Yagyū Shinkage-ryū* and Suhara Koun, a *Rinzai* Zen priest at Engaku-ji temple in Kamakura and a master archer. Pictures of these two Buddhist masters (who are *also* martial artists) in action can be found in Draeger's *Classical Budo* on pages 75 and 96-97. I mention these illustrious gentlemen in order to stress a point: Zen and traditional budo forms have relationships but those are widely varied. Martial arts practice at whatever level is no more a guarantee of spiritual or religious development than is tennis practice. People such as these two men have developed a Zen practice that uses martial training in a transformational way. We should perhaps also include Onuma Hideharu, whose name appears in the bibliographic listing below, in this list.

54. A person who has vowed through body, speech, and mind, to devote his personal efforts towards ultimate liberation to the ultimate liberation of the cosmos. "Sentient beings are limitless. I vow to liberate them all." Zen at its best is selfless and compassionate.

55. Not nearly enough serious work has been done on the morality and ethics of staged violence. In the light of Littleton, it seems to me, I might wish to reexamine and reevaluate my enthusiasm for the act of staging and performing violent acts however well meant. I think we hide much when we attempt to disguise violence as spiritual or artistic disciplines under the rubrics of "Zen" or "martial arts" or even "stage combat."

56. I think it marvelous that Maestro Boushey is ready to see martial arts recognized as a possible element in an integrated and emergent stage combat form that is itself clearly a martial art. Folks like Payson Burt, David "Pops" Doersch, and many others seem to have known this all along.

57. A wisdom saying from my style of swordsmanship goes, "Heiho wa, heiho desu." The Japanese characters for the two words pronounced "heiho" are different and have two different meanings. The first character reads "martial law" or "truth." The second reads "everyday law" or "truth." In full translation then, it reads, "Martial law is the same as everyday law." To practice martial art or acting art is simply and completely life itself. Always was, is right now, and always will be. Just so. The practice, in many martial systems, in Taoism, and in Buddhism, is to become more fully, more simply, and consequently more *mundanely*, human. The wondrous paradox is that the very special goal of liberation turns out to be just my birthright from the start and nothing special at all. That is the truest of true miracles but still, first, and always, nothing special.

JTC Dec 1999

After playing a super-powered martial artist for two seasons (one in *Iron Fist* and another in the *Defenders*), Finn Jones is finally getting around to actually training in martial arts for the second season of *Iron Fist*, Netflix's worst reviewed Marvel show ever. The development was announced via a Twitter fan account for the British actor. Should this get everyone pumped for a new adventure featuring Danny Rand? Finn already started his martial arts training for Iron Fist season two! pic.twitter.com/2IFr1vgnIW. Finn Jones Central (@finnjonescom) September 20, 2017. Aside from the His training began in Tang Soo Do, a Korean form of martial arts that combines techniques from Subak and Wushu. Upon his discharge from the Air Force in the 1960s, Norris opened a chain of about 30 Karate schools spread over different US cities. An encounter with Bruce Lee during a martial arts demonstration in Long Beach, California led to his appearance as Colt in the movie, *The Way of the Dragon*, where he performed in one of the most iconic fight scenes in film history. Ask any martial artist about Muay Thai, and you'll find out that it's one of the most effective and powerful martial arts in the world. Also known as the *Art of Eight Limbs*, Muay Thai. Videos. Recent efforts to theorize martial arts cinema have showcased a renewed interest in issues of cinematic realism, and in step with this recent turning of the realism tide, I will endeavor to think through the dialectical relationship between realism and aesthetics. My articulation of a concept I will refer to as martial suture will serve to overcome the two most problematic tendencies in scholarship on martial arts cinema, each of which reinforces the other: First, the tendency to discuss cinematic realism in reductive and inflexible terms where montage is antithetical to realism 2, and second

Martial arts are codified systems and traditions of combat practiced for a number of reasons such as self-defense; military and law enforcement applications; competition; physical, mental and spiritual development; and entertainment or the preservation of a nation's intangible cultural heritage. Although the term martial art has become associated with the fighting arts of East Asia, it originally referred to the combat systems of Europe as early as the 1550s. The term is derived from Latin and means His martial arts resume attracted the attention of a Hong Kong stuntman organization, and his acting career began to take off. His breakout role in western films was 2006's "Undisputed II: Last Man Standing", playing antagonist Yuri Boyka. He continued to appear in several well-known movies, even starring in a few himself, albeit some of them did not appear in theaters. Donnie Yen is revered by many as having transcended the fame as an actor, and is now the face of martial arts in cinema. Credited with the introduction of MMA to China, his movies, and martial arts talent have inspired many actors such as Tony Jaa, Mike Tyson, Eddie Peng, and Iko Uwais. Born in 1963 in Guangzhou China, his family immigrated to Boston, Massachusetts when he was 11.