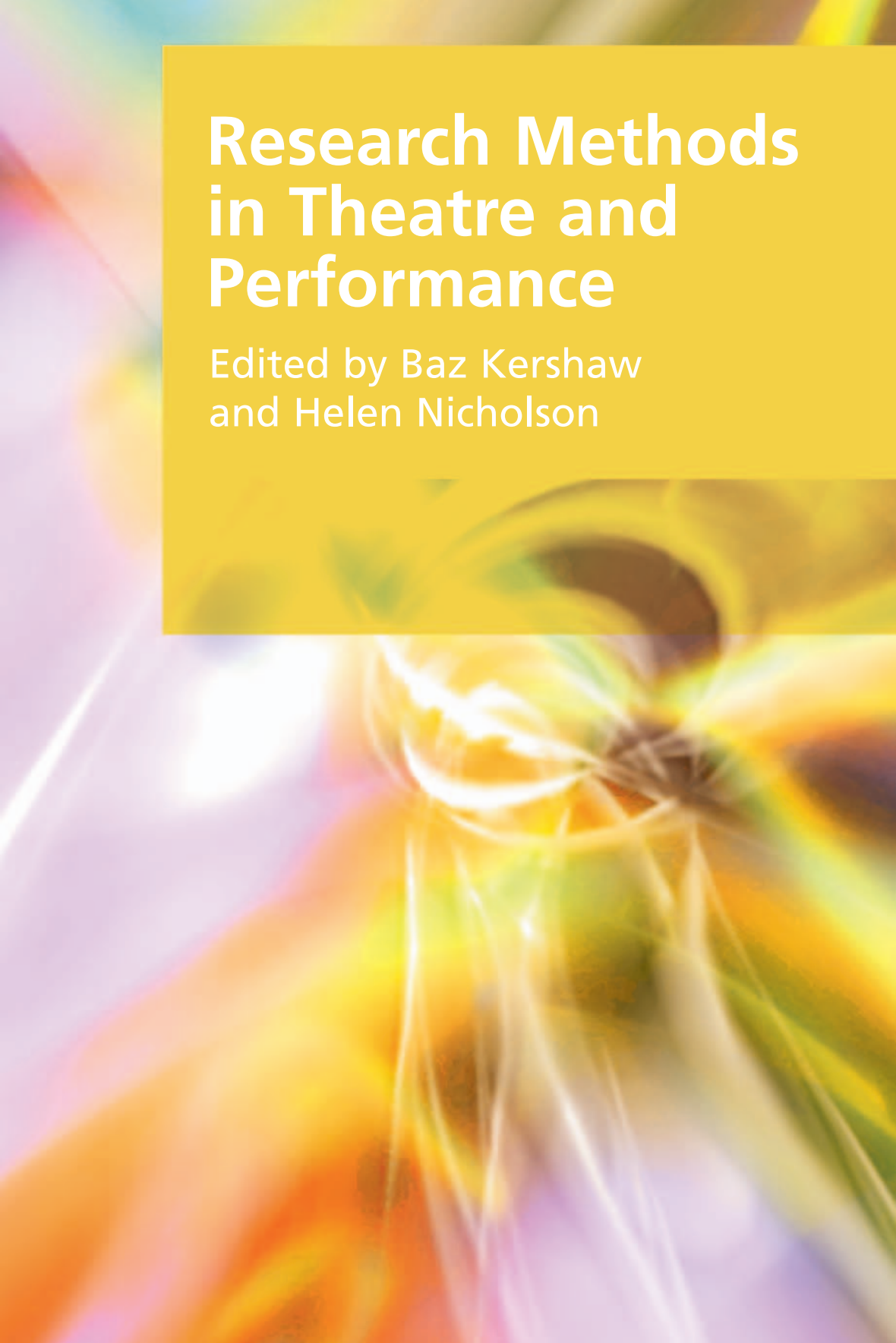
Research Methods in Theatre and Performance

Edited by Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson



Research Methods in Theatre and Performance

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Research Methods in Theatre and Performance

Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson

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Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson

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Introduction: Doing Methods Creatively

Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson

This book was conceived and planned during a period when theatre and other human performance practices had become especially diverse and challenging in their aesthetics and cultural locations. Performance happens in more types of theatres than ever before, and in many other places than in theatres. Playwriting is countered by many approaches to scripting and devising shows. Acting is just one of myriad ways of performing. Design is extended into scenography. Audiences are transformed into spectators, witnesses, observers, voyeurs and the rest. Responding to this environment, the methods of theatre and performance studies scholars and practitioners have been revitalised by fresh research demands and opportunities. A new spirit of research and pedagogic innovation in UK university drama, theatre and performance departments has emerged, in part encouraged by the international growth of performance studies during the past few decades. Old research methods have been re-adapted and fresh ones invented, often responding to developments in twenty-first-century postmodernised, mediatised and globalised cultures.

Almost all its chapters are co-authored by members of the Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA), most have sections written collaboratively and every one results from sustained negotiation between colleagues with complementary research agendas but different ways of working. Starting with a community of scholars, rather than by invitation to individual authors, has ensured that the process of sharing research commitments generated ideas, arguments, emotions, passions and insights that show through all of the chapters. The authors' creative approaches to research practices offer an implicit challenge to outmoded perceptions that the terms 'method' and 'methodology' imply an attempt to capture, codify and categorise knowledge. Across chapters the recurrent focus on researching the 'liveness' of the performance event within both theatre and performance studies, however loosely and variously this may be construed, has shaped the terms

of the methodological debate. Our Introduction shares the concern of many contributors to establish imaginative uses of methods that trouble the boundaries between creative practice and critical analysis, between epistemology and ontology.

Debates here turn on how research 'methods' and 'methodologies' might be reconceptualised for theatre and performance studies by thinking philosophically, procedurally and practically about working processes that resist unhelpful dichotomies and fixed binaries which separate embodiment and intuition from intellectual practices, emotional experiences and ways of knowing. Rather than attempting to resolve or smooth over distinctions between the ephemerality and the materiality of performance that, on first sight, may appear incoherent or inconsistent, many of the contributors to this book show how dwelling in the ambiguous space between binaries invites inventiveness. As they amply demonstrate, intuitive messiness and aesthetic ambiguity are integral to researching theatre and performance, where relationships between the researcher and the researched are often fluid, improvised and responsive. Getting lost, meeting obstacles or generating disagreement in the methods and methodologies maze are intrinsic to collaboration, but these moments of confusion, dissent or antagonism can be very research-rich. We contend, then, that research methods in theatre/performance studies per se, at least as represented here, at best are not concerned with legitimating the cultural authority of the researcher or the research. Rather, they are about the engaged social-environmental production of systems and the cultural production of flexible research ecologies wherein tacit understandings, inferred practices and theoretical assumptions can be made explicit and can, in turn, be queried and contested.

CONTESTING DISCIPLINARITY

If research methods in theatre and performance studies are not primarily pursued to produce cultural authority for researchers but rather to create diverse and dynamic research ecologies for the future, what does that imply for their disciplinary 'nature' overall? This book's chapters describe an especially rich diversity of projects and methods, a fact reinforced by the wide panorama of their locations: archives, digital workshops, studios, theatres, community halls, heritage sites, motorway service stations and more. They also parade a remarkable variety of methodologies, drawing on many theoretical domains beyond theatre and performance as subjects per se, and exactly *how* they do that resonates with the ethical commitment of culturally, socially and environmentally engaged research. That ethical engagement is usually coupled with a determination to explore productive instabilities between existing

epistemological practices and ontological results. So could this book be about the research methods of an *anti-discipline*? And if so, what might that indicate about UK theatre and performance researchers' responses to the postmodernised, mediatised and globalised world of the twenty-first century?

The 'anti-discipline' idea is borrowed from a formative moment of performance studies in New York, 1995, when a new research association was founded: Performance Studies international (Phelan and Lane 1998). But, starting in the 1950s, creative enquiry through practical theatre and performance making had become widespread by the early 1980s in higher education in the UK and elsewhere. By the late-twentieth century it was clear that university research in drama and theatre and performance had evolved symbiotically, giving the lie to genealogies that proposed their linear development, as Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis in part show (Shepherd and Wallis 2004). From this perspective, the 1980 renaming of New York University's Graduate Drama Program as the first Performance Studies department is not especially remarkable, though its hosting of the PSi founding conference did mark an important juncture for the disciplinary identity of performance in universities. In plenary presentations, Richard Schechner argued performance studies were an 'in-between', interdisciplinary 'field' while Dwight Conquergood pungently called it an 'anti-discipline'. Just three years earlier (1992) Schechner had provocatively proposed a paradigmatic quasi-evolutionary status for this burgeoning anti-discipline, notoriously predicting that: '. . . theatre as we have known and practiced it – the staging of written dramas – will be the string quartet of the 21st century' (1992: 8; but see also 2000). He was, of course, wittily begging the question of what might constitute the full concert orchestra of performance in the world.

That begging carries profound implications for the disciplinary limits of theatre and performance studies, for the uses of their research skills, methods and methodologies, and therefore for their researchers' ethico-political engagements in the twenty-first century. In his earliest published attempt to define performance, Schechner ignores the semicircle of orchestral convention and seats a small but expansive band in a single straight line: 'play → games and sports → theatre → ritual' ([1965/6] 1969: 85). This simple line-up was later extended (1973) to include performance in everyday life, public political behaviours, animal behaviour patterns and more. Four years later (1977: viii; exp. edn 1988) the line was morphed into fan- and web-shapes to incorporate rites, ceremonies, shamanism, entertainments, art-making process, origins of theatre (in Eurasia, Africa, Pacific, Asia, Europe), body-oriented psychotherapies and – exceptionally, as it explicitly references a research methodology alongside a practice – ethological studies of ritual (for a summary history, see: 2002: 10–11). This exception is crucial to the question of disciplinary identity, as it sets limits to the plethora of events that constitutes performance. The

ethological focus also defines performance as *behaviour*, particularly behaviour *shared* between humans and select other animals. Schechner defends performance studies against accusations that it imperialistically includes everything by arguing that 'There are limits to what *is* performance' because convention defines it in relation to 'cultural practice'. But he significantly moderates this by also arguing that 'just about everything can be studied *as* performance' (ibid.: 30). This 'is/as' distinction is a foundational component in his theory of performance. We note that it aligns with the ontology/epistemology binary, which we are arguing is a major focus for the fluid dynamics of theatre/performance research methods generally, including those presented in this book. We will return to the 'is/as' idea shortly, following a brief look at Jon McKenzie's equivalent theoretical building blocks.

The subtitle of Jon McKenzie's extraordinary *Perform or Else* (2001) hits its major key idea resoundingly: 'from discipline to performance'. The latter is proposed as a new global 'stratum' of existence for the third millennium that aligns with the 'postmodern condition' (Lyotard [1979] 1984). Three paradigms of knowledge constitute the stratum – performance studies, performance management and techno-performance – which are committed to, respectively, cultural efficacy, organisational efficiency and technological effectiveness. Crucially for our argument, those determinations align with the epistemological-ontological experimentation of many of the research methods described in this book. Because McKenzie argues that it is performance that expresses – in the genetic sense of producing observable characteristics – the structures of 'onto-historical formation of power and knowledge' (2001: 194). The major point here is that it is *not* these structures (or any others) which constitute the strata of experience and the paradigms of performance, but rather vice versa.

So there is a fundamental difference between Richard Schechner and Jon McKenzie's general theories, most succinctly indicated by the latter's devastating challenge to the former's 'is/as' formulation for performance. If Schechner's theorising may be characterised as a form of modernist behavioural humanism, then McKenzie's may be distinguished as a post-postmodernist cyber-systemic proto-ecologism. These differences have profound implications for any general characterisation of the drama/theatre/performance research methodologies that inform the practices analysed in this book. We need to figure, therefore, just *how* theatre/performance research methods variously but almost always critically destabilise the interactions of current epistemologies and ontologies. What, exactly, might be the meta-forces at play between its skills, methods and methodologies that can so profoundly upset the apple carts of 'knowledge' and 'reality'? This question sets us up for a somewhat challenging quest, and so to complete it in just three relatively short steps we will briefly draw on the following chapters in order three at a time. By embedding them in this meta-analysis of crucial qualities of

theatre and performance research we hope to avoid the reductiveness of conventional chapter summaries: they can more fully speak for themselves when their turn comes.

WHEN IS A DISCIPLINE NOT A DISCIPLINE? REFLEXIVITY

Throughout this book it is not difficult to find signs of confidence in the powers of theatre and performance research to challenge its subjects in radical ways. For example, in Chapter 1 Maggie Gale and Ann Featherstone argue that: 'Evidence-gathering with a view to the destabilisation, reorganisation or reordering of a historical position or perspective often lies at the root of the researcher's work in the archive' (p. 21). They question the authority conventionally endowed on the 'archive' to provide unproblematic access to the past, as well as any absolute truth claims based on such access. The knowledge it can be coaxed into producing is seen as provisional and open for revision. It follows that any 'history' created from an archive's materials is just one account of many possible ways of being that were available in the past. Their focus on the 'ideological' relationship between the archival researcher and the stuff in the document boxes and storage cabinets does this: it *reflexively* highlights criticality in the choice of archive research methods as potentially productive in *both* putting together *and* pulling apart any alignment of epistemological processes and ontological results.

What is it about such reflexivity that in practice might make it create such transformative momentum? The technological environments explored by Steve Dixon and his case-study subjects in Chapter 2 provide some clarifying answers to this question. They show that the impact of the digital-media explosion, resounding globally in the final decades of the twentieth century, provided beneficial aftershocks for theatre and performance. The fresh performative 'spaces' which the new technologies opened up created enriching new methods for projecting what they do best: manipulating the 'nature' of the real to remake it anew again. Dixon demonstrates this in discussing a scene set in Hell from one of his own research group's experiments, in which onstage screens portray the on-stage live performers. His crisp analysis pinpoints a doubly reflexive structuring: 'The projection imagery presents a parallel spatial and psychic dimension, and the characters are revealed to inhabit and haunt both their own inner (screen) and outer (stage) spaces and psyches' (p. 49). This techno-scenography enables spectators – onstage and off – to appreciate the kinds of epistemological and ontological conundrums presented by, say, the proofs in quantum physics that time-space is structured so we can meet ourselves coming in the other direction.

In the second case study in Baz Kershaw's Chapter 3, choreographer Rosemary Lee uncovers the ethics that are bound up with such reflexive messing about with the nature of the real. In answer to a question about inventing new tasks for the two dancers in her 'inside out' piece of practical creative research *the Suchness of Heni and Eddie* she says

> . . . this question of whether I can actually really get at the suchness of Heni and Eddie without imposing my own pre-existing tasks was a constant question in my head.
>
> In my defence, though, the tasks I gave in *Suchness* were usually only skeleton suggestions that left a great deal of room for interpretation. (p. 80)

'Suchness' is a translation of the Buddhist term 'tathata', meaning (at its simplest) the 'real nature of all things' (Xing 2005: 76). Hence the title of Lee's dance piece points to the problem of fixing for good any relationship between epistemology and ontology in any specific time-space. Lee's description of her improvisatory choreographic tasks echoes Gale and Featherstone's approach to archives, which produce only 'skeleton suggestions' that rattle in the space they leave for interpretation. Again reflexivity is shown to be a methodological key that can unpick the conundrums which plague the discipline of methods in theatre and performance research. It follows that our quest next should enquire into the qualities of theatre/performance as 'discipline' per se. And, given that they offer profound challenges to binary formulations such as 'epistemology/ontology' and 'cause/effect', we should look more closely into their genealogies.

So far we have invoked two trilogies of words that are usefully dependent on each other. The first has a very long history in dramatic and theatrical criticism and theory, but Raymond Williams's performance studies text of 1954 – *Drama in Performance* – is an important historical marker for all of *this* book's chapters, as they focus variously on what he calls the 'conditions of performance' (1954: 2). Williams indicates a very wide span of factors that create those conditions historically, but they concentrate most specifically on *places* of performance, and most regularly – at least in the Western traditions that provide the bulk of his material examples – on the theatre. So drama/theatre/performance is our first triumvirate of disciplinary terms, and the second is based on McKenzie's paradigms of performance: cultural/organisational/technological. It is important to stress that neither trilogy has its order of words necessarily fixed by hierarchy or genealogy, but sequencing the two together has important implications for theatre and performance research. What is at stake here is not the detail in the exercise of naming a discipline – no doubt there will continue to be debates about that – but the implications

of *naming as such* for the interactivity of skills, methods and methodologies in accounts of theatre/performance research practices.

This particular language game of disciplinarily related naming focuses on prefixes and starts with 'multi-', because that is produced in the transactions between drama and theatre. The cultural practice of, say, playwriting implies or requires the productive structures of theatre, which involves a *collection* of skill-sets and knowledge-domains. We move on to 'inter-': as the practices of theatre require the combined *tekhne* (or know-how) of other disciplines to create the in-between (or liminal) qualities of performance. Next we suggest that anything coming as a *result* of performance is an effect of some sort of 'trans-'. This is because any extra-disciplinary effects that significantly challenge established disciplinary boundaries will be produced by destabilising the binaries of *existing* as/is and epistemology/ontology configurations. This adds a third trilogy – multi-/inter-/trans- – to our language game, each of which operates at a higher level of abstraction than the last:

multi-/inter-/trans-(disciplinary)
↑
cultural/organisational/technological
↑
drama/theatre/performance

What is important here is that the learning which is implied by this trilogy of ideas creates reflexivity not only in the conventional sense of subjects being alert to the assumptions on which their 'reality' (or ontology) rests, but also in a performative sense. This performativity captures ephemerality as part of its reflexive pedagogy, as Scott Lash and John Urry claim: 'Reflexive action not only entails the mediation of . . . abstract systems, it also involves significantly deciding between alternatives' (1994: 50).

Such doubled reflexivity is essential to understanding how and why theatre and performance research – alongside other creative practices – can *both* be defined as disciplines that encompass more or less specific subject skill-sets – say, playwriting, scenography, performer training of various kinds – *and* by their cultural, organisational and technological capacities to reach beyond disciplinarity as such. Hence theatre is a discipline that is inherently multi-disciplinary in terms of skill-sets, say, but also interdisciplinary in its capacity significantly to engage other disciplines, such as anthropology, archaeology and ecology. Performance shares this interdisciplinary capacity with theatre, but rather significantly reaches beyond that when posited as a paradigmatically integral factor of, say, human cultures or weather systems or the evolution of galaxies, i.e. as a trans-disciplinary vector of all or most events. From this perspective performance studies may well be an anti-discipline, but also, given

its propensity for querying boundaries as such, it might be more productively reflexive to call it a *quasi*-'discipline'.

WHAT ARE METHODOLOGIES FOR? RESEARCH UNPREDICTABILITY

Jim Davis's scheme for the production of high-class theatre and performance histories in Chapter 4 might create that result if put fully into effect. His dismissal of 'reconstruction' as a useful approach to researching the histories of theatrical performance nicely matches the scepticism of the 'archive' recommended by Gale and Featherstone. And his final recommendation that researchers should 'question continually the methods and methodologies through which the theatrical past is approached by theatre historians' (p. 98) is an especially straightforward championing of reflexivity. But there is an irony in that straightforwardness regarding the writing of any history that results from well-founded historiography, which must rest at least partly in a determination to pin down the determining forces that have shaped the present in the past. Why else should a theatre historian end up delightfully comparing the broken-down walls of medieval monasteries and convents as evidence of the latter's nurturing attitude to the local community, as Katie Normington reveals in her case study? The unexpected coupling of fallen stones and love for locality is plausibly interpreted as a source for the growth of feminine-developed drama in what used rudely to be called the 'Middle Ages', and another welcome historical bulwark for early twenty-first-century feminism is built. As Gilli Bush-Bailey and Jacky Bratton put it, 'doing history backwards' (p. 103) in this way adds up to a placement of the theatre and performance researcher in the present, the better from where to surprise us about the past.

Tales of the unexpected also feature strongly in Chapter 5, in which Joslin McKinney and Helen Iball do much more than sketch out a backwards plan for the rise of that most theatrically material of arts, scenography. Theatre design historian Christopher Baugh's awareness that there are no definitive truths of scenographic (or any other) history harks back to his childhood playing with the contents of his mother's button box. He resonantly calls it 'a treasure house of disordered, random pleasure' (p. 116), an image that might be applied to the whole object of his wide-ranging research into twentieth-century technology and scenography. Likewise, McKinney and Iball's account of the scenographic Mecca of the Prague Quadrennial (PQ) conferences/exhibitions includes a particularly telling exhibit, because it was both a creative experiment and a reflexive response to PQ itself. With the wickedly tongue-in-cheek title of *The Heart of PQ*, Dorrita Hannah's huge five-towered installation was designed

as a 'performance landscape' that simultaneously incorporated the specially devised productions of the five performance companies in residence at the event. The key point here is that it 'was conceived as an experiment where the outcomes could not be predicted and "failure is productive"' (p. 120), which could be an especially sharp definition of advanced research in theatre and performance generally. In other words, the *event* of *The Heart of PQ* was *reflexively unpredictable* in a context that, at least by implication, usually worked to succeed through an entirely opposite suite of effects. In their turn McKinney and Iball, tactically and tactfully, are model collaborators in this sophisticatedly accessible critique. They inform us that – just like Baugh's button-box exercise – the Prague Quadrennial itself implicitly plays the game of knowing substitution because: 'Many of the models that are displayed at exhibitions like PQ are reconstructions *after* the event' (p. 117, our emphasis).

Just like theatre historiography and scenography, at first glance performer training should not belong in a section building up a brief for *unpredictability* as a crucial quality of theatre and performance research overall. But Jonathan Pitches and Simon Murray's highly capable coordination of Chapter 6 demonstrates that there can be a world of difference between the delivery of professionals to the stage and the researcher's deconstruction of what goes on in the training workshops and studios of the theatrical 'world'. Their chapter makes clear that the latter can be extremely challenging places when it comes to marrying the detailed controls of physical rigour, say, to reflexively subtle research enquiries into performer training practices, as its case studies show in effect. Helen Poyner and Libby Worth's self-administration of Anna Halprin's RSVP system of collective creativity to their task of co-authoring a book about her is based on their own reflexive use of that system for creative projects. Likewise, David Richmond and Jules Dorey Richmond make it very clear that their own training system, *floorplan*, provides a practical methodology that aims to place complete control of its evolution in the hands and hearts of its users. So these systems function as open ones by structuring creative activity according to rules that can be radically modified by users as *their* projects progress, and exemplify that unpredictability is constitutive of creativity in theatre and performance.

That is why we risk recommending an ironically paradoxical maxim as a possible principle of theatre and performance research methodologies: 'What are methods for, but to ruin our experiments?' (Kershaw 2009: 115). Because that suggests *how* the unpredictable accidents of reflexive methods in theatre arts research can be productive of positive, creative, methodological revision. Our contributors' willingness to face up to what they *do not know* is often a major source of quality in their projects. So from the *multi-/inter-/trans-disciplinary* perspectives of drama, theatre and performance research *not* to know where your project is heading exactly, or even *avoiding* a methodological tactic in favour of more risky ones, can produce fruitful failures.

But what, *beyond* the layers of reflexivity teased out above, are methodologies *for* in theatre and performance studies? Answering this question invokes tripartite thinking, and using binaries – *and/or contradictions* – to beat them at their own game. Using binaries as a weapon against themselves is quite a complex reflexive tactic. But it is an appropriate one in the context of drama, theatre and performance research, which develops methods and methodologies that are related homologically to the practices of drama, theatre and performance themselves. Comparing like to part-like can help to detect difference in similarities, and vice versa, and that is a key to opening up the mysteries of *reflexive unpredictability* in drama, theatre and performance practices. This is the equivalent in research practices to pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps: thinking the unthinkable in order to achieve the impossible. We will now demonstrate this approach by tripartite reflection on one of the biggest binaries of all in theatre and performance research – theory/practice – though a second binary – generic/specialist – which relates to the structuring of disciplines. Then in the next section we will consider the relevance of that exercise to a third key theatre/performance binary: ephemerality/materiality.

The demonstration entails a close look at the etymologies of 'generic' and 'specialist' to detect their relevance to 'theory/practice' in theatre/performance research. In planning this book we thought it would be useful to distinguish between generic and specialist *methods*, because it seemed likely that the former would be generally *relevant* to all of the latter. We gambled that the methods in Chapters 1 to 3 belong to a *genus* or *class* of activity that somehow filtered through to the more specialist practices of Chapters 4 to 9. But now that division between 'generic' and 'specialist' seems problematic, as it is a binary that on its own – like all the rest – is unsustainable. The practice of tripartite thinking, however, might yet change this problem into an advantage. It may help to turn the great performative-shoe trick that circumvents the impassable limitations of gravity *without* rocket science, so that we *can* lift ourselves up by our best quasi-'disciplinary' bootstraps. Might that trick be possible because *in theory* 'generic' (etym. late Latin *genus*: SOED 2002: 1083) conceptually constitutes 'specialist' (etym. 'special' from Latin *specialis*, formed as SPECIES: SOED 2002: 2945)? That is to say, a species/specialism *by definition* cannot be said to exist without a gene/genre that produces it. *But* the precise opposite is the case, *in practice*, because there is no genus without the activity of the species (Atkins 2003: 8 and 38). Thus the paradox of genetic/generic indeterminacy trumps the binary contradiction of theory/practice, because the specialisms of the species result in sustainable survival only through energy – pulling up one's bootstraps – used with apparently impossible reflexive economy. Such may be the elusive but achievable rewards of research in a quasi-'discipline'.

ON EPHEMERALITY AND MATERIALITY

What lies between ephemerality and materiality may make them the most elusive binary in theatre and performance research. This binary is especially hotly contested in arts that are considered 'live' or 'time-based', and increasingly so as the world became networked and webbed by the digital 'revolution' of the late twentieth century. In Chapter 7 Adam Ledger offers a neat trilogy of terms that marks this viral spread: 'mediatisation, replication, remediation' (p. 181). These are words that lurk in the shadow of research 'documentation' and betray the highest value in the quality of 'liveness'. From the outset Ledger makes clear that this 'elusive' ephemerality is the Holy Grail of many theatre/performance researchers. He notes some of the quarters from which this notion has been strongly challenged theoretically, and this is backed up in his chapter's case studies. For example, theatre director Simon Ellis relates how the flexing of his Australian university's 'positivistic muscles' over examination rubrics turned out a liberation, leading to three equally important 'pathways' of writing, video and interactive exercises that were crucial to his thesis. Ledger follows a similar conversion in his case-study project, summarising his embodied learning with the memorably specific: 'It is . . . memorialising viscerality that can challenge the cold eye of the video camera and its contemporary companion, the computer screen' (p. 183). Put fairly straightforwardly: the binary opposition that had the spirit of ephemerality dominating the body of materiality is still recognised, of course, but it can also be gently and graciously subverted.

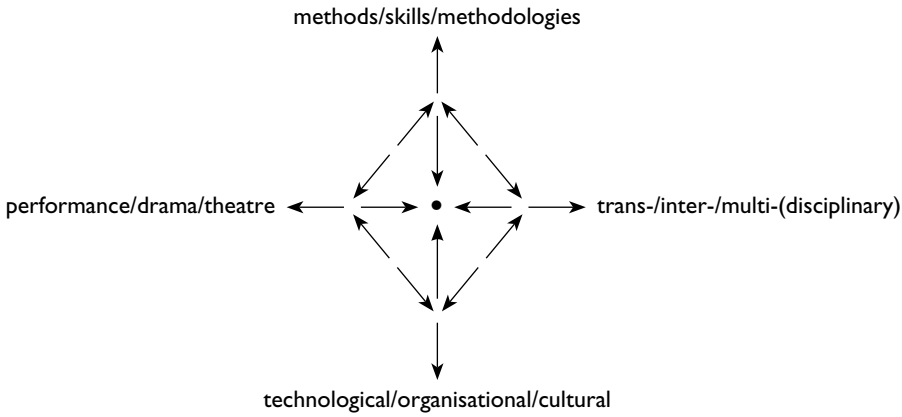
If any particular area of theatre and performance research can lay claim to especially high levels of unpredictability in practice, then the applied theatre that features in Chapter 8 might take that dubious prize. Most usually pitched beyond theatre buildings on sites that range from sedate museums to ravaged war zones, this is no field for the faint of heart, a point underlined by Jenny Hughes's crisp summary of the landmine-like 'issues' addressed by its three case studies: 'an atrocious heritage, alienating constructions of sex and gender, and the lack of political rights for refugees' (p. 187). There is a similar challenge in the third term that Hughes and her co-authors propose as 'principles of practice' in applied theatre generally. Alongside the expectable 'artistry' and 'improvisation' they place 'decomposition', defined as 'experiences that confound expectations of an orderly, rule-bound, habitable universe' (p. 188). What implications might this last concept carry for the impact on participants and spectators of the 'mutual unsettlements' and 'searching performatives', as Jenny Kidd and Catherine McNamara name the high-impact moments described in their case studies? Such moments bear directly on how the ephemerality of performance might translate into durable material practices that will make a positive – possibly even

permanent – difference in the 'decomposed' lives of the people involved in their projects.

It is fitting, then, that the final chapter of this book is about the body and bodies in performance and theatre research. That double inflection through the singular and the plural allows Jennifer Parker-Starbuck and Roberta Mock to establish a sophisticated multi-perspective take on the body/bodies of theatre/performance. They argue, on the one hand, that 'What begins to distinguish body-centred research is the very notion of "body" as interpretable and flexible, yet materially and culturally specific', and, on the other, that a 'focus on "bodies" . . . generates a broad category exceeding either biological substance or a singular sense of identity, a category open to various becomings . . .' (pp. 211–12). These formulations resonantly chime in the realm of the everyday with the paradox of boundless specificity that generally characterises performance as such. The chapter persuasively demonstrates that the doubly evasive absent bodies of theatre and performance have set a new bar for inescapable ephemerality *as confirmed by* the continuing presence of material bodies doing increasingly extraordinary things to prove conclusively that – at least for the time being, and like this book's chapters – they are becoming here to stay.

But before they have their fuller say we must briefly consider one further unanalysed term that is usually, and crucially, tagged onto the big disciplinary binary of 'method' and 'methodology': namely, skills (see Griffin 2005: 5–7). That supplementary status of *skills* in the research emporium lies in their mundanity. But it is also in the everyday routines through which they are honed that they too become the mothers of invention. For theatre and performance researchers these qualities of skills – taking time and patience to acquire, often highly specialised in their applications, and so on – are productive because the repetition required to become skilful is a quality of what they investigate: theatre and performance almost invariably dance to the beat of repeat, repeat, repeat. So the practice of research skills in theatre/performance enquiries may thrive through material embodiment in its objects of attention, especially as many of the researchers in this book's twenty-five or so case studies of necessity slip from one skill-set to another and another in response to the multi-modal natures of the creative practices they engage to profess.

So skills are as much foundational to research in theatre and performance as are methods and methodologies. And even though a further trilogy of terms (skills/methods/methodologies) may form yet another level in the game of defining disciplines and thus still lead us to quasi-'disciplinarity', at root there is nothing in any step of the trilogies' order which cannot be reordered in its horizontal and vertical alignments. For example:



Hence it is also the case that the 'objects' of research in performance and theatre are dependent on creative processes, so that such research per se may be just as unpredictably flexible in its material and ephemeral effects. When it comes to *being 'creative'* in the messy business of *becoming*, therefore, probably there is nothing but truth in what the poet Louis Aragon so dryly claimed: 'Your imagination, dear reader, is worth more than you imagine.'

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

Part of our brief to authors was that each chapter should both challenge established researchers and give clear signposts to emerging scholars/practitioners that would help them find new directions in their own research. We conceived this book with pedagogy in mind, which means, we hope, that reading it involves an act of doubled imagination, as between student and teacher. Inevitably, as both reading and pedagogy are creative practices, there are many different ways to consume this text. We hazard a guess that most people who pick up this book are likely to enter it with a specific purpose in mind, and likely there will be an understandable temptation to find the parts that seem immediately relevant to your own research or teaching. But if the mixture of chance, design and serendipity that influenced the book's conception and production reaches beyond the page to its readers, it could be at least equally beneficial to extend your focus to the chapters that may seem less obviously relevant at first glance, as they may yield the rich rewards of entirely unexpected insights. The process of learning, whether as an established scholar or postgraduate student, is not linear but spiral; as educationalist Jerome Bruner argued, 'knowing is a process not a product' and it is always intuitive and exploratory (1966: 72).

Gaining an ephemerally embodied understanding of theatre/performance research skills, methods and methodologies through a *book* will certainly involve paradoxically attending to absences – aporia and lacunae – as integral to the poetics of reading, the dramaturgies of index searching, the theatricality of leafing through pages, the performativity of tossing this book into the air to feel how it falls back into your hands (we hope) – all of which, in turn, probably have their own pedagogies. And through those wayward means might you find a response to the question we posed that hasn't been answered, as to whether research in theatre and performance does anything different than what goes on in other 'fields' where humans desire to better understand why on Earth they are here. For sure there are many possible ways of adapting, discarding or elaborating the ideas, practices and methods presented herein: so we are happy to release you at last into the capacious aims of our long-standing and truly remarkable collaborative contributors.

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CHAPTER 1

The Imperative of the Archive: Creative Archive Research

Maggie B. Gale and Ann Featherstone

> [O]ur experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past. We experience our present world in a context which is causally connected with past events and objects. (Connerton [1989] 2004: 2)

> The archive is a record of the past at the same time as it points to the future. (Steedman 2001: 7)

The archive – as concept, as resource, as location, as site of power relations, as signifier of the historical and cultural division and ownership of information and knowledge – has in recent years been the subject of much debate, largely centred on questions of who creates the archive, for whom is it created and how it is used. A perception or knowledge of the past creates a sense of self and, in a culture dominated by the need to self-define, the archive has become a vital cultural tool as a means of accessing versions of the past. In this chapter we interrogate the archive in both conceptual and material terms, through exploring theories of the archive and its different forms, concrete and virtual, and by using case examples to unpick its complexity as a research tool.

Definitions of the archive vary. It is both a location and an assemblage, a building and the organised or unorganised contents housed by the building, which might be a personal collection of related materials, a state-funded body of documents or information that has been systematically organised. As a physical entity – whether real or virtual/digital – the archive houses or hosts a collection of archived materials. The assemblage of materials housed might be a 'fonds' collection, which has been created by one person or an organisation, or a 'collection' that was brought together for a specific purpose and linked by genre or subject.

There is now a generation of theatre and performance scholars for whom

the major source of research knowledge is Internet archives and who are relatively unfamiliar with more traditional forms: boxes of papers and documents in libraries or other official buildings. Conversely, many theatre and performance scholars used to working in these traditional archives may be less familiar with the dynamic possibilities of the Internet as an archival resource. Scholars, of course, have to be able to work *across* as well as within these two basic resource environments, to understand their connective potentials and their different operational systems. Similarly, they need to develop an awareness of the ways in which *ideology*, values and beliefs nuance how archives have been created and the intentions that have informed the process of collection. While the 'how' and 'what' can sometimes determine the practicalities of access, the ideological basis of archive formation has been the subject of academic debate by cultural theorists and historians in recent years.

From the late 1960s onwards, many scholars rallied to defend the value of the archive, how it might be defined, its use and function, and specifically how it gave authority and layering to their own history-making practices (see Foucault [1969] 2001; Derrida 1995; Steedman 1998 and 2001). Their debates embraced the relation of the archive to power, memory and the ways in which knowledge is defined and divided. On the one hand, some historians have used Derrida's critique of 'archive fever' to argue that some scholars have assumed too quickly that the archive holds the 'truth', and that their desire to discover the authentic or the origin has been unquestioning. For others, as Carolyn Steedman points out, the archive is a place of *creative* possibilities, where the historian can work in full knowledge of the pitfalls of archive work, the bias of the collection, the recognition of the significance of what is *not* included and so on (Steedman 1998, 2001).

In many twenty-first-century nations, archive formation and accessibility are economically driven and embedded in a commodity culture. Rarely generating income, there is nevertheless the expectation that the state funding which enables, for example, 'national' theatres to maintain an archive, also requires them to historicise themselves and their product. In this combination of outreach and heritage, the archive becomes part of the justificatory discourse of funding because it catalogues, makes orderly and accessible past events, performances, programmes, transcripts of interviews, etc., giving them an imagined relevance in the future.

Both building-based and virtual archives are embroiled in a process of cultural formation and consumption. One way of framing the potential of the Internet as an archive is to see it as providing a shop window of information, often disguised or simply *misread* as knowledge: sometimes a shop window displays much more of interest than the shop itself actually contains, at other times it barely begins to suggest what lies beyond the shop doors. The advent of the World Wide Web as archive and its subsequent augmentation by

educational and heritage bodies has brought with it a perceived heightened level of accessibility and range of content far beyond that of the traditional theatre/performance archive.

Although all archives are subject to limitations in terms of ideological bias, economy, quality and geography, these limitations in fact impact in remarkably similar ways, despite the apparent differences between a building-based and a web-based archive. In theatre and performance studies particularly, the viability of archiving an essentially ephemeral cultural form at all has lead to debates over the possibilities, problematics and available practices of documenting both performance and our experience of it. This directly impacts on the kinds of archive used and the ways in which materials might be treated, either as a faulty record or an irretrievable show or as valid evidence of a cultural state (see Gorman 2000; Heddon 2002; Iball 2002; Taylor 2003). However, our discussion focuses upon access rather than treatment, and deliberates upon ideas and practices which lay the foundations for a methodology. Indications as to how archive materials might be processed are explored through the case studies in the second half of the chapter.

CONCEPTUALISING THE ARCHIVE

To begin with, archival researchers engage with the activity of *archiving the already archived*. When the archive material is returned to the file/box/shelf or when the online tab is closed, researchers reorder and catalogue their findings, often producing another personalised archive of information, material, impressions and questions. Researchers identify and negotiate the layers of an archive. It is the relationship between these layers – these strata of knowledge – and the transaction between them and the foundation of the new knowledges created by the research process, which this chapter now examines. We begin by looking at the ways in which theorists and historians have defined and approached the archive as a cultural phenomenon.

The archive is distinct from a simple collection; it represents and hosts a collection or a number of collections that are considered to have historical and cultural significance, in which materials have been ordered or sorted and catalogued, and which might be accessible to few or many users. The archive can be both inclusive and exclusive. Critiquing the historian's desire to use the archive as a means to identify origin, Jacques Derrida notes the root of the word *archive* as the place or domicile in which official documents or texts are stored by the socially and politically powerful (Derrida 1995). Archive, for Derrida, is a location signifying state authority as embodied in text/word/document (ibid.: 10). While for Helen Freshwater, *archive* focuses on text and the word (Freshwater 2003: 733), performance historian Diane Taylor asks us

to acknowledge the difference between the archive and what she names as the repertoire. For Taylor the historical prioritisation of the text-based archive has meant the repertoire – the archive of embodied memory, oral history, the experiences and traces of performance – has been given less significance than it might have been. Both she and Derrida question the ways in which the archive, through text, word and document alone, might be seen as providing access to origin/history/experience (see Taylor 2003).

Theatre/performance archives invariably contain a multiplicity of document forms, including visual and aural material such as photography, images and occasionally live recording (a combination of visual and aural) as well as texts. This complexity necessitates a broad conceptual approach by researchers. The visual composition of materials, whether a playbill, a script marked up by the director or deputy stage manager, a sketch or a photograph of a rehearsal, an actor, a building and so on, require an interpretative strategy. This interpretation might borrow from other disciplines; Roland Barthes' and John Berger's theories of reading images for example, might inform reading a visual document (Barthes 2000; Berger 1972).

The charm of the archive

While Helen Freshwater follows Derrida's conception of the archive as a construction of history, she also points to the archive's potential to enchant and charm us, its 'allure', and notes the privileged position of the archive researcher (Freshwater 2003: 729). Researchers *remak*e history, making objects and materials from the past relevant to the ways in which we understand our present and conceptualise our futures, and this contributes to the process of cultural meaning-making. But with this privilege should come caution. The pleasure of archive work includes experiences that, we are warned, may enchant us: the secrecy of the exercise, the sense of being somehow special for being allowed access; the discovery of documents which we are surprised that no one else has found; the identification of relevance in the seemingly irrelevant, and so on. Charm and allure, of course, also have their opposites in professional practice: when the labour expended seems excessive, when archivists and curators seem excessively protective of their collections, when doubt outweighs energy and when documents resist interpretation. Scholars stress the importance of understanding both the agenda for research as well as the foundational principles of the archive being used. Freshwater, for example, calls for an embedded statement and analysis of the intellectual and methodological attitude towards the materials being assessed by the archive researcher, who 'frequently acts as a conduit between the past and the contemporary present' (Freshwater 2003: 734). We will return to the idea of the archive researcher as conduit. Derrida's influential critique of the historian's obsession with the imperative

of archival research was that it reflected a refusal to acknowledge the shift in the discipline of history – modern historical practice is not just about collating facts and constructing 'truths' from them. In naming the archive as a place of state power he also points to it as a signifier of the historian's 'feverish' desire to find the origin, to 'recover moments of inception' (Steedman 2001: 4–8) and to the seeming resistance to separate out the archive – building, collection, system of cataloguing – from what it might be reduced to: in Steedman's words, 'memory, the desire for origins' (ibid.). Work in the archive, although regarded by many historians as a 'professional rite of passage' (ibid.: 9), has its own dangers. Because of our vulnerability to its allure some see archive work as potentially addictive – historian Mary Lindemann even talks of her fear of becoming an 'archive junkie' (Lindemann 1992). For Derrida this vulnerability problematises the process of archive research (Derrida 1995). Perhaps what can be drawn from these varying positions is that archive-based research necessitates consciousness of the task and an awareness of its pitfalls and limitations.

Just as no archive is free of either ideology or the fluctuations of economics in its formation and operation, so too it is not stable in content. Content fluctuates according to what is kept and what is added by the custodian, but it is also defined by the researcher's processes of meaning-making. A high percentage of what lies in the average archive is never read or examined; it is only given meaning through examination and definition. In other words, even if the content remains constant over time, its signifying potential meanings are in continuous flux according to who chooses to use it and in what manner and context.

Oddly, this instability chimes with the fluid nature of theatre and performance itself and so for both theatre and performance researchers and practitioners, there are common themes and practices at work. Theatre and performance makers and archive researchers work through a process of composition in the ways in which their materials are sourced, collected, assessed, analysed and re-archived. For the researcher this process demands an understanding of how any given archive itself works and what its cultural *function* might be.

Power and the ordering of knowledge

Evidence-gathering with a view to the destabilisation, reorganisation or reordering of a historical position or perspective often lies at the root of the researcher's work in the archive. It is therefore a prerequisite for effective research that theatre and performance archive researchers understand their own ideological position and recognise the ideological biases which operate in the archive they are using. For Foucault the archive is 'the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events' (Foucault [1969] 2001: 145–6).

Thus the archive creates a possibility of cultural definition, what a culture might be and how it might be read and understood. He points out that the information in an archive is not 'an amorphous mass' which might 'disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents', but rather that archive materials are

> composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities . . . the archive is . . . that which differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration. (ibid.)

Foucault saw the paradigms of archaeology and its practices as a means of defining the discourse of history and of the archive itself, as well as identifying those 'discourses as practices obeying certain rules' and in order to 'define discourses in their specificity' (ibid.: 155–6). His assertion of the non-objectivity of the archive and of the social and historical power relations which the archive embodies produces the critique of partisanship often levelled at official or state archives, where collections are linked to civil law and administrative practices. Theatre/performance archives, often made up of donated collections from individuals – some keen theatregoers and collectors, others practitioners – might appear to be random and arbitrary, but in practice they are no less prone to bias. Ideological and political biases influence even the seemingly simple choices as to what may or not get catalogued and be accessed by the public. As the case studies below imply, these choices are rarely arbitrary.

Foucault's admiration for the archaeological practices of identification and classification is not underpinned by an interrogation of the ideological basis of those practices. While archaeology, originating as it does out of a period of colonial rule, was given credibility by being identified with science as an ordering system, it also relies heavily on the specific implications of social trends and time-specific interpretations: it is neither objective nor is it impervious to cultural whims and trends. With its allegiances to the idea of archaeological practice, Foucault's work on the archive attempts to demystify and understand the archive as a cultural phenomenon and it is vital to any understanding of archive discourse. It originates, however, in the specific cultural moment of Western Europe in the late 1960s, and his arguments are susceptible to the mark of time as are those of any theorist. Perhaps more important here is the fact that Foucault provides us with a model and system for identifying and analysing an archive which pre-dates the digital revolution, one which consists largely of paper and is housed in a building. In practical terms, for historians and specifically historians of theatre and performance, this strange juxtaposition of the 'order of things' as delineated by Foucault and the *orderly disorder* of the World Wide Web is in fact a productive one. Writing from a slightly different perspective about the role of the collector, Marxist cultural theorist

Walter Benjamin has noted that 'the life of the collector manifests a dialectical tension between the poles of order and disorder' (Benjamin 2007: 7).

Foucault's choice of disciplinary framework requires the researcher to both think about the ways in which the archive might be used and to explore the tensions it embodies. The archaeologist digs, blows and brushes away the soil, collects and gathers, identifies and categorises. Similarly the archivist locates, sorts, catalogues and indexes. These practices are not dissimilar to those of a detective, as historian Natalie Zemon Davis notes: 'I worked as a detective, assessing my sources and the rules for their composition, putting together clues from many places, establishing a conjectural argument that made the best sense, the most plausible sense' (Zemon Davis 1988: 575). As someone practising micro-history – studying the minutiae of very specific lives or events as a means of making the specific speak to the general in historical terms rather than the other way around – Zemon Davis applies the premise of the detective's method to that of the historian and the archive researcher. Researchers must locate the appropriate archives, understand its complexities as a collection or series of collections, and strategise modes of operation while considering how best to make use of its contents and filter the archive materials through research frameworks and questions. In other words, what is the evidential basis for suppositions, where is it located and can it be made use of? Archive researchers, like detectives, need an obsessional drive to puzzle over minutiae: to make tangential connections; to remember obscure and seemingly unimportant facts and bring them to the fore and into focus; to problem solve and to question the hierarchies of history, the story, as it has been handed down to them. Indeed, for Zemon Davis researchers have their own 'mental habits, cognitive styles and moral tone' as they work with 'conjectural knowledge and possible truth' (ibid.: 574).

Memory, inclusion and exclusion

Researchers need to negotiate between truth and supposition, fact and fiction: all they can produce in effect is a *version* of history. Thus it is important to explore the methods by which this might be achieved.

> [T]he fault line between the mythic past and the real past is not always that easy to draw – one of the conundrums of the politics of memory anywhere. The real can be mythologised just as the mythic may engender strong reality effects. In sum, memory has become a cultural obsession of monumental proportions across the globe. (Huyssen [2001] 2004: 63)

Historians negotiate the narrative they compose as between what Huyssen calls the 'mythic' and the 'real past' and recontextualisations of the past

(Freshwater 2003: 738). In warning of the dangers of the desire to re/contextualise, Tracy C. Davis has noted that when historians provide 'context' they are often doing so in order to fill what are perceived as research 'gaps', which raises the problem of one scholar's 'criterion for gestalt' being 'another's idea of irrelevance'. 'Sometimes gaps left unfilled', says Davis, 'tell us more as "empty" spaces than "full" re/contextualised ones' (Davis 2004: 204).

History, like science, is derived in part from experiment and supposition. Some might even suggest that historians have little choice but to capitalise upon their ability to fabricate the past, whether through identifying gaps or composing a contextualisation for them. One of the methods by which researchers achieve this is through an examination and interpretation of the archive and the memories it encapsulates, engaging what Steedman identifies as 'a politics of the imagination' (Steedman 1998: 63). One of the key perceived functions of the archive is that it has an integral role to play in the shaping and preservation of nation formation and national memory and some archives, such as the Library of Congress American Memory Collection, have been constructed with this purpose specifically in mind (see p. 35 below). The content of the archive was created through consultation with scholars, to create a digital 'memory' of historical documents. It is easier to decipher the ideological basis of such web-based archives as their history is relatively new. Part of their brief is to construct memory according to stated principles of inclusion and exclusion. We have already alluded to the fact that there is no archive without politics of the archive, and indeed some would argue that all archives whether paper/building-based or virtual/digital are the 'manufacturers of memory' (Harvey Brown and Davis Brown 1998: 22). Thus the politics of an archive is embedded in the process and product of the re/creation of memory. Theatre and performance, similarly reverberate with the dynamic complexities of memory acquisition and replay: from the learning of lines and blocking of moves to the production of memorabilia and 'collectable' ephemera, to the memoirs, autobiographies and biographies of performers and theatre workers, critics and fans.

As a cultural product, theatre often plays on the nostalgic, on a version of memory, idealising the past as a way of looking at the present, on retelling the stories of the lives of others, whether those lives are real or simply imagined. Memory can, of course, be faulty and unreliable. So, too, archive-based researchers need to be aware of the basis of their archive's duality of 'random inclusion and considered exclusion', and this again applies across both the tactile archive and the virtual (Freshwater 2003: 740). All archives are susceptible to a state of incompleteness, to a kind of failure of memory; often contents are included only by chance. As Freshwater notes, items might be missing, deliberately excluded or absent for no discernible reason other than chance. For researchers of British theatre and performance this

is an interesting proposition. Apart from the Lord Chamberlain's collection of scripts and correspondence deposited in the British Library, other formal collections (that is to say state-funded collections) are archived at the Theatre Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London or in universities. Although state-funded, British theatre archives are impoverished when compared with similar archives in the US, often being poorly staffed and minimally maintained, relying on donations and charity gifts, and without the advantage of being financially supported by the theatre industry. A number of smaller theatre and performance archives exist within universities such as Bristol and Manchester and the National Fairground Archive at the University of Sheffield. Within the university sector and in the public museum archives, the level of state intervention in the selection of content is limited. Conversely, the economy of such an archive culture means that many of the collections held remain uncatalogued and often inaccessible. Thus there are both random and planned inclusions/exclusions in the provision, formation and maintenance of theatre and performance archives themselves, as well as in their actual contents.

In the US, perhaps more concerned as a nation with collecting and collating materials pertinent to memorialising and historicising its own nationhood, theatre archives are comparatively well funded, managed and maintained. On the downside, it should be noted that in many of the US archives, the desire and capacity to collect often outruns the ability to sort and organise: many of these archives have less than 75 per cent of their holdings catalogued and accessible. Here there is a mismatch between the drive to collect and the provision of labour to catalogue and make accessible. In the UK, the theatre and performance industry and private sponsorship has very little to do with archives, except in the subsidised sector where the archiving of activity can be part of the educational objectives of theatre companies, such as is the case with the Royal National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Some of these organisations now have remits to 'preserve' performances through filming and this of course brings with it many dilemmas about what aspects of live performance we can actually archive and how. Do we fabricate a version of the performance? What is it we are trying to capture about the performance and how might we capture it? Many cultural organisations simply want some sort of record and spend little time thinking about authenticity or viability on a complex level. Perhaps as a result of this, many of the recordings of performance tell us very little about the complexity of the experience of the performance itself. In British theatre collections, as in others, researchers are likely to find scripts, prompt copies, reviews in 'first night' files, photographs and illustrations, advertising ephemera, e.g. photos, posters and playbills, cuttings files (sometimes lacking dates or origin of cutting), some recordings, both visual and aural, and books such as histories, biographies,

autobiographies and so on. These materials have often originated in personal collections and donations, so the aesthetic taste of the private collector (from, for example, the late nineteenth century) might be central to the formation of the archive.

From a practical point of view, the facilities available to researchers may govern how and what materials can be examined. Online catalogues and indexes are great time-savers and increasingly the contents of collections are presented, in varying degrees of detail, on sites such as the ArchivesHub and Theatre Information Group. Finding aids, paper-based or virtual, which include hand-lists, catalogues, search engines and the indispensable knowledge of helpful staff, are maps to guide researchers through the sometimes muddy terrain of the archive. There might be limits to the number of files which can be ordered or the number of photocopies which can be made, and all of this is often dependent upon the number of staff available to advise, fetch and carry.

The false promise of *all and forever*: the archive online

The Internet has created a significant cultural shift in terms of the ways in which we record and circulate information. The digitising of archive holdings has been slow and awkward, not simply because of the inadequacies of computer technology relative to the demand of the user, but also because the Internet has created a new set of ethical and practical questions around issues of documentation and re/presentation. Archives now have a digital history of their own, and many have moved from the hybrid scrapbook format – with a predominance of text – to more visually/aurally oriented practices, resulting in the digitisation of documents and their wider availability (Brown 2004). There are emerging arguments, however, suggesting that the digital challenge needs to centralise its focus on creating new forms rather than simply replicating old ones, in particular that audio and visual formats and their hybrids have so far 'failed to coalesce into a new form and still operate as a fragmentation of different types of information' (ibid.: 256–62). Digitisation has resulted only in preservation rather than exploiting the creative potentials of that technology, and the digital format reproduces only that which already exists. One attempt to counter this is through projects in which the possibilities of virtual space are explored, evidenced in 'The Lost Museum', now a relatively old-fashioned digital resource.

Though not actually an archive, the 'Lost Museum' project, funded through US university research centres, uses web technology to present artefacts found in P. T. Barnum's American Museum and to recreate the spaces within which they would have originally been found – a nineteenth-century American dime museum. It bears a general resemblance to a computer game both in appearance and in terms of the experience of using it (Augst 2005). Such projects

demand substantial funding, and certainly the development of online archives has been prohibited by cost since digitising uses labour to shape, maintain and build resource. It is certainly the case that theatre/performance archives simply do not have access to this kind of economic power. However, the idea of 'spatial exploration' (Brown 2004: 262) is one around which we can map onto a discussion of the different approaches to traditional paper and building based archives and those available through the Internet.

Many of the online theatre/performance archives provide simple 'collection level' descriptions – that is descriptions of archive items in clearly identifiable groupings or 'spaces' – of a very small proportion of their holdings. What they offer is an increased access to the general public and a listed grouping of materials such as 'periodicals', 'costumes', 'posters and playbills', 'performers' and so on, with search facilities and guidance as to how to access information from the collection on these specific holdings. Hugely expensive to construct, such online archive initiatives take time to set up, progress and complete. Such initiatives also reveal an odd irony in relation to digital archives which is predicated on the promise of access, infinite content and a whole new way of doing things, but often ends up simply repeating the cataloguing and 'sorting' systems of traditional paper and building based archives.

'Surfing the net' is now a somewhat outdated term, but it still best describes a process of fast browsing which Internet archive research permits. Theatre /performance researchers have an immense number of possibilities in terms of constructing their own archive using online material: from the early social networking sites such as YouTube through online digitised newspapers and periodicals which offer immediate access (although subscription payment is often necessary) to Access to Archives, which provides listings of holdings and links to other archives both private and government funded. Equally, although browsing the Net does not yet generally offer a tactile experience – despite widespread development of touchscreen technologies – there is the increased chance of serendipitous discovery, simply because of the speed of the Internet; one lead flags up another and another without having to wait for the arrival of the next box of manuscripts or photographs.

The transformation of the ways in which the virtual archive is accessed and used reflects a general shift in working practices brought about by technological development. Physically travelling to and seeking out the archive is replaced by interaction with the flat-screen portal which can be located almost anywhere. However, the seductive simplicity, flexibility and ease of access which characterises the electronic archive still makes demands upon researchers, who have to be prepared to employ the same range of skills – scanning, surfing, browsing, navigating, sifting, assessing, sorting and collating – whether working on hard-copy or in virtual spaces. Again, what exists online is often a misleading reflection or representation of that which exists in

the archive itself. A working example here is the relation between catalogue and content in the Theatre Museum archive at the V&A in London. This is likely to be the first stop for UK theatre/performance researchers, though since its reabsorption in the late 2000s into the South Kensington galleries – particularly the relocation of the reading rooms from the bustling Covent Garden site to Blythe Road, Olympia – it presents perhaps a less accessible face. Its reputation as the country's leading performance archive, containing a wide diversity of books, papers, paintings, costumes, video and sound recordings in many genres, is well known, and the collection, which includes objects such as prints, posters and puppets, can be searched online with other V&A objects using the 'Search the Collections' feature from the V&A website. Also online are the catalogues of twenty separate collections and these give item level descriptions of the contents of individual resources. But, as with many collections, users must be aware that the online display is the tip of the collection iceberg. In fact, most of the Theatre and Performance collections at the V&A are accessible only via the paper lists, card catalogues and finding aids which have to be consulted by visiting the Reading Room. Researchers can sympathise with the staff who have to battle with this huge quantity of material that has been gathered, rather than consciously selected, over eighty years, then organised according to the preferences of successive generations of curators and librarians. In this the V&A Theatre Collection is by no means unusual. Neither are the formalities which have to be gone through in order to gain access to the material. The newly refurbished Blythe House Archive and Library Reading Room, which serves three other major archives as well as the Theatre Collection, is accessible by appointment only. Indeed, often a casual visit to any major collection is likely to be impossible, even if just to check the card catalogue or typescript list.

WORKING METHODS WITH/IN THE ARCHIVE: 'IT'S NOT WHAT YOU'VE GOT BUT WHAT YOU DO WITH IT'

> The Archive is made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past *and* from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there. And *nothing happens to this stuff* . . . it is indexed and catalogued – though some of it is unindexed and uncatalogued, and parts of it are lost. But as stuff, it just sits there until it is read and used, and narrativized'. (Steedman 1998: 67)

As researchers we re-archive the materials we find in our notes and thoughts. Of course the materials themselves go back to where they belong, back in a

box on a shelf or we close the tab online. Metaphorically, however, we replace and reorder our archive materials inside a history; we disconnect them from one context and reconnect them with another or with other materials; we renegotiate their position in a hierarchy and, like the detective, we make our clues *mean* something. Just as the detective's search can be held up by an uncooperative witness, so too the uncooperative or remit-bound professional archivist, the poorly organised collection, the misleading hand-list can be a hindrance rather than a help. Web-based resources are, apparently, less prone to negative interference, or perhaps researchers are less aware of it. What is presented or replicated on-screen can be taken to be the full extent of archives or holdings unless there is a counter-indication. The impersonal web environment, however, discourages researchers from being suspicious that something significant has been left out or held back on an archivist's whim. Researchers are still unpractised enough in the skills of technological interfacing that they somehow believe that if 'it' exists 'it' can be found somewhere on the World Wide Web. Seasoned researchers know, of course, that, as in the physical archive, 'it' is only there if 'it' has been put there. Working *with* the archivist can often be a tricky process of negotiation: archivist and researcher do not have an equal relationship – the physical space of the archive belongs to the archivist, whose own personal tastes, attitude to work, predilections for and attractions to certain kinds of materials are often more influential in the collection and cataloguing of materials than any institutional imperatives might be.

Even with the assistance of helpful archivists and a perfectly organised collection, researchers need to work with the precarious idea that they will only ever create an incomplete picture. Collecting more does not make the picture any more complete, so while content lists and catalogues can answer the question 'do they have what I want?', researchers must also ask 'do I want what they have?' It is a process of accumulation and discarding, finding and throwing away, and imagining what is missing and why. In this way archive researchers are like well-heeled shoppers, with plenty of time to peruse and browse. But just as Rachel Bowlby talks of the 'showroom as a microcosm of the world', so canny archive researchers have to be the kind of shoppers who are disliked by commerce – those who target goods, negotiate prices, know the competitors in the market and do not get distracted in their task, shoppers who might shop at their leisure but are not leisurely in their approach (Bowlby 1993: 97). Just as when people shopping have a sense of which place to look for specific goods, so too knowing the collection policy of an archive gives a clue to both its potential and limitation. If information on the policy is not readily available, researchers have to make the best use of online catalogues, help desks, home sites, databases and so it is often difficult *not* to make assumptions in the effort to discover what a collection holds.

Case study 1: The paper-based archive – finding J. B. Priestley

Maggie B. Gale

The following case study illustrates the ways in which problematic indexing/cataloguing and processes of chance can impact on archive research. No matter how well prepared, researchers have to be able to mediate the realities of the relationship between *assumptions* about and *actual* results of findings.

When I was recently researching for a book on British mid-twentieth-century playwright J. B. Priestley, it was very exciting to find holdings listed at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center in Austin, Texas, although at the outset there was an 'issue' with the spelling of his name (it was listed both under Priestly and Priestley: each list turned up different holdings). There appeared to have been two major donations and acquisitions, one in the early 1960s, collated by Priestley, and one in the mid-1980s after the playwright's death, collated by his family. On my arrival at the archive it appeared that the latter collection had been less than fifty per cent catalogued and the printed catalogue for the earlier donation – which had been created as part of a special exhibition in the early 1960s – used a different cataloguing system so that nothing in the archive matched the identification numbers in the catalogue. In addition, the latter set of holdings had been selected by the author's family. There were letters from Carl Jung, T. S. Eliot and even Nöel Coward, but no sequences of correspondence. The intention was clearly to include these documents to 'frame' Priestley's career as kinds of evidence of his status. Further related holdings of professional and family correspondence and account files from Priestley's agent were held in a different collection under the name of his literary agent. A friendly trainee archivist found a listing where Priestley's name was mentioned in a diary and workbook belonging to modernist poet and aristocratic socialite Edith Sitwell: this had been carefully catalogued because of the intellectual and archival currency of Sitwell as a modernist writer and contained a whole page of Sitwell bemoaning Priestley's damning criticisms of her work (Gale 2008). I discovered these materials accidentally rather than intentionally, and they helped me to create and build an argument about the context of Priestley's career. This is a circumstance which archive researchers need to be prepared to embrace. This was a wealthy and established archive that I had approached with due preparation but also with an open mind. Despite the inadequacies of the cataloguing systems, the archivists were able to navigate the holdings in a fruitful way.

When I continued the research process at the Priestley Archive at the University of Bradford in England, I assumed that it would contain a more random collection of ephemera. Instead the university held a substantial archive, lovingly catalogued and sorted. The range of holdings was

extraordinary, especially considering this is neither a wealthy university nor one with a substantial Special Collections section. Bradford was Priestley's city of birth and he had become part of its heritage culture. As a consequence the archive had, at some point, been prioritised for the assignment of labour. Even so, the catalogue descriptions did not fully describe the depth and wealth of holdings, making use of a shorthand code rather than a system of annotated listings.

The point here is that archive researchers have to be flexible in their approach, to enter prepared and with a clear set of objectives, but also to embrace both disappointment and surprise, and disregard items, no matter how fascinating, which cannot be integrated into the immediate research in any meaningful way. For example, the Bradford archive had many original accounts for Priestley's plays in production, BBC contracts and invoices, payment reminders, plumbers' and builders' bills – all treasures and lenses on the life of a man arguably obsessed by the economic instability of his early career despite his later success as a best-selling author, a hit-making playwright and theatre producer, a critical journalist, broadcaster and film-maker from the late 1920s to the 1960s. Of course, these were the holdings which I might have found to be most immediately fascinating and 'personal', as was the gift album from the Russian government donated on the occasion of the Priestley's extraordinary visit immediately after the Second World War. But time constraints required me to be disciplined, to leave such fascinations for another day and a differently framed research task – such materials might have to sit on the back burner.

Archives online: conduits to 'authenticity' – the 'real' and the 'virtual'

We would both suggest that it is reasonable to make the assumption that the title of a collection describes its contents, but our experiences of working in archives show that this is not always so. Though the broad subject of the Boucicault Collection (at the University of Kent), for example, might be self-evident, as might the Gay Sweatshop Company Archive (at Royal Holloway, University of London), the name of a collection is not always a clue to its content, and researchers should be suspicious of the collection which purports to 'do what it says on the tin'. Research does not necessarily begin with trawling through websites for the right archive or collection, particularly now that search facilities such as the UK Archives Hub assist with the business of establishing 'who holds what'. This very useful resource describes itself as providing 'access to descriptions of unique and unpublished primary source material held in universities, colleges and research institutes'. Searchable and with multi-level description and access, the Archives Hub makes simple the

process of identifying the location of materials held in academic institutions, while the UK Theatre Information Group provides a similar resource, but incorporates non-academic repositories. These sites are facilitators rather than repositories. Holding no records themselves, they provide cross-search descriptions of the contents of archives. The web and its strands of archival deposits become linked through the threads – sometimes interwoven, sometimes not – generated by these databases. And they become, of course, archival in themselves, existing as they do as metadata-rich/content-poor containers for virtual material.

Part of the appeal of the archive is the promise of the rarities it may contain. Any historian who has held a letter written by a performer, or touched a costume, even when wearing a standard issue pair of cotton gloves, will imagine that they feel a connection with the past making their work in the present feel hugely important. Freshwater's idea of the researcher as a conduit between past and present implies a role that is in a constant state of negotiation: how far might a researcher's personal agenda be subsumed by the wider imperative to communicate? And what is more personal than the artefacts which some collections own: the Garrick Club has David Garrick's powder puff and Nöel Coward's perfume ioniser, and Worcestershire County Museum has Vesta Tilley's waistcoats, hats and shoes. Such artefacts may open up unusual conduits between the researched and the researcher.

Digitisation has given that conduit another space, allowing a pixelated *version* of the original to be reproduced on screen, where it can be enlarged in its entirety or a fraction zoomed in upon and printed off. Given researchers' imperative for authenticity, these possibilities raise questions. Is the image alone sufficient? Should serious researchers demand nothing less than to see and feel the original, the 'real thing'? This desire for the original might be seen as connecting to Derrida's critique of the historian's search for origin discussed earlier. Why should we be obsessed with the authentic, the original? Certainly, the sensations of touch and smell, both of which create and recall memory, are currently removed from the digital archive environment, but it can offer us other sensations and experiences. There are questions of authenticity, the quality of the real in the digitised images which archives and collections now favour as another means of conserving precious and deteriorating materials: our perceptions are played with but the materials are conserved for posterity. On the positive side, the digital image can be interrogated at some length, manipulated, rotated, enhanced and be looked at from different perspectives. This also helps conservation; Vesta Tilley's waistcoat, for example, will not alter materially if a photograph of it is placed on the Worcestershire County Museum website (although the relative impressions of size, the detail of fabric and so on are less tangible), but the intended throw-away thinness of a nineteenth-century playbill or the vivid colours of a late Victorian

advertisement in the John Johnson Collection might be lost. Some digitisation processes allow for an alteration of the original and provide us with new ways of viewing materials, new versions of the real, and this might be something we might take advantage of rather than dismiss the representation of the object as inauthentic.

Case study 2: Digital archives

Ann Featherstone

As has already become apparent, digital archives vary enormously in terms of set-up, content, access and agenda from sites which merely provide a portal to others containing actual archive(d) materials for analysis. Below I discuss three digital archives which exemplify some of the questions raised by the interpretation between the archive and theatre/performance researchers.

The John Johnson Collection: an archive of printed ephemera (ProQuest)

The name of this new digital resource (http://johnjohnson.chadwyck.co.uk/marketing.do) suggests that the terminology of 'collection' and 'archive' can in fact be very flexible. Part of the Electronic Ephemera Project, it aims to present images and associated metadata (37,700 images out of a projected 150,000) to participating UK educational institutions. The material is divided into five sections: book trade, popular prints, crime and murder, advertising, and popular entertainments. This latter is divided again into theatrical and non-theatrical materials. Each digitised item is expertly reproduced in high-resolution detail, with accompanying information regarding size, content, provenance, etc. Online tools enable researchers to zoom in, scroll down, isolate, enlarge or reduce a section of a document, in effect 'mirroring' the activity of hands-on scrutiny. A vast improvement upon the already detailed but difficult to negotiate online catalogue of the collection, this is a good reminder that there is now *new* space for archival material: the actual artefact, the printed photograph and the digital image on the computer screen. These images can be downloaded, saved, printed – and interrogated at leisure, no longer subject to delivery times and closing hours.

The mass of material which now appears to be instantly available as more and more archives digitise their collections seems to offer the opportunity to process more and produce better research. In fact, the online John Johnson Collection is an interesting example of the selection process which takes place for large-scale collections. What is available onscreen is a *sample* of what to expect if researchers choose to interrogate the catalogue or make an

appointment to see the collection: what is available online provides a glimpse of materials, chosen with an eye to the visually arresting. It is a wide shop window on the collection, primarily aimed at the interested web-browser, and doubtless shows the best and most eye-catching documents. Getting past this, however, it is quickly evident that the collection is a very useful archive. For example, in its Popular Entertainments strand, it includes a range of artefacts from tickets to posters, from venues as diverse as frost fairs and waxworks, Drury Lane and the Theatre Royal, Bath. But what we find on screen is one of many layers which can only be accessed through physical presence in the physical archive itself.

How items are searched for online inflects the ways in which the items manifest themselves: combinations of key words will vary the result, as will changing the order in which they are input. In many ways, searching an online archive is as complex and variable in terms of method as working in any paper-based archive: it is not a one-directional process as researchers need to note routes and pathways to findings very carefully, to cross reference materials and allow for chance findings along the way. Often the activity of searching reveals much about how the archive works as a reflection of the requirements of the individual research project.

Periodicals Archive Online, 19th Century British Library Newspapers Online, the Stage *Archive*

Digitising fever has struck the most obvious candidates: the print archive. The Web is full of books online, from Google Books through to Project Gutenberg and to digitisation projects undertaken by universities of (sometimes random) volumes from their libraries. Then there is the curious Internet Archive which claims to be 'building a digital library of Internet sites and other cultural artefacts in digital form'. This includes Moving Images, Live Music Archive, Audio and Texts and a bold, though not new, effort to archive the Web, making deleted or dead links available, and driven by the promise that nothing will ever be lost again (http://www.archive.org/index.php). The digital archiving of newspapers, journals and magazines is a serious asset for theatre/performance researchers. There are obvious benefits: the resources are text-searchable, even though the search tools vary in their accuracy regarding results. Material becomes not only immediately available, but available in a way never before possible. The micro-analysis that digitisation enables makes it possible to expand the thickness of print journalism and take it down to the level of the word, even the letter. Although it often sidelines context, it is nevertheless a resource rich in potential.

The Gale Group's *19th Century British Library Newspapers*, for example, recently produced in collaboration with the British Library, brings together

forty-eight newspapers, representing national and regional publications and trade journals such as *The Era*. The *Stage* weekly newspaper has also found a commercial niche, offering digital online searching of the newspaper from 1880 to the present day for a fee. Whereas *Era* and *Periodicals Archive Online* (ProQuest Chadwyck Healey) have a historical brief, much of which is situated in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, *The Stage* caters more for researchers of the twentieth century. *Periodicals Archive Online* offers the researcher a range of popular and scholarly periodicals and, depending upon the subscription of the institution, there are 500 publications available, all text-searchable and downloadable. There are search refinements for all of these archives: by date, specific journal or newspaper, and by particular section in the publication. Text-searchable, these resources create a new archive of materials every time a search is requested. As we noted earlier, researchers become archivists, collators and cataloguers. They must make a decision about whether to keep or reject a result, and unpick the connections between results which are engineered solely by the particular search. What is produced is a curious randomness – described by Freshwater as 'random inclusion and considered exclusion' – which is here potentially very creative and productive.

Searching publications entails homing in on a particular item or article, and it is presented on the screen in an orphaned state, often with little surrounding material. Creating the page on which it is found or the journal in which an article appears has the effect of shifting the cultural and intellectual space around. Interestingly, the effect is not to see the whole, because the computer screen is too small and to fit a full newspaper page onto the screen makes it unreadable. In order to look at those surrounding items it's necessary to scroll across and around the screen, to see part of an advertisement before the whole, a process which is not unlike the way we scan a newspaper page, but slower and more concentrated. The ease with which this level of research is achieved is seductive, like the archive itself. Suddenly, when the entirety of *All the Year Round* or the *Pall Mall Gazette* is not only available to see, but to handle, it's easy to give in to the old temptation to download, save, print later. Such randomness in collecting can be profitable and enable unexpected connections to be made. But sometimes one has to suppress the appetite to possess the image or document rather than interrogate it.

The American Memory collection (Library of Congress)

The American Memory collection originated in a pilot project which ran between 1990 and 1994 and which experimented with the digitisation of the Library of Congress's vast collections of historical documents, moving images, sound recordings, etc., producing CD-ROMs for schools and colleges (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html). The National Digital Library

Program followed, with $13 million in private funding to first support it and then to make these collections freely available on the World Wide Web. A museum and an archive online, it ostensibly democratises this very disparate assemblage of materials, rendering everything equally available, regardless of format, from early films to letters and diaries. Its mission statement asserts this idea of a 'free and open access through the Internet' to materials which 'document the American experience'. A national project, sponsored and supported by the American government and private donors, it reflects a contemporary sense of what is seen as important in terms of American history and creativity. That is, for researchers, a very clear assertion of what is there and why. The List of Collections (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/browse/ListAll.php) records over one hundred thematic collections, labelled by topic or title, e.g. Baseball Cards, and by subject, e.g. Aaron Copeland. They can be browsed by time period or by the kind of documents they contain such as song sheets, maps, sound recordings, and these documents are replicated in their original formats: as prints, photographs, play texts. It is a conspicuously self-aware collection, with an agenda that goes beyond the perimeters of its mission statement for, like many national collections, it is aware of its own authority, identity and importance. Its very vastness speaks of undiscovered treasures – we are told as much about the quantity of material that is *left out* as the amount the collection contains – but at the same time it is finite and accessible, at the click of a mouse.

Here is an example of an archive where ease of access can be problematic; it is easy to feel that all the effort is concentrated in finding the material rather than doing something with it. These pitfalls can be oddly productive for researchers, although it is vital to bear in mind that unless the entire catalogue has been digitised, every scrap of paper indexed and reproduced in a finding aid, even the seemingly limitless resources of the Library of Congress or the British Library – which hosts the Online Gallery website of over 30,000 images and sound recordings (http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/index.html) – represents only a selection, a fraction of the whole. Again, the online collection is only a shop-window version of the whole. Interestingly, the Online Gallery features Online Exhibitions in which a curator selects favourite exhibits from the collection to whet the appetite of the casual visitor, and is a reminder that this is *mediated* material, chosen by people, singly or in committee, whose interests might either be very specific or who have tried to imagine what might satisfy most web users.

In terms of the methodological implications of these resources, it is still better to have the online sample or catalogue, even if incomplete, than the 'dark days' of hit-and-miss indexes and typewritten hand-lists. Of course these still yield surprises. For good researchers, who have doggedly narrowed their field of enquiry, made their lists and hunted out the requisite document, it is

still very pleasant to be confronted by the unexpected. Sometimes this is also necessary as it brings researchers closer to the subject of their study. We like the story of the researcher working on family papers in the Special Collections department of an American college and, finding a catalogue entry which read 'Lock of hair', filled in a call slip and was presented with just that, a lock of hair. 'That lifeless, limp hair had', she writes, 'spent decades in an envelope, in a folder, in a box, on a shelf, but holding it in the palm of my hand made me feel an eerie intimacy' with her subject (Lepore 2001: 129). This short description captures in its entirety the kind of connection all archive researchers who are involved in the slippery area of performance research hope for; the collection and research process from donor to artefact, to layers of conservation and storage, to recall and, finally, that intimate response – this was 'coarse, red [hair]' – might be generated only by contact with the 'real thing'.

WHAT TO DO WITH IT NOW I'VE GOT IT; OR, HANG ON, WHAT'S MISSING?

In reflecting on our experiences of working in archives, we would suggest that contemporary archive researchers can surround themselves with the choice goods of the trade now more than ever, since there are more and more archives available online. What researchers then *do* with these materials relates to historiographic practices, which are examined in Chapter 4. But we would like to close with some final thoughts and pointers.

Ideally a list of questions should be formulated, actual or mental, before 'good' researchers – who are conscious of the terrain and the final objective – even glimpse the archive. But perhaps if we always knew what we might find and where we might find it, then we would stop opening envelopes and folders in that spirit of enquiry which drives good archival researchers' work ethic and practices. If the archive encourages researchers to examine and process multiple truths, to see the rounded figure or the networks of connective materials rather than the flat negative, then there is an argument for a *creative* archival process, that sense of openness to what the material suggests and where it might lead. Micro-historians such as Zemon Davis embrace the serendipitous quality of found materials and the ability to let this suggest or direct research. But these historians have also already worked on the archive mechanically. They have wrestled with material whose usefulness at the study table has to be sensed – if not immediately identified – and carefully noted so that it can be will extracted, explored and investigated later, with imagination. This position is well summarised by Zemon Davis (1988) and Steedman (2001) and is a key feature of good archival research. Competent researchers will go armed with a list of questions and may or may not use the archive to find the answers. Good

researchers will go with the list of questions and answer them with material which raises further questions.

Zemon Davis asks where, in writing history, does reconstruction stop and invention begin? It's a good question for historians in general and historians of theatre and performance in particular. The spirit of creativity that accompanies researchers as they burrow in the archive has to be present in their notebooks and at the computer when the archival research is over. If, as Zemon Davis persuasively argues, multiple truths make up history, and the historian's job is more or less to balance them out, then the business of collecting, sorting and arranging the evidence, in order to reconstruct and then to reinvent the past, has to begin before the writing does. Creative archival research demands more of theatre/performance researchers than simply gathering evidence; sometimes the laundry bill is as significant as the prompt copy, and the truths which it reveals have to be balanced and interpreted with imagination. Nevertheless, theatre/performance researchers have access to a huge variety of what Foucault terms 'ordered knowledges'. The spirit of creativity that guides historiographic practices determines how such archival material is used, reordered, juxtaposed, mediated and presented, and it is this spirit, or approach, which distinguishes the outcome of archive-based research.

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CHAPTER 2

Researching Digital Performance: Virtual Practices

Steve Dixon

INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1990s, computers and their software have become central to research processes across all academic disciplines. Critical writing is honed using word-processing packages, research data is stored and analysed via computer applications and, in theatre and performance studies, video editing and DVD authoring software is utilised to document and disseminate practice-as-research performances. In tandem, the World Wide Web has become one of the most important global research resources, providing immediate literature searches and a plethora of easily searchable and accessible materials, and it is becoming a key forum for research discussions, debates and collaborations. In theatre and performance studies there has been a burgeoning of specialist online journals, theatre sites and blogs, data analysis systems, resource hubs and arts archives, while performance companies' websites and portals such as *YouTube* provide ready access to video files of performances. The Web has thereby become a key platform for both performance documentation and the dissemination of research outputs. Just as significantly, the computer screen has become a new type of theatre proscenium, in and through which to create new modes and interactive genres of theatrical (as well as social) performance. Hence the web can be considered as 'the largest theatre in the world, offering everyone fifteen megabytes of fame' (Dixon 2007: 4).

In theatre and performance studies, the use of new technologies has not only significantly transformed traditional research methods and methodologies, but it has also led to an extension or evolution of theatre practice itself. This chapter's main focus is what I term 'digital performance': theatre/performance events where computer technologies play a key role in content, techniques, aesthetics or forms of delivery. It centres on three case studies of projects that adopt innovative research methods towards the creation of interactive works

which attempt to push the technological and aesthetic boundaries of theatre practice-as-research. They concentrate on individuals and groups within academia and the theatre – an established university practice-as-research group, a leading professional multimedia theatre company and a PhD student – each of which has devised distinct research methods in order to realise specific technological-aesthetic objectives:

- *Case study 1.* The Chameleons Group: to devise ways to enhance the sense of 'liveness' of a digitally projected performer, and to establish new models of stage–screen interaction and integration.
- *Case study 2.* The Builders Association: to design a new type of 'virtual architecture' on stage that appears to 'enmesh the performers in the media . . . by collapsing the video space into the stage space'.
- *Case study 3.* Sarah Atkinson: to conceive a multi-linear and multi-perspective interactive video drama that enhances the sense of spectator agency, and to utilise specialist embedded software and external eye-tracking systems to document and analyse audience reception.

A further aim of the chapter is to review recent theories within the field of digital theatre/performance and to analyse the key issues and debates surrounding theatre's conjunction with new media. As a relatively new area of practice, it offers both significant opportunities and daunting challenges to the researcher. These relate to three main aspects of digital creative research more generally. Firstly, to the search for new theories and paradigms, and its development and testing of new methodologies. Secondly, to its multidisciplinary nature, as it draws upon and interrelates practices, perspectives and knowledges from established disciplines – such as theatre/performance studies, media/communications studies, computer science – as well as emergent ones, such as interactive arts and cyber/posthuman theory. Thirdly, to its technological basis, which necessitates considerable skills acquisition and development, ranging from elementary levels of effective operation/mastery of new software/hardware systems and technical problem-solving to more advanced levels that create new custom-built virtual systems and original performance manifestations, platforms and genres.

THE QUEST FOR ORIGINALITY

Research is concerned with the production of 'new knowledge', and the word *originality* holds a central position within academia – from its formal requirement in PhD submissions to its status, alongside 'significance and rigour', in evaluation of university research outputs during the UK 2008 national Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). In the emergent field of digital

performance there are clear opportunities to develop truly original methodologies, hypotheses, arguments and creative outputs, and many academics and practitioners have developed pioneering work. For example, the performance company Blast Theory has created new genres of interactive performance by combining gaming and theatrical paradigms with high technologies such as Virtual Reality (*Desert Rain*, 1999) and GPS systems (*Uncle Roy All Around You*, 2003). In 2001, Susan Broadhurst produced the first theatre performance to feature a fully autonomous Artificial Intelligence 'synthespian' called Jeremiah (designed by Richard Bowden), whose actions could not be predicted from performance to performance. Broadhurst relates the work to the 'becomings' and 'intensities' of Deleuze and Guattari (1988), and her ambitious methods concerned not only the quest to (digitally and dramatically) theatricalise these notions, but also to create original performance paradigms and ontologies:

> The hybridization of the performance . . . [and] these imperceptible intensities, together with their ontological status, give rise to new modes of perception and consciousness . . . [T]echnology's most important contribution to art may well be the enhancement and reconfiguration of an aesthetic creative potential which consists of interacting with and reacting to a physical body, not an abandonment of that body. For it is within these tension filled (liminal) spaces of physical and virtual interface that opportunities arise for new experimental forms and practices. (Broadhurst 2005)

The development of pioneering software systems has been important in the advance of digital performance, with theatre companies such as the Wooster Group utilising applications such as *Imagine* to manipulate and 'scratch' live-feed video in real time. Other software programs such as *Max/MSP/Jitter* have been used widely as real-time interactive systems to respond minutely to the actions and voices of actors (or interactive installation users), transforming the data into metamorphosing video projections and sonic effects. Applications that activate media events in response to the position or motion of performers on stage, such as *Isadora* and *EyeCon*, have been specially designed by and for theatre and dance companies.

The search for the 'new' has been grasped firmly by both practitioner-researchers in digital performance and analytically oriented researchers writing about these practices. But while many original critical perspectives have been formulated, no overarching new 'meta-theory' has yet emerged, with the possible exception of Philip Auslander's *Liveness* (1999), which is discussed below. The inter- and multi-disciplinary nature of the performing arts has led most writers to adopt an eclectic methodology which combines

and interrelates established theoretical constructs with new ideas. Thus the methods of 'old' sources are melded, extended and supplemented to create new methodologies, and all the key recent monographs in the field demonstrate that established disciplines and fields of thought have provided the methodological starting point: psychoanalysis (Matthew Causey's *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture*, 2006), deconstruction (Nick Kaye's *Multi-Media: Video, Installation, Performance*, 2006), phenomenology (Susan Kozel's *Closer: Performance, Technologies, Phenomenology*, 2007), postmodern philosophy (Gabriella Giannachi's *Virtual Theatres: An Introduction*, 2004) and theories of the early twentieth-century avant-garde (Steve Dixon's *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art and Installation*, 2007).

Theoretical researchers have also turned their attention to science in general, and biosciences and neuroscience in particular, as a lens through which to examine the field. Johannes Birringer's *Performance, Technology and Science* (2008) focuses on scientific paradigms from computation and complexity to self-organising systems and biotechnology, while his edited collection with Josephine Fenger, *Tanz im Kopf/Dance and Cognition* (2005) centres on neuroscientific analyses, as does Susan Broadhurst's monograph *Digital Practices: Aesthetic and Neuroesthetic Approaches to Performance and Technology* (2007). New developments (or claims) within neuroscience have had a particular appeal to researchers studying digital performance, as well as the performing arts in general. The AHRC-funded *Watching Dance: Kinesthetic Empathy Project* (2008–11), for example, uses neuroscience techniques such as Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) and Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) to probe and analyse the neural and cortical functions, pathways and excitability patterns of spectators when they watch dance performances, with the aim to provide insights into audiences' cognitive, sensory, emotional and empathetic responses.

The search for originality and the opportunity afforded to pioneer novel theories in an embryonic field has led a number of writers to adopt explicit methodologies that seek to define and categorise emergent elements. Phaedre Bell (2000) identifies three ways in which onstage media projections operate in relation to live theatre action. She suggests that they function either as a primary, secondary or dialogic (equal) medium, according to their relative aesthetic impact or dramaturgical significance. Similarly, I propose four types of 'digital double' (reflection, alter ego, spiritual emanation and manipulable mannequin) and four hierarchical categories of interactive arts based on systemic openness and consequent level/depth of user interaction (navigation, participation, conversation, collaboration) (Dixon 2007). Other fields of technological and cultural theory also have been important in providing new perspectives apposite to digital performance. For example, in *Bodies*

in Technology (2002) Don Ihde proposes three types of body: *body one*, our physical, worldly, phenomenological body; *body two*, the socially and culturally constructed body; and *body three*, which exists 'in a third dimension . . . traversing both body one and body two . . . the dimension of the technological' (2002: xi).

Following a period of late-twentieth-century critical thought dominated by postmodern theories that contested the very concept of originality, theoretical methods in digital performance in the early twenty-first century challenged this perspective and pointed to the unprecedented nature of the field's technologies, techniques and aesthetics. For example, my book *Digital Performance* argues that many performance artists and theatre/dance groups work consciously to create original new theatrical forms as well as to embrace concepts that are anathema to postmodern philosophy such as 'grand narratives' (Jameson 1991). These include works which focused on

> death (Dumb Type, Paul Vanouse, Mark Pauline), love (Paulo Henrique, Company in Space, Curious.com), morality (Builders Association, Joel Slayton, Natalie Jeremijenko), nature (Char Davies, Amorphic Robot Works, Brenda Laurel/Rachel Strickland), suffering (Marcel.Lí Antúnez Roca, David Therrien, ieVR), foundations (Blast Theory, Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre, Stelarc), religion (Bilderwerfer, George Coates Performance Works, Paul Sermon), biology (Eduardo Kac, Critical Art Ensemble, Yacov Sharir/Diane Gromala) and revolution (Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Critical Art Ensemble, Electronic Disturbance Theatre, VNS Matrix). (Dixon 2007: 661–2)

Case study 1: The Chameleons Group

Arguably, the most original and radical new theory related to digital performance is Philip Auslander's celebrated arguments about *Liveness* (1999). It follows on from Walter Benjamin's 1936 thesis concerning the diminution of the 'aura' of an image when it is technologically reproduced (as a print of a painting or a film of a person): 'even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be . . . The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity' (Benjamin 1999: 214). Auslander extends this to argue that 'all performance modes, live or mediatized, are now equal; none is perceived as auratic or authentic' (1999: 50). He contends that traditional notions of theatrical liveness have been eroded so much that there now seems little difference between live and recorded

Figure 2.1 Artaudian notions of the double and new approaches to stage–screen integration are explored in the Chameleons Group's *Chameleons 4: The Doors of Serenity*.

dramatic forms, and he asserts that the digital has become culturally dominant over the live so that, for example, when watching a theatre performance combining live actors and screen-projected actors, audiences will pay more attention to the screen.

Auslander's theories are engaged and challenged by the Chameleons Group (established 1994), a digital performance research company that I direct. The Group has created theatrical events and documentation artefacts across a range of contexts, from multimedia theatre productions and CD-ROMs to interactive Internet events and video-conferenced 'virtual world' performances. The Group uses research methods that experiment with the relative 'performative presences' of recorded and live performers and equalise them so as to counter Auslander's claim that projected performers dominate live ones.

The Group's use of precisely timed conversations between live performers and their pre-recorded video alter egos is one method employed to ensure the live performer's presence is not overcome or upstaged by the screen's presence. This technique has been utilised by a number of artists, including Mary Oliver, who shares a concern to engage with Auslander's theories and considers that the cultural dominance of screen-based imagery means

that audiences are more 'accustomed' to seeing performers on screen and, importantly, that they are also more 'comfortable' doing so. Oliver writes: 'This has created an unequal relationship between the actual and virtual performer. The creator of digital performance now needs to forecast the level of screen seduction that will take place and counter it where necessary or else suffer from the "fifty-watt light bulb syndrome"' (2008: 61). This references Auslander's argument that the live performer's presence can be like a low-wattage light bulb in comparison to the high-wattage imagery of onstage screens. So while Oliver very much embraces and allies herself theoretically with Auslander's ideas, her research methods in practice aim to counter their implications by establishing a creative rationale through which both stage and screen characters 'can exist independently but not to the exclusion of the other . . . in a symbiotic relationship' (2008: 65). She achieves this by using methods such as quick-fire comic dialogues between them to ensure that audience attention is constantly switched between and directed to both her live and on-screen characters.

The Chameleons Group's research methods for the multimedia theatre production *Chameleons 4: The Doors of Serenity* (2002) involved migrating and infusing Artaudian theatrical theories into contemporary digital performance practice. Once the methodological starting point was conceived, the group identified four prime research objectives, the first summarising the overall methodology and the others indicating the project's practical methods: (a) to reinterpret and realise Artaudian and surrealist theories of performance for the digital age; (b) to establish new models of stage–screen interaction and integration; (c) to devise ways in which the sense of 'liveness' of a digitally projected performer may be enhanced; and (d) to create a distinctive digital performance aesthetic which is experimental and avant-garde, but also narrative-based, populist and accessible to a wide audience.

The production's methods were designed to blend both traditional and non-traditional techniques. In devising the show, for example, conventional techniques such as brainstorming and improvisation were complemented by more experimental ones, such as surrealist automatic writing techniques, that aimed to draw on the writer's unconscious mind (conducted with the performers 'in character'), as well as the creation of scenarios based on the performers' actual dreams. These methods were used to evoke the darker, more 'primitive' aspects of Artaudian theatre, and were found to induce the types of violent and visceral images that Artaud advocated, as summarised in relation to his film scenarios: 'eroticism, cruelty, the taste for blood, obsession with the horrible, dissolution of moral values, social hypocrisy, lies, false witness, sadism, perversity' (1931: 23).

Artaud's notion of 'the double' was explored using practical experimentation with dialogic interactions between the live performers and their

pre-recorded digital doubles, and by discovering how 'dual texts' of live and recorded performance could be devised to produce different semiotic, narrative and psychological effects. A number of scenes were developed where the performers engage in rigorous and minutely timed interactions with the screen. For example, the two male characters each conducted 'solo' scenes involving long three-way dialogues with two simultaneously projected recorded versions of themselves, while the two women characters held a six-way conversation interacting live on stage with two on-screen alter egos each. In pre-recording the projection sequences, acting methods were employed to highlight pace, energy and adrenalin so as to emulate theatrical liveness. Since studio recordings commonly lack the comparative tension and vigour of a performance for a live audience, the aim was to bring a comparable and equal sense of performative interactivity to the recorded characters. These methods were employed so that when the live actor met the supposed 'absence' and the 'past tense' of her projected double, the doppelgänger could assert itself as doubly 'present', both in time and space and in terms of equal theatrical presence. As the flesh-and-blood actor meets her virtual self, the physical 'absence' of the digital body becomes a palpable presence and past (the time when the video image was recorded) becomes present (in theatrical time and space). The image of the body and its double pervades the show and relates to the shadow figure of the doppelgänger, Freudian notions of the uncanny (Freud [1919] 1985) and the subconscious Id ([1923] 2010), Lacan's conception of the mirror stage and the *corps morcelé* (the body in pieces) (Lacan 2007), and the Narcissus myth.

Artaud wrote that 'acting is a delirium like the plague' (1974: 18), and his vision of the actor in delirium, the martyr burned alive and still 'signalling through the flames' (1974: 14), remains one of the most potent and imagistic articulations of acting theory. For western performers, moments that come close to this grand metaphor are rare. The Chameleons Group's use of the actor on stage and their double on screen, so that the performers act with and against themselves, presents a research method that at worst offers the actor 'two bites of the cherry' and at best opens the possibility of some synergetic alchemy which might approach this notion of flame-licked delirium. Some *Chameleons 4* images pay direct tongue-in-cheek reference to Artaud's metaphor: a light-hearted live stage scene where the two male characters, a cyborg and a devil, first meet is played in front of a projection of the cyborg character, a noose around his neck, screaming in agony in the midst of lapping, digital hell-fire; meanwhile the devil, in miniature, dances on his shoulder, and the ghosts of the two women characters wander, lost and blindfolded, in a darkened, background purgatory.

The acting and scenographic method in this scene was to play the live stage dialogue 'light' against the distinctly 'heavy' projection imagery, and this provides a key to understanding the Group's particular praxis. The simple

Figure 2.2 Images from the 'Hell's Mouth' scene between the cyborg and the demon in *Chameleons 4: The Doors of Serenity*.

counterpoint and contrast between stage and screen texts was inherently 'theatrical' as it helped to disorient the audience's senses, thus moving them toward Artaudian realms. But more fundamentally it created an effect that cannot be achieved by live theatre alone. The use of technology contributed to the dramaturgical point of horror in two ways: firstly, in the creation of a visually arresting computer-graphical representation of hell inhabited by four characters (the screaming cyborg, the dancing devil and the two ghosts lost in purgatory); secondly, by enabling each actor in the video recording to work separately through multiple takes (they were each digitally inserted into the composite image later in post-production) in order to reach a concentrated point of acting extremity that would be difficult to replicate reliably night-by-night on stage. Had this screen sequence been conceived for live performance on stage, its scenic ambition and acting demands might have rendered it as a climactic ending, but it is placed with ease within the expositional first act and is juxtaposed against a prosaic, live prologue. The projection imagery presents a parallel spatial and psychic dimension, and the characters are revealed to inhabit and haunt both their own inner (screen) and outer (stage) spaces and psyches.

The Group's methods are informed by detailed research into the history of multimedia theatre, as well as through practical and theoretical explorations of ontological issues and debates arising from stage and screen performance. For example, in the scene just described, the company's belief in recorded media's relative empowerment of acting extremity and authenticity in comparison to live performance relates back to one of the earliest attempts to define and differentiate the separate ontologies of film and theatre, Allardyce Nicoll's *Film* and *Theatre* (1936). Nicoll maintains that audience orientations when experiencing the two forms are quite different since theatre has an inherent falsity acknowledged by all: 'dramatic illusion is never . . . the illusion of reality; it is always imaginative illusion' (1936: 166), whereas film purports to *truth* and, despite the fact that the idea that 'the camera cannot lie' has been disproved, 'in our heart of hearts we credit the truth of the statement' (167). He maintains that stage characters tend to be 'types' whereas film characters are 'individuals', and the search for individualisation in film acting leads to greater complexity in characterisation. 'What we have witnessed on the screen becomes the "real" for us' (171) he says, a perhaps surprising anticipation of postmodern media theories as exemplified by Jean Baudrillard (1994). Nicoll's ideas are interesting in contrasting film as 'truthful', 'complex' and 'real' against the falsity, simplicity and illusion of theatre. Whether or not one is inclined to agree with his analysis, The Chameleons Group's methods are an explicit attempt to demonstrate that his thesis still holds seventy years after he proposed it. The Group's performers consciously explore notions of reality and acting extremity and 'truth' much more directly when recording their video performances than they would ever attempt during scenes they perform live.

Case study 2: The Builders Association

Where the primary methodological aim of the Chameleons Group concerns theatrically updating Artaud's theories for the digital age, the metamethodology for the Builders Association, a New York-based ensemble, is encapsulated in their objective to 'reanimate' theatre for a contemporary audience, 'using new tools to interpret old forms . . . to create a world onstage which reflects the contemporary culture which surrounds us' (Builders Association 1997). Using 'new tools to interpret old forms' is crucial to new media theory as exemplified in two books that have exerted a major influence on digital performance studies. Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin's *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (1999) is an incisive consideration of how digital technologies have repackaged and reinterpreted older media forms and paradigms, and Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media* (2001) demonstrates

new media's close links to the past, including a tour de force analysis of Dziga Vertov's *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929) in which he couples the Constructivist film directly to computational notions of editing, cut-and-paste montage, superimposition, compositing, 'virtual' cameras, trick effects and dynamic database access systems. But while both texts highlight the extending lineage and reliance of digital computing technologies on older analogue media, they also make clear that they nonetheless offer new perceptual paradigms and creative phenomena. Manovich argues that digital processing extends older media to new levels of sophistication, positing, for example, that 'the computer fulfils the promise of cinema as visual Esperanto' (2001: xv). He also celebrates the emancipatory properties of computer interfaces, the Web and editing software in empowering lay users to become sophisticated creative artists. While proposing a theory of *re*mediation, Bolter and Grusin also emphasise that the reconfigurations which computer technologies produce are not trivial since they herald unique new forms: 'What is new about new media comes from the particular ways in which they refashion older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media' (1999: 15).

The Builders Association's performances often deconstruct existing texts and narratives, as in their 1997 refashioning of the Faust legend, *Jump Cut (Faust)*. It used three large projection screens playing (among other things) footage from F. W. Murnau's 1926 silent movie of *Faust* and relaying live video close-ups of the actors, shot by onstage camera technicians who followed them on foot or used a traversing downstage dolly and track. For *Opera* (2000) the company's research methods centred on establishing particular correspondences between old and new media in a theatrical setting. It drew connections between early twentieth-century multimedia theatre and contemporary club culture by 'sampling' fragments of theatrical history through the language of DJ and VJ culture (Builders Association 2000). The methods included use of a system of MIDI triggers to prompt video and audio samples in real time and the production emphasised how digital performance practice remains at an embryonic stage of development in comparison to 1920s film-theatre experiments by directors such as Piscator, Claudel and Eisenstein.

The main research methods for *SUPER VISION* (in collaboration with dbox, 2005) were a departure from the company's previous work. In director Marianne Weems's words, this was an attempt to

> enmesh the performers in the media . . . by collapsing the video space into the stage space. So there wasn't the feeling that you had in our other performances where the viewer is tracking back and forth between the real live performer and the mediated image. It was really about trying to combine these as intimately as possible. (Kaye 2005: 561)

Nick Kaye has documented this production rigorously, including interviewing twelve members of the company. His results make clear that many of *SUPER VISION*'s methods were constructivist, in common with much devised theatre internationally. For example, Weems describes how its creation began with the company brainstorming ideas from which a key theme emerged: 'the invisible world of dataveillance' (Kaye 2005: 561). They then researched contextual materials which prompted further ideas; for example, Weems read John E. McGrath's book *Loving Big Brother* and incorporated into the show his conceptual recycling of 'data body' – a term first coined by sociologist David Lyon in the 1970s – as a kind of electronic doppelgänger that shadows our movements. She saw 'data body' as a perfect theatrical metaphor and used a particular McGrath quote about the effects of the data body's continual surveillance as a conceptual and aesthetic inspiration for the production: 'a disjointed, hybrid, prostheticised, multiple body, appearing and disappearing in the irregular, contradictory landscape of surveillance space' (McGrath, cited in Kaye 2005: 561).

Research methods for design and technological aspects of the production involved collaboration with dbox, an innovative 3D design and media company. Its primary task was to design a virtual architecture for the production that would collapse the live into the virtual. Research into Renaissance paintings produced inspiration and formal models for the screen designs, as well as diptych- and triptych-style sequences in which two or three scenes are played in parallel. This reference to the effects of classical painting highlights how the family at the centre of one of the show's three narratives is attempting to live the classic fantasy of the American dream. The mother and father are live actors who seem to inhabit a film – the set of which is a projected AUTO-CAD graphic 3D design of the perfect, luxury modern home – where they interact with their child, represented by a video-projected virtual boy. Ironically the father steals the son's identity in order to run up half a million dollars in credit-card debt to pay for the family's lifestyle.

In diptych sequences, at one side of the stage the live mother plays with the videoed child in the virtual living room with windows overlooking a photographic back yard, while at the other side of the stage the live father sits at his computer in his virtual 'den'. dbox director James Gibbs conceived the visual design of the den space so that it would 'physicalise electronic activity' (in Kaye 2005: 563) by creating a projected cyberspace-effect which immersed the father in a 3D-mesh grid of lines (like graph paper squares in 3D perspective). As the actions of the father get out of control, the den space expands to invade and crush the on-screen living room set, an effect the company had achieved earlier with a physical set in their adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *Master Builder* (1994), where a life-size house was gradually demolished to reveal both its skeletal structure and the skeletons of the characters' pasts.

A further method used to create a sense of the characters' immersion within the virtual world visually was a small downstage mobile screen in front of the actors, on which the child's image was projected. This was used to great dramaturgical effect in the show's second narrative about the airport border-crossing experiences of a Ugandan-born Indian traveller, Mr Shah. As he is interrogated by passport control officers he becomes increasingly beleaguered and dehumanised upstage of the mobile screen, onto which many digital imaging data streams are projected. Their volume and density is increased progressively throughout the performance: thumbprints, signatures, retinal scans, credit card transactions, numbers, itineraries, facial recognition, names of his family members, his prescriptions and the regularity of his daily caffeine and tobacco use. The downstage-screen technique appears to place Mr Shah inside a bureaucratic data environment where his body is dissected and his identity becomes transparent, cleverly evoking the company's aim that the character 'should become less of a physical presence and more of a presence defined in the body of data that accumulates around him' (in Kaye 2005: 569).

Mr Shah is questioned by passport control officers sitting alongside console operators who, omnipresent throughout the performance, control the show. They are at the front of the stage with their backs to the audience, facing a line of computer screens and other kit, like mission control calling up and manipulating Shah's data while their faces are projected in close up on the upstage screens. These methods reflect analytical perspectives developed in Bolter and Grusin's *Remediation*, such as their notions of transparency and opacity, and immediacy and hypermediacy. The production's scenography highlighted the tensions and pleasure principles at play as between computer representations/experiences that seek to immerse the user by making the interface disappear (transparency and immediacy) and other techniques which positively foreground the medium and interface (opacity and hypermediacy). Such effects, according to Bolter and Grusin, create a spectator perception that 'the excess of media becomes an authentic experience' (1999: 54). They also note that new media encompasses the complementary and 'contradictory impulses for immediacy and hypermediacy . . . a double logic of remediation. Our culture wants both to multiply its media and erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them' (1999: 5).

It is notable that the performers' acting methods in *SUPER VISION* were adapted to work effectively within the *mise en scène*, or – to use Aleksandar Dundjerovic's apt coinage for Robert Lepage's work – the 'techno-en-scene' (2006: 69). Actor David Pence (playing the father) notes that he moderated his acting style to the controlled, 'doing less' paradigm of film acting, because for much of the performance his face is simultaneously

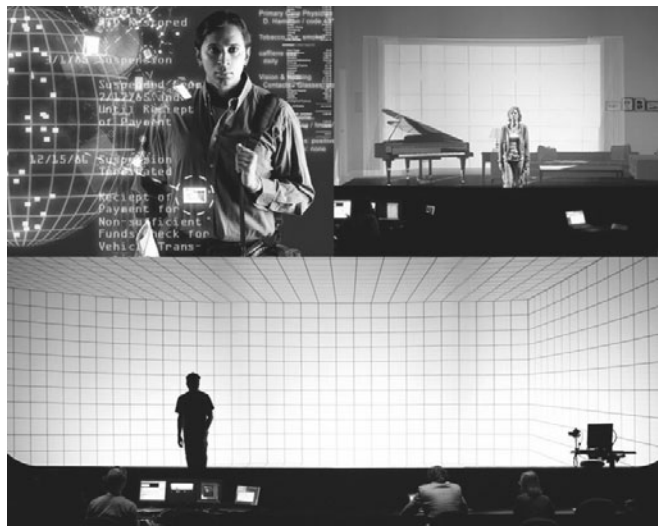

Figure 2.3 (*Clockwise from top left*) Mr Shah, the mother and the father in SUPER VISION. Photos: Courtesy of The Builders Association.

projected in close up. This informs Kaye's view of the show that 'it's not only film, it's not only theatre. It's a hybrid' (Kaye 2005: 562). Kyle deCamp (the mother) notes that she consciously intensified her focused connection and empathy with her fictional son since the character is a flat video projection: 'it's the warmth of my performance that effectively animates him' (in Kaye 2005: 565), and Rizwan Mirza (Mr Shah) discusses a stylised method of 'acting within the character and without . . . [to create] a certain haunting loneliness' (in Kaye 2005: 571). Weems also reflects on how the sense of physical isolation between the performers was part of a conscious research method in the group's work, which of course closely mirrored the theme of *SUPER VISION*:

> In every performance, in all of our shows, for me it is about the performers being really isolated physically, but we are mediating them electronically and so what the audience sees is the network that is joining them all. None of the performers ever really look at each other . . . What is being staged is the network. They are in very isolated worlds, coming together in that bigger state picture – that is really the key. (in Kaye 2005: 569)

It is interesting that Weems has stated that 'in my work, technology is a performer' (Zinoman 2005: 15) – and it is clearly a high-profile one – yet she nonetheless sees the production as ultimately critical of technology and

globalisation: 'what you see are people isolated, melancholy, in various states of fragmentation. Technology is not creating communities that anyone would hope for. And this is a political message' (Zinoman 2005: 15). So while embracing new media technologies aesthetically, the Builders Association continually question, critique and challenge their socio-political impacts and implications. They share this with a number of other multimedia theatre practitioners, including George Coates, who has argued that: 'Using technology to critique technology is no more a contradiction than it is to call the phone company to complain about the service or to use a calculator to challenge the bill. The use of a particular tool implies no endorsement of values beyond itself' (Coates 2000).

Case study 3: Sarah Atkinson

Whereas the previous case studies have focused on the use of digital media to create innovative performances, the research methods of Sarah Atkinson's PhD study *Crossed Lines* (completed in 2009 at Brunel University) involved using computer technologies both to create a multi-perspective, interactive dramatic narrative and to analyse its audience's reception.

Atkinson had two primary methodological aims: to create an original and distinctive interactive drama installation with an intuitive interface; and to provide new models for audience-response analysis suited to digital media interactive narratives. Her methods for addressing both these objectives encompassed conventional and experimental approaches. But, as noted earlier, in emergent practices – such as digital interactive drama – the researcher always faces new challenges and demands, even when adopting the traditional format of the literature review. In Atkinson's project this involved study of the history of interactive storytelling practices and their emerging technical platforms, environments and forms, as well as a wide range of theoretical paradigms and perspectives, both 'old' and 'new'. The written element of her thesis examined pertinent 'traditional' theoretical perspectives (film and narrative theory, critical theory), but also several research fields that have evolved since the 1990s through a burgeoning and dynamic body of literature. Five sections of the written thesis were devoted to a literature review covering: hypertext and hyperfiction, cybertheory, new media/multimedia theory, interactive theory and (video) game theory.

In creating the *Crossed Lines* installation Atkinson devised practice-based research methods to counteract some of the structural and navigational limitations of existing interactive narrative models, as well as to enhance the spectators' sense of freedom and agency. This involved discounting traditional navigational routes in interactive narrative, such as branching tree structures

– where the story halts, then progresses via 'forks' providing user choice of direction – and menu-centred models – where menu screens provide different options for exploration. Instead, the installation features an interface structure of nine sub-screens all showing continuous video streams, each screen presenting a different character in a specific location, framed by a 'locked off' camera shot. The user has complete freedom to select any of the nine screens/characters at any time, which prompts the character to either telephone one of the others or receive a call from one of them. As their conversations develop a multi-plot drama unfolds, centred on themes of friendship, trust, surveillance, deception, crime and despair. Some characters leave their sub-screen spaces to follow or find the other characters, metaphorically 'crossing the lines' between the sub-screen spaces to appear in one of the other locations. The nine video streams are ordered within a database system programmed to progress each character's narrative strands chronologically and coherently (in a structure akin to dramatic 'acts'), but without the necessity to view all scenes related to that particular storyline. The software monitors the user's choices and deploys a system of narrative rules and prerequisites to call up a logical 'next scene' that will progress the action for the character selected. Users can shift the narrative to another character and scene at any point while still maintaining 'narrative arcs' and dramatic progression, thus enhancing their sense of freedom and agency. This contrasts markedly with most screen-based interactive narratives, which stop at predetermined points where users select route options from a limited number of 'branches'.

The interface includes a specially customised telephone placed on a desk in front of the nine-screen installation. It was conceived to replicate the central narrative device of the drama itself as the characters all converse by phone and, as a ubiquitous piece of hardware, for users it is familiar and engaging: as Marshall McLuhan noted in 1964, 'the telephone demands complete participation . . . [and is] an irresistible intruder in time or place' (1964: 267, 271). But most importantly, it is a simple and intuitive interface device. No instructions are given to users but, on lifting the handset, they quickly realise that it provides the installation's audio source, while the numbered buttons (1 to 9 set in three rows) of the telephone keypad on the desk mirror the layout of the nine video screens: pressing a button activates a scene on the equivalent screen. A firm visual relationship is therefore established between the interface and installation structure, because the user's interaction via the telephone provides a sense of complicity with the characters, as they are involved in eavesdropping and surveillance within the narratives, and generates thematic coherence.

Multiple research methods were required to meet the considerable technical and dramaturgical challenges of creating the installation, e.g. using sophisticated editing methods to ensure fluid transitions and synchronisations

between the screens; conceiving, scripting and interweaving the multiple plots within interrelational 'acts'. It followed that in order to document and analyse audience reception of its interactive possibilities Atkinson should adopt multiple quantitative and qualitative research methods. Hence to track, measure and evaluate user engagement and experience of *Crossed Lines*, Atkinson undertook detailed research with fifty users from a broad age range (18–67) and with an equitable gender split. The primary qualitative research method adopted was a face-to-face interview with each of the sample users, which was videotaped, transcribed and analysed. The interview findings were cross-referenced with extensive quantitative data derived from two sources: a user questionnaire and a dataset generated through a secondary level of scripting embedded within the software programming of the installation (primarily using *Macromedia Director*). This mapped users' precise routes through the narratives and exact time spans spent in each scene and with each character. A raw data text log indicated the timings of each of the user's interactions, for example:

- 'Viewer started watching movie at: 15:15:36'
- 'Viewer entered scene24 at 15:15:58'
- 'Viewer left scene24 at 15:16:44'
- 'Viewer entered scene19 at 15:16:44'
- 'Viewer left scene19 at 15:16:56' . . . etc.

(Atkinson 2009: 139)

From these logs, Atkinson produced statistical datasets which she presented in graph and pie-chart form in order to analyse user behaviour in detail. These included separate graphs identifying each user (by number) and showing each of their overall viewing times and which scenes they accessed; graphs with scene numbers showing the number of viewers accessing each scene; and individual graphs for each scene illustrating the time viewed (as a percentage of total) by each user. Pie-charts and further graphs provided visual data on the most and least popular characters (in terms of time viewed/scenes accessed), and a gender comparison of scenes visited between male and female users. The data showed that certain characters and storylines had particular appeal to male subjects – for example, one involving an increasingly desperate alcoholic – and to female subjects – for example, one in which a call to the emergency services from a woman in a broken down car is intercepted by a phone hacker who stalks and terrorises her.

Questionnaires generated further quantitative data through fifty-two questions that probed many issues, including: the users' views on the installation's interactive elements and whether they helped or hindered the narratives; their evaluation of the degrees of freedom, agency, empowerment and immersion they felt; their responses to different storylines and characters. This data

Figure 2.4 Eye tracking technologies are used to monitor and track the user's precise visual engagements with Sarah Atkinson's *Crossed Lines* installation.

was processed using a standard social sciences software application, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), and then analysed to identify commonalities and divergences in the users' opinions and viewing behaviours and to discuss their implications. Findings rated as having 'statistical significance' included indications that younger respondents enjoyed the paradigm and experience of eavesdropping on characters' conversations more than older users, and that most users considered that the interactive elements enhanced their engagement and sense of 'immersion' in the narratives.

Eye-tracking technology (Visiontrak Global System ETL-600) was utilised with ten users. They wore a head-mounted device incorporating a transmitter and four sensors, and a 'point of regard' software system tracked the path of the users' pupils, providing thirty lines of data every second (around 80,000 lines per user). Atkinson presented this data in visual form using a separate 'gaze plot' for all the scenes viewed by each individual user. A black-and-white image of the nine-screen display was overlaid with blue dots representing the direction and track of the user's eye. These visualisations provided clear indications of when there was a high degree of concentrated attention on one screen – an inkblot-style accumulation of dots appears – as against less concentrated or erratic attention – the dots are scattered in diffuse patterns and streaks across a number of the screens.

This combination of quantitative evidence led to significant insights into different users' attentional processes, as the clocks of both analysis systems

were synchronised to provide accurate data time-stamps. Thus the eye-tracking data was cross-referenced with the user-choices data files generated by the installation's *Director* software to reveal correlations between user points of interest and decisions made to press keys at particular times. The findings from this proved a number of points that otherwise would have been difficult, if not impossible, to verify. These included the fact that eye activity always correlated directly with the viewer's next choice of scene: the user always observed a particular screen character before selecting them, and also that viewers never simply pushed buttons to access material randomly; rather, they were always trying to anticipate or stay one step ahead of the narrative, or, as Atkinson explains, 'attempting to pre-empt action throughout the experience' (2009: 176).

CONCLUSION

The three case studies provide a clear sense of how practice-based digital performance combines elements of old and new research methods in the quest to forge original theses and performance events. A growing number of academic researchers, such as the Chameleons Group, also are conceiving methodologies to interrogate the practical implications of recent theories of performance and technology (such as Auslander's arguments regarding 'liveness'), as well as devising methods in ways that test, challenge or even disprove the robustness and validity of such theories. Here, the framing of the methodologies and the choice and operation of particular methods in order to assess, and prove or disprove, specific hypotheses have much in common with laboratory models from the science disciplines.

The Builders Association similarly meld the old with the new, and their practice explicitly engages with ideas of 'remediation', creating a pleasurable satiation of media and 'hypermediacy'. Their inventive use of technology in *SUPER VISION* included complex layering of computer graphics and front- and back-projecting screens to place live actors within virtual settings and to visually immerse them in data streams. Their particular aesthetic vision has led to critical acclaim, including that from Wooster Group director Elizabeth LeCompte, who suggested that it created 'a new genre entirely' (in Zinoman 2005: 15). Their methods also engage with and challenge prevalent theories on liveness and the comparative presence(s) of the live and the mediatised, as noted by Nick Kaye:

> SUPER VISION exemplifies The Builders Association's emphasis on the recovery and complexity of 'human presence' in the transition and flow between the live, mediated and recorded channels of

> address . . . The Builders Association's consistent emphasis on the articulation and recovery of performer presence through mediation and projection departs from significant aspects of performance theory, in which the technological mediation of live performance has been powerfully constructed as eliding presence . . . in its circulation of the signs of 'liveness' and 'presence' SUPER VISION explores a *return* of that which technologies of reproduction would seem to defeat: the performance of 'the live' in 'the mediated', the performance of presence across the absences of the screen. (2007: 558–9)

Sarah Atkinson's project provides an apt conclusion to our consideration of research methods in practice-based digital performance, and draws together a number of the key issues and themes I have sought to highlight. It demonstrates that although practical investigations in the field involve significant research challenges they also provide opportunities to create genuinely original artistic expressions and paradigms. Equally, Atkinson's audience analysis research, drawing on both traditional methods and the latest cutting-edge digital techniques, is indicative of the great sense of invention and dynamism within digital performance. It seems especially fitting that a doctoral project should encapsulate a much wider alchemical quest for such efficacious marriages of theory and practice, and the old with the new.

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CHAPTER 3

Practice as Research: Transdisciplinary Innovation in Action

Baz Kershaw with Lee Miller/Joanne 'Bob' Whalley and Rosemary Lee/Niki Pollard

INTRODUCTION

There would be no theatre or performance studies without the creative practices of performers, actors, directors, designers and the many other kinds of talent that populate the performing arts. Yet the relationship between the academics who created the disciplines and the practitioners who made the art has been mostly an uneasy one historically. In the traditions of modernism, the cogito of Descartes – I think, therefore I am – ensured the head and the heart were in conflict alongside mind and body, sciences and arts, culture and nature and all the rest. But the so-called 'postmodern moment' of the late-twentieth century, happening sometime between 1950 and 1990, radically upset that philosophical applecart to create a mash-up world in which binary habits of thought and practice were challenged profoundly. In this now famous putative paradigm shift the modernist model of the nineteenth-century scholar-poet re-emerged as the 'practitioner-researcher', and fresh methods of melding art and scholarship were invented. Named variously as 'practice as research', 'practice-based research', 'practice-led research' or simply 'artistic research', by the twenty-first century a well-founded and sometimes controversial methodology had been added to research repertoires in university theatre and performance studies.

Practice-as-research genealogies in the UK can be traced back to at least the 1960s. This was part of a broader international trend to develop methods of creative enquiry that would be recognised as cognate to established scholarly research procedures and techniques. Sometimes called the 'practice turn', the trend was widespread across many disciplines – from philosophy through science and technology to cultural studies – and characterised by post-binary commitment to activity (rather than structure), process (rather than fixity),

action (rather than representation), collectiveness (rather than individualism), reflexivity (rather than self-consciousness), and more. Its relevance to theatre and performance research is evident in Theodore Schatzki's claim that practice is crucially constituted by 'embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity' and 'shared skills and understandings' or 'tacit knowledge' (Schatzki et al. 2000: 2–3). Hence practice as research in the performing arts pursues hybrid enquiries combining creative doing with reflexive being, thus fashioning freshly critical interactions between current epistemologies and ontologies.

Since the early 1990s practice as research in theatre/performance has grown remarkably in a range of countries around the world, with practitioner-researchers in the UK collectively being widely identified as among its pioneers. In 2009 three books of collected writings and other materials on its purposes and approaches (mainly in the UK, USA and Australia) were published, marking an important evolutionary milestone in theatre/performance research (Allegue et al.; Riley and Hunter; Smith and Dean). The generic terms their titles adopt – practice-as-research, performance as research, practiced-led research – suggest the wide range of definitions the methodology has acquired. But this chapter adopts a straightforward one: 'practice as research' (PaR) indicates the uses of practical creative processes as research methods (and methodologies) in their own right, usually but not exclusively in, or in association with, universities and other HE institutions.

PaR is primarily a methods-focused enterprise, though its specific projects – as demonstrated below and elsewhere in this book – spring from the passions and interests of hands-on creative researchers. Hence the case-studies approach of this chapter is a response to an extraordinary diversity within its overall methodology. Inevitably though, whatever the project topic, PaR research engages specific aspects of theatre and performance as innovative process; but even so a tighter focus of analysis is required to make useful comparisons between different projects. To narrow my case-study focus I rule in five aspects of theatre and performance that together may be the minimal constituents of PaR, i.e. take any one of them away and it disappears or becomes something else. They are: Starting Points, Aesthetics, Locations, Transmission and Key Issues.

Viewed from the broader perspective of the practice turn, each of these aspects produces fundamental tensions and/or dynamics that, between them, can generate an uncommon instability in the interactions of epistemology and ontology. As the next section briefly explores, this is because PaR is, so to speak, at ease in generating troublesome contradictions. The aspects therefore perform as provocative entry points for debate about its purposes and qualities. They also enable us to take an oblique approach to this chapter's

examples – by Miller/Whalley and Lee/Pollard – in a bid to show that, paradoxically, the similarities they share in combining these minimal PaR constituents highlight their unique qualities as individual practices. Hence these PaR 'not-without-which' aspects are positively productive of conundrums and paradoxes in theatre and performance arts. Because of course unpredictable couplings and unexpected conjunctions are essential to artistic creativity and, methodologically, PaR is no exception to *that* rule. From this it follows that PaR practitioner-researchers must grapple with a curious query: What are methods for, but to ruin our experiments?

NOT-WITHOUT-WHICH ASPECTS OF PaR

PaR thus presents fundamental challenges to established processes of knowledge making in the academy, but what is the basis of that potential? Short answers can be derived from the centrality of *creativity* to its research methods, and especially from the capacity of creative acts to embrace contradictions. That has been the source of PaR's fundamental troubling of the epistemology/ontology binary, of unsustainable bifurcations between becoming and being. Its creative projects can be productive in subjecting such binaries to flights of imaginative fancy as a method that *logically* stretches the bounds of established sense. Hence performing arts PaR has been a paradoxical project because, as I have argued elsewhere, performance (and therefore theatre) is rife with paradox (Kershaw 2007: 23–6). It becomes appropriate, then, to introduce its minimal constituents through contradiction and paradox.

Starting points

In PaR, the methods for creating starting points are *countless*; generally there are *two* main methods for creating starting points in use for PaR. The main UK research funding bodies, for example, require applicants to state the *questions* to be answered of the *problems* solved by their proposed projects. Yet many researchers encounter *hunches* (or more conventionally *intuitions*) that spur them to root around for a starting source. The clearest contradiction here is between the predictability-quotient of questions (even the most open ones imply a range of answers) and the unpredictable prompting of hunches. The latter ensures the meta-contradiction between the countable and countless starting points for PaR. In PaR as elsewhere in the state called knowing: the more you know, the less you think you know.

Aesthetics

Every particular example of PaR is imbued with other practices and thus is an integral part of evolving artistic genealogies, always beholden to aesthetic traditions. But its place in the academy is differently demanding because that puts a premium on advanced research innovation and originality. So the 'freedom' of independent avant-garde traditions, for example, is transformed into a disciplinary 'order' to perform at the cutting edge. Creative licence is compelled, as an income stream, to conform to the contradiction of legitimate lawbreaking. University bursars may as well adopt Samuel Butler's paradox as a motto: the dearer a thing is, the cheaper as a general rule we sell it.

Locations

All performance and theatre is bound by location in space and time, tied to limits that it cannot completely escape. Yet nothing, but especially theatre, exists without performance, so performance itself is boundless. Hence the incorrigible specificity of theatre and performance is crucial to what they are or will become, even as the exact nature of their being can never be pinned down for good. They are a part of yet apart from the disciplines that constitute them, therefore they are trans-disciplinary, always operating in yet-to-be-defined intersections between disciplinary fields. Hence PaR participates in the paradox of boundless specificity that calls a ring a hole with a rim around it.

Transmission

As PaR is pursued through time-space events its transmission – the means by which any knowledge/understanding/insight it produces are communicated – is always multi-modal and has the qualities of a moveable feast: always already the 'same' project but forever differently displayed through diverse channels. This diversity of dissemination reflects the hybridity of its specific methods of enquiry, as it evolves unique 'messages' that constitute a singular chorus, the PaR bandwidth. It broadcasts exactly as John Cage once said: I'm saying nothing and I'm saying it.

Key issues

This is the joker in the PaR pack because, as inescapable diversity is its chief overall quality, it will always be generating innumerable key issues. Usually these disrupt a powerful parade of binary formulations:

theory/practice, process/product, ontology/epistemology, artist/academic, resources/infrastructure, multiple formats/singular outcomes, and so on. So *its* key issue becomes how to fall into contradiction without only contradicting itself. When it's done as performance and theatre it might routinely save itself from this fate because, as Oscar Wilde said: life imitates art far more than art imitates life.

TWO CASE STUDIES AND AN INTERMISSION

As PaR is practised in very diverse ways, the following case studies focus on the unique dynamics of creative research processes and methods in particular projects when viewed through the optic of the five aspects presented above. The case study projects are Joanne 'Bob' Whalley and Lee Miller's *Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain* (2002) and Rosemary Lee's *the Suchness of Henni and Eddie* (2002/2007). A brief observation on my *Mnemosyne Dreams* (2002/2005) provides a linking reflective Intermission on reception. Together the case studies demonstrate how specific research methods can be combined to create the particular methodologies of different projects, and how they may engage with key issues of PaR overall. They also reflect the tendency of PaR to be inherently collaborative, and they engage with research concerns typical of UK theatre/performance studies at the start of the twenty-first century, namely: space and identity; spectatorship and participation; bodies and technology. They indicate as well some of the main objectives served by PaR in universities internationally: the awarding of higher degrees (MA/MPhil/PhD), experimental arts development and postdoctoral research investigations.

The specific ways in which the five 'not-without-which' aspects of PaR were approached by the projects are indicated below by **Baskerville Semibold** font. Each case study is followed by a short commentary describing how the aspects combined to produce its unique qualities in practice. The commentaries also group their key research methods together and this points up how PaR methodologies can variously articulate the individual and/or collective concerns of a great variety of researchers. The case studies together aim to suggest that, whichever of the 'not-without-which' aspects predominates in retrospective analysis, the five together in practice may ensure a generally coherent methodology for PaR overall which positively supports the remarkable diversity that it enjoys.

Figure 3.1 Welcoming the guests: *Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain*, at M5 Sandbach Roadchef Service Station, Cheshire, UK, 2002. Devised by: Joanne 'Bob' Whalley and Lee Miller. Photographer: Martin Nealon. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 3.2 One of the ten wedding couples enjoy a dance: *Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain*, at M5 Sandbach Roadchef Service Station, Cheshire, UK, 2002. Photographer: Martin Nealon. Reproduced with permission.

Case study 1

'Bob' Whalley and Lee Miller

YOU CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE:
Notes on a collaboratively written PhD

When you undertake a PhD, you write a lot. Not just in the sense that there is an institutional expectation that a weight of words will be generated to fulfil the requirement of the thesis. Rather, we are thinking about all of those ghost words, those sentences, paragraphs and chapters that you elide, skate away from and ultimately try to let slip from your consciousness. But they don't really leave you. All of those drafts that your supervisor makes responses to accrete in a very particular way, but perhaps not one that you are always aware of. They hide away in the way you think about things, they inform your writing, leaving traces of their cadence in the writing that will follow.

When Baz Kershaw asked us to write about our PhD, the first collaboratively written practice-as-research PhD to be undertaken within the UK, we knew we would struggle. It was ten years since we began the project about which he asked us to write, and six years since we finished. Ten years is a long time, and being given the opportunity to revisit a completed project, especially one that has in many ways defined who we are, is a rather daunting prospect.

(**Transmission**) The process of writing from the early moments of uncertainty where the whiteout of the page blighted us with snow blindness is on our minds and in our laptops. We return to articulate a project that was determinedly **multi-modal**, each mode of **articulation** (performance, written submission, exhibition and DVD) informing the other, but each complete and incomplete in its own right. The process of conjoined writing constantly raises curious questions from interested parties as to how it is done. In a bid to suspend our audience/reader inbetween the two writing voices, we entertain a series of methods where, amongst others, we use overlapping writing, correspondence, talking-at-the-same time as writing, editing, leaving gaps for the other one to fill. Our writings are not in conversation, there are no distinct and separate voices, and this is to dissolve the oppositional grading which might assume a hierarchical response.

What follows is a piece of writing from 2002. It didn't make it into the thesis. So here we offer the reader a commentary, similar to the one we provide when we write to each other about our practice. The boxes function in the same way as the letters, e-mails and Post-it notes that were generated by the writing process of our thesis; we continue to employ them as we write our way towards each other.

The practice-as-research PhD project of Joanne 'Bob' Whalley and Lee Miller explores through performance the 'non-place' as defined by Augé of a specific section of the M6 motorway. Through a series of performance strategies that will culminate in a larger-scale performance, they hope to reinscribe the motorway as 'place'. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'two-fold thinking', they intend for the project to challenge the individualist focus of knowledge creation, and explore collaborative practices within their own practical work.

They travel the motorways. Sometimes they stop at the transport cafes to talk to truckers about their ultimate destinations. Sometimes they pick up hitch-hikers and in exchange for a treasured memory they will ferry them from A to B. They trawl through the narratives that prop up this space, seeking their own truths in other people's stories.

(**Starting Points**) Our experience of the motorway has **found articulation in** the terminology of **Marc Augé**. In *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Augé suggests that 'supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places' (Augé 1995: 78). We are now in the process of reclaiming the motorway, of inscribing it with its hidden narratives in an attempt to bypass its supermodern position as a non-place, and return it, even if only temporarily, to the position of an anthropological place.

(**Starting Points**) A **journey in a car** seemed to provide us with the space for this venture, and we are now exploring the motorway as site for performance.

Perhaps it is useful to offer a little context here. The abstract at the opening of the written element of our PhD states:

> The entire project, processes and products are collaborative and the writing includes an overt reflection upon the joint creation of knowledge, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of two-fold thinking, primarily articulated in *A Thousand Plateaus.* Consideration is also given in this context to artists engaged in collaborative practice with whom Whalley and Miller share a genealogy (Whalley and Miller 2004: 4).

Thus it is this conjoined interest in the articulation of place and an interrogation of the shifting modalities of knowledge creation that were central to our PhD, and continue to inform our postdoctoral practice-as-research.

(**Starting Points**) The project grew out of a **chance observation** of what appeared to be a bottle of urine, lying abandoned on the hard shoulder of the M6 motorway. In order to confirm our suspicions, we stopped to collect it, and having seen one bottle, we began to see them at regular intervals along the hard shoulder. Knowing that these bottles and their contents were the product of fellow travellers, Bob felt uncomfortable about simply taking them, and so we needed to make some sort of exchange. At first we left behind whatever we had in our pockets (coins, tissues, paid utility bills), but this developed into keeping a selection of items in the car, gifts that had been given to us, things with some provenance, things we could exchange for the bottles of urine.

(**Location**) We were thus compelled to consider the **service station**, and its collusion with the motorway, to view it in any way other than that of a non-place. Unlike on the motorway, we can get out of our vehicles and function in this area, which suggests that the service station could be read as a *place*. But the service station exists merely as a utilitarian place, somewhere to drop out of your journey and procure what you need: a toilet, a bed for the night, food, fuel. It conforms to the model Augé describes as an 'abstract space' (Augé 1995: 98), a place that most people pass by as it lacks spatial coordinates with 'real places'.

In our attempt to bring a public consciousness of place to the service station through performance we are presented with a series of time-space problems. (**Method**) As we pass into the motorway space from the sliproads it is increasingly difficult to **place oneself in** accordance with the surrounding **landscape**. The motorway therefore affords a sort of limbo status.

These small, almost invisible actions continue to dominate our performance strategies. Initially we make things for each other, trying to elicit a laugh or prod the other body in to some sort of action. Each offer is insular, inward looking. Eventually critical mass will be achieved and the actions will become too frequent or exaggerated to remain for us alone. (**Aesthetics**) It is at this point that we are forced to raise our eyes, and begin to think about the wider **audience/user** of the space.

In the *Polaroid Act*, first enacted at Lancaster Services in 2000 and subsequently performed at service stations between Junctions 16 and 40 on the M6, we undertake a series of evening meals. After consuming a popular choice from the menu, we take a Polaroid of the table we have eaten at. (**Method**) The Polaroid is signed, dated and **placed** in an envelope. The envelope is then stuck to the **underside** of said **table** with chewing gum. The Polaroids are left for another diner to find.

As we cross from service station to service station, northbound to southbound, a network of glimpses of our motorway lives is formed. These incorporate Augé's notion of a 'series of snapshots' (Augé 1995: 86), which describe the traveller moving through space capturing fleeting partial glimpses of the landscape. Here, the Polaroid, unlike the snatched view from the frame of the car windscreen, poses a moment of rest and contemplation within the perpetual movement and sound of the motorway.

(**Method**) It seems important to recognise that the collaboration, both with each other and the potential hidden viewer, encourages a felicitous place where the **practice of looking** can be seen as a delightful and playful experience.

(**Method**) We deliberately **displace ourselves** from the arena of the non-place in an attempt to assemble, build or state connections with anthropological place.

A repeated performance entitled *Losing Purses*, first performed in 2001 at Sandbach Services Northbound, involves one of us attempting to lose a leather purse or wallet under a table, in the toilets or by the arcade machines. Displayed in each purse and wallet is a variety of paraphernalia: coins, wedding photographs, false business cards, supermarket receipts, doctors appointment cards. There is a contact number in each purse, with an invitation to leave us a message by telephone. Each purse is then stuffed with feathers to form a nest. The avian imagery references our magpie-like tendency to collect anything shiny. (**Method**) In **losing an** apparently personal **object** we are offering something of ourselves to the service station clientele. Those who find a purse have to thread together various strands of text and image, some real and some created.

Central to our praxis has been the engagement with the imagined viewer/reader. The abandoned purses and the Polaroids stuck to the underside of tables were not considered a failure when no one responded. (**Method**) This imagining extends to the reader of our written documents, as we hope they (you) will find the intrusion of a more ludic discourse analogous to the **strategies of** gentle **resistance** we offer in our sited practice.

From very early on, a small sense of ritual was ghosting the edges of our practice. And if ritual was ever-present, so too was the domestic context from which we might have imagined ourselves to be fleeing. To choose a wedding service as the final element of our practical interventions, was to find a way for both to exist within the space of the service station and to challenge its normative/social construction.

Thus, on Friday 20th September 2002 we invited fifty family, friends and interested parties to the Roadchef Sandbach Services between Junctions 16 and 17 of the M6 for the performance event *Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain.* From 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., the site was occupied by ten performers in wedding dresses, ten performers in morning suits, a six strong choir, a three-piece jazz-funk band, a keyboard player and a priest. At twelve thirty, we renewed our wedding vows in a ceremony that was open to all the users of the service station.

Our performative acts occur in the non-places of the service station and the hard shoulder. These are strange places that are neither part of the journey nor belonging to the surrounding landscape: '[t]he non-place is the opposite of utopia; it exists, and it does not contain any organic society' (Augé 1995: 111–12). Yet despite the displacement, abandoning the relative comfort of our car on the motorway, respite is evoked in the form of shelter from the frequentation of these places. In this depersonalised space of the motorway where can we find narratives to connect the travellers with the space?

(**Method**) We **found our narratives** around the *Bottles of Urine*. And so in their place we leave something of ourselves: coins, tissues or a telephone bill long since paid.

(**Method**) Also we left small **gifts** that friends have given us, or that we have given each other. We offer our own possessions in lieu of being able to initiate an exchange face to face with the drivers.

We are interested in examining the fluxal nature inherent in our performance work. Thus finding space, not only for the oscillation between liminal places and spaces, but the oscillation between ourselves. Occasionally, more than occasionally, one or the other of us thinks that the other one is not pulling their weight. But more often than not, one of us will bring the other one something that they've found, something diverting, disturbing, amusing. We surrender it to the other one, and this is when the 'n' fold thought comes into play, the thing fits into the bigger picture, makes sense of itself and of the things it is brought into contact with, a metamorphosis that has, to quote Deleuze and Guattari, 'multiple entranceways and exits and its own lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 21).

(**Key issues**) There are moments when one of the collaborators talks too much, and the **collaboration** is always subject to the other voice. Sometimes, there are moments when neither of the parties will say a word for a long time. Because we are yoked together in the action of daily life, and carry with us prior combined knowledge, it becomes necessary to set controls and limits. (**Method**) One of these is to **articulate a joint ownership** over all ideas and concepts generated, even in those moments when individual knowledge creation appears to be at play. It has become increasingly impossible to untangle the origins of a particular concept, Thus we assume joint responsibility.

(**Key Issues**) **Collaborative writing** for us brings about no single space where meaning can be sought, but a multitudinous array of spaces for interpretation.

This is described aphoristically by Deleuze and Guattari: '[t]he two of us wrote Anti-Oedipus together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 3). Deleuze and Guattari's writing is described by Stivale as 'two-fold thinking' (1998: ix), **which challenges the individualist location of knowledge creation**, as accepted in academic research.

(**Method**) If to be 'intertwined and enfolded' (Stivale 1998: ix) is reflective of collaboration, so we must **address the in-between space** in our work. This terminology reveals a thinking shared by two, and describes a collaborative process that folds together two individual perspectives in flux.

CASE STUDY 1: COMMENTARY

Baz Kershaw

Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain was the first fully collaborative performance/theatre doctoral project to be successfully completed in the UK. As such it achieved an innovative impact as creative research in its own right, as well as setting a new milestone in PhD awards. Its combination of research methods was shaped by the deeply intimate professional and personal relationship of Whalley and Miller in conjunction with the highly public **location** of a *service station* on the nation's *motorways*. It was also the first ever arts research collaboration between a university (Manchester Metropolitan University) and a motorway service station company (Roadchef Costa Coffee). Its **transmission** involved a broad range of 'multi-modal' outputs – a jointly written *thesis*, an *exhibition*, DVD *documentation* and a *television broadcast* – all articulated to a two-year long preparatory series of low-profile, surreptitious *motorway actions* and culminating in a highly visible *performance event*. The latter centred on a formal ceremony conducted by a priest in the service station café where Miller/Whalley reaffirmed their marriage vows before family, friends and colleagues (including PhD External Examiners), as well as many passing members of the British public as the café was open for business as usual.

The *ritual framing* of vows itself was the verbal correlative of a suite of *conjoined writing* **research methods** that included correspondence (letters/e-mails/Post-it notes/etc.), talking while writing together, leaving textual gaps for filling by the other and more. These tactics corresponded to the *performative exchange* methods of *gift giving* and *sharing finds* with strangers and each other devised for the research process – leaving letters, purses, Polaroid images, etc. – which depended on repeated motorway *car journeys*. These included swapping stories with hitch-hikers and transporting and *placing/losing objects*, which performed as service station contact points for the public. The artefacts' apparent provenance produced a key method of the research, as

they represented a *placing/displacing of the self* in the motorway landscape, literally opening a space that might never be filled by a reciprocal gift, but which could always become a focus of *practising looking* for the absent other(s). This *addressing of in-between spaces* as method was fundamental to articulating a dynamic of theoretical **starting points** for the project in the writings of *Augé* (non-place) and *Deleuze/Guattari* (folded thinking) that eventually materialised in the written thesis, but also to the aesthetics of its creative practices. The culminating marriage-vow ritual, like the deliberately placed artefacts, constituted an *audience framing* for the motorway-going public who could treat it as an *ignored invitation* or as a *found narrative* – a wedding in a motorway service station! – well fit for retelling, especially as the site was populated by ten other couples formally dressed as brides and grooms.

The reward of the public's interest for Whalley/Miller as researchers was animation of their project's **key issues** regarding conventional relationships between *space and place* on motorways. The research event challenged how that transport system tends to render the *domestic absent* by manifesting a foundation of the domestic – marriage – as present via *collaborative/contra-individualist creativity* as a *strategy of resistance* regarding the site's tendencies to commodify the travelling public. While the passing public might be puzzled or intrigued by the spectacle, the service station staff clearly enjoyed being in the picture. As the eleven waltzing wedding couples on the lawn alongside the three-lane carriageway almost brought the busy motorway traffic to a stop, so it was amusing to reflect that the most vital **starting point** of this remarkable example of PaR was the *chance observation* of a bottle of urine on the thin strip of its hard shoulder.

INTERMISSION: RECEPTION, SPECTATORSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain engaged the motorway-going public through a mix of participation and different modes of spectatorship that is representative of reception regime combinations in PaR more generally. Indirect and direct participation through the carefully placed artefacts, hitch-hiker stories, workplace entertainment and so on overlapped with the intimate and in-the-know spectatorships integral to the marriage-vow ceremony, plus the accidental spectatorship of the service station customers, then implicated spectatorship and – through the honking of horns – participation of the motorway drivers. Though no formal system of feedback was included, the patterns of contact in these differentiated modes enabled Whalley and Miller to gain comparative knowledge of, and insights into, reception of the event on a spectrum ranging from closely private to generally public.

A comparable mix was built into my environmentally specific durational

production *Mnemosyne Dreams*, presented on the heritage site of the Victorian ocean-going liner *SS Great Britain* at Bristol Docks, UK in 2002 (Kershaw 2005). With solo performer-artist Sue Palmer as chief collaborator, the project investigated one-person small-scale spectacle through performances that ran for six hours and were accessible to all visitors during its four-day run. Its three main shipboard locations – the promenade deck, women's boudoir and first-class cabin – positioned spectators as semi-formal audience, accidental eavesdroppers and intimate voyeurs, and its free-ranging walkabout sequences were an open invite that produced commentators, co-walkers, pied-piper followers and other quasi-roles. Invited spectators and randomly chosen visitors participated as four distinct 'memory groups' in a formal feedback system that also included one-to-one conversations. Modelled on reception research methods used in an earlier show on the ship (Kershaw 2002, 2008), *Mnemosyne Dreams* extended its findings to show how both large-scale and miniaturised spectacle can evoke acutely contesting histories often currently invisible at such sites.

The relatively restricted spaces of performance studios and rehearsal workshops are no barrier to equivalent experimentation in PaR mixed-mode reception. This is often designed to explore reactions to the hybrid aesthetics and fissionable thematics that often feature in PaR projects and productions. The diverse forms of attention, engagement and response this produces encourage the invention of tailor-made feedback methods that aim to clarify the fine and frequently fluid distinctions created in and between spectatorship and participation. Readers might be interested to detect something of this kind in the terms of address created by the subtly structured relationships of dancers, choreographer and audience members implied in this chapter's second case study.

Figure 3.3 Head finding a nest: *the Suchness of Heni and Eddie*, at ResCen NightWalking Conference, Greenwich Dance Agency, UK, 2002. Performers: Henrietta Hale and Eddie Nixon. Choreographer: Rosemary Lee. Writer: Niki Pollard. Photographer: Vipul Sangoi, Raindesign. Reproduced with permission.

Case study 2

Rosemary Lee and Niki Pollard

the Suchness of Heni and Eddie

an inside out performance

This hybrid performance/lecture-dem unpicked and exposed the layers of exploration within the creative process. Intimacies, subtleties and fruitful accidents were revealed as the audience witnessed the dancers' thought processes and physical challenges and heard the choreographer's struggles and discoveries. Simultaneously an intimate duet unfolded before their eyes.

the Suchness of Heni and Eddie explored a new form of presentation that is both educational in its broadest sense and a performance at the same time. It was designed to be presented in more intimate settings such as studio spaces. It toured to the main UK higher education institutions offering dance at postgraduate level as well to various dance agencies and festivals, including NottDance06. It was first shown at the ResCen conference *NightWalking* (2002) and was then developed and toured in 2006–7. The development of *the Suchness of Heni and Eddie* was supported by ACE and ResCen.

Choreographed by Rosemary Lee with the dancers; performed by Henrietta Hale, Eddie Nixon and Rosemary Lee; writing and devising by Niki Pollard and Rosemary Lee. *the Suchness of Heni and Eddie* DVD (Bristol: PARIP and London: ResCen, 2007) is an interactive DVD that is part of a research project by PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance) that investigates how new technology can be used for the documentation of performance, as well as part of ResCen's ongoing research into revealing the creative process of the artist.

> [The ResCen website includes video clips from the performances and DVD, referenced by the thumbnail images keyed to `research methods` below (reproduced with permission): http://www.rescen.net/Rosemary_Lee/suchness_vid.html (accessed 1 July 2010) – viewing advised. It also has the full version of the following interview, so text missing from the blank spaces in the edit below can be acessed by readers.]

Interview (edited BK and NP) • **`Transmission:`** *`website`*

In December 2004 Niki Pollard interviewed Rosemary Lee about her work *the Suchness of Heni and Eddie*. This interview took place between its first performance at *NightWalking* in 2002 and Rosemary's revival and development of it for touring in 2006. It was also prior to her involvement with PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance) to produce the interactive DVD.

NP *the Suchness of Heni and Eddie* is a project in which I have collaborated with you as a writer.

RL *the Suchness of Heni and Eddie* I suppose originally started when I watched two dancers, Henrietta Hale and Eddie Nixon, dance together in the rehearsals of a work I made in 2001 called Passage.

- **Starting Point: an unfinished dance**

I wanted the duet to be about my sense of who these dancers are when I watch them in the rehearsal studio. When I speak of 'suchness', which is in fact a translation of a Buddhist term (**tathata**, eds), I am trying to mark this quality. I borrowed the term as I felt it could suggest my interest in what I am seeing in a dancer, that is an essence and potential which I want to draw out through their dancing. By this, I do not mean any impossible idealisation of who they 'really are', but rather that I am focused on who they are to my eyes as they dance.

- **Key Issue: performers' presence**

I decided to give a kind of performative lecture . . .

My idea was that I would reveal what was happening for me choreographically as I started a creative process from what felt like nowhere – other than in this conviction that whatever was created be about how I saw these two dancers dancing together.

the Suchness of Heni and Eddie became I would say an 'inside-out' performance in which I tried to show the workings of a piece and particularly the layers of influence that come into play when a choreographer tries to make a piece.

I am now researching how it can tour as a duet in which I still talk and read as part of the performance. It will somehow start from seeing the workings of the duet, like listening to a musical performance while following a score annotated by the composer's notes.

- **Transmission: multi-modal duet for three**

NP How did you approach that first week in the studio?

RL

I started with **tasks** that were about the dancers being 'present' and 'arriving' in the space, but in a duet form. For example, I remember asking Heni and Eddie each to sense their arrival – in their bodies, their readiness for rehearsal, how they were noticing the space, how they felt – but to be simultaneously sensitive to the arrival process of each other. They could only move when the other moved.

- **Method: connection first [Clip 1 balance]**

I remember strongly wanting to 'start from scratch', with 'a blank sheet', I consciously tried not to prepare in my usual way. I can't even remember having written any ideas in a notebook. My thought was simply to start with finding themselves in their own bodies, of becoming present with each other. In that sense I wanted to begin *in* and *from* the present moment.

- **Starting Point: scratch/blank sheet**

I gave them improvisation tasks with formal structures like the spatial patterns of partnering in a court or folk dance. each day, I would set a relationship such as 'far away' or 'left shoulder to left shoulder', or 'face to face'. Think of the squareness of the two bodies in a folk dance. You are often side by side or front to front or you might circle each other.

- **Method: bodies in measured proximity [Clip 2 pivots]**

What I did bring to the space too, besides an empty notebook, were many postcards that mostly featured two people or two animals – images of different partnerships and duets. I imagined that we would each write on these postcards every night after rehearsal.

Some of that writing was read or circulated through the audience during the 'inside-out' performance.

- **Method: writing postcards**

NP During that first research week for *Suchness* you seemed concerned that the stamp of your voice would impose itself too strongly on Eddie and Heni's dancing?

RL Yes, I questioned the integrity of what I had set out to do.

- **Key Issue: questioning/reflexivity**

The potential I can draw out of them is inevitably inseparable from who I am and how I see.

in *Suchness* the process *is* the product.

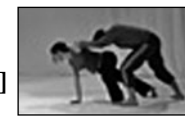
- **Aesthetics: be spontaneous**

How I try to draw out their individual qualities, I think, is to find images which release ways of moving that feel right for who they are and so empower them in some way.

NP Can you describe an image or task during your research week which drew this 'suchness' from Eddie?

RL One task I set was for one dancer to manoeuvre the other to walk through the space. Imagine only moving if your partner moves you and their task is to make you walk by picking up a foot, getting your body in the right place, placing that foot down on the floor again and so on. In other words every detail of a walk had to be attended to by the active dancer in this exercise.

- **Method: moving others' bodies [Clip 3 transient moments]**



Eddie can seem taller than he actually is and muscularly solid . . . In this task, I can see the solidity of his bones and musculature by how laborious it is for Heni to move him. Yet I am also drawn to how he surrenders his authoritative quality of strength and is quietly absorbed in how Heni is trying to move him.

NP The dependency imposed by the task could seem disempowering even humiliating, but Eddie neither resists, nor is helplessly passive within the task?

RL Yes, he is fully engaged in this task of not being able to move on his own.

NP What then is the 'suchness' of Heni?

RL

Her presence is very open – one that I find extremely beautiful. I see abandonment in her dancing, a kind of wild, 'limby' grace.

I remember describing to Heni the feeling of being out in the endless long grass of a prairie, under a huge sky. I was thinking of the extraordinary descriptions of prairie lands in *Little House on the Prairie.*

I feel that Heni's dancing existed in a place like this.

- **Method: imagined location**

NP I remember you questioned yourself as to whether you were looking at Heni and Eddie's own 'suchness' if you sometimes gave them movement tasks that you have used elsewhere.

RL Could I shape a task that was purely about finding out who these people are?

I realised that obviously my tasks impose structures and spatial relations constantly. For example: How, then, can I claim that I am investigating their 'suchness'? I sometimes fear that I am being hypocritical. My aspiration to uncover a dancer's 'suchness' may be more bound up with my ethical sense of wanting to respect and recognise a dancer than a reality.

- **Key Issue: ethical self-critique**

So this question of whether I can actually really get at the suchness of Heni and Eddie without imposing my own pre-existing tasks was a constant question in my head.

In my defence, though, the tasks I gave in *Suchness* were usually only skeleton suggestions that left a great deal of room for interpretation. I was trying to find forms that were formal and simple that allowed the poignant content of seeing Heni and Eddie together to spill in and about the forms.

- **Aesthetics: uncontainable flows**

NP You worked on tasks with their eyes closed. Can you explain more about that?

RL While realising I would impose structures, I also tried to be very receptive to Eddie and Heni's qualities of movement. One way I did this was to ask them to move with their eyes closed. In part this was to do with asking them to sense one another's movement profoundly through senses other than the visual.

Witnessing them work without sight makes their sensitivity to each other all the more apparent.

I am interested in the audience knowing the dancer is facing a problem. For example, seating them side by side on chairs, with eyes closed, and asking them to try to move in the same way as the other person; this makes you acutely aware of the struggle to sense in the dancer. This struggle to find their way in the dark seems to me not just to represent this couple's desire to find each other but perhaps a state familiar to many people finding their way on their own journey.

- **Method: relating blind [Clip 4 rehearsal]**

The tasks that I gave were almost all of partnering, creating a physical dependency which might also have indirect emotional resonance to an audience. I do not give physical tasks that might be 'about' an emotional situation, for example the grabs and pushes of a fight. Rather, I might give a practical task of Heni being always held away from the ground, while Eddie walks an imagined tightrope. Their interdependency is in physical terms. The intimacy that arises between them then is abstract, belonging to the dance form, but it can hint at the unspoken complexities of human relationships.

NP Several of your duet tasks made them move clumsily, for example, restricting them to moving while always standing on the other's feet.

RL

I was interested in their struggle to achieve the task perhaps because it is evocative to me of the struggles we experience with partners in our own lives.

Heni stands on Eddie's feet and leans far out. You will see a beautiful image, suspended like the figurehead at the prow of a ship, but you also see Eddie straining to counterbalance her as he holds onto her hips. The audience knows that she is on the cusp of falling.

- **Method: stepping on each others' feet [Clip 5 on moving feet]**

I want the dancers to keep working at this edge. My dilemma is to compose work that can also be 'raw' and 'unpolished'. Do dancers inevitably sometimes fake rawness?

The challenge to me as I direct dancers then, is to discriminate finely between over- and under-rehearsing material depending on the dancers I am working with.

NP

What did you learn from the 'inside out performance' at *NightWalking*?

RL

I think *Suchness* gave the audience an intimacy with the dancers that I had not realised was possible.

This relationship felt deeper and much more tangible because of the form the performance took.

Just as I want them to sense Heni and Eddie's state as they dance, so, we can sense the audience as they watch intently; they are part of the action.

- **`Transmission:` interactive live performance**

CASE STUDY 2: COMMENTARY

Baz Kershaw

the Suchness of Heni and Eddie confounded normative assumptions about relationships between process and product in the creation of contemporary dance. Its hybrid combinations of movement and text, presentation and commentary, improvisation and choreography exploded many of the presumptive rules that separate arts creativity research and experimental dance. Its mix of research methods was founded in the well-rehearsed uniqueness of strong professional-personal bonds between dancers Hale and Nixon and choreographer Lee and amanuensis-confidante Pollard. It belied its classic combination of PaR **locations** of *academic conference*, *dance studios* and *festivals* through an extreme hyphenation of communicative modes – lecture-demo-choreo-impro-pas-de-deux/trois/quatre-motion – while still being broadcast through a relatively familiar roster of multi-modal **transmission** channels: *participatory live performance*, *website writings/videos* and *interactive DVD*. The whole suite of creative manoeuvres was crafted in intensive periods over five years from conception to DVD publication. In actual performance the super-cool live combination of the energy rich un-dancing duet plus a softly spoken voice-over exposé of first-frontier bodily techniques and raw personal-professional ethical honesty of judgement was clearly revelatory to its intensely attentive audiences.

The **research methods** leading to that effect were like a countdown of deliberately wrong-footing moves designed to evolve a complex creative clarity. The mundane business of *writing postcards* with source images for audience members to reflect on before and during the performance was especially

consonant with the choreo-improvisational score's technique of *moving others' bodies* – an everyday aspect of care, of course – that established the dancers'/spectators' utter interdependence. For example, the delicately advancing travel while *stepping on each other's feet* echoed the many demanding passes, balances, traverses, lifts as Heni and Eddie *related blind* through visceral contact obviously charged with tentative but certain trust. These interactive routines conjugated into sequences of shifting *bodies in measured proximity* and always implied the grounds of an *imagined location* which could be anywhere that spectators chose: a thin cliff top, a maze with transparent walls, a dance hall of dreams. Such randomness seemed planned to become predictably unpredictable, sustaining a boundless flow of creative exchange, as the event's first rule was to make *connection first* – between dancer and dancer and choreographer and correspondent and spectator-participants and dancers – and to be ethically finely calibrated in whatever ensued.

The **aesthetics** of this highly dexterous *duet for three* was founded on simple stratagems which magnified the two base elements of all efficacious performance – namely paradox and excess – as if by serial on-off switching of a light one could really see what the dark looks like. That impossible order to *be spontaneous* was its core conundrum, through which the bodies of the two dancers seemed to search for *uncontainable flows* from one moment to the next. The project's **key issues** together might be considered an object lesson in how to distress the principle art of deconstruction: to destabilise each and every form of address. The key term in its title – 'suchness' – cleverly performed as a detonative stand-in for *performers' presence*, a substitution wholly informed by a disarming commitment to *questioning reflexivity* in order to produce a stunningly rigorous *ethical self-critique*. Yet the main **starting points** of *the Suchness of Heni and Eddie* signal provisional in-between events and the radical openness in simultaneous acts of bodies moving, voices speaking and hands writing: an *unfinished dance* and a *scratch blank sheet*. If one were searching for a paradigmatic PaR event, what better place to start than with a foot already lifted to make an invisible mark creatively right?

POSTSCRIPT: AN ANTI-CONCLUSION

If diversity characterises the nature of practice as research in theatre and performance studies, can it be said to have any general unity of purpose or usefulness? If a lifted foot can stand for a multitude of other starting points, what might we make of its sole? These are not 'what is the meaning of life' kinds of question. The two case studies together indicate that the quality of particular PaR projects rests in their ability to make specific sense of very

common properties. Including Key Issues as a minimal PaR aspect, thus generated: space, place and absence; movement, presence and reflexivity; and, in the intermission example, memory, the past and power. Each group of properties generate particular multiple meanings for every specific PaR project. In this they align with the *paradigm shift* (assuming it happened, *c.*1950–1990) between modernism and postmodernism, between a world organised around the (apparent) stability of binaries and one in which multiplicity, complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity rule.

A key component in the 'practice turn' in the disciplines has been a vertiginous traverse between discursive and embodied ways of becoming/being, doing epistemologies and creating ontologies. I have implied throughout this chapter that PaR in theatre/performance studies increasingly has aimed to rest, as it were, on the point of that turning. One major sign of the criticality of that conundrum is the 'foundational problem of where knowledges are located' (Piccini and Rye, in Allegue et al. 2009: 36). And that indicates a profound principle of practice as research in theatre and performance: that its methods always involve the dislocation of knowledge itself.

Paradoxically, the annals of philosophy provide corroboration of that principle, often in the form of reminiscence and anecdote. One of the earliest and shortest examples in the Western tradition is about a famous cynic of Ancient Greece.

> Diogenes once observed a child drinking from his cupped hands. 'In the practice of moderation, a child has become my master,' he remarked, and immediately threw his goblet away.

The goblet leaving Diogenes' hand is the moment of practice as research. Philosophy becomes action and the location of knowledge is temporarily entirely undone by performance. Ecologically speaking, a more sustainable future may be drawn closer through creative acts and events. Could this become why one of the most common mottos in the practice of theatre and performance-making will be that next-to-briefest of paradoxes: less is more?

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CHAPTER 4

Researching Theatre History and Historiography

Jim Davis, Katie Normington and Gilli Bush-Bailey
with Jacky Bratton

This chapter interweaves two case studies around a discussion of research methods in theatre history and historiography.

Case study 1: Tracing medieval English convent drama

Katie Normington

What methodologies are appropriate to retrieve a theatre history for which there are few traces? European convent drama has the relative luxury of being served by textual remains ranging from the like of tenth-century Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim to sixteenth-century Tuscan Dominican nun and playwright Beatrice sel Sera. In England, extant writing by women is fragmentary, but despite the lack of evidence critics such as Nancy Cotton believe it is 'likely, in view of the uniformity of medieval European culture and the considerable authority of women who headed the medieval nunneries, that . . . English abbesses contributed to the slow, anonymous, communal growth of the medieval religious drama' (Cotton 1980: 28).

Textual evidence provides a tantalising insight into the possible influence that women may have had in shaping religious drama. At fourteenth-century Barking Abbey, the Abbess Katherine Sutton's adaptation of the Regularis Concordia for performance by nuns introduced some innovative features. Ogden believes such adaptations by Abbesses better expressed female religious experience (Ogden 2002: 153). The Abbess noted that she had altered the trope in order to offer more exciting fare for the 'populorum consursus' – a congregation of the people – which suggests that the

ceremony was seen by people from the parish (Young 1933: 164–8). Textual remains suggest that beyond formal uses of drama convents engaged with ceremonies that explored performative dimensions. Indeed, the whole symbolic language of the house was imbued with a sense of the performative: vestments were coded to reflect aspects of Christ's life and, as this was a silent house, a sophisticated sign language meant that the religious were accustomed to reading gestural inflexions (Aungier 1840: 405–9). More specifically, the ordinances that set out the novice ceremonies showed how a sense of the theatrical was embraced within the abbey traditions. The novice ceremony displayed an engagement with many aspects of theatricality. The ceremony utilised prearranged props such as a coffin, a ring, banners and specific vestments. The ceremony was tightly scripted with detailed roles indicated for the Bishop, novice, abbess and other sisters (Aungier 1840: 313–16).

The methodological constraints of using textual remains to trace a historically distant practice soon become apparent. Though such techniques unearth remnants of religious drama and performative practices, they offer little insight into why convents supported an environment conducive to the development of drama. In order to attempt this it is necessary to look to other methods, and in particular to think about how the discipline of performance requires techniques that extend beyond textual approaches.

The methodologies employed by dance historian Susan Foster suggest a similarity between the processes of performance and that of retrieving history in that she deals with the ephemeral. She postulates that physical traces of the past are embodied within our contemporary somatic expression. In *Choreographing History* she introduces the notion of 'bodily writing' (Foster 1995: 4). She posits that whatever a body is doing – sitting writing, standing thinking, walking, talking – it is a body that is engaged in cultural practice. Foster goes on to ask, 'What markers of its movement might a bodily writing have left behind?' (Foster 1995: 4). She muses that in the past the movement of bodies meant they must have touched buildings, clothing or objects. Other indications of past bodies are given through records that denote how bodies were supposed to look or what they should wear. In other words, there are a series of 'material remains' through which a historian can reconstruct the bodies of the past.

The employment of Foster's methodology necessitates analysing a range of interdisciplinary sources, including archaeological remains, sumptuary laws, wills and behaviour manuals, in order to see how bodies lived. Some of these sources are of particular benefit in uncovering why an active dramatic life occurred within convents. The work of archaeologist Roberta Gilchrist

offers a comparison between the remains of medieval monasteries and convents. Gilchrist points out that nuns, unlike monks, were not self-sufficient and relied on social links with villages in order to provide them with food, rental income and the like. Additionally convent churches were often shared by the parish and served the parochial congregation as well as the sororal body. She concludes that, 'From the nature of their archaeology and the evidence of medieval wills, it seems that nunneries were founded in order to interact closely with the local community' (Gilchrist 1994: 191). The close relationship between a nunnery and its surrounding community may account for the growth in drama since it would serve to educate a visiting population.

Gilchrist's archaeological study is useful in a further way. She suggests that the use of space within abbeys was gendered: 'In contrast to male houses, communal space appears to have been better guarded against the encroachment by the desire for privacy' (Gilchrist 1994: 194). While the fifteenth century saw greater segregation of male abbey spaces and a demand for greater privacy, shown through the partitioning of dormitories and other spaces, many convents maintained shared spaces. This preference for shared and communal spaces indicates that practices, like drama, which brought the community together, were likely to be popular.

Archaeological approaches open up ideas as to how bodies of the past might have, in Foster's terms, 'touched buildings'. The study of library holdings and reading practices of abbeys such as Syon offers other ways of discovering how bodies interacted and through doing so set up an environment in which drama could flourish.

In her analysis of the instructional literature of Syon Abbey, Julia Mortimer suggests that the fifteenth century saw a trend away from solo reading and of the sole woman mystic to a more communal and embodied practice (Mortimer 2002: 17). Drawing on the scholarship of Felicity Riddy and Carole Meale, Mortimer suggests that:

> the process of listening and memorising devotional texts, 'hiding them in the bosom', 'learning by heart' suggests not only a strategy which overcame the limitations of illiteracy but also a feminised form of internalising text which united women across different groupings of devotional readership. (Mortimer 2002: 32)

This embodying of text and the formation of communal reading practices is also seen by Mortimer as a response to growing fears of unregulated religious practices and the encouragement of a corporate sororal body (community of nuns) which was more outward looking and public (Mortimer 2002:

190). Mortimer suggests fifteenth-century reading patterns and religious regulation encouraged greater communal expression and the rise of this possibly accounts for a growth of performative practices among religious houses. In a climate where participants were used to reading aloud and to listening to 'live' words it is only a small step to transfer this activity to one of enactment and spectatorship.

Employing a range of methodologies in the study of distant, and often absent, theatre histories opens up new approaches to the subject. By using Foster's notion of 'bodily writing' the past can be brought alive, and to some degree inscribe itself upon the body of the historian.

RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Jim Davis

This chapter brings together a series of intersecting essays to demonstrate the ways in which we currently approach theatre history and seek to overcome some of the difficulties entailed in our pursuit of the theatrical past. In *Re-thinking History* Keith Jenkins makes a useful distinction between the past, the otherness of the 'before now' – absent, unknowable, gone forever – and history, which is the means by which we attempt to interpret, record and narrate the past (1991: xx). History is the way we write about that past and theatre historiography has come to define not only the way we write about the theatrical past, but also how we raise issues about the research methods we use in uncovering, interpreting and disseminating that past.

Since Bruce A. McConachie argued for a post-positivist approach to theatre history in the mid-1980s (1985: 465–86), there has been something of a revolution in the field, accentuated by the recognition that a singular notion of history is inadequate. Old orthodoxies, such as the notion that theatre history largely exists to provide background information for the staging of canonical dramas in (largely) western theatres or to enable a scientifically based approach to reconstructing past performances, notwithstanding their limited traces and ephemerality, have largely disappeared. McConachie argued convincingly that the investigation of past performance needs to move beyond the aesthetics of theatre to its variegated modes of reception and to the social and culture contexts that have engendered these. Theatre history or histories, in other words, do not exist in a limbo; they are part of something much broader in scope and relate to society at large.

In accepting that an understanding of theatre history cannot be confined by the scientific methods of positivism, it may also be necessary to accept Hayden

White's view that history is a narrative form, telling a story and adopting rhetorical devices to convince readers of the point of view argued for by the writer (White 1978; Postlewait 1992: 356–68). (History may also be transmitted orally just as embodied histories may be transmitted by actors, issues that will be addressed below.) Subjectivity, as embodied in the beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and concerns of the authors and the societies that have formed these attitudes, will have an inevitable impact on what they write or recount. But narratives themselves can be seductive, so in turn it is necessary guard against the 'grand narratives' of history and of theatre history, whether these represent the 'Whig' belief in human perfectibility or a more dystopian or negative perception of progress. Once historians accept that there can be no 'objective truth' waiting to be uncovered when they delve into the theatrical past, but merely assessments and interpretations of the evidence available, they will be all the more likely to take nothing on trust, while also better prepared to make independent judgement, whether they are working individually or collectively.

> We began our collaborative research project with some very marginalised evidence: the plays of Jane Scott, which we had first to disinter from the Larpent Collection of plays submitted to the Lord Chamberlain for licensing, where they had languished unrecognised and undisturbed since she wrote and staged them at her successful theatre, the Sans Pareil in the Strand in London, between 1809 and 1818. The Collection contains around fifty manuscripts of hers, which have not only been disregarded as unimportant trash, evidence only of 'The Decline of the Drama' in the early nineteenth century, but have been actively suppressed by reference works such as Allardyce Nicoll's hand-list, which fails to attribute the majority of them to their author. (Gilli Bush-Bailey with Jacky Bratton)

History (and theatre history) relies on a series of processes before its dissemination. Firstly, the historian has to make a decision that something is worth researching and writing about. This may be because plenty of evidence is available; alternatively, it may be a lack of evidence that determines the need to find out more, to explore an absence further. Or it may be that the historian judges the topic, from their point of view, to be important or significant enough to justify writing about it. Even in selecting a period or particular subject to study the historian is making ideological and subjective decisions, just as the selection of evidence may be the result of their own choices and value judgements. Thus, even before the interpretation and evaluation of evidence takes place, choices are being made. In turn this determines how the topic is documented and narrated, is rendered, in other words, into the version which we eventually read or are presented with in other forms.

What methodologies are appropriate to retrieve a theatre history for which there are few traces? European convent drama has the relative luxury of being served by textual remains ranging from the likes of tenth-century Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim to sixteenth-century Tuscan Dominican nun and playwright Beatrice sel Sera. In England, extant writing by women is fragmentary, but despite the lack of evidence critics such as Nancy Cotton believe it is 'likely, in view of the uniformity of medieval European culture and the considerable authority of women who headed the medieval nunneries, that . . . English abbesses contributed to the slow, anonymous, communal growth of the medieval religious drama. (Katie Normington)

In accepting that history is often ideologically driven and usually presented in narrative forms, it is useful to remember that two further factors influence its dissemination: epistemology and hermeneutics. Epistemology demands an awareness that our understanding of history is subject to systems of knowledge in operation when an event occurred in the past and to the systems of knowledge which impact upon us today. At one level this is the point of intersection – past or present – between history and philosophy. Jenkins refers to the 'epistemological fragility' of history, citing this as a key factor in enabling multifarious readings of past events (Jenkins 1991: 12–16). For, in any particular period, fundamental assumptions about 'reality' are invisible to the people holding them. Foucault famously sees the 'episteme' as fluid, as an open rather than closed concept that 'makes it possible to grasp the set of constraints and limitations, which, at any given moment, are imposed upon discourse' (Foucault 2002: 211). Secondly, hermeneutics – which (for our purposes) can be rather generally defined not just as the theory and practice of interpretation but also as the interpretation of interpretations – is central to the way in which we read historical texts. Such texts themselves are interpretations of past events, just as the reader's or auditor's reception of such text adds yet another layer of interpretation to their reception. An understanding of the centrality of epistemology and hermeneutics to the study of history is therefore essential, for they are the means through which the necessity for multiple – rather than unitary – perspectives can be appreciated. In turn reflexivity in writing and responding to history – an awareness of how meanings are constructed through the more or less shared subjective assumption of writer and reader – eventuate from this understanding.

However, in accepting history as a form of narrative and dismissing positivist and essentialist approaches to the past, it should not be assumed that good historiographic practice can eschew careful and detailed exploration and evaluation of sources or of archival evidence, in whatever forms these may take.

The employment of Foster's methodology necessitates analysing a range of interdisciplinary sources, including archaeological remains, sumptuary laws, wills and behaviour manuals, in order to see how bodies lived. Some of these sources are of particular benefit in uncovering why an active dramatic life occurred within convents. The work of archaeologist Roberta Gilchrist offers a comparison between the remains of medieval monasteries and convents. Gilchrist points out that nuns, unlike monks, were not self-sufficient and relied on social links with villages in order to provide them with food, rental income and the like. Additionally convent churches were often shared by the parish and served the parochial congregation as well as the sororal body. She concludes that, 'From the nature of their archaeology and the evidence of medieval wills, it seems that nunneries were founded in order to interact closely with the local community' (Gilchrist 1994: 191). The close relationship between a nunnery and its surrounding community may account for the growth in drama since it would serve to educate a visiting population. (Katie Normington)

Any observation made by historians must at least be grounded in evidence. But it is very difficult – perhaps impossible – to write history in which some form of speculation or imagination does not occur, either in making connections between sources or in assessing new evidence that has been unearthed or in filling in the gaps when evidence is unavailable. Nor can it be assumed that approaches to writing history should be theory-free: while theory applied over-rigorously can be a form of closure, the orthodox assumption that a study of history should ignore theory is in itself flawed. Far better to acknowledge the ideas that are influencing one's own opinions rather than to assume naively that one is untouched by theoretical positions. Even the selection of evidence is unlikely to be free from bias, whether it commences or is part of the process. Equally top-down approaches to theatre history (asking, for instance, how the representation of power in the theatre of the Jacobean period reflects or comments upon the operation of Jacobean state power) may be just as legitimate as the bottom-up approach, in which the historian starts with documents (perhaps a newly discovered series of letters and diaries belonging to an actor) and then attempts to elicit what they tell us about the theatre in which that actor worked.

As theatre historians we rely on documents, visual records and other material objects to explore past performance events and their contexts. Yet historians should also take heed of recent work by Joseph Roach and Diana Taylor, which emphasises how the traces of performance may be communicated physically over time, and which sees the body and oracy as legitimate points of focus for our studies (Roach 1996; Taylor 2003), a factor which is strongly emphasised in our two case studies. Roach has argued for the importance of

How can we know about past performance? Joseph Roach notes theatre historians' tendency to strike notes of 'irretrievable loss' about the 'fragility of their subject', to express 'self-consciousness about the perceived contradiction of writing the history of so notoriously transient a form' (Roach 1992: 293–8). But the same writer, in his cross-disciplinary study *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996), shows that the subject of performance, if adequately theorised and imaginatively extended, offers wonderfully suggestive ways of dealing with its own absences. Building on his insights, the urgent 'issue of absence' in 'performances of the distant past', and the development of strategies to deal with it, are at the centre of Mark Franko and Annette Richards' introduction to *Acting on the Past: Historical Performance Across the Disciplines*. Franko and Richards emphasise 'the movement between present and past, one in which archive and act, fragment and body, text and sounding, subject and practice, work in provocative interaction' (2000: 1), arguing against the prevailing focus on 'immediacy and evanescence' advocated by Richard Schechner and others who laid down the foundation stones for performance studies as an emergent discipline in the 1960s and 1970s. Franko and Richards' project is to issue 'a challenge to the field to conceptualize the past and thus also historicize itself' (2003: 3). (Gilli Bush-Bailey with Jacky Bratton)

juxtaposing 'living memory as restored behaviour against a historical record of scripted archives' in performance research, suggesting that the projects of the French *Annalistes* of the twentieth century engage with performative practices that are transmitted somatically across generations and cultures (Roach 1996: 11), a notion taken up in Bush-Bailey and Bratton's case study below. Roach's concerns have been supplemented by Diana Taylor who makes a telling distinction between the archive 'of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral *repertoire* of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)' (Taylor 2003: 19). She makes a plausible case for treading warily around the fixity of the archive, arguing that the function of the repertoire is to enact

> embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge . . . As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning . . . The repertoire too, then, allows scholars to trace traditions and influences . . . Embodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge. (Taylor 2003: 20–1)

Taylor further suggests that, if we shift the focus from written to embodied culture, we may also wish to rethink our methodologies:

> Instead of thinking of focusing on patterns of cultural expression in terms of texts and narratives, we might think about them as scenarios that do not reduce gestures and embodied practices to narrative description. (Taylor 2003: 16)

The methodologies employed by dance historian Susan Foster suggest a similarity between the processes of performance and those of retrieving history in that she deals with the ephemeral. She postulates that physical traces of the past are embodied within our contemporary somatic expression. In *Choreographing History* she introduces the notion of 'bodily writing'. She posits that whatever a body is doing – sitting writing, standing thinking, walking, talking – it is a body that is engaged in cultural practice. Foster goes on to ask, 'What markers of its movement might a bodily writing have left behind?' She muses that in the past the movement of bodies meant they must have touched buildings, clothing or objects. Other indications of past bodies are given through records that denote how bodies were supposed to look, or what they should wear. In other words, there are a series of 'material remains' through which a historian can reconstruct the bodies of the past. (Katie Normington)

Roach's nomination of the term 'kinaesthetic imagination' is particularly useful to the pursuit of the embodied history of the performer and acknowledges the inspiration of 'dance historians on the transmission (and transformation) of memory through movement'. He cites Susan Foster's work on the language of dance as separable from the dancer, 'a kinaesthetic vocabulary, one that can move up and down the social scale as well as from one generation to the other' (Foster 1996: 166). This concept offers ways into understanding the performances of early nineteenth-century melodrama that, as Foster so vividly describes, 'helped to consolidate a new, dichotomous relationship between words and movement . . . movement was called upon only in those moments when events extinguished speech'. (Gilli Bush-Bailey with Jacky Bratton)

The work of Taylor and Roach is of great significance for theatre and performance historians, broadening the field of enquiry but not necessarily erasing other, complementary approaches. For the moment, I want to return to the archive and focus on the place of iconographic and material objects in our

study of the theatrical past. Christopher Balme, in an essay on theatre iconography and the referential dilemma, pinpoints the problems of pictorial evidence and the impossibility of 'final' verification of pictorial documents (Balme 1997: 190–201). All too often used simply as descriptive illustration in some publications, without the rigorous interrogation usually applied to written documents, pictorial evidence is limited in its usefulness as a record of performance (or the circumstances of performance). This is partly because its reliability cannot always be measured against other sources, partly because pictorial representation itself was governed by aesthetic rules and conventions which circumscribe its legitimacy or accuracy as a depiction of events, people or places, and partly because (as in illustrated editions of Shakespeare, for example), an idealised rather than 'authentic' rendering of an event may be depicted. Even photographic evidence may not be taken on trust (especially from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), since scenes from plays, for example, were often represented in photographers' studios rather than in the theatres where they occurred. The referential dilemma, then, refers to the gap between the actuality of events in the past and how they have been represented. While we may find that some pictorial evidence is relatively reliable, other evidence (scenes from staged plays in eighteenth-century England represented in the style of conversation pieces – as if they were scenes from everyday life – or depicted as idealised history paintings, for example) may be limited in their scope for revealing exact details of past theatrical performance.

Just as Balme demonstrated how iconography is contextualised by period, so essays by Thomas Postlewait on periodisation and period style have usefully explored the ways that theatre history often has been organised methodologically (Postlewait 1990: 52–5; 1998: 299–318). Postlewait accepts periodisation as an unavoidable evil, reminding us that it is one of the ways in which historians not only break up and organise history, but also manipulate it. Thus we may define theatre by century (nineteenth-century theatre), by geography (English or French theatre), by monarchies (Elizabethan or Jacobean theatre), by artistic or literary movements (Baroque theatre, Romantic theatre), by individuals (theatre in the age of Shakespeare or Molière) and by many other means, all of which are highly loaded and carry implications about context and significance. Periodisation becomes even more complicated when we define theatre by an aesthetic style – if we talk of Expressionist theatre, for example, are we referring to a theatrical movement in early twentieth-century Germany or to a general tendency in certain types of drama, theatre and performance to externalise moments of emotional intensity regardless of a specific period? Since styles (such as melodrama and naturalism) may also overlap within a given period of time, a further problem confronts us if we try to define period style too specifically. Clearly, even if the organisation and compartmentalisation of the theatrical past is unavoidable, especially in general, sequential

histories of national and world theatre, readers need to query and interrogate this rather than merely accept it on face value.

Postlewait has also drawn attention to the significance of micro-history as a means of investigating the theatrical past (Postlewait 2000: 95–6). Macro-histories are likely to be periodised in that they deal with events between one point in time and another (whether this is a history of theatre from ancient times to the present day or, more specifically, of Medieval, Restoration or Victorian theatre); or, less traditionally, they may question periodisation through the use of contrasting time frames. But micro-histories – the study of the past synchronically (across a specific moment in time) – may yield results that differ substantially from more diachronic studies (the study of the past through chronological time). Thus Joseph Donohue's account of the campaign to close the Empire Music Hall in 1894 or Mark Baer's study of the Old Prices Riots in Covent Garden in the latter months of 1809 provide alternative approaches to examining moments in the past, releasing them from the restrictions of linear narrative history (Baer 1992; Donohue 2005). Specific

Approaches that seek to 'reconstruct' past performance axiomatically carry the notion that the first, or original, state can be rebuilt. Cultural materialist theories have worked to destabilise the bedrock of objectivity upon which reconstruction must surely rely if it is to be successful. Therefore a concern with the present – the cultural position from which we revisit the past being as potent as the contexts of the past we seek to investigate – is central to the materialist methodology we have sought to establish. In attempting to define the relationship between cultural analysis and the 'different' understanding of history it seeks, Mieke Bal offers a summation of that project that is pertinent to our own search for a definition of our process and methodology:

> This understanding [of history] is not based on an attempt to isolate and enshrine the past in an objectivist 'reconstruction', nor on an effort to project it on an evolutionist not altogether left behind in current historical practice. Nor is it committed to a deceptive synchronism. Instead, cultural analysis seeks to understand the past as *part* of the present, as what we have around us, and without which no culture would be able to exist. (Bal and de Vries 1999: 1)

In echoing this critical perspective we have suggested the nomination of the notion of 'revival' as a theoretical approach to the practice-based method we adopted for our practice-based exploration of Scott's Romantic melodrama. (Gilli Bush-Bailey with Jacky Bratton)

past performances may also be the object of study, although the impossibility of 'reconstructing' such performances is now generally acknowledged.

The study of theatre history and historiography is something of an adventure, not so much a survey of what was, as an investigation of what might have been. It is about questions not answers and it should continually allow new approaches and new possibilities. It can enable the exploration of performances that have previously been hidden from history, as Katie Normington's case study demonstrates. Or it can use practice as a dynamic mode of interrogation, as Gilli Bush-Bailey and Jacky Bratton's case study does. It can question the absence of popular forms from historical records and histories of theatre, as well as the sometimes limited parameters drawn up by earlier theatre historians, such as a total emphasis on 'high culture' manifestations of performance (Bratton 2003). It can draw on the new historicist notion of the circulation of texts, whereby a play may be just as easily defined as a social document as a blueprint for performance. It can apply the techniques of ethnography to the spectacles and behaviours of the past (Dening 1996). Even contemporary theatrical events become history in the very moment of their description, analysis, documentation and/or narration. Drawing on Hayden White's seminal work on history as narrative, Keith Jenkins theorises history as 'a narrative prose discourse the content of which is as much imagined as found and the form of which is inexpungeably problematic après Hayden White' (Jenkins 1991: xvii), a definition of potential value to anyone writing on theatrical topics. Yet, since theatre history may also be embodied, orally transmitted and recorded, and since the run of a theatrical piece may extend over months or even years, research methods are needed that respond to these particular factors.

As this chapter as a whole has emphasised, theatrical and performance histories are concerned with the ephemeral and the intangible: they may attempt to tell 'how it was', but may well depend on traces that are too insubstantial to enable anything more than a speculative engagement with the past. Given the inevitable interplay of 'liveness' and disappearance in any past performance, research method in theatre and performance history and historiography must enable both memorialisation and disruption, and must embrace oral testimony and embodied history as well as the material object and the written text. It records and documents yet it also interrogates and interprets. It arguably comes alive at the moment when careful scholarship and detailed research merge with imaginative speculation to ignite a creative yet informed response to live events that may have occurred either in the immediate or distant past. It relies on data, but as a means not an end. It is open to multiple perspectives creating a complementary and/or contrasting range of histories for any one event. During the last twenty-five years theatre history has undergone not so much a period of crisis as a process of regeneration. As a result theatre historiography has become the crossroads at which knowledge of the theatrical past intertwines

with debates around the ways in which scholars establish and interpret that knowledge. Thus research methods in the history of theatre and performance not only contribute to the way in which past events are perceived, but also to how they are evaluated, examined, investigated, interrogated and speculated upon in the present. A firm grounding in the processes of theatre historiography is essential, but we need also to remain alert to the need not only to take nothing on trust, but also to question continually the methods and methodologies through which the theatrical past is approached by theatre historians.

The two case studies demonstrate discrete approaches to the exploration and writing of theatre history, but both indicate, explicitly or implicitly, the value of Taylor's and Roach's insights. Normington draws on Susan Foster's interest in somatic expression, both past and present, and the relationship of the body with, for example, archaeological remains to trace evidence of performative practices in English convents during the early modern period. Bush-Bailey and Bratton draw strongly on collaborative approaches to research, on feminist historiography, on Roach's interest in cultural memory and embodiment, and on Susan Foster's work on the body, to argue the case for practice-based historical research, focused not on reconstruction, which is anyway impossible, but on a concept of 'revival' which revitalises past performance for the present. Both case studies effectively demonstrate historiographic methods and methodologies in action and also affirm the fact that theatre historiography is now embedded very firmly, nationally and internationally, in our approaches to the theatrical past.

Case study 2: Memory, absence and agency: an approach to practice-based research in theatre history

Gilli Bush-Bailey with Jacky Bratton

Collaboration and interdisciplinarity is much talked about today, by both national and international funding agencies that seek to forge new relationships between HE institutions and beyond to active engagement with cultural industries, but often the efforts of the individual researcher still seem to come first. In some disciplines, and most obviously in theatre research of all kinds, collaboration is really of the essence and we have been working for some time now to fully reflect that collaboration in our own research, whether the focus is on the text or on the practical realisation of that text. Working historically through practice is a procedure without secure precedents or agreed protocols: without an established theoretical base. The double-voice of this piece of writing self-consciously reflects a dialogue that began between us several years ago and was first realised in our joint

work on a practice-based research project undertaken in the summer of 2002. Supported by an AHRB research grant, under the then newly formed Innovations Award Scheme, 'Working It Out: A Practical Workshop Re-discovery of Company Practice and Romantic Performance Styles via Jane Scott's plays' was, in the terms set out for the award, a 'high-risk' project that sought to develop an interdisciplinary approach to practice-based exploration of early nineteenth-century Romantic melodrama. For this work we created a company of professionally trained performers and extended our dialogue to include the many voices and methodologies of historians working in performance fields of music, dance and costume. This paper reflects upon the theoretical and methodological issues we considered as we worked to address two central questions in the field of theatre history: How does hitherto marginalised evidence change our perceptions of agency and/or the dominant historiographic discourse? If in its widest sense evidence includes every possible source of information, what strategies must be used to read it effectively?

We began our collaborative research project with some very marginalised evidence: the plays of Jane Scott, which we had first to disinter from the Larpent Collection of plays submitted to the Lord Chamberlain for licensing, where they had languished unrecognised and undisturbed since she wrote and staged them at her successful theatre, the Sans Pareil in the Strand in London, between 1809 and 1818. The Collection contains around fifty manuscripts of hers, which have not only been disregarded as unimportant trash, evidence only of 'The Decline of the Drama' in the early nineteenth century, but have been actively suppressed by reference works such as Allardyce Nicoll's (1930: II, 87) hand-list, which fails to attribute the majority of them to their author (he lists only two of her more than fifty surviving plays in her name). Our choices for exploration, a naval piece called *The Inscription* and her only published play, *The Old Oak Chest*, are both melodramas, though of very different kinds. That genre at large has been brought back into scholarly discourse in particular and tendentious ways, first as part of the 1960s wave of left-leaning British cultural studies which championed melodrama as belonging to 'the people' but failed to find ways of interrogating it effectively. The foundational text in this endeavour, Michael Booth's *English Melodrama* (1965), was ground-breaking and strove to sympathise with its subject, but was somewhat disabled by the sneering stereotypical typology of characters in the genre that Booth derived from Jerome K Jerome. More recent critical attention has been channelled through a more productive, or at least a more sophisticated, enthusiasm for Romantic idealism that underlies the semiotic analysis of Peter Brooks' *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976); scholars of the theatre

and, more recently, of Romantic music have made good use of Brooks' critical insights, but he himself was using his characterisation of melodrama simply as a preface to a literary exploration of the mid-century French novel. His understanding of such texts was therefore not focused upon what theatre history might regard as central: the inadequate witness that the written, authorial remains of this most layered and collaborative form offer for a full reading of its meanings in performance. But where might one find evidence to change our perception of agency in the Romantic melodrama, and to re-read its history accordingly?

The problem of absence

How can we know about past performance? Joseph Roach notes theatre historians' tendency to strike notes of 'irretrievable loss' about the 'fragility of their subject', to express 'self-consciousness about the perceived contradiction of writing the history of so notoriously transient a form' (Reinelt and Roach 1992: 293–8). But the same writer, in his cross-disciplinary study *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, shows that the subject of performance, if adequately theorised and imaginatively extended, offers wonderfully suggestive ways of dealing with its own absences (Roach 1996). Building on his insights, the urgent 'issue of absence' in 'performances of the distant past' (Roach 1996: 2), and the development of strategies to deal with it, are at the centre of Mark Franko and Annette Richards' introduction to *Acting on the Past: Historical Performance Across the Disciplines*. Franko and Richards emphasise 'the movement between present and past, one in which archive and act, fragment and body, text and sounding, subject and practice, work in provocative interaction' (Franko and Richards 2000: 1) arguing against the prevailing focus on 'immediacy and evanescence' (Franko and Richards 2000: 1, citing Schechner 1986: 50) advocated by Richard Schechner and others who laid down the foundation stones for performance studies as an emergent discipline in the 1960s and 1970s. Franko and Richards' project is to issue 'a challenge to the field to conceptualize the past and thus also historicize itself'. They suggest that Schechner's notion of performance as '"restored behavior", as fundamentally repetitive or reiterative' (an idea which Roach was to take up) is useful to this project as it 'necessarily brings back the past to unsettle the present' (Franko and Richards 2000: 2–3). This interactive approach to past and present is echoed elsewhere in current academic discourses where relatively 'new' disciplines, such as performance studies and cultural analysis, seek to identify and develop critical strategies that deal with the historical past while maintaining the focus of their discipline on the present.

The problematising of the historian's 'situatedness' in the present has long been the concern of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism. Meike Bal's introduction to another recent interdisciplinary collection of essays, *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation*, suggests that the concerns of cultural analysis 'can be summarized by the phrase "cultural memory in the present"'(Bal and de Vries 1999: 1) and identifies the project of cultural analysis as being interested in 'problematiz[ing] history's silent assumptions in order to come to an understanding of history that is different' (Bal and de Vries 1999: 1). It is the identification of 'silent assumptions' and the pursuit of different understandings that has marked the work of feminist methodologies, including our own approaches here, and has made a significant contribution to theatre histories, but it has also led some historians, such as Robert Hume, to develop reactionary strategies for avoiding the pitfalls of 'presentist' approaches and advocate the limited and limiting return to the excavation and cataloguing of extant materials and documents, thus assiduously avoiding that which can be dismissed as merely interpretive. Hume's manifesto for this approach is called, revealingly enough, *Reconstructing Contexts: The Aims and Principles of Archeo-Historicism* (Hume 1999). But, as Roach establishes, materials available to the historical study of performance cannot be contained within a fixed notion of documentation: 'One important strategy of performance research today is to juxtapose living memory as restored behavior against a historical archive of scripted records' (Roach 1996: 11). Citing the epigraph used at the head of his introduction 'History, Memory and Performance' that 'today documents include the spoken word, the image, gestures' (Roach 1996: 1), Roach identifies Jacques Le Goff's use of 'the variety of mnemonic materials – speech, images gestures – that supplement or contest the authority of "documents" in the historiographic tradition of the French *annalistes*', arguing that these 'performative practices' leave their 'traces' in the 'living bodies of the successive generations that sustain different social and cultural identities' (Roach 1996: 11). Our response to this suggestion is to ask: What better than the theatre to provide a wealth of such documentation and where better than the body of the performer to begin the work of supplementing and/or contesting the 'documents'?

As theatre historians we still tend to be hung up on the need to substantiate our 'gestures' from tangible documentary sources. British Departments of Drama and Theatre have long established that the play text should be seen as a blueprint for performance, resisting hegemonic moves to contain and control the dramatic text by appropriating it as literature; yet there is still a tendency to consider the serious study of the play's history as something

that happens in the 'other' room, away from the work of the performer. One consequence of this legitimising binary is that historical work tends to be done chiefly around unquestionably 'important' texts whose aesthetic worth is not in question, which excludes the works of unliterary but highly successful commercial and female writer/performers such as Jane Scott. Alternatively, as in the case of research under the rubric of 'cultural studies' that picked up melodrama for its social/ist interest, emphasis is placed on a crude content-analysis of play-texts. But Scott's manuscripts submitted to the licensor are full of gaps and absences to be filled by the performers, and so resist our attempts to know about melodramatic performance from text alone. To understand her as writer/performer and manager of the company of performers with whom she regularly worked and for whom she specifically wrote, we need to explore and trust to the history carried in the body of the performer. There are, in this case, no 'living' memories – no one to pass on the exact gesture or delivery of a line, which was previously the universal practice in the study of a role, and one which is by no means dead, though it has mutated and become hidden since the time to which Roach refers in an anecdote concerning a minor actor who, when Thomas Betterton was 'at a loss to recover a particular emphasis of Charles [Hart] . . . repeated the line exactly in Hart's key' (Roach 1996: 80). But there are, as Roach so powerfully argues, many forms of cultural memory, 'defined by the French historian Pierre Nora as "true memory"', found in 'gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories' (Roach 1996: 26).

Roach's nomination of the term 'kinaesthetic imagination' is particularly useful to the pursuit of the embodied history of the performer and acknowledges the inspiration of 'dance historians on the transmission (and transformation) of memory through movement'. He cites Susan Foster's work on the language of dance as separable from the dancer, 'a kinaesthetic vocabulary, one that can move up and down the social scale as well as from one generation to the other' (Roach 1996: 26–7). This concept offers ways into understanding the performances of early nineteenth-century melodrama that, as Foster so vividly describes, 'helped to consolidate a new, dichotomous relationship between words and movement . . . movement was called upon only in those moments when events extinguished speech' (Foster 1996: 166).

The promise of presence

So how can these methodological and theoretical models work as a base upon which to negotiate the dichotomy between the presence of the spoken

melodramatic text and the silent and silenced gesture of historical melodramatic performance? Working on our own established teaching procedure of 'doing history backwards', we begin most fruitfully by starting where we are – in the present – and thinking backwards. This approach is usefully explored in Franko and Richards' consideration of the differences in Derrida's use of 'mark' and 'trace' in relation to the past and Derrida's argument for the ongoing power of language to communicate in spite of the absence of the original interlocutors. Franko and Richards extend this beyond spoken language to the material concerns of performance studies, arguing that:

> Traces may fade completely, but marks tend to remain, like scars, yet without immediate reference to the present. Performance studies need to consider, and to interpret, that which remains, persists, and returns. Marks are, in the most mundane sense, the archives themselves, which do not disappear unless we ignore them, forget how to work with them, or destroy them. (Franko and Richards 2000: 5)

Early in the twentieth century, actor training systems and techniques developed in reaction to perceived limitations of the nineteenth century. Twentieth-century received wisdom condemned and supposedly rejected melodrama's 'excessive' or 'unnatural' emotional expression and its engagement with the body of the performer. Foster, from a much later perspective, identifies the 'essential difference between movement and speech' in melodramatic performance, but argues that the fusion of the two into one discourse 'far from disintegrating the performance, enhanced its coherence' (Foster 1996: 166). But the twentieth-century naturalist emphasis on the playwright and the spoken dramatic text, in its historically distant and modern forms, could be seen as a deliberate act of 'forgetting' this powerful confluence of speech and movement.

Discussion of the new expectations of textual dominance, stage behaviour and the actor training systems that emerged to satisfy them has tended to accept the 'break' so inscribed in the story as an absolute. But there was no *tabula rasa* on which new approaches to performance might be formed and inscribed. The bodies of performers, on which and through which the ideas of Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Copeau and Michael Chekhov were worked out, were performing bodies imbued with performance practices, whether experienced directly or indirectly as part of the 'cultural memory' we all share. Surprisingly perhaps, the actor training systems pioneered by these canonical practitioners all contain references to past practice (mostly,

it must be said, pre-nineteenth century and frequently somewhere in the 'golden age' of the Renaissance) as the place where 'true' performance practice must be located. Copeau, for example, defined his own work as one of '"Dramatic renovation" [. . .] a peeling away of layer upon layer of over-painting' (Rudlin 2000: 55). It is this sense of performance practice as an embodied palimpsest through which earlier approaches might be perceived in current practice that links with Franko and Richards' use of Derridean 'marks'. The 'marks' of earlier forms can then be seen to 'remain, persist and return' not least, perhaps, in the current, twenty-first-century, move toward physical theatre with its exuberant rediscovery of the powerful visual and visceral delight of movement that works interdependently with written instruction and/or spoken text.

Our strategy then was to reposition the melodramatic play text, to remove it from its traditional position as a stable, fixed – and aesthetically inferior – document of the historical past and allow its position in the present to work as an aide-memoir, a catalyst for the kinaesthetic imagination which Roach suggests 'flourishes in that mental space where imagination and memory converge' and is a way of 'thinking through movements – at once remembered and reinvented'. This faculty of thought and expression, he suggests, exists 'to a high degree of concentration in performers' (Roach 1996: 27). In its turn, the abjected text of Romantic melodrama especially invites a release of bodily gesture and expression repressed, if not actually forbidden, by the constraining practices of twentieth-century Naturalist approaches to performance which exert an unnatural pressure to contain and censor bodily theatrical expression.

Substitution, restoration, reconstruction

Roach's reworking of the place and purpose of 'the effigy' is pertinent to melodrama, particularly in his use of effigy as a verb and its meaning 'to invoke an absence, to body something forth, especially from the distant past' (Roach 1996: 36, citing the OED reference for this description). In this sense, melodrama has itself become an effigy, 'a crudely fabricated image' that is ridiculed yet also recreated, reinvented, as part of our cultural memory. Our method of work built on this notion and sought a more subtle restoration. Roach argues that:

> Beyond ostensibly inanimate effigies fashioned from wood and cloth, there are more elusive but more powerful effigies fashioned from flesh. Such effigies are made by performances. They consist of a set of actions that hold open a place in memory into which many

> different people step according to circumstances and occasions.
> (Roach 1996: 36)

The embodying of the 'effigy' in the terms Roach lays out fits with the performative process of the kinaesthetic imagination. Roach goes on to identify actors and dancers at the top of his list of 'specially nominated mediums or surrogates' through whom communities are enabled to perpetuate themselves. If we extend this idea to apply specifically to the cultural place of melodrama, it may be seen to be a medium through which communities can rework their current ideas and concerns. Melodrama continually reinvents itself in both form and expression, appearing repeatedly in western and non-western media, from the Hollywood action movie to the soap opera and, latterly, Bollywood. This suggests that the effigy of melodrama is simultaneously 'burnt' and unashamedly reinvented, serving a cultural purpose that, like the funeral rituals Roach explores, contains something of 'the relationship between memory, performance, and substitution' (Roach 1996: 36). Audience and performer join in their ambivalent attitude to melodramatic performance, at once eschewing its practice as 'over the top' while simultaneously revelling in the opportunity to 'have a bit of fun' with the expansive performance vocabulary, even its less explicit form of the adventure movies or weekly soap opera. As with any form of theatrical performance, melodrama's currency relies on the shared language between performer and audience, a language which relies less on the spoken text than the gesture which, as Susan Foster notes in its early nineteenth-century form 'became the universal language . . . transcending all cultural boundaries and requir[ing] no special tutelage . . . Where words could dissimulate, gesture could only reveal the truth' (Foster 1966: 166).

In order to push the envelope, to develop a broad-based theoretical and methodological approach by which we might access the 'other' embodied history of melodrama, we extended the limiting boundaries inferred by the conventional separation between academic historians of theatre, music, dance, costume and even fight arranging. This self-conscious act of interdisciplinary collaboration is intended to echo Mieke Bal's assertion that such practices should work to 'counter the common assumption that interdisciplinarity makes the object of enquiry vague and the methodology muddled' (Bal and de Vries 1999: 2). In Bal's edited collection of work, William P. Germano asks if '"*inter*disciplinarity" [is] the wrong term':

> After all, what's *inter* about it? Does 'multidisciplinarity', with its implied respect for the integrity of established fields, get us any

> further to the truth of practice? Does 'transdisciplinarity', in which the scholar leaps over tall canons with a single bound, name the act at last? Anyone for 'postdisciplinarity'? *Inter, trans, multi, cross, bi, post*: the language of academic writing repeatedly attempts to define a relation of two fields of knowledge. Maybe we're between disciplines, like out-of-work musicians between gigs? (Germano, in Bal and de Vries 1999: 327–34, at 332)

Germano's tongue-in-cheek tone reflects, perhaps first, his interest in the business of selling books as Vice President and Publishing Director at Routledge, NY, but this commercial bent, akin to that of most theatrical enterprises, and the playful tone of his enquiry should not distract us from the serious matter he confronts here. By drawing on a range of theoretical and methodological approaches we come face to face with the gatekeeping tendencies of discipline-specific interests and a concern with the ever-shifting sands of authenticity. As Franko and Richards succinctly identify, 'since the 1980s notions of authenticity in historical music and dance practice have been increasingly problematized, as projects of reconstruction are faced with complex issues of interpretation' (Franko and Richards 2000: 4). Without wishing to fall into the very gatekeeping trap that we have identified here, we might, with some confidence, suggest that materialist approaches to theatre history have confronted the problem of reconstructive performance attempts some time ago.

And finally – revival

Approaches that seek to 'reconstruct' past performance axiomatically carry the notion that the first, or original, state can be rebuilt. Cultural materialist theories have worked to destabilise the bedrock of objectivity upon which reconstruction must surely rely if it is to be successful. Therefore a concern with the present – the cultural position from which we revisit the past being as potent as the contexts of the past we seek to investigate – is central to the materialist methodology we have sought to establish. In attempting to define the relationship between cultural analysis and the 'different' understanding of history it seeks, Mieke Bal offers a summation of that project that is pertinent to our own search for a definition of our process and methodology:

> This understanding [of history] is not based on an attempt to isolate and enshrine the past in an objectivist 'reconstruction', nor on an effort to project it on an evolutionism not altogether left behind

> in current historical practice. Nor is it committed to a deceptive synchronism. Instead, cultural analysis seeks to understand the past as *part* of the present, as what we have around us, and without which no culture would be able to exist. (Bal and de Vries 1999: 1)

In echoing this critical perspective we have suggested the nomination of the notion of 'revival' as a theoretical approach to the practice-based method we adopted for our practice-based exploration of Scott's Romantic melodrama.

The term 'revival' has long-established roots in the context of theatre practice. It is used to indicate the new realisation of an old – normally a classic – text, and carries the implication that director and cast bring their contemporary world into fruitful dialogue with the author's work from an earlier time. Inherent to that practice is an understanding that, at some level, there is a self-consciousness about the contemporaneous nature of the performers and audience. Our interest is in extending this theatrical model to include the multiple meanings of revival: 'bringing back to life', restoring lost, or merely unused, vigour and consciousness – the elements Roach identifies in kinaesthetic memory.

The notion of revival as a bringing to currency is particularly appropriate to a central concern of the Jane Scott project: the possibility of an embodied tradition of expression, erased by the dominance of Naturalism but to be re-membered, re-lived, revived, through an open physical engagement with nineteenth-century performance styles. Whereas reconstruction ignores the present in seeking to rebuild from the past, 'revival' acknowledges the present and works to reawaken that which can be brought into use again. Revival seeks to connect with the past through present consciousness. We sought through the specially created company to use present performers, and the marks of performance tradition that they carry, to explore the possibility of historical agency. The written remains of Scott's texts demand that we reach through and beyond them to the agency of live performance. A full description of the workshop process, including essay contributions from the collaborative team, can be found in a special edition of *Nineteenth-Century Theatre and Film*, 29 (2) (2002) which also includes a CD-ROM of workshop and performance material.

The theoretical and methodological approaches we have worked to establish here have since been usefully extended to a practice-based workshop on the written remains of a Victorian 'gag-book', created and used by Tom Lawrence, a clown in the nineteenth-century circus ring. Working from material now published by Jacky Bratton and Ann Featherstone in *The Victorian Clown* (2006), we ran an AHRC-funded practice-based workshop

with actor/clown Tony Lidington. The outcomes of this application of notions of 'revival' to access historically distant performance material can be found on the RHUL Drama Department website. Further workshops in nineteenth-century theatre are planned and we would be pleased to know about other practice-based explorations using this or other historical methods.

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CHAPTER 5

Researching Scenography

Joslin McKinney and Helen Iball

ETYMOLOGY TO METHODOLOGY

As a developing field, a central project of scenographic research from the 1990s to the present has been establishing its identity and scope. Research methodologies in scenography can be viewed as active responses to the issues that have been figural in its emergence. Although not a new term in itself, 'scenography' has served to effect a reappraisal of the role of design in relation to the expressive and communicative possibilities of the material stage, its interaction with the text and the performers, and audience engagement. The origins of the term 'scenography' are associated with scene painting and with architectural perspective drawing (Hannah and Harsløf 2008: 11 and Rewa 2004: 119 n.1). But during the twentieth century the term gradually gained currency by drawing attention to the way stage space can be used as a dynamic and 'kinaesthetic contribution' to the experience of performance (Rewa 2004: 120). Emphasising the spatial and sensory aspects, contemporary use of the term moves away from thinking of design as decoration of the stage and locates scenography as an integral component of performance or as a mode of performance itself. This chapter will address some of the methodological questions raised by researching scenography as an integral and significant part of performance.

Although an interest in researching scenography can be traced back to Adolphe Appia and Edward Gordon Craig at the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century, the Czech designer Josef Svoboda, working through the second half of the twentieth century, has been particularly influential. His insistence on scenography as performance has helped shape contemporary definitions:

> Theatre is mainly in the performance; lovely sketches and renderings don't mean a thing, however impressive they may be; you can draw

> anything you like on a piece of paper, but what's important is the actualization. True scenography is what happens when the curtain opens and can't be judged in any other way. (Burian 1971: 15)

Beyond productions themselves, the professional practice of scenography has been preserved and examined mainly through retrospective exhibitions and associated publications. The largest and most influential of the exhibitions has been the Prague Quadrennial (PQ), a four-yearly exhibition of international theatre design and architecture which aims to represent the best of contemporary work. Traditionally, models, drawings and photographs along with artefacts from the original production (especially costume) have been the principle means of conveying the work of design practitioners, but as more holistic notions of the designer's work and concepts of scenography have taken hold, it has become important to find new ways to show the work. In more recent PQs video recordings, computer simulations and live performances have allowed representations of scenography which reflect the way design performs both on its own terms and in relation to other aspects of theatre and performance. The UK exhibit for PQ 2007, for example, was structured around the consideration of definitions of collaboration (Burnett 2007).

Contemporary uses of the term scenography do not define a particular set of processes or materials; rather they cluster around approaches which prioritise 'the dynamic role design plays upon the stage, orchestrating the visual and sensory environment' (Dorita Hannah, in Howard 2002: xv). Portuguese designer and architect João Mendes Ribeiro identifies the spatial dimension as a defining feature:

> The scenographic concept, as currently understood by the majority of artists, is a far cry from the pictorial two-dimensional aspect that traditionally characterizes scenography and focuses much more on the three-dimensional (architectural) nature of the space or the scenic objects and its close relationship with the performers. (Ribeiro 2007: 109)

The spatial nature of scenography opens up questions about what it is and how it is that scenography might express. Svoboda aimed to create 'psycho-plastic' space or 'transformable space that is maximally responsive to the ebb and flow, the psychic pulse of the dramatic action' (Burian 1971: 31). As well as articulating 'the visual-spatial construct', scenography is concerned with 'the process of change and transformation' (Aronson 2005: 7). Using a variety of technologies and techniques, including projecting film onto multiple surfaces in conjunction with live action, Svoboda intended to bring about 'a confrontation between the spectator's experience at the moment of performance with his

experiences in the past, now awakened by the performance' (Svoboda 1993: 67). The audience is encouraged to engage imaginatively and subjectively with the performance through the medium of the visual-spatial construct of the stage. This 'apprehension of space', although often registered subconsciously, 'may be the most profound and powerful experience of the theater' (Aronson 2005: 1).

Increasingly, scenography is also practised outside theatre buildings. Site or context-specific performance draws on the histories, practices and inherent spatial qualities of real places and often relies on an active engagement from spectators. Cliff McLucas's design for Brith Gof's *Tri Bywyd*, a performance which took place at the site of a ruined farmhouse in the middle of a Welsh forest, used a skeletal scaffolding structure to create spaces for performance within and above what remained of the original site. The site itself was conceived as the 'host', resonant with the lives of past inhabitants while the scaffolding structure allowed other stories to be layered over the host site, creating a 'ghost', that is the performance, and its temporary architecture that haunts the host site for a short time. The third active component for McLucas is the 'witness', that is the audience, which constitutes the event (McLucas 2000: 134). Kathleen Irwin explores site-specific performance to investigate how scenography activates new modes of spectatorship. Her practice-based research investigates site-specific performance as a form of theatre which reveals and unsettles 'the complex and ongoing relationship between our physical environment and ourselves' (2008: 55). The *Weyburn Project* was based in a disused mental hospital and used scenography and performance to recover the stories of former patients, workers and the wider community. Irwin is interested in how physical surroundings affect mood and behaviour and how particular sites resonate with 'a dense and contested past' revealed through their physical presence (ibid.: 54). The *Bus Project* used specially designed interactive computer games and customised bus seats to enable journeys between Regina and Saskatoon in Canada to involve passengers as spectator-participants. The games revealed stories of women's experiences of departure, immigration and displacement, encouraging the spectators to see 'their immediate surroundings in a global context' (ibid.: 54).

CONTEMPORARY METHODOLOGIES

Contemporary definitions of scenography point towards multiple lines of enquiry for research. They suggest the need for methodologies which address the spatial and material nature of the stage, the interaction between scenography, text, site and performers' bodies, the signifying capabilities of scenography, the nature of the audience experience and its potential effects and also the

processes of scenography and how to document them. Research methodology in scenography needs to accommodate the means of investigating complex interactions of elements and it needs to be responsive to the experiential and fluid nature of scenography.

An important strategy in developing approaches to scenographic research and reflecting on effective methodologies has been to utilise forums for dialogue in national and international settings. These have, in turn, contributed to the establishment of the field in the UK and its engagement with international peers. The Organisation Internationale des Scénographes, Techniciens et Architectes de Théâtre (OISTAT) established a History and Theory Commission in 1993, the Scenography Working Group of the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) was formed in 1994 and in the UK a scenography working group came about through the auspices of the Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA) in 2005. These forums provide useful space for reflection upon role and identity, particularly where many of those currently engaged in scenographic research have joined higher education with extensive and often continuing experience within the professional sphere. They have also provided valuable opportunities for peer-review and publication: for example, IFTR's Scenography Working Group has published peer-reviewed papers (Eynat-Confino and Šormová 2000) and *Scenography International*, an online journal, is a forum for discussion and dissemination of scenographic research (http://www.scenography-international.com).

A persistent subject for debate surrounds definition – both of the field and of the role of the professional scenographer. This was evident in discussion at the early meetings of the TaPRA Scenography Working Group, which now defines the scenographic as 'a particular perspective from which to research theatre and performance' which resonates across dramaturgical, critical, design and directorial approaches to practice and analysis.

- It addresses the visual, sonic, and musical languages of theatre and performance.
- It explores the dynamic relationships between these elements in terms of the sensory experience of audiences.
- It considers ways of scoring, documenting, archiving, and analysing, scenographic practice.

(http://www.tapra.org/working-groups-mainmenu-41/scenography-mainmenu-33/30-scenography.html)

So, while practitioner processes form an important part of this field, there are wider perspectives, some of which overlap with other areas of research in theatre and performance. The reach of the scenographic as a research

methodology can usefully draw on and extend the methods of artists, theatre designers, theatre theoreticians and historians.

This chapter reflects the emergent nature of scenographic research: although we discuss the work of established researchers in the field, many of the methods discussed here have come about through recent PhD study and the work of early-career researchers. From a survey of recent research, we have identified five strategies which have been adopted across a wide range of scenographic research for discussion in this chapter. These strategies include retrospective reviews of past practice which use scenographic archives, uncovering the tacit and embodied knowledge used in scenographic practice, strategies of spatial thinking, practice-based approaches to investigating audience response and scenographic writing. Some of the strategies involve adapting methods established elsewhere in theatre research, for example historiography and performative writing. In other cases new methods are emerging to address the specific research problems of scenography, for example using scenographic techniques to investigate and document research and developing ways to capture the spectators' experience of scenography. Methods can also be seen to be useful across these strategies; for example, scenographic writing may form a valuable component of reflecting on practice-based research.

RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW AND THE SCENOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

A central plank in the development and construction of scenography as a scholarly field has been the identification and analysis of pioneering practices which make manifest key scenographic principles. Several researchers have found it valuable to use historiographical methods and apply them to the scenographic archive in order to re-evaluate the role of scenography or to trace the development of scenographic concepts.

Christopher Baugh's research combines working from historical accounts and archives with his sensibilities both as a practitioner and as a theorist of scenography. Materials from theatre history are, in this way, revisited and re-presented from a scenographic perspective. His study of the collaborations between actor manager David Garrick and painter and designer Philippe de Loutherbourg (Baugh 1990) closely examines the sketches, paintings and models that Loutherbourg produced and also draws on eye-witness accounts of the productions and letters which passed between Garrick and Loutherbourg. Baugh draws on his knowledge of the history of theatre technology and on his own practical experience as a designer to make sense of the fragments of Loutherbourg's designs and models (ibid.: 76–7). This methodology clarifies the extent to which Garrick's innovations as a performer and director were

informed and aided by the scenographic developments. Baugh has used a similar approach in investigating Bertolt Brecht's collaborations with designers, particularly Caspar Neher (Baugh 1994).

Elsewhere Baugh revisits familiar names and practices, particularly those of Adolphe Appia, Edward Gordon Craig and Josef Svoboda, and uses the context of technological development to construct a history of the emergence of scenography through the last century (Baugh 2005). Conscious that there can be no definitive truth, he sorts, sifts and selects from what remains – images, models, photographs, letters, books, documents, anecdotes, witness accounts and memoirs – to create arrangements which 'represent what *might* have happened' (ibid.: xvi). Baugh compares the process to the games he played as a child arranging and rearranging his mother's button box: 'buttons of every description, shape and colour, a treasure house of disordered, random pleasure' (ibid.: xiii). Each rearrangement is an archive which tells a slightly different story. The historical material we encounter has usually already been archived; historical significance is accrued to the 'buttons' of scenography from the past by their selection and inclusion in other archives. Images of work by Caspar Neher, for example, have been widely included in archives of Bertolt Brecht's work and Lyubov Popova's designs for Meyerhold have been used as emblems of Constructivism and Soviet theatre. The scenographic dimension of theatre history may have been overlooked or subsumed by competing claims for the dramaturgical, the directorial and the cultural dimensions. But Baugh's arrangements uncover significant ideas and energies in the development of scenography and contribute a new history of theatre and performance.

The analogy of the button box might be applied to any form of archiving, but in the context of scenographic archives, it seems particularly apt. There is a scenographic sensibility at work in the selection and arrangement of material that relates to the attempt to make sense of aesthetic experiences of the past. In his discussion of Growtowski's apparent rejection of scenography, Baugh recalls his own experience of a performance of *The Constant Prince* in Manchester in 1968 which featured a wooden floor stripped of varnish:

> Sanding the entire floor harmonized its surface with the palisade and the rostrum, and created a surface that almost dazzled in its cleanliness. To anyone walking through the studio door, the smell of untreated wood was intense. The gentle and repetitive creak of the steps and platforms as the audience filed silently into the place of performance gave the sense that its members were combining to become part of a machine . . . (Ibid.: 194)

Baugh's attention to the scenographic aspect of the experience uncovers the material and the sensuous in the performance. The physical manifestation of

scenography: the construction and nature of materials, the quality and nature of the sound, the movement and texture of a costume, the atmosphere induced by the light, the manipulation of the stage space – all these conditions resonate with possible meanings.

Dennis Kennedy uses scenographic archives to understand the way Shakespeare has been staged and viewed in the twentieth century. The scenography of past productions offer 'revisions of the visual' and reveal the social and historical contexts in which those productions were made (Kennedy 2001: 12). His account of his methods contain valuable insights for scenographic researchers because it offers a clear articulation of the richness and the limits of archival material.

Kennedy considers the detail of the evidence that designers' sketches can provide. Costume drawings, for example, do not just show what was intended to be worn. They 'suggest characterization, indicate color and tailoring details, and even show fabric samples' (ibid.: 17). They may also suggest qualities of movement and gesture. Baugh's research reveals that Caspar Neher's drawings responded to the actors' physical characteristics and movements, developing what Neher saw in rehearsal. The drawings suggested how items of costume or selected scenic elements could extend or comment on the actors' work. Neher's drawings arise from 'confrontations between actors and scenic material' and, as such, create instances of 'scenography standing side by side with dramaturgy' (Baugh 1994: 243).

The visual material needs to be considered in the context of modes of production which operate in the theatre. Design sketches are expressive but often show scenographic intentions for a production rather than what actually happened. Models and technical drawings ought to provide an accurate record of what appears on stage, but they do not always survive the production process. In any case, practicalities and 'aesthetic reconsiderations' may mean that scenographic proposals can evolve beyond the point of the model being delivered (Kennedy 2001: 18). Many of the models that are displayed at exhibitions like PQ are reconstructions after the event. Photographs appear to offer themselves as the most accessible evidence of a historical performance, but here, too, there are limitations. 'Despite their apparent veracity', Kennedy says, 'photos need at least as much analysis as other historical documents' (ibid.: 24). Photographs are often produced as publicity rather than to archive the performance. They may have been commissioned by a press agent and set up separately from the performance, supplemented by additional lighting and artistic effects by the photographer (ibid.: 21). Even where photographs are made during a performance, photographers make their own aesthetic judgements in framing and selecting the images. Another major drawback is the static nature of the photographic image which can only infer the time-based aspects of scenography: shifts in lighting, transformations of the stage space,

the movement of costumes and materials. Film and video have helped in this regard, but they, too, are limited. Video recordings do not replicate 'the perceptual discourse of the spectator's eye' (Auslander 1999: 19) because the camera determines the limits of what the viewer can see. In recordings, the multi-sensory experience of live scenography is altered. The auditory and visual are prioritised while spatial aspects (depth, scale and proportion) are condensed and flattened. Reference points which are crucial to the live reception of scenography such as the dimensions and dynamics of the performance venue and the sensing body of the spectator are all downplayed, if not lost, as the live event is transposed to the screen.

Kennedy considers scenography a 'language of the visual', or a text which 'requires a separate reading' (Kennedy 2001: 12). To this end, he has employed a broadly semiotic approach to analysing the ways scenography and visual approaches have interpreted Shakespeare's texts. Specific consideration of scenography as a signifying system has been developed through semiotic analysis (Pavis 2003; Ubersfeld 1999; Fischer-Lichte 1992; Aston and Savona 1991). In general, semiotic approaches have been helpful in identifying component parts of the contribution that scenography makes to the experience of a performance. Veltruský's declaration that 'all that is on the stage is a sign' ([1940] 1964: 84) opened up new ways that the stage spectacle, sometimes considered 'too ephemeral' for systematic study (Elam 2002: 4), could be considered as part of the network of signs within which theatrical meaning is generated. In particular, Kennedy distinguishes between the metonymic design, based upon 'the contiguity of the presence on stage to the absence it represents', and metaphoric design, based on 'the similarity between the signifier and its reference' (Kennedy 2001: 13). Scenographic metaphor often requires a more conscious effort for interpretation and comprehension and this is particularly helpful in pinpointing and analysing, from a retrospective position, the advent of new scenic vocabularies. Summarising the impact of Sally Jacobs' design for the 1970 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Peter Brook, Kennedy writes:

> What Jacobs provided, then, was a simple but semiologically rich environment in which the transformations wrought by love could be investigated inside a visual metaphor that liberated performance. Unlike many of the imitations that followed, the design did not establish a simile between the play and the circus; the secret of the white box was its emptiness, its power to call forth the imagination, not its ability to invoke a specific set of cultural responses. (Ibid.: 184–7)

A semiotic approach to the analysis of scenography seems particularly useful as a way of reflecting on scenographic practice within a wider social context.

Anna Birch, whose research is discussed later in this chapter, uses social semiotics to think about representations of gender in scenographic performance and Helen Iball considers the signing potential of a single element of scenography, a shoe, in her scenographic writing. Kennedy uses it to distinguish between 'sure signs and sham signs' (ibid.: 357) and to identify practice which demonstrates a synergy between scenography and the wider social context from which it arises. But the limitations of semiotic analysis, particularly where interactions between scenography and other elements of performance are under consideration, have been identified (Pavis 2003; States 1985). A too rigid approach to decoding scenography risks underplaying the subtle interaction of signing systems and the 'obtuse' level of meaning operating outside articulated language (Barthes 1977: 52) that is often conveyed by images.

TACIT KNOWLEDGE AND EMBODIED UNDERSTANDING

Much of the existing knowledge and understanding about scenography is bound up with its practice and with the tacit knowledge of scenographers, and for this reason practice-led research is now being widely adopted and developed specifically for scenographic research. Tacit knowledge is developed through experience where 'we know more than we can tell' (Polanyi [1966] 1983: 4) and we are unconsciously aware of things before we can consciously attend to them. Embodied knowledge of this kind may be 'incommunicable' through words but, nonetheless, affords the basis of 'knowledge-creation' (Nelson 2006: 107). Donald Schön says skilled practitioners habitually move between modes of tacit 'knowing-in-action' and 'reflection-in-action' (1983: 49, 54) in order to further develop their practice. But although the embodied knowledge of practice might be considered as being 'necessary and sufficient' in a professional context (Nelson 2006: 112), a more explicit articulation is needed for research purposes. The challenge for practice-led scenographic research is to find ways to make tacit knowledge accessible to others in the research community and open, therefore, to further examination and question.

Dorita Hannah, working as a practitioner-researcher, draws on tacit knowledge while working outside the usual constraints of professional commissions. In *The Heart of PQ*, Hannah investigated how performance space can contain simultaneous performance events and multiple audiences. This 'performance landscape' (Hannah 2007: 137) installed at PQ 2003 used five scaffolding towers between seven and eleven meters high connected by stairs and undulating, planked walkways. The towers were conceived to appeal to one of the five senses – smell, hearing, touch, taste and sight – and to provide a base for five performance companies who were commissioned to become part of this

'architectural sensorium' (ibid.: 137). Hannah attempted to create a single structure which would be responsive to the work of the companies but which was also a provocation for the way they would work during their two-week residence. Hannah's method for developing the space was based on professional working practices which involved discussion with her collaborators via the medium of sketches and virtual models. But unlike most professional practice this was conceived as an experiment where the outcomes could not be predicted and 'failure is productive' and where, from time to time, moments of 'great beauty, insight and communality' emerged from the confusion (ibid.: 143).

To evaluate this experiment, Hannah used observation and reflection. Over the course of the installation, Hannah noted the capacity of the space to both 'contain' or frame performance and also allow it to 'contaminate' and permeate the boundaries between performer and spectator, and between one set of performers and another. The most contained tower within the hall came about through Canadian company Recto-Verso requiring greater isolation to install a 'smoke-filled vitrine of sound, light and moving images viewed from platforms on either side' (ibid.: 139). Other towers explored more porous boundaries, especially the 'tower of taste' occupied by the Akhe Group from Russia, who created an anarchic kitchen, leaving pungent traces of cooking and rotting food to permeate the whole hall and potentially upset more controlled and subtle performances. For participants and witnesses, it was an imposing yet fluid space. The stairs and walkways provided a variety of spaces for performance to be rehearsed or take place with multiple positions for viewing. With simultaneous rehearsals, participatory workshops and casual visitors to the space, it was hard to tell performers and audience apart; the space tended to frame any human presence as potentially significant. It provoked reflections on the ways space frames performance and structures relationships between performers and audience members.

Methodologically, Hannah's observations arise from a tacit knowledge of manipulating space in the process of designing for performance and these may be shared by others who have a similar experience. The evaluation of the research relies principally on the event itself and the witnessing of the event by peers as the means of disseminating new knowledge. PQ provides a unique context in which to show work which tests the boundaries of scenography. It attracts international and highly regarded practitioners as well as researchers. OISTAT's History and Theory commission and the IFTR's scenography working group now run events alongside or as part of PQ and practitioner-researchers are exploring ways to present scenographic research and engender discussion with their peers. The testimony of witnesses or 'experiencers' (Nelson 2006: 113) forms a key part of the evidence of scenographic practice as research. But the validation of these testimonies and the wider dissemination

of the research (beyond the event itself) requires the embodied knowledge of practice to be brought into dynamic dialogue with other forms of knowledge which arise from critical reflection on the practice and the conceptual framework of the practice (Nelson 2006: 114). For scenographic research appropriate and effective methods of capturing and recording the observations of the practitioner-researcher and the testimonies of witnesses or participants need to be considered alongside methods of developing the practice in the light of ongoing reflection.

Melissa Trimingham's PhD practice-led investigation of the principles of Oskar Schlemmer's work (Trimingham 2001) adopted a more conscious method and a more systematic approach to developing and evaluating understanding gained through the 'disorderly creative process' (Trimingham 2002: 55). Trimingham's aim was to move beyond the surface detail of the remaining records of the work and Schlemmer's own explanations in order to discover unifying principles (Trimingham 2001: 18). She rejected a historically based reconstruction approach in favour of a more personal engagement drawing on her own experience as a scenographer (ibid.: 35), and used workshops to develop performances while audience members took part in post-performance discussion. Trimingham used light, plasticity, the body, motion and sound, and proposed that the principles which governed the practice were as follows:

1. The working space should be tightly controlled.
2. The whole stage space is articulated.
3. Costume is treated as plastic form.
4. Movement begins as simple actions.
5. Sound is used for its physical properties.

(Ibid.: 17–34)

Drawing on principles of Action Research (ibid.: 40) she adopted a method of formulating questions arising from her reading to frame and drive practical investigations, adopting cycles of doing and reflecting so that a 'spiral' of knowledge was developed. Written notes and drawings made by Trimingham and her student collaborators formed the basis of ongoing reflection throughout the devising process. Audience response was also used as evidence and compared and contrasted with notes from the devising process. This material was then, through the written thesis, considered in relation to Schlemmer's writing and the theoretical frame which Trimingham had constructed. Trimingham conceived the project as a hermeneutic spiral of developing understanding:

> The process of keeping as open a mind as possible is crucial to this methodology and related to this is the awareness that whatever question (s) is asked determines or at least limits the kind of answer ultimately

> received. This is the hermeneutic circle, which drawn out in time into a three-dimensional model creates the spiral of progress. (Ibid.: 42)

The culmulative effect of cycles of doing and thinking is also shown in Yvon Bonenfant and Ali Maclaurin's and collaborative research. Their project investigated the way costume and the vocal body might inform each other. They devised a method of reflective commentary on their improvisatory workshops which allowed embodied understanding of their two separate practices to be exchanged. The resulting performance, *Acoustic/Electric*, featured an electric sonic wig and a large piece of silk and 'attempted to integrate the design of costuming materials as a full partner in the generation of a piece of extended voice performance in a sound art environment' (Bonenfant and Maclaurin 2006). Reflective commentary on the workshops charted the 'dynamics of lived relationship in performance' (ibid.). Sometimes the reflection represented their individual points of view. Here Bonenfant responds to an enormous piece of silk that Maclaurin contributes to a workshop:

> I look at it and see a kind of silence – no – not silence, touch . . . the silk streams like light brushings and sweepings of a second skin . . . there is a sensation of streaming into my hands, gentle, light, gorgeous streaming, streaming that is somehow bright but not loud. (Ibid.)

At other times the nature of their work seemed to require them to 'see, feel, and hear from a kind of (temporarily) shared body' and their writing reflects how costume, sound and body interact, for example thinking of 'costuming as a flowing, improvisatory soundscape' (ibid.). Their studio-based practice has much in common with research in the creative arts which uses studio-based practice and reflexivity to bring about 'materialising practices' (Barrett and Bolt 2007: 5). Rather than set out a method with clearly defined outcomes, reflection on practice sets up iterative cycles of practice and reflection which incorporates reflection on the methods and allows for adjustments as the project develops. Iterative processes such as these lead to methodologies which are necessarily emergent to allow for creative discoveries (ibid.: 6). The precise methods used may need to be developed in response to the creative project as it progresses.

Both of these last two projects are influenced by phenomenological thinking and the experience of theatre 'as it is given to consciousness in direct experience' (Garner 1994: 2). Indeed, phenomenological perspectives influence most of the projects in this chapter. Of particular value for the study of scenography is the connection between seeing and the sensing body where there is 'an immediate equivalence between the orientation of the visual field and the awareness of one's own body as the potentiality of that field' (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 206). Stanton B. Garner claims a particular connection between the

performing body and the bodies of each of the spectators and says that whereas the presence of performers will set in train a phenomenological appreciation on the part of the audience, the scenic space is an objectified and detached spectacle (Garner 1994: 3). Objects on stage might be pulled into the phenomenological field, for they are always more than that which they sign, but for Garner this only happens through the actor, who is 'a site of agency within a field of things' (ibid.: 88). Trimingham's research, however, shows that on the non-mimetic stage, objects themselves are fully part of the phenomenological field. Her findings correspond to Bert O. States' claim that theatre is a field of sound, space and shape 'in which meanings parasitically swarm' (States 1985: 27). Theories of the embodied and phenomenological experience of artworks is also pertinent to scenographic research of the kind that Bonenfant and Maclaurin have engaged with. Paul Crowther claims that the materiality of artworks offer a distinct mode of embodied understanding. 'Colour, shape, sound, mass, and weight are not just the means to the meaning generated. They are an essential dimension in its full definition' (Crowther 1993: 172).

The implications for scenographic research methodology are that the constituent elements of scenographic practice might be considered as a phenomenological field out of which experience and understanding emerges. A phenomenological account of the way scenography works emphasises the complex network of spatial and temporal elements and the sensing body of the scenographer and, ultimately, the spectator. Here embodied understanding is central to the process of meaning. In the projects described above, scenographic research draws upon embodied knowledge about scenographic operation to produce environments and events. These, in turn, become a focus for collaborative exploration through participation, opening channels between the tacit knowledge possessed by each of those involved. In such circumstances, embodied knowledge is firmly in the foreground, both to the making of the event and to the engagement it elicits. Post-hoc reflection on the shared experience helps explicate tacit understanding and feeds back into further iterations of the practice, contributing to developing insights about knowledge which is embodied.

SPATIAL THINKING

Where researchers are examining their own practice, scenographic processes are often central to the researchers' methods. Processes of drawing and constructing scale models are processes of evaluating and developing ideas, of thinking visually and spatially. Rudolf Arnheim has written about the intelligence of visual perception in order to assert that cognitive operations are not exclusive to mental processes, but also arise in 'active perceiving' (Arnheim 1969: 14). Shapes, forms and colours in the natural world and in art take on meaning as

we actively engage with them. Understanding of the visual world comes about gradually through 'continued confirmation, reappraisal, change, completion, correction, deepening of understanding' (ibid.: 15). Making a drawing is an active engagement with the visual and spatial and in scenographic practice storyboards are used to develop design ideas. Robert Wilson's storyboards describe the spatial compositions and architectonic arrangements for each scene and his 'visual book' serves as the framework for his productions (Bly 1996: 70). Talking about the design for his production of *King Lear*, he says:

> I am a visual artist, I think spatially . . . I have no sense of direction until I have a sense of space. Architectural structure is crucial in my work. If I don't know where I'm going, I can't get there. The crown was the visual key that unlocked the play for me. It became a tiny wall in this enormous space, and I started thinking of the stage as a dialog between empty space and walls that fly in from time to time to change the space. (Wilson, in Holmberg 1996: 77)

The processes of drawing and of working through different kinds of visualisation (rough sketches, technical drawings, 3D or computer models, renderings and samples) allow mental projections to be made. Luigi Prestinenza Puglisi's concept of projection as a means of developing ideas in art and architecture can also be applied to scenography. Developing ideas through successive iterations of making, of working through different graphic media and from two into three dimensions is a process of thinking through materials, each iteration subtly transformed and extended by translation into another medium (Prestinenza Puglisi 1999: 30–8).

Anna Birch developed a method of using visual analysis as a way to examine representational strategies in live and mediated performance. Her performance kit, originally developed as part of the methodology for her PhD, reflects storyboarding processes (http://www.theperformancekit.com). Video recording of rehearsal and performance allows 'strips' of work to be isolated and examined from a visual perspective. For Birch 'the power of scenography' lies in the way it frames 'ideas and images as well as bodies and words in space' and this she utilises as a means of exploring the dramaturgy of her work as a feminist director (Birch 2004: 84). The value of these strips is that they provide a means to make the work strange, to reappraise work in progress and to activate her 'outside eye':

> The theatre director takes the role of the outside eye, the one who looks and watches from the spectators' point of view. The process of looking activates a series of frames through which the process of looking takes place. These frames shape the process of looking and making to such an

> extent that their existence for the feminist director becomes the reason for making theatre. The feminist director addresses these normative frames through her practice in an attempt to cite alternative gendered readings. (Ibid.: 11)

The strips created from Birch's performances offer a way to freeze-frame the creative process in order to analyse it and generate new possibilities through 'the making and tagging of social meanings in both dramaturgical and scenographic languages' (ibid.: 189).

Representation and recontextualisation is a central theme in Birch's work and she draws on theories of social semiotics to explore the way meanings of cultural objects transmute and transform through the processes of creation and consumption. In the course of her study she explores through practice the implications for moving from proscenium theatre to site-based performance, from script to devised work, and from live performance to projected filmed performance. By bringing the exterior space into relationship with the interior space, the conventional context of meaning-making is subverted and questioned. For example, a film of a live performance, *Di's Midsummer Night Party*, staged inside Clissold House in Stoke Newington, London, was projected on to the exterior of the same space a year later offering a new perspective on space and gender. In this 'strip analysis', Birch considers the blurring and /or clarifying of boundaries that occurs between interior and exterior and between domestic and public space:

> Reframed by the house, with the house used as a screen, the audience looks through the façade, seeing into, and through to the other side of the house. Tolulu, framed and spotlit in the window, shows the route through the house to its 'other' side, showing how to look through her female gaze. The audience look with Tolulu out of the house, bringing the back of the house to the front to discover the ontology of the house revealed from behind the façade by the camera. The surface of the house is made porous, questioned, mutable – no longer the resistant monument of the past. (Ibid.: 180)

The transformation from one medium to another, such as Birch adopts, is 'a throwing forward, projecting in order to place the concept outside ourselves where it can be elaborated' (Prestinenza Puglisi 1999: 79). Projecting from one medium to another creates a kind of spatial *Verfremdungseffekt*. The multiple viewpoints of a phenomenological account of the experience are in evidence here, but they are bracketed off, through the strips, in a way which gives room for a reconsideration of theatrical and social space.

A notion of spatial thinking embraces the phenomenal and the material

dimension of scenography and the multi-sensory nature of the scenographic environment, including the aural dimension of scenography. Ross Brown considers the 'phenomenal potency' of theatre sound and advocates consideration of all noise as part of that phenomenal field in order to establish 'a more suitable field for meaningful soundings' in a postmodern world (Brown 2005: 119). In a conference paper at TaPRA in 2007, Brown considered how attendance to sound in performance hovers between the designed 'object of attention' (listening) and the field of 'noise' (hearing) in which it exists. In his AHRC project 'Noise, Memory, Gesture: The Theatre in a Minute's Silence', he concludes that attending performance places the 'audient body' in a 'subject theatre' where everyday background noise demands attention. Before any noise may be dismissed as an insignificant or annoying local incident, it must be inspected to check that it is not a deliberate part of the dramaturgy. Listening (the auditory gaze) is thus effected by hearing (unfocused aurality). The object of auditory attention may only ever be experienced vaguely through the fog of theatre noise that hangs between the object of attention and the receptive subject. Brown's modelling of attendance to sound underlines the spatial dimension of perception which applies to all aspects of scenography. It also places the audience member at the centre of the process of meaning-making (or the avoidance of it) which is activated by spatial concerns. The body in space is at the root of perception and understanding because 'the body organizes and gives structure to the phenomenal field through its positioning' (Crowther 1993: 104).

The interchange between the auditory gaze and unfocused aurality that Brown describes reflects Henri Lefebvre's notion of space as a means of thinking, imagining and mediating. Lefebvre's account of the dual nature of social space is that it is at once both an actual location, a means of seeing oneself in a particular position and in relation to others (people, objects), and, at the same time, a space of mediation, where one seeks to apprehend something else beyond the plane surface, behind each opaque form. For Lefebvre, our perception, conception and actual experience of spaces interpenetrate each other and superimpose themselves (Lefebvre 1991: 86). Where scenography has been conceived as a practice of creating spaces of mediation, or spaces of change and transformation (Aronson 2005: 1), a spatial approach to researching scenography refers not only to performance-based methods of research but also to the consideration of the way audiences and/or participants engage with scenographic material.

IMPLICATING AND INTERACTING WITH AUDIENCES

Several of the practice-led projects we have already discussed implicate audiences as part of their research method. As we indicated in the introduction, a

focus on the audience and the ways they might experience of scenography has become an important strand in new definitions of scenography and therefore research into scenography. This way of thinking about scenography pays attention to the role of the audience in meaning-making, and therefore suggests that investigating audience response is integral to scenographic research methodologies. A common approach is to use post-performance discussion, sometimes supplemented by written tasks or questionnaires. Joslin McKinney developed methods of eliciting audience response to scenography which were themselves scenographic (McKinney 2008). McKinney's practice-based PhD used scenographic performances to investigate the nature of communication between scenography and audience. The aim was to uncover the ways in which audiences take note of scenography during a performance and what kinds of sense they make of what they experience. Structured using iterative cycles of action and reflection, the trajectory of the three performances begins by drawing on recognisably mainstream professional practice (*The General's Daughter*), through a scenographic installation where the audience were placed physically in the centre of the performance (*Homesick*) to engaging and involving the audience through scenography and creating a form of participatory scenographic performance (*Forest Floor*). Discussion in small groups directly after *The General's Daughter* was recorded, transcribed and then analysed for types of responses – the way they described what they had seen, the meaning they ascribed and the feelings and emotions they experienced. This yielded some valuable and articulate response, but it tended to prioritise cognitively decoding of the scenography. The invited audience of theatre and arts practitioners and scholars tended to use a broadly semiotic approach to assigning meaning to what they had seen and to say much less about their personal feelings and embodied responses (McKinney 2008: 16–18). Using image-making as a means of investigating responses provided a quite different kind of response. After *Homesick* audience members each made drawings which were then used as the basis of interviews with research assistants. As Patrice Pavis points out, drawing as a means of analysing performance conveys a more immediate response as it can retain 'a gestural and kinesic quality' (2003: 33). The explanations that participants gave for their drawings provided insight into the way scenography worked on them at a phenomenological level and the act of drawing seemed to encourage them to express their response to the scenography in terms of subjective feelings and memories (McKinney 2008: 22–5).

Collectively the drawings also worked for McKinney as a means of reflection on her own work in *Homesick* as they appeared to reflect and extend the original scenography by projecting and transforming the performance into significant images of the audience members' own. McKinney figured this as a conversation or exchange, through images, about the material and themes of

the performance and the notion of the 'scenographic exchange' became a key concept in attempting to model the complex relationship between the scenographer and audience members (ibid.: 25). The next step was to see whether a notion of scenographic exchange could be made to operate within and as a constituent part of a performance. *Forest Floor* was only partially predetermined by the team of performers and designers. The material that was initially presented offered repetitions on traditional fairy stories (Hansel and Gretel, Red Riding Hood and Bluebeard), varying the emphasis of each version through the use of costumes and scenographic objects. Audience members were encouraged to respond by joining in or intervening in the scenographic environment. Participants could use light, costume, objects, puppets and graphic materials to augment images others had created or develop their own. The structure of the performance event allowed the roles of audience, performers and designers to merge and switch, and opened up the possibility of a site for exchange where the process of experiencing and making sense of scenography became a mutual imaginative construction (ibid.: 86–7). McKinney used Lefebvre's notion of spatial thinking to prompt consideration of the action of scenography on the audience. Lefebvre, and Edward Soja after him, have used the idea of a 'third' space to conceptualise a spatial imagination which is potentially transformative. 'Thirdspace', as Soja has coined it (Soja 1996: 68), is characterised by being '. . . simultaneously material-and-metaphorical, real-and-imagined, concretely grounded in spatial practices yet also represented in literary and aesthetic imagery' (Soja 2000: 24). The 'non-verbal subliminality' of this 'third' space foregrounds the 'potential insightfulness of art' and offers a different way of thinking and a terrain of social struggle and potential emancipation (Soja 1996: 67). The simultaneously material and metaphorical milieu of Thirdspace makes it a potentially rich site for collective cultural exchange and individual experience and discovery, and McKinney proposes that scenography might provide a theatrical and performing Thirdspace (McKinney 2005: 136–7).

McKinney observes that 'scenography is a process of thinking which oscillates between the visual, the haptic and the cognitive' (McKinney 2008: 34) and that no single method of gathering response was sufficient. Discussion and post-performance reflection remained important in clarifying and contextualising what could be observed in the visual images and scenographic interventions. She also recognises that her reflection on audience response could not be truly objective, inevitably coloured as it was by the intentions and artistic sensibilities that informed the performances in the first place (ibid.: 32, 40). The process of making and the reflecting on a performance through the material generated by audience participants was fed back into the next performance and created a spiral of deepening understanding about her work as a scenographer in parallel to and in dialogue with the larger purpose of the research.

SCENOGRAPHIC WRITING

For around a decade, and with the influence of performance studies, pockets of performative writing have begun to flourish, perhaps most particularly in the UK journal *Performance Research*. Peggy Phelan describes performative writing as 'enacting the affective force of the performance event again' (1997: 11). It is, she proposes, 'solicitous of affect even while it is nervous and tentative about the consequences of that solicitation', writing that 'points both to itself and to the "scenes" that motivate it' (ibid.: 12). Performative writing that focuses on the scenographic draws on the researcher's responses to the multiple dimensions of the event and to the constituent parts of the performance environment. Ventures into scenographic research of this kind aim to describe the event – or, rather, the author's recall of the experience – by reflective and evocative means. The centrality of spectators' experience to research in scenography is a motivating factor in the particular subjectivity expressed by writing that might be described as 'scenographic'.

Stephen Di Benedetto, in several articles (2000, 2003, 2007) informed by Arnheim's work on sensory perception (Arnheim 1969), proposes that 'we can think with our senses' through the medium of theatre (Di Benedetto 2003: 101). Di Benedetto perceives and seeks to record theatre as 'a form of mediated sensory stimulation' (2003: 101). In considering Il teatro della Societas Raffaello Sanzio (SRS), he holds that the perceiving body collages actual and represented experiences, bringing to 'the lived experience of theatre' a fusing of 'non-verbal cultural memory with present experience' and thus is keen to 'explore the ways in which the use of culture can be made visceral to the active attendant of a theatrical event' (ibid.: 102). Recognising such a visceral invocation of cultural resonance in the Wrestling School production of Howard Barker's *Dead Hands*, close analysis is the chosen method in a chapter by Helen Iball that focuses upon one aspect of the performance text: a pair of stiletto-heeled shoes (2006). Here, the shoes are explored as a metonym for the distinctive aesthetic of Barker's drama. This analysis is undertaken in a writing style that self-consciously seeks out the sensual and playful. The desired effect is to express the impact of the shoes upon the player's body in space, its temporality, its impact on the spectator and the socio-culturally gendered resonances that it evokes:

> [P]oise here is a kind of teetering, an anticipatory space balanced precariously between liberation and constraint, power and vulnerability: a potent ambiguity recognised in the stiletto as symbol [. . .] in theatrical terms, this presents as a heightening: of the sexual allure of the legs through tension, of the way the body presents as prone. (Ibid.: 80)

Iball aims to express heightened sensory experience through her writing, an aim echoed in Di Benedetto's call for the development of 'a more poetic or sensual language' (2007: 126) to express theatre image and sensation. This comes from an acknowledgment that, to express the operations of the non-verbal in performative acts, the impact of the pre-linguistic on the sensing body needs recognition. In an echo of Phelan's assertions of the tentativity of performative writing, Di Benedetto, in attempting to suspend conventional approaches to interpretation and instead to chart moments of performance and their effect upon him, concludes that 'many of the reactions to SRS can be best understood through a highly personal view of the event. And this language always seems inadequate' (2003: 106). Investigating Robert Wilson's theatre, he observes that 'before interpreting, one needs to have a vocabulary to understand the ways in which an object or experience exists in space' (2000: 62). In this essay, he draws on the language of art composition to identify the essential components of theatre images: 'line, weight, colour, movement, and sound' (ibid.: 63). Later, he draws upon his personal experiences of performances, registering carefully the effects of light, colour, texture, space, smell, movement and sound on his own body. His methods are expressed as a series of research questions:

> What are the ways in which spectators can become aware of the full range of sensations offered from performance or live art events? To what extent do artists consciously use sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste as expressive forms? What are the possible ways in which the senses influence one's experience of art work? What means do we, as bodies attendant to these events, have to chart and describe these experiences? (2007: 125)

These questions arose from the recognition that this is a live art event representative of a trend since the 1990s, and demanding that he activates his 'awareness of the performance sensorium', adjusting his expectations of what a performance event is so that he might take an active role in attending to the performance (ibid.: 124). The word attendant is preferable to the common terminology audience or spectator, given that it 'suggests presence and can be thought of in the Catholic sense of being "attendant to mass," implying presence and participation' (ibid.: 126). Although there has been a general move towards the 'emancipation' of the spectator (Bennett 1997: 213), Di Benedetto concentrates on the spatial and the sensory aspects of performance. These invite an openness and sensitivity to the effects of spatial manipulation, qualities of objects and shifts in light and sound.

Martin Welton's article 'Once More With Feeling' (2005) is another useful example here. Seeking to 'reposition or re-imagine the theatre in terms of

sensory modalities beyond vision itself' (ibid.: 101), Welton is a practitioner writing scenographically in order to particularise a theatre event through personal account. Welton's initial modes of reference to Sound and Fury's production *The Watery Part of the World* are descriptive and contextual (ibid.: 103). This facilitates the reader's understanding of the staging configuration before Welton goes on to consider the experience of performing in the dark – which he describes as 'an act of co-perception of self and environment' because 'how we imagine the world to be has an effect on how it actually is and vice versa'. Thus 'the actor's imagination becomes a particularly practical kind of knowledge, occupying, rather than abstracted from, the here and now' (ibid.: 108). Welton's approach is phenomenological:

> Entering the dark theatre space at the beginning of *The Watery Part of the World*, we led each other by the hand feeling with our feet along a guide rope on the floor, reaching out in the darkness for the rope overhead. One after the other, we would guide one another's hands towards the rope as we arrived in the space. This marked the start of a flurry of touches of reassurance, affirmation, urgency . . . Although we created and occupied a world apparent [to the audience] through sound, at a professional, practical level, it was the shared experience of touch that allowed us to act together. (Ibid.)

By describing his embodied knowledge as an actor in the playing space, Welton provides a very different perspective on this production than the one experienced by the audience; he notes that audiences may have been surprised to see a credit for a set designer in the programme of a production that took place in the dark. Indeed, as an inverse case for the intra- and trans-disciplinarity of research methods that have been identified here with scenography, the material for Welton's scenographic writing is contingent upon his role as performer.

CONCLUSIONS

Research methods in scenography demonstrate particular affinities with visualisation, projection and improvisation. It is fitting that these distinctive methods have their roots in theatre design techniques such as drawing, storyboarding and modelling. As a significant proportion of researchers have design experience, and many are experienced designers, such tools are commonplace. Indeed, in this developing field there has been debate concerning the extent to which scenography might be recognised as an inherently research-based practice. National and international fora such as TaPRA, IFTR and OISTAT have helped to establish research communities which play an important role

in discussion and dissemination of research methods in scenography. Indeed, networking itself may be viewed as a significant step toward research methods, facilitating context and underpinning future directions. Assumptions and hierarchies within the field are brought into question through discussion, practice-led workshops and papers from participants with a wide range of interests but working from scenographic perspectives. This is of particular value given that scenography often becomes synonymous with theatre's visual components – risking the demotion or even exclusion of the aural, olfactory and tactile, an imbalance recognised but also reflected to some extent in the current chapter.

There is also a recognised danger that enduring visual records of the theatre event present a limited perspective. In scenographic historiography, design artefacts have been explored with a caution to remember the distinction they represent between intention and production, but also recognising a generative energy in positing an alternative focus to historical narratives. In practice-led research selectivity is also generative – storyboarding is utilised as an imaginative site of reappraisal for work in progress, situated as it is between thinking and making, representing an opportunity to communicate and clarify. Scenographic practice is characterised by willingness to adapt new methods during the creative process, to collaborate, to rework.

Virtual environments and other interfaces between scenography and new technologies are now increasing the range of tools available for research – adding further dimensions to the visualisation of proposed theatre events. The implication is that projective methods are fundamental to scenographic research by historians and for contemporary makers. Such methods depend upon tacit knowledge as a key to unlocking the potential of researched or created materials. In the areas of the field concerned with audience experience of a seen event, the impulse is in description rather than projection. This description is retrospective and refers to an event substantially vanished. Scenographic writing aims to evoke moments that have passed, styling the writing to 'do' things performatively. In a few instances, drawing has been used as a means of expressing and sharing audience response, but the expectation that concluding observations will be in written form has yet to be shifted.

Underpinning most research methods in scenography are phenomenological perspectives, prioritising embodied understanding. The bracketing of assumptions to take a fresh look is a method that has been used across scenographic historiography, practice and reception studies. In describing embodied experience, the language adopted by scenography is often transdisciplinary, looking to fields such as art, philosophy and cognition – and perhaps the efficacy of this strategy rests partly in its location beyond the established hierarchical perspectives of theatre research. Though, equally, as an emergent field, scenographic researchers have been enabled by established

approaches to theatre research, scholarship around the postdramatic and also by a cultural shift towards site-specific participatory theatre events. These lend further credence to scenography as an integral (and often instigative) component of performance, to the extent that scenographic research is by no means only practised by and of interest to scenographers. The increasing centrality of audience (participant) experience – often blurring distinctions between performer and audience and sometimes removing the performer entirely, in configurations that also involve spatial and environmental shifts in staging dynamics – has become a fundamental concern. Here key areas of theatre praxis overlap with scenographic methods and these developing strategies suit a climate where forms of visceral performance and immersive theatre find inspiration in the theatre as bodied (third)space. It can be difficult to determine where the boundaries of the field are drawn and invigorating to question if they need to be drawn at all. Indeed, trans-disciplinarity is a crucial and fascinating aspect of the area, as this chapter has identified. What is clear, however, is that as research in scenography develops, it will be important to keep returning to definitions and to the identification of research methods that are informed by scenography.

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CHAPTER 6

Performer Training: Researching Practice in the Theatre Laboratory

Jonathan Pitches, Simon Murray, Helen Poynor, Libby Worth, David Richmond and Jules Dorey Richmond

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Jonathan Pitches

Research into the processes of performer training has enjoyed an explosion of activity in recent years. This is partly due to the advent of practice as research as a methodology and the particular dimension of that activity which Robin Nelson calls 'Practitioner Knowledge' (2006: 11). This renewed interest is almost certainly caused by the growth in numbers of practitioner-researchers in higher education, a development related to the ever-shortening distance between creative industries and the academy. It may also be a manifestation of the growth of training outlets in the UK and beyond. As Murray and Keefe point out in *Physical Theatres: A Critical Introduction* (2007), in the UK venues for training and courses can now be found far beyond the nineteen accredited acting conservatoires included in the National Council of Drama Training listings. Extensive numbers of undergraduate theatre and performance programmes develop 'practitioner knowledges' in their students, experienced theatre directors not only make work but lead their own training laboratories, and there has been a connected development in what could be called the 'workshop industry': short courses led by an array of international professionals and pedagogues transmitting their training methods to a varied audience of actors, artists, academics and researchers. All these manifestations of 'training as cultural production' (Murray and Keefe 2007: 121) have added considerably to the complexity and popularity of the field. Developments in the academic journal market, particularly the introduction of the Routledge journal *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* in 2010, recent publications such as the second edition of *Actor Training* edited by Alison Hodge (2010) and

conference activity dedicated to performer training suggest the intensification in training research looks set to continue.

With this proliferation of training research comes a set of related problems, ones which haunt much of theatre and performance studies in the UK and internationally but which become particularly visible in the contemporary crucible of creativity: the theatre laboratory. Most fundamental of these are as follows. What distinguishes the everyday work of an investigative practitioner from activity that might, with some confidence and justification, be called research? What are the pitfalls and, conversely, the potentialities when researching in and around a theatre studio environment? How does one balance a state of *engagement* in 'hands on' practices with a state of *separation* from those very same practices, the second being more appropriate for reflective thinking and expression? This latter conundrum is of course central to the doubleness of the lived theatre experience, but what distinguishes research from any actor-centred training discussion is the second-level audience a practitioner-researcher is addressing: the research community or, even more generically, the disciplinary knowledge pool.

Practice as research is a widely inclusive term and performer training occupies a very specific place in this broad church, but the position of the researcher in the theatre laboratory nevertheless echoes the range of possibilities in practice-oriented enquiries. This includes the practitioner whose work is the subject of the enquiry itself and for whom knowledge can only be generated through creative practice as a research methodology, to the researcher who is looking in on the training laboratory from outside and for whom there are varying degrees of immersion combined with separation. This range of possibilities is reflected in the case studies that follow below and each raises specific methodological problems. What in effect is offered here is a series of meta-commentaries on the processes of laboratory research, written at one remove from the research itself and facilitating a set of reflections which otherwise would not have been part of the research process. The value of this approach is to compel each writer to revisit the context of their research, which by its nature is specialised, with the aim of exploring more general and transferable questions of method and methodology. These are then synthesised and rearticulated as guiding questions for performer training researchers in the conclusion. With the phenomenon of the theatre laboratory only really gaining currency after 1905 (prompted by Stanislavsky's various Theatre Studios), the case study contributors draw here on practices from the last hundred years, grounding questions of research methods in the writers' own experience of translating embodied processes and discoveries into written registers. Thus the roots of the practical work exemplified in these case studies span nearly a century of laboratory practice – from Meyerhold's biomechanics first codified in the 1920s, through Lecoq's experiments in France from the

1950s onwards, to Anna Halprin's collaborative scoring practice (RSVP) first devised in the 1960s, and concluding with a contemporary analytical window onto British studio pedagogy in the university sector: *floorplan*. This cross section allows an introductory consideration of the varying modes of transmission evident in laboratory research and spans the range of training functions: from skills-development focused on a very particular theatrical aesthetic through personal (and interpersonal) development and finally to models of interactive pedagogy.

It might be tempting to see this chronological organisation of experiences as placed along a progressive line of evolutionary development: from a practitioner-driven model of 'simple' embodied transmission, master to pupil, to a more complex, shared experience of creation in Halprin's methods and *floorplan*. In his introduction to *Performer Training* (2001) Ian Watson identifies an associated development in training terms: from early twentieth-century practitioners and their emphasis on overarching systems, to a focus, later in that century, on the 'individual actor':

> Experimentalists like Grotowski and Barba [are concerned with] . . . providing means for each actor to explore his or her own creative potential . . . rather than with developing a universal training model that can be transmitted from teacher to actor. (Watson 2001: 7)

In fact, the fractures in this neat training history are evident much earlier than Eugenio Barba's Theatre Anthropology or Grotowski's search for 'secular holiness', but what *is* valuable here is the simple binary of *system/individual*, a lens through which we can view the following case studies in order to scrutinise questions of research methods and methodology in the training laboratory. This binary is intimately connected with another of Watson's key terms: *vertical transmission*. This term, analogous with a diachronic perspective, connotes the passage of performance skill and knowledge from one generation to another, most evident in the deep, psycho-physical training traditions of, say, Asia and the Pacific Rim, for instance Kathakali or Beijing Opera. But it begs scrutiny and extension: what might constitute *horizontal (or synchronic) transmission* in terms of performer training and would such a term, given its implication of surface learning, inevitably be a bad (or shallow) thing?

These two ideas provide a frame for the consideration of the following case studies. They resonate with a number of interconnected themes which emerge from all four case studies and form the through-line for the ensuing sections. These include: the problems of translating from one mode of communication to another, from, say, a workshop demonstration to a written document; the challenging of terms such as 'lineage' and the related issues of status, legitimacy

and authority; questions of analytical distance and how it might be best for researchers to position themselves when working in a laboratory context; and, most fundamentally, an interrogation of the ways in which knowledge is generated, owned and complicated by the researcher's own connections with the object or process under scrutiny.

If one issue is clear in the diverse interactions between practice, research, documentation, writing and reception in this chapter, it is that any claim to a singular and expert account of training methods or methodology should be treated with considerable suspicion and scepticism. What emerges from these testimonies is the strong sense that a variety of angles of critical interception – or explicitly identified research *methods* – offer a fundamentally productive approach to understanding, articulating and disseminating training practices.

(1) Researching Meyerhold and biomechanics: whose line is it anyway?

Jonathan Pitches

In 2003 Eugenio Barba published a plea to have his relations properly recognised: 'Vsevolod Meyerhold was my grandfather. It may seem bizarre . . .' (2003: 108). In so doing, he was consciously provoking questions of the theatre 'family' and of lineage which are particularly troublesome in a vertical tradition of training. To place oneself in a line of practitioners going back many years is not an unusual strategy to preserve a body of ideas, techniques and skills associated with a system of training; it is often driven by a genuine concern that they might otherwise be lost, misunderstood, diluted or misrepresented, compromising a hard-earned and long-exercised apprenticeship. But this approach to locating practices does not come without issues for the laboratory researcher. The diagrammatic equivalent of Barba's provocation is the family tree, often used in training analyses to exemplify acting traditions and to identify the key players who have contributed to keeping alive a particular tradition. In the case of Meyerhold, such a tree might more accurately include Nikolai Kustov, Alexei Levinsky and the students of ARTO in Moscow rather than Barba, for Kustov was Meyerhold's colleague who trained Levinsky in the 1970s who, in turn, is leading his own laboratory today. Examples of training inheritances like these raise several important points in relation to theatre laboratory research and specifically to the experience of ***translating*** the practical and pedagogical experiences into writing. These questions can be usefully addressed under the headings Transmission, Ownership and Documentation, which will form the focus of this section.

Transmission

What is at work in the passing on of bodily practices is a process of transmission, in this case the physical storyline of how biomechanics was passed on from its original context in Soviet Moscow in the 1930s to the early twenty-first century. Barba's urge to construct a simplified genealogy is indicative of a desire in many trainers, within and beyond the Russian tradition, to identify clean lines of inheritance. But what about the other players in Barba's lineage? And how are the alternative lineages constructed? A place in a training lineage is, of course, always *contingent*, dependent on historical context, and recognition of that contingency is the first imperative of research in any embodied practice. How does one navigate through this complexity, complicated further by one's own place in it? One step is to recognise that reflective and experiential modes of thinking are both part of a practitioner-researcher's critical armoury; managing this duality in methodical terms needs an element of strategic research *design*.

For historiographers, suspicion of the past (and its various tellings) is a given, but for participant-researchers in the laboratory it is often easy to forget the need for critical distancing. Indeed, it might be important actually to *suspend* one's doubts so that the work can be entered into in an open and accepting way, only later to examine the assumptions inscribed in the practice. Paul Allain has articulated this demand for dextrous negotiation of the practitioner's standpoint:

> We need to be able to train with conviction and practise without inhibiting analysis, so that when we emerge the other side, when we stand back and judge we can speak with embodied insights. Reflection can rarely be done within the flow of the work, because it is always enough just to do. We need to allow ourselves to be immersed, and yet also to know when and how to reflect. This duality is still the central challenge for those documenting performance processes. (Allain 2006: 24)

To address this challenge in practice here are some suggestions, based on the assumption that you, the researcher, are also participating in the practice. Firstly, manage carefully your interaction with secondary sources: reading Michael Chekhov's statements on the Psychological Gesture, for example, or Anne Bogart's on Viewpoints, before or after their introduction in a studio space, will clearly affect the manner in which the ideas are processed. Secondly, decide how (and if) to punctuate practical work with periods of writing: does the practice merit constant small written interventions or a longer period of more sustained written response, for instance?

Thirdly, distinguish between *formative* writing (to help understand the work), *documentary* writing (to record the work), *reflective* writing (to allow space for personal evaluation) and *critical* writing (to draw on ideas from a wider context). Fourthly, decide how best to gauge when these different modes of writing may be adopted. Fifthly, build in discussion points with other participants, if appropriate, for benchmarking your own experiences against those of others. Finally, pay attention to the overarching *design* of these reflective moments and allow for flexibility and responsiveness in its execution.

Ownership

Laying aside questions of intellectual property and copyright, a more interesting question, in this particular context, is the way one might define the ownership of *embodied* creative processes and how far this overriding process of definition might be seen as a transmission of principles from the leader to the participant(s). Central to this is the problematic nature of bodily practice: where does intuition, knowledge and understanding reside? At what point are participants able to take on the principles of the work and adapt them to their own needs? And 'adaptation', here, may not necessarily mean significant changes to the specific practice. It might simply be the absorption of knowledge into a different bodily frame.

The construction of practical exercises and the explication of these in writing pushes this process of adaptation much further: beyond what is implicit in the leader–participant relationship and into the still more complicated area of mixed-mode documentation. It is one thing to 'record' the translation of knowledges from one practitioner to similar corporeal media, quite another to assume that writing alone can support this translation and sufficiently communicate it to others.

An example will illustrate my point here. In Meyerhold's biomechanics, a significant part of the training relates to the practising of 'études'. These short physical studies are intensified dramas, refined and condensed into minute-long, repeatable forms. Once the overall pattern of movements is memorised and the underlying compositional principles of the work are understood, the training is about pursuing this ideal form and finding a personal understanding or accommodation of the exercises within one's own physical limits. Yet these études were born out of a very specific and highly influential socio-political context: post-Revolutionary Russia. There is little to connect this context directly with Medvedev's/Putin's contemporary Russia, let alone to twenty-first-century Boston, Birmingham or Bangalore. Incumbent upon the practitioner-researcher, then, is a 'duty of care' both to the leader of the work and to the tradition they represent and of which they are part. This should

be reflected in the clarity and transparency of the documentation strategy adopted by the researcher.

Documentation

Central to the function of a theatre laboratory researcher is a need to open up questions of authenticity, legitimacy and power which are implied by the term 'tradition'. How one goes about answering those questions has a direct impact on the kinds of documentation methods to be adopted: what use might be made of historical surveys, participant interviews, or archival access, for example?

One direct way of addressing the complexity of historiographical questions when working in the laboratory is through the design of a documentation strategy, first to survey what documentation already exists of the practice under scrutiny, and second to decide *how* to record the work experienced directly. Paul Allain is right when he insists on the need to immerse oneself in the experience (2006: 24), but without a sufficient record of the events any later reflection is severely hampered. The need for a documentation *strategy* reflects the multiple kinds of documentation available to the practitioner-researcher; without some planning in relation to these, any project may quickly become mired in documentary overload. Logbooks, video documents, still photographs, eye witness accounts, reviews, interviews, all need arranging strategically to reflect the particular questions the research is asking. To exemplify, in my book *Vsevolod Meyerhold* there is a section called Reconstructions (2003: 148–50) which lists eleven 'versions' of a biomechanical étude called *Shooting the Bow* and identifies four different categories: prose descriptions, diagrams, photos and videos. The invitation in the book is to reconstruct these versions and then to compare the subtle differences produced by the various categories of documentation. Thus questions relating to the relationship of documentation *mode* to researcher *knowledge* may be brought to the fore. Such subtleties must be part of any nuanced documentation strategy.

In contexts such as this one, where multiple documentation sources exist, including those from one's immediate experience, the documents will not always 'speak' to each other in a logical way. But these inconsistencies are of important research value and will ultimately reveal more about the practices under observation than when subjected to a singular, homogenising perspective. The studio or laboratory is of such complexity that a binary or triadic modelling of sources will seldom be enough to capture the richness of the interaction. But paramount is that the dialectical tension between strategic thinking and experiential engagement is managed both with consciousness and care.

(2) Researching Lecoq and physical theatres

Simon Murray

Any writing project focusing on training invites its author to wrestle with a series of challenges. These exist at different orders of specificity. At one level there are unavoidable generic questions concerning any act of translation and communication of embodied live practices (from teaching studio or performance space) through the page into the body-minds of readers. At another – and perhaps more important – level there exist a series of complex issues as to how scrupulous practices give rise to a series of unfolding questions as knowledge(s) develop around the subject in question. The research questions to be posed of training practices are themselves contingent upon a range of shifting epistemological and cultural factors.

Particular challenges and issues arise when the writing in question contains a translation of *practical exercises* from the laboratory floor to the page, as many books dedicated to training aim to do, including, most notably given its popularity, the Routledge Performance Practitioners series (edited by Franc Chamberlain). Each book in the series has a simple template of biography, key ideas, a key production and a final chapter of illustrative practical exercises. The construction of these books raises many research questions over and above the more usual challenges in writing about training practices (as discussed in our first case study), not least those relating to one's target audience and the chosen methods of documentation. Imagining a Lecoq workshop on, say, his key concept of the neutral mask, the range of documentation possibilities (and hence strategies for dissemination) might include:

- unedited real-time video record;
- edited video record;
- written record of external observer and/or of participant observer;
- sound recording;
- edited transcripts of interviews/conversations with Lecoq and/or students;
- edited transcripts of interviews/conversations with other commentators (alumni, teachers, academics, practitioners);
- distillation of existing secondary sources.

Plus combinations of any of the above with other methods not included.

Within each of these methods of documentation are critical editorial choices/decisions (e.g. position and number of cameras, choice of interview questions, selection of material to be documented – why 'neutral mask', why not 'clown' or 'melodrama'?) which will significantly inflect the kinds of knowledges produced and received through transmission and translation.

To map out something of the landscape of these decisions I will concentrate

on two aspects of *Jacques Lecoq* (2003), my contribution to the Routledge series, which were conceptually and practically complex, and only partially resolved through the actual writing. These are identified as follows:

- proximity to the practitioner-subject and the role of tacit knowledge;
- the attention paid in the writing to issues of *context*.

Proximity to the subject and the role of tacit knowledge

Lecoq had been dead for only three years before I embarked on the book project and his school was still flourishing under the guidance of his widow Fay and a team of tutors. Furthermore, little had been written about his teaching and theorising of performer training. So the issue of proximity is both a matter of temporality and of available knowledge, or, rather, the type, status and authenticity of that knowledge. Closeness and distance, and the extent to which the subject matter is already well mined and disseminated, all have a significant bearing on the researcher's choice of enquiry methods.

The book illuminates a series of particular perspectives on the proximity issue. Lecoq's death in 1999, and an understandable sense of protectiveness for his reputation from those closest to him, produced sensitivities to the research and writing which would not have been the case for a figure who had died much earlier in the twentieth century. In a different, but crucial, sense I had another proximity problem: I was not a Lecoq 'graduate' and therefore an outsider to the community of teachers and students that was the Paris school both when Lecoq was alive and subsequently when undertaking my research. While I had no direct experience of his pedagogy, I had spent a year training in Paris (1986/7) with two ex-teachers from his school – Philippe Gaulier and Monika Pagneux – who had moved on to run their own institution. I had also undertaken a number of courses and workshops run by Lecoq-trained theatre-makers such as Jos Houben and Simon McBurney. Thus I felt I had a significant amount of *indirect* experience of the principles and practices entailed in Lecoq's teaching, and for over twenty years had witnessed a considerable amount of theatre from artists and companies who explicitly acknowledged a debt to Lecoq. This tacit comprehension of Lecoq's teaching blended indiscernibly with knowledge acquired through scholarly academic research methods: reading, interviews, observation and immersion in archive film and video. The meeting point of what superficially felt like two relatively distinct streams of knowledge was in fact a complex engagement, and not simply a linear accretion of the facts, understandings and insights which ultimately were to be communicated through the book.

This tacit knowledge acquired through my own training, particularly with Gaulier and Pagneux, my own practice as performer, theatre-maker and

spectator of live performance which had been stimulated and framed explicitly by the 'Lecoq experience', provided an embodied mechanism through which I sifted, refined, selected and evaluated information I acquired from other commentators and through the writing of Lecoq himself. That such tacit knowledge is, by definition, difficult to articulate and quantify is largely to do with the fact that it is embodied as a series of corporeal dispositions – skills even – which influenced me in the construction of the Routledge series book. Whether this embodied knowledge of Lecoq's principles and practices provides additional 'authority' and authenticity to the account is for others to judge. However, I believe such tacit comprehension contributed to an embrace of complexity and nuance in assembling an account of Lecoq's fifty-year span as theatre teacher and intellectual. This articulation of complexity – in contrast, I hope, to complication and mystification – was intended to add a richness to the account which might otherwise have been lacking.

These points all have a significant bearing on understanding how one selects research methods for any particular project investigating performer training, and how one becomes aware of (and deals with) the implications of knowledges which are tacit and implicit, hidden but deeply *incorporated* into the process of articulating one's subject matter. The pragmatics of a research process inevitably have a major impact on choice of research methods and consequently the shape and content of the knowledges produced. If I had had first-hand experience of Lecoq's pedagogy as a student, or if I had been offered the opportunity to observe classes at the school during the research period of the project, the kind of knowledges generated – and their subsequent dissemination – might perhaps have looked significantly different. For the researcher this kind of issue may not be primarily about 'quality', but about the ethics of making transparent (to oneself and others) the circumstances that frame the choices one ultimately makes.

The articulation and importance of context in the writing of practice

How to deal with 'context' is equally critical and complex in the research into, and dissemination of, training practices. The issue of context necessarily imposes itself on a research project from the outset as one identifies research questions and speculates upon strategies for communication. In some respects it seems a similar issue to tacit (incorporated) knowledge. It exists – hidden or explicit – as knowledge is produced, translated and transmitted, just as reading the signs of theatre is always context bound and can never be otherwise. Experiencing as a participant the training 'event in itself' largely leaves preoccupation with context submerged and – necessarily perhaps – unaddressed. However, the moment that training practices are combined with the scrutiny of a scholarly research process, questions concerning context can no longer

be ignored. These questions become even sharper and more insistent when the researcher addresses decisions about which modes of communication best illustrate the research outcomes.

The extent to which context needs to be explicitly identified and unpicked in either a teaching or reading situation depends largely on the nature and purpose of the activity. If I attend a week-long master class with, for example, Eugenio Barba, Lev Dodin, Peter Brook or Philippe Gaulier, then it may be of little use *in the moment* to be told about the lineage of the pedagogy or its relationship with other contemporary training practices. Nonetheless, in terms of a writing and reading transaction, if I want to 'understand' the practices of Brook or Dodin then the breadth of the engagement might properly have to encompass information about, reflection on and analysis of historical lineage, comparison with relevant peers and the location of those within a range of similar or different embodied practices. Thus, as a reader, my understanding of, say, a technical exercise, game or rehearsal technique is only ever partial without engaging with this contextual information and analysis. Conceptually, therefore, any articulation of studio-based practice can never simply 'speak for itself' but must also be positioned and framed both historically and synchronically.

At times context will appear as an all-prevailing frame for the practice which is being taught or read about, a tight circumscription explaining and directing the work and its purpose. Corporeal practices are often understood, communicated and apparently experienced as 'context free' but, notwithstanding the species-specific mechanics of movement, the texture and grain of our physicality is conditioned through our 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1986) and 'techniques of the body' (Mauss 1979). However, as the lens of cultural materialism insists (Wallis 2005), it is perhaps when context seems least explicit that its force is most pervasive. Nothing between reader and writer or teacher and student can be free of the mediations and framings of the circumstances which surround it. The range of possibilities for such interventions in any account of performer training might include the following:

- where an exploration of context is the explicit purpose of the engagement;
- where the practice itself is explicitly bound to a context and purpose (e.g. various forms of applied theatre work);
- where the practice seems to have a precision of focus/purpose which is tightly circumscribed (e.g. learning a particular dance technique, or the rhythms of delivering Shakespearean text);
- where the practice itself articulates its purpose as 'preparation', an opening up process that may be applied to a range of sites, forms and possibilities;
- where the practice is explicitly part of the compositional process and a means of generating material; in this sense the context of the ultimate goal

of production or performance will frame and shape the experience of the activity.

This ever-demanding issue of context became particularly evident to me when faced with the challenge of writing a chapter of practical exercises which was supposed somehow to articulate and capture the spirit of Lecoq's teaching. With the expectation that the series would be used by readers in a practical and somatic way, and not read simply for the delight of contemplation and reflection, concerns about an extreme form of decontextualisation presented themselves. There was also an anxiety concerning the almost complete lack of control a writer has over the conditions in which these exercises might be taught: the complex process and act of translation from the teaching of a particular principle (the dynamics of pushing or pulling, for example) by Lecoq himself in his Paris laboratory through the pages of a book and into the body/mind of a theatre teacher, probably in a radically different time and space.

As we have seen, this raises wider questions about research methods and methodologies: methodological questions around the status of authorship and control, about epistemology, about reading and about methods of dissemination, as well as questions of method which, particularly, might circle around the forms of representation to be selected for the investigation. These issues invite the scholar-practitioner-researcher to consider the ethics and legitimacy of the 'ownership' of established creative processes, and – depending on one's perspective on this issue – how one then handles the subsequent articulation of the practice in question through dissemination. So researching training practices necessitates quite complex engagements with a number of different constituencies: tutor and student, researcher and intended recipients of the dissemination, the concrete nature of the practices being learned, and the historical and cultural contexts which enshrine them.

(3) Collaborative writing: wrestling the slippery fish

Helen Poynor and Libby Worth

a conversation . . .

Writing or speaking about creative practice inevitably involves a process of recollection, whether this happens alone or with others, immediately or at a later date. Recollection is by its nature a fragile and partial reflection of the original experience.

Speaking about creative practice as a precursor to writing allows for the reflection to emerge from the voice and the body, with breath and energy and rhythm, with dips and pauses, voices that overtake each other, with ideas

that flip back and forth, reaching for something which has yet to find its form in language, which formulates itself in the creative exchange between two people. This is the pleasurable struggle of attempting collaboratively to 'draw' the processes of creative practice with words. Before words reach the paper a dance between two embodied voices takes place (writing as a choreographic process engaging time, space and bodies). This dance moves us beyond habitual language and assumptions, narrowing the gap between the living process of writing together and the way in which this is communicated. Before the logical sentences can be formed on the page a messier interaction is necessary. It is the energetic form of dialogue that engages, the flow of the conversation. What makes writing able to engage as dynamically with the reader?

about writing collaboratively . . .

For us there was little separation between the process of writing a book on Halprin (*Anna Halprin*, published in the Performance Practitioners series by Routledge, 2004) and the practice that we have both trained in with her in the early 1980s; we have been applying her approach to dance/movement in our practice and teaching ever since. In speaking we begin to unravel how we wrote together and how this reflects the way we might move together. For the period of writing, the book became our creative project and the tools from our training with Halprin informed the style of our working process as writers. Sometimes this was clearly articulated between us and the techniques were actively applied to our working method. For example, we applied the RSVP cycles, Halprin's approach to collective creativity, to the series format for the book, using it as 'score' (**S**) that could be 'recycled'. Collecting our 'resources' (**R**) according to the theme and intention of each section, we re-interpreted the original chapter 'scores' to reflect the ethos of Halprin's practice. At other times Halprin's approach was so fundamental to our way of working together that it did not need to be discussed. We took for granted the collaborative nature of the project, the way in which the baton in any given chapter could be, and was, passed between us. There was a tacit agreement that while not attempting to blend our voices there was no need to define our separate identities, to the extent that not only is the reader unable to distinguish our two different styles of writing, but we are now not always a hundred per cent sure which of us wrote a particular section.

This application of the creative process used by Halprin in her dance work to our writing was possible because her methodology is essentially collaborative and cross-disciplinary. The RSVP cycles are a creative research method for Halprin which allows her and her colleagues and students to research practically and reflect upon their movement and performance material and the relationship between form, content and intention. We would argue that in

order to write about studio practice, to reflect with integrity on that practice rather than becoming divorced from it, the writing and reflection benefits from being approached as an embodied and creative process. Applying Halprin's studio methodology to the writing process reflects this position and is consistent with the practice itself. By design the RSVP cycles offer a basic framework and instructions that leave much open to creative response. Using the RSVP cycles to develop 'scores' for writing we entered a contract, familiar for us, that determined certain parameters but not the exact content or style of writing. Equally, when writing the practical section of the series book, the scoring component of the RSVP cycles provided an integrative method to stimulate explorations of practice through the written word. Each score (**S**) included an intention, resources (**R**) and a series of task-based instructions to generate physical responses or 'performances' (**P**) that the reader/participant could choose to 'valuact' (**V**) and so enter the RSVP cycles methodology.

moving from talking to writing . . .

The process of creating our contribution to this chapter pushes the collaborative nature of our writing practice further. Writing about how we write about practice – what might that look like, or rather, what might that feel like? What does feeling have to do with writing in this more reflective, analytic form? Just as in a dance improvisation, I, or is it 'we', respond kinaesthetically and emotionally to your movement, feeling infuses our writing collaboration. How do our emotional responses to each other's writing indicate a point to be retained or a point to be lost? Rather than being conflictual this can be helpful, a strong feeling can indicate when a new perspective is being offered by the other. There is an ebb and flow that is easy, insistent, automatic, but that also rattles the pebbles, chinking them up against each other. Another's response can cause discomfort – this may indicate that a point needs resisting or that, for the benefit of the project, there is a need to open up to a new angle, a new thought, a contradiction. A feeling of excitement might reinforce the validity of an idea or reveal a section that needs expanding. Such are the unpredictable benefits of these research-writing methods.

Fundamental to Halprin's practice is the belief in the inextricable relationship between life and art; applying this to writing as a creative endeavour, rather than as an academic exercise, enables us to process the personal interactions that hinder or facilitate this practice. Our initial discussions about the contribution of this chapter included not only collecting 'resources' for the content in terms of ideas and themes, and how we might re-interpret the given 'score' to reflect more closely the nature of the process we are writing about, but also untangling the complex feelings provoked during the closing stages of the Halprin book project. This awareness of feelings is not separate from the

more tangible and recognisable dialogue about content. In this context it also constituted part of the ongoing 'valuaction' (**V**) element of the RSVP cycles. 'Valuaction' is a neologism that encapsulates the combination of reflection on/evaluation of performance (**P**) and the action that results from these responses. The emphasis on active response propels participants into any section of the cycle that requires fresh input, such as re-scoring or adding new resources.

Our discussion took the form of an 'embodied conversation' in which, without any forethought, hand gestures were used to describe the intensity of the collaborative relationship and a subsequent need for separation, and the possible form for our contribution for this chapter. These movements provided us with an understanding that we were not able to reach through language alone, enabling us to envisage a way of allowing our approach to writing together to become more fluid and layered rather than segmented. This use of movement to communicate ideas and feelings and to unravel a situation is central to Halprin's work. However, if the use of the body is crucial to communicating practice, how are we to write about it rather than talk about it? Is there a way of 'pressing' the written word to expand in response to the life of the embodied dialogue? The linearity of the logical sentence format necessarily constrains the more fluid experience of moving and talking. The notion of translating from one form to another is rife with difficulties, plagued by a lack of equivalences in the same way that a translation from poetry to painting might be. Nevertheless, the impossibility of direct translation does not mean that it is futile to attempt to communicate something about studio practice through language. There are inevitable pitfalls, or one might term them distractions, notably a use of language that promotes analysis of physical experience. This of course has its uses but is in no way a direct reflection of the experience itself. At the other end of the spectrum language may be used by participants writing experientially from inside a particular studio practice (or indeed as part of that practice) as Halprin encourages her workshop participants to do. This experiential writing differs from participants simply – or complexly – documenting the work undertaken in other ways than writing. The chasm between the analytical and experiential approaches provides unlimited potential for miscommunication as well as the possibility of exchange.

One of the crucial differences which we often sense when addressing the communication of practice via the written word is that between writing 'about' or writing 'from' the practice. Writing 'about' implies a degree of separation, describing the practice from the perspective of an observer, albeit an informed observer. Writing 'from' suggests the possibility of writing from inside the practice in such a way that the practice informs the process of writing as we have described it above. Of course these are never discrete, the interweaving of perspectives is a two-way multi-faceted process in which the understanding gained from analytical and contextual research can flow back into practice

and vice versa, creating a layered approach to writing. In the Halprin book we attempt to both write about the RSVP cycles and use them as our method for writing.

tussling with language

Practitioners attempt to articulate their practice in different contexts and for different purposes. Those working together clearly need to talk about what they are doing. This often leads to a kind of shorthand accessible only to those engaged in that particular practice. However, even practitioners trained in the same approach can understand the terminology and embody the practices in very different ways.

Likewise, in a discussion among practitioners from different backgrounds common terms in an apparently shared language can be misleading, as they are interpreted and applied differently in different practices. As a movement practitioner it is possible to have a conversation with another colleague which gives the impression of common ground, only to find in the studio that there is little communication and few points of contact between the embodied practices. In movement, as in language, it is of course also possible to dialogue across difference.

Practitioners respond to the elusive challenge of articulating their work through language by attempting to 'name' their practice, claiming or creating a particular terminology to indicate its specificity. There is a danger, when writing about a specific approach, of leaning too heavily on the terminology associated with it on the assumption that it is solid and immutable, then to find that it fails abysmally to reflect the vibrancy and fluidity of the practice which continues to evolve after the writing lies still on the page.

The dance between movement and the written word is challenging both kinaesthetically and conceptually. Two movement practitioners sit over a computer navigating the intermediary space between these apparently contradictory forms necessary to our lives and to our practice. For us 'embodied conversation' provides a bridge, allowing us to reflect on and develop our collaborative writing practice about dance. Below we offer some suggestions for wrestling with this slippery fish.

Resources and scores for collaborative writing about practice

This approach needs to be undertaken with the same degree of trust necessary for experimental studio practice.

- 'Embodied conversations': noting and unpicking the spontaneous gestures that accompany speaking about the work, using gestures when words fail.

- Creating large-scale visualisations for the shape of collaboration and the writing envisaged.
- Creating initial drafts/rants/charts individually, then giving them to one another to 'play with' freely.
- One person writing or typing as the other speaks.
- Typing instantly in response to another's spoken contribution.
- Reading the writing aloud to each other.
- Including apparent distractions as part of the process.
- Allowing visual images and metaphors alive in the conversation to permeate the writing.
- Including embodied language (physical terms and images) in the writing.
- Misbehaving, not censoring apparently inappropriate comments or behaviours.
- Going for walks on the beach.
- Recognising the resources generated during the collaborative writing process and creating your own list.

(4) *floorplan*: between knowing and doing

Jules Dorey Richmond and David Richmond

When we were asked to articulate something of the research methods and methodologies that we utilise in performer training in the studio, we were immediately struck by the term *training*, which we associated with other sorts of training, i.e. ballet or dog training. This conjured up images of well behaved, obedient, predictable, homogenised students/puppies performing 'correctly', which is not our experience or desire as pedagogues and researchers working with post/undergraduates in and on performance. We would assert that what we do is as much to do with de-training (after Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* 1973) and re-training as it has to do with training in and of itself.

floorplan is an active research tool into performance pedagogy and performance practice. Central to our methodology is a challenge to the distinction between pedagogy and research as separate/distinct modes of operation and practice. Our *floorplan* work with (student) bodies is both research methodology *and* pedagogy. It is worth bearing in mind that though we may be focusing on certain modes of activity, these remain in a state of flux and fluidity with each other, specifically: creativity, empowerment, reflection, action, analysis and activism.

As we are dealing with the contested terms and practices of training and pedagogy we should be mindful of the constantly shifting relationship between technique and epistemology, a perception that is clearly articulated by Wallis (2005). We take a fluid position within the studio space, moving between

lecturer, facilitator and co-researcher with the students, to pose and attempt to answer fundamental questions in what the students at York St John University aptly call a practical philosophy.

As our mantra is 'don't make the show do the process' we have corralled a series of performance strategies together to create *floorplan*, which is utilised once initial performance fragments have been created. We are not under any illusions that we have created anything new or indeed are operating differently from colleagues in performance departments around the country. However, what follows is an attempt to articulate a strategy which we and the students with whom we work find helpful. It involves looking at 'grams' of material and perhaps more importantly how the manipulation of these grams in relation to themselves and to other grams create a compositional 'landscape' or a visual (visceral) geography, playing out Michel de Certeau's axiom 'what the map cuts up the story cuts across' (1984: 129).

floorplan's seeds were planted back in 1993, in a three-week workshop with Tim Etchells (Forced Entertainment and writer), Marissa Zanotti (dance artist and film-maker) and Clanjamfrie, a Glasgow-based performance company, creating works in diverse contexts from 1989 to 1996 with co-artistic directors Jules Dorey Richmond and Emma Davie. The workshop began with four chairs at the back of the performance space and the notion of 'onstage' and 'offstage' (on/off). It has continued to develop through dialogues with students on Level 2 (Year 2) performance practice modules which we call *Performing the Self* and *Artist as Witness*, and with colleagues both within and beyond the academy.

Performing the Self and *Artist as Witness* evolved as part of the Performance Practice strand of the theatre programme at York St John University, UK. While the former module asks students to engage with autobiographic performance techniques, genres and processes, explicitly dealing with self as text, the latter asks them to engage in dealing with the notion of 'other'. Students thus progress from the personal (implicitly political) to the public (explicitly political). In order to facilitate this journey, in the inter-semester week between the two modules, we go on a field trip to the Second World War concentration camp museum at Auschwitz, in an attempt to understand somatically, kinaesthetically and philosophically what happened there. We take a position that Auschwitz as metaphor and as reality is the epicentre of the epistemic breach in the story of European culture (see Bauman 1989; Friedlander 1992; Young 2000; Lanzman 2007). If that is so, we must question: how do we deal with being beyond comprehension, beyond representation, beyond imagination, looking at loss and failure as key components of the times we live in? How do you make art, theatre, now? So the question 'how will we remember when all the witnesses are gone?' suddenly takes on a resonance, with each attempt to remember doomed.

It is here that structures like *floorplan* begin to offer a space/place for students to unpick the representational form of their content, so a pile of shoes is just a pile of shoes and yet metonymically . . .

floorplan

So what is *floorplan*? At a literal level it is a means of organising the studio floor space in order to provide a clear opportunity to look at disparate grams of material. *floorplan* organises grams of material in space and therefore time, and it provides an understanding of structure that can examine the relationship of these disparate 'grams' of material (as inspired by Gregory Ulmer's essay the 'Object of Post-Criticism', 1985) and their allogenic effect across time and space. It can also operate to break open denser kinds of performance material into constituent parts (utilising the compositional strategy of isolation), i.e. action, gesture, text, subtext, critique. It provides explicit opportunities to utilise various compositional strategies as well as providing a model by which one can translate the performance experience directly into the reflective experience of a catalogue document that is comprised of images, text, evidence, reflections, quotes, critique and so on. It clearly aligns what occurs on the floor with what occurs on the page and these two mediums become topographically equivalent offering the student the opportunity to understand the relationship between a blank page and a blank space and how one might creatively imagine the scoring of a theatre piece through time and space in modes other than the orthodoxy of a play. *floorplan* is fundamentally a research tool which enables all its participants to suggest strategies towards composition and identify reflexive questions about those strategies.

Instructions for use

floorplan is a game and the best way of understanding how a game works is to play it. For *floorplan* the studio floor is the gaming board and it is marked out thus:

- A delineated playing and audience space – all players start in the audience space.
- An on/off space at the back of the playing space created by placing a line of chairs facing in towards the audience.
- Discrete assigned performance areas, i.e. *box (a) and box (b)*, set up downstage, at either side of the playing space, where different kinds of text (autobiographical, evidence, critique) can be delivered (over microphones).
- A play area, mid-stage, where rules concerning compositional strategies

can apply: repetition, accretion, accumulation, palindrome, stochastic, insertion, scaling, substitution, dynamics, layering, as well as compositional tactics such as gagging, dragging, tagging, copying, leading, following.

- A projection area – visualiser, OHP, live feed camera, for instance – helping to generate evidence from the floor for the page, offering opportunities of live writing and live reflection.
- Some rules.

Rules of floorplan

1. The first rule of *floorplan* – there is no *floorplan*.
2. You may enter the space stage left and proceed to on/off.
3. You may go to box (a) or box (b) and speak to us – explicitly problematising the role of audience.
4. You may go to play area and utilise a gram of material and allow the preordained compositional strategies to act on it/them.
5. You may go to projection and write or draw comments.
6. If someone takes your hand you are obliged to follow.
7. If you wish to have one of the performers do a particular movement you can ask them but you will have to hold their hand while they do it.
8. We all reserve the right to clear the space (compassionately) and so start again (i.e. dragging, tagging, gagging, etc.).
9. If you wish to adjust any rules, please collude with as many as possible.
10. It is essential to collude in and with the audience.
11. . . .
12. . . . Ad infinitum.

A story of playing floorplan.

I have been set the task of creating an image of something I did not witness, I create an image, which has a falling action, a small hand gesture routine with 5 movements, a piece of found text (an obituary) and whistling Bridge over Troubled Water.

There are another 27 colleagues who have made fragments.

I enter floorplan and go to on/off, another player joins me; we talk and suggest that we should take our shoes and socks off, which we pile up stage right (accumulation).

I enter the play space and do the falling and hand gesture routine, I go to box (a) and whistle Bridge over Troubled Water, and go to box (b) and read the obituary (isolation).

I go to on/off, another player joins, takes off shoes and socks, there are now 3 of us, we all go up and we all do the falling routine with gestures, 3 times and sit down at on/off. A 4th player arrives takes off shoes and socks, we discuss accreting the routine, so we go in to play space and accrete the x3 routine i.e. we learn a move at a time (1, 1 + 2, 1 + 2 + 3, 1 + 2 + 3 + 4, etc).

We repeat, 5 colleagues collude and enter on/off take off shoes and socks, whistle Bridge over Troubled Water.

A colleague in the audience goes to another player in the audience and takes her by her hand to on/off, they remove shoes and socks, they then go to centre stage whilst holding hands. One sings the song the other looks at her.

So, from fragments the result through floorplan is an accumulation of shoes and socks (metonymic of the bodies that once inhabited them, and bringing to mind other un-peopled shoes), a falling and hand gesture routine, with choral whistling and a sung solo. And we haven't even seen the obituary again; of course the other 27 grams also come into play.

Why floorplan?

floorplan is essentially a 'collage'. It offers the opportunity for its participants to engage in the world actively, to try and understand the world through the creative practice of performance.

floorplan has been contrived to allow intervention in the performance material, deconstructing and recombining, appropriating and juxtaposing, offering it up to be witnessed and commented upon in the moment. The moments/grams/actions are the components that shift, changing the perspectives of the articulator/witness.

> Thus the art of collage proves to be one of the most effective strategies in the putting into question of all the illusions of representation. (Cited in Ulmer 1985: 88)

The process of engaging in *floorplan* is to propose a research methodology by asking the student to evidence an understanding of collage and its function in contemporary thinking. It is a process which refers to Derrida's notion of grammatology, as explicated by Ulmer (1985), and more specifically to the gram and its function as a contaminant from its original site to its present one: how do these different times and spaces also offer a resonance? As Derrida writes:

> Each grafted text continues to radiate back towards the site of its removal, transforming that too, as it affects the new territory. (Cited in Ulmer 1985: 90)

floorplan evidences the trajectory of process: starting point – research – creation – composition and editing – repetition – performance – documentation – starting point, etc. It recognises that each of these components not only follows but also feeds into each other (the iterative). Each also sits within the whole and within each component (the stochastic) and as such is itself an example of these compositional strategies.

floorplan may appear a mechanistic process. However, it allows one to shift, to move to fluidity and complexity from a (false) sense of stasis (recognising that stasis is indeed already complex and dynamic). It has the added benefit of being controlled by the player/witness/activist, and it allows them to come to an understanding of the methodology of adjusting the process and therefore adjusting the outcome.

GENERAL CONCLUSION: SOME QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTITIONER–RESEARCHER IN PERFORMER TRAINING

'Practitioner knowledge' is multi-faceted and intimately connected to the specific activities of the practitioner-researcher as well as to the nature of the work under scrutiny. Nevertheless this chapter's case studies do highlight a fundamental aspect of laboratory research: participant *immersion*. All four of them refer to a state or states of engagement. Together they illustrate some prominent themes in terms of complexity, design, register and output:

- the non-linearity of processes of transmission and translation;
- the varied means for recognising and *organising* a combination of research methods, including issues of documentation;
- the forms and functions of different kinds of writing;
- the problematics of place, proximity and personal testimony;

- the pragmatics of collaboration, planning and design;
- the feeding back of findings from dissemination practices into the process of research gathering.

To summarise the trajectory of the case studies here – touching on over a hundred years of the training laboratory – the emphasis ostensibly shifts from the pursuit of an objective (if not universal) training in biomechanics aimed at dispensing skills appropriate for Meyerhold's particular aesthetic, through to a design of a user-centred model of laboratory research most clearly evident in *floorplan*, a system which is 'controlled by the [individual] player/witness/activist' (p. 158 above). But the intervention of writing clearly problematises this neat vertical model, as the case studies by Murray and Poynor and Worth highlight. Either as a solo writer or in collaborative mode the act of writing (*about* and *from* the practice) marks a present engagement with the training, and inevitably in some way will refer to the wider context of the here and now – the horizontal perspective.

There is important learning to be had relating to these two *axes of analysis* (the vertical and the horizontal) from these assembled stories. For each case study in its own way highlights a delicate interplay between both perspectives. Thinking outside the powerful narratives of lineage which accompany significant practitioners (Meyerhold, Lecoq and Halprin) is an essential aspect of the laboratory researcher's task. Conversely, seeing improvisation and task-based practice, which often appears to create material instantly, in a historical frame is equally important. Indeed, seeing the vertical (or diachronic) as a persistent shadow of the horizontal (synchronic) might be seen as a defining element of critical *reflection* or *reflexivity*, a constructive and complementary force to the immersive imperative.

As a stimulus for that reflection, then, we would like to conclude with the themes of this chapter expressed as a series of problems. These questions are designed to be considered at the beginning of a research project or before a proposal is fully drafted. They are pitched specifically at the practice-based researcher, to be read just before the doors of the theatre laboratory are opened:

- What assumptions do I bring to the work?
- What is my relationship to the studio work under scrutiny and how does this impact on the experience, documentation and dissemination of the research?
- How might my chosen research methods and my articulation of them best reflect the specifics of the work in the studio?
- What is the blend of materials available to me – body memories, interviews, logbooks, video documents, contextual research and reading – and how do I take account of the non-linearity of their arrangement?

- How does context operate in the theatre laboratory – explicitly or implicitly?
- How do I address the complicated terms of *translation* and *transmission* in my research and how do I manage the transition from one mode of operation to another, from movement to words, for instance?
- How do I negotiate the balance between immersion and reflection in the studio and beyond?
- How do I bridge the chasm between the analytical and experiential – the gulf between 'writing about' and 'writing from' practice?
- How do I manage any shifts from facilitator, to participant, to (co-) researcher?
- Who is my audience and how do I acknowledge this in the dissemination of my research?

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CHAPTER 7

The Question of Documentation: Creative Strategies in Performance Research

Adam J. Ledger with Simon K. Ellis and Fiona Wright

Few other research topics in theatre and performance have attracted such sustained discussion as that of documentation and its uses. Although institutional imperatives in, for example, university degree requirements or governmental systems for validating research activity have made documentation a key issue in practice as research, the archival and creative needs of contemporary arts practices may also incorporate documentation. Although some have argued that performance is dissemination, even a form of publication, Angela Piccini points to its elusiveness, since performance 'exists through only one space and time with no possibility of object repetition' (Piccini 2002). At its most straightforward, documentation can be understood as part of interlinked practices that the 'research-practitioner' (Merlin 2004: 40) – or 'practitioner-researcher' and other attempts at holistic terms – undertakes both to pursue and disseminate research through practice.

While research practitioners may well be caught up in what Matthew Reason has called the 'frenzy of documentation' (2006: 80), we should recall that its making did not start with practice as research. Pictures on urns, photographs and, later, moving images of performance have long existed. And beginning in the 1940s, Brecht's *Modellbuchs* ('model-books') strongly prefigure contemporary concepts of documentation. Each book contains many photographs of scenes, plus enlarged details. The play text, stage directions and 'explanatory instructions' (Willett 1964: 211) are pasted next to these. Brecht also includes commentary and discussion. The *Modellbuchs* are remarkably effective in their multi-faceted approach; strategies such as the combination of text and other media, the interweaving of modes of writing and the manipulation of images to highlight moments from the live event continue to have implications for theatre and performance practices today.

Documentation now includes a burgeoning range of forms and media. This is partly because, as Philip Auslander has argued (1999, 2008), developed

cultures are habituated to the aesthetics of technology. As the equipment has become cheaper and more accessible, since the turn of the millennium there has been a clear growth in the use of video recording for documentation of theatre and performance as well as, in the still emergent digital age, media such as the DVD. The flexibility of form and content available with DVD-ROM in particular has shifted audiovisual documentation into the realm of the computer screen. Given a willingness to use editing and authoring software, the capability to produce and to make strategic choices about the form and content of digitised media (albeit with some technical support) is within easy reach of many researchers. By way of acute contrast, some research practitioners have developed new approaches to writing creatively – sometimes collectively called 'performative writing' – about their practice.

Although documentation does much to sustain aspects of the practice it apparently captures, it should not be seen as simply an adjunct to practice-based research, which simply demonstrates, justifies or, at worst, negates its value. For example, as Auslander notes, there is a tendency 'to place live performance and mediatised or technologised forms in direct opposition to one another' (1999: 41). While there may be tensions between the live nature of practice and a recording of the work, documentation can be seen as a potentially dynamic and interactive process between practice, its audience and more traditional written critiques. So from a research perspective, documentation concerns the articulation of practitioners' questions and processes of working.

This chapter will consider documentation as a necessary part of the research process, while acknowledging variety and complexity within emergent trends. It offers a discussion of the notions of liveness and mediation to illuminate some of the key issues of documentation, and through a range of examples suggests how its production is enfolded in many performance practices. In an age of the seemingly insatiable appetite for the prying of the camera lens, ethical issues arise. Some key examples will be drawn from the early work of Peter Hulton, a considerable contributor to the field of audiovisual documentation, who has been an influence on my own documentation practices. Other practitioners (such as Chicago's collaborative Goat Island Performance Group) have evolved a process of writing from within rehearsal, simultaneously a form of creative reportage and reflection. Three postgraduate project case studies are also included, revealing variety in the role of documentation in PhD submissions. These also explore methodological questions about auto-documenting one's own practice and its relationship to critical writing. Overall, the chapter offers these cumulative examples and discussion to suggest practical possibilities and questions to the researcher, and I hope a prompt to innovation in the form, purpose and implications of future methods of documentation.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS: LIVENESS, ETHICS ... AND A MNEMONIC

Although Matthew Reason discusses a range of documentation strategies, including video, photography and press reviews, his arguments suggest documentation's role is to provide records of performance outcomes. In relation to video, Reason considers that:

> whatever the original purpose of any particular video recording of a live performance, its eventual and overriding function is more broadly and simply that of documentation – of preserving and making present to see and know something that without being recorded would be inaccessible and unavailable. (2006: 80)

Although he usefully links documentation to issues of availability and longevity of work that (like others following Phelan 1993) is assumed to disappear (see also Kershaw 2008), Reason also assumes parity between performance and video, a method of documentation that has achieved a prevalent position in theatre and performance studies due to its relative ease of use and apparent accuracy. In contrast to some other forms, video (especially in media such as DVD-ROMs or websites) can be instantly played back, apparently eliminating the interpretative gap between the live event and resultant footage. Reason suggests this is a 'narrative of immediacy' (2006: 77), strengthened by video's distinctive features as a moving image. But for Phelan, liveness can only occur at the time of the original since it relies on the presence of the unmediated human body (Phelan 1993); thus video cannot escape its status as a recording. As Piccini suggests, 'it [documentation] cannot unproblematically "stand in" for the performance itself' (2002); it may be part of the creative and research process, represent or evidence practice, contextualise it, or provide additional insights, but documentation can never *be* the thing it documents nor, by implication, replace it.

As well as being a form of memorialisation, documentation can be understood as another occurrence. Although speaking more particularly of television, Auslander introduces the idea that 'the television image remains a performance in the present' (1999: 15); that is, an audiovisual event in the here and now. Auslander considers that the screen image – and by implication, as I explore below, much computer-based, digital documentation – is a performative medium. Rather than a passive simulacrum, the researcher can regard documentation as a dynamic phenomenon, at once bound up with yet standing apart from former liveness and capable of performing its own presence.

While there is a tendency to assume that documentation principally concerns performance outcomes (Reason 2006; Rye 2002, 2003a), Peter Hulton's

approach to documentation focuses on what happens in areas of training, rehearsal or process: concerns which may be crucial to theatre and performance research. In choosing to remain primarily in the workshop environment, Hulton seeks what he calls the 'thickness of interchange' (2002: 13) between all the elements of creative practice, responding to 'what is on offer' (personal communication) when filming in the studio. For Hulton, the video lens witnesses 'the body in operation with imagery' in order to go about 'evidencing the current reality of something *through* media' (2002: 14, emphasis added). Hulton's camera is thus a deliberately selective eye; he attends to details through explicitly selective framing: a hand, a foot, a point of contact between performers is often dwelt upon. Although Hulton's strategy implies that key issues of research in practice can be elaborated through moments of human interaction, Caroline Rye believes such an approach is a 'monocular vision' that 'determines the selection of a particular point of view and an inevitable separation of this detail from its context' (2003a: 3). In contrast to Hulton, Rye has developed work on multi-screen images (Rye 2000, 2003a), which offer simultaneous perspectives on particular practices. However, Rye's suggestion that close framing separates detail and context tends toward a visual bias, whereas sound – characteristically in Hulton's work the voice of the workshop leader – can still be picked up from the entire studio, regardless of what detail is filmed.

Hulton's provocative suggestion that documentation can be 'entirely subjective' (personal communication), and therefore is inevitably an interpretative methodology, recalls Annabelle Melzer's earlier discussions of video as a 'betrayal' of performance (Melzer 1995a, 1995b). But Hulton stresses that 'you don't have proactive ideas on what you're watching . . . the subjective is always striving to be *of service* to what's on offer' (personal communication, emphasis added), which implies particular purposes for the 'end user' of documentation. While Hulton's subjective stance may clash with research imperatives or viewpoints which have different aims, to document nevertheless implies choice, and this occurs in all documentation; photography can be more selective visually than video, audio tends to prioritise speech and written forms of documentation are arguably even more susceptible to the subjectivity and interpretative interests of the documenter.

Aesthetics

Since it offers a particular still-image point of view, some commentators have seen photography as a deadening process. In contrast, Shawn Kairschner – drawing on the notion of 'ghosting' as an erasure of the live in Phelan (2002) and Barthes (1981) – points to the viewer's experience of photographs, where 'photography's freezing apparatus gives the spectator a great deal of time

(a lifetime if necessary) to scrutinize a signified fused to the photographic surface' (2003: 13; see also Sontag [1979] 2008; Schneider 2005). Kairschner draws attention to a quality of contemplative gaze and deliberation usually not possible with film, nor indeed during live performance. Photography's sometimes overt aesthetics point to the artistry of the photographer charged with stopping time attractively, underlining the fact that what we view is clearly documentation. Although Reason accepts the sometimes poor quality of videos (2006: 84) – which seems to undermine the purpose of making them – Rye (2003a) similarly uses a highly sophisticated aesthetic, technical presentation and 'finish', and has offered a set of strategies for remediating the filming of live performance (2002).

Although technical quality can be an issue and is dependent on elements sometimes beyond the documenter's control (for example, lighting, the availability of hardware or the limits of software), simple strategies can improve moving image documentation. For example, shaky camera operation can mean that entire sections of recording cannot be used or may be irritating for the viewer. Likewise, an overly visual emphasis may mean that sound quality is often neglected. Peter Hulton usually asks workshop leaders to wear a clip-on radio microphone. However, this strategy risks privileging one voice, and is likely to be inappropriate in a situation when multiple voices need to be heard. The larger microphones of higher specification camcorders have considerably improved on the sound quality provided by the built-in condenser microphones of smaller units. External microphones such as the boundary or rifle-type may produce excellent results. It may also be worth considering when audio recording should be adopted as a primary method beyond its typical use for interviews. So documentation has to be carefully considered, but does call for flexibility and imaginativeness of approach.

I have proposed that what is often considered 'documentation' is usually produced around and – in its final form – after creative practice research projects. Angela Piccini differentiates between this 'external' documentation and other 'integral' documentation – a distinction first proposed by Kershaw in 2000 – which comprises 'the mass of heterogeneous trace materials that the practice process creates' (2002). In contrast to neatly authored and/or edited digital documentation, integral documentation has more tangible qualities, a roughness hewn from the real work of the studio, which may be 'script drafts, notes, call sheets, camera reports, continuity notes, costume designs, laboratory reports, treatments, set designs, choreographic notation, sound scores, etc.' (2002). Possibly writing exercises, attempts at assembly of materials, publicity drafts or even press reviews and other responses such as audience questionnaires might be added to this list. The plurality and particularity of such trace elements can, as Piccini goes on to suggest, be part of 'submitting' practice as research for institutional validation. Or increasingly it has been

made public on websites: the performance company Brith Gof, for instance, exemplifies how a range of integral and external documentation can be assembled (Brith Gof).

Ethics

Caroline Rye has pointed out that the artist must engage in the process of documentation in order to ensure its validity as an articulation of practice (PALATINE 2003). In the digital age, this may be especially challenging; some researchers are adept at computer-based technologies, others draw on strong technical support in order to achieve compelling, computer-based audiovisual documentation. While the content of any documentation remains the decision of the researcher, any help or collaboration will need to be acknowledged.

Some care is needed that documentation is not imposed upon practitioners. Many practitioner-researchers will introduce the reasons and strategies for documentation prior to undertaking work with others, who may well be given the right to decline to be (for example) filmed. Many meetings, workshops or conferences will ask that participants agree to the presence of a form of documentation and often offer an opt-out clause. In professional settings, these considerations may even extend to contractual arrangements. Practice can occur in sensitive situations (work in prisons, for example, or with especially vulnerable participants); schools will require parental consent before pupils are filmed or photographed. Some writings will also need to protect participant anonymity. Finally, researchers often provide copies of final documentation to those with whom they work. To receive a copy of the documentation is often just part of due acknowledgement of participation in the original practice.

A mnemonic

Peter Hulton has condensed his thinking about documentation into the mnemonic, 'AIPP' (personal communication), which for him focuses the form and purpose of documentation generally. Firstly, documentation must be *aligned*: that is, it and the documenter should be in sympathy with what the practice is doing. Documentation is also *individuated*: that is, it is appropriate to what it documents, but has a form and content in its own right as well. (This reinforces how documentation refers to an event, it is not the event itself.) 'P' stands for *performative*: that is, documentation is performative in that it functions on its own terms and relies on the perception and engagement of the end-user. Finally, Hulton suggests that documentation is also *projective*: that is, the document is made with future end-users in mind. So as well as the process of documenting, the documenter must envisage an audience: perhaps the documentation may be part of an academic thesis read by examiners; it may

be part of the record and presentation of a research project; it might reside in an archive; or it may be used in a teaching situation.

DOCUMENTATION: EXAMPLES OLDER AND CURRENT

Acknowledging the performative nature of documentation, the Chicago-based (now disbanded) theatre group Goat Island asked: 'How is a performance *performed* after it has actually been performed?' (Goat Island 2004: n.p.). As part of its creative practice, the company produced texts 'that are artworks in their own right' (ibid.). An early, playful example is the photo flipbook of images from *It's Shifting, Hank* (1993–4). The reader (or, perhaps, viewer) is invited to 'recreate the performance!' (1994: n.p.) of a clothed, then naked, comic dance. Goat Island has also produced 'reading companions' alongside, for example, *The Sea & Poison* (1998) and *It's an Earthquake in My Heart* (2001), which provide further contextual and responsive material. The two issues of the Croatian journal *Frakcija* (Goat Island 2004/5), which document the process and performance phases of Goat Island's piece, *When Will The September Roses Bloom? Last Night Was Only A Comedy* (first performed 2004) are more complex. Some components are academic articles, but the visual impact of the work quickly becomes evident: photographs, handwriting, scrawls, notes and diagrams spill out from the two bundles of sleeved papers, some of which have to be unfolded into a much larger size.

While these *Frakcija* issues are an example of documentation that collates responses and artefacts produced both during and after the process of making a performance, Sarah Jane Bailes writes from within rehearsal to evoke how Goat Island's complex and resonant performances might eventually work for spectators:

> I remember Litó standing still with one leg raised, her thigh strong, straight, and parallel to the ground, her knee suspended calculating the tension . . . her foot hovering then quivering inches above the ground enduring the immensity of seven minutes of carefully counted time . . . this image accumulated a peculiar sadness in me each time I witnessed it . . . Litó's leg made me feel I could sense the loneliness of the world. (Goat Island 2004: n.p.)

Bailes' personal response reinforces Hulton's notions of the subjective; this is unapologetically the personal affect of what she sees.

There are no page numbers in these *Frakcija* issues and the contents page is only a 'proposed order'; this qualification, according to the introduction, 'challenges its readers to experiment with the performance of reading' (Goat

Island 2005: n.p.). For each reader, understanding is the sum of responses to the interaction of its particular parts. Yet are we expected to appreciate solely the artistry of the documentation, or to perceive something else? Perhaps both: this *Frakcija* allows us to learn about Goat Island's performance of *When Will The September . . .*, but that must be constructed through the actuality of engaging with the documentation, which draws attention to an individualised act of reading, reconstruction and reflection.

While, as I have suggested, video is often used to record performance, it can – like some of the examples mentioned above – be incorporated into rehearsal processes. Denmark's Odin Teatret has used video from its earliest availability; Ian Watson describes that 'through a combination of the working actor's memory, his/her colleagues' notes, and/or the tape of his/her improvisation, the actor establishes a pattern of physical actions which s/he can repeat' (1995: 79). Here video is seen as a swift and simple documentation strategy when assembling elements during the complex and long-term evolution of Odin's productions, sometimes spanning several years. As a process of notation, filming rehearsal is also a key strategy for the UK company Forced Entertainment. The company's director and writer, Tim Etchells, explains that for the company video provides a tool for 'checking to see what happened in some improvisation or another, trying to register exact combinations, coincidences, structures' (1999: 68), which points to the detailed retrospect that video can provide as a utilitarian technical method given the fallibility of memory.

Recently, the linear nature of VHS tape – cumbersome and time-consuming in having to be rewound, paused, fast-forwarded – has been largely replaced by DVD and DVD-ROM. This medium can assemble components such as video, writing, photographs and audio into a flexible format which offers a multi-modal engagement with many aspects of research practice. The performativity of the DVD-ROM is thus enhanced by its navigability. Peter Hulton also encourages DVD users to wear headphones in order to create an ambient environment when engaging with computer-based documentation (personal communication). Paradoxically perhaps, in the digital age, documentation of once shared events is sometimes an intensely private affair.

DVD-ROM documentation (and of course its close relative, the website) implicitly acknowledges the interactively stimulated interpretation of its user. As an example, I will discuss a still from the DVD-ROM that accompanies Phillip Zarrilli's book, *The Psychophysical Actor at Work* (2008). Zarrilli's text refers the reader to particular parts of the disk, which are proposed as integral to the publication, as are other examples in similar genres (Staniewski and Hodge 2003; Allegue et al. 2009). This kind of publication package allows for diverse methods of discursive and audiovisual encounters with practice.

In Zarrilli's book, the reader/viewer has been referred to a point about *tai*

Figure 7.1 *Tai chi chuan* section from Hulton and Zarrilli's DVD-ROM. Zarrilli (2008).

chi chuan on the DVD, which is part of his use of Asian martial arts and meditation practices in actor training (see Figure 7.1). The video stream shown in this subscreen of the DVD can be entered at a number of key points by clicking on a list of red titles to the left. Some of these video sections include audio commentary that can be accessed through a separate audio channel, which can be switched on and off. To the right of the video subscreen, the viewer may open and close a second, smaller screen that contains still images of the practice. Below this, a further link can be opened that shows relevant parts of the book's text, which provides information alongside and relating to what is witnessed, yet may not necessarily refer to the user's chosen video sequence directly. Finally, the user may make notes in a box at the bottom of the computer screen, into which the DVD-ROM's text can be cut and pasted; all of this can be saved or exported to other platforms.

This DVD-ROM's claims to accessibility depend on simple choices within the frame of the computer screen. In the example in Figure 7.1, simple colours and a recurring format encourage ease of navigation and the potential connections between documentation elements attempt to open up the user's understanding. For example, if the user clicks 'Audio commentary on energy and breath', s/he hears Zarrilli's voice:

> If you are just talking about the breath in a physiological sense, if you are talking about the habituated breath dropping in that means that you are alive – then *prana* can mean that – but when you are using it and circulating it in some kind of systematic way, other than just breathing to stay alive, when you are shaping and developing that energy, then it becomes something more – it takes on aspects of concentration, focus – the things that make for a state of actualisation that we often look

> for in virtuosic practice, a state of being/doing which is activated and appropriate to the task at hand. (2008)

While this is a general statement about *prana*, it is also the practitioner's own way of articulating his practice. If the user were to listen to it when looking at the video of *tai chi chuan* in Figure 7.1, then the notion of 'circulating' the breath in a focused, 'systematic way' may be related directly to the perception of that particular moment of practice.

Viewing research practice comparatively in this way is clearly impossible in the situation of live performance. As well as framing this particular *tai chi* detail, the digital package offers further perspectives that encourage the end user to change how to render the practice intelligible. Hence, DVD-ROM software can provide the basis for previously unattainable simultaneity of content and, through juxtaposition of contrasting elements, reinforce that what appears on the computer monitor is most definitely documentation. Optimally, DVD-ROM technology suggests the possibility of a dynamic method for understanding creative practice via interpretative activities embedded in its structure. To return to notions of mediation, in this type of documentation the user remediates the already mediated.

PHD RESEARCH: THREE CASE STUDIES

Even a quick survey of the practice-based PhDs currently available reveals how varying degrees of critical analysis will be required alongside the pursuit and documentation of practice. While it seems unlikely that the discursive nature of writing can be left aside, what should be resisted are those presentation rubrics that require documentation to be relegated to an appendix where it cannot function as part of a complete, integrated thesis. But as the following case studies reveal, the nature of documentation shifts over the course of research projects and may function both within the 'fieldwork' of practice and its summative presentation. The three case studies below are based on the following PhDs: *Indelible*, Simon K. Ellis (University of Melbourne, 2005), *Other Versions of an Uncertain Body*, Fiona Wright (Nottingham Trent University, 2005) and my own, *The Work of Actions* (University of Exeter, 2007).

In his PhD submission Simon Ellis problematises differences between practice, writing and documentation that usefully extends some of the earlier examples in this chapter. Ellis has deliberately pushed the non-linear format of computer-based documentation towards a totality that obliges its viewer to become implicated in an interlinked, cumulative experience. In contrast, Fiona Wright reports her resistance to the dominance of video and digitisation

and instead developed a personalised, reflective body of writing. For Wright, writing mirrors her solo performances as a strategy to tell of the performer's perception from within the practice, reducing the gap between experience and its articulation (see Figure 7.2 below). My own PhD sought to link critical writing to two types of audiovisual documentation that could reveal the research questions of rehearsal and devising, practices away from public view but, like other issues of performance preparation, crucial to theatre and performance research.

Case study 1: *After an uncertain body*: notes regarding a practice-based PhD project

Fiona Wright

My thesis concerns writing as documentation, located in the context of the researcher's own solo dance and performance art practice. The project approaches a formulation of the thesis as a framework for different registers of writing as a generative process (and outcome) of dissemination in the context of art making. The intention is to point towards *looking* as a part of the sensorium of experience and towards embodied forms of knowledge found in the picture/body of performance as it is encountered by the audience/viewer. The practice-based methodology seeks to develop self-reflexive strategies as a move beyond critical evaluation and towards individual and particularised writing. This writing is an enactment of the slippage of the visible and the excavation of the invisible in the work of retelling and re-presenting lived events. Despite – and perhaps because of – our inevitably two-way glance across perceived splits between thinking/doing as conventionally articulated, these *other versions* can demonstrate different ways of knowing as embodiment in the life of our thoughtful actions.

The above statement, based on the PhD's abstract, is from the programme notes for *Other Versions of an Uncertain Body (in five parts)*, the series of performance lectures given as part of the thesis submission in February 2005. The work has been very much process-led and has emerged in response to my intention to present the experience(s) afforded by my own solo performance art practice and the actual writing processes that happen around it as a key research activity and resource. It is the engagement with this personalised (yet not necessarily confessional) work of documentation that has framed the motivations of the thesis; these sites of practice have informed an ongoing reflection on the performance of writing in relation to the image.

I will confess, however, that I began the formulation of the thesis wanting to resist any form of visual documentation in the context of the PhD submission.

This was grounded in a certain amount of resistance to the prevalence of visual modes of documentation and their use as serving a primarily evidential purpose, especially in academic contexts. The reification of performance in the form of photographic and film or video documentation seems to be too often and too quickly inserted as a stand-in for what is, after all, the deliberately and strategically positioned impermanence of the live event. As the project progressed, I became more engaged in expanding notions of the image and the potential strategies that we might have as artists and writers for our presentations of documents of performance. And it became the interest in image making and retelling that motivated the emphasis on different versions.

Some way into the main written thesis, at the beginning of Chapter Four titled 'On seeing', I find one of my passes at writing, as it were, from the inside of performance and performing:

> Complete me
> Picture me
> Mirror me
> Remember me
> Remember her
> Remember two sides of this
>
> And as you sit down you will take in what you see: this suit of clothes, this corset, shoes, salt on the floor (this time just a handful), mirror, chair, glass of red wine (or another time a bowl of water, half-full and spat in, just once each time).
>
> You will arrive, completing the picture now with your own body (sitting in the chair, there).
>
> Watch, from a distance that feels near but separate enough, held apart.
>
> (2005: 80–1)

Much of the writing was related to and became extensions of several published pieces of writing that I had been working on. Many sections were conceived as stand-alone pieces and these continued to be used over several years, appearing frequently in artist talks, symposium presentations and studio or seminar teaching. This use of the writing happened most substantially in the series of live performance lectures, which became part of the final submission, where each time sections of the written thesis were structured into several different, new edits and read as extracts in relation to selected video documentation and performed actions.

The collaborations with video makers Lucy Cash (formerly Baldwyn) and Becky Edmunds allowed for other ways to approach strategies for dissemination – and in other, pragmatic senses, as promotional material

– while still emphasising the idea of the video as always another edit of the work, as *not* the live work, but as a new site of resonance and new source of citation. The live performance lectures frequently featured simultaneous use of spoken text, video footage, stylised movement sequences or functional actions – layering choices of looking, usually in close proximity to the audience. These and subsequent presentations were intended as generative and alternate manifestations of the ongoing performance work and this body of research, allowing movement within and beyond the PhD project and its academic context.

> I had waited alone, for hours, sitting on the edge of a chair, holding the small compact mirror slightly higher than my right shoulder, to one side and just in front of my face.
> I breathed.
> My back was facing the door.
> I was either naked or fully clothed.
> Any-body entering could have seen one eye in the mirror but not my face looking back . . .
> He sat down on the second chair, some distance a way. We eyed each other. And then my hand started to quiver so that the image in the mirror blurred and shuddered.
>
> (Wright 2005: 38)

The different forms included in the final thesis submission – the performance lectures, reflective writing, the academic essay language and the different short video edits – all operated at different times independently and with their own status, and sometimes still do. Much of this has flowed away from the original context of the postgraduate research project into communications and exchanges with other artists and audiences. The Preface, Postscript and sections at the beginning and end of most of the chapters offer a kind of framing for a movement between the deliberately 'academic' essay style and the more 'performative' – here I always am thinking 'poetic' – the more personalised and, indeed, intentionally *uncertain* writing.

> And then there are foot notes too. I will write these soon.
> Something about feet.
> Feet on the floor when sitting on the floor as a description of a folded body.
> Marking a place in the text is the folded page.
> The idea of footnotes so long that they cut the page in half – makes me laugh, in theory . . .
> By the skin of your teeth.

Figure 7.2 Fiona Wright, 'stolen dances'. Ben Ponton/Lee Callaghan.

> Happy thefts, she says.
> And I say: Can you imagine a time when you don't do this any more?
> (Wright 2005: 54)

Case study 2: *The Work of Actions*: devising, analysing, and performing new work

Adam J. Ledger

My PhD research (Ledger 2007) explored the director's work with actors in the creation of new performance. I devised three new pieces in various circumstances. While examiners saw and discussed the performances with me (itself a matter of some debate as to whether it should happen and why), I conceived always that the performances should be part of an overall practice as research exploration and dissemination. Although Exeter's PhD rubric conceived of the PhD as a portfolio which could contain various ingredients, it also required a written account of the performance practice. My account developed the relationship between critical writing and, principally, video documentation. This

choice stemmed primarily from some prior experience and an interest in video editing. I had little experience in, for example, more reflective writing, and could not conceive of how that strategy linked to my research concerns. While others filmed for me at times, video was, further, a strategic choice since the necessity to operate the camera myself could, at times, become part of the rhythm of rehearsal in which filmed records could be used to aid the devising process.

Originally, I had considered whether writing could be incorporated into digital material. But what was posted off to Exeter at the point of submission was a paper thesis, which included an appendix that contained integral documentation (for example, publicity materials, the scripts of each production, notes and photographs of items worked with in rehearsal). Two discs are also part of the thesis. One is a DVD, containing extracts of around twenty minutes from each performance, which the DVD authoring software (Ulead DVDWorkshop) could therefore process at high quality. The second disc offered a more complex arrangement. This is a DVD-ROM eBook (authored using DNAML's Desktop Author; see also Night Kitchen's TK3, Adobe's Creative Suite).

My intention was that the DVD should function as a reflection, a taster or aide-memoir to the live performances, which could also complement the scripts of each production. Aside from issues of quality, I did not want to provide complete video documentation of the three performances, since I felt this could devalue the live practice, already seen by a public audience and the examiners. The DVD is, then, clearly documentation, not an attempt to 'replace' the live performances at the point of submission. Some PhD rubrics will have other requirements of course, but I suggest that a key strategy is to state emphatically the purpose of performance recordings, as I did in a foreword, and how these are to be engaged with as part of a total submission.

In contrast to the DVD, the DVD-ROM eBook often shows rehearsal and devising processes, or strategically chosen fragments of performances. Since my examiners were not in the rehearsal studio – and could not be – the eBook aims to give insight into that part of the practice that is central to the critical discussion. I do not see this as evidencing practice (no negative connotation intended), but a means to place at least a representation of the necessarily private work into the public research arena.

At certain points in the written part of the thesis, I direct the reader to a particular part of the eBook, which can be easily navigated via its contents page or by flipping the virtual 'pages'. Written commentary accompanies each video stream, which is sometimes drawn from the thesis or is unique to the eBook; this means that the documentation has a stand-alone quality in order that it can be viewed and understood without constant recourse to the main writing (and it is of course inevitable that a user will turn a page or two of the eBook beyond what the thesis directs them to). The reader-viewer subsequently returns to

Figure 7.3 PhD eBook, *Again*. Ledger, 'The Work of Actions' (2007).

the written (paper) thesis, which continues assuming that an engagement with the electronic content of the eBook has happened.

One of the three productions made for my PhD was *Again*, a professional, solo piece performed by Jill Dowse. The piece is structured in three parts, each a repetition, elaboration and juxtaposition of the former (hence the title, *Again*). Having been rehearsed and performed in Ireland (2004), *Again* later toured the UK as a co-production with Foursight Theatre (2006). The PhD has a complete chapter on the development and performance of the work, and a smaller section that discusses the issues concerning the later reworking of the practice. The main discussion refers the reader to the eBook five times.

The beginning to the work on *Again* was an exploratory, seeding research week in August 2003, which included a range of improvisation, devising and textual methods. Much of our practice during this phase was videoed by an assistant in order to build up a stock of material. This documentation started to form a kind of visual 'notebook'. I also took sequences of photographs, which, allied to notes, became a further way to document the evolution of the mass of potential performance material that devising produces. Since much of my written thesis discusses rehearsal processes, I sometimes watched documentation of rehearsal later when writing initial drafts. This allowed film of practice (that had happened sometimes months previously) an input into the content of chapters. Rather than an end product, documentation in both these examples functions as a sort of working, audiovisual 'script', which aided the creative process as well as eventual critical writing.

In contrast to the purposes of video documentation during the early phase of the project, some eBook sequences show performance. One part of the eBook shows fragments that have been edited together to sit alongside a theoretical discussion in the thesis, which concerns how parts of the actor's

work 'house' other parts, but where each may shift in terms of how acting is understood (see Figure 7.3). Here, what might be called summative documentation has been created after the process of writing and works to its concerns, yet the documentation also reinforces the research concerns of earlier live performances.

The choice of what and when to video is a difficult question to answer objectively. Throughout my work, and some years before submission, I had of course only some idea of the form and content the final PhD submission might take. Choices could not be governed by these considerations. What and when to document related to how the practical work was evolving; particular exercises or points of development inevitably occurred and were included in a stockpile of tape. I have never tried to document everything. To have video equipment around seemed a natural and, I realise retrospectively, perhaps sometimes uncritically accepted part of pursing a totality of practice that concerned work in the studio, documentation, reading and critical writing.

Case study 3: *Indelible*: an approach to documenting practice-led research

Simon K. Ellis

Background

Indelible is a practice-led performance and dance research project with three outcomes or pathways presented on a single DVD-ROM (Figure 7.4). The project invites the user-reader to experience multi-modal perspectives on remembering, memory and representing performative ideas, events and

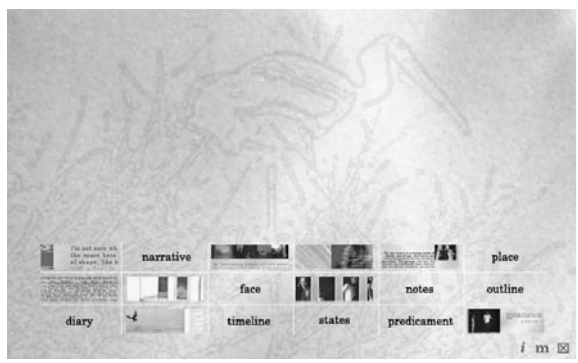

Figure 7.4 Menu to interactive section. Ellis, *Indelible* (2005).

actions. The pathways are *video*, *writing* and *interactive* and together they form a series of hypermedia framings by which the corporeal and philosophical underpinnings of the project are witnessed.

Within *Indelible* I sought to confront the methodological and theoretical paradox affecting performance-makers electing to recontextualise their work beyond live processes. How might the absence or disappearance of a so-called live work contribute to the overall design and representational practices underlying the outcomes? In this sense the three pathways that comprise *Indelible* generate a network of artistic, scholarly, poetic, and methodological enfoldings in which the user-reader is presented with possibilities for experiencing the vital subjectivity and inherent fallibility of memory and remembering.

Early planning

From the very early stages of developing *Indelible* I was interested in finding a way of generating internal logic between the performative and documented aspects of the project. This was because I understood documentation as serving a role in remembering (live) performance. Although my understanding at this stage was quite conventional in terms of the complexity of the performance–documentation nexus, I was interested in the form-content of the documentation being developed hand in hand with the form-content of the performance. At no stage did I consider the documentation as being independent from the performance aspects of the project.

Throughout *Indelible* I was committed to investigating artistic-scholarly processes that supported my overarching interest in the complexities of human memory. The methodological challenge that emerged was how to develop a form that was nothing less than *appropriate*, rather than to fit my work and ideas into a postgraduate methodological pro-forma.

Iterations

The process of resolving how best to organise the various artistic-scholarly materials developed with the material itself. This made the collection process demanding. There were a lot of 'data' (writing, video, audio, voice, still images, animations), and the process of sorting and organising became increasingly seamless with my understanding of the project. In this way the processes fed into themselves, and kept generating possibilities for form-content. In certain instances technical limitations helped or constrained the decision-making (e.g. the amount of video content I could fit on a DVD-R disk, or my burgeoning understanding of Macromedia Director), but for the most part the process of sorting and considering the material was highly iterative, and tended to

generate 'new' ideas for me as my understanding increased. Throughout these iterations I kept asking myself, (how) does this material represent my experience and understanding of the work and contribute to the meaning potentials of the entire project?

Constraints

These processes were not completed without difficulty. Almost three years into the project, the University of Melbourne started to flex its positivist muscles by questioning how my plans for *Indelible* fitted within historically conventional PhD structures. At this stage I still viewed the work as existing in two parts: a live performance followed by a written component (that would include hypertext-based documentation). The university's demands meant that I would be required to submit the written work within six weeks of the completion of the performances. This was not feasible given the iterative data processing I was involved in, and as a consequence I decided to forego the performance work as an assessable outcome. In so doing, I hoped to open out the creative possibilities of the project, but I also had some concerns, particularly the possibility that I was potentially undermining the live aspects of the project. However, the decision meant that I was able to consider the performing body beyond the performed, and that the apparent disappearance and oblivion of the performed live materials acted as a powerful juxtaposition to the relatively reproducible rememberings (or documentation) I was constructing.

Notwithstanding the pros and cons of this change in the makeup of the project, my primary memory of this significant time in the development of *Indelible* was that of feeling liberated. Ironically, the university's restrictions meant that the project increasingly became about my practice as a researching artist. Central to this development was my growing understanding of many of the contentious issues surrounding representation and documentation in art practice, both within and outside of the academic creative arts community. In a project that evolved out of personal concerns for the significance of memory to human experience, the debate on representative forms, particularly for performance-based artworks, seemed highly relevant.

This major change in the final form of *Indelible* meant that, in many respects, the 'documentation' became the work. At this stage, however, I ceased calling it documentation as I became increasingly convinced it was not, and is not, an appropriate term in some contexts. The DVD-ROM is designed as an artistic-scholarly project in its own right. Although it 'refers' to another so-called live project, its relationship to this event is nothing as temporally simplistic as 'original' and 'documentation'.

Importantly, I chose to view my writing as another part of my practice, not

something that occurred when I stopped practising. What was the written component became one of three 'pathways' in the project. Although simple, this conceptual shift meant I remained focused on a practice-*led* outcome, regardless of what modality I was working in and with.

Democratic

Throughout the development of the DVD-ROM, I sought a means of preventing any component being more important (depending on the biases of the viewer) than another. In the project's abstract, I suggest that the computer screen is a democratic site. This was and remains important to me: the idea that no one aspect of a research project is 'foregrounded' simply because of systematic epistemological biases in academia (logocentrism being the most pertinent). In this way, the user-viewer was asked to choose between the three pathways (video/writing/interactive) at any one time, and each pathway has different (but equally important) contributions to the work as a whole. To present the whole project on a single DVD-ROM (without the digital artefact becoming a part, or placed at the back, of a written thesis) was central to this idea.

Seduction

In hindsight, I probably ended up being seduced by the possibilities of 'documentation', and I wonder if this meant the 'live' work was misrepresented. (This in itself was an important possibility given the uncertainty and fallibility of human remembering.) At the same time, practice-led research (and other emergent type methodologies related to experimental qualitative research methods) involves being open to the ways in which research shifts as it is developed and understood. Part of the development of my understanding during *Indelible* was in using the constraints of the university's traditional systems to my advantage, and in seeking creative ways of resolving my research interests.

CONCLUSION(S), OR 'KNOW WHAT IT IS YOU'RE LOOKING AT' *(Hulton, personal communication)*

Through recent methodological developments, documentation has become an implicit part of practice as research. What may be variously interpreted as a response to, a reflection upon, a recording, reworking or impression of live practice can take many forms and have a range of purposes. Issues of mediatisation, replication, remediation, interpretation and documentation's relationship

with other forms of recording, response and analysis – most obviously critical writing – are further considerations.

As well as its presence in research and creative practice, many postgraduate degrees require documentation which, when combined with performance and critical writing, can be considered to have potential as a holistic methodology. However, while documentation is part of a set of practices necessarily enfolded from the outset in creative research projects, the form of a final submission is often a particular negotiation between institutional demands, practitioners' resistances to establishment expectations and (to use Ellis's term) artistic-scholarly imperatives. While institutional pressures have negated live practice in Ellis's example, his 'documentation' attempts to become the performance practice itself. Ellis also exemplifies the research-practitioner who could conceive of a solution because he had mastered the necessary software, a point about creative autonomy significant to the ethical reflections in this chapter. Similar developments have also affected Masters and undergraduate pedagogies in theatre and performance studies. The use of journals or portfolios so prevalent in those studies' curricula is, in part, the utilisation of documentation. In response to these developments, publishers have shown an increasing tendency to add linked DVDs, and occasionally websites, to books.

Although the example of Brecht's *Modellbuchs* draws attention to how documentation can pre-empt its utilitarian purpose, Brecht does recognise the limits of documentation, explaining: 'One does not learn much by *reading* that a character moves in a particular direction after a given sentence, even if the tone of speech, the way of walking and a convincing reason can all be supplied (which is very difficult)' (Willett 1964: 216, emphasis added). The difficulty lies in unambiguously conveying something, in his case through static photographs and linguistic commentary, a reminder that no documentation can replace the live, even if the attempt to do so indicates the status of video in much contemporary documentation.

Partly in response to the prevalence of digital recording, Fiona Wright and Goat Island employ personal writing as a mode of documentation. Extending the graphic form, some of Brith Gof's documentation is diagrammatic (Kaye 2000). These strategies document the particular concerns of the practices more appropriately than other means. Wright also sees documentation as generative of new material in 'other versions' of practice. For others, documentation is part of a creative process that aids in devising work; this occurred in my own case study, which highlighted the possibilities of video linked to critical writing.

In each of this chapter's examples, the documenter takes on the role of interpreter of the practice. As researchers, we can acknowledge the effects and processes of mediatisation, while simultaneously seeking out how

documentation can form a new rendering of practice. Yet, despite its prevalence and potential flexibility, some practitioner-researchers still question why documentation should exist. Is it not enough to undertake the performance practice itself? Despite her technical prowess in producing high-quality digital documentation, Rye has drawn attention to the limits of digital technologies, and calls for:

> oral modes of analysis and address which prevailed prior to the invention of the printing press and share with performance an emphasis on the live as a knowledge-producing encounter . . . [and] . . . more attention [to be] given to the live exchange, the spontaneous, reactive, evolutionary, provisional exchanges of ideas and opinions which formed, and still form, the basis for much information gathering, judgments and policy-making today. (2003b: 2)

While arguably the oral is a form of documentation, Rye stresses the liveness of practice as a form of knowledge; as in the case of Peter Hulton's work, it is primarily to this that documentation can respond.

Given the tangibility of performance practices, the supposition of their ephemerality can be challenged. In his discussion of what remains after performance, and how a performance can be retrospectively experienced, Baz Kershaw tellingly draws attention to the 'officially produced paradox that the traces of a creative performance event had more value than the event itself. Is an empty plate always the best part of a meal?' (Kershaw 2008: 25). What is left behind is clearly not the thing itself. And as spectators, we have memories. Memory also exists in the bodies of performers who train, rehearse and perform. It is this memorialising viscerality that can challenge the cold eye of the video camera and its contemporary companion, the computer screen.

Since documentation can and should be considered as interdependent with other aspects of practical research projects from the outset, there is a threefold dynamic to its methods: it interacts with and is part of the processes of practice; the primary documentation strategies must reflect the issues, not necessarily the form, of the research; and, in the longer term, documentation can be shaped into a means of communicating practice to interested parties. It is for theatre and performance researchers to define documentation on their own terms, to consider the dynamic possibilities of the form, methods, purpose and spectatorship of their chosen documentation methods, and to assert its presence as part of an entirely valid creative research methodology.

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CHAPTER 8

The Usefulness of Mess: Artistry, Improvisation and Decomposition in the Practice of Research in Applied Theatre

Jenny Hughes with Jenny Kidd and Catherine McNamara

> In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solution . . . in the swamp are the areas of greatest human concern. (Schön 1983: 42)

The frequently traversed and often indistinct boundary between 'research' and 'practice' in applied theatre provides a useful site for an examination of research methods in theatre studies. Researchers and practitioners involved in 'applied theatre' (and we explore some of the issues raised by this term below) are responsive to invitations to research and practice in complex, diverse and unpredictable contexts. In common with other disciplinary areas of theatre and performance, the prominence of practice as research in applied theatre complicates any attempt to clearly categorise 'research method' as distinct from or outside of practice. However, the ways in which applied theatre practice also constructs relationships across professional contexts with varying policy, value and practice imperatives means that the methods of research and practice itself are also subject to multiple pressures. In addition, commitments to mobilising an emancipatory politics of practice often means that participants of projects are integrated into the research in applied theatre. This participatory ethos challenges practitioners and researchers to implement reflexive and critical research methods as part of addressing wider issues of social justice and equity. The diverse contexts and intentions of applied theatre practice have meant that multiple methods have been drawn upon in applied theatre research, sometimes, but not always, used in combination with each other. The field incorporates, for example, externally commissioned research drawing on social science methods, participatory and action research,

and discursive and non-discursive forms of reflective practice, as well as modes of theoretically informed scholarly research and creative practice as research familiar to theatre studies as an academic discipline.

In this chapter, we explore three examples of applied theatre practice which exhibit contrasting relationships between context, creative intention and research perspective. An example of practice is contributed by each of the three authors, and the overall argument is informed by separate and detailed conversations between Jenny Hughes and Jenny Kidd and Catherine McNamara respectively. The first is Kidd's account of *This Accursed Thing*, a performance that explored new interpretations of Manchester Museum's collections in response to the transatlantic slave trade and abolition movement. This project was an outcome of 'Performance, Learning and Heritage' (2005–8), a research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council exploring theatre and performance in museums and heritage sites. The second is McNamara's discussion of the Sci:dentity Project, an arts initiative with young transsexual and transgendered people that explored the science of sex and gender through film, live performance and visual art, carried out by an arts team connected to the Central School of Speech and Drama and funded by The Wellcome Trust (2006–7). The final example is Hughes' account of *A Letter from Home*, a musical performance devised with refugees and asylum seekers living in Manchester and originally from Central Africa and the Great Lakes region, taking place as part of 'In Place of War', a research project also funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (2004–7). *This Accursed Thing* was a piece of action research that also drew on qualitative social science methods to explore the impact of the performance on learning. The Sci:dentity project was a piece of practice that was at the same time a research process led by young people, drawing on performance and visual arts to interrogate the science of sex and gender in collaboration with scientists, medical professionals and artists. *A Letter from Home* was an example of practice as research that explored a specific question, in this case the relationship between identity, displacement and participation in performance.

The case studies generated research findings that challenged knowledge discourses concomitant with their contexts: models of learning in museums and other institutions of learning, biologically determined constructions of sex and gender, and exclusionary constructions of national identity respectively. The analysis presented in this chapter aims to draw out some of the reciprocal and ethical knowledge practices that can be identified in these research processes. What was critically investigated in each project was the relationship between performance, site and, respectively, an atrocious heritage, alienating constructions of sex and gender and the lack of political rights for refugees. The three examples also repeatedly showed how applied theatre researchers are challenged by direct engagements with practice. We argue that these challenges

provide a site from which to conceptualise a research method that privileges notions of *practice*. This way of working challenges notions of method and methodology as epistemologically secure, finite, discrete sets of procedures fit for the purpose of discovering certain, measurable findings about the impact of applied theatre practice (such findings are often expected by funders of commissioned research). Instead, the chapter promotes responsive and practised methods that support the creative, social and political aims of projects.

We propose a method and methodology configured by three dynamic and overlapping principles of practice, each of which places complex demands on the researcher: *artistry*, *improvisation* and *decomposition*. The term 'artistry' refers to a crafted process of research that occurs as part of or alongside creative practice. 'Improvisation' refers to actions that take place during a research process that are spontaneous responses to unpredictable events and venture beyond the confines of predetermined design. 'Decomposition' refers to moments when designed and improvised research processes deteriorate in confrontation with experiences that confound expectations of an orderly, rule-bound, habitable universe. The term evokes moments of practice and research which disintegrate or are unmade as part of an encounter with exceptional experience, and positions these moments as a troubling and potentially enriching part of a research process. This notion is rather expansive and will be explored in more detail below; however, it is important to note that the term 'decomposition' connotes processes of regeneration in which the research may be carried forward in new and unexpected directions. Importantly, these regenerations do not compensate for or counteract any loss or absence of meaning: the intention here is to recognise the importance of difficult moments of not knowing, and deterioration of meaning, in any research endeavour. Drawing on the three principles of artistry, improvisation and decomposition, we also propose the notion of *practised method* as a fruitful way of conceiving research in applied theatre, that might usefully complement the 'practice as research' and 'research into practice' categorisations configuring recent discussions of research method in our disciplinary area.

TRAVERSING THE SWAMP: THE PRACTICE–RESEARCH–PRACTICE RELATIONSHIP IN APPLIED THEATRE

> [T]he questions of where knowledge is situated, what forms of knowledge are valued, and how knowledge is shared, remain a major preoccupation in the range of practices which constitute applied drama. (Nicholson 2005: 38)

'Applied theatre' is broadly related to traditions of socially committed community, educational and political theatre that emerged as part of and as

alternatives to the professional theatre sector in the western hemisphere during the course of the twentieth century. Nicholson identifies 'applied drama' as an umbrella term that brought these traditions together during the period of change following the end of the Cold War in the 1990s (Nicholson 2005: 11). This period coincided with the neo-liberal prioritisation of the free market, and in the UK, concomitant cuts in arts funding. The emergence of 'applied theatre' at this time, at least in part, responded to the need to ensure the ongoing practice and research of socially and politically committed theatre practice in academic contexts. Applied theatre occupies an ambivalent position, helping to protect the ongoing research, study and practice of socially and politically committed theatre and also securing and marketing new study programmes and publications inside academic contexts. Of course, these contexts are also increasingly subject to the imperatives of a free market economy that, in turn, potentially threaten critical theatre practices by reductively shaping the times and spaces by which teaching and research take place. This ambivalent position is reflected in the challenge of conceptualising research methods for applied theatre. Not least, the economic imperatives attaching to the wider field have led to engagement with the discourses of evidence-based practice, including research into the impact of theatre for policy-related audiences interested in social, personal, behavioural and attitudinal changes that are difficult to measure or securely attribute to participation in theatre, and may also have very little relevance for understanding the complexities of creative practice.

The term 'applied theatre' has been contested (Chamberlain et al. 2006). It carries an instrumental intent and claims 'usefulness' but lacks clear signification – who is applying what to whom and for what purpose? (For critical discussions of the term see Thompson 2003: 13–21; Nicholson 2005: 2–8.) However, the term has also stimulated discussions of a set of questions about the value of theatre that are arguably more expansive and diverse than the narrow categorisations of socially committed theatre practice historically debated by the political Left. The field of applied theatre has renewed and developed debates about the ethics and aesthetics of theatre practice, the performance of citizenship, the relationship between theatre and learning, and access and inclusion in the arts. (For examples, see Thompson 2009, and themed editions of *RIDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* on ethics and citizenship respectively – 10 (2) and 12 (3).) This engagement with a diverse range of cultural, social and political issues is partly what makes a discussion of research methods in applied theatre important and timely. Research methods facilitate investigations of the processes, aesthetic and ethical complexities and social functions of theatre, often with unexpected and confounding results. However, as the multi-disciplinary debates about the importance of 'reflexivity' in research have stressed, the value-laden, context-dependent

nature of language-based interpretative regimes mean that research methods themselves construct assumptions about what questions, knowledge and outcomes of practice are deemed significant, as much as support the development of knowledge about practice (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000: 1). The methods by which applied theatre practices are researched therefore construct particular claims for the value of theatre that reflect the ambivalent position of the wider field of practice and are worthy of further deconstruction.

Raymond Williams' definition of 'art' provides a critical perspective of significance for further explicating the problems and possibilities of applied theatre research and its associated methods and methodologies. He notes that 'the arts' emerged inside academic contexts in the nineteenth century as a result of a 'defensive specialisation of certain skills and purposes', that is a separation of skills and purposes whose 'use value' could not be reduced to 'exchange value'. The 'arts' constructed an area of scholarship within which skills and purposes not immediately related to the 'exchange value' of commodities could be 'conceptually abstracted' (Williams 1976: 34). The field of applied theatre deliberately and creatively disrupts the binary of 'use value' and 'exchange value' identified by Williams and to a certain extent renders these terms obsolete, as it adopts an approach to theatre practice that exhibits use value and exists within the productive regimes of the social and cultural economy, broadly conceived, as well as carries the abstract value attributed to 'pure' arts. Applied theatre research is concerned with exploring the experiences that materialise at exactly this challenging point of crossover between the use, exchange and abstract values of both theatre and society. Those that commission or otherwise support applied theatre practice and research are often themselves preoccupied with the possibilities and problems for action and understanding that emerge at this border. In terms of the projects below, this can be seen in the interest in learning as it might be conceptualised beyond the domains of formal education, experiences of gender that challenge biological binaries of male and female, and the narratives of refugees who stimulate revisions of categorisations of political citizenship. This has led to a hybrid methodological domain for applied theatre research and a complex context for practice, the processes of which might sometimes challenge hegemonic, ideological understandings of value, but (perhaps) more often exhibit a precarious balance between reproduction and disruption of those values, reflecting the ambivalent position of applied theatre signalled by the overall argument here. Applied theatre research has been preoccupied with responding to a requirement to provide evidence of the 'effect', 'impact' and 'outcome' of practice in ways that conform to the agendas of non-arts audiences and this has sometimes led to an uncritical acceptance of positivist social science research methods (see Hughes and Ruding, in Prentki and Preston 2009, for a discussion). However, the examples below also highlight the subtleties by which applied theatre

practice and research accommodates as well as disrupts rigidly predetermined notions of value. The analyses here explore how the practice of research facilitates a diversification of the use, exchange and abstract values of theatre practice in ways that may have broader significance for understanding theatre and performance practice in the contemporary world.

The complex relationship between research and the 'value' of theatre materialised within applied theatre contexts demands a precise, supported and dynamic approach to conceptualising method and methodology. We pursue this in the analyses of practice that follow, and find a more precisely articulated approach in the often unexpected interweaving of creative practice and research method – for example, when the responses of spectators in *This Accursed Thing* confounded the discourses of learning within which the research method was constructed, and in the messy and fruitful cross-fertilisations within the practice-research-practice relationship mobilised by the Sci:dentity project. What this chapter promotes is a *practised* methodology whereby different methods of research and practice combine to develop and strengthen ongoing critical revisions of the value of applying theatre in complex and unpredictable contexts. This notion of *practised* method also argues for the usefulness of that which might be defined as the negative, confounding, discarded or ignored moments of practice that do not readily 'fit' into a preconceived, intentional schema of research.

According to Schön, the 'reflective practitioner' has a capacity for creative, tacit and improvised responses to the 'confusing messes' and 'swampy lowland' of the unpredictable contexts of practice that challenge applications of designed 'method' (Schön 1983: 42). Schön emphasises the 'artistry' of knowledge-making in complex contexts, and his formulations have profound resonances with the challenges of applied theatre research. The practice of applied theatre is itself defined as a reflexive knowledge-making practice that works to materialise, investigate and remake social experience, narratives, histories and contexts (Nicholson 2005: 166; Thompson 2003: 172; Taylor 2003: 110). The combined importance of reflective practice and non-arts discourses and practices in applied theatre research supports a conceptualisation of research methods in applied theatre as constituted by various combinations and negotiations between non-discursive processes aligned to reflective practitioner methodologies and embodied, participatory knowledge practice and 'designed' research studies with qualitative and quantitative discursive research methods distinct from creative processes, applied before, during and after the 'practice'. The ambivalent position of applied theatre has generated a diverse range of research projects, many of which combine these methodological approaches and also have multiple 'uses'. These include: embodied, intuitive, embedded processes that might not lead to any discursive outputs (as suggested by Conquergood 2002, to whom we return below); 'reflective

conversations' and private journals of the reflective practitioner (Schön 1983; Taylor 1996: 25–58); creative, visual and discursive methods of participatory research and action research that engage groups in investigations of their immediate experiences (see Kerr, and Thornton, in Prentki and Preston 2009 and Thompson 2003: 147–72); and interview- and observation-based methodologies of qualitative social science (Hughes and Wilson 2004) and survey and experimental method (Fleming et al. 2004) that lead to reports for non-arts audiences. Reflective practitioner methodologies and modes of research associated with the interpretative or 'soft' social sciences, that is qualitative, participatory and action research methodologies, are more prevalent as the expertise required to implement these approaches is closely aligned to the skill bases of applied theatre practitioners, and these methods are easily adapted to unpredictable contexts.

It may be useful to briefly note some recognised strengths and weaknesses of these different methodologies. Qualitative social science and associated methods work with the interpretations of researchers, practitioners and participants of experiences and can yield rich and complex understandings of practice in context. However, qualitative data are often used without rigorous analysis: participants' statements can be uncritically taken to correspond to reality, and research often blurs the boundary between research and advocacy. Weaknesses of reflective practitioner and interpretative social science approaches include difficulty generalising from findings and their subsequent lack of credibility for policy-making audiences. Experimental and survey research, including use of control groups (classically with one group 'exposed' to practice and results measured against a control group), struggles to establish reliable measures for sensate, unpredictable and participatory processes, with resulting issues for internal and external validity. For practitioners, developing research that has relevance across professional and disciplinary contexts can divert time away from supporting artistic exploration. Reflective practitioner methods are privileged by practitioners because they can be embedded in creative practice, but their non-discursive outcomes make them less useful for contributing to discussions of value across the different audiences that have a vested interest in practice.

Before moving on to consider the specific methodological compositions of the three case studies, it is important to explore the conceptualisation of research method as *practice* a little further. Williams usefully deconstructs the 'complex linguistic cluster' around the terms 'practice' and 'theory', that is the relationship between things done, things observed and things explained (Williams 1976: 201). As part of this discussion, he notes the emergence of the term 'praxis', also used by Nicholson in reference to applied theatre (Nicholson 2005: 38–59), to describe a uniting of theory with practice as action, where the distinction between theory, method and practice is made in analysis but not

observable in practice. The notion of praxis resists a compartmentalising of theoretical and methodological endeavour as outside of, imposed upon or superior to practice. Situations of practice are inherently unstable, messy, interconnected, conflictual, uncertain, complex, and there is a need for usable knowledge practices, including Schön's 'artistry' and tacit knowledge, which have the capacity to respond to the unpredictable situations of practice: the world is no longer a readily controllable, predictable, mappable place, if it ever was. As such, theory-led 'modes' of research might be usefully reconceptualised *as part of* a broad practice-based methodology that privileges practice as a means of generating theoretical knowledge, and theoretical endeavour as a practised form of knowledge that has critical and affective force when brought into relation with practice. *Practised* methods, following the discussion that has unfolded here and evidenced by the projects below, might be defined as methods that combine overlapping tacit, embodied, discursive and theoretical processes. The degree to which a discrete research method is articulated as part of this will depend on the specific imperatives of context and the usefulness of specific research methods in each moment of practice.

Two important contributions to thinking about the relationship between theory and practice, from two scholars from philosophy and performance studies respectively, support the trajectory of this argument. Gumbrecht (2004) has explored how the arts and humanities inside universities have suffered as a result of privileging interpretation over experience in research and teaching. He proposes instating 'moments of intensity' that remind students of the 'epiphany value' of aesthetic experience in processes of learning and understanding: 'rather than having to think, always and endlessly, what else there could be, we sometimes seem to connect with a layer in our existence that simply wants the things of the world close to our skin' (Gumbrecht 2004: 106). Taking up a similar point in relation to performance studies, Conquergood resists the visual, verbal and textual forms of representation predominant in western epistemology and associated with colonial forms of control, and explores the improvisational performance politics of the singing of enslaved people as a non-verbal, non-text-based knowledge practice. Drawing on the writing of Frederick Douglass, Conquergood asserts the need for a research methodology that incorporates 'experiential, participatory epistemology . . . an ethnography of the ears and heart' and 'a hermeneutics of experience, relocation, copresence, humility, and vulnerability: *listening to and being touched by*' (Conquergood 2002: 149 – italics original).

Gumbrecht and Conquergood's propositions implicitly unsettle any hierarchical separation of theory and practice. Their conceptualisations are suggestive of a research methodology that exceeds cognitive and discursive control without wholly rejecting the potential of discourse and text as producers of knowledge. The reflective process implicit in applied theatre produces and

uses 'knowledge' in the everyday motion of practice, and may or may not necessarily be identifiable by research methods that are discursively constructed (it is possible, for example, to research practice without ever writing anything down). A clear implication of this argument is that theoretical endeavour, research activity and creative practice do not exist outside of each other but are each part of practice: research methods of all kinds of shapes and sizes can be productively used to understand practice but they, like practice, produce a 'remainder'. Each of the case studies explored here highlight moments where knowledge was generated not from the discrete application of research method to practice, but from a research method that was itself part of the practice and *practised*. The significance of the practised messiness of methodological endeavours to knowledge about applied theatre is repeatedly evidenced, from the challenge to the singular knowledge archive of the museum and predetermined research design that took place as part of *This Accursed Thing*, to the display of 'not-knowing' that was central to the Sci:dentity project's research activity as well as the research process of *A Letter from Home*. These moments suggest that the most useful knowledge about the value of theatre resides in tracing the processes of artistry, improvisation and decomposition implicit in the practice of research. They suggest a methodology that is intimately embedded in creative practice and that, rather than posing answers to clearly defined questions, develops articulations of experience that may not be accounted for by habitual and institutionally bound framings of those experiences. This interrelationship between the practice of method and method of practice reappear across each the three case studies as distinct methodological challenges.

Case study 1: Unsettling absences: *This Accursed Thing*

Jenny Kidd

This Accursed Thing was a promenade performance that took place in the Manchester Museum and explored connections between the transatlantic slave trade and the collection of the museum. The performance was timed to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary year of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in Britain and was part of the 'Revealing Histories: Remembering Slavery' initiative, encouraging reinterpretations of collections to explore the largely hidden history, impact and legacy of the slave trade on cultural institutions in Manchester. *This Accursed Thing* was a challenging, multi-vocal, interactive historical performance adaptable for school groups and independent visitors, in which two actors played six characters: a modern-day curator, Thomas Clarkson (a key abolitionist), an African slave trader, a British slave trader, James Watkins (a freed slave and abolitionist) and a cotton mill worker

from Manchester. The narratives portrayed also cast the city of Manchester as a key player in the performance, highlighting the importance of slavery to the economic boom of the Industrial Revolution as well as the positive role the city played in the abolition movement.

This production was the final of four projects which explored the impact of performance as a learning medium across different museum and heritage sites. Research at the Manchester Museum and the previous three sites included the use of focus groups, qualitative interviews, questionnaires, participant-observation, creative exercises and video recordings of visits to track visitor engagement. The qualitative methodology favoured intensive, in-depth collection of narratives of specific performance moments explored in the context of wider narratives of an overall visit. Immediate reports were compared to responses during follow-up telephone interviews that took place three weeks and nine months after the visit. During the initial run of *This Accursed Thing*, the research team received feedback from more than two hundred audience members, including independent visitors and school audiences via post-performance questionnaires, focus groups and interviews. The qualitative methods – focus groups and semi-structured follow-up interviews – were more useful than questionnaires in that they yielded complex and intricate narratives about the performance from diverse audiences. The longitudinal research also provided an opportunity to garner responses that both compared and extended those narratives, allowing the team to begin to understand how the impact of the performance was shaped and articulated over a period of up to a year after the encounter. Such longitudinal studies are not common in the arts due to their time and resource implications, but here they proved to be invaluable in gaining a nuanced and more reliable account of 'impact'.

Research findings showed that individuals relate to and interpret performances in museum and heritage sites and the wider 'performance' of the site itself in ways that are unique, improvised and complex. The analysis of qualitative data from the initial three projects generated a series of emerging research findings, and these were applied and further explored by *This Accursed Thing*. The research of the latter therefore built on the qualitative methodology developed by the wider research of which it was a part but also involved the commission of a new performance and a range of research activities to explore its impact. The commission was taken up by Andrew Ashmore and Associates, specialists in museums and heritage performance, who devised a performance to a specific brief generated by the emerging research findings. For example, the importance of 'framing' performed narratives in order to facilitate understanding, including the use of improvised and interactive devices and out-of-character moments, had been highlighted by the previous research. This action research project aimed to critically explore such findings by means of practice as well as research into that practice. In this sense,

the relationship between the practice and our research was ongoing, dialogic and continually negotiated. Of particular interest were audiences' diverse responses to interactive and improvised performance moments, their reactions to moments of discomfort and 'unsettlement', and the impact of multiple, challenging and complex narratives on institutions built upon the singularity of a knowing archive. These responses and moments, some of which are explored further below, demonstrate the renegotiation of theoretical and practical knowledge that occurs during a research process that therefore might be configured as *practice* and *practised*.

Throughout the performance the actors, both in and out of character, showed the audience samples from the Museum's collections: the hidden narratives of these artefacts creating a series of increasingly provocative connections between the museum's history, Manchester's cotton wealth and the abolition movement. Different architectural spaces around the Museum were imaginatively interpreted. For example, the Natural History gallery became the hold of a slave ship and then a nineteenth-century meeting hall in central Manchester addressed by James Watkins, a freed US slave and active abolitionist, a performance move that cast the audience first as potential slave traders and then as supporters of abolition. The reframing of the gallery space revealed the city of Manchester and its citizens, past and present, as intimately related to a heritage of slavery. At the abolitionist meeting Watkins proclaims, 'slavery only existed in the South, because cotton was required at Manchester . . . Every single bale of this cotton is produced by a system that true English hearts abhor', to which the cotton mill worker from Manchester, suddenly arriving in the middle of the audience, responds, 'Have you wandered around here? Around our great nasty manufacturing town? . . . Have you seen the white slaves, who work and drink a short life out, and reel before you from fatigue or drunkenness? . . . A working man in Salford has a life expectancy of seventeen years from when he starts labouring, did you know that?'

The qualitative data gathered as part of the research process showed that the deliberate interconnecting of here and there and past and present performed by means of sudden interruptions of character entrances, frequent reframing of spaces, and audience movement around the museum, created moments of surprise which provided ways into the story but also unsettled and disturbed audiences. The theme of 'unsettlement', which became central to the findings of the overall research project, was developed to capture a particular quality in the descriptions that audiences gave during interviews and focus groups. This term describes experiences of overturned expectations, challenged assumptions, unexpected emotion, a sense of intense 'reality' of the performance and discomfort arising from improvised interaction with performers (Jackson and Kidd 2008). A range of unsettling moments were commented upon by audiences, highlighting the disturbance created by the revealed narratives and their

interconnections and the intimacy of the 'learning' experience: 'it made what I thought was a straightforward campaign into an interesting and complicated journey'; 'the objects that were passed around – I felt quite a connection . . . in a very sad way'. The previous research had highlighted the need to 'frame' these moments and in *This Accursed Thing* this led to the inclusion of 'out-of-character' encounters at the start and the end of the performance which provided audiences with an opportunity to explore links between historical narratives and contemporary realities. These framing devices were intended to support the learning of audiences, provide a space to explore responses and answer questions, and help manage the discomfort that such evocative journeys can engender. They also helped audiences process the multi-vocal and contradictory representations of past events in the performance itself.

It is interesting that the artefacts used in the production lacked a meaningful frame beyond the performance itself. For example, the stuffed bird from the United States belonging to Henry Dresser (a Manchester businessman) shown by the modern-day curator towards the end of the performance meant little without his narration of Dresser's attempts to get cotton harvested by slaves through the Northern blockage of slave goods created during the American Civil War. The unsettlement here was caused by the significance of absent, undocumented lives inherent in the narratives of each artefact, and this unsettling absence reinforced the disturbance of the performance's resymbolisation of space and the audience's constant movement around the museum. The performance evoked ghostly presences rather than recuperated lost human lives through the provision of detailed, factual evidence of the exploitation and destruction of life – and was deeply emotive as a result. The sensitive subject matter and its connections to contemporary institutional racism also evoked strong emotional responses: 'it actually took me on a journey that I didn't want to connect with because it was a connection of thinking this was what my ancestors went through'; 'even the chiefs of Africa were involved in it . . . he was giving away his own people, the black slaves, that made me feel upset'; 'there were one or two moments when I wanted to weep at the fact that human beings could do that'; 'it wasn't that it just touched you emotionally, it did actually move you physically, I could feel revulsion'. These kinds of responses, triggered in interviews and focus groups after the performance, did not alter in their tone or emotional resonance over time – and were often reiterated many months after the performance. The improvised interactions, debrief session and research activities were used by many to work through these responses to the performance, rather than to give a coherent or rational account of 'learning'. Importantly for the argument developing here, these emotive reactions therefore confounded the research team's expectations of findings relating to the importance of framing to support learning. It is not that framing was not important, but that the emotive impact of the performance challenged the

research team to further develop their articulation of how 'learning' as part of an interactive performance environment might be described. These responses, together with the moments of interactivity built into the performance, challenged both performers and researchers to respond spontaneously and improvise different kinds of reactions to capture the complex and sometimes contradictory interpretations of audiences.

Any anticipation that the action research would affirm a standard set of guidelines for ongoing practice quickly dissipated therefore. Instead of the practice confirming research findings from the other case studies, it was a powerful provocation for further exploration. The emotive engagements of the audience – the moments of disruption, disagreement, vested interest, outburst and other responses – surprised the performers and research team. In the interests of not predetermining interview responses, interview questions were carefully worded to avoid introducing learning discourses within which respondents could easily frame their experiences. Rather than asking if participants 'learnt anything', we asked them about moments of surprise, understanding, engagement and interaction. There was a concerted effort to hear experiences in the 'own words' of the participants and work interpretively with those descriptions. Results were revealing: participation in the performance did not necessarily provide any direct learning that could easily fit within the frame of one learning theory or another. The research team had no desire to discredit experiences that for participants felt in no way educative, or to discount experiences that could more easily be described as emotional, empathetic or even therapeutic. The qualitative methods – focus groups and interviews – provided access to layers of experience that unsettled the discourses by which the research was designed (that people are able to describe their learning in a readily accessible or readable way, for example). Most significantly, it was the surprises and unsettlements that generated the most useful and useable knowledge for our understanding of the impact of the performance.

Some audiences for the research, including museum, education and theatre-related audiences, have asked for recommendations for 'best practice' for museum theatre that would work across different sites. However, the more meaningful outcomes of the research have been the series of external and internal dialogues about the relationship of performance and learning that were improvised at the time and continue to be shared in encounters that exceed the boundaries of the original research project (including this chapter). The research methods in this case did not produce findings that proved or measured effect. Rather they were a significant participant in the artistry, improvisation and decompositions of practice that we posit here as an important feature of applied theatre research. Rather than producing a set of findings that supports the replication of models of 'museum theatre' that would work across different sites therefore, the research findings emphasised the value

of research *and* practice as a series of interlinking and carefully improvised methods that illuminate the complexities of practice. In this case, the artistry and improvisation of the practice and research unsettled preconceptions and widened languages of what 'learning' might mean in the context of applied theatre. 'Moments of intense engagement' or 'boom' moments of learning are descriptive phrases that emerged from the analysis of interview data rather than any evidence of a clear knowledge of slavery that could be narrated weeks or months after participation. These findings suggest a relationship between performance and learning – and practice and research – that is best facilitated by carefully designed engagements with complex subjects and that remain open to the improvised encounters and mutual unsettlements caused by their dynamic and symbiotic relationship.

Case study 2: Searching performatives: the Sci:dentity project

Catherine McNamara

The Sci:dentity project was an arts-led interdisciplinary project that worked with a group of eighteen young transsexual and transgendered people over a twelve-month period to explore the science of sex and gender, in particular the relationship between lived experiences of gendered identity and scientific and medical discourses of sex and gender. 'Transsexual' is a term that refers to people who identify as a gender different from that assigned at birth; 'transgender' refers to people who feel that the gender assigned to them at birth is not a correct or complete description of their gender identity. The project drew on performance, film-making and visual arts to facilitate young people's reflexive and creative exploration of scientific knowledge. The first phase began with a series of weekend arts workshops and culminated in a public exhibition of installation art, sculpture, live performance and a short film made by participants. The second phase developed creative outreach activities which engaged wider audiences of trans and non-trans young people in discussions of the science of sex and gender. Finally, there was a public screening of a documentary that presented the experiences of the group as they explored how the science of sex and gender impacts (or does not impact) on their lives as young trans individuals. The film incorporated images created by the participants, interviews they carried out with medical professionals and older members of the trans community, as well as footage recorded as part of the documentation of the workshops. The project was funded by The Wellcome Trust, an independent medical research-funding charity committed to engaging the public in debates about the social and ethical implications of biomedical science. This public engagement activity has produced work that is innovative artistically,

supporting performers known for their ground-breaking artistry, such as Bobby Baker and Peggy Shaw, as well as an innovative range of arts projects with young people (for examples see Levinson et al. 2008; Hughes 2006).

The Sci:dentity project can be characterised as an artistic exploration of the value-laden nature of knowledge, in this case the biological binaries of 'male' and 'female', oppositions that do not sustain their meaning when brought into contact with the lived experiences of trans young people. The process included the use of contemporary art and media images to open up conversations about knowledge, representation and gender, for example through the creation of life-size three-dimensional models sporting deliberately distorted, gendered clothing and an arts installation which reinvented the space of a public toilet using recorded sound and personal narratives plastered over the walls. Knowledge, in this context, was situated within and generated from personal experience brought into productive relationship with an artistic process and scientific and medical discourses of sex and gender. This knowledge was always and at once gendered, bodily, social, creative and collaborative – and was realised as a series of moments inside and outside of the creative practice and research process rather than as a mappable and coherent set of findings. Here, it was often not possible to identify distinctions between methods of creative practice and research: the central question driving the project ('what is the science of sex and gender?') was explored through young people's artistry and the findings of the research were works of art which directly engaged members of the public. The 'research' elements of the project occasionally stood outside of the creative practice. An evaluator was employed to identify the impact of the project on the young people involved, for example, and the methods used for this included qualitative interviews, focus groups, observation, participant logbooks, analysis of video documentation and weblogs. However, even these aspects of the process became embedded in the creative practice, with findings from the research being used as part of artistic explorations and the researcher training the young people in question design and interview techniques in preparation for their interactions with science and medical professionals. This project can be most accurately conceived as an overlapping and interweaving process of research and creative practice, therefore, rather than 'practice as research' or 'research into practice', and is a further example of the practised method which we posit as useful for understanding the practice and research relationship in applied theatre.

The processes of creative practice and research were configured by a series of encounters across the different times and spaces of the project, between scientific and medical discourses of sex and gender and the lived and performed experience of the young people engaged in the project. These encounters, one of which is explored below, produced explorations of identity across varying settings and relationships – arts workshops, public performance, science

seminars and interviews with medical professionals. These critical interventions into participants' and spectators' understandings of identity constituted a performative re-searching of discourses and practices of identity permitted within and constructed by those settings. The example below shows how the participatory ethos of the overall methodology privileged the agency of the young person to creatively explore and critique the performatives encountered in different settings by exploring their resonances (or lack of) with autobiographical experience. If the conventional sense of 'performative' broadly denotes those statements and actions that bring about social and material effects, then the combination of creative practice and research activity here manifested what might be called a 'searching performative'. This was supported by improvisation with methods of creative practice and research, and in ways that created spaces for the felt experiences of the young people to be articulated and become effective.

A particularly powerful example of this searching performative emerges from one participants' weblog of the project, which starts with a description of a visit to the doctor:

> I talked to him about things and he immediately turned away from me and listened to me, but pretended to fiddle about on his computer and stuff, and then he eventually wrote this: 'this 22 year old asked me to refer her as she has not been feeling fully female, as felt more male gender in her physical and mental activities. Her menarche started late 14, and her sexual organs showed reasonable development. She denies any hirsuitism (note: a medical term to describe hair growth on women's bodies deemed unusual by medical professionals), would you kindly see her for further investigations.

The participant goes on to describe a proposal for a short film which would creatively reconfigure this experience and the assumptions about sex and gender that are contained within it:

> I'm gonna read (the letter) out and change it and change it and change it until it's completely relevant to who I am, not to how my doctor with his ignorance had to write it. I'm going to adapt it and change it 3 or 4 times, each time changing it a bit more to suit . . . (McNamara, in Levinson et al. 2008: 190–1; also see Rooke and Gooch 2007: 19)

Importantly, the proposal was made on the weblogs set up for the evaluation and is thus an example of the overlapping research process and creative practice described here. The performative imperative of the creative practice and research method is evident: the participant repeatedly cites the pathologising

discourses of the medical consultation, with each repetition inflected by an imagined transition from, in the participants' words, 'what's not acceptable/not real, to a better place' (McNamara, in Levinson et al. 2008: 190). The power of this searching performative, repeated across the performance of the final exhibition, was evidenced in the participants', parents' and non-trans young people's reports of attending the public exhibition, watching the documentary film and participating in outreach workshops: 'performers laid themselves bare with experiences it hurt to imagine, sending us away still thinking and talking about what we'd seen long into the next week' (audience member); 'I am more interested in gender politics, I read about it more . . . I like to talk to friends about it at school' (school pupil); 'it gave my mum a bridge into my world without me having to verbalise everything . . . it helped her understand me and trans issues' (participant); 'it has brought me some peace of mind regarding his future' (parent); 'its been a positive experience for us all and it was a great show' (parent – for original references see Rooke 2007; Rooke and Gooch 2007).

The participatory research methods fused with the artistry and improvisation of the research and creative practice provided successive points of engagement between autobiographical experience, scientific knowledge and medical expertise: a process of undoing and redoing knowledge via the performance of personal experience realised in emotional, interactive and reciprocal encounters with other young people, medical professionals and audiences engaged in the project. As noted above, the evaluator helped to prepare young people for conducting interviews with medical professionals. During one interview a prominent endocrinologist openly reflected on the lack of secure knowledge relating to sex and gender, an acknowledgement of the limits of science that occurred in the context of a warm and humorous encounter with an 'expert' and that had an empowering impact on the interviewers and became a key part of the documentary at the end of the project. In common with the participatory principles of the methodology, this moment reversed the relationship of questioner and pathologised 'subject' common to encounters of trans young people with medical professionals. It led to an articulation of the provisional knowledge and reciprocal subjectivity of the medical professional and young trans-person in context, with a concomitant shift from 'interview' to 'informed and reflective conversation'.

The participatory methodology that combined creative and discursive research methods in the Sci:dentity project manifested a searching performative that disrupted binary constructions of sex and gender and exemplified a hopeful kind of knowledge practice. This incorporated provisional, embodied as well as discursive, inter-disciplinary and democratic methods of knowing. Young people's experience was the 'body of knowledge' respected here and the arts were employed to explore those experiences and disseminate the

results of the investigative process. Like the first case study, Sci:dentity responded productively to the blurring of boundaries between practice and research, challenging any clear articulation of research findings relating to its central research question. The model of knowledge practice that emerges here was energised by artistry and improvisation, producing new possibilities for ongoing research and creative practice as well as in the everyday lives of the young people and others engaged in the project.

Case study 3: Powers of decomposition: *A Letter from Home*

Jenny Hughes

A Letter from Home was a three-month project with communities in Manchester affected by war, namely refugees and asylum seekers from the Central African and Great Lakes region, especially the Democratic Republic of Congo (hereafter DRC). The project explored the relationship of participatory performance to remaking identity after war and displacement, for example, investigating questions of whether and how participation in theatre facilitates integration into 'host' cultures. It was a collaboration between 'In Place of War' and 'Britannia Rumba', a band made up of refugees and asylum seekers from the DRC that offers a unique fusion of Congolese rumba and British popular music. The performance incorporated narrative, testimony, dance and live music. A researcher took part in each rehearsal and the final performance and completed semi-structured interviews with participants during and after the project, generating a qualitative snapshot of the project at different moments of the process. In particular, interviews aimed to explore the relationship between experiences of participating in the project and the everyday lives of participants. However, struggles in the process of relating personal narratives as part of the practice, and inconsistencies between participants' 'performances' in rehearsals, the performance and research activities, troubled any linear progression from gathering and analysing 'evidence' to making knowledge claims about the relationship between theatre, identity and displacement. An exploration of some of these difficulties exhibits the limits of discursive research – and of narrative performance – when faced with the experiences of those for whom relating stories may be risky or difficult to articulate. In addition, it highlights the importance of recognising when not to ask questions and of appreciating the complex interactions between 'real' and 'fictional' realms in the performance of practice and research. The discussion here centres on moments of practice where the predetermined research design and its planned methods deteriorate and argues that these moments of decomposition – halts in the process, stuttering progress, changes of direction – highlight the limits

of method in ways that are significant for understanding the potentially powerful social effects of research and creative practice.

The idea for the project came from the lead singer of Britannia Rumba, Jean, who wanted to tell his own story of fleeing the Congo as a fifteen-year-old and settling in Manchester. Early in the process other participants also said that they wanted to relate their actual experiences during the performance. The rehearsal that explored this was difficult. Some participants explained that they felt their experiences were 'a page in history' or 'a closed book'. Jean, whose experience had inspired the project, said that he could not rehearse the telling of his story as it was too precious to be repeated: he would only do it once, in the moment of the performance. After some discussion, the group decided not to include personal experiences in the play and instead to rely on the fictional character called Wana, who flees the DRC and comes to Manchester, to portray what they wanted to say. Wana's story was a formulaic narrative of victimisation, flight, arrival and struggles with the asylum system in the UK, which in many ways flattened out and obscured the more nuanced experiences of participants that were articulated during the rehearsal process. The performance excluded aspects of experiences germane to the research question, therefore, because the group decided to present a particular narrative. The need to respect this decision means that it remains impossible to recount the contradictions between experience and its representation in this chapter, which itself is a public outcome of the research.

In the same rehearsal the younger members of the group were asked to devise a scene based on what they say about Africa when the adults are not present. They improvised a scene of playing a computer game, while talking about the way the adults get worked up about 'Africa':

BENJAMIN: I don't believe in Africa
LIAM: I don't believe in Africa, of course I don't believe in Africa, because I don't know Africa
UNCLE SEDOPHE: You do! You were born there
BENJAMIN: I haven't even seen Africa . . . can we stop talking about Africa? We don't want Africa.

The message of the play – the importance of 'knowing where we come from' (as represented by the statement in Lingala that the group decided to project onto a screen during the performance: '*soki oyebi epai owuti oko kende tina suka ya molongo*'; 'if you know where you come from, there's no limit to where you can go') – was strongly challenged in this scene improvised by the younger members of the group. For the older members, the play was an opportunity to communicate the importance of knowing where you come from and developing positive images of cultural identity. In this scene, the younger members

of the group identified and expressed contradictions in the 'talk' of the adults about African identity. However, in an interview after the project, two of the young men in the scene confidently asserted the importance of 'knowing where we come from'. Furthermore, it was clear that they had difficulty identifying where they were from, either from ignorance or from fear of saying too much. Their family's case to stay in the country may rest on versions of 'truth' that need to be differently improvised, depending on audience. Knowing the importance of the constructed narrative to performing 'legitimacy' in making claims for asylum, the researcher did not press further.

These moments raise important questions for research and practice about choices relating to telling, including who is listening, what is being told and for what purpose: questions of knowledge and understanding are bound up in relationships of identity, power and memory that have to be carefully negotiated. *A Letter from Home* presented a series of events relevant to the reconstruction of identity following war and displacement. These included moments of cultural dislocation, belonging, celebration, nostalgia, fantasy, loss and hope. This layering, translation and juxtaposition exhibited a playful engagement with the problems of identity and displacement that was perhaps more important than, for the participants, staking a claim to an authentic cultural tradition or, for the researcher, affirming a certain and fixed research finding. Narratives told during the performances, including the public performance and in the research interviews, were some of many possible narratives of experience, including narratives told or withheld by participants in more private exchanges. As such, the practice of research and research of practice here might be described as residing in the multiple stories that have and have not been told. The research process created, maintained and developed the fiction of a performance that excluded complexity in order to constitute and present the participants' desired narratives and obscure some of their anxieties, rather than articulate and analyse layers of experience. The story told here is one way of durably pinning down moments of practice, but it should be clear that there is much of singular significance left unsaid.

This might be read as an example of how the practice of research and research of practice in applied theatre excludes the complexities of experience in order to constitute itself – and as such what is described here is a failure of both creative practice and research method in applied theatre. The first two projects discussed in this chapter highlighted ways in which research and practice can be brought together in distinct but equally useful ways to deepen and broaden understandings of applied theatre. In this third example, the methods of research and practice decomposed when confronted with the need to maintain a fiction to protect the lives of participants, leaving the research question – the relationship of participatory performance processes to remaking identity after war and displacement – unanswered in the practice. The young

men's contested citizenship means that they are not permitted to settle in their everyday environment, including the environments provided by applied theatre practice and research. The absence of an answer to our question, of course, generates alternative responses; however, all of these were inflected with the realisation that 'we cannot know'.

The decomposition of method in the face of some kinds of experience, however, does not mean that method is without its *uses*. After all, decomposition performs important functions connected to the preservation and regeneration of life as well as its deterioration, and these moments are profoundly and provocatively suggestive for researchers and practitioners of applied theatre. The powers of decomposition reside in drawing attention to issues of survivability and provoking reflection about the social and political implications of the creative practices of this project. In addition, perhaps the most important research 'finding' here was that the experience of the rehearsals and performance seemed to be compelling, joyful and invigorating for many participants, and facilitated the expansion of social networks and relationships, even if momentarily. These aspects of experiences of applied theatre projects are often difficult to put into words but are, perhaps, the most compelling 'evidence' that something of significance has occurred.

SUMMARY

> Fontenelle suggested as early as 1699 that artisans' shops sparkle everywhere with an intelligence and a creativity that nevertheless does not attract our attention. Spectators are lacking for these very useful and very ingeniously contrived instruments and practices . . . These 'spectators' become collectors, describers, analysts. But at the same time that they acknowledge in these practices a kind of knowledge preceding that of the scientists, they have to release it from its 'improper' language and invert into a 'proper' discourse the erroneous expression of 'marvels' that are already present in everyday ways of operating. (De Certeau 1984: 67)

If not of the order of 'proper discourse', what kind of methodological imperatives have emerged across all three case studies? They have each, in different ways, shown that the research of applied theatre is a performed and performative process intimately connected to questions of power and identity. They provide useful examples for considering the complexities of researching applied theatre practice, and draw attention to the significance of processes of artistry, improvisation and decomposition to such research. Artistry is evident in planned and designed processes that draw creatively on methods from

the fields of reflective practice, performance practice and social sciences and are insistently reflexive. Improvisation is evident in the application of these designs, particularly in the appreciation of research methods as tools that can support creative processes and conversations about them in ways that may be unplanned. The principle of decomposition has also been evident across all three examples, though mostly in the third: this term has been used to describe moments in practice and research when encounters with the silences, disruptions or contradictions in experiences of participants confound, delay, surprise or obstruct the play of discursive process and creative activity of research. This conceptual framework sees research methods as participating in creative practice rather than as standing outside of practice in a comfortable relation of interpretation, classification, definition and determination. It emphasises the importance of the utility and efficiency of method in practice and – in common with many other disciplines – the provisional, constructed, and practised nature of research.

The methodological approach that has emerged as common and fruitful in each case can be described as a series of creative crossovers and confluences between discursive research methods and creative practices. These are best conceived as ongoing, layered and sometimes unpredictable journeys for participants, artists and audiences rather than a permanent fixing or framing of the multiplicities of practice. The processes of knowledge production implicit in distinct research methods are all mediations of practice, useful at times but inherently limited. Our argument can be summarised as follows: there is 'practice as research' and 'research into practice'; and there are also the interweaving *practises* of research, theory and practice. Stories of practice worked up in applied theatre research – including narratives offered by participants and theorised overviews offered by researchers – always only indicate a temporarily abstracted fragment of the practice. Applied theatre research is a kind of practice that produces discourses and narratives that may (or may not) open up new perspectives and questions of relevance to the people and contexts it works with and in. In our making of something – a performance or research report – we hold the practice still for a moment so that we can look at its parts. But we make a mistake if we assume that those parts added together come to the sum of the whole.

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CHAPTER 9

Researching the Body in/as Performance

Jennifer Parker-Starbuck and Roberta Mock

> Uses of the term 'the body', in terms of contemporary performance writing, bring with them a veritable network of values (*measures*) and potential unfoldings; its use in that particular context identifies a momentarily and artificially stilled site, within networks of relations, and not a material being as such . . . [in] these highly specific situations, unqualified use of the term 'the body' is a nonsense. (Melrose 2006: 9, emphasis in original)

Bodies are the material through which theatre researchers most often discuss performance; they are scrutinised, critiqued, displayed, transformed, gendered, controlled and determined in critical reviews, historical accounts and theorisations of practices such as theatre, live art and dance. Whether performing or spectating, bodies are often the means for understanding how performance operates and makes meaning. The interdisciplinary nature of performance studies has encouraged theatre researchers not only to analyse bodies *in* spaces of performance but to consider how bodies might *become* or *produce* performance spaces. As Richard Schechner has noted, in the twenty-first century it is increasingly difficult to make clear distinctions between the bounded events understood to be performance, by context, convention, usage and tradition, and human experience and its by-products that we are able to understand and analyse 'as' performance (2006: 49). The use of 'in/as' in the chapter title points to our consideration of body-centred research under both rubrics (as well as their blurring), and signals the dynamic disciplinary interplay between theatre studies and performance studies for researchers of bodies and performance, many of whom are as invested in researching bodies 'as' the locus of performance as they are in researching bodies 'in' performance.

In this chapter we will identify some of the methods – that is, tools and techniques – that researchers use in body-centred performance research and

explore their prevalence, purpose and organisation (how they are combined to create bespoke research methodologies). We will address many ways in which researchers engage with 'performing' bodies: on stage, in media, in everyday practices or in other cultural forms and events; how researchers negotiate the differences between spectating and performing bodies; and what tools they might use to work with historical bodies in archives, photographs, in video documentation or notational systems. Methods, as we consider them here, are the ways in which researchers encounter bodies to collect evidence and information, and to gain deeper understanding about performance. As indicated in our epigraph, the term 'the body' is itself problematically generic and its use varies across disciplines and practices; moreover, boundaries are often porous when researching bodies and performance. We consider certain researchers to be 'body-centred' because their enquiries – whether from a performance-making, spectatorial or historical perspective – are provoked by and increase understanding of particular bodies.

The examples we offer in this chapter indicate a fluidity in addressing bodies. They are in part selected from more than forty papers presented to the Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA) Performance and the Body Working Group at the organisation's annual conferences between 2006 and 2009, and in part from a broader range of published research through or about performing bodies. In addition to identifying some of the key methods we have used ourselves to encounter and engage a range of bodies as performance researchers, our methods in developing this chapter include the reading, seeing, hearing and analysing of a breadth of research by others about bodies and performance, as well as the circulation of a questionnaire among Working Group members in December 2007. This questionnaire requested information about their topics, projects, methods, methodologies, forms of dissemination, the role of theory in their research and what they felt was unique to researching bodies in performance. Our methodology thus combines our own understandings of research material made public (including written and spoken reports and the documentation of practices) with the researchers' own reports on their methods. This methodology has enabled us to include both quotations from abstracts, conference papers and published written research as well as the informal voices of e-mails and questionnaires. We have tried to allow researchers to tell their own stories in their own terms, treating them as brief case studies to exemplify the research methods that have recurred in our investigation.

When we discuss 'body' and 'bodies' in this chapter, these refer to specific subjects of study, usually the present corpus of humans or non-humans, but also bodies within archives, historical bodies, absent or overlooked bodies. What begins to distinguish body-centred research is the very notion of 'body' as interpretable and flexible, yet materially and culturally specific. It often

plays with the provocative tension between the notion of 'the body' which, as Melrose argues, is 'a shifter, able to move endlessly between contexts of use, slipping easily, and apparently without loss of identity, into multiple relational sets' (2006: 8) and the more specific use of the term 'a body', which may help to prevent a slippage into generic and essentialist categories. Body-centred research tends to work at the intersection of this tension to address specific qualities of individual bodies as distinguishable subjects and as interconnected beings in the world. We at times use the adjectival term 'corporeal' to refer to the physical practices and techniques of material bodies, and we also engage with the notion of 'embodiment': that is, the sense of being in a body or having a body, a conscious engagement with the materiality of sensing bodies, or the experience of practices that are physically manifested. According to Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'By emphasizing the bodily being-in-the-world of humans, embodiment creates the possibility for the body to function as the object, subject, material, and source of symbolic construction, as well as the product of cultural inscription' (2008: 89).

The ubiquity of acting and performing bodies at the centre of theatrical activities, epistemologies and cultures often makes them both the subjects of and the tools for communicating performance research. Indeed, it might be argued that without bodies there is no theatre or 'live' performance. Simon Shepherd writes that theatre is 'a practice in which societies negotiate around bodily value and bodily order. In that negotiation, theatre is not simply an art of bodies but an art of bodily possibility, an event where the limits of body are negotiated, fetishised, imagined somehow else' (2006: 20). A researcher might, for example, analyse puppet theatre's seeming absence of bodies for the 'bodily possibilities' it envisions, or by imaginatively reading the puppet body as 'somehow else' than a body. Hence, our focus on 'bodies' rather than 'flesh' or 'self' generates a broad category exceeding either biological substance or a singular sense of identity, a category open to various becomings rather than fixed notions of subjectivity. This correlates with contemporary body scholarship in other fields; sociologist Bruno Latour, for instance, defines the body as 'an interface that becomes more and more describable as it learns to be affected by more and more elements' (2004: 6). This chapter therefore explores a wide range of methods used to interrogate a complex 'body of knowledge': that is, what it might mean when bodies learn to be affected.

GROUNDING THE RESEARCH ENQUIRY: METHODS AND MEANS

These methods emerge as a result of questions about the body's location and function in performance contexts: How do I encounter a/the performing

body? How does my/a body participate in, or generate, performance? What challenges are posed by archival bodies? How do/should/might we encounter unfamiliar bodies? How are bodies understood, imagined and re-embodied through notating practices, stage directions, images and memorabilia? If bodies are placed at the centre of research processes, then research questions and methods must be inflected by corporeal concerns.

The archival body of Pina Bausch's dance-theatre work presents a rich example of the wide range of methodological possibilities available to body-centred researchers. Before her death in 2009, Bausch – dancer, choreographer and director of the German-based company Tanztheater Wuppertal – created a unique body of work that is documented in a wide variety of forms: written, photographic and as moving images; in the bodies of the dancers who performed with her company; in memories of those who witnessed her body dancing and those who have seen her company perform, as well as the subsequent documentation of these bodies and memories. Within an archival setting a researcher might examine a wide variety of this documentation, viewing it closely to understand, for example, how movement choices create a somatic through-line in performance or to develop a movement-based performance analysis. Alternatively, the researcher might analyse reviews to form a sense of how a performance choreographed by Bausch was evaluated by critics, or apply critical perspectives, such as feminism or power relations, to the use of bodies in this work. The researcher might have movement training that would allow her to form kinaesthetic understandings of Bausch's practice, or perhaps knowledge of the work of José Limón, a former teacher of Bausch, which would enable the identification of Limón's influences in her work. The researcher might analyse this performance semiotically, reading the codes of the bodies within video documentation, or through their appearance in or relation to a cultural or historical moment. Alternately, the researcher might have seen Bausch dance live, and draw upon phenomenology to reflect upon her own body's spectatorial relationship to the work in a specific context. Or the researcher might work with a Bausch-trained dancer or dance notation to reconstruct movement through her or his own body, attempting to understand how the movement functions in three-dimensional space. This fictional researcher potentially may use a wide range of research methods that differently attend to specific bodily concerns.

While we do not attempt to exhaust every possible body-centred research method in this chapter, we present a range of tools and techniques that have emerged in our research as fundamental in addressing questions raised by bodies in and as performance. These, of course, will be uniquely inflected by each researcher's particular concerns with bodily specifics. In Table 9.1 we list some the main methodological approaches used to analyse, understand or emphasise 'bodies' as subjects of study, as well as key examples of how these

Table 9.1 Some of the main methodological approaches used to analyse, understand or emphasise 'bodies' as subjects of study

Method	Means
Theorising bodies	Cultural positioning of the body; interpretation of corporeal ideas and experiences; investigating researcher's own lived experience; negotiating between bodies absent and present; modelling non-fixed subjectivities
Archival analysis of bodies	Engaging researcher's own bodily knowledge in cultural analysis of historical embodiment; reconstructing and re-enacting historical bodies and movement; identifying evidence of corporeal experience from the past in documented forms
First-person methodologies, including: practical research through bodies, ethnographic fieldwork, phenomenology of lived experience	Practice-led research techniques including performer training and performance-making that centre on bodily discipline and creativity; physical exploration of everyday activities with reflexive bodily awareness; participant observation; application of critical perspective upon lived experiences
Intercorporeal exchanges: sharing research through the body	Autoethnographic storytelling addressing absent bodies; collaboration that facilitates physical sensorial communication

methods might be undertaken, which are outlined in greater depth in the examples below.

Used singly or in combination, these methods provide strategies for negotiating tensions between bodies in theory/practice, or between observing/spectating bodies and performing/participating bodies. Body-based researchers often find themselves – like Augusto Boal's 'spect-actors' – participating dually as spectators and performing participants, drawing upon their own corporeal experiences and engagements in archival, theoretical and practical research. It is ultimately the bodies themselves that intervene in, disrupt or engage productively among these binaries, opening new research pathways.

LOCATING THE BODIES OF RESEARCH: IDENTIFYING THE CATALYST

Two specific questions frequently drive the construction of research methodologies for projects that focus on bodies and performance:

- What and whose body/bodies am I researching?
- How am I locating this/these particular body/bodies in or as a site of performance research?

For many practice-led researchers the bodies at the centre of the enquiry are their own, often in proximal relations to other bodies, media and objects. For others, the bodies researched are drawn from texts or moving images discovered within archives, observed on stages, seen in photographs or read about in the news. Body-centred performance research is certainly not limited to creative practice or traditionally aesthetic 'theatrical' or 'dancing' bodies, and different researchers arrive at their subjects of study from a variety of routes. These might include: a personal interest relating to family, childhood, culture; a perceived familiarity with, or difference from, the researcher's own body; a transformative sensory experience during a specific class taken in school, training or university; or through a wide range of reading, spectating or professional practices in which bodies are confronted. Our personal senses of embodiment, of experiencing our transforming healthy or ill bodies, of grieving the loss of a loved body, can become a stimulus for corporeally driven research. Herbert Blau, who has described theatre as 'a carnal space' of 'blood, bone, tissue, muscle, nerves' as well as the 'ocular site of blooded thought', has suggested that 'in the extremity of performance . . . actor and spectator breathe each other' (2002: 50–1). To some extent, creating the conditions in which the bodies of researchers and their subjects are able to 'breathe each other' is also always the utopian intention of body-centred performance research.

For example, the starting point for Roberta Mock's research into the work of artist Oreet Ashery was her own body, instilled with an acute sense of sexual difference through the mechanisms of her religious education as a child, which included the study of *halacha* (Jewish law). This was later reinforced when living in Israel, as Mock felt physically ill at ease in very religious Jewish neighbourhoods where she knew her self-presentation would be considered gender inappropriate. Her response to watching the video *Dancing with Men* (Ashery 2007) was therefore visceral: the video, made in 2003, documented a 'secret' performance in which Ashery, presenting herself as an orthodox Jewish man, joined thousands of dancing men in an exclusively male environment at an annual two-day celebration in the north of Israel. It was an intervention that Mock, as a Jewish woman, found extraordinarily brave and through which she gained an exhilarating sense of personal liberation as she imagined herself in Ashery's place. This produced a desire to think systematically through Ashery's artistic practice. In an essay that begins by describing how she felt about the video of Ashery's risky cross-dressed participation in the closed ritual dance, she borrows from Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimlett's discussion of the 'corporeal turn' in Jewish studies (2005). In order to erase the distinctions between body/mind and body/text, Kirshenblatt-Gimlett's affective approach focuses, as Ashery's does, on 'habitus, embodiment, experience, practice and feeling'. As Mock's early religious experience taught her,

in Judaism 'Woman' is always associated with materiality and the body while 'Man' is associated with the mind, which is exercised via the lifelong study of written texts. Mock notes that in blurring these distinctions 'neither the direction of Ashery's body of work as an artist, nor the physical patterns of bodies within it, can be described as linear. They whirl, they return, they change direction, they snake – as she does when she holds hands with men and dances in a circle' (2009: 35).

Similarly, the highly charged images of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, exposed to public attention in 2004, became a catalyst for Patrick Duggan's research:

> I was drawn to examining the images from Abu Ghraib because I had always seen them as theatrical; they seem to operate in a way that is reminiscent of the staged photographs of theatre productions because they collapse the diegetic event, the moment of staging and the representation of that moment of staging into one image. The catalyst to writing about the photographs was a hunch that it was precisely the performativity of the bodies in the images (soldiers and prisoners, willing and forced, knowing and unknowing) that contained the violence/trauma of them in both reception and initial moment of staging. This research provided an access point to not only consider the theatricality of those images but also to investigate the possibility that the performing body might be put into trauma, so to speak, precisely through the operations of theatre and performance. (Duggan 2010)

Applying Goffman's model of 'faces' and Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus', Duggan develops a framework of reference through which to argue that embodied theatrical 'failures', such as 'corpsing' and stage fright, might legitimately be modelled as specific instances of theatrical trauma (Duggan 2009).

For both Mock and Duggan, their research processes began with images of physical transgression, one violent and one non-violent, and led to understandings of how liminal bodies are able to trigger the perceived transformation of other bodies. In both cases, the performances they analysed were created in the moment of viewing, when the researcher/spectator was simultaneously sensorily engaged and able to contextually and critically frame the bodies in those images. These examples also suggest that the concerns of body-centred performance researchers are not determined by, or dependent upon, any one set of specific aesthetics or artistic codings, theatrical disciplinarities, performance techniques, skills or historical lineages.

RESEARCH METHODS: THEORISING BODIES

In *Theatre and the Body*, Colette Conroy applies a range of theories to theatrical examples in order to identify four approaches to articulating the relationships between bodies and theatre. These are: (1) considering how, through conventions of presenting and viewing, the body produces meaning on stage; (2) exploring the body as a locus of power; (3) using the relationship between mind and body as a vantage point or perspective through which to understand performance; and (4) distinguishing between 'the body' and 'bodies' to differentiate cultural values from specific referents (Conroy 2010: 8). Although she concentrates primarily on plays, textual analysis and spectatorship, her emphasis on dialogic exchange between performance practice and critical theory offers a useful model through which to analyse, illuminate or contextualise the potential relationships between bodies and performances. For instance, Conroy uses Timberlake Wertenbaker's play *Our Country's Good* as a case study, applying Michel Foucault's theories of how bodies are disciplined, Judith Butler's writing about gender as a regulatory abstraction, and Kier Elam's semiotic modelling to demonstrate how bodies might be used to explore the effects of power in the theatre (Conroy 2010: 28–33).

Theorising offers an engagement with other voices, often as an attempt to better understand the bodies that frequently haunt researchers, bodies that are no longer physically present, whether in archives, personal memory or through aging processes. An ongoing desire and objective in body-centred research is arguably to recapture and make sense of these bodies, to negotiate between absence and presence. Performance researchers have engaged with a wide range of theatrical, cultural, social, scientific, anthropological and other theoretical trajectories to address these corporeal concerns. These include: theories of bodily control and disciplinary practices (e.g. Agamben, Deleuze, Foucault, McKenzie); feminist theory (e.g. Cixous, Dolan, Grosz, Phelan); LGBT/queer theory (e.g. Butler, Halberstam, Muñoz, Sedgwick); theories of race, colonialism and ethnicity (e.g. Bhabha, Fanon, Moten, Spivak); theorisations of the body's relationship to media and technology (e.g. Auslander, Broadhurst, Causey, Kozel); cognitive and neuroscientific theories (e.g. Blair, Lakoff, Wilson, Damasio); and notions of 'dis-abled' bodies (e.g. Cooper Albright, Kuppers, Masefield, Sandahl). Early twenty-first-century researchers return to these and other philosophers and theorists to enter into dialogues about their subjects of enquiry, to underpin their findings and to provide frameworks for their research. Art historian Amelia Jones identifies the fluid processes of reciprocation as dialogue:

> I stress the notion of engagement and exchange: I engage with what I experience as these works in relation to contemporaneous theories

> of subjectivity and aesthetics; I consider my readings to be a dialogue with the bodies/selves articulated in these important practices . . . My readings themselves are offered as 'performances', as suggestive, open-ended engagements rather than definitive answers to the questions of what and how body art means in contemporary culture. (1998: 10)

Like Jones, many performance researchers consider the formal articulation of these dialogues – the exchanges between bodies and theories – a form of performance. Whether they are active performance practitioners or not, most are invested in critical writing as a form of practice within academic and qualifying discourses and this is evidenced by an exponential increase over the past decade in published writing about bodies in performance.

How are bodies produced and encountered between theory and practice? How do body-based researchers use lived experiences, memories and knowledges to inform writing that works in productive gaps, tests the limits of comprehension or provides moments of interpretation which respect the specific bodies of their research? In responding to these questions, body-centred research methods frequently attempt to intervene and disrupt 'traditional' binary distinctions, addressing Diana Taylor's cautions about the perceived authority of the traditional 'archive' and its oppositional positioning in relation to 'the repertoire' (the enactment of embodied memory such as performances, gestures, dance). Body-centred researchers have frequently positioned themselves between these difficult binaries, recognising that, as Taylor argues, the notions of the archive and the repertoire have exceeded the limitations of each other and 'exist in a constant state of interaction' (2003: 21).

Researchers of bodies, embodiment and corporeality increasingly have focused on fluid, non-fixed subjectivities. Their projects include non-human bodies, challenge hegemonic ideas of embodiment, directly address issues of health and mortality, bio- and neuro-science and the mediatization of corporeal materiality and refract them back into performance practices. Whether experimenting in rehearsal studios with motion capture technologies and bodily endurance, or in laboratories cultivating cellular tissue and matching patterns of bodily activity that translate into performance, body-based researchers often 'report' on these topics by investing their own lived experience, their memories and their muscular energies as wholly integral to their research methods. The coupling of that physical commitment with notions of unstable subjectivity seems to have opened up a fascinating inversion of embodiment in body-based theatre and performance research. This holds many implications for the 'nature' of that research and its methods, which we variously explore in the rest of this chapter.

EXAMPLE: THE DISEMBODIED/ABSENT BODY

An increasing awareness of questions of 'disembodiment' – in the form of absent, projected, ghosted, non-human, abject and/or mediatised bodies – presents fresh challenges for twenty-first-century performance researchers. A shift toward disembodied presence on contemporary Euro-American stages has generated increasing theoretical and methodological attention, which might be seen as a return to nineteenth-century notions of ghosts and ghosting, as evidenced in examples that range from Marvin Carlson's *The Haunted Stage* (2001) or Alice Rayner's *Ghosts* (2006) in critical theory to the Wooster Group's recycling of Richard Burton's 1964 film of *Hamlet* as a theatrical performance (2007). This shift recognises the relevance of bodies historically erased or unacknowledged on stage, and questions notions of what it means to be 'human' in an increasingly mediatised world. The growing prevalence of multimedia performance encourages theatrical explorations into disembodiment, doubling and displaced bodies, and web-based collaborations across distances.

While it is important to maintain flexibility in the application of working research methods, it is especially the case when attempting to interrogate specifically absent or disembodied bodies, since it is often difficult to identify/interpret what is not there. What might begin as a clear engagement with a theoretical discourse around a specific body, for example, may unexpectedly shift to embrace other modes as the project develops. For example, Jen Parker-Starbuck's initial analysis of the 'abject' body of Terri Schiavo – a young woman from the United States who was at the centre of a legal battle to decide whether to remove her feeding tube and let her die – shifted mid-way through its development: from an application of philosopher Alain Badiou's notion of ethics upon this particular body, it began to include non-human animal bodies. The research was begun through 'traditional' methods searching for an intersection of relevant ideas: archival research into Schiavo's life (including Internet research, autobiographies, news reports); medical research to understand Schiavo's 'persistent vegetative state'; interpreting and analysing Badiou's notion of 'the event'. But it was disrupted by the appearance of another set of 'subjects':

> Although this seemed like straightforward research about Schiavo's condition and her husband and family's decision to remove her life-support – at every turn, I began to encounter pigs in art practices. An art exhibit in Italy featured a life-sized pig on a butcher's block, made from chewed-up and molded sugar-free chewing gum, another – a larger than life-sized animatronic, breathing pig – found me in a London gallery, a performance was brought to my attention that

> contained a dead pig, I read a novel about a boy with a pig-heart. It became clear that I couldn't ignore them and that they were somehow related to this project. (Parker-Starbuck 2009)

As the project evolved, the research method that became most valuable was listening to the bodies of one's subjects. The juxtaposition of the 'wasted' pig bodies with Schiavo's began to present difficult corporeal linkages and questions of ethical relationships to bodies deemed less 'embodied' than others; the 'disembodied' subjects here were either inanimate, represented or being spoken for by others. By taking the time to allow the research to be inflected by and about its various subjects (which also later included the voices of valuable readers), the project began to take on an embodied 'life of its own'.

The final form of this essay (Parker-Starbuck 2008) took into account the encounters with pig bodies in the research process as moments that might make these various bodies/subjects visible:

> I resisted my own urges for argument and closure as I wrote. I felt that, like performance, it was important to offer spaces, gaps, and especially, the time to allow the readers to hear and to activate their own lived memories triggered by these subjects. This part of the process became a specifically chosen working method. (Parker-Starbuck 2009)

In this example, the long-term development of the writing – through an emergence of the critical framework, an interpretation of the interdisciplinary practices and an attuned 'listening' to the bodies that prompted a shift in corporeal attention – attempted to solve the problem of writing about bodies that had slipped towards absence, and in turn transformed the research for the researcher. The documentation of bodies and their stories in contemporary critical contexts frequently relies on the researcher's own embodied engagement with material matters, whether by association or, as in the examples that follow, through archival, ethnographic and practical positioning.

RESEARCH METHODS: ARCHIVAL ANALYSIS AND BODIES OF DOCUMENTATION

A parallel problem to that of the 'disembodied' subject arises for the researcher working with archival or historical bodies. These are the bodies that are perhaps most 'fixed' through their historical placement, although their material evasiveness may present difficulties for researchers whose analyses rely on the accounts of others, many of whom might not have been theatre researchers or who would have had their own culturally specific agenda. Currently,

research is made somewhat easier through recorded audio-visual documentation that allows researchers to see and hear the bodies being researched, although it is important to recognise that this distanced perspective may be misleading: the camera, for example, directs the spectator's viewing and the flatness of image produces different bodily responses than the physically present performer. The methods of historical body-based research need to be used imaginatively, and they may often engage the researcher's own bodily knowledge. Methods including close 'readings' and analysis of performance documentation, the choice of critical perspectives through which to locate historical bodies, or the reconstruction or re-enactment from notation of bodily movement are frequently inflected through the researcher's own body or bodily experiences.

Example: addressing historical bodies

Colin Counsell's ongoing research project, an analytical history of performance and the moving body, is indicative of current strategies which work with bodies that are definitively absent and evasive. His close readings and analyses of the writings of body-centred practitioner Jerzy Grotowski, for example, are only the starting points for further research. As he explains: 'I seek to address not a practitioner's own accounts of what they are doing (we settle for that way too often in our discipline) but the forms of movement their work or practices actually generate: I am less interested in what Grotowski says than what he does on a stage, as that is the more widely disseminated cultural object' (Counsell 2007). Counsell's research follows a methodological trajectory that aims to understand not only the significance of modernist bodies from a historical perspective, but the operation of bodily movement itself as signification:

> I will ideally trace an explanatory chain leading from 1) a practitioner's ideas/theories, to 2) the practices by which they presume to realize those ideas/theories, then to 3) the actual movement forms resulting from those practices, 4) the kinds of meanings generated by those forms, and finally 5) the socio-historical context from which those forms/meanings arose and in which they were deployed. Sometimes this isn't possible – sometimes a practitioner doesn't have a theory – but my aim always is to get to the movement itself, how it functions semically. (Counsell 2007)

This archival excavation allows him to address how specific bodies might be understood and negotiated through movement in their own historical moment.

Counsell's research methods by necessity vary according to the source

materials available to him. His writings on Rudolph Laban (Counsell 2005, 2006) lead him to explain why he occasionally needs to move into participant observation and practical experimentation:

> If there is a good deal of usable documentation of someone's work – i.e. video – I will start with that. However, with someone like Rudolf Laban there is almost nothing of his stage practice recorded, only his theory and training techniques. In that case, I will 1) observe classes teaching Laban technique, noting in detail the outcome of training exercises, and 2) practice it myself and note or record the results. (Counsell 2007)

Counsell's methods here involve his own and other bodies in re-embodying and resituating specific performance techniques within a wider cultural analysis in order to demonstrate how and why bodies construct, and are constructed through, a specific genre of performance and its training regimes. When observing technique, the question of 'generational' bodily transmission is raised: for instance, whether the person teaching the class has a direct linear connection to Laban (such as Susan Klein, who studied with Irmgard Bartenieff, who studied with Laban) or has understood Laban through more general practice. Counsell, like Parker-Starbuck, expresses the need to attend, listen to and variously re-animate his historical subjects' bodies and this shapes the direction of his research.

Regardless of whether he is observing and documenting his own practice or that of others, live or via a recorded medium, his methods involve an attempt to see anew or make strange:

> The most significant conclusions are almost invariably those one first overlooks, largely because as observers we are culturally predisposed to see some aspects as given, obvious or merely practical. In reality, the opposite is usually true. The features of movement/the body that seem less important are typically those that have been culturally construed as such, rendered 'normal' in the onlooker's gaze. Establishing their significance thus entails unearthing what culture, history and ideology have elided. (Counsell 2007)

When body-centred researchers like Counsell undertake archival research, the historiographic research methods used in other areas of theatre and performance are inflected by corporeal concerns: how bodies, that are both absent and present, move and relate to each other; what powers the body's movement might have; what the cultural significance of individual bodies might imply. These and more are re-imagined in order to activate a kinaesthetic sense of, and response to, what is encountered in the archive.

FIRST-PERSON RESEARCH METHODS

1: Applied theory: research through bodies

The rise of practice-as-research in performance in recent decades has meant that many researchers are increasingly deploying their own bodies in their research methods. While some researchers have contested the ways that binaries have been formulated and employed by Diana Taylor, the shift she has proposed 'from written to embodied culture, from the discursive to the performatic' (Taylor 2003: 16) has been addressed by body-centred researchers in the UK and elsewhere who have developed new methods to make visible and interrogate the performed limits of embodiment. The researcher's body becomes a conduit through which ideas are discovered and presented, and research is conducted about *and* through bodies. Like practitioner-scholar Phillip Zarrilli (although in very different ways), the researchers that feature in this section turn to creative practice as a means to develop an 'applied theory' of bodies and ways of going beyond the so-called 'Cartesian' mind/body duality. Zarrilli's intercultural approach draws on his experience in *kalarippayattu*, *hatha yoga* and *taiqiquan* training as well as Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological thinking which, he maintains, 'eloquently (re)claimed the centrality of the body' (2002: 13). Zarrilli's research practice in embodiment starts with the breath because 'it offers a psychophysical pathway to the practical attunement of the body and mind' (2009: 25).

The intertwinement of mind and body is of particular interest to body-centred practice-as-researchers, many of whom explicitly negotiate the theoretical implications of semiotics and phenomenology through their practice. While semiotics focuses on processes of signification and communication, phenomenology includes the theorisation of perception or embodied experience. Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis note that the two approaches are necessarily interconnected: the experience of 'the body that performs and the body that watches' provides 'the conditions for signification; in trying to write about what is ungraspable phenomenology needs signification' (2004: 239). While practice-as-research may be understood as a methodology in its own right, we include creative practice here alongside other methods that researchers might use to examine body-centred practices. How, for example, do theoretical notions emerge through corporeal practices? How do researchers develop research methods through their own bodies? What modes of understanding do physical practices offer that differ from discursive research methodologies? The methods used by body-centred practice-led researchers vary widely, from accessible everyday activities such as standing and walking, through demanding physical training regimes, to interdisciplinary projects involving subjects such as anthropology, auto/biography, psychology and science.

Example: dancing

Simon Ellis's practice-as-research project, *Four Acts of Violence Leading Up to Now*, explored the accumulated physical and theoretical 'microtraumatic' impacts of time (that is, small, seemingly insignificant injuries) on the dancing body of performer and collaborator Paea Leach (Ellis 2008b). It was an intermedial research enquiry that combined the Internet, video and live performance modes and materials. Ellis explains that in his practice, theory is not merely a discursive exploration:

> The work Paea and I were doing 'on the floor' involved 'theorizing the body' – in questioning its capacity for representing ideas, its capacity for generating ideas, and the impact of the long history of dance improvisation on the corporeal ideas present in Paea's moving. Perhaps I relate the term 'theory' with the question, 'What if?' – What if we did this? What are the implications for this? . . . [I]t is perhaps analogous to a biochemist, working within the domain of heat related exhaustion asking, 'what if we place the "subject" into a dry suit and then instigate a series of extreme temperature changes whilst he/she is working on a treadmill?' This question has not come out of nowhere; it has a history in practice/theory, and is asked as a result of the experience and understanding of the researcher. (Ellis 2008a)

Ellis's reference to the biochemist highlights how corporeal research methods might correspond in some ways with scientific procedures. Theory provides a questioning that propels the movement of Ellis's body and that of his collaborator. It is significant to him that those bodies are trained and professionally experienced.

> The body is not abstract in this case. I see Paea sweating, falling, failing, finding. We ask questions of meaning in relation to the performing body, and seek possibilities then and there. This PRESENCE is undeniable and invaluable. (Ellis 2008a)

Bodies function as networks exceeding the empirical measurement of data (such as how much sweat? how often does it fall?) by posing 'questions of meaning' while they are materially present. Ellis's research, exploring possibilities for corporeal understanding and nuance, is located at the limits of what can be articulated *about* the phenomenological body: that is, the body that understands and expresses itself experientially through presence. As Kozel argues (against the traditions of dance as a 'silent profession'): 'at stake here is the myth of objectivity. *No one is uninvolved*. All those who experience

a piece – performers, audience members, stage managers, journalists – do so from their own culturally situated positions, their own preferences, histories, bodies, and connections with the art world' (Kozel 2008: 134, emphasis in original).

2: Ethnographic fieldwork and knowledges in the body

Theatre and performance researchers engaged in ethnographic fieldwork in its various forms frequently rely upon methods such as participant observation, thick description, cultural interpretation and analysis. Of particular interest to body-centred researchers is what sociologists call 'performance ethnography', an embodied methodology that has been described by Joni L. Jones as 'most simply, how culture is done in the body'. This is a research practice that aims to 'explore bodily knowing . . . and to puzzle through the ethical and political dilemmas of fieldwork and representation' (Jones 2002: 7). In contrast to the ethnography of performance, which discursively investigates cultural performances, performance ethnography employs enactment and embodiment to perform research about cultural values. Grounded in the belief that we learn through participating and performing, performance ethnography can take many forms, from the creation of participatory cultural performances and rituals, through the staging of 'traditional' theatre pieces, to the making of interactive installations. According to Norman K. Denzin, the 'knowing' facilitated by performance ethnography 'refers to those embodied sensuous experiences that create the conditions for understanding . . . [P]erformed experiences are the sites where felt emotion, memory, desire, and understanding come together' (2003: 13).

Performance ethnography, participant observation and creative practice are all examples of 'first-person' research techniques which Varela and Shear (writing about the study of consciousness) describe as 'the lived *experience* associated with cognitive and mental events' (1999: 1, emphasis in original). 'First-person' methods aim to encourage subjective accounts through the experience, perception and observation of the self that are useful in accessing and constructing knowledges in the body. However, as they caution, first-person description is usually considered most effective (and valuable) when it is open to inter-subjective validation and when it is able to link with 'third-person', empirically based research methods that feature the observations of others (Varela and Shear 1999: 2). While quantitative empirical research (for instance, the comparison of statistical data or use of standardised controls) remains extremely rare in body-based performance research, combined research methods frequently are used by theatre, dance and performance researchers to more thoroughly interrogate bodily perception and experience. In describing the impulse for her own research writing, for example, dance

philosopher and somatic movement practitioner Sondra Fraleigh writes: 'I wanted to weave the intuitive voice of the dancer into a descriptive aesthetics, slipping from first-person voice to analytical third-person theory' (2000: 54).

Example: walking

While Phil Smith describes his methodological practice as 'mythogeographic', it has much in common with the practice of performance ethnography. Working with Simon Persighetti (who, like Smith, is a founding member of the Exeter-based collective Wrights and Sites), he has been engaged in a long-term project entitled *Relics and Processions*, centred on physical engagement in a specific street in South West England. In 2007 Smith explained that 'we are repeatedly walking this one [urban] street as performative explorers. We are both pedestrians and also performers – we are corporeally present in a democratic sharing with the other pedestrians, but we are also present as provocateurs' (Smith 2007). According to Smith, mythogeographical walking is

> about a meshing of geographical spaces, and their ghostly bathing in cultural motion pictures, about the geometrical connectivity of a fragmented self, the integrity of which is constantly modulated by neurological research, critical theory, and speculations about consciousness and transmission, and about direct experience of the unplanned route. (Smith 2010a: 120)

Borrowing from geographer Tim Edensor (2007: 242), Smith describes the mythogeographic body as 'coerced and stimulated to perform in unfamiliar ways'. In *Mythogeography: A Guide to Walking Sideways* he suggests how this might be done, including: walking the route to your own burial or incineration; repeating a simple physical pattern such as stubbing your toe; entering your city as if it were a movie; opening a book at random in a library or charity shop, choosing a word in it and then drifting through the nearby streets until you find the word or some association with it (Smith 2010b).

In the *Relics and Processions* project Smith and Persighetti employ specific physical methods designed to 'provoke' the site:

> Extreme slowness and close attention to texture and detail, sensual contact with the site (testing the smoothed and greasy mark beneath the 11th century date on a plaque . . .), carrying objects that draw pedestrians to us to 'tell' the street in their own way . . . reciting texts in the street . . . We record accidents . . . our own interactions with motorists and with other pedestrians. We are collecting texts about or cutting across the narratives of the street and sketchily re-enacting

> them (giving corporeal reference to the site and to certain actions, but without representational character) . . . During the research we remain open to responding to on-street, spontaneous enquiries and carry materials that explain our work to those who enquire. (Smith 2007)

While some of these research methods result in texts about issues of theatricality, dramaturgy, artefacts and processional practices (Smith 2009a, 2009b), the embodied knowledges gained are disseminated experientially through presentations to and interactions with other people on the street. Hence Smith and Persighetti are 'working to create a walk/procession that will "initiate" its "audience" into the methods of exploration and intervention and into the narratives and patterns that have been found.'

Through these research methods they become ethnographers who 'other' their own culture. As a methodology that privileges embodied knowledge, performance ethnography uses the situated body to generate new understandings and research trajectories. Smith and Persighetti's ethnographic methods investigate the interrelationship between bodies – their own and those in the community – and sites through their processions and pedestrian performances by presenting their fieldwork performatively through everyday encounters on a specific street that reframe quotidian events. Their project embraces ethnographic investigation and performance practice-as-research in a multi-moded approach that always depends on aesthetic and technical expertise as well as critical contextual reflexivity.

3: The phenomenology of lived experience

Writing about research based on creative practice and lived experience often requires a researcher's ingenuity in weaving together the ideas, methods and practices to produce 'outcomes' in academic contexts, as Susan Kozel expresses:

> Writing from lived experience often amounts to writing without a clear methodological mandate, or demands the courage to assert that the methods are fluid and subjective. Paradigms are scraped together (defiantly, guilefully, playfully, intuitively) from philosophy, literature, the social sciences, physics. This bricolage or hybridization is done in part to find a voice in the academy, but more important, to help the writer herself understand what it is that she is experiencing and to communicate these experiences. (Kozel 2008: 9)

Kozel's book *Closer* is an example from interdisciplinary practice-led research that methodologically incorporates physical performance and digital

technology, suggesting ways in which one might 'do' a 'phenomenology of lived experience' (2008: 52). Through her close reading and interpretation of writings largely by Merleau-Ponty, Kozel lays out specific methods and outlines useful procedural steps derived from her own practice, such as:

- Take your attention into this very moment.
- Suspend the main flow of thought.
- Call your attention to your body and what it is experiencing . . .
- Witness what you see, hear and touch . . .
- Take a break . . .
- Describe what you experienced . . .

(Kozel 2008: 53)

Like the three examples included in this section, Kozel offers a modelling for a 'first-person' enquiry that includes the close 'reading' of experience, a focused attention to the researcher's own perceptions, bodily experimentation and theoretical interrogation. The examples weave together archival documentation, theory and performance practices in very different ways, but what is key to their methods is an insistence on attending to the specific bodies through which research is produced.

Example: sitting

In *Sitting Practice: Expansion Earth* (2009a), Jane Bacon presents a methodology for embodiment that aims to eradicate binary distinctions between mind and body, signification and perception, archival and enacted transmission. Hence she draws on a range of psychologists and philosophers (such as Jung, Nietzsche, Husserl and William James) to wittily transform the act of sitting into a performative research method:

> I have been 'sitting' for some time now, 'consciously' since 2005, sitting as an embodied performative action in order to hold the 'tension of the opposites'. As an Authentic Movement practitioner, I sit. As a Jungian analyst, I sit. As a film and performance maker, I sit. As a writer/academic, I sit. And now, somehow it seems clear to me that as a dancer, I sit . . . In this field where the (my) mindbody can penetrate into the mindbody of others I have developed my 'sitting practice' as a methodology that generates a body of artistic work and an artistic body of work – *poems, video, photographs, movement*.

The conference paper through which we encountered this research wove spoken text with poetic video imagery. One video entitled *Woman and the Sea*, about ten minutes in length, featured a horizontal split screen although both

images were unified through the use of a deep blue colour filter (Bacon 2009b). The top image was of Bacon sitting on the floor in a studio space, her arms moving fluidly, casting hypnotic shadows across a projection screen behind her body. The bottom image was a littoral landscape with foamy waves crashing into a rocky Irish beach, echoing the patterns of Bacon's light-coloured dress as it responds to her Authentic Movement practice. Presenting the paper, Bacon told us that:

> I am a witness to my own creative process, others' and the world which I inhabit. So are you. In this role of witness I try to re-imagine my habits of perception and give undivided attention to what comes towards me without moving to impose sense or meaning . . . I surrender to complexity.

Here, a phenomenological practice-as-research methodology merges entirely with a creative methodological approach designed to generate artistic objects, images and symbols.

As she sits, Bacon 'pays attention' to 'fringe sensation' and her 'felt sense' of landscape and of the experience of moving. In this state, she tries to allow her bodymind to move 'into speech through poetics' that 'arise in the depth of the body'. This is a process of translation that seeks to 'allow a movement, a word or an image to emerge that embraces bodily and felt experience' (Bacon 2009a). As in Phillip Zarrilli's research, 'mind' and 'body' do not operate as binary opposites. Bacon's methods, pursued through an intercorporeal exchange that includes both psyche and soma, are grounded in the body and her 'findings' are disseminated through the body. She draws our attention to the fact that this is no simple matter:

> Often there is still the danger of falling into bodily cliché as choreographer, movement therapist or performance researcher. Or perhaps the danger is in writing or speaking the 'body' rather than the 'experience'. In language the body quickly becomes gesture, a metaphor, a personification of personhood.

Bacon's research, like that of many who focus on the body and performance, exists in the lacuna between written and creative practice, as well as embracing both. In all of the examples of embodied research methods presented in this section – dancing, walking, sitting and breathing – the body of the research transmits experiences of presence and the present differently from that of the spectatorial or spectated body.

RESEARCH METHODS: INTERCORPOREAL EXCHANGES

1: Storytelling: spectacles of death

When Herbert Blau notes that 'the entire institutional superstructure of the theatre hangs upon a breath, as the deepest sensation of performance seems to occur when an entire audience, for the moment, is not breathing at all' (2002: 50), he draws attention to what so often haunts ontological considerations of theatre and performance; that is, the ultimate material body: a/the corpse. Many of the researchers discussed in this chapter have used the dead or dying body as a metaphor: Patrick Duggan, for instance, has analysed the trauma of 'corpsing', that is laughing involuntarily and inappropriately on stage (2009); in an article on contemporary walking practices, Phil Smith begins with a discussion of the 'lifeless body' of 'the situationist project' in the early 1970s (2010a: 103). Philosopher and playwright Hélène Cixous has described theatre as 'by definition the stage where the living meet and confront the dead, the forgotten and the forgetters, the buried and the ghosts, the present, the passing, the present past and the passed past' (2004: 28–9). Many body-centred performance researchers develop methodologies that address the temporal and spatial confluences to which Cixous and many others allude by considering their own body's proximity to death.

Using a personal story to draw attention to the relationship between a specific occurrence and its context, Lib Taylor's 'The Hanging Man: Death, Indeterminacy and the Event' presents research that addresses both the presence and absence of a particular remembered body.

> While driving out Interstate 10 from Los Angeles to Palm Desert, my partner and I came across a traffic jam . . . The cause of the disruption was a body hanging by the neck on a rope from a bridge some 25 or 30 feet above the freeway . . . The feet of the corpse dangled at shoulder height of the policeman directing traffic past the obstacle. (Taylor 2010: 4)

This incident initiated a research project that investigated the cultural and historical moments of what Taylor called a 'spectacle of death'. The fleeting image became a catalyst for questions about that specific body and its relation to her own: 'How are the spectator's identifications with the body affected by whether it was a real or simulated body? How do reactions, bodily and intellectual, to witnessing the event relate to the interpretative frames that defined whose and what kind of body it was?' (Taylor 2007).

Taylor teases out these queries' implications to discover productive instabilities both in her topic and methodology, drawing on theories of trauma, presence and spectacle. Juxtaposing the hanging man memory with mediated

images of death – such as the 'falling man' of 9/11, the self-immolation of Buddhist monk Thích Qua'ng Đú'c in 1963, and of the Irish hunger-striker Bobby Sands (died 1981) – Taylor analyses the (in)visibility of these acts for public audiences by locating her own spectating body as witness alongside other roadside witnesses, to present a reflective account of her body's physicality in the moment:

> We moved slowly past the body, but not only would it have been indecorous to stare, but my initial physical reflex was to turn away. Like the spectator of almost any horrific or frightening image, desires both to look and look away – to have seen but not to be in the moment of observation – were overwhelming. (Taylor 2010: 9–10)

Taylor's research is indicative of much body-centred performance research in its grappling to meaningfully encounter an always-already absent body through the researcher's own. Her broadly autoethnographic approach includes 'acts of embodiment, witnessing, storying, introspection and self-conscious writing' (Jones 2005: 764), blending personal authorial narratives with socio-cultural exploration to draw attention to the relationships between collective experience and social agency. According to Stacy Holman Jones, autoethnographic 'performance texts' respond to three coinciding crises, those of 'representation, legitimation, and praxis', in a landscape in which stability and coherence are routinely questioned (2005: 766). Using storytelling as a mode of address to engage both her own and her audience's memories and sensations, Taylor demonstrates how a body in such a landscape is able to produce a space of performance. She translates the 'theatrical' to the everyday, exemplifying Blau's phenomenological observation that 'The actor out there, literally dying in front of your eyes, reveals the space that is never seen' (2002: 51).

2: Sharing research through the body

We were among twenty-five performance researchers who sat scattered throughout a cinema-theatre, trying to leave spaces between us to balance out a space that felt too large. Simon Ellis stood in front of us to begin his conference presentation, and suddenly, thoughtfully, began to dance. In the narrow gap between the projection screen and the first row of seats his body lifted and breathed, a leg pushed back, his head dipped. Ellis caught our attention, bodily. This dance was both a method of his research and its dissemination, articulated and shared through the body. As Gail Weiss notes:

> Acknowledging and addressing the multiple corporeal exchanges that continually take place in our everyday lives, demands a corresponding

> recognition of the ongoing construction and reconstruction of our bodies and body images. These processes of construction and reconstruction in turn alter the very nature of these intercorporeal exchanges, and, in so doing, offer the possibility of expanding our social, political, and ethical horizons. (Weiss 1999: 5–6)

In retransmitting any form of research practice, shared experience can become a method for deeper interrogation, for an exchange of ideas or expression. As Diana Taylor explains, 'The telling is as important as the writing, the doing as central as the recording, the memory passed down through bodies and mnemonic practices' (Taylor 2003: 35–6). In both public performance and conference presentation, intercorporeal exchange provides a process in which the 'written' archive can come into play with the repertoire. Being in the same space at the same time allows the work to be developed through the telling, through bodily interpretations and reception.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this chapter, we have attempted to emphasise the intercorporeality of research processes. These sharings, collaborations and exchanges take place between spectatorial researcher and performer, between performer-researcher and audiences, between researchers who write and the theorists that they read, and among researchers of different disciplines, all of which may be crucial to research methods that enrich understandings of the interrelationships that exist between networked bodies and performance. One final example illustrates an encounter between researchers that might be considered an intercorporeal research method. Select participants of the 2009 Body and Performance Working Group at the TaPRA conference were invited to engage in a series of exchanges. They were encouraged to circulate their work – which could be a paper, weblink, video – in advance and then present it through the perceived shared themes of their research. Alissa Clarke and Paul Hurley, who were paired under the theme of 'Loving/Giving Exchanges', affected us strongly as audience members with their generous interplay (although, having set up the scenario ourselves as working group convenors, we may have equally been affected by what we perceived to be the success of the exercise). Abandoning their original papers they performed a new, jointly written dialogic presentation. Meeting in person for the first time, they presented – through excerpts from their preparatory e-mail messages and discussions – a joint essay about their shifting understandings of exchange, collaborative research and each other. Exploring how the symbolic gesture of the e-mail sign off from 'thanks', to 'all the best', to 'best', to 'warmly', to 'x' evokes and

increases a sense of the physical and familiar, they stood side by side exuding a deep sense of shared intimacy. Although research methods are often thought of as what a researcher does by herself, body-centred theatre and performance researchers rarely work alone for long. Whether encountering other bodies electronically or in a room face to face, they are situated always in a productive range of disciplinary communities and transdisciplinary networks.

Ultimately, the methods we have identified as crucial for body-centred researchers are each inflected uniquely by attending to specific bodies: which bodies, where located, how documented, how moving and engaging with others, where influencing and influenced by spaces and places, how made memorable. These processes always somehow include the researcher's own body, connected to other bodies in the world. The subjects of research, research methods and forms of dissemination that findings take are often intertwined and inflect each other. As a result, body-based research methods in theatre and performance have evolved to incorporate – quite literally – a greater breadth of bodily presences. The performance research methods discussed in this chapter are wholly dependent upon bodies, bodies that are largely physical and material, but sometimes mechanised, animal, absent, remembered, augmented, projected, dead, dying, our own, another. Rather than discovering, observing and explaining, the fundamental methods of body-centred research are locating, sensing and listening to the bodies around us, to our subjects, to each other and to ourselves.

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Joanne 'Bob' Whalley and **Lee Miller** are the Fictional Dogshelf Theatre Company (http://www.dogshelf.com) and have been working together since 1999. Their work displays an affinity and sensitivity towards place and site, and their performed interventions ask delicate questions of their (often accidental) audiences about narrative, everydayness and why certain actions seem to belong to certain places. For example, as part of a collaborative performance project *Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain* (2002), they were remarried between junctions 16 and 17 of the M6 motorway in Sandbach, UK. More recently, both Whalley and Miller were taught contemporary dance via text message.

Libby Worth, Senior Lecturer in Theatre Practice at Royal Holloway, University of London, trained in dance with Anna Halprin and has completed the Feldenkrais Professional Training Programme. Both these approaches to movement are important within her site-responsive and dance-based practice,

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