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THEATRE PEDAGOGY AND PERFORMED RESEARCH: RESPECTFUL FORGERIES AND FAITHFUL BETRAYALS

Proponents of theatre-based research presentations—called, variously, performed ethnography, ethnodrama, arts-based research—often argue that knowledge is both presented and disseminated more powerfully and effectively than is the case with the conventional research report, scholarly article, or book. This article looks at some of the ways in which this kind of performance works on us aesthetically and pedagogically. And ethically, the author suggests that performances of qualitative research might be productively understood as *respectful forgeries and faithful betrayals*. While theatre might hold exciting possibilities for critical teacher development, the author also raises some important questions about the implications of this kind of work for the preparation of (drama) teachers.

Les adeptes de la recherche théâtrale—appelée aussi performance ethnographique, ethnodrama ou recherche artistique—soutiennent souvent que la connaissance se présente et se propage de façon plus efficace dans un contexte de recherche conventionnelle de publication savante d'articles ou de livres. Cet article étudie diverses avenues dans lesquelles cette forme de travail théâtral a des effets sur nous d'un point esthétique et pédagogique. D'un point de vue éthique, l'auteure suggère que les présentations théâtrales dans un contexte de recherche qualitative, devraient être comprises comme une contrefaçon respectueuse ou une traîtrise fidèle. Tandis que le théâtre devrait favoriser le développement critique chez l'enseignant, l'auteure soulève aussi quelques questions importantes au sujet des implications et du travail de formation des futurs enseignants d'art dramatique.

Scholars in the fields of education, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies have, in recent years, turned to theatre as an arts-based mode of representation and dissemination of research. Theatre, broadly defined, has been exploited to express a range of ethnographic, auto/biographic, and case-study research findings. Proponents of theatre-based research presentations—called, vari-

ously, performed ethnography, ethnodrama, arts-based research—might argue that knowledge is both presented and disseminated more powerfully and effectively than is the case with the conventional research report, scholarly article, or book. This mode of research representation is also increasingly used for its particular pedagogical strengths in teacher education (Gallagher; Goldstein; Conrad; Saldaña; Norris; Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer; Mienczakowski) both by researchers/teachers who have formal theatre expertise and by those who do not. These researchers are "committed to harnessing drama to cultural engagement, social intervention and educational change" (Nicholson 119). Given this proliferation of interest in theatrebased research, it is timely, then, for those of us in the field of drama education to pose some of the more difficult ethical and artistic questions that have arisen, particularly as they might influence how we use performed research as a teaching "tool" in the building of future school drama teachers.

I have become particularly interested, as a drama practitioner and social scientist, in understanding the role of artistic provocation in engendering dialogue. In a set of ethnographic scenes titled Sexual Fundamentalism and Performances of Masculinity: An Ethnographic Scene Study that I have written and performed from my recently completed research project¹, I came to wonder why I had chosen to express some of the most important qualitative findings from this project through the vehicle of theatre. I would suggest that to expressly create ethnographic scenes from classroom-based research, to use theatre as metaphor in order to make explicit the performances of identity in these charged environments, is to put the "once removed" frame around these "data" but also to keep alive the immediacy of the discourse and the tensions and theatrical turns of everyday life. This attempt to use theatre rather than present these research stories in more traditional qualitative narrative or reportage form—is to draw from theatre's potency, its economy of expression, and its embodied character in order to serve the creativity, the performativity, and the reflective engagement that is at the centre of critical ethnographic research.

Madeleine Grumet encapsulates well the tension many qualitative researchers feel, particularly those who see their work more allied with art than science:

> For some time many of us have been arguing that qualitative inquiry is an art rather than a science. Having made that assertion, we quickly crawl into it for comfort. No longer

radically disassociated from the object of our inquiry and subjugated to the epistemological loneliness that plagues the scientist, we bring together that which science has separated and declare our connectedness, our continuity with our world. The problem of validity—ascertaining a concept's adequacy to the phenomenon to which it corresponds—is relegated, we think, to the skepticism of the Cartesians who must struggle to assert connections they have denied.

The artist, on the other hand, admits the relation to the object that the scientist represses. That is the message of Henry James's artist in "The Real Thing" (1893/1979). After struggling in vain to illustrate a text on the aristocracy by working with authentic models, the artist finally has his servants pose, and it is their perception of class difference that strikes the gestures he draws. His canvas depicts a relationship to the phenomenon rather than a display of the thing itself. (101)

As qualitative inquiry expands its horizons and social scientists work in increasingly interdisciplinary ways, the tools of communication for these studies, too, must evolve. To be sure, not all research would benefit from a "theatrical" rendering, but as new methods of qualitative inquiry and post-positivist epistemologies gain momentum, the tidy, linear research reports of more positivist paradigms may not satisfactorily express the postmodern theoretical complexities and creative research methods of current educational research. Somewhat like James's work above, the performance of research offers an interesting way to depict a relationship to or reflection on the phenomenon rather than a display or "reproduction" of the thing itself.

Performance and Performativity in Culture and Research

The word "performance" is used to indicate a wide range of cultural events, such as drama, theatre, ritual, popular entertainment, and ceremonies, while its theoretical partner "performativity" is used to theorize the social construction of identity. Social theorists like Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, for example, have used the performative to theorize the complex and iterative construction of identity. In formal education, the concept of performance and related terms such as performance management, performance indicators, performance tasks, and performance-related pay are commonly used to "measure" academic achievement, professional competence, and standards of work achievement. This use of performance is also prevalent in the business and

commercial world, again as a tool for assessing standards or, as Besley and Peters describe it, as "the new convention defining the measurement of what is right, true and good" (Besley and Peters, "Performative" 6). McKenzie defines performance as a "formation of power and knowledge" ("Performance" 5) and asks whether we have entered an age of global performance, noting that the term "performance" has emerged as a crucial term in at least three different areas of social life: economics, technology, and art:

Far from existing in disconnected spheres, these paradigms increasingly overlap and intersect: just as theatre takes place in institutional contexts, constrained and enriched by economic and technological imperatives, the theatrical model has come to inform organizational theory and web design. ("Soft Wares")

In qualitative research, "ethnography has crossed that liminal space that separates the scholarly text from its performance. The text is now given back to those to whom it has always belonged—the reader, the other, who finds in these texts parts of themselves and parts of others just like them" (Denzin 123). And in the theatre,

In our simplest references, and in the blink of an eye, performance is always a doing and a thing done. On the one hand, performance describes certain embodied acts, in specific sites, witnessed by others (and/or the watching self). On the other hand, it is the thing done, the completed event framed in time and space and remembered, misremembered, interpreted, and passionately revisited across a preexisting discursive field. (Diamond 66)

Theatre performance, teaching, and new modes of qualitative research, then, reflect both a process and a product/event. But what are the implications for knowledge production, for teaching and learning, and for art, when we ask research to perform? All texts, of course, are performing in some measure, but the live event of theatre opens up certain possibilities for interactivity, for active engagement of the audience, and makes tangible the postmodern theoretical interest in contingency. The silences in theatre performance, for instance, can be filled with the presence of an audience; the openings and uncertainties of any given "reading" of a theatrical story remain unfixed in the most fruitful sense, despite the director's and actors' interpretations.

To be sure, live performance offers a complex way to "see" research. Researchers must therefore ask certain questions: 1) How does the stage "instruct"? 2) What are the scientific, artistic, and pedagogic risks/gains? and 3) What are the artistic limits of performed ethnographies? There are also ethical, scientific, and artistic questions to ponder as the discipline of drama/theatre is increasingly exploited in the world of qualitative research. One might also ask what makes performed research "good," "innovative," or "useful." Despite the power of theatre for learning when the stage "instructs," I would like to raise questions about the limits of theatrical devices in qualitative research, the dangers of didactic theatre, and, in an example from my own use of performed research with teacher candidates, I would like to provoke the issue of possible pedagogical responses to the sometimes visceral reactions that theatre can elicit. The pedagogical, political, and ethical investments of these artful ethnographic research texts (and researchers) demand that we consider the productive risks involved in this kind of work.

Performance moves us into the territory of pleasure, politics, desire, and the senses. To talk of pedagogy and research is also to insinuate arenas of desire, subjectivity, vulnerability, voice, and commitments. For these reasons I am suggesting that we consider theatre performances of qualitative research based on the lives and experiences of others—our research participants—not as "the new convention defining the measurement of what is right, true and good" but as *respectful forgeries and faithful betrayals*.

A Question of Ethics

As with all research on/with human subjects, there are ethical considerations when one makes public the lives, histories, and narratives of "the other," the research subject/participant, the "coinvestigator." To add to this, the element of "performance" requires that the researcher also consider the question, "How far into the other's world can the performer and the audience go? Can the differences that define the other's world be respected? Is there a null point in the moral universe?" (Denzin 122). In the domain of ethnography and performance, considering the responsibility that must be taken for artistic interpretations of another's life experiences, performers/researchers must avoid at least four ethical pitfalls: "The Custodian's Rip-Off" (Conquergood 402), "The Enthusiast's Infatuation" (Conquergood 404), "The Curator's Exhibitionism" (Conquergood 405), and "The Skeptic's Cop-Out" (Conquergood 403). These self-evident, morally problematic

stances and/or processes are challenged by the kind of text that speaks to and with the other, rather than for or about them. Such a dialogic text attempts to keep the conversation between text, performer, and audience open-ended, to produce "honest intercultural understanding" (Conquergood 409).

An important comparison must be drawn here with the professional theatre world, for all of these potential "pitfalls" in performance ethnography are also potential dangers in every theatre performance. Actor/writer Linda Griffiths, in a recent interview, called her work on real life characters Pierre and Margaret Trudeau in her show *Maggie and Pierre* an "imaginative leap-off, with elements of truth" (126). Speaking further on the tensions and wonders of artistic processes, Griffiths and Campbell explain the challenges of representing—as a White woman—the life of a Metis woman:

And so at one point I say, 'OK, so I'm stealing,' and she says, 'Fine. Admit that you're a thief and give back ten-fold.' That is what an artist does. All artists steal but they then have to give back ten-fold. (127)

What might it mean, in this hybrid of performed research, to "give back ten-fold" if this is the criterion for conducting ethical work based on the "real" lives of "real" people? What is one giving back and to whom? Who judges the quality (and quantity) of that giving? These are, of course, both artistic and scientific questions. Atrocities have been committed in the name of research and in the name of art. But to find an "ethical standard" for theatre and research, however, is to risk effacing the important specificity of each individual research/artistic process. Are signposts for ethical behaviour (on the stage or in the field) the best we can hope for? There are, to be sure, significant ethical protocols in place in the cognate disciplines, but there appears to be a lack of ethical standards that specifically relate to performed research. In addition, what is recognized as "ethical" is a highly subjective and political concept. In a study exploring performance practice in places of war, Jenny Hughes rightly concludes that conformity to a code of ethics is no guarantor of ethical practice. Some researchers, however, are now beginning to contemplate these difficult ethical questions as they relate to projects of applied theatre. James Thompson helpfully suggests that the ethics of applied theatre practice—like research—are active, participatory, dialogic, and negotiated. Yet, despite these attempts at more egalitarian research

relationships, there will necessarily be elements of betrayal in the new account. My goal, as researcher, is to make these inevitable betrayals (or interpretations, translations) respectful of, and faithful to, the participants' own framing of events.

In the face of continued ethical debates over issues of representation, performance, artistic/scientific process, and power, I would, nonetheless, argue for the abundant use of performed ethnographic research in the education of new teachers for the following simple reason: theatre has a way of bringing the world closer to us, of making powerful connections between our lived realities and those of others (un)like us. If there is anything that new teachers need to understand it is that theirs is but one reality operating in a classroom; the strength of their teaching, therefore, lies in their ability to receive, to learn alongside, and to extend the classroom walls to include the complexity and richness of the world beyond.

How the Theatre Teaches (and what it might mean for those learning to teach)

It is interesting because both those areas—theatre and education—are very forgiving at one level, but they are the most rigorous at another. Yet there is also something very humane about both pursuits. The fact that they can tolerate a multitude of ineptitude doesn't take away from the fact that they are driven by excellence, like anything else. It is human activity with a very, very wide embrace. (Macdonald 249)

If we agree that using theatre—well conceived and well performed theatre—to present research is a good thing and perhaps even an effective tool for teaching (drama) teachers, then there are three aspects (and many associated but unresolved questions) of such projects that should be considered. Despite MacDonald's persuasive connection drawn between theatre and education above, those of us bringing theatre and research together for educational purposes should not put to rest too easily the significant questions related to the kind and quality of art, pedagogy, and the production and dissemination of knowledge that such work provokes.

In what ways does the art work on us aesthetically? How is performed research different from theatre that does not intend to provide a vehicle for research findings? One of the interesting things about performance is that it usually says more than it means, which, in the case of performed research, means it is communicating a whole host of potentially unintended meanings. While commonplace in the world of theatre, this multiplicity of meanings—more characteristic of postmodern epistemologies might be regarded as radical in the world of research. The familiar plea from theatre directors is "Let the text speak!" Actors are urged to respect the text, to almost intuit the intent of the playwright. What might this mean for researchers respecting the words and worlds of their research participants if they intend to act like artists who also imagine and create in some measure? With what questions, then, are the performers of those words/worlds confronted? What is the nature of the artistic engagement for the audience? Should the meanings—explicit and implicit—in the performance be opened up for debate with the audience? When does it become activist theatre of one genre or another? The art can also ask us to look at the tensions of the "local" and "global" because the theatre event is necessarily particular but often speaks metaphorically. One certain strength, therefore, of performed research is that, through its expansive and intentionally performative mode, it can address important questions about provisionality, partisanship, and interpretation in research.

In what ways does performed research work on us pedagogically? First, it is certain that the potential for interactivity with an audience raises the stakes on knowledge in the live event. In the pedagogy of educating new teachers, if the audience (would-be teachers) is asked to participate in the action, to read parts, to respond to questions raised, to negotiate, in short, the meanings of the text, this emphasis on process and form offers multiple ways to take up and/or challenge the research text embedded within the performance text. Can these ways of learning/experiencing theatre constitute a pedagogy that differentially validates knowledge? Do the pedagogic modes have intellectual quality, sustain conversation, and connect to the world? Critical pedagogy theorist Henry Giroux insists, in this political moment, that there is a need for "academics, artists, cultural workers and others to address the crossing of borders not only as a resource for theoretical competency and critical understanding, but also as a pedagogical practice that promotes the possibility of interpretation as a challenge to the coming police state and as an intervention in the shaping of a more democratic global social order" (7). The implications for learning to teach are important here, for implicit in this view is a social justice stance toward education that expects teachers to intervene where they see inequities.

How is knowledge both produced and disseminated differently through the performance of research? The centrality of the research participants in creating performance texts suggests that the participants, themselves, might also become documentists. The construction of theatre from research provides an opportunity to engage research participants in their own creative constructions of themselves—while they participate in the research—rather than after the product has been made. Further, the unfinished-ness of the "final account" offers a challenge to dissemination if we take seriously the idea that the research act is unfinished until it meets its intended audience. In the live event, how might "consumers" of research continue to "produce" or "co-produce" knowledge? In the teacher education classroom, this proactive and participatory stance toward understanding children and social relations is particularly important given the historical tendency, in teacher preparation programs, toward recipes and "tools" for teaching.

Finally, to translate into another medium is to turn research into something else. What is that something else? The notion of praxis, I would say, is central to an understanding of this "translation," for praxis creates a wider set of implications for the communication of research while drawing an important line between research and the processes of teaching and learning. Patti Lather has coined the phrase textuality as praxis, which challenges dominant forms of knowledge and pedagogy. Taking teacher education as one site where such praxis might occur through the use of performed research causes us to further question whether engagement with these artistic works might invite a creative/artistic/aesthetic or embodied response as well as an intellectual one from teacher candidates? If so, then how should teacher educators navigate the emotional terrain such responses might produce?

I am reminded here of the experience of bringing my own ethnographic scenes to a group of drama teacher candidates at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. In this instance, they read the play together rather than experiencing it as a performance. Every word and action in the scenes had been taken directly—verbatim—from my research field notes. Reading "a play" was clearly a very different way for the teacher candidates to learn about teaching and adolescents. At the end of the reading, many students were very critical of the teacher character in the scenes. Given how much easier it is to critique another's teaching than one's own, I was unsurprised, although somewhat troubled, by the many immediate judgments made of the teacher in the script. I wondered whether the vehemence of the

group came from the experience of play-reading together, whether the aesthetic experience and these small gestures toward "embodying" characters had been responsible for the impassioned responses of the teacher candidates. They judged the teacher, whom they thought should have intervened more in the homophobic and hate-filled comments that students were expressing. They questioned her "management" of the classroom discussion.²

I offer this story as one example of how theatre pedagogy works on us differently. But despite their rather immediate and strong judgments, we proceeded to analyse more systematically the "character" of the teacher, to deconstruct the actions in "the play." And before long, with this critical distance, this alienation provided by the "fictive" story, the teacher candidates began to recognize their own invested readings of the scenes, their own positioned and biased responses. What began as an impassioned and rather harsh critique of a "character" turned into a rather more reflexive discussion about the challenges and conditions of teaching. The actions of this "teacher-character" were candidly presented in the scenes, not processed or re-packaged with educational jargon but there, in all their baldness. And so as spectatorreader-performers, they interpreted the events and responded strongly. Once through the reading, however, we began to identify striking moments of social reproduction in the "research-script" and asked what they, in their own future classrooms, might do differently. We arrived, finally, at a much more fruitful analysis than where we had begun. As I have argued elsewhere, research as theatre holds exciting possibilities for critical teacher development when it forces us to resist the passive consumption of research while moving "audience" closer to the role of "spect-actors," as Boal conceives it (Feldhendler), referring to the activated spectator, with choices and potential involvement. These uses of theatre in teacher education point to the pedagogical and research possibilities uncovered in aesthetic spaces that re-present the potentialities for a dynamic seeing and being seen, for the recognition of the self and the other, and the expressions of desire for change in everyday life and classroom life.

The New Reciprocity of Theatre and Research

Theatre has always been an important form of and forum for knowledge production. Its processes have forever involved the researching of human life, and its social commentaries have taught us about our world. Moliere's work, for instance, continues to teach us about hypocrisy and mendacity, Ionesco's about the impossibil-

ity of communication. In the contemporary theatre world, there are many examples of theatre being made from research into "real" experiences of "real" people's lives, like, for instance The Farm Show, a collective creation by Theatre Passe Muraille staged in 1972 in the farming community, on which the show was based, in Clinton, Ontario. Playwrights and collectives like these borrow recognizable qualitative research methods, like interviewing, archival research, and participant observation, in order to embed the created story in the lives and experiences of those whom it aims to represent on stage. Moises Kaufman's The Laramie Project and Joan McLeod's The Shape of a Girl would be two obvious illustrations of art working from the premise of real-life events, the former based on the gay-bashing and death of a young American boy, Mathew Sheppard; the latter, the playwright's response to the beating death of a young Canadian girl, Reena Virk. In fact, there seems to be a growing appetite in the West for theatre that is being called "documentary" or "verbatim" theatre, which uses interviews, first-hand accounts and official transcripts to tell a story. In a new play which opened at the Royal Court theatre in London's Sloane Square, Talking to Terrorists, director Max Stafford-Clark and writer Robin Soans, along with a team of actors, spent a year interviewing terrorists, politicians, journalists, and relief workers around the world in order to answer the question: What makes a terrorist? Globe and Mail reviewer, Elizabeth Renzetti writes, "The authentic first hand feel of the play makes it seem as if you're getting a peek into many minds, not just the playwright's" (Renzetti). This work was well completed before London's terrorist attacks on the tube in 2005; its prescience now brings a chill. What the play appears to have done is braid the real with the invented, as perhaps all art does to some degree.

But now research, too, has taken a turn, is playing more freely with perspective and taking "imaginative leap-offs" from the conventional qualitative research report, not merely to create more engaging or entertaining research but to make explicit the role that perspectivism and interpretation, indeed fiction, play in all qualitative inquiry. This is a fiction that is unavoidable, given the researcher's investments in seeing life in certain ways and developing, then reproducing, relationships with research participants (and audiences) based on their particular social location. I am not speaking about taking artistic or scientific liberties with real lives but simply understanding that no research (as no teaching) is neutral, devoid of the particular political investments or imaginative powers of the researcher. Respectful forgeries and faithful

betrayals of the lives of research participants might be the best we can expect. And these accounts will always be, what we might call, *necessary fictions*. Recapitulating research in this way, for its use in teacher education classrooms, will help to break down the understandable but misguided urgency most new teachers feel about "getting it right," finding the one right way to be a good teacher.

I conclude with the words from 1957 of the great theoretician of the stage, Bertold Brecht. In this passage, Brecht is differentiating between what he calls "Theatre for Pleasure, or Theatre for Instruction" as he considers the impact of theatre on "the spectator":

The spectator was no longer allowed to submit to an experience uncritically (and without practical consequences) by means of simple empathy with the characters in a play. The production took the subject matter and the incidents shown and put them through a process of alienation that is necessary to all understanding. When something seems 'the most obvious thing in the world' it means that any attempt to understand the work has been given up.

What is 'natural' must have the force of what is startling. This is the only way to expose the laws of cause and effect. People's activity must simultaneously be so and be capable of being different.

It was all a great change.

The dramatic theatre's spectator says: Yes, I have felt like that too—Just like me—It's only natural—It'll never change—The sufferings of this man appal me, because they are inescapable—That's great art; it all seems the most obvious thing in the world—I weep when they weep, I laugh when they laugh.

The epic theatre's spectator says: I'd never have thought it—That's not the way—That's extraordinary, hardly believable—It's got to stop—The sufferings of this man appal me, because they are unnecessary—That's great art: nothing obvious in it—I laugh when they weep. I weep when they laugh. (71)

While very modernist in its conception, I would not necessarily make this same distinction today, that is, between "instruction" and "pleasure." These earlier categories have been successfully blurred, and the teaching of drama in schools is almost always about both instruction *and* pleasure. But I do think Brecht's discussion of the differences between dramatic theatre (for pleasure) and epic theatre (for instruction) have particular application

for our conceptions of *teaching about how to teach drama*, or any other school subject for that matter. The passage invites us to consider seriously the pedagogical and political possibilities of theatre pieces that are drawn from research, produce knowledge about schools and children, interrupt formulaic notions of schooling, and help new teachers productively intervene in school curricula and classroom relations. "That's great art." And great pedagogy. "[N]othing obvious in it."

Notes

- Gratitude to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for their generous support of this study. *Drama Education, Youth and Social Cohesion: (Re)constructing Identities in Urban Contexts* (2002-05) has examined the experiences of youth in urban drama classrooms, in order to develop a theoretical and empirically grounded account of the dynamic social forces of inclusion and exclusion experienced by adolescents within their unique contexts of urban North American schooling. The ethnography of four urban sites (two in Toronto, Canada; two in New York City, USA) was concerned with investigating the extent to which drama education in classrooms illuminates the intersections of youth's personal/cultural lives with their school lives in the formation of their social, academic, and artistic identities. The work is published in *The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times* U of Toronto P, 2007.
- ² For the ethnographic scenes used in the play-reading discussion with teacher candidates in this article, see Gallagher, "Sexual fundamentalism."

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