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Building a Cast of Clones

Examining Stanislavski’s Theories in the Context of Maslany’s Performances in *Orphan Black*

By
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An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation from the Western Oregon University Honors Program

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Abstract

This thesis examines the theories explicated in Stanislavski’s second acting text, *Building a Character*, as they are utilized in the creation and continued manifestation of Tatiana Maslany’s seven different clone characters in the first season BBC America’s drama, *Orphan Black*. The paper begins by exploring the historical contexts of both Stanislavski’s System and *Orphan Black* before narrowing in focus to discuss the ‘outward-in’ approach of external character creation, its importance and relevance in the field of acting, and its application in Maslany’s performances. Stanislavski’s basic concepts of external characterization as realized through an actor’s stylistic, physical, vocal, and tempo-rhythmic choices are discussed, with examples of practical application drawn from specific scenes of Maslany’s work in *Orphan Black*. Intentional aberrations and breaks from Stanislavski’s theories are discussed, as are a number of curious manipulations of these theories based on the inherent medium, premise, and circumstances of the given drama. The essay concludes by examining the prevalence of these theories in Maslany’s work, arguing that these often-undervalued avenues of external character exploration are more important to character manifestation than the inner psycho-technique for which Stanislavski is often remembered. Mastery and manipulation of these theories are what enable masterful, distinct, specific, honest, and living performances, like those given by Maslany in *Orphan Black*. 
**Historical Context for Stanislavski:**

*A Period of Change*

As the 20th century approached, the western theater began an incremental shift away from the presentational, melodramatic style of the 1800s to one increasingly grounded in naturalism. The level of realistic detail ultimately achieved by the Moscow Art Theater and Stanislavski’s psychological realism stem from the emerging naturalistic styles presented by the likes of German director Georg II, Duke of Sax-Minigan and André Antoiné’s French company the *Theater Libré*. Georg II’s contributions to the theater include unprecedented strides in the employment of realistic set designs over traditional stock sets as well as an elongated rehearsal process which allowed the actors more time to craft their performances. The *Theater Libré* crafted realistic settings to the point of hyper-naturalism, at times even using live chickens to establish rural settings, and was among the first theaters to employ the concept of actor/audience separation via an imaginary fourth wall at the proscenium arch (Gordon 1-2). These advances toward realism had a profound effect on Stanislavski who, having been exposed to both companies early in his career, modeled his personal style and manner of directing after their examples (Gordon 5). These and similar innovations form the theatrical zeitgeist from which the realism employed by Stanislavski and his collaborators at the Moscow Art Theater sprang forth.

*A Grammar of Acting and Theatrical Reform*

Beyond the theatrical context in which he was immersed, Stanislavski’s system emerged from an intense personal desire to create a “grammar” of acting (Benedetti 163). This desire grew from his own experience, artistic struggle, lifelong fascination with the
theater, and an obsession with what he deemed to be the actor’s greatest problem: artistic creation on demand. Theatrical performances are given on a regular, regimented basis, necessitating an actor to create their art and deliver their performance not only when feeling inspired or particularly insightful, a luxury enjoyed by other forms of artistry, but whenever the company dictated. How, Stanislavski wondered, could an actor effectively capture inspiration night after night giving a consistently fresh, true to life, human performance for an entire run of a production (Gordon 8)? How could an actor creatively live a role before the looming distraction of an audience (Stanislavski Art, 255)? Stanislavski began addressing these problem in 1877 by reflecting on his theatrical experiences in detailed journals, a habit he sustained for the rest of his life (Benedetti 14).

Stanislavski’s fixation on consistently creating a truthful reality on the stage is apparent in his earliest writings, as is a general disenchantment with the state of the Russian drama. Active in the theater as both actor and director since 1882 and having performed approximately seventy-five roles, Stanislavski approached the creation of the Moscow Art Theater in 1898 with artistic reformatory zeal. Partnered with Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, who acted as literary specialist and co-manager, the pair rebelled against the “old style of acting, ‘theatricality,’ spurious emotion, declamation, over acting… against the whole way performances were put together and the triviality of the repertoire of the time” (Stanislavski Art, 166). They accomplished this sweeping reform early in the theater’s history, allying themselves with the realistic playwright Anton Chekov. Described by Stanislavski as, “a creative miracle,” the level of visual and psychological realism achieved by The Seagull and the other Chekhovian plays firmly established the Moscow Art Theater as a prominent, naturalistic theatrical powerhouse.
Chekov’s plays are historically significant not only for the domestic and international acclaim they brought the Moscow Art Theater, but for their inherently deep character psychologies requiring a greater complexity in a character’s inner life (Benedetti 89). This necessitated a fundamental shift from Stanislavski’s initial acting style, which focused on external characterization based on observation and mimicry, to one based on internal movements and motivations (Stanislavski Art, 197). It is this internal approach toward acting that captured Stanislavski’s attention and that he began to pursue, desiring to organize his “rag bag of theatrical tricks,” years of observation, and new theatrical experiments into one codified grammar of acting that would enable an actor to consistently and effectively create and access their character while endowing them with realistic human behavior (Benedetti 163).

**Personal Significance**

The intense desire to develop a system may have had an even more immediate, personal reason behind it as well. When Stanislavski began the deepest exploration and greatest development of his System he felt he was stagnating as an actor; all the joy had gone from his work. During performance he felt as though his emotional state was removed and disconnected from his body and physical actions. The development of the System was not simply to advance or reform the theater in its entirety, but as Stanislavski describes in *My Life in Art*, “to save my work from decline, from spiritual death, from the tyranny of ingrained actor’s habits” (255).

**The Life of the System**

With such intense motivation, Stanislavski began experimentation with and careful organization of his System in 1906, employing it to a wide variety of productions
at the Moscow Art Theater. After a number of failures and a few tentative successes he began public explications of his work, including presentations at prominent theater conferences (Benedetti 197). Yet met with a company largely set in their ways and unwilling to fully invest in his new, highly experimental methods, Stanislavski turned to the younger generation, opening the First Studio. Founded in 1912 as an affiliate theater company to the Moscow Art Theater, the First Studio offered Stanislavski the opportunity to truly explore and develop his System (Gordon 11). What was once a series of chaotic observations and rehearsal techniques became a regimented approach to creating and acting a role; an approach he applied to the First Studio’s group of young actors. The First Studio experienced resounding success and led to the creation of three subsequent Studios (Stanislavski *Art*, 308).

The period that followed the creation and initial success of the First Studio was dichotomous. Russian drama had moved on, abandoning the Moscow Art Theater in favor of less realistic styles like Meyerhold’s concepts of constructivism and biomechanics. However, internationally, especially in the United States where they toured in 1922-23, the company enjoyed unprecedented success (Benedetti 239). The American tour was historically significant for many reasons: Stanislavski gave public lectures on his work, a series of six instructional articles and an expose by former student Richard Boleslavski were published in the prominent *Theatre Arts Magazine* explaining the System and its merits, and the American Laboratory Theater was founded under the direction of Boleslavski and Maria Ouspenskya constituting the first System based theatrical school in the United States (Gordon 23).
Additionally, this period marks the beginning of Stanislavski’s desire to produce a structured, written account of his theories for publication. In the subsequent American tour of 1924 Stanislavski signed a contract with Little Brown Publishing Company to publish a novel. Stanislavski intended for the book to be a manual for his System, but the concept was rejected in favor of an autobiography, which developed in the first of the seven works Stanislavski was to write, *My Life in Art*, which was hastily published later that year only to be extensively revised in the Russian edition of 1926 (Benedetti 279).

While *My Life in Art* was not the actor’s manual Stanislavski envisioned, the 1924 tour was not completely counterproductive to the publication of his System. While attending a reception at the White House where the company was to meet President Coolidge, Stanislavski met Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, a woman who would prove instrumental to the dissemination of Stanislavski’s written works (Benedetti 279). In 1930, Elizabeth Hapgood, who spoke fluent Russian, and her husband, Melvin, acted as Stanislavski’s translator and editor respectively as he began to organize his collection of notes, observations, and rehearsal techniques into theories. Stanislavski would go on to grant the Hapgoods full power of attorney so as to better represent him as they navigated worlds of professional publication and American copyright law. Their legal involvement and eventual titles as co-authors lead to extensive revisions in word choice, excisions, and additions reflected in final publication. Further, certain legal agreements necessitated that all future translations of Stanislavski’s work be based on the Hapgood version rather than the standard Russian edition, further skewing Stanislavski’s ideas. Yet not all problems associated with publication or the resulting alterations to Stanislavski’s theories falls on the Hapgoods, nor should they be too harshly criticized. Their extensive work
with Stanislavski was one of the few factors enabling his publication, and their legal action appears to have been taken with Stanislavski’s best interests in mind (Benedetti 316).

Perhaps the biggest problem associated with the publication of the System was Stanislavski’s propensity toward detail and the work’s resulting length. What would eventually become the three volumes of *An Actor Prepares, Building a Character, and Creating a Role* was initially intended to be published as a single volume under the title *Diary of a Pupil*, which would feature two sections: one on experiencing the role (what would become the internal work of *An Actor Prepares*) and one on physical characterization (*Building a Character*). In a single volume, the process of the System and the interplay between the internal and external elements would be presented in continuity, as was Stanislavski’s design. This desire was stymied by Russian publishing houses, who insisted the work was too long to feasibly publish. The works were then split, much to the detriment of the general comprehension to the System. This is especially apparent in Western theaters; the United States suffered a gap of almost fifteen year between the publication of *An Actor Prepares* and *Building a Character*, leading many theatrical artists to wrongly discount the aspect of physical characterization or assume that the psychological aspects of character preparation were the System in its entirety. This flawed interpretation is reflected in the Western Theater’s preoccupation with the emotional, inner, naturalistic elements of the System (Benedetti 316-317).

In the United States of America this tendency toward the inner life of a character with limited focus on the external aspects of characterization was exasperated by the aforementioned founding of the American Laboratory Theater following the Moscow
Theater’s tours there. Director Boleslavski emphasized the emotional aspects of Stanislavski’s System, depending heavily on an actor’s emotional memory to inform their stage action (Gordon 28). His colleague and fellow student of Stanislavski, Ouspenskya, emphasized different aspects, especially those of concentration and affected memory, or memories triggered through sensory stimulus. She also, more than Boleslavski, brought a strict Russian discipline to the American theatrical classroom (Gordon 28).

While the Laboratory Theater itself lasted only a short while, its reach and influence, training more than 1500 students, was lasting. Among the pupils exposed to this emotionally-centered interpretation of the System was Lee Strasburg, a prominent member of the Group Theater, arguably among the most famous of the Stanislavski derived theaters (Gordon 40). The Group Theater included such prominent theatrical figures as Stella Adler, Clifford Odets, and Sanford Meisner. What Strasburg developed during his time with the Group Theater would come to be known as the Method, and while it is often mistaken for the System, it differs in a few key respects. Stanislavski’s system utilizes the actor’s imagination to explore given circumstances, emotional memory, affected memory, and many techniques for physical characterization. His system is action based, and focuses on through-lines of both character and plot. The Method does not, and relies more heavily on emotional memory and includes a few other influences including the improvisational work of Vakhtangov (Gordon 143). The Method is in no way a facsimile for the System; it is a different approach to the art of acting. Dissatisfaction within The Group regarding the effectiveness of this new Method abounded, leading to the eventual splintering of The Group Theater. Many of its members, including Stella Adler who herself studied with Stanislavski for five weeks,
and Sanford Meisner went on to develop revolutionary theatrical programs and acting methods of their own (Benedetti 328).

_Criticism and Acclaim_

That is not to say that unlike Strasburg’s Method Stanislavski’s System was met with universal acclaim. Stanislavski’s unusual methods, newfound psychological realism, and eventual disposition to use rehearsals as experimental labs were met with unease and criticism from the very beginning: his own partner co-founder of the Moscow Art Theater, Nemirovich-Danchenko, dubbed his System “Stanislavschina” which translates to “Stanislavski-sickness,” a title of which Stanislavski was well aware (Benedetti 203). The two directors were fundamentally different in their approaches to the creation of theater; as literary manager Nemirovich-Danchenko saw the playwright and their text as the guiding creative force, Stanislavski’s view of the actor as the central creative force had the potential to skew the playwright’s intentions. Further, Nemirovich-Danchenko simply could not believe that the complex art of acting could be reduced to a series of steps, a repeatable methodology, nor could he envision a situation where the System could be made profitable due to its lengthy rehearsal process (Benedetti 203).

Stanislavski was aware that his methods could, at times, be more hindering than helpful to the rehearsal process. He was often met with less than enthusiastic participation from established actors who preferred their classic presentational methods to his newfound psychological analysis. He simply turned to the younger generation, fresh and eager to learn. Yet criticism came from outside the Moscow Art Theater as well. At times the audience was not prepared for the level of realism Stanislavski achieved. Other critiques expressed concern over the System’s “excessive concern with the trivial and the
common place” (Benedetti 189). Others still dubbed it “idealistic” with a tendency to oversimplify complex problems (Benedetti 320). It did not help that there were a number of attempts to employ the System that were unsuccessful, including Othello and Cain.

Yet there were also countless successes; including a production rather early in the System’s development, A Month in the Country; the legendary production of the opera, Onegin; and Figaro, one of Stanislavski’s last notable works. As a result of his work, the Moscow Art Theater was praised as one of the greatest pillars of realistic drama in Russia and around the world. Other theatrical practitioners clamored to study his methods and praised its results, as exemplified in Gordon Graig’s sentiments that, “a simpler technique, a more human result, would be difficult to find” (Benedetti 184).

The Ever-Changing System and Stanislavski Today

Whatever opinion one may personally hold of Stanislavski’s work, his lasting influence on the theater and the profession of acting as a whole is undeniable. However, it is important to note that Stanislavski’s perception of his own system was dynamic and ever-changing. While the core elements of his methodology remained relatively unchanged from their initial development at the turn of the century to his death in 1938, the relative importance he awarded each element fluctuated greatly in relation to what he was pursuing artistically at the time. Initially his work, both as actor and director, was incredibly external. His focus was on mimicry to create believable human behavior; he would don a mask of physical transformation to create his roles, foreshadowing the work of Building a Character. As Chekov became an influence, psychological depth and emotional fluidity between actor and character gained importance. The use of imagination to envision how an actor would respond to the carefully articulated given
circumstances of the text constituting the ‘Magic If’ was of great importance initially, while other aspects such as tempo and rhythm developed later as a result of his operatic works. As his career drew to a close, functioning predominantly a director, another shift occurred heavily favoring the character’s physical actions. These actions became the means for an actor to achieve their character’s objectives, to create a through-line of action both in the character and production itself. As a result, beats, tactics, and actions became the driving force of the System.

Had Stanislavski lived longer the System, in all likely hood, would have continued to experience extensive revision. Upon his death he left many partial, fragmented, and unpublished manuscripts. This propensity for change genuinely reflects his unending thirst for improvement, as well as his rather “impulsive” personality. (Gordon 13). This dynamic quality, often overlooked by students of the theater, is liberating. Stanislavski himself never touted his theories as the decisive approach to acting. His methods are simply a means of achieving “the quintessence of life,” or as he writes in Building a Character, a means “to create the life of a human spirit in a role or play” (Stanislavski, Building 165). The System “existed to provide access to truthful performances. It was not a moral obligation” (Benedetti 329). Stanislavski acknowledged acting as a highly personal art form; what is effective for one actor will not be effective for another. In such circumstances those tools, theories, and exercises deemed helpful should be utilized and those found irrelevant should be discarded. This remains as true today as it did in the nineteenth century.

This selective approach is largely how Stanislavski is presented today. In university settings, his theories are often treated as a starting point, a means of initial
access, but not the only means to achieve realistic acting. His theories are prevalent foundational knowledge which constitutes only a portion of the actor’s skill set or colloquial ‘tool box’ with which they accomplish their work. His theories are often built upon or modified by instructors to suit their educational agendas, or incorporated into larger lesson plans. It is in this way that Stanislavski continues the work he began over a century ago. The presence and lasting influence of Stanislavski’s fundamentals, including “spontaneity and impulse over structure, actor as character over scripted character… ‘doing’ over ‘being’ … intention over motivation… and outward, rather than inward-directed energy” in university and professional settings are a testament to how revolutionary he was, how effective his methods were and continue to be, and a positive indicator of his continued esteem in the theater (Mann).
The History of *Orphan Black*

The science fiction drama *Orphan Black* began as a “little tiny show” which “nobody wanted to make” and has since blossomed into a fan favorite, critically acclaimed television phenomena (Whedonopolis). Before premiering on the Canadian Space Channel and BBC America in March of 2013, the show enjoyed a decade long gestation period in which it almost failed to come to fruition. Co-creators and self-proclaimed Canadian science fiction aficionados John Fawcett and Graeme Manson, well known for their previous works on *Ginger Snaps* and *Cube* respectively, developed the initial concept for *Orphan Black* in 2003 when Fawcett suggested the image of a woman witnessing her own suicide on a train platform (Brown). Graeme was intrigued by the premise and together the creative team began to explore the idea, expecting to develop a feature film. Fawcett’s initial concept did not suggest any inherent relationship between victim and witness, and not initially intending to write about clones, the subject “didn’t take long” to arrive at as other avenues of twins, siblings, and doppelgangers quickly became insufficient to tell their developing dramatic narrative (TatianaMDaily). As the clone concept grew increasingly nuanced it became apparent that a feature film would be an inadequate medium to fully explicate the complex, “labyrinthine” mystery of multiplicity, scientific ethics, individuality, and identity the pair had created (BBC America). Consequently, the project was sidelined, left only to casual musing over drinks at the pub until they could more adequately address the problem (Brown).

It was not until 2008 that Manson suggested the concept may be better suited to a seasonal television format. A filmmaker by trade, Fawcett was initially wary of the idea, but was encouraged by the growing popularity of the television science fiction genre and
the general shift toward serialized drama that had occurred over the course of his career. He soon saw the format as an opportunity, with the episodic nature becoming necessary to the concept’s format (Brown). Citing the creative influences of the recently released *Memento* and the collective works of David Cronenberg, Fawcett sought to tell his favorite kind of story with *Orphan Black*, one that continually “pulled the rug out from under the audience,” twisted the plot in unexpected ways, and left viewers breathless at each episode’s conclusion (Willmore; Radish; TatianaMDaily). What emerged was a serialized narrative Fawcett describes as a “mystery thriller with a sci-fi angle” (Radish).

The next major difficulty was to find a network to financially support the show. At the time, despite the growing popularity of serialized science fiction like *Battlestar Galactica*, few companies were willing to invest in science fiction for the television format, generally consenting to leave the genre to the bountiful budgets of Hollywood. BBC America, who in 2012 had just launched their first original work, *Copper*, was the first network to express any interest in the project, and Fawcett credits their “love and belief in *Orphan Black*” for the show’s manifestation and ultimate success (Radish).

With a limited budget, a rambunctious Canadian production team, and a complex concept, Fawcett and Manson produced the first season of *Orphan Black*, which ran March through June 2013. The season was met with generally favorable reviews, receiving a Rotten Tomatoes score of 92% fresh and such praise as *The Hollywood Reporter*’s Tim Goodman’s description of the show as “addictive and compelling… the most intriguingly entertaining new series of the year” (Goodman). Other critiques cited minor concerns over ‘jarring’ humor, the low budget feel, and the potentially limited, gimmicky nature of having one actor play all of the clones (Ryan; Seitz). Regardless of
initial opinion, the first season received numerous nominations and awards, including IGN’s nominations for best TV series and best new TV series, and the Satellite Awards’ nomination for best television or miniseries. Of its thirteen total award nominations, the first season received six awards including the Critics' Choice TV Award: "Best Actress in a Drama Series" for Maslany and IGN’s title for "Best TV Sci-fi Series" (Imdb).

Now five seasons into its indeterminate tenure, *Orphan Black* enjoys unprecedented success, occupying an earned place of respect in the ever-expanding universe of the television science fiction genre. It continues to accrue both fan loyalty and critical acclaim, with over fifty-one nominations and forty-one wins to its name (Imdb).
Applying Stanislavski’s Theories to Maslany’s Performances

The Internal System

The aforementioned difficulties associated with the publication of Stanislavski’s system have caused many theatrical artists to possess only a limited or skewed understanding of his work in full. In separating the internal and external aspects of the System between the works An Actor Prepares and Building a Character the System experienced a fundamental divide, leading many to isolate these aspects rather than view them as the cohesive whole Stanislavski intended them to be. In the West, where An Actor Prepares stood alone for over a decade before the English translation of Building a Character appeared, this internal system took hold and revolutionized the theatre with little to no regard for the external aspects meant to accompany them. In many ways, An Actor Prepares came to be seen as the System in its entirety. While not Stanislavski’s intention, his internal psycho-technique proved highly effective in its own right.

This part of his System focuses on textual analysis as a means of the informing the “inner creative forces” of the mind, will, and emotions to create the, “inner life of a human spirit,” as expressed “in an artistic form” (Stanislavski, Actor 15). This textual analysis begins with the adage, ‘acting is action,’ and correspondingly uses the actions of a character within a text as the basis of an actor’s art (Stanislavski, Actor 15). In examining the individual actions performed by a character as the means of achieving an end, an actor can begin to determine what the character desires and why. For Stanislavski, this end, the desired result of any action, is a character’s objective; a specific, attention-consuming, attainable goal which not only responds to the requirements of the text, but captivates the actor’s attention, sparking something within
them (Acting 127). The more compelling an objective an actor can assign to any given action, the more motivated and specific their performance of that action will be.

In Stanislavski’s methodology, the development of a character’s inner life and truth begins with an analysis of their actions as described in the text as a tangible means of discerning appropriate internal motivations and objectives. This focus on acting as a series of actions intended to achieve an objective accomplishes a number of things. It emphasizes what the actor aims to accomplish and how they will achieve it rather than the character’s emotional state; simply conveying the emotions of the scene does little in the way of advancing the dramatic action or achieving an objective. In focusing on the intention informing each action, mindless or distracting actions are mitigated. Most importantly, the patterns created by the establishment of strongly worded actions and objectives create a means of accessing a character’s inner emotional life.

In this manner of character analysis scenes are divided and subdivided into minute changes in action and objective. These smaller actions work together to form a through-line which works toward an overall objective for any given scene. Once a scene objective is established for each section of a work, they can be examined to form a larger through-line culminating in a super-objective; the character’s all-encompassing, primary desire which all smaller objectives strive to attain. This compelling need forms the foundation of an actor’s artistic creation, offering their character drive and continuity as each acting choice made works toward the attainment of their super-objective. To be most effective, the super objective must not only be in “harmony with the intentions of the playwright” but at the same time must “arouse a response in the soul of the actors” creating emotional fluidity and truth between character and actor (Stanislavski, Actor 324).
The remaining text of *An Actor Prepares* describes internal devices aimed at enhancing the personal connection to and potency of these scene and super objectives for the actor enabling them to more effectively act “in unison” with their character (Stanislavski, *Actor* 245). One such device is emotional memory; in which an actor draws upon their own life experiences to create an internal and authentic emotional reaction analogous to the emotional needs of the character they portray (Stanislavski, *Actor* 175). This work is incredibly personal to the actor and begins with a thorough understanding of the emotional context of the scene and character being performed. In analyzing which emotional overtones are needed, the actor searches their own past, feelings, and experiences, utilizing those that create a naturally similar response to those called for by the scene. In using emotions genuinely experienced by the actor, a fresh and truly felt emotional state can be created with each performance. However, as with any device, the actor must be constantly evaluating its potency and efficacy in producing the desired emotions. As the actor’s feelings toward a memory change their acted response changes as well, potentially skewing the emotional content of the scene. New experiences and memories should be substituted when previously potent devices begin to fade.

Another device, among Stanislavski’s most famous, is the concept of the ‘Magic If.’ Stanislavski awards the word ‘if’ a number of peculiar qualities which lend themselves to the art of acting. ‘If’ does not truly compel an actor to believe or disbelieve anything, but to explore the possibility of a scene or character in a clear and honest fashion. Further, in a childlike manner, ‘if’ engages an actor’s imagination, and encourages them to think about characters and situations in terms of creative action. ‘If’ also brings an actor more in line with their character by asking, ‘how would I respond if I
was in this situation?’ Explored with a high level of candor, this ‘Magic If’ inspires real human action and reaction without artifice or overthinking.

The ‘Magic If,’ and the connection it inspires by placing an actor in a character’s situation, is enhanced by the imagined elements of the given circumstances of the character and scene. In exploring the details of a character, the setting in which they find themselves, the surrounding objects, or the points of focus they interact with, new layers of reality are formed in the actor’s imagination. These detailed layers add texture and honesty to a role by making it seemingly more real and specific for the actor. This is further enhanced by endowing each textually informed given circumstance or detail with emotional significance personal to the actor, by drawing on analogues images and memories from the actor’s own life. The more effectively an actor can analyze the given circumstances of a role or scene and use the ‘Magic If’ to create a personal connection, the more realistic and meaningful their behavior within the character will become.

Stanislavski deems ‘If’ to be so powerful because it sparks ‘unconcise creativeness through conscious technique” (Actor, 336). The actor is able to read the text, ask the appropriate ‘if’ questions and engage in the process of imaginative exploration, which manipulates the inner life of a character on a subconscious level, inspiring natural, spontaneous, and realistic action on the part of the actor. In accepting the ‘if’ and fully investing in an honest and subconscious response to the emotionally endowed given circumstances, a right set of inner conditions will be established in which “right feelings will come to the surface of their own accord,” allowing the actor to let go of their craft, and truly be in the scene to embody their character (Stanislavski, Actor, 56).
The employment of the subconscious to intuitively create real human action for the stage is the ultimate aim of the inner, psychological portion of Stanislavski’s system. The aforementioned techniques of determining actions and objectives, and fostering a personal connection between actor and character through emotion memory, given circumstances, and the ‘Magic If’ endeavor to inspire the inner motive forces of the mind, will, and emotions. This is the foundation of Stanislavski’s psycho-technique, which works on the conscious plane to promote an inner creative state on the subconscious plane which functions organically and intuitively on the stage. It is when an actor transitions from a conscious application of technical, preparatory character analysis to an intuitive, subconscious embodiment of a character that true artistry begins; it is then that a realization of the character as a living, breathing human spirit can be achieved.

Accessing and effectively utilizing the subconscious in acting is a complex and personal endeavor. In his writing on the subject, Stanislavski offers no concrete methodology for inspiring the subconscious, suggesting only the establishment of a right creative state through the utilization of his prescribed psycho-technique. Any element of the technique, if fully explored, can be a conscious point of entry to the subconscious. It is the actor’s responsibility to explore the tools at their disposal and determine which avenue is the most efficacious stimulus for them. This stimulus, enhanced by a strong super objective and applied to a right internal creative state, is Stanislavski’s surest way of inspiring subconscious activity.

While Stanislavski acknowledges the spontaneous, fleeting, and changeable nature of acting from the subconscious, he also emphasizes the power of truly experiencing a role in this way. Acting intuitively from the subconscious offers the actor
the greatest sense of truth, the most real experience on the stage, and the most intimate
union with their character, in which the actor’s life and that of the character become “so
intermingled that they seemed to merge” (Stanislavski, Actor 313). It allows an actor to
truly feel the inner life of their character, to “feel his own life in the life of his part”
(Stanislavski, Actor 306). When the subconscious becomes involved there is no division
between actor and character, creating a freshness, spontaneity, level of detail, and
inherent truth impossible to craft conscientiously (Stanislavski, Actor 303).

This internal system for developing a living, breathing character has become one
of the single greatest influences in Western acting. It, in many ways, is the starting point
for traditional character development, and forms the foundation of many academic acting
programs. For its prevalence and efficacy, it must be acknowledged as a creative tour de
force and fundamental element of acting. As such, it has had undeniable influence on
Maslany’s work. In a number of interviews Maslany discusses her imaginative
explorations of the clones’ pasts and family lives as a means of informing a clone’s
present behavior, a form of Stanislavski’s given circumstances (VanDerWerff). In
focusing on the given circumstances of where a clone comes from, as set by the text and
enhanced by the ‘Magic If’ of Maslany’s imagination, she can begin to connect to a
clone’s inner life. Maslany also utilizes Stanislavski’s concept of emotional memory,
overlaying the given circumstance and relationships of the show with analogous
memories and relationships from her own life, making them more real and relevant to
herself as both actress and character. She explains her use of this tool in an interview with
James Ostime for Interview Magazine; “I have two younger brothers… [They] are so
much a part of who I am, and such a large part of my heart and my drive. I think that's
why I can relate to Sarah. I've never had a kid, but I understand that whole, ‘I would kill for my family’ kind of thing” (Ostime). Maslany was able to add depth and emotional connection to Sarah’s relationship with her daughter by endowing it with the analogous familial love she feels for her brothers, explaining that “Sarah's drive for her daughter, I understood it, it resonated with me. It's a very primal, animal thing that you feel for your family” (Ostime). This form of substitution exemplifies the connection and use of relevant personal experiences advocated for throughout *An Actor Prepares*. She also uses Stanislavski’s concept of objectives, using the term ‘central drive’ in place of super-objective. In an interview with *The A.V. Club* she said of Sarah, “her central drive was… always Kira, and that was always to get her family back together and to try against all odds within herself and outside of herself to be a good mother and to settle down and stop running” (VanDerWerff). This driving desire, the given circumstances of the text, Maslany’s many imagined ‘if’s, and her improvisational work, all flow in tandem to inform each acting choice to create the unique and nuanced character of Sarah Manning.

*The Difficulty*

Yet beyond these explicit discussions of internal technique the employment of Stanislavski’s inner system is difficult to gauge in Maslany’s work. Many of the techniques outlined in the text, including the entire concept of perfecting an inner creative state which allows for the proper functioning of the subconscious to intuitively create a character, are entirely internal. This renders objective analysis of their use in character creation difficult and highly subjective. As an external observer, I cannot say with any certainty whether an actor is working intuitively from a properly established inner
creative state or consciously from place of psychologically based craft; only the actor can make that determination based on personal perception and self-reflection.

However, counter to many perceptions of Stanislavski this internal work is not the entire system. There is another aspect, the external approach to acting; which, in contexts akin to *Orphan Black*, is arguably more apparent and important than the internal one. While *An Actor Prepares* focus on character creation on an internal level to create real, truthful, and honest behavior on the stage, transformational acting as described in *Building a Character*, is an amalgamation of carefully crafted external acting choices developed by the actor to create visually and aurally distinctive characters for the stage. These choices may or may not be informed by inner creative states, but have in themselves the potential to inspire new and relevant inner motivations for the actor to utilize. It is this type of comprehensive external character creation which drives a series like *Orphan Black*, making it successful and astounding to watch. It is this type of transformational character creation that is often overlooked in favor of psychological reality due to an unfortunate gap in publication. What is more, it is this form of characterization that can be objectively examined, defended, and lauded in Maslany’s performance. As such it will be the subject of the remainder of this thesis.

*The Outside-In Approach*

A continuation of the System Stanislavski began outlining in his first work, *Building a Character* utilizes the inner motive forces of internal characterization, namely the mind, will, and emotions, in a new way. Focusing on a means of characterization that is often considered an external-to-internal approach, these creative forces are used to craft the outer, physical embodiment of a character; that which is most visible to the audience
and truly communicates the “inner, living spirit” of the character portrayed (Stanislavski, *Building 5*). This outside-in approach has the ability to not only produce the appearance of unique, specific characters, but to affect the inner creative state, sparking internal impulses which intuitively inform other internal and external actions and choices.

This concept, that physical choices have the ability to intuitively inform other aspects of character, is a theme prevalent throughout the text but is initially explicated by the fictitious director Tortsov in the first chapter. In a demonstration before his students Tortsov crafts a series of minute physical changes to his eyes, leg position, mouth, and manner of speaking transforming him from himself into an Englishman. While during this demonstration he made no “inner adjustment” as would have occurred in *An Actor Prepares*, “his inner faculties responded to the external image he had created” (Stanislavski, *Building 9*). This intentionally crafted external-to-internal approach is an effective means of characterization employed by many actors; yet Stanislavski emphasizes that these physical choices should not occur in isolation from the previously outlined internal work, but is to be performed in conjunction with it, as “the physical materialization of a character to be created emerges of its own accord once the right inner values have been established” (Stanislavski, *Building 5*).

Embodied in an actor’s physical and vocal choices, these “purely technical, mechanical, simple external” tactics, are far more perceptible than the psychological preparatory work of *An Actor Prepares*. As such, they prove to be better suited to objective analysis in regard to character creation. Therefore, the practices, exercises, and concepts of external characterization as described in *Building a Character* will form the foundation of the remaining examination (Stanislavski, *Building 9*).
The Physical Aspects

Donning the Image of the Character

The first external means of character creation discussed at length is that of dressing a character. While in textual discussions Tortsov encourages his students to create their own costume, make-up, and hair design, in today’s television industry those decisions are largely removed from the actor and given to a creative team of specialized artists. In the case of *Orphan Black*, each clone’s appearance is dictated by costume designer Laurie Drew, make-up artist Stephen Lynch, hair stylist Sandy Sokolowski, and a fleet of wardrobe support staff (Miller). With each clone’s styling the creative team attempts to fashion distinct looks which convey the character’s history, life style, and personality habits. For example, dark, smoky eye makeup and unkempt hair differentiate the street hardened Sarah from her suburban counterpart Alison, who sports a sleek ponytail and impeccably applied purple eyeliner. Helena’s pallid aesthetic, red-tinged eye makeup, wild blonde hair, and light wardrobe inspired by Madonna imagery and religious iconography, ostentatiously differentiate her from her clone counterparts (Miller).

To layer additional texture and specificity into each clone’s look, each character possesses a unique and reoccurring hair style, distinctive color palate, and iconic accessories which can be maintained or modified to externally reflect their present personality, grooming habits, and mood. Alison proves to be an excellent example of this situational modification; in stressful situations, her usually sleek ponytail is styled to be frizzy, reflecting her internal turmoil. At these times her makeup is more likely to be smudged, as it is in both her street fight with Ansley in episode eight and in her intervention from episode nine.
These detailed and idiosyncratic looks not only visually differentiate the characters from one another and contribute to the overall presentation of their current situation, they provide a means of accessing each character for Maslany. During each character transformation, up to four per day ranging in length from thirty-five to forty-five minutes, Maslany has the opportunity to mentally transition between clone personalities. In these transient periods, Maslany adopts the new clone’s thought processes, physicality, voice, and character quarks, maintaining the crafted personality both on-camera and in-between takes (Miller). This process is akin to what the character of Kostya describes following Tortsov’s costuming exercise; Kostya was able to successfully inspire intuitive physical and vocal character choices based on the envelopment of himself in the external character aesthetic he had developed. However, the experience proved difficult to disengage from, with aspects of his newly created character permeating the offstage interactions that followed. He attributes this phenomenon to the full immersion of himself into his character that costuming, hair, and makeup uniquely provide, which can be among the “most important asset[s] for an actor” (Stanislavski, Building 21). For Maslany this consistent immersion, both during and in-between takes allows for greater character consistency and distinction. By maintaining a clone’s specific mannerisms for the duration of her time appearing like them, what Stanislavski encourages and describes as, “putting yourself into your character’s skin,” she is better at “keeping everybody straight” in her head (Building 25; Vanderweef). That is not to say that Maslany continues to think of herself as these characters outside of scenes. In Loofbourow’s article in the New York Times, “The Many Faces of Tatiana Maslany,” she describes how Maslany maintains her current character’s speech patterns
and general personality while interacting with others as herself, able to discuss non-show related aspects of the world, such as recent award nominations or adult onesies. *Building a Character* likewise touches on this phenomenon, which it described as a “duality,” which encapsulates both the actor and the character being created, an observational and symbiotic internal relationship prompted by external choices which promotes creative work (Stanislavski, *Building* 21). This duality, in which the actor can don and hide within the mask of characterization, enables the utilization of the actor’s own deep seated thoughts, fears, and emotions to inform their characters in ways they would never employ in their everyday life (Stanislavski, *Building* 30). The transformative power of costuming, hair, and makeup, in conjunction with the intuitive physical and vocal choices they inspire enable actors to become “incarnate in their parts” (Stanislavski, *Building* 30).

**Character and Type**

In the chapter “Characters and Types” Stanislavski touches on a dangerous acting pitfall which poses a legitimate threat to *Orphan Black*: the portrayal of generalized, stereotypical characters based on ‘types.’ Textual examples of type include ‘merchants’ and ‘military men,’ but within the context of *Orphan Black* these generalizations could easily be ‘soccer mom’ for Alison or ‘British punk’ for Sarah. Stanislavski outlines three levels of character development based on these recognizable character ‘types.’ The first level is poor characterization, which is described as a series of “generalized clichés supposed to portray characters. They are taken from life, they actually exist. But they do not contain the essence of a character and they are not individualized” (Stanislavski, *Building* 26). The mimicry of these clichés without thought or individualization would be incredibly detrimental to a series like *Orphan Black*, which depends on deeply textured
characters with clashing objectives to propel the show. The ability to go beyond this first level of character development to portray individualized characters over generalized stereotypes was of primary importance when Fawcett and Graham were casting the show. Maslany’s ability to surpass cultural clichés and believably portray “individualized” and “extra distinct” characters is what earned her the role (Brown).

The type of characterization employed by Maslany is the highest level of character development described in the text. Not only does it effectively utilize a recognizable type with which the audience can connect, it recognizes sub-divisions and specificities within that type (the second level of character development) while also employing a “heightened, detailed sense of observation,” to create the “rich and layered and dense and soulful and grounded and real” characters Fawcett and Graham write and on which the show depends (Stanislavski, Building 27; Brown).

These observations and the specific acting choices they produce develop from a careful exploration of the given circumstances of the type within the context of the work. Stanislavski utilizes the type of ‘elderly’ to exemplify this form of character development. His students initially gravitate toward the overt signs of old age, applying external maladies like limps and poor posture without thought to the reasons behind them. These characterizations were flat exaggerations. Yet as the students are guided to explore specific areas of discomfort or disfigurement associated with old age, such as enflamed joints or stiff muscles, the characterization became more specific. In essence, to develop an individualized character from a clichéd stereotype an actor must consider the “tempering factors,” or those given circumstances of the play which effect the external characterization of their role (Stanislavski, Building 31). By manipulating and honoring
These circumstances an actor imagines themselves into analogous circumstances which generate the external characterization of a role (Stanislavski, *Building* 34).

Tatiana Maslany, while not attempting any clones of advanced age, utilizes a similar thought process in differentiating and developing her clone characters. Most clones can be given modern stereotypical labels, which are repeatedly acknowledged within the show itself. During the second episode Sarah deems Alison a “soccer mom” after first seeing her as she emerged from a mini-van on her way to coach soccer. In other episodes Cosima is labeled by Katja as the “scientist friend” and Sarah is referred to as a British punk (“Natural Selection;” “Unconscious Selection”). These types aid the audience’s ability to identify and differentiate the clones, but also serve as starting points for Maslany. ‘Hippie’ Cosima will look, feel and speak very differently than the ‘power-business woman’ Rachel based solely on the clichés associated with those types. These types and the context in which they are presented also shape the audience’s perception of the character. Yet Maslany does not rest on these stereotypes, using them only as initial points of exploration. For example, in creating suburbanite Alison, Maslany developed external physical characterizations by making decisions about Alison’s past that lead to her current situation, working backwards through her personal history. Much of Alison’s tension and upright posture are residual habits from participation in ballet as a child, an acting choice inspired by Maslany’s own limited experience in ballet and the stereotype of affluent, suburban mother (VanDerWerff). In this instance, a history of ballet would be a ‘tempering factor’ for Alison, one of many that lends her specificity beyond a simple, suburban, soccer mom. Maslany employs similar explorations into the past of each clone she portrays, heavily emphasizing each clone’s parents and the environment in which
they were raised. This is reflected in Helena as well. The character quirk in which she devours almost any food in sight was the result of Maslany’s choice that Helena was often denied food as a child; as an adult, she is plagued by an animalistic hunger.

This level of characterization is idyllic in Stanislavski’s System because it allows an actor to don a protective mask in which they are no longer themselves, but their character; “all actors who are artists, the creators of images, should make use of characterizations which enable them to become incarnate in their parts” (Stanislavski, Building 30). This liberates the actor from personal limitation to “bare his soul down to the last intimate detail” and perform actions they would be incapable of in their everyday life (Stanislavski, Building 30). By being incarnate in her roles Maslany is able to believe “fully and sincerely in the reality” of her characters and their “extraordinary circumstances” (VanDerWerff). An added benefit of this envelopment in characterization is that by focusing intensely on the given circumstances and the resulting external characterization the pressures associated with pleasing an audience or the stress of facing a camera are diminished (Stanislavski, Building 29).

**Making the Body Expressive**

While much of the fourth chapter, which outlines the need for an actor to have an agile, able body and the means of achieving it, is outdated and physically dangerous (such as the method described for developing turn out on page 42) its underlying concepts remain relevant to acting today. With these appeals for physical agility and flexibility Stanislavski hopes to foster an actor with a “healthy body in good working order, capable of extraordinary control” (Building 38). Only then can actors trust their bodies, among their most important instruments, to respond quickly and decisively to the
action of the play. The study of gymnastics is recommended to correct physical defects like imbalanced muscles or poor posture. Acrobatics is also a suggested area of physical training to develop “the quality of decisiveness,” enabling an actor to physically respond to an event in an organic way without superfluous forethought (Stanislavski, *Building* 39). This willingness to fully commit to and execute a physical movement in the moment of reaction contributes to an actor’s ability to “give themselves completely to their parts” (Stanislavski, *Building* 40). The study of dance is also advised to develop proper posture, and senses of grace, finish, and eloquence. Cumulatively, these areas of study and the exercises chronicled in the text develop will-power in an actor’s command of their body. In doing so they increase their range of motion and the vocabulary of physical movement in the repertoire, creating a broader base from which they can develop characters as well as an increased capacity to consciously carry out those movements.

The chapter also discusses the importance of developing a lithe, neutral physic. To over or under develop the body into deformity or change the external appearance of an actor’s form limits their ability to adapt to new roles. Actors, Stanislavski suggests, need “strong, powerful bodies, developed in good proportions, well set up, and without unnatural excess,” a neutral, ready canvas on which a character can be created (*Building*, 38).

Maslany does not ascribe completely to Stanislavski’s suggested method of physical training, nor should she. However, she does appear to honor the underlying philosophies on which they are based. Her slim figure, naturally hued hair, and polished appearance create the neutral canvas required by so changeable an actor. She utilizes her personal history in dance to generate unique movements and mannerisms in her
characters. She also genuinely cares for the instrument of her body, remaining healthy and active, able to respond the physical demands of her work on *Orphan Black*.

**Plasticity of Motion**

Building on the previous chapter’s theme of an agile, flexible, and neutral body, the discussion shifts to how character-specific motion can be crafted upon this blank canvas. Stanislavski states that movement and action must be taken from an “inner pattern” found intuitively within the recesses of an actor’s mind. These inner patterns are “the only kind of movement fit for our use when we are building the physical form of a character” (Stanislavski *Building*, 61). Essential to this discussion are the concepts of energy and attention, which should flow in tandem with this intuitively found inner pattern, creating an “endless, unbroken line” of movement (Stanislavski *Building*, 63). The unbroken line is the organizational factor inherent in any and every form of art from music, to design, to theater. In acting, the unbroken line of physical movement is meant to closely mirror the internal unbroken line of actions and objectives, giving it physical expression and offering the character an element of unity. This harmonious flow fosters physical fluidity and continuity of character.

When properly established these two contiguous lines, the internal and the external, have a reciprocating relationship. While he begins with the internal line, Stanislavski acknowledges the power of both, teaching, “it is up to you to decide which of these two lines, the inner or the external is the more important… to the building of a character” (*Building*, 69). The internal line inspires physical actions, but the energies created by physical movement have the capacity to similarly stimulate the emotions, will, and intellect, inspiring new internal movements which may result in novel acting choices.
The continuity of these through-lines, an intangible quality, can be difficult to gauge in an actor’s performance. However, the utilization of tools and exercises similar to those suggested by Stanislavski to develop these through-lines is relatively easy to observe. In the text, Stanislavski describes a number of exercises designed to “coordinate the beat of your external tempo and rhythm in your step with the corresponding beat of the internal line of energy movement,” in essence coordinating the external and internal movement of energies (*Building 69*). Such exercises include: guided improvisation exploring how the various parts of the body interconnect and influence one another; and moving in tandem with music, allowing the musical through-line of melody to inspire a similarly continuous flow of movement. Maslany has stated that she uses similar techniques in her character development. With a musical playlist and a dance specific to each clone, she uses British punk rock to inform Sarah’s slouched strut and show tunes to inspire Alison’s quick paced precision (*Ostime*). Improvisation, often under the guidance and in collaboration with creators Fawcett and Mason and her body double Kathryn Alexandre, plays a large part in clone personality and physical characterization development (*Miller*). Maslany states this improvisation work is among the most important tools to her process of character development. It allows her to “commit” to each character and keep them alive amid the complex technical requirements of multi-clone scenes (*Ostime*).

The through-lines developed by these and similarly external means can then be consciously manipulated by the actor to endow the character with more specific individual quirks. Such manipulations include changes in tempo, rhythm, and which parts of the body engage in the movement. This manipulation and artistic exploration should
aim to further unite the internal and external lines, engaging the entire body in the inner motivations of the character creating a fluid, consistent “external plasticity” based on the “inner sense of the movement of energy” (Stanislavski Building, 70).

While there is little to base any utilization of ‘internal line’ in Maslany’s work, each clone possesses the flow and consistency Stanislavski desires. This is perhaps most visible in Cosima’s rounded, swirling movements. Endowed with an organic quality inspired by her fascination with the world, the curved quality of motion is visible in her very first appearance in episode two, as she quizzically emerges from around a corner, her head curving up and to the left as she greets Sarah. This curvature is maintained throughout the season in her hand movements, such as in her phone discussion with Sarah in episode three and in her large circular movements in her nervous interactions with Delphine in episode seven. However, there are also times in which Maslany chooses to place these inner and outer through-lines at odds with each other, as exemplified in the character of Alison, who Maslany describes as “the external being completely different from the internal” (VanDerWerff). In this instance, the friction created by opposing through-lines informs character tension, movement, and the physical expression of their objectives.

**Restraint and Control**

Character movement, much like a character’s physical appearance, must be built upon a blank canvas. Stanislavski suggests that an actor “must rid himself of all superfluous gestures” (Building, 73). These superfluous gestures can take many forms; from theatrical clichés to repetitive personal mannerisms of which an actor may not even be aware. These unconscious habits are especially detrimental to an actor’s work; if not
recognized and curtailed they will permeate the physical characterization of every role attempted, creating similar rather than distinctive characters on the stage or screen. This encroachment of personal habits on multiple characters is an incredibly real and perilous danger in the context of Orphan Black. If Maslany is unable to control her personal mannerisms as she portrays her numerous characters they would begin to share gestures and meld together into a vague mess of characterization rather than the seven separate, living individuals they are intended to be.

Wherever these superfluous gestures come from, whether ingrained personal mannerisms or conscious choices to appear busy or theatrical, Stanislavski warns “an actor’s performance which is cluttered up with a multiplicity of gestures will be like that messy sheet of paper,” on which it is impossible to create an artistic masterpiece (Building 73). His suggestion to prevent this problem is to adopt a hyper-sensitivity to the instrument of the body, with an awareness of what it is doing at all times. Further, an actor must utilize personal control and restraint, allowing him to “harness his gestures that he will always be in control of them and not they from him” (Stanislavski, Building 73). To employ the paper metaphor from above, only when an actor begins with a clean sheet, free of these pointless gestures can they “achieve the necessary sharpness of outline” for their character’s physical embodiment (Stanislavski, Building 74).

This control and the more restrained, simple manner of movement that it fosters are especially relevant to Orphan Black given the context of its medium; television. While Stanislavski intended his works to remain on the stage and largely discounted the emerging entertainment, his concept applies very well to the intimate work and technical concerns of the medium. In tighter frames, often utilized in heightened emotional
moments, such as Sarah’s reaction to Beth’s suicide in the first episode, or Cosima’s discovery of the patent in the final episode, an abundance of movement would overcrowd the frame, detract focus from the truthful emotion of the moment, or simply not make it into the frame at all. The manner in which multi-clone scenes are filmed, using a techno-dolly, necessitates an even greater level of mindfulness and restraint on the part of the actor. A computerized camera set atop a tract, the techno-dolly essentially memorizes the movement with which the scene is initially filmed and executes that pattern exactly over multiple takes. This allows directors to repeatedly capture the same angles as Maslany portrays multiple clones over multiple takes. The precision offered by this technological feat requires a great amount of physical awareness from Maslany; she must not only remember where the camera is, but where it is going, as well as her positioning in her past and future performances during multi-clone scenes. Were she to utilize too many gestures, or gestures inappropriately scaled to the frame, the clones would appear to run into each other or exit the frame entirely. This would compromise continuity, resulting in a scene too chaotic to serve any narrative purpose. By applying Stanislavski’s concept of restraint and incredible mindfulness the clones in such scenes are able to interact flawlessly, as in the final episode when Alison pours Cosima a glass of wine as Sarah examines Dr. Leekie’s contract.

While restricting the physical movement of a character may initially seem limiting, leading to an uneventful performance, Stanislavski suggests “lessening of your gestures will be compensated for by the intonations of your voice, flexibility or your facial expression, all the more exquisitely exact means of communication” (Building, 76). In essence, by limiting large, unnecessary gesture an actor is compelled to use more
subtle and impactful methods of communication. The effectiveness of these means is enhanced by the intimate nature of television. An example of such use of voice and facial expression rather than overt physical depictions of the character’s inner state is Alison’s intervention in episode nine. In the scene Alison remains stationary, seated at the head of the circle. Her power is not derived from large motion or angry gestures, but from the intensity or her stare, the twitch of her eyebrow, the crescendo in her voice, and the conviction with which she delivers her arguments. The one gesture used, the bird-like hand flick on her lines, “no, no more words,” is concise and effective in punctuating her newfound dominance (“Unconscious Selection”). The limited nature of her movement exemplifies Stanislavski’s concept “the movements and action of a character being portrayed gain immeasurably in significance and attraction when they are not clouded over with superfluous, irrelevant, purely theatrical gesticulation” (Building, 75).

Characteristic Gesture

For an actor desiring to create some form of character movement, this raises the question of which gestures are permissible amid the seemingly vast sea of superfluous options. The criteria offered by the text include the instruction to “make use of movements which induce physical action,” because, “they in turn convey the inner spirit of the part one is playing” (Stanislavski Building, 74). The example given above exemplifies this point. After Alison’s pivotal hand flick, her husband Donny reacts by asking everyone to leave; her single, decisive movement induced physical action from an acting partner in the scene (“Unconscious Selection”). Stanislavski also suggests the development of a limited range of gesture for each character. This repertoire of movement, typically three to four characteristic gestures per role, can then be
manipulated and modified to fit the given circumstances of the scene. This manipulation provides variety while maintaining the core movement characteristic to the role. These typical gestures have the added benefit of not only establishing character but bringing the actor, “closer to the character he is portraying,” offering a way to easily slip into a character once the character is developed (Stanislavski, *Building 76*).

This limited range of gesture “requires an economy of movement,” which serves Maslany well in her efforts to quickly create visibly distinct characters which she can easily access throughout the filming process (Stanislavski, *Building 75*). By creating a unique set of gestures for each clone she is able to differentiate them in her own body, avoid mannerism crossover between clones, and maintain clone distinction for the audience. Further, by revisiting the same movements Maslany is able to create continuity of motion within a character which spans the entire ten-episode arc. Perhaps the most ostentatious example of characteristic gesture is Sarah’s propensity to touch her hair. The gesture is first utilized less than five minutes into the first episode, when after stealing and inspecting Beth’s purse, Sarah runs her right hand through her hair smoothing it to the side. Similar gestures are used later in the episode as she
talks with her brother at a bar and attempts to deceive Paul at their apartments. Not always one smooth gesture, Maslany varies the rate, manner, and intensity with which she manipulates her hair to correspond to the situation of the scene. At the end of the first episode, after being confronted by Katja, both hands are used to repeatedly and agitatedly move the hair from her face, an expression of Sarah’s anxiety from both the wake she just witnessed and the current situation. A few moments later, after Katja is assassinated by Helena, Sarah’s manipulation of her hair becomes one-handed, jerky, repetitive swipes. Similar hair-centered gestures modified to parallel the situation can be seen throughout the season, most notably in times of distress. In episode four as Art confronts Sarah in Maggie Chen’s apartment while she has no feasible explanation for her presence there, she nervously runs her hand through her hair. In episode ten, one hand slowly smooths her hair back in a gesture of fatigue before being startled by the discovery of blood splattered across the floor, a product of Helena’s violence toward their biological mother. This gesture, unique to Sarah, aids in the establishment of her through-line and general sense of continuity. Other repeated movement motifs include her repetitive leaning on tables and furniture, which could be expanded to encompass her rather casual relationship to furniture. She
leans across the dining room table at Paul’s apartment in episode one as she examines Beth’s financial records, leans with her bum against Felix’s sink in episode two, leans across the table into the laptop as she video chats with Cosima in episode seven, and sits with her legs crossed atop the center of the dining room table in episode three. This relaxed relationship with her surroundings is a defining characteristic for Sarah and contrasts greatly with Alison’s rigid formality and Cosima’s relaxed, floor sprawling habits.

Alison’s characteristic gestures stem from a repetitive posture in which one arm is held across the body supporting the opposite elbow, allowing her hand to gesture in and around the face and neck area. Such gestures occur largely from the wrist and remain in close proximity to the frame of her body, necessitating angular positions and articulations. There are many instances of gesture from this position ranging from subtle hand flicks to quick precise points, or simply resting on the chest, cheek, or collarbone, to ostentatiously fidgeting with her earrings or necklace. The most conspicuous of this type of gesture is the point, exemplified repeatedly in episode three. In the first instance, when she points at Felix while

Examples of Alison’s characteristically tight posture. Note how she remains within the frame of her body. From episodes five, eight, nine, and ten respectively.
outlining her expectations of him as a babysitter, there is one decisive point held at face level which articulates from the wrist. While her elbow leaves the side of her body, it remains relatively tight to her person. Later in the episode, as she explains her relationship with Beth to Sarah, she repeats this gesture on a slightly lower plane, with the elbows remaining at her side. In this conversation three specific points are utilized rather than one to emphasize her arguments. These staccato gestures, more precise than Sarah’s movements and more compact than Cosima’s, differentiate Alison from her clone counterparts. They provide Alison a season long continuity; as visible in episodes eight, nine, and ten as they are in episode three. In episode eight, Alison points to Ansley from her characteristic elbow support position as she confronts her about her role as monitor. During the intervention in episode nine, what limited movement Alison has articulates near her face and within the frame of her body. Finally, her episode ten discussion with Dr. Leekie is punctuated by many curt points. It also features hand placements near the chest, chin, cheek, and forehead, and use of constant use of the non-dominant elbow to support the articulating arm (“Endless Forms Most Beautiful”).

Alison also demonstrates Stanislavski’s concept on how characteristic gesture can be manipulated to serve and support the given circumstances of the character. Episode eight, “Entangled Bank,” is undeniably one of the roughest episodes for Alison; over the
course of the narrative she partakes in marijuana, fornicates with Ansley’s husband in a mini-van, consequently engages in a physical confrontation with Ansley in the street, drinks a great deal of alcohol, and ends up disheartened and disheveled at Felix’s door. In these moments of crisis Alison falls back on her characteristic gestures and postures but executes them rather differently than she does in her proper, suburbanite state. While she smokes, she retains the propensity to hold her hands near her face, such as when she takes a hit or fiddles with her jacket; yet these gestures have a more leisurely pace and a more rounded quality than is typical of Alison’s gestural pattern. This trend grows more pronounced the more inebriated she becomes. Following a few drinks and the street fight with Ansley her gestures become even slower. She finally abandons her personal constraints to gesture more broadly, extending beyond her typical frame. These changes in pace, scale, and precision underline the power of a carefully manipulated characteristic gesture to add depth and texture to a character undergoing extraordinary given circumstances while maintaining character consistency.

In stark contrast with Alison’s typical rigidity and tight frame of movement, Cosima gestures broadly, employs few angles, and possesses a rounded quality of movement apparent, as previously discussed, even in her first appearance, curving her head to the side as she rounds a corner (“Instinct”). Cosima’s movements generally take up space; this wider range of movement necessitates a fuller use of her arms, articulating not from the wrist as Alison does, but from the elbow or more
often the shoulder. She also creates space with her hands in how she holds her fingers. Alison generally maintains a close-fisted finger position or hand movements which keep the fingers together. Cosima’s broad gestures utilize spread fingers, with space between each one. This expansive use of space in conjunction with a leisurely pace and smooth execution lend Cosima’s gestures an organic quality inspired by the given circumstances of her biologically minded background. Her two most employed gestures include the circling of her hands, and a spacious sweeping motion in which her hands, with fingers splayed, cross in front of her chest or stomach before pulling to move to their respective sides.

Cosima’s hand circling often surfaces as she attempts to explain scientific concepts to her counterparts, as exemplified in episode three while she video-chats with Sarah, and in episode four as she explains the link between Maggie Chen and Helena. In both cases her hands circle outward, away from herself, with spread fingers near head height but held away from the body. While this circling motion is used more generally as a physical manifestation of her ever-turning scientific mind, Cosima’s sweeping motion is reserved for more social interactions. She uses this gesture as she attempts to connect with Sarah on a personal level at the bar in the third episode. Her scenes with Delphine in episode eight also use this sweeping motion or similar gestures, executed in some fashion
approximately seven times. In the emotional argument between the couple in episode nine, the sweeping movement takes on an edge, becoming more of a jagged, repetitive slice, used five times in the scene. These expansive, organic gestures give Cosima a unique energy and style of movement unused by her clone counterparts.

In contrast with her clone sisters, Helena lacks easily identifiably characteristic gestures. Her most prominent gesture, an arch of the back letting the head drop backwards as she shifts her focus to the heavens, is used sparingly enough to make its description of ‘characteristic’ dubious. This lack of distinctive gesture arises from a number of factors, including her limited screen time, her ambiguous nature, and the contradictory temperament of her character. Very rarely does Helena do the same movement twice. Those gestures she does repeat, such as savagely consuming any food in sight, obsessively touching her surroundings, smelling various objects, and later in the season compulsively rocking, are all more akin to behaviors than gestures. Even within these patterns of motion there is more variation than is seen in the manipulation of the other clones’ characteristic gestures. For example, Helena’s behavior of tactiley inspecting her surroundings utilizes a wide variety of qualities: in the restaurant scene from episode seven, Helena swipes at the walls in a childlike manner while sucking on her Jell-O
spoon. Later in the same episode, Helena’s inspection of Beth’s apartment sports more sinister overtones, with each touch and smell appearing deliberate and controlled. This tendency toward highly varied behaviors serves to enhance Helena’s character as an enigmatic assassin by making her unpredictable. In these behaviors, Helena is consistently inconsistent, emphasizing the inherent opposition of her character; a religious fanatic but also a serial killer, a woman with a steady, penetrating stare who swiftly springs into surprising viciousness. To have such a clone be physically consistent in the manner of her counterparts would undermine the suspense generated by her unpredictability. Rather than establishing her unity and through-line using gestures, as Maslany does for the other clones, Helena’s unity arises from the oppositional energy and the quality of movement in which individual gestures are executed. Most of Helena’s movements and stares feature a restrained energy akin to a coiled spring, augmenting the suspense her character creates. In this way, relying on quality of movement rather than repetitive gesture, Helena opposes Stanislavski’s theory that each character should depend on only a small repertoire of characteristic

Above: Examples of Helena’s characteristic head tilt, usually paired with an arched back. (“Parts Developed in an Unusual Manner.”)

Below: The referenced restaurant scene and examples of Helena’s variety of tactile interactions with her surroundings and tendency to eat any food in sight. (“Parts Developed in an Unusual Manner.”)
gesture made mutable only through changing circumstances; her character is established by overarching movement quality, behaviors, antithesis, and changeability.

Worthy to remember is that the entire efficacy of a character’s physical gesture lies in an actor’s ability to control their instrument, restraining from personal habits and ticks that could muddle the characters they attempt to create. This restraint offers clarity and specificity by creating a neutral physical canvas on which to build. Stanislavski argues that characteristic gesture built on a blank canvas have the power to draw an actor closer to his character, allowing him to more easily access the character. “Intrusion of personal motions” he states, do nothing but distract the actor from the scene by bringing in “purely personal emotions” rather than analogously relevant ones (Stanislavski, Building 76). “The more restraint and self-control an actor exercises in this creative process the clearer will be the form and design of his role and the more powerful its effect on the audience” (Stanislavski, Building 76).

This restraint and careful differentiation in the context of the complex plots of Orphan Black create a few scenarios in which Stanislavski’s theories on characteristic gesture are used in unconventional ways. For example, the events of episode four necessitate that Alison impersonate Sarah to Sarah’s daughter and foster mother, Mrs. S. As Felix assists Alison in her attempts to act more like a British punk the character of Alison attempts to utilize Sarah’s characteristic gestures. This usurping of gesture is not only an acknowledgement of the other clone’s physicality and patterns of movement, but contributes to the physical characterization of the clone attempting the impersonation. By manipulating how similar or different the two clones’ walks, gestures, or postures are as they impersonate each other Maslany can manipulate how much of a chameleon each
clone is. These subtle and nuanced choices are also practical, allowing the audience to more effectively differentiate the clones in these confusing impersonation situations. While the use or misuse of characteristic gesture is of primary importance in these scenarios, the full effect of one clone attempting to be another is enhanced by similar choices in other aspects of characterization. As such, a more holistic, detailed examination of this phenomenon encompassing more of Maslany’s nuanced choices will be discussed in its own subsequent section beginning on page eighty-seven.

Another notable exploitation of established gestures contributes not to the differentiation of the various clones, but to emphasize their similarities, enhancing the thematic content of the sci-fi drama. This is most ostentatious in episode seven, when at the end of an irate phone conversation between Sarah and Cosima each clone throws the phone to the side while muttering ‘bitch’ under their breath in a strikingly similar fashion. Due to Maslany’s careful and specific character work to make each clone unique, this deliberately shared gesture appears jarring. In apparent contradiction with Stanislavski’s desire for unique physical gesture, a poignant statement is made about these clones’ nature, harkening to their mutual origins. This shared gesture is effective only because it is used sparingly as emphasis. Were Maslany to overuse this device, its meaning would be lost and the clones’ individual physical characters would lose their integrity.

Much of Maslany’s success in physically differentiating her characters comes from her employment of Stanislavski’s ‘slightest touches’ which suggest that true artistry is found in the all-important details (Building 76). In carefully crafting the characteristic gestures for each clone, manipulating them in unique ways, and deliberately controlling when and how effectively gestures are shared between characters Maslany creates these
intricate details and slight touches that bring each role to its own unique life.

**Final Thoughts on Physicality**

Maslany’s effective use of these theories to create visually distinct and behaviorally dissimilar clones is one of the most important aspects to the series’ success. Beginning with the neutral and capable canvas of her body, Maslany is able create a number of identifiable, repeatable gestures recognizable to the audience as inherent to each clone. These gestures, never performed mindlessly or uninformed by inner motivation, offer the all-important physical through-line Stanislavski speaks so highly of. These gestures also, in their manipulation relative to the given circumstances of the scene, present valuable glimpses into a character’s inner life. Maslany utilizes her physical mannerisms to great effect, and keeps them simple and uncluttered by extraneous movement, heightening their emphasis on the screen. She also demonstrates a keen physical awareness in keeping each clone separate within her own body, avoiding overlap of clone physicality except when artistically relevant to the work. Her crafted performances enable unique scenarios and compelling plots, and are a testament to her skill and ability as an actress. Yet the physical manifestation of a character is only one aspect of her performance; an actor also must rely on their voice.

*The Vocal Aspects*

**Diction and Singing**

Stanislavski, having explored physical characterization through the manipulation of visual aspects like appearance and gesture in detail, next begins a broad discussion on the use of voice in characterization. He suggests that a “beautiful, vibrant, expressive and powerful voice” is one of an actor’s most powerful instruments and “one of the greatest
gifts of a creative nature” (Stanislavski, *Building* 107). Maslany’s performances exemplify the incredible importance of Stanislavski’s suggested vocal exploration. Through global vocal choices, such as a character’s pitch, pace, and resonation and more specific choices regarding the effective use of pause, emphasis, and volume, Maslany establishes the vocal characteristics fundamental to each character, contributing to the differentiation begun with their physical attributes and behaviors.

Following his general introduction to the voice as an important artistic instrument, Stanislavski describes various vocal exercises aimed at enhancing articulation, clarity, and projection on the stage. For Stanislavski, an actor’s principle duty during performance is to be understood, proclaiming, “every actor must be in possession of excellent diction and pronunciation,” which extends to encompass not only whole words and phrases, but the individual sounds which constitute them (*Building* 85). This meticulous approach to articulation is generally more applicable to the stage of Stanislavski’s era than Maslany’s work today. Given the technological advantages of microphones and the ability to rerecord audio during post-production, the relatively intimate digital mediums of television and film allow Maslany to be a bit laxer in her articulation and explore a greater range of volume than one would find on Stanislavski’s stage. Yet, on some level she must still be cognizant of her own intelligibility, especially when working in difficult accents and dialects.

**The Global Voice**

The discussion of voice continues with an examination of the inherent difficulties of stage speech, such as conversing “about things we do not see, feel, [or] think about for ourselves” (Stanislavski, *Building* 110). Yet for Stanislavski the two most grievous
challenges to realistic stage speech is attentive listening and maintaining the meaning of the text. The repetitive nature of rehearsal and performance often leave an actor bored on stage; their minds wander, creating only “a pretense of attentive listening,” before they respond mechanically in some predetermined way with all inner meaning of the text lost (Stanislavski Building, 110).

To address these concerns Stanislavski explores a number of technical topics utilized to great effect in Maslany’s work including subtext, pause, volume, and accentuation. These technical devices are to be applied only after an honest recognition of personal vocal deficiencies has been achieved so as to most effectively address any relevant concerns. Maslany ascribes to this honest reflection, admitting that none of the clones use her exact voice, which she describes as “super Canadian,” unsuited to any of the characters she has been asked to portray (Feeney). This view is not inherently negative; Maslany enjoys the creative process of exploring her vocal capabilities and manipulating the many elements which contribute to each individual performance.

The product of this creative process, a unique and characteristic voice for each clone, is best exemplified in those scenes where the three principal clones appear together. These multi-clone scenes serve as useful comparisons for the more global aspects of the unique vocal landscapes Maslany has crafted for each character. Such scenes occur in episodes three, five (though Cosima is only present digitally), and ten. These direct interactions between the principal characters illustrate the variances between them clearly, contrasting Alison’s clipped speech against Cosima’s melodic delivery and Sarah’s gritty, urban sound. Tightly-wound Alison occupies a higher pitch range than either Sarah or Cosima, and resonates primarily in her head and mask area. She delivers
short, well-articulated speeches, with a punctual and staccato rhythm. In contrast, Cosima occupies a pleasant middle timbre and resonates from a mixture of chest and throat placement, frequently incorporating limited amounts of vocal fry. While she speaks articulately, her diction is not as sharp as Alison’s, playing into the relaxed, West Coast feel indicative of her Berkley roots. Sarah adds to the vocal diversity with her innate estuary dialect, lower pitch, exclusive use of chest resonation, propensity to mumble, and gritty vocal quality. Helena, ever the enigma, interacts with the clones exclusively through Sarah, and is notably absent from the group scenes which so conspicuously demonstrate their vocal variations. However, Helena’s voice and speech pattern are distinctive enough a direct comparison proves unnecessary. Her most prominent vocal characteristic is her Ukrainian accent, a product of her given circumstances. Her delivery in the mid to lower section of Maslany’s pitch range is often at odds with her often childlike, soft-spoken vocal quality and resonates from either her chest, head, or a combination thereof depending on the scene and her vocal intensity.

These global differences create unique and easily recognizable vocal foundations upon which Maslany can layer specific choices in regard to Stanislavski’s pause, volume, and emphasis to create a distinct aural pattern for each clone. These specific choices are informed first and foremost by subtext.

**Subtext in Speech**

The first technical tool Stanislavski explores, subtext, harkens to the more internal aspects of his system. Subtext is defined as “the manifest, the inwardly felt expression of a human being in a part, which flows uninterruptedly beneath the words of the text, giving them life and a basis for existing” (Stanislavski, *Building* 113). Phrased
alternatively; what the character is actually attempting to communicate, regardless of the actual text. At times the text and subtext may align, aiming to convey the same idea; at others, characters may intend precisely the opposite of what they are given to say. Instances of sarcasm come to mind, such as Sarah’s response to Alison’s pestering about proper use of the defense fund in episode five. While Sarah’s dialogue is, “yeah, I’ll bring you the receipts,” which would be honor Alison’s request, it is delivered with a more challenging subtext, conveyed through the vocal choices of a lower pitch, staccato delivery, and hostile tone. Sarah effectively snub Alison while acknowledging her request through the use of contradictory subtext (“Conditions of Existence”).

Subtext is effectively what makes a character say the words they do on the stage or in a scene, and creates layers of interest and complexity within a character. For greatest effect, the subtext should proceed naturally from the inner movements of a character and be informed by the ‘magic if,’ given circumstances, objectives, and the like. By effectively linking the subtext of every line to an objective, a vocal through-line is created which contributes to the overall tactical pattern employed by a character in the pursuit of their objective. If each line is used in this manner, as a means of attaining a desire in which the character is truly invested, “there should never be any soulless or feelingless words used on the stage,” as the words are made valuable by the subtext which informs them (Stanislavski, Building 114). These desires can be emphasized and made more personal to the actor by the employment of inner images, in which the actor imagines something relevant from their life which provides feelings analogous to the needs of the character. By internally endowing a phrase with a personally relevant
subtext, even words foreign to an actor can become meaningful, allowing for greater vocal exploration.

Stanislavski also advocates for line deliveries to be active and directed at a specific person or focal point with the purpose of affecting them. Working from an objective, each character needs something from their scene partner; everything said, whether supported by a similar or oppositional subtext, should be directed toward actively attaining that need from the others in the scene. In this way, the text takes on a similar role to physical action; “action – real, productive action with a purpose is the all-important factor in creativeness, and consequently in speech as well” (Stanislavski, Building 123). By truly striving to vocally impact the others in the scene an actor can “infect” their partner and “insinuate yourself into his very soul, and you will find yourself the more infected for doing so;” by investing in their partner, the actor invests both in the entire scene and in their own performance (Stanislavski, Building 123).

In many instances this presents no problem for Maslany, as she frequently interacts with many non-clone characters. However, due to the production’s very concept, there are more than a few occasions in which Maslany is essentially acting against herself. This problem is rectified by Katheryn Alexander, Maslany’s body double and most consistent acting partner, who out of necessity receives no screen time whatsoever. In carefully watching Maslany’s characterization of each clone and being an active participant in their development, Alexander can capture each clone’s personality and physical presence, allowing Maslany Stanislavski’s suggested focal point to act upon and invest with vocally (Prudom). It is in this interaction and emphasis on the other person that “the true, the spontaneous source of natural speech technique lies;” the external
word, if directed appropriately and treated actively, has the power to affect both the actor’s and the partner’s emotions, memories, and feelings (Stanislavski, *Building* 137).

**Exploring Specific Vocal Patterns**

Stanislavski, aiming to act toward and affect the others in the scene, next discusses the ways in which line deliveries can be manipulated to most effectively convey the relevant subtext through the use of various pauses, volumes, and placements of emphasis. In making careful, crafted decisions in these regards, and considering the subtext and given circumstances of the character, vocal patterns can be created unique to each character, as Maslany does for each clone of *Orphan Black*. Coupled with the previously discussed conception of a unique vocal foundation for each character, Maslany creates a vocal soundscape for each clone as distinctive and effective as their carefully crafted physical character.

**Pause**

Pause is the first device discussed in detail by Stanislavski, as “an important element, a real trump, in our technique of stage speech” (*Building*, 140). He describes three distinct types of pause; breath, logical, and psychological. Breath pauses are somewhat self-explanatory; they are short, snap like breaks in which the actor pauses the stream of dialogue to take a breath. These can be manipulated in the length and quality of breath employed, and used as a means of emphasizing the words and ideas which follow.

While breath pauses are an element of craft and can be used in diverse ways contributing to overall character, they are the most fleeting and seemingly random of the three Stanislavski pauses. Logical pauses are of a greater length, though remain relatively short when compared to psychological pauses. Logical pauses are structural devices,
simultaneously grouping words and separating ideas to shape phrases, thoughts, and arguments in such a way as to aid audience comprehension. Logical pauses are defined by Stanislavski as the “breaks” used “to increase the clarity and expression” of speech (Building 127).

Psychological pauses are of a different vain all together and are the strongest and most crafted of the three varieties, contributing most directly to a character’s emotional state. Stanislavski differentiates the purpose of the logical and psychological pauses in the sentiment, “speech without the logical pause is unintelligible, without the psychological pause it is lifeless” (Stanislavski, Building 138). As such, psychological pauses are filled with emotional action despite their silence, adding life and unspoken sub-textual significance to the text which proceeds or follows it. As a window of heightened nonverbal communication, the appropriately used psychological pause accomplishes something the logical pause, which simply shapes phrases, does not; it conveys the emotional state of the speaker while affecting a change in the emotional state of the recipient. A true psychological pause is “an eloquent silence… [a] means of communication between people,” informed by subtext and a rich inner content (Stanislavski, Building 139). Psychological pauses, while an element of vocal characterization, rely heavily on physical choices; the pause will only be as effective as the facial expressions, eye contact, and scarcely perceptible physical movements which endow it with meaning.

Each type of pause is used with varied frequency and to diverse effect among the clones. Sarah utilizes both logical and psychological pauses with a fair amount of regularity, creating dynamic silences especially in the use of psychological pause. In
early episodes, as Sarah attempts to navigate her new situation as Beth, her psychological pauses are often filled with rapid eye movement and glances to and away from her scene partner as she struggles to assess the situation or concoct a clever lie. This is evidenced in her nervous interactions with Paul in the first episode and in her pleading with Felix in episode two as she asks him to lie to Mrs. S. This use of pause continues throughout the season; in episode five Sarah looks away from her fellow clones to examine the ceiling as she contemplates Paul’s role as her monitor, and fleeting glances fill the silence which follows once it is revealed that she slept with him.

These examples of Sarah’s psychological pauses are drawn from instances of relative weakness, and employ the pause as a means of gathering her thoughts or changing tactics. Sarah also uses psychological pauses in powerful ways to more effectively pursue her current objective. Such pauses are used as she discusses the Maggie Chen shooting and missing money with Art in the second episode. Two psychological pauses bookend the rapidly delivered, “I’m not dirty, I just freaked out” (“Instinct”). These pauses are filled with compelling physical choices as she leans forward and intensely stares at Art. This stare is not static, but features rapid eye movement as her focus minutely shifts from moment to moment. This subtle eye movement alludes to the larger glances of her psychological pauses in positions of weakness. This similarity creates a continuity of character that contributes to both her vocal and physical through-lines while enabling her a greater position of power through its smaller scale and correspondingly increased intensity. Similarly searching stares fill psychological pauses throughout the season, most notably in her interactions with Helena. In episode nine, as she implores Helena to listen to her, Sarah uses a number of
psychological pauses, such as in between the statements; “you know the connection you feel, psychological pause, I feel it to” and “he’s going to do that to Kira, psychological pause, he’s gonna hurt Kira, breath pause, like he hurt you” (“Unconscious Selection”). In these pauses, Sarah very steadily stares at Helena with very pointed glances to Tomas to underline her point. This eye contact, returned by Helena, is filled with subtextual, nonverbal communication and tension which greatly affects Helena, evidenced by her subsequent attack on Tomas. Following the events of that attack, Sarah uses a powerful psychological pause on Tomas in the statement, “yeah, I’m the one with the keys.

*Psychological pause.* Maybe I’ll give them to Dr. Leekie.” The general steadiness of the stare, low pitch, and even delivery is used as a definitive expression of power, underscored by her physical action of leaving him in the locked cage he had been using for Helena (“Unconscious Selection”).

While Sarah readily uses psychological pauses with various levels of eye contact to access her situation or get her way, she is unique in the frequency with which she uses them. This is especially noticeable when comparing her to either Alison or Cosima. Alison in particular speaks in such a rapid, staccato manner that lengthy psychological pauses of fierce or flighty eye contact would disrupt her rhythm. Instead, Alison generally punctuates her bullet-like delivery with breath pauses and clipped logical pauses. This is illustrated in her very first encounter with Sarah in episode two, “*Gasp. Are you out of your mind? Logical Pause.* How dare you show your face in front of my children? *Breath pause.* How did you find me?” Throughout the exchange, Maslany uses a variety of breath pauses to transition between Alison’s tactics and focus; for example, a breath pause in the form of a controlled sighing exhale is used between “I don’t care who
you are,” delivered as she casually waves a knife at Sarah, and “why Lord? Why me, I never wanted any part of this. Do I wear a giant kick me sign on my back?” in which her focus sarcastically shifts toward the heavens as she turns away from Sarah (“Instinct”). At other times, such as before “how did you find me?” the breath pauses are short, sharp inhales (“Instinct”). These breath pauses work in conjunction with Maslany’s placement of Alison’s logical pauses to create short, clipped ideas which contribute to Alison’s overwhelmingly rapid and up-tight aesthetic. This pattern is established in her last series of statements toward Sarah in the scene, “are you kidding me? Logical pause. I am not doing that. Logical Pause. That is not my responsibility. Logical pause. You need to get out of here. Go, breath pause, and wait for a call” (“Instinct”). The rhythm and tension these pauses create are emphasized by her propensity to fill them with business, or menial activities that keep her constantly in motion. In this exchange, she deals with orange slices. In episode nine similar clipping logical pause are used as she asks Felix if she can stay at his apartment, accented by the physical business of cleaning.

This tendency toward business filled logical pauses is not to say that Maslany chooses to never utilize a full psychological pause for Alison. They are simply used more sparingly, and are therefore of much greater impact when they occur. One psychological pause is used in each of the scenes described above. In episode two the psychological pause comes after Sarah physically touches Alison. Alison recoils with an abrupt, “let go, don’t touch me. Logical pause. This is my neighborhood. Psychological pause. You wait for a call” (“Instinct”). In each pause, Alison’s vocal tactic changes, moving from explosive anger to a decreasing volume, before settling on an intense, quiet, and threatening delivery of “you wait for a call,” following the psychological pause
(“Instinct”). This last phrase is emphasized by a pointing gesture, relative stillness, and wide eyed stare. In episode nine the psychological pause is placed when Alison is weakest and in greatest need of Felix’s help, “Felix, logical pause, Felix, breath pause, I’m a pariah. Logical pause. I can’t go back there alone. Logical pause. I need you to be my wing man… Psychological pause. Please?” (“Unconscious Selection”). Each breath and logical pause in this rather one-way exchange is filled with movement closer to Felix, taking off her cleaning gloves, or pulling the blanket off of Felix. The psychological pause placed before her imploring “please” is set apart by its length and relative stillness, in which she reaches out to Felix and remains there (“Unconscious Selection”). In these and other instances of psychological pause Maslany chooses to make Alison still, breaking her normal rhythm and conveying the heightened need felt by Alison. This stillness and pause occur relatively infrequently, and differs from Sarah’s more frequent psychological pauses of searching eyes. Sarah’s use of psychological pause is to recover or maintain power, her searching eyes contribute to that dynamic. Alison’s pauses are still and utilized in moments of vulnerability, like when she feels threatened, as in episode two, or weak, as in episode nine.

While Sarah and Alison have discernible patterns of pause, Cosima differs from her counterparts in her general lack of pause. The rhythm Maslany created for Cosima’s speech mirrors the swirling and rounded movement of her physical gestures and her holistic view of the world; her delivery is melodic and rarely punctuated by staccato pauses like Alison’s. This pattern of speech is created through the repetition of small, inconsequential linking words and the elongation of important words. These two devices work in conjunction to create an unending flow of ideas, connotative of her constantly
turning mind. This is first exemplified in her bar scene with Sarah. In her attempt to retrieve the case, “well, if you give me the case, I’ll know in a couple weeks,” the words ‘well,’ ‘case,’ ‘know,’ and ‘weeks’ are all elongated, most noticeably on the ‘s’ phoneme (“Variation Under Nature”). Cosima’s first use of repetition occurs during her explanation of how the American clones found each other; during the speech, which was proceeded by a preparatory breath pause, the words ‘so,’ ‘to,’ and ‘we,’ are repeated to link ideas rather than being set off by a logical pause. The use of elongated words, such as ‘who,’ ‘whose,’ and ‘us,’ to both provide emphasize and link ideas continues to create an uninterrupted and fluid speech rhythm unique to Cosima. Conventional logical pauses are found in her more scientific or detailed explanations, and are primarily used as opportunities to allow whoever she is speaking with a chance to absorb the information or for her to assess their understanding. This pattern is used repeatedly in phone conversations with Sarah on scientific subject matter or when verbally processing complex situations, like in the conversation between Cosima and Sarah regarding whether or not to engage with Delphine, a potential monitor (“Conditions of Existence”).

Like Alison, the psychological pauses Maslany utilizes as Cosima are given added emphasis by their relatively infrequent employment. They are reserved for moments of intense anger and betrayal, such as in her first fight with Delphine in episode nine. A poignant psychological pause is placed between, “I still thought you were on my side,” and “I wanted to trust you,” in which she steadily stares at Delphine (“Unconscious Selection”). This stare lacks Alison’s wide-eyed, tense energy and Sarah’s searching gaze; but is filled with a soft, somber energy while her hand rests against her face. A similarly reserved, yet less hostile energy is used an episode earlier, in “Entangled Bank”
just before Cosima and Delphine kiss. A psychological pause is placed between Cosima’s “that’s oddly romantic,” and “totally encouraging” (“Entangled Bank”). This particular pause is filled with calm eye contact and flirtatious eyebrow twitches, which non-verbally build the romantic tension that leads to the subsequent sexual interaction. In Maslany’s vocal landscape for Cosima psychological pauses, true intentional breaks of speech meant to emotionally impact the other character, are reserved for situations of the highest, most intimate stakes.

Helena, as the enigma, follows a vocal pattern markedly different from the other clones, using pauses with the greatest frequency and variety. Helena’s use of logical pause is greatly informed by her Ukrainian accent. By placing logical pauses at odd intervals, a broken quality connotative of English as a second language is created. In examining the episode seven diner scene between Helena and Sarah, logical pauses punctuate Helena’s speech to create rather short simple ideas, as in her initial invitation to Sarah, “We must talk. Logical pause. And Eat. Logical pause. Let’s have lunch” (“Parts Developed in an Unusual Manner”). Similar pauses are used throughout the encounter as she asks for her knife back and for the names of the other clones, including Sarah’s. Helena’s logical pauses are filled with a variety of non-verbal qualities over the arc of the season. In the aforementioned diner scene, they are often filled with an innocent and childlike gaze as she takes in her surroundings and questions Sarah. At other times, like in her episode nine interactions with Tomas, they are filled with nervous energy, downward glances, and little eye contact as she shifts side to side.

Yet both of these responses differ from her use of psychological pause, which largely defines her vocal landscape and is among the greatest contributions to her sinister
nature. While psychological pauses filled with a steady and animalistic stare are used throughout the season, Helena’s practice of using psychological pause as an intimidation technique is most visible in her episode ten interactions with Sarah following the murder of their birth mother. In the dialogue “my sistra. Psychosocial pause. My twin,” and “she tore us apart. Psychosocial pause. But now we’re together” these pauses effectively emphasize ideas and connections which cause Sarah emotional distress, demonstrating Helena’s power in that moment (“Endless Forms Most Beautiful”). This dynamic is enhanced by how the pauses are filled, with an intense stare, measured movement toward Sarah, and waving the burning flare in her grip. The last psychological pause of the interaction falls between Helena mocking Sarah and her exploding into a physical attack, illustrating another pattern characteristic to Helena; an extended moment of silence and physical stillness before explosive physical action. This preparatory pause creates suspense and an unpredictability which contribute to her wild, animalistic character.

Yet vocally nothing contributes more to her wild disposition than the frequent and noisy use of breath pauses. Where Alison’s breath pauses are typically soundless and quick or measured sighs used to change tactics, Maslany chooses to make Helena’s breath pauses noticeably auditory and labored. They, similarly to logical pauses, are placed at odd intervals within a phrase, separating ideas in a way which feels foreign to Western convention. These raspy breaths intersperse Helena’s first interactions with Sarah, separating the ideas, “dirty little copy cop,” and “who are you?” as well as “not yet” and “not Beth” (“Variations Under Nature”). These rattling breaths also punctuate her religiously tinged fervor and manic shaking in episodes seven and eight.

This varied use and frequency of breath, logical, and psychological pause among
the clones contributes to their overall character in subtle but impactful ways. Rather than
a full stop, Maslany uses pause as Stanislavski intended; as opportunities to provide rest
and emphasis while maintaining connection and physical action through heightened
nonverbal communication, offering life and subtext to the words of the script. One
consistency in Maslany’s performances which contributes to this phenomenon is the
outward direction of her focus during pauses; her energy is always directed toward her
scene partner. As such, her pauses are filled with “real productive action” with the
purpose of achieving something from her partner, honoring the observation, “pauses in
themselves possess the power to produce a powerful emotional effect on the listener” a
fact Maslany’s characters use to their advantage in fascinating ways (Stanislavski,
Building 142).

Volume

Stanislavski next details the technical element of volume in vocal
characterization. He begins this discussion by emphatically explicating that “loudness is
not power,” but a product of a character’s emotional state and a tactical means of
achieving an objective (Stanislavski, Building 145). True power is derived from choices
of pause and intonation; volume should act to support these other choices. As an
enhancement, rather than a display of power in itself, volume level should generally be
informed by a scene’s subtext and the inner movement of the character, encouraging a
variety of volumes. An inherently relative facet of voice, a wide gamut of volume is
available to an actor to craft a scene or argument, creating a textured landscape of highs,
lows, crescendos, decrescendos, and plateaus. Shaped with enough intention and gradual
expansion the relationship between soft and loud, or to use Stanislavski’s terminology,
piano and forte, can be capitalized on to more effectively pursue a character’s objectives (*Building 147*).

Maslany utilizes this gradual expansion most conspicuously in the character of Sarah. In her arguments with Vic and Paul in “Condition of Existence” similar volume arcs are utilized. Each discussion begins conversationally, with Sarah matching the moderate volume of her partner. In her argument with Vic she momentarily crescendos with the line, “do you want the money or not?” before a series of much quieter line deliveries (“Condition of Existence”). It is not until she denies Vic’s recollection of the past that she begins a slow crescendo, accentuating “we were parasites,” and “right now Vic” with the loudest volume of the scene (“Condition of Existence”).

A similar decrescendo to crescendo pattern is utilized in her subsequent scene with Paul. As Sarah attempts to maintain her cover as Beth she retains a medium conversational volume. To circumnavigate her widening knowledge gap, she turns the focus to Paul, growing softer with, “you know what I’ve been through,” and the whispered plea “you’re losing it” (“Condition of Existence”). It is not until she drops her Beth façade and offers her name that she returns to a greater volume and stronger delivery. As she turns away from Paul and repeats the story of Beth’s suicide she begins a measured, yet not linear, increase in volume. The monologue begins strongly as she explicates her attempt to clean out Beth’s bank accounts before diminishing as she insinuates Paul’s role as monitor, reaching her quietest point at the line, “and she knew,” followed by a psychological pause (“Condition of Existence”). This pause provides a break before a relatively rapid and steady return to a forte volume, finishing on “the man she loved turned her whole life into a lie” (“Condition of Existence”). The pattern
continues when she decrescendos again as her attacks on Paul become more personal. As the dynamic in the scene shifts she chooses to become even quieter, shifting from a state of providing information to searching for it.

This gradual decrescendo-crescendo pattern is utilized by Sarah throughout the season and aligns with the concept which concludes the section on volume; that the loudest volumes must be earned through the emotional merit of the scene, acting principally as accentuation to provide emphasis or contrast rather than a level to be maintained. This is an element in many of Sarah’s speeches, but is best illustrated by the last scene of the season as she searches the house for her missing daughter, growing louder and more frantic with each outcry to finish with an intensely emotional and loud shout “Kira” out her daughter’s window (“Endless Forms Most Beautiful”). This caps both the scene and her season-long emotional journey with a well-deserved exclamation.

That is not to say that Maslany has limited the character of Sarah to this pattern of volume use. Other notable characteristic choices in volume include her propensity to be louder with people she is more familiar with, such as Felix and Vic, and softer with her feminine family members, especially her daughter. Her volume pattern is most erratic when under duress or interacting with Helena, often jumping from extreme to extreme in reaction to the events around her. This occurs following Katja’s assassination in the first episode, when Sarah repeats “shit” four times, first softly, then explosively, before two additional quiet repetitions. Maslany also created a recurrent vocal device for Sarah utilized with great frequency in a number of diverse situations; muttering expletives under her breath. This occurs as early as the first episode, when she mutters “bitch” under her breath as she hangs up the phone in frustration, a breathy “holy shit, a soccer mom,”
when she first sees Alison in episode two, an “oh shit” after she receives menacing texts from Paul in episode five, and in episode nine she mutters “shit” when she fails to shoot Helena. In its repetitive nature this pattern fulfils the same role as a characteristic gesture, creating a vocal through-line which differentiates Sarah from the other clones while offering a character quirk which makes her more nuanced and human.

Sarah’s typical pattern of volume use in arguments can be effectively juxtaposed to Alison’s approach to volume in her confrontation with Donny from “Conditions of Existence.” Maslany places Alison’s general volume of speaking at a slightly louder level than Sarah and Cosima. Correspondingly, Maslany chooses to make an increase in volume one of Alison’s initial and most frequently utilized argumentative tactics. Her first increase in volume follows a lack of response from with the line, “Donny what’s in the box?” (“Conditions of Existence). Her volume returns to its previous, yet still rather elevated, state for the next line before a subsequent crescendo as Donny continues to deflect her pleas for information. This general upward build, nuanced through brief returns to her initial volume, differs from Sarah’s use of volume in that it is rarely affected by the volume of the other characters. Maslany generally makes the choice to have Sarah read her situation and initially mimic the volume level of her partner.

Conversely, the character of Alison rarely regards the volume of her partner, responding more to their action/inaction or the general activity of her environment. This preference to be loud continues through Alison’s subsequent arguments with Donny near the beginning of “Variations Under Domestication.” In this altercation, Alison again adopts a volume in opposition to her scene partner, beginning rather softly as she probes Donny for information. As her frustration increases her volume mounts, following the
aforementioned nuanced crescendo pattern, though she never reaches a true yell in this particular instance; instead, that aggression is expressed physically as she strikes Donny across the face with a golf club. The ensuing and humorous interrogation scene, which begins with Alison tying her husband to a chair with all manner of sparkly ribbon, provides a useful example of Maslany’s manipulation of pianissimo volumes in Alison’s vocal character; as a means of creating intensity, menace, and (when coupled with an increase of her already rapid pace) feelings of mania. Alison initiates her interrogation rather softly, with a correspondingly close proximity to her husband. As she moves away her volume increases negligibly, remaining relatively soft for her established character. It is not until Donny asks to be untied that her volume increases noticeably, instigating a building, linear crescendo which flares in response to Donny’s reactions. This build culminates in a final yell, returning to Alison’s preference toward volume as she repeatedly slaps him across the face.

This pattern of quiet intensity is also applied in many of Alison’s interactions with Ansley in episodes eight and nine, exemplified best in the intervention scene of “Unconscious Selection.” The volume arc in the intervention is similar to but far more gradual than those of the previous examples. It begins with a soft intensity before utilizing the “gradual expansion” of volume as discussed by Stanislavski, to culminate with a final shout of “you blew the roofer at the cabin! No, no more words” (Building, 147; “Unconscious Selection”). Alison’s preference towards heightened volume does not undermine or weaken her character in the way Stanislavski warns against in his preliminary discussion on the topic when he argues, “[loudness] serves no purpose except to deafen those who have no understanding of art” (Building, 147). Maslany understands
her art; many of Alison’s most explosive moments are placed in logical, powerful places, earned through the emotional merit of the scene. Further, they are typically surrounded by some measure of softer lines, creating the all-important range, build, and contrast deemed necessary in Stanislavski’s text. Alison may use her volume as power, but Maslany makes that choice with careful craft and forethought.

As Alison’s primary vocal pattern is built on a rather straightforward crescendo and Sarah’s utilizes a more varied pattern of alternating crescendo and decrescendo, Cosima’s aural pattern is idiosyncratic in its relative stability. In general, Cosima utilizes a mezzo-forte, conversational volume similar to Sarah, but tends to deviate from her base volume less frequently and with less range than the other clones. Within this relatively stable context, one of Cosima’s distinctive vocal patterns is the use of a subtle and nuanced pianissimo to enhance the texture of her arguments. These volume changes do not drive her arguments in the way Alison’s larger fluctuations in volume do; rather Cosima relies, as Stanislavski suggests, principally on inflection and pause (or lack thereof) to propel her dialogue. This is evident in her episode six interactions with Dr. Leekie, in which she nonchalantly insinuates knowledge of his company’s illicit research. Beginning neutrally, her volume drops as she describes her academic specialization. She maintains this diminished volume as she leans back and reveals the breadth of her knowledge regarding Dr. Leekie’s work with stem cells. She uses a minute amount of crescendo as she delivers, “and your patenting,” before returning to the previous level on “transgenic embryonic stem cells” (“Variations Under Domestication”). As Dr. Leekie reacts to her knowledge of confidential information, Cosima’s volume arcs back to a conversational volume before withdrawing to a more reserved level, giving her taunting a
rather melodic, cyclical feel harmonized with the rest of the character Maslany has created. The exchange culminates with Cosima’s softest volume as she corrects Dr. Leekie with “Scientific American doesn’t put scientists on the cover,” creating a feeling of suspense and tension as the scene shifts (“Variations under Domestication”).

Maslany’s use of a slightly elevated volume for Cosima is less distinctive but more frequent than her use of softer volumes and occurs most regularly when she launches into her many informative or scientifically minded speeches. This pattern is established early in episode three, as Sarah, Alison, and Cosima, encounter each other simultaneously for the first time. Her greatest volume is employed in her brief discussion of nature and nurture, contrasting with the softer tones she had just used to soothe Alison. This trend to increase in volume for explanations continues in the bar scene Cosima shares with Sarah in the third episode. Her narrative describing the European clones and how she met Beth utilize Cosima’s loudest volume of the scene, surrounded by softer, more intimate volumes as she compels Sarah to invest in the clones as her new “biological imperative” (“Variation Under Nature”). This pattern is used in many subsequent speeches including her discourses on Helena’s knife, her description of scientific concepts, and her episode four defense of Paul as a potential information source given his role as monitor.

Maslany reserves the extreme ends of Cosima’s volume range for very specific situations, generally involving deeply felt emotions of love and betrayal surrounding the character Delphin. Cosima’s only use of explosive volume akin to those employed by Alison or Sarah is in the second half of her argument with Delphine during the final episode when she defends Kira and her fellow clones despite her romantic and emotional
turmoil. Her softest moments include those in which she first engages with Delphine or makes romantic advances toward her, and are often found in conjunction with the use of true psychological pause. Cosima’s line “that’s oddly romantic, and totally encouraging,” from “Entangled Bank” is her softest of the season, an indication of deeply felt love and emotional connection. Conversely, the angry, explosive “get out” of their subsequent fight is the loudest volume Cosima ever achieves, conveying her corresponding deeply felt sense of betrayal (“Unconscious Selection”). By limiting the use of these extreme instances Cosima’s volume is effectively moderated in a way which contributes to her steady flowing feel, further differentiating her from the more vocally varied clones.

Helena, as a character, is Maslany’s testament to Stanislavski’s maxim “loudness is not power” (Building 145). Helena is arguably the most dangerous and therefore powerful of the clones, yet rarely departs from the whisper-like softness of her foundational characteristic volume. This quiet intensity provides a feeling of suspense and menace which interplays well with her intense physical aggression. This pattern of softness before explosive aggression appears several times, creating a characteristic vocal gesture much like Sarah’s muttered swearing. For example, in “Unconscious Selection” Helena whispers “you made me this way,” before a lengthy psychological pause which climaxes with Helena gouging out Tomas’ eyes. A similarly soft pianissimo volume is used leading up to Helena’s final physical confrontation with Sarah is episode ten, an altercation which features many comments toward Sarah delivered at an incredibly muted volume. Helena’s last line of the season, “Sarah, we make a family, yes?” is among the softest of the scene, despite the high stakes of having Sarah’s gun directed at her face (“Endless Forms Most Beautiful”). Helena’s loudest interactions are reserved for
strenuous moments in her relationship with Tomas; predominantly in episode nine as she
defends Kira and is locked in a cage. Toward everyone else Helena utilizes only a soft to
conversational volume, deviating from this characteristic volume with less frequency
than even Cosima.

This choice to so steadfastly remain at a pianissimo volume presents the potential
for over indulging in the ominous aspects of Helena’s character, or becoming too
monotonous to truly be effective. Maslany addresses these concerns by creating three
distinct vocal qualities for Helena which deviate from her typical aspirated delivery; one
of vulnerability, one of innocence, and one of conviction. The scene in “Effects of
External Conditions,” which takes place in Maggie Chen’s apartment between Sarah and
Helena proves a useful example of how minimally volume is manipulated by Helena in
favor of a fluid movement between these varied vocal qualities. The conversation begins
with Helena’s lines delivered in her usual aspirated whisper, but soon shifts to her
stronger vocal quality, lacking aspiration on the line, “God sent me,” followed by a
slightly louder delivery with the same quality on “you don’t know God” (“Effects of
External Conditions”). Yet rather than remain at this new volume Maslany chooses to
bring Helena’s volume back down, where it remains until it returns to the aspirated
whisper and even softer volume on “I can save you” (“Effects of External Conditions”).
Her most ostentatious use of volume comes on the line, “no, no, the other’s, poor copies
of God’s image of human beings,” but never truly approaches a yell (“Effects of External
Conditions”). This line utilizes a great deal of fry but no aspiration, and is quickly
dismissed as she returns to her most vulnerable aspirated whisper, on “I can save you,”
growing her softest on “can you feel it? … You do feel it” (“Effects of External Conditions”).

Her innocent, childlike quality is used throughout the season, especially in her episode eight interactions with Kira, but is most evident in the restaurant scene of episode seven. In this conversation, Helena’s vocal delivery is slightly louder than her typical aspirated whisper, employs more upward inflection, and connects her ideas more fluidly than in her other vocal qualities. While she maintains her general preference to use a softer volume for important points, she does use a slight crescendo delivered with childlike obstinacy as she demands the names of the other clones. This increase is relatively fleeting, returning to her more menacing strong whisper, lacking aspiration on “or you die first” before leaving the restaurant ("Parts Developed in an Unusual Manner"). This final vocal quality, one of a strong whisper lacking aspiration, is used most in her final scene of the season. Her comments toward Amelia regarding her failure as a mother and Helena’s discussion of her own inability to kill Sarah use this strong, fry-filled dynamic to create a level of power and menace despite her ultimate demise ("Endless Forms Most Beautiful").

**Emphasis**

The third and final aspect to speech explored by Stanislavski is the use of emphasis, which he melds with intonation. He describes emphasis and intonation as a means of adding depth, color, and life to the text of the scene by acting as a “pointing finger” which singles out the important concepts (Building, 148). Like many of his concepts, the discussion begins from an internal place, stating that the words and phrases to be emphasized should be informed by a well-developed subtext clearly present in the
actor’s mind. The emphasis develops naturally from this subtext as the actor looks outward, avoiding self-listening, to convey the “soul, the inner essence, the high point of the subtext” to their partner (Building, 149).

While highlighting the importance of adequate and carefully placed emphasis, Stanislavski also warns against the over-employment of the device, touting the art of non-accentuation. The ability to limit or eliminate accentuation in speech effectively creates a blank canvas of dialogue upon which greater nuance can be created through the intentional addition of various forms of emphasis. An overemphasized sentence, with limited differentiation between ideas, holds no significance; true subtextual meaning is conveyed through employment of carefully crafted contrast. With the power of emphasis dependent on the creation of differing levels, Stanislavski describes a “complex scale of accentuation: heavy, medium, and light” in which the lighter serve to enhance the heavier (Building 162). These distinct levels of accentuation are created principally through varied intonation. These variations in emphasis, intonation, and intensity create depth and complexity in speech, offering richer avenues of expressing a character’s subtext. Emphasis can also be created through a change in pace, placement between two pauses, or any other means creating contrast between the emphasized and un-emphasized ideas (Building, 164). Stanislavski closes his discussion of emphasis and accentuation by articulating the importance of the inter-relationship between degree and quality of emphasis with the subtext of the inner life attempting to be conveyed.

Creating and effectively using highly varied emphasis is undeniably important to both audience comprehension and vocal characterization. Given the wide variety of intensities and executions possible, Maslany has an almost infinite array of vocal choices
at her disposal to craft a pattern of emphasis specific to each of her characters. With so many options, each clone utilizes a number of means to create various levels and qualities of emphasis; rather than delve into the minutia of an explicatory examination of each, the general accentuation pattern of each clone will be described and used for comparison.

Maslany’s use of accentuation is most consistent in the character of Sarah, who presents two general patterns of emphasis in her speech. The first is a use of a heavy degree of emphasis in moments of sarcasm. Examples of Sarah’s sarcastic sass can be found throughout the series, and vary a great deal based on to whom she is speaking. When directed a Cosima, such as in the episode seven sentiment, “right, because you’re such a brilliant scientist,” the words ‘right’ and ‘brilliant’ are accentuated through a slight elongation of the words and a change in inflection. On the word ‘right,’ Maslany’s tone arcs up before falling, and remains at that level before deepening on the word ‘brilliant,’ remaining there for scientist. A different pattern of emphasis is used in her conversation with Dr. Leekie in episode nine, where her relationship is much more guarded. Her whispered line, “that’s brilliant” is delivered sarcastically, all be it softly, with light emphasis on the word ‘brilliant’ created through a slide toward a slightly higher pitch (“Unconscious Selection”). Her subsequent line, “oh you’ll give us lives,” is similarly sarcastic, created through medium level accents on ‘oh’ and ‘lives,’ by elongating ‘oh,’ and upward inflecting ‘lives’ (“Unconscious Selection”). When interacting with Felix, her sarcasm is of a similar strength and pattern as that used with Cosima; heavier accents though elongation and changes in pitch.

While the manner of Sarah’s sarcasm varies greatly to reflect to whom she is speaking and her current situation, Maslany chooses to use sarcasm rather consistently as
both a defense mechanism and a demonstration of frustration. This variable pattern of emphasis contrasts greatly with Sarah’s default pattern of accentuation, which involves a generally uninflected delivery punctuated by pause with a frequent use of light accentuation accomplished through slight modulations in volume and intensity. Exemplified in her interactions with both Olivier and Dr. Leekie, this pattern of light accentuation is made effective by an absence of accentuation on supporting words. Her episode nine interactions with Dr. Leekie demonstrate her typical pattern, where almost every other word is subtly emphasized. In her dialogue, “just tell me why, what is this all about,” the words ‘just’ ‘what’ and ‘all about’ receive a medium emphasis through slight increases in volume while ‘why’ receives a heavy emphasis through elongation and a more substantial increase in volume (“Unconscious Selection”). Many of her later statements and conversations, including her subsequent discussion with Mrs. S, use a similar pattern. Her relatively steady delivery also creates a driving, even, heartbeat-like rhythm which enhances the emphasis given to words following a pause which break it. The jab at Olivier, “you want to grow a tail, logical pause, that’s your business” follows this pattern (“Parts Developed in an Unusual Manner”). The pause in-between the clauses breaks the rhythm established by the light accents of the previous series of interchanges, providing emphasis for both ‘tail,’ which is upward inflected, and the final clause.

Alison’s scene with Dr. Leekie in episode nine also exemplify her typical pattern of accentuation. As Sarah, Maslany chooses to reserve pitch changes for sarcastic emphasis, as Alison, sudden ascents in pitch are the primary means of creating emphasis. In her unrelenting and emotional tirade against Dr. Leekie, many of her most important words, ‘life,’ ‘family,’ ‘privacy,’ ‘you,’ and her final ‘life,’ are all heavily emphasized
through an abrupt and momentary change in pitch, elevating them above the deeper pitch of the linking words. Phrases of significance are separated through breaks in her rhythm by short breath pauses, such as the ones preceding, “my family back,” “I want you out of my life,” and “I want things to be normal again” (“Unconscious Selection”). While generally following this pattern, in more conventional situations Maslany uses a wider range in pitch to achieve Alison’s emphasis. In episode seven as Alison speaks to Sarah on the phone regarding the deterioration of her marriage, the words ‘early,’ ‘house,’ ‘liars,’ and ‘life,’ are emphasized through her typical upward inflection, while ‘divorce,’ ‘fine,’ and ‘don’t,’ are emphasized through downward inflections. Further, the phrases “I’m taking a break from you two,” “my decision,” and “I’m reclaiming my life, Sarah” are all set apart and emphasized by breath pauses (“Parts Developed in an Unusual Manner”).

While in her general speech pattern Alison’s use of emphasis is on the light to medium end of the spectrum, Cosima tends toward a consistent use of a heavier degree of emphasis. As previously discussed, Maslany generally chooses not to rely on pause to structure Cosima’s phrases, but utilizes word elongations and subtle pitch glides to create emphasis. In Cosima’s bar scene with Sarah from the third episode, many of her key words are elongated and feature upward pitch glides, like ‘meet’ in the question, “how many of us do you have to meet, Sarah?” and ‘case’ in the enticement, “if you give me the case, I’ll know in a couple of weeks.” Other words, like ‘have’ in “can I have the briefcase please” are accentuated through the same elongation but are accompanied by a downward inflection (“Variation Under Nature”). Maslany also chooses to use these devices individually to achieve emphasis. Later in the same scene, Cosima shifts to a
greater reliance on pitch with ‘original’ emphasized through a simple lowering of pitch in the question, “who’s the original?”, while ‘killing us’ in the follow up questions is set apart through an escalation in pitch (“Variation Under Nature”). Conversely, many of Cosima’s scientific speeches or candid reactions utilize elongation for emphasis without any modulation in pitch, as exemplified in the video chat at the start of episode five where in her line, “dude, that’s complex;” ‘dude’ receives a medium emphasis and ‘complex’ receive a heavy emphasis through increasing levels of elongation. An even heavier emphasis through elongation is utilized in her last bit of dialogue from that video chat, “I would terminate. So be careful,” where nearly every word is stretched beyond twice its typical length (“Conditions of Existence”). As she explains the symbolism of Helena’s blade in the fourth episode many important nouns are moderately emphasized via elongation without change in pitch, such as ‘fish’ ‘weapon’ and ‘this.’ Pitch changes return as she her explanation takes on greater emotional weight and requires the accentuation of antithetical ideas such as in, “like not God’s children, but Satan’s” in which ‘God’s’ and ‘Satan’s’ are similarly elongated but receive ascending and descending pitch glides respectively (“Effects of External Conditions”).

Ever the ostentatious oddity, the pattern of emphasis Maslany created for Helena differs significantly from the other clones with placement, degree, and frequency of emphasis greatly informed by the given circumstance of her Ukrainian accent. Helena’s speech tends to feature rising pitch at the ends of phrases to create a light degree of emphasis, as exemplified in her episode seven discussions with Tomas, in which ‘connection’ in “we have a connection” and ‘same’ in “we are all the same” receive a subtle upward inflection. This pattern is also employed in her single line to Olivier, “I
want to see your tail” with ‘tail’ receiving a light upward inflection (“Parts Developed in an Unusual Manner”). Helena is not, however limited to this light level of emphasis; on the contrary, her degree of emphasis more directly reflects the severity of her current situation than is typical of the other clones, which results in a wider range of emphasis use. Her episode nine shouts at Tomas use heavy emphasis, as does much of her final scene with Sarah in episode ten. While these instances of emotional intensity use a correspondingly increased emphasis intensity, they follow her usual pattern of placement toward the end of a phrase. This pattern of terminal emphasis does not preclude the use of emphasis internally within an idea; she does so in her lines from episode seven, “yes, I also had a pleasant day. I went working and shopping,” where ‘yes,’ ‘pleasant,’ ‘working,’ and ‘shopping,’ receive some level of emphasis through slight modulations of pitch and volume. While not universal or her only use of emphasis, this placement at the ends of phrases enhances the effect created by her breath and logical pauses lending a broken feel to her speech, making her accent more believable to the viewer’s ear.

**Final Thoughts on the Voice**

Summarily, Maslany approaches the creation of a unique vocal landscape for each clone with the same level of care, craft, and specificity as she does their physicality. Their more general diversity of pitch, resonation, pace, and vocal quality are enhanced by specific patterns of pause, volume, and emphasis to create complex, living, and speaking characters. In the clones’ idiosyncrasies and consistent execution Maslany demonstrates her mastery of her instrument. She utilizes fully the “many technical voice means…actors must have at their disposal to meet the demands our art makes on us with respect to words and speech” (Stanislavski, *Building* 171). In doing so, her voice is the “lively,
powerful, expressive, and irresistible” one desired by Stanislavski, and one with enough strength, variety, and skill to carry a complex show like *Orphan Black* (*Building*, 165).

**Tempo-Rhythm**

One of the final concepts explored by Stanislavski in *Building a Character* is that of tempo-rhythm. Its placement near the end of the process is a product of its all-encompassing nature which, “runs like a thread through all movements, words, pauses, the emotional experience of a part, and its physical interpretation” (Stanislavski, *Building* 238). Tempo and rhythm are intrinsic to acting in that “our actions, our speech, proceeds in terms of time” and as such can be temporally manipulated to create both novel character habits or reflect a character’s instantaneous response to evolving situations (Stanislavski, *Building* 187). The tempo and rhythm of a character are made manifest and manipulated through an actor’s use of movement and stillness, speech and silence, and the speed at which these are executed along a relative spectrum. By altering the pace at which a word or action is performed, new qualities are created which have the capacity to not only aid character individualization, but provide new emotional depth and texture for an actor to tap into, explore, and build upon (Stanislavski, *Building* 191).

This relationship between tempo-rhythm and emotional life awards tempo-rhythm a greater importance and versatility than other technical elements explored in the text. It, more than any other device, has the capacity to work from either an internal or an external starting point. In the text, Stanislavski describes a variety of metronome based exercises intended to assist the actor in adopting an established external rhythm to inform their character work (*Building* 187). This crafted outside-in approach, where a specific tempo-rhythm is created intellectually and applied by the actor through specific physical
and vocal choices, has the potential to suggest new or truer feelings within a character, fostering a deeper emotional connection between actor and character and new avenues of emotional exploration (Stanislavski, *Building* 197). Conversely, tempo-rhythm may arise without these constructed exercises, but naturally from an actor’s intuition based on the recurrent patterns of movement and speech as informed by the preexisting inner state of the character as created through objectives, subtext, inner images, and through-line of action (Stanislavski, *Building* 222).

Whether created by internal movement or external craft, one cannot deny the utility of tempo-rhythm for contributing to and conveying the emotional state of a character. Stanislavski emphasizes the “indissoluble interdependence, interaction and bond between tempo-rhythm and feeling and, conversely, between feeling and tempo-rhythm” (*Building* 243). It is an ever-present element of character, acting almost as their pulse and is most effective when a direct reflection of a character’s objective, subtext, and through-line of action (Stanislavski, *Building* 235).

It is difficult to ascertain from objective analysis the manner in which Maslany works with tempo-rhythm. She may work intuitively, allowing the pre-established inner life of each clone to inform the physical and vocal acting choices of pace and pause in which tempo-rhythm is evident; or conversely, she may intentionally craft the tempo-rhythm of each character, allowing it to create new and relevant emotions which she can then experience and explore. Regardless, an awareness and manipulation of tempo-rhythm is apparent in her work, as her performances demonstrate many of Stanislavski’s concepts for the effective use of tempo-rhythm.

The first of which is Stanislavski’s call for a dynamic tempo-rhythm. As
described in the text, “tempo must go on living, vibrating, to a certain degree changing, but not remain frozen at the one rate of speed” (Stanislavski, *Building* 239). While each clone has a foundational tempo and rhythmic pattern, established through the physical gestures and vocal patterns described in previous sections, no tempo-rhythm is static. Rather, each clone experiences tempo and rhythmic changes to reflect the given circumstances and emotional content of the scene.

This dynamism best exemplified by Alison’s epoch journey in “Entangled Bank.” Her initial tempo-rhythm is established in the episode’s expositional scenes with Ansley. In a position of comfort and power, Alison’s base tempo and rhythmic pattern, the quickest among the clones, is established through the physical choices of her small, repetitive flickering gestures and quick paced walk between rooms and enhanced by her vocal choice to frequently use short pause to create swiftly delivered, clipped phrases. In the text, Stanislavski often uses musical notation as a metaphor to describe the tempo-rhythm of a scene or character; to use his vernacular, Alison is generally an allegro amalgamation of sixteenth notes and fleeting rests. In the subsequent ice rink scene, Alison’s tempo escalates to reflect her increasing paranoia. This tempo is broken only at the end of the scene by a brief psychological pause in the threat toward Ansley, “you mess with my life, psychological pause, I’m going to mess with yours” (“Entangled Bank”). This momentary change in rhythm emphasizes the threat, but quickly evaporates back into a heightened version of her rapid, nervous, energy as she walks away.

This mounting paranoia contrasts greatly with the subsequent scenes, in which Alison smokes marijuana and enjoys a high. Under the influence, Alison’s speech becomes elongated as her gestures slow down. Her whole tempo-rhythm shifts into a
new, slower dynamic which utilizes fewer logical and breath pauses and more notable psychological pauses. Her physical gestures, executed at a slower pace, fill the extra time by adopting a larger scale. This change in tempo, now more akin to half or whole notes than sixteenth notes, is enhanced by Maslany’s other acting choices to drop the pitch of Alison’s voice and shift the primary place of resonance from head to chest, creating a raspy quality unusual to Alison, but fitting for the given circumstance of inebriation.

Yet spurred by the resulting physical altercation with Ansley in the street, and sobered slightly by the passing of time, Alison’s tempo-rhythm in the next scene occupies a middle ground between her usual and the previously described slower pace. In this intermediary tempo-rhythm, her tendency toward quicker delivery returns, but without her short pauses and retaining a certain amount of elongation. Her physical gestures are quicker, yet still retain a slightly slower, wild and veering quality not typical of Alison.

Yet Alison’s most lethargic, adagio pace comes near the end of the scene, when she arrives, half-consumed bottle of wine in hand, at Felix’s apartment with a breathy “bad things have happened to me,” delivered as almost a single slurred word while she leans, unmoving against the doorframe (“Entangled Bank”). For the rest of the episode her words remain elongated, her psychological and logical pauses are extended beyond their normal length, and breath pauses are taken as lengthy, aspirated sighs. Her physical mannerisms, still reminiscent of her characteristic gestures of holding her hands near her face and pointing, take on a diminutive quality and are executed with a slow flippancy. This last version of Alison is the equivalent of a musical dirge (“Entangled Bank”).

Similar, though not as ostentatious, manipulations of tempo-rhythm are utilized in each of Maslany’s clones. As Sarah, Maslany often adopts a slower pace and gentler
rhythm when interacting with Kira, or a faster more staccato pace and rhythmic pattern when attempting to cover a lie, often communicated through the manipulation of her aforementioned searching gaze. Cosima’s pace tends to be slow in guarded situations, conveyed through her lengthy silences and general abandonment of her typical swirling gestures. This is exemplified in her scene with Dr. Leekie in the final episode, where unlike her coy and challenging interactions from the previous episode, Cosima elects to remain silent. Yet what few abrupt responses she does offer are delivered in her typical moderate pace, creating a jagged rhythm at odds with her typical flow, denoting her discomfort. Her physical stillness is punctuated by her quick blinks and looks around the space, suggesting an underlying, internal rhythm quicker than her measured external one.

In addition to advocating for a dynamic, ever changing tempo-rhythm, Stanislavski suggests the use of contrasting tempo-rhythms both within individual characters and between them to create texture, reality, and intricate power dynamics within a role or scene. While Cosima’s aforementioned differing internal and external tempo-rhythms reflect this pattern, Helena is the clearest example of contrasting tempo-rhythms within a single character. Her physical gestures employ a spectrum of tempos, ranging from her fevered rocking in episode seven, to her deliberately slow and menacing decent down the stairs before her final altercation with Sarah in episode ten. More direct contrasts in tempo are evident in Helena’s tendency to incite physical confrontation with deliberate slowness or even stillness, as exemplified when she attacks Olivier. She begins with an elongated, “I want to see your tail,” and limited movement before launching into quick paced action (“Parts Developed in an Unusual Manner”). This build and abrupt change in action, in which her calm exterior is clearly at odds with her internal rapid
energy, give Helena the feeling of an ominously coiled spring. A similar use of contrasting tempo is used in her attack on Tomas in episode nine, which is preceded by a quick whisper, conveying the subtext of her rapid inner tempo-rhythm, and a very measured walk forward, conveying her outward leisurely pace, before she springs into swift and violent action (“Unconscious Selection”).

Multi-clone scenes provide an excellent opportunity for a direct comparison of each clone’s foundational tempo-rhythm and exemplify how these conflicting tempo-rhythms can interact to create intricate power dynamics within a scene. The first group clone scene demonstrates these intrinsic differences well, with Alison occupying the most rapid rhythm, enhanced by her agitation, Cosima occupying the melodic middle ground, and Sarah the slowest by comparison, but by no means lethargic. In the scene, Maslany crafts Sarah’s responses to occur either slowly, as when she attempts to draw information out of Cosima, or quickly as when she responds to Alison’s rude remarks. Yet these varied responses arise at fairly regular intervals, and coupled with her more restrained, seated physicality, lacking Alison’s pacing or Cosima’s grand gestures, Sarah has the most consistent and regular tempo-rhythm of the clones. These differences in tempo-rhythm between the clones are almost palpable in their recurrent speech patterns and physical mannerisms as described in the previous sections, but are thrown into sharper relief by their direct interaction and proximity, highlighting the specificity and detail with which Maslany has crafted them (“Variations Under Nature”).

A similar situation arises in the final episode of the season when Alison, Cosima, and Sarah meet to discuss Dr. Leekie’s looming offers. Where the initial multi-clone scene illustrated the inherent differences in their individual rhythms, the last episode
demonstrates how each clone’s individual tempo-rhythms interact and work in conjunction to create a dynamic tempo and rhythm which shapes the scene itself. The scene begins with moderately paced interactions between Alison and Sarah, with Alison utilizing her typical staccato pattern of short pauses with rapidly delivered text between them. Sarah’s pace is a bit slower and has a more jagged feel, created through her uneven use of medium to heavy emphasis as she walks toward the door.

When Cosima enters, she has a depressed tempo and legato rhythm, conveyed through her even delivery, tentative steps, and how slowly she instigates her hug with Sarah. This new dynamic causes Sarah to slow as she returns the hug, thereby decelerating the pace of the entire scene. The tempo does not return to its previous pace until Cosima’s verbal cadence picks up as she explains her reasoning for joining the DYAD institute. Her delivery adopts a swift quality and regular rhythm through her fluid delivery of individual clauses separated by only the briefest of logical pauses. Alison tends to build on this increasing tempo, while Sarah becomes an accent, with certain words and phrases like ‘well’ or ‘pro-clone’ delivered at greater levels of emphasis or a slower tempo to give her speech a rising and falling quality at odds with the general build of the scene. Sarah’s contrasting tempo and rhythm serve to emphasize her position as the clone most opposed to Dr. Leekie’s offer.

The next major shift in tempo-rhythm occurs after Alison admits her inclination to take the offer, creating an ostentatious break in the flow of the action. Following a lengthy pause from all three clones, both Cosima and Sarah respond to this new information in reserved or elongated ways which creates a new, tense, and measured tempo-rhythm. As the scene dissolves, this slower tempo is challenged by Sarah’s
increasing agitation, reflected in her lack of pause and more fluid delivery when she expresses her intent to reject Dr. Leekie’s contract. Cosima’s vocal pacing accelerates as well, though not as sharply as Sarah’s, in reaction to Delphine’s text. Only Alison, notably inactive on the couch, retains the slower tempo of the previous moment as she considers her choice. These varying and often conflicting tempo-rhythms, especially between Alison and Sarah, reflect each clone’s position on the proposed offer and work to create a textured and dynamic tension, enhancing the narrative and power dynamics of the scene (“Endless Forms Most Beautiful”).

While one of the last items discussed by Stanislavski, tempo-rhythm, for its infusion and influence on almost every other aspect of character, is one of the most powerful tools at an actor’s disposal, and one Maslany handles with great craft and specificity. Though her consistency and manipulation of tempo and rhythm within each clone, both in establishing their foundational tendencies and how their tempo-rhythms respond organically to their surroundings, Maslany enhances the individualization of each character while creating the potential for intricate power dynamics which make their interactions more realistic, exciting, and compelling to watch.

*When Clones Portray Other Clones*

While each and every scene in *Orphan Black* must be carefully crafted in regard to character specificity and individualization, among its greatest acting challenges are those instances where one clone must impersonate another. As the actress portraying all nine clones, Maslany could slip flawlessly from one clone to the next, performing the impersonated clone as she would in one of their own scenes. Yet that would be to disregard the given circumstances and truth of one clone impersonating another. In these
situations Maslany must decide to what extent one clone can impersonate the other, and manipulate the relevant external characterizations accordingly. As complex situations performed with finesse and detail, these instances are not only amazing to watch from an acting perspective, but prove useful case studies for the utilization and manipulation of Stanislavski’s theories, especially in characteristic gesture and vocal patterning.

**Alison as Sarah**

Aside from the obvious example of Sarah adopting Beth’s identity, which is not a useful example of this phenomena because *Orphan Black*’s first season lacks a true interpretation of Beth to compare Sarah’s impersonation to, the first instance of a clone impersonating a clone is the aforementioned incident in episode four when Alison becomes Sarah for a visit with Kira. This transformation is aptly described by Felix as a “full reverse Pygmalion” (“Effects of External Conditions”). Stylistically, Felix is able to transform Alison into a visually compelling version of Sarah, with the most notable differences consisting of a slightly heavier use of eyeliner than is typical for Sarah and the beanie she wears even while indoors, which Sarah never does. These slight variations in costuming and make-up ease the viewer’s ability to differentiate the impersonating clone from the original character. Vocally, the most deliberate change from Alison to Sarah is the adoption of a rough British accent and a lowering of pitch. While these choices bring Alison more in line with Sarah, deliberate ‘mistakes,’ relay the truth of the situation. Alison as Sarah mispronounces certain vowels, such as in the word ‘mate,’ and consistently over emphasizes other vowel changes, as in ‘what.’ Her vocal placement is also highly variable as she attempts to impersonate Sarah; in the car before meeting Mrs. S she has a lower, chest resonance, yet when facing Sarah’s foster mother Alison’s
characteristic placement in the mask and head area returns, despite her lower pitch. A better match to Sarah’s chest placement is not achieved again until the end of the scene in her final interactions with Mrs. S. The cadence with which she speaks is also slightly off, with Alison using her own short logical pauses rather than Sarah’s logical and psychological patterning, and fails to truly adopt Sarah’s typical pattern of steady use of medium and light emphasis. Maslany makes the choice to exasperate these differences when Alison becomes distressed; her pitch returns almost to Alison’s standard and the adopted accent fades substantially when Kira observes that Alison is not her mother.

Her physical transformation from Alison to Sarah is generally closer, and involves the character of Alison usurping a number of Sarah’s characteristic gestures. Maslany strips Alison of her own distinctive gestures and upright postures, and makes the choice to overplay Sarah’s slouchy physicality and more relaxed gait. As she approaches the door near the beginning of the scene Alison’s walk is notably not her own, yet compared to Sarah’s walk across the soccer field in the second episode it appears to bouncy, created by an over-extended stride. Alison as Sarah also fidgets more than the actual Sarah, and executes small movements more quickly than Sarah typically would, likely a residual effect of Alison’s nervous energy and heightened internal tempo-rhythm. She also lacks Sarah’s most characteristic gesture; running her hands through her hair. The one example of Alison as Sarah touching her hair is petite, using only a single finger to adjust a stray lock rather than an open hand running along the top of her head as is typical for Sarah (“Effects of External Conditions”).

**Sarah as Alison**

In “Variation Under Domestication” the previously examined impersonation is
reversed when Alison compels Sarah to interrogate Donny in her place. As the episode progresses Sarah is forced interact with a number of characters as Alison, and generally occupies Alison’s persona for a greater length of time than Alison occupied hers. With Sarah’s character dependent on her ability to adopt other identities and maintain them for extended periods of time, like she does with Beth, Maslany makes the choice to have Sarah generally achieve a truer, more consistent representation of Alison than Alison did of Sarah. Vocally, Maslany shifts Sarah’s vocal range and resonation up to Alison’s typical timbre and retains it with ease. She even initially captures Alison’s distinctive pattern of short phrases separated by short logical pauses, evident in her interactions with Donny, “yes, logical pause, after a few questions,” “I know logical pause, Donny, so you can, breath pause, tell me how it works,” and finally, “the double blind, logical pause, monitoring” (“Variations Under Domestication”). These similarities break down when Sarah, as Alison, yells at Donny. Her voice, while remaining at the correct pitch, takes on a gravel like quality from a shift in resonance. This quality is absent when Alison actually yells, as exemplified during the intervention in episode nine. Further, the patterns of pace and pause during this tirade are more akin to Sarah’s than Alison’s. Sarah uses no pause, but verbally attacks Donny in a rush, primarily using downward inflection, contrary to Alison’s preference to ascend in pitch during heightened interactions. The sustained level of high volume utilized in this instance, while not inherently characteristic to Sarah, is not typical of Alison either; a choice made by Maslany which both effectively responds to the given circumstances of the situation while betraying the complex clone conniving within the scene. This pattern of maintaining a set volume for an extended period of time carries over into the final interrogation scene with Donny, in which Sarah as Alison adopts and
maintains a whisper as she compels Donny to think about his marriage and life with Alison. Differences continue to accumulate in the utilization of a slightly lower pitch than would be typical of Alison and the frequent employment of lengthy logical pauses, a pattern more typical of Sarah. These lend Sarah’s interpretation of Alison a legato quality never used by the actual Alison.

Sarah as Alison’s interactions with Ansley involve an even higher degree of crafted labor. In speaking with Ansley, Sarah often begins at a fair facsimile of Alison’s resonation and pitch patterning, including her tendency to upward inflect, but quickly loses it as the conversation progresses, falling more in line with the pitch and chest resonation typical to Sarah. However, she does revert back to the superior Alison impersonation relatively frequently when startled, beginning a new idea, or attempting to get away from Ansley. Maslany also makes the choice to stutter a great deal when Sarah as Alison searches for words or attempts to cover a gap in knowledge, a pattern typical to neither clone in play (“Variations Ender Domestication”).

Despite the explicated differences, Sarah’s impersonation of Alison is stronger vocally than physically, a choice which may stem from the narrative of events; Donny is blindfolded for most of the interrogation scenes, rendering a physical impersonation of Alison less necessary. While in these interactions Maslany elects to forego many of Sarah’s characteristic gestures, like running her hands through her hair, she does not add any of Alison’s typical postures or gestures in their absence. Sarah as Alison rarely engages in bird like flicks, or holding her hands near her face, and with her hair down rather in Alison’s characteristic pony tail she cannot smooth her ponytail as Alison frequently does. Some of Sarah’s gestures as Alison simply seem wrong; for example,
while lying to Ansley Sarah uses a wide sweeping gesture in which her arm leaves the general frame of her body, which up-tight Alison rarely does unless inebriated. Maslany also makes the choice to exaggerate certain facial expressions Sarah associates with Alison to comical proportions. This last choice beautifully exemplifies the situation; one clone attempting to be their interpretation of another and slipping in the details.

**Helena as Sarah**

The nefarious Assassin Black impersonates Sarah twice during the first season to very different ends. In episode four, Helena infiltrates the precinct as Sarah, but does little to truly adopt an impersonation of her in any way. She speaks infrequently, and does nothing to alter her accent, vocal patterns, or resonance. There is also very little physical change; she retains her own gait, slightly tilted posture, and steady stare. The most significant difference between Helena as herself and Helena impersonating Sarah is superficial; she wears jeans, a nice blazer, and tucks her frizzy blond hair into a beanie. In her episode ten impersonation of Sarah this apparent lack of chameleon ability diminishes substantially. Despite having no change in her distinctive pallid makeup, she bears a greater resemblance to Sarah through a stylized outfit and long, brown wig to disguise her hair. She enhances this physical impersonation by elongating Helena’s stride to better resemble Sarah’s distinctive gait. She also makes subtle changes in her posture which place the impersonation somewhere between Helena and Sarah. Yet the impersonation never truly reaches her face; Maslany elects to have Helena maintain her own stoic gaze and reserved facial expressions, lacking the more animated variety and searching stare typical to Sarah. Vocally, there is a similarly limited amount of change. When she speaks she maintains her own accent, resonance, and vocal patterning. She attempts to
circumnavigate this inability to produce a vocal facsimile of Sarah by limiting her speech, speaking as Sarah only twice in the entire scene (“Endless Forms Most Beautiful”).

Of the impersonations examined Helena’s is the least complete, the least effective; but the degree to which one clone is able to impersonate another is a deliberate character choice, one informed by the given circumstance of the text and crafted by Maslany, which adds layers of texture and complexity to each clone. These transformations create character spectrums with one clone on either end and Maslany moving fluidly and decisively between them; she is not simply Sarah or Alison, but Sarah performing Sarah’s interpretation of Alison to the best of Sarah’s ability, or vice versa.

This device is not only a brilliant exploration of the show’s subject matter and fascinating to watch; it is a testament to Maslany’s skill and specificity as an actress. Having one clone impersonate another relies not only on the careful manipulation of every aspect of external characterization in that moment, but on the established patterns of the clone being impersonated. Without specific and recognizable vocal and physical patterns to impersonate in each clone the device falls flat. The specificity and entertainment value is found in seeing which patterns are recognized by the other clones and impersonated, which are left out, what is done well, and what becomes a tell of the actual situation. These instances, dizzying and wonderful to examine as a student of acting, demonstrate not only Maslany’s mastery of these characters in the moment, but the amount of ceaseless external character work she performs to make each clone specific, consistent, and recognizable.
Conclusion

The analysis of acting, as of any art, is highly subjective. While this essay has endeavored to be as empirically minded as possible in examining the application of Stanislavski’s theories of external characterization to the creative realization of Maslany’s clone characters, it must be acknowledged that the observations made are entirely my own. They are explicated here with the intention of making a positive contribution to the larger artistic discussion regarding the merits of various aspects of Stanislavski’s work. In my mind, Maslany’s character work is a compelling testament to the value of the theories espoused in Building a Character, placing this external characterization on a level of similar or greater significance than those more renown psycho-techniques of An Actor Prepares. While preparation in the form of creating a right inner state and possessing a deeply detailed understanding of each character’s past, circumstances, and desires, is essential to achieve any level of realism, these devices are, by definition, internal and therefore invisible. This inner life is only one facet of character; a facet from which only the actor can draw any benefit. It is in how these internal choices are externally expressed through an actor’s physical and vocal choices that a character comes to life for the audience. It is the actor’s obligation to not only “live their part inwardly,” but then “give to his experience an external embodiment” (Stanislavski, Actor 17).

Maslany, in her five-season tenure on Orphan Black, has undoubtedly developed an intimate knowledge of each clone’s inner life, slipping in and out of their personalities as simply as she dons the costumes which begin to visually differentiate them. Yet were these inner lives to remain private to Maslany and never manifest themselves in the
unique physical and vocal choices she has made, each clone would be blatantly similar to Maslany herself. Without her detailed, nuanced external differentiation to truly individualize the clones the very concept of the show is rendered null and void.

These crafted choices; to make Sarah urban and edgy; or to make Alison quick, sharp, and flighty; all while Cosima curves her way melodically through scientific discourses, represent a level of transformational character acting largely absent and devalued in the present state of theatre and film. The current trends in the entertainment industry of type casting, hyper-realism, and playing oneself to appear natural, often result in actors being repeatedly cast into a select character type, limiting their range and artistic potential. Most theater and film now hire on a project-by-project basis, bringing in select talent as needed rather than relying on a set company of versatile actors to support any given project, as was typical of repertoire and production companies in the past.

Yet this ability, to truly transform physically, vocally, and even internally, is one of extreme value and remains the hallmark of a truly great actor. This transformational ability enables one company of actors to perform a wide range of works. It enables a single actor to play an array of diverse characters offering a highly-varied career and the greatest potential for work; this examination of character creation could have easily spanned the course of an actor’s career, examining how each new role was created compared to prior or subsequent roles. What is more, this ability creates the potential to expand the tradition of theatrical doubling, a device in which an actor portrays multiple roles in the same piece, to epic proportion. Such examples of doubling, enhanced by modern technological feats, include new works in the vain of Orphan Black such as The United States of Terra, which deals with mental illness; or the Netflix original A Series of
*Unfortunate Events*, in which Neil Patrick Harris must effectively play a new villain in each episode while essentially remaining Count Olaf. Older examples of cinematic doubling include the 1964 *Dr. Strangelove* as acted by Peter Sellers, and *Kind Hearts & Coronets* which featured actor Alec Guinness playing no less than eight distinct characters (Kiang and Lyttelton).

This convention of doubling has captivated audiences since its conception. For the proficient actor, creating two or more distinct characters within the context of a single project presents little reason to modify their typical manner of character development. Maslany creates each clone as its own entity independent of the other characters, stating in an interview that creating a new clone is, “kind of the same as any process— it’s no different from how I prep any other character” (Miller). However, the compressed process of work necessitated by doubling places heavy artistic demands on the actor in terms of the rapid manner in which new characters must be developed (which Maslany describes as “frantic”), maintaining these hastily crafted characters’ differentiation as they evolve over the course of the narrative, and sustaining an impressive number of distinct roles without character crossover or artistic exhaustion (Miller).

While these challenges may arise in any project an actor undertakes, especially when working multiple projects at once, there is something fascinating and particularly inspiring about seeing a number of diverse characters presented in such close proximity to one another. This phenomenon is enhanced by modern technologies and digital mediums; on the stage a doubled actor cannot truly act against themselves, yet in television and film they can, allowing their characters to interact in new and novel ways. With character creation in such a compressed form, the actor’s craft and skill set are
displayed in intimate, ostentatious, and directly comparable ways, demonstrating their full range and ability in a single work.

This capacity, for one person to so perfectly become another, is amazing to me. I find it mesmerizing to see an actor, a single human being and person in their own right, transform themselves into a different person or many people, real or imagined, and tell their story with nothing more than their own body, voice, and imagination. That humans have the capacity to not only see the world through our own eyes, but through the eyes of others; that we can use real or imagined voices to tell compelling stories; that we do it for entertainment, for enjoyment, for pay; that storytelling, imagination, and play are so incredibly intrinsic to the human experience, is wonderful to me.

Which, ultimately, is why I wrote this paper. Yes, this thesis was written to fulfill the requirements of attaining an honors degree from Western Oregon University, but I could have written on almost any subject. There certainly were topics which would have required less analysis or yielded a shorter final product. Yet seeing this transformational craft and play, the very phenomena that initially drew me to theater, demonstrated with such impeccable precision in each and every episode of *Orphan Black* captured my interest. If I could spend a year and half of my academic career watching brilliant acting, or write approximately ninety pages attempting to define a few of the facets that make Maslany’s characters so compelling, I was going to do it. Even after all this effort; watching each episode more times than I would like to admit, obsessing over the smallest gestures or inflections, and spending many nights glued to my laptop writing notes into the early hours of the morning, I can still definitively say I enjoy *Orphan Black* and continue to be amazed by Maslany’s performances.
Performances which may perhaps be driven by the creation of a right inner state, but are brought to life through the stylistic, physical, vocal, and tempo-rhythmic choices Maslany has made for her characters. Her performances attest to the value of these often-overlooked external aspects of character creation. Stanislavski never intended these theories to be separated from his psycho-technique in the manner in which they ultimately were. Rather, he envisioned the two aspects of his system working in conjunction to create the inner life of a human spirit on the stage and make that life manifest for the audience in the visible and audible world.

Maslany achieves this integration brilliantly in every character she portrays. While I cannot with any level of certainty deem that these are the theories or practices Maslany uses to create her characters, I can speak to the connections and patterns I observed in what I found to be a series of amazingly crafted performances which demonstrate a number of Stanislavski’s theories. You may examine her work and draw completely different conclusions. Maslany may read this thesis and scoff, ascribing to a personal process unlike anything described here. Regardless, I view Stanislavski’s theories on external characterization, often undervalued in the western theater’s preference for psychological realism, as one means of achieving the amazing standard set by Maslany’s performances in *Orphan Black*. A standard of specificity, consistency, craft, and creativity which I, as a student of acting, find inspiring. A standard which I, as an actor, one day hope to achieve.
Appendices

Appendix A: The Clones of Season One

A large portion of *Orphan Black*’s success rests on the depth, individuality, and compelling nature of the various clone characters which propel its tumultuous plot. Fawcett acknowledges character development as one of the most important aspects of the show and endeavors to fashion each clone character to be “rich and layered and dense and soulful and grounded and real” (Hottopic). As much of the show’s thematic content rests on questions of individuality and personal identity, writing characters who are complete individuals, unique and textured in their own right is of primary importance. Further, making each clone as distinctive as possible not only allows for the greatest creation of complex clone to clone relationships and exploration of conflict, but affords Maslany both the most freedom and direction to breathe life into each clone. What follows is a brief description of each clone featured in *Orphan Black*’s first season with special emphasis placed on those who received the most analysis in this essay:

**Sarah Manning**

For creators Fawcett and Manson, Sarah is where it all began; it is from her that the rest of the story stems (Hottopic). Much more than a streetwise British punk with an urban accent, Sarah’s defining feature is her chameleon like ability to fluidly adapt and respond to any situation. She is a steel nerved survivor, a product of
her rocky past and involvement with drugs, who will do anything and everything necessary to protect her daughter, Kira, and her foster brother, Felix. The fierce, protective love she feels for them motivates everything she does and is omnipresent under her biting humor and sarcastic wit. Interestingly, she was not initially intended to be British, one of her most ostentatious character features. Her accent and nationality is a product of BBC America’s involvement. Having never thought to expand the world of the clones, Fawcett embraced the suggested international scale and the dramatic possibilities it created. He also utilized the requested accent as a way to differentiate Sarah from the other clones and the many people she impersonates (Radish). In this way, the accent becomes essential to establishing Sarah’s identity. Sarah is the driving force and most prominent clone of the narrative for her host of unique character quirks.

**Alison Hendrix**

Loosely inspired by the creator’s sister, Alison is Fawcett’s favorite clone and one created to add a comedic color to an otherwise unrelenting drama (Whedenopolis). A suburbanite, soccer mom who’s apparel consists of yoga pants, Lulu Lemon, and snappy sweaters, she is more textured than her stereotypical appearance suggests, operating with a slightly neurotic energy which embodies itself in her unique and fluttery physicality. Her paranoid disposition coupled with her undue concerned with appearances and how others perceive her repeatedly place Alison in socially awkward situations that prove humorous to navigate, such as the
glue gun interrogation from episode six, which Fawcett credits as truly solidifying the
tone of her character (Crave). Her world consists of her husband Donny, her two adopted
children, and a host of neighborhood gossips. As this world falls apart, she desires
nothing more than to regain control of her life and protect her family. Alison, a featured
close, presents an excellent study of physical characterization in regard to her
mannerisms, use of the upper vocal register, and unique tempo.

Cosima Niehause

Cosima was created to be the show’s somewhat omniscient character, capable of
examining the clones’ problems with an objective, logical eye (Whedenopolis). Named
after the production’s science consultant, Cosima’s defining characteristic is her
fascination with the world and her devotion to science (Professorfarnsworth). A recent
transfer from Berkley to the University of Minnesota to pursue a PhD in evolutionary
developmental biology, Cosima’s personality has a distinctly Bohemian feel to it, often at
odds with her scientific disposition and the staunch adherence to reason and logic it
pursports. For this more relaxed, liberal nature Cosima is
lovingly described by Manson as “the funkiest kind of
hippie chick out there,” and draws heavily on Manson’s
personal West Coast ties (Whedenopolis). This
perception is supported by her dreadlocks, hipster
glasses, marijuana use, lesbianism, and her circular, free
flowing physicality. Yet like Alison, she is more textured
than any stereotypic label can suggest.
Helena

A Ukrainian raised in a convent before being taken in by Tomas and the religious group known as the Proletheans, Helena believes she is the genetic original mandated by heaven to wipe the clones from the face of the earth. Fawcett and Manson characterize Helena as a shadow, and her mysterious, feral nature is by design (Whedenopolis). Initially a mystery to even her writers, Helena lacked a name for much of the show’s development, simply known as ‘Assassin Black’ until a decision could be reached. Yet Fawcett had plans for this ominous enigma of a character; he endeavored to take “an assassin, a serial killer, someone’s who’s scary, and make that character sympathetic” (Whedenopolis). This sympathy comes from Helena’s internal motivations, which the creators based on “love, not hate” (Whedenopolis). Her tendency toward love becomes most apparent in her relationship with Sarah and in her interaction with Kira in episode eight, “Entangled Bank.” Yet still a killer by nature and predominately fierce, Helena possesses an animalistic physicality, a unique use of the lower register and vocal fry, and a number of character quirks, such as messily eating any food in sight, which continually set her apart from her fellow clones in ways both suspenseful and nefarious.

Elizabeth (Beth) Childs

More a reoccuring plot point than a fully developed character, Beth’s suicide is the only opportunity to see Beth as a true character and not Sarah’s impersonation of her.
While she offers little in way of relevant analytical material, her history, career, personal relationships, and choice to commit suicide inform much of the show’s dramatic action.

**Katja Obinger**

Katja is among Sarah’s first direct interactions with clones, though she does not realize it at the time. A fiery red-head with a German accent, Katja is notable for her physical illness, desperate nature, and foreign feel. Though an incredibly important plot point she is alive for only a single episode.

**Rachel Duncan**

Rachel receives very little screen time, appearing in only the final two episodes of the season and therefore offers little in terms of analysis. She sports and blonde bob, upper class British accent, and carries herself with a menacing professional dignity at all times. She also describes herself as a proto-clone, a title of ambiguous meaning at the season’s culmination.
Appendix B. Season One Synopses

**Episode One: Natural Selection**

The show begins as Fawcett described over a decade ago, with a woman, Sarah Manning, witnessing the suicide of a woman who looks strikingly similar to herself as she jumps in front of a train. An opportunistic London druggy in town to reclaim her daughter, Kira, from her former foster mother, Mrs. S, Sarah steals the woman’s personal items off the platform and uses them to explore her place of residence. Sarah soon discovers the jumper, Elizabeth (Beth) Childs, had a bank account worth $75,000. Seeing a unique opportunity, Sarah decides to assume Beth’s identity to steal the funds, intending to utilize them to run away with her daughter. With the help of her foster brother, Felix, who identifies Beth’s body as Sarah’s, Sarah quickly becomes embroiled in Beth’s life; including her career as a detective with local law enforcement, where Beth was being investigated for a deadly civilian shooting; and her dysfunctional relationship with her handsome boyfriend, Paul. All the while Sarah is making arrangements to withdraw the $75,000 from Beth’s account while dealing with the repercussions of her own falsified death. It is while she is watching her own wake from afar that she is approached by another woman identical to herself, Katja Obinger. Assuming Sarah to be Beth, Katja, between bloody fits of coughing, implores Sarah to take her to Beth’s ‘scientist friend.’ She is then shot through the head by a surprise sniper while in the back seat of Sarah’s car (“Natural Selection”).

**Episode Two: Instinct**

Having just escaped a sniper with a deceased woman in the back of her car, Sarah receives instructions to hide the body and find the dead woman’s briefcase from an
anonymous caller on Beth’s phone. Sarah takes Katja’s hotel room keycard and hastily buries her body before returning to Beth’s life as a suspended detective. Beth’s partner, Art, has become increasingly suspicious of Sarah’s behavior regarding the trial, especially after discovering the cash she had withdrawn from Beth’s bank account, which Sarah had left in the trunk of her car. Assuming the large sum to be payment for some illicit activity, Art steals the money and uses it to blackmail Sarah into performing well at her hearing, forcing her to study the events surrounding the death of Maggie Chen. She performs admirably at the trial, and Art promises her the money once she is reinstated to active duty.

Sarah then decides to pursue the briefcase she was mandated to find by the unknown caller following Katja’s death. Disguised as Katja, Sarah makes her way to Katja’s hotel and is able to secure the briefcase despite finding Katja’s room in disarray. Inside the case she finds hair and blood samples as well as a number of international and domestic identification cards, passports, and addresses, all from women identical to Sarah aside from hairstyles and fashion choices. Utilizing the information in the briefcase Sarah locates and approaches Alison Hendrix, a local identical. Appalled by her unanticipated appearance Alison asks Sarah, who at this point is no longer impersonating Beth, to leave under the stipulation she come to Alison’s house that evening. Sarah does, where she is introduced to Cosima, yet another identical (“Instinct”).

**Episode Three: Variation Under Nature**

Alison and Cosima bluntly inform Sarah that she is a clone, part of a group whose members are being systematically assassinated. Stunned and refusing to give them the briefcase she acquired from Katja’s hotel room Sarah leaves. At the precinct the next day,
still posing as Beth in an attempt to reacquire the money from Art, Sarah is re-instated and immediately sent to investigate a murder; the mangled body of Katja Obinger had been found at a gravel quarry near where Sarah had buried it. In response to this startling development, Sarah meets with Cosima where the two begin to establish trust. Sarah gives Cosima the briefcase and agrees to continue to impersonate Beth to remain informed about the investigation, manipulating it to protect the clones if necessary. The investigation progresses, and with gun lessons from Alison in which she reveals to Sarah that Beth’s $75,000 was in fact hers, Sarah is able to continue to pass as Beth.

Following up on a lead, Sarah and Art find and engage with the assassin responsible for Katja’s death. Art is wounded in the initial altercation and Sarah is forced to pursue the fugitive alone. During the fight the assassin’s face is revealed for the first time, exposing her to be yet another identical; a clone is responsible for the murder of other clones. Shocked, Sarah stabs the assassin with rebar. Art rescues Sarah as the assassin escapes (“Variation Under Nature”).

episode four: effects of external conditions

As the investigation continues the police learn more about their fugitive; she is a blonde Ukrainian woman fraught with deep, religiously tinged psychological issues. While Sarah and Art investigate, the assassin, known as Helena, sneaks into the precinct as Beth and leaves Sarah a message on Beth’s computer insinuating knowledge regarding the civilian shooting of Maggie Chen and requests to meet that evening. Sarah, who had originally intended to spend the evening reconnecting with her daughter, Kira, calls on Alison to impersonate her so as not to disappoint her daughter or her daughter’s caretaker Mrs. S. With Felix’s help Alison is able to effectively impersonate Sarah, appeasing Mrs.
S. Meanwhile, Sarah meets with Helena in Maggie Chen’s apartment where the two discuss Helena’s religious fervor, divine purpose of razing the clones from the earth, and her belief that she is the genetic original. Having discovered Sarah’s disappearance from the precinct and intended destination, Art arrives. Fearing the discovery of the clones Sarah forces Helena to leave, but not before Helena communicates the deep connection she feels to Sarah. Helena disappears into the night, leaving Sarah to explain herself to Art. Unwilling to tell the truth and feeling as though she cannot maintain the charade much longer Sarah, as Beth, resigns from the force (“Effects of External Conditions”).

**Episode Five: Conditions of Existence**

Helena, on the run and gravely injured, collapses in the street and is collected by unknown men in a white van. Having resigned from the force, Sarah returns to Beth’s apartment and continues to impersonate Beth to Beth’s boyfriend, Paul. The next morning, Sarah recalls dreams of undergoing scientific examination and upon finding an electrode attached to her person presumes those dreams to be reality. The clones quickly realize they are likely all being monitored as part of the experiment responsible for their creation. Investigating Paul as her potential monitor, Sarah discovers Beth had borrowed police department surveillance equipment and was already spying on him unbeknownst to Alison or Cosima. After placing the surveillance equipment in Paul’s office, she departs to meet with her daughter, Kira. Paul follows Sarah and observes the mother and daughter from afar, taking pictures he later uses to threaten Sarah into meeting with him. Meanwhile Alison, fearing her husband Donny to be her monitor, tears her house apart in hopes of finding evidence of his subversive activities. She soon discovers a locked box Donny is unwilling to open; assuming the worst, Alison confronts her husband about it.
After their fight, Alison purchases surveillance equipment of her own. On the way home, she is mistaken for Sarah and accosted by Sarah’s ex-boyfriend, Vic, who believed Sarah was dead. Now believing Sarah to be alive, Vic is anxious to see her again and corners her at Felix’s apartment that night. Shaken, Alison installs her small surveillance camera in her bedroom where it records Donnie getting up and leaving in the early hours of the morning. While Alison frets about Donny, Sarah reviews the audio her surveillance equipment captured on Paul, which confirms his position as monitor, before being interrupted by the appearance of Vic. Sending him away with some of Alison’s money, she receives a message from Paul containing the aforementioned picture of her and Kira, and a request to meet. Fearing for the safety of her daughter Sarah agrees, returning to Beth’s apartment. Threatened at gun point Sarah drops her impersonation of Beth, admits her fraud, and describes Beth’s suicide to Paul, blaming him and his role as monitor for it in the process.

Aware of the developing monitor situation, Cosima, somewhat removed at the University of Minnesota, fares much better than her clone counterparts; she quickly identifies her monitor as the new, overly friendly French immunology student Delphine. She intentionally befriends her monitor, seeing the interaction as an opportunity to glean additional information on the clones’ mysterious opposition (“Conditions of Existence”).

**Episode Six: Variations Under Domestication**

In confronting her husband about his whereabouts the previous night, Alison knocks Donny out with a golf club and immediately calls on Sarah, who has just finished questioning Paul on the secretive medical examinations, for assistance rectifying the situation. By the time Sarah arrives Alison has already tied Donny up in the craft room
and begun interrogating him (under threat of hot glue gun) regarding the contents of his mysterious box, his role as monitor, and any medical examinations he may have performed on her. The awkward situation is exasperated when Alison’s neighbors and friends begin pouring into the home for the monthly potluck, which Alison is wildly unprepared for. She deals with the party, leaving Sarah to impersonate her and continue to interrogate Donny. Worlds collide as Sarah calls on Felix to assist with the party, who is followed by Vic in an attempt to get to Sarah. Vic and Sarah argue discreetly upstairs while Paul arrives, having tracked Sarah’s car. He finds Alison drunkenly passed out on the couch, confirms she is neither Beth nor Sarah, and continues to move through the house where he discovers Vic and Sarah arguing. He confronts Vic and the men leave to finish their argument elsewhere. Once in the garage, Paul asserts his dominance and questions Vic for all that he knows about Sarah. It is during this questioning that Sarah returns, breaks up the fight, and sends Vic away for good. That evening Alison reconciles with Donny who, after the reflection brought about by Sarah’s interrogation, tells Alison of a long-ended affair he had been attempting to hide. Alison, embarrassed at her paranoid behavior, forgives him and the couple reconcile. Across town, with Paul aware of the otherwise inexplicable multiplicity, Sarah decides to tell him the truth. She informs him of all nine clones and explicates his role as monitor in a human clone experiment.

Watching her clone sisters’ antics from afar, Cosima continues to engage with her monitor, Delphine, attending a Neo-lutionist lecture by Dr. Lewis Leekie with her. Following the lecture, they meet Dr. Leekie where Cosima questions him about his work before departing. As the episode ends Delphine and Dr. Leekie are depicted as intimate, confirming Delphine’s role and Cosima’s monitor (“Variation Under Domestication”).
Episode Seven: Parts Developed in an Unusual Manner

Paul is called in for questioning by his superior, Olivier, regarding the results of the most recent medical tests performed on Sarah, who they still assume to be Beth. Fearing the results may in some way reveal Sarah’s true identity and that Paul may betray the clones, Sarah and Felix go to the neo-lutionist night club owned by Olivier where the questioning is taking place. Felix locates Paul, and they all depart. Back home Sarah and Paul discuss the new information Olivier shared with Paul; that an assassin, who Sarah knows to be Helena, is murdering the subjects of the experiment. Helena, who has been nursed to health and set back on her righteous mission to eradicate the clones by her religious leader, Tomas, approaches Sarah to request a meeting. The two have lunch. Helena again describes the deep connection she feels to Sarah and deems the relationship they have to be friendship. She offers a bit of personal history before demanding the names of the other clones in return for Sarah’s life. Sarah, now rather loyal to Alison and Cosima, refuses and Helena departs after making one last threat on Sarah’s life and leaving a number to contact her by.

Back at the neo-lutionist club, Olivier receives a call from Dr. Leekie, for whom he works, regarding the results of the medical tests performed on Sarah which reveal her to be an imposter. Olivier meets Paul and brings him in for further questioning. During the process, Olivier has Paul call Sarah to lure her to the club. Yet when Paul calls, interrupting Sarah as she spends time with her daughter and foster mother, he warns her of their new knowledge and the impending threat. Despite his command for her to run she heads straight to the club in an attempt to rescue Paul. Before entering the club Sarah calls Helena, requesting her help with Olivier. Introducing herself as Beth but keeping all
other aspects of her personality, Sarah speaks with Olivier who accuses her of being the rouge murdering clone. Sarah protests, attempting to blame Helena, but is ignored, blindfolded, and lead from the room. On the way out, Helena arrives and attacks Olivier’s assistant who had been leading Sarah. Sarah escapes to free Paul and the couple leave to hide out in Felix’s apartment. Olivier attempts to restrain Helena but is overpowered. She escapes into the club.

Meanwhile, the investigation into Katja’s murder continues at the precinct. Difficulties with the investigation include identical DNA across multiple crime scenes, to many dead ends, and the fact that the corpse’s fingerprints did not match any on record (Sarah deleted the initial results before quitting the force). As the investigation starts from scratch Art grows suspicious of Beth’s behavior and sloppy police work (Sarah, after all, is no detective). Re-running the fingerprints, Art finds a match in Sarah Manning who, thanks to Felix’s intentional misidentification, is publicly considered dead via suicide.

At the University of Minnesota Cosima continues to pursue Delphine, attending dinner with her and advancing a romantic relationship with an impromptu kiss. The kiss is rejected, and Delphine leaves to meet with Dr. Leekie, who mandates she monitor Cosima even more closely in response to Helena’s growing threat. Cosima and Delphine’s deepening relationship affords Cosima plenty of opportunity to question Dr. Leekie on his scientific work and practices at his institute (“Parts Developed in an Unusual Manner”).

**Episode Eight: Entangled Bank**

For once, Cosima is fairing about as well as her clone counterparts. Delphine, mandated by Dr. Leekie to find out which clones Cosima has been in contact with, feigns
interest in their kiss, emotionally manipulating the willing Cosima into sharing a sexual experience. After the encounter Cosima briefly leaves the apartment, allowing Delphine time to access Cosima’s research. She reports Cosima’s contact with the other clones to Dr. Leekie, betraying not only Cosima but Sarah, who Dr. Leekie was not aware of. Cosima is left oblivious of the intrusion.

Alison, having forgiven Donny yet still as paranoid as ever, suspects she has found her real monitor in her nosy neighbor, Ansley, and proceeds to fight with her. She later gets high with Ansley’s husband before having sex with him in a minivan. Ansley finds out, and stepping in front of Alison’s car, demands an explanation. Alison gets out and the women brawl in the street. With no one else to turn to Alison calls on Felix and Sarah, who take her to Mrs. S’s house to recover, finally revealing the clone secret to Sarah’s foster mother.

While Alison’s life was imploding, Sarah had been dealing with problems of her own, having been called into the precinct as Beth to answer increasingly difficult questions about Katja’s murder and her work on the investigation. It is while at Mrs. S’ that Helena re-appears, having found Mrs. S’ address in one of Sarah’s belongings. She lures Kira away, has a brief but meaningful conversation with her, and then lets her go. Sarah, having discovered Kira’s absence and suspecting Helena, runs down the street calling out for her daughter. Kira responds, and as she attempts to cross the street is hit by a car (“Entangled Bank”).

**Episode Nine: Unconscious Selection**

Kira is taken to the hospital and given a clean bill of health by the doctors; she released with only bumps and bruises. Relieved, but furious with Helena for causing the
accident, Sarah decides to press the advantage of her supposed connection with Helena to trap and deliver her to Dr. Leekie. This course of action presents itself after an initial meeting with Dr. Leekie discussing the clones in general, his role in the experiment, Sarah’s awareness and mysterious past, and finally Helena. Unbeknownst to Sarah, witnessing Kira’s accident had a profound effect on Helena; as a result, she now refuses to follow Tomas’ orders to kill Sarah. Tomas imprisons her for her insubordination, and it is in this compromising position Sarah finds Helena and breaks her out. Having locked Helena in her trunk in preparation to give her to Dr. Leekie, Sarah, at Mrs. S’ request, stops by the house with Helena instead of following the plan. It is at Mrs. S’ house that Sarah is introduced to her birth mother for the first time. Having been located by her foster mother, Sarah listens to the woman’s story of unintentionally participating in and then fleeing from human experimentation in which she had been artificially inseminated. The embryo split into unintended identical twins, and the woman gave one each to the church and the state, Helena and Sarah respectively.

A world away from this discovery, Cosima continues to enjoy her romantic relationship with Delphine, but is outraged to discover her research into the clones had been betrayed to Dr. Leekie. She confronts Delphine about the betrayal, her role as monitor, and her connection to Dr. Leekie, finally attacking her on a personal level. After a tearful fight, in which Delphine explains which information she passed to Dr. Leekie and ardently promises to keep Kira a secret, the couple part ways.

Meanwhile Alison, after lying low at Felix’s apartment for a few days, returns home to a surprise intervention organized by her supposed monitor, Ansley. With Felix’s guidance, she humorously navigates the situation by revealing scandalizing information
on those in attendance. Donny stands up for her and sends everyone away.

At the precinct, Art’s investigation into Katja’s murder circles ever closer to the truth. Having questioned both Mrs. S and Felix but still desperate for answers, Art visits the train platform of Sarah’s suicide. Reviewing the security footage captured there, he observes the events as they actually occurred; Beth Childs jumps in front of the train and Sarah Manning steals her purse from the platform. Now aware that his partner has been dead for some time, Art issues an arrest warrant for the imposter, Sarah Manning (“Unconscious Selection”).

**Episode Ten: Endless Forms Most Beautiful**

Sarah introduces Helena to their birth mother as the police arrive with a warrant for her arrest. Sarah is taken down to the station for questioning as Helena escapes into the night. During Art’s interrogation Sarah nearly breaks and reveals the truth, but is granted a reprieve by the hasty arrival of a corporate lawyer sent to represent her courtesy of Dr. Leekie. She is escorted to a high-rise commercial building where she is met by proto-clone Rachel Duncan, who offers her a contract exchanging personal protection for herself and her daughter for willing participation in the medical exams of the experiment. Similar contracts are offered by Dr. Leekie to both Alison and Cosima; Alison’s focuses on the safety and privacy of her family while Cosima’s contract includes a career as part of the clone project’s research team at the DYAD institute and a copy of her completely sequenced genome.

Amid concerns of whether or not to sign, Alison, still perceiving Ansley to be her monitor, continues to fight with her neighbor. When Ansley’s scarf gets caught in a garbage disposal Alison does nothing to help, resulting in Ansley’s suffocation.
Witnessing her death, Alison finally feels free of her monitor. That evening Helena, posing as Sarah, meets with and attempts to murder her birth mother. Sarah intercedes in time to shoot Helena but not to save her mother, who with her dying breath tells Sarah not to trust Mrs. S.

As events transpire Cosima dives into research, attempting to determine the significance of an odd synthetic sequence of her genome present in her own research yet notably absent from the copy given to her with her contract. Working with the reconciled Delphine, they decode the sequence to find not only an identification number, but a patent deeming the organism to which it belongs and all descendant genetic material to be property. Based on this information Sarah and Cosima refuse to sign the contracts. Alison had already signed hers. As the season draws to a close, Cosima reveals she is deathly ill with the same ailment as Katja, Donny meets with Dr. Leekie reestablishing his role as Alison’s true monitor, and Sarah returns to her foster mother’s house to find it in disarray with both Mrs. S and Kira nowhere to be found (“Endless Forms Most Beautiful”).
Appendix C. Literature Reviews


The first of Stanislavski’s acting trilogy, *An Actor Prepares* explicates the psycho-technique designed to cultivate an actor’s ability “to play truly… to think, strive, feel and act in unison” with their roles (Stanislavski, *Prepares* 15). Written in a first person narrative style from the perceptive of a young drama student, the System is explained by the company’s director, Tortsov. The technique strives to create a favorable internal creative state, which allows the subconscious to function naturally on the stage, intuitively creating “the inner life of a human spirit” (Stanislavski, *Prepares* 15).

The process begins with an examination of the text focusing on the character’s actions and given circumstances, which are then expanded and heightened by the actor. As external expressions of internal desires, actions are the best way of accessing a character’s inner emotional life. Next, the text explicates various techniques used to enhance the actor’s emotional experience in the role, all with the aim of achieving in the actor an emotional state analogous to his character’s. These techniques include various forms of concentration, relaxation, adaptation, communion, faith/sense of truth, units/objectives, and emotion memory. The final two elements are given special emphasis by Stanislavski as they work in tandem to create an emotional through-line, giving rise to the character’s super objective. By utilizing these techniques under the direction of the inner creative forces of the mind, will, and feelings an actor can access their subconscious, creating a merging of actor and character that produces reality on the stage.
Much of this psycho-theory is internal or intellectual in nature; presenting difficulties in easily assessing its contribution to Maslany’s acting based solely on her performances in *Orphan Black*. Therefore, this text will be used in conjunction with supplementary research on Maslany’s training and process to determine their presence or absence in the development of clone characters.


The second text in Stanislavski’s acting trilogy explicates the external techniques designed to facilitate the process of living a part, achieving “the physical materialization of a character” based on the “inner values” established by psycho-technique (Stanislavski, *Building* 5).

The text discusses superficial aspects of characterization including costuming and character types before moving into detailed examinations of physicality and voice. His approach to physicality begins by freeing the body via muscular relaxation, avoiding generalized, unexpressive movement, as well as stripping away of personal mannerisms. Characteristic gesture, its development through the inner life of the character, and its utility in defining overall character are then discussed. Two guiding concepts in the physical sections include restraint and creating a consistent through-line of motion to match the inner through-line of emotion.

His vocal techniques are an amalgamation of technical and artistic activities. His discussion on pause, word emphasis, diction, and intonation read like rule books. Yet his methods of using the text and given circumstance to create a sub-textual inner monologue
filled with meaningful emotion memory are less restrictive, based more on the individual actor’s personal experiences and the role they are building.

This is followed by an examination of tempo-rhythm and how pacing of speech and movement influence character portrayal. The text concludes by discussing acting intuitively from the subconscious and summarizing both the psycho and external aspects of Stanislavski’s system emphasizing how they work in conjunction to create the inner life of a human spirit and manifest it in artistic form.

This text will be the foundation of the analysis of Maslany’s physical and vocal performance. Of special relevance will be those sections on gesture, voice, and tempo-rhythm. Utilizing these concepts as a frame work for dissecting each clone’s performance, I will evaluate the contribution of these methods to the overall quality of the character.


The third and final text in Stanislavski’s acting trilogy, *Creating a Role* summarizes and demonstrates the process of the previous texts by applying them to the creation of specific roles. Published after Stanislavski’s death, the text is the product of three separate manuscripts. The first section was written prior to the publication of *An Actor Prepares*, and as such does not follow the student director dialogue format assumed by his previously published texts. Written from Stanislavski’s perspective as he prepares a role from the *Woe from Wit*, his processes from initial interactions with the text through performance are clearly outlined with extensive examples. This process is roughly divided into three phases; the period of study, which establishes a firm understanding of
the given circumstances of the play; the period of emotional experience, which corresponds to the inner processes of An Actor Prepares; and the period of physical embodiment, which akin to Building a Character outlines the process of physically manifesting a character’s inner life.

The next two sections, written later and following the dialogue format of the other texts, explicate in an abbreviated fashion how this process is applicable to any number of diverse roles using examples of character studies drawn from Othello and The Inspector General. An interesting shift present in these later sections is the re-ordering of the process, where the physical life of the role is created before the inner emotional life. Cumulatively, this text demonstrates the system’s ability to create characters both externally to internally and internally to externally.

As the text covers a wide range of Stanislavski’s theories yet predominantly functions as a summary and exemplification of application it will have a secondary role within the thesis. Providing quotes and alternative ways of articulating concepts, the work will support the sections on the previous two texts rather than receiving any special emphasis of its own.


Orphan Black, created by John Fawcett and Graeme Manson, premiered in 2013 and is currently in its fifth season. For the purposes of this thesis I will focus exclusively on the first season, which will provide the performances by Tatiana Maslany to be analyzed through the lens of Stanislavski’s System as explicated in his acting texts. In this ten episode arc Maslany portrays seven different clones: Sarah Manning (a London punk), Beth Childs (a detective), Alison Hendrix (a suburban soccer mom), Cosima Niehause (a
PhD student of an evolutionary developmental biology), Helena (the Ukrainian assassin), Katja Obinger (a German), and Rachel Duncan (a mysterious Proto-Clone). While each character is unique and has the potential to provide evidence in the thesis, the analysis will have a primary focus on the examination and comparison of Sarah, Alison, Cosima, and Helena as they present the most developed characters with the greatest amount of material to utilize in illustrating Stanislavski’s theories.

The sci-fi drama follows the events put into action when Sarah Manning, the first of Maslany’s characters and primary protagonist of the show, witnesses the suicide of Beth Childs (a woman who looks exactly like her) and decides to assume her identify. The complicated nature of Beth’s life, including her detective career, unpredictable boyfriend, and pursuit by a German woman who also bears an uncanny resemblance to her, quickly complicate Sarah’s plan to clean out Beth’s bank account and disappear with her daughter. As the season unfolds Sarah meets more women like herself, and the truth of their shared clone nature is revealed. Further, these (as they preferred to be called) “genetic identicals,” are under threat of assassination by a rouge clone suffering from psychotic disorders and religious paranoia. As this threat is addressed and the clones continue to investigate their origins the season ends.
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