

Canadian Performance Genealogies: A Roundtable¹

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The following is an edited transcription of a roundtable conversation held on 3 June 2013 at the Canadian Association for Theatre Research conference in Victoria, BC.

The original blog referenced below can be accessed at <http://performancegenealogies.wordpress.com/>.

Heather Davis-Fisch: The idea for this panel came out of a series of conversations that the roundtable participants have had over the last couple of years. It became clear to us that there was interest in a focused conversation about how we understand and construct the pasts of performances taking place in and on the lands now known as Canada. There was particular interest in looking at historiographical and methodological approaches that operate in, and are appropriate to Canadian contexts.

We began with the idea of performance genealogies, taking as our starting point Joseph Roach's description of performance genealogies in *Cities of the Dead*. In Roach's words, genealogies "document—and suspect—the historical transmission and dissemination of cultural practices through collective representations" (25). This provides one theoretical framework for putting theatrical, extra-theatrical, and non-theatrical performances in conversation with one another and for describing "the disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and memory as it is publicly enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences" (26). In preparing for this roundtable, one of our central concerns was problematizing the idea of genealogies and examining other frameworks for interpreting and connecting performances of the past. Beginning with the question of what theoretical models and methods of genealogies are appropriate—or inappropriate—to Canadian contexts, each of our participants has chosen a keyword to investigate, tracking out in a sense, the keyword's genealogy.

In blog discussions preparing for our panel today, Marlis drew our attention to Jill Lane's article on the merits of a keywords approach in Latin American performance, making the point that this approach emerges as a potential solution to several problems in Canadian performance history as well. Marlis wrote: "a keywords approach [...] works against the unidirectional singular narrative approach of more traditional Western scholarship and brings ambiguity, contestation, and debate to light. In this respect, I see obvious connections to Foucault's use of genealogy to move away from singular, linear teleological narratives (i.e. A begat B begat C begat D but it all started with A)" (Canadian). In other words, this approach allows us to look for connections that might be obscured by national, or linear, or institutional approaches. Keywords also lead us to consider how language and vocabulary construct how we understand the past, particularly when we look at how language shapes or marks discursive and critical moves.

Before turning to our roundtable participants, I want to flag three meta-questions that run beneath our discussion. First, why have certain narratives of performance unfolded or prevailed in Canadian performance studies and histories and what investments—personal, institutional, regional, aesthetic or political—are preserved in these choices? Second, the genealogical approach and other alternative approaches to the performative past challenge binaries between theatre/performance, past/present, space/time, but attempting to disrupt these binaries often generates new binaries. One notable example of this is archive/repertoire. We want to identify when we wrestle with these binaries and to ask what our investments in these binaries symptomatize. Finally, we want to raise questions of ethics, concerning who decides which events, performances, or histories count, what violence we commit or repeat in representing the past, and what epistemologies or ontologies we privilege.

Each participant will begin by giving a short description of the term she has been working with and then we will address three questions that emerged from our online discussions.

Our first keyword is “hemispheric”.

Marlis Schweitzer: I’d like to give a shout out to Natalie Alvarez, who gave such a brilliant introduction to the keyword “hemispheric” yesterday when she launched her books [*Latino/a Canadian Theatre and Performance* and *Fronteras Vivientes: Eight Latino/a Canadian Plays*]. As Natalie writes, glossing Rachel Adams, “the hemisphere has proven to be a useful frame for those interested in a more expansive and inclusive optic that considers the plurality of the Americas that lie beyond US borders” (*Latina/o* 1). Diana Taylor and Jill Lane make similar observations about the importance of thinking hemispherically. Lane argues that a hemispheric approach to the study of performance in the Americas “illuminates the different tropes, genealogies, and cultural forms in the respective cultures of imperialism and their different enactments of national longing and anticolonial imagination” (458). Such an approach recognizes the need to look at north/south trajectories rather than only east/west connections; it requires a geographic reorientation that illuminates new geographic connectivities. Diana Taylor also suggests that “[a] hemispheric perspective stretches the spatial and the temporal framework to recognize the interconnectedness of seemingly separate geographical and political areas”; this requires thinking differently about space and time to recognize the “degree to which our past continues to haunt our present” (277).

What excites me about the hemispheric approach is that it does not deny the need to understand performance and other forms of cultural expression in an historically grounded and geographically specific way. It does not suggest that we should turn away from the local or avoid paying attention to Canada specifically but it acknowledges the need to look across time and space for similar patterns, and shared as well as different experiences. We are not the United States, we are not Brazil, we are not Cuba, we are not Jamaica, but we have a lengthy, complicated, rich history with many of these other nations and it is important to acknowledge that. In the past Canadian scholarship has often stopped at the border: we say, “Oops, I can’t study playwright X because in 1972 they relocated to Mexico so they stopped being Canadian.” Canadian scholarship has been obsessed with borders, with fixing, defining, securing, and maintaining borders and I wonder whether that effort has limited the questions, research projects, and methodologies we’ve engaged with. I’m interested in examining

why we have become so bound to particular narratives, and considering how a hemispheric approach might open up new understandings of the past.

HDF: Our next term is “archive and repertoire”.

Roberta Barker: I looked at the terms archive and repertoire as they were first approached by Diana Taylor in *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* and subsequently taken up, interrogated, and explored by theorists such as Rebecca Schneider and Robin Bernstein, among many others. As her title suggests, Taylor’s book looks at the means by which cultural memory is preserved and conveyed through time and space, both by what she calls the archive of supposedly enduring materials such as texts, documents, buildings, bones (and bones are going to come up later in this session!), and via the so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practice or knowledge that we see in spoken language, dance, sports, and ritual, to use some of Taylor’s examples.

I started thinking about these terms again when I was working on a Master’s thesis with a student who was madly in love with Taylor’s theory and used it to analyze Indigenous playwrights such as Yvette Nolan and Tomson Highway. The student embraced the idea that there was a distinction between the way that knowledge was passed along in the European framework through the written form, as she saw it, and the way that Indigenous knowledges were passed through embodied practice. I became worried about this, partially because I was thinking about theatrical practice—for instance, what of devised works where there may be theatrical moments that are written down in prompt books or recorded in photographs or archival videos, but where knowledge is also recorded in the bodies of the performers and plays out through multiple shows in different ways? I also thought of the nineteenth-century theatre, and recent attempts to regain the lost repertoires and embodied knowledges of European and circum-Atlantic theatres of that period. To be sure, Taylor stresses that the archive and repertoire, as she puts it, “usually work in tandem” and “exist in a constant state of interaction” (21). Subsequent theorists such as Schneider have questioned further the notion that the archive and repertoire could ever form a binary. Yet, as the example of my student shows, they are often used in a shorthand form to create just such a binary between the textual and the embodied. This opposition is often linked to other oppositions—between hegemonic and oppositional political practices or political positions, for instance. And often in Canadian performance genealogies it is tied to an opposition between Eurocentric versus Indigenous ways of understanding and of transferring memory.

My explorations have centered around the question: what is at stake when we create such binaries? What’s productive about this process? What may be problematic about it? And what other possible keywords might help us to think within and also beyond the archive/repertoire opposition?

HDF: The next term is *lieux de mémoire*, which I looked into. I came across this term in returning to Joseph Roach’s work on behavioral vortexes, one of the ways that he imagines performance genealogies being transmitted across times, bodies, and spaces. Following Roach, I traced the term to French historian Pierre Nora’s explanation in his essay “Between Memory and History, *Les Lieux de Mémoire*.” Nora begins by discussing why *lieux de mémoire*

have emerged, claiming, “There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieus de mémoire*, real environments of memory” (7).

In explaining what *lieux de mémoire* are and how they function, Nora works with three terms that operate in varying (and arguably somewhat problematic) relations of opposition: “true” memory, which he defines as primitive, spontaneous, social, affective, magical, and vulnerable to manipulation (8); history, which is teleologically progressive and marked by its attempt to annihilate true memory (9); and modern memory, deliberate acts of cultural remembering marked by archival knowledge (13).

Lieux de mémoire emerge from a sense of loss, from the sense “that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations [. . .] because such activities no longer occur naturally” (12). *Lieux* mark “moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned,” mediating between memory and history (12). Without “commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep [*lieux*] away,” but if history did not “besiege memory” there would be no need for *lieux* (12). It is important to note that Nora does not use *lieux* to refer exclusively to places; rather, he is using the term to refer to sites, which are not necessarily spatial, evoking how memory becomes embedded at particular moments in particular objects, ideas places, or bodies, and pointing to both spatial and temporal ways of thinking through relations of the past.

I found it useful to return to the term, particularly in relation to our conversations about Rebecca Schneider, because it potentially provides a way to link performances of the past, to think of performances relationally through their interaction with sites, and to challenge linear teleologies that previously linked events, and acts and performances. In other words, it seems to me that *lieux de mémoire* is a useful term for thinking through how the inter(in)animate encounter might take place.

I’m going to turn it over to Kirsty and “surrogation”.

Kirsty Johnston: I chose this term while thinking about inclusion in the context of disability and performance studies as the term surrogacy comes up often in relation to disability. I know there are people in this room who know this term and its place in performance studies very well, but for those who are newer to it, “surrogation” was mobilized in the mid-1990s by Joseph Roach in his influential text *Cities of the Dead*, and it points to an uncanny process of cultural substitution or transmission. I have been thinking recently about losses and Canadian theatre, most particularly the loss this year of David Freeman, an important Canadian playwright whose works have been particularly meaningful for disability theatre both in Canada and beyond. Roach argues that “In the life of a community, the process of surrogation does not begin or end but continues as actual or perceived vacancies occur in the network of relations that constitutes the social fabric. Into the cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure [. . .] survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternates” (2). A phrase Roach and others often cite in relation to surrogation is “the king is dead—long live the king!” This phrase provides a pithy example of a process of continuation despite the tensions of adaptation and an emphasis on stability over rupture and of what we know over what we do not. Roach is concerned with history and memory and how cultural communities work out identities in the context of change and redefine the centre in part by invoking the margin. In this sense, surrogation “tends to disturb the complacency of all

thoughtful incumbents, may provoke many unbidden emotions, ranging from mildly incontinent sentimentalism to raging paranoia” (2). The term has been taken up and challenged in a range of directions. Shannon Jackson, in a broader charting of “gendered occlusion in theories of bodily performance” briefly critiques *Cities of the Dead* to demonstrate the risk of excluding or overdetermining the position of women in performance histories (171). In a different direction, Michael Chemers uses the term’s potential to explore other axes of difference and builds from Roach’s paradigm to argue that disability itself is a kind of social performance (18).

Roach’s paradigm of surrogation, and those who seek to build from it with greater reference to gender, bodily, and other forms of difference, together invite historians to read moments of loss, mourning, remembering, and celebration of old and new artistic performance not only for the stated continuities they claim, but also for the ruptures, inconsistencies, and anxieties they belie. Through what means and processes of surrogation does the centre hold?

HDF: Next we have Laura with “reenactment”.

Laura Levin: I looked at the concept of “reenactment” in Rebecca Schneider’s recent book *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*. Although the idea of reenactment is certainly not new, the way that Schneider uses the concept needs a bit of unpacking. When we think about reenactment, we often picture restagings of battles or reperformings of iconic artworks. When performance theorists write about it, they tend to emphasize distinctions between model and copy, prior event and subsequent iteration. Schneider wants us to rethink the nature of reenactment to find a new way of articulating the relationship between past and present, one that reworks the language of chronology and unidirectional transmission. She asks: what terms would we need to question which event came first, how one depends on the other, indeed *pulls* the other in multiple directions? And she answers this by connecting reenactment to a few specific theoretical ideas, each of which serves as example of this kind of cross-temporalized pull.

First, Schneider connects reenactment to Elizabeth Freeman’s very productive idea of “temporal drag.” Freeman argues that temporal drag works against dominant readings of Judith Butler’s notion of performativity, which support linearity by presenting identity as the effect of citationality. Rather than thinking of identity as a citation of prior acts, temporal drag asks us to consider how the past is never really left behind, but is rather physically “dragged” into any future iteration. So our bodies register on their very “surfaces the co-presence of several historically-specific events, movements, and collective pleasures” (Freeman 729). In that sense, Schneider proposes that we think about the ways that times touch—how time can be felt as a sticky substance that materializes in the confluence of bodies, gestures, and experiences.

Secondly, Schneider draws on the term “inter(in)animation,” to work against binaries of animate and inanimate, life and death, which are always at play in constructions of time. “Inter(in)amination,” a term borrowed from Fred Moten, suggests “ways live art and media of mechanical [. . .] reproduction [. . .] cross-constitute and ‘improvise’ each other” (Schneider 7). Schneider offers a clear example of this process in her reading of the Abu Ghraib photo-

graphs. Normally we might distinguish these photos from performance by noting that photos are ontologically linked to the past and performance is, conversely, insistently *live* and of the *present*. But Schneider urges us to consider what readings might be opened up if we were to approach these photos as “still” images, a term that references an object’s ongoingness. The prison guards in the photos seem to be addressing a future viewer in a “now deferred” (162). In reframing photos not as events that *took place* but rather as events that *take place* in our hands, as we look at them, we see the political stakes of undoing media specificity. This stresses our own complicity in looking, in “*misrecognizing the past as past*” (162). So, in effect, the project of rethinking temporality must always be accompanied by a rethinking of (inter)mediality.

HDF: Thank you, and our final term is “ossification”.

Kim Solga: My term is a departure from the terms the rest have chosen, which are specifically performance studies oriented. I borrowed ossification from bioscience, anthropology, and archaeology, and I intended the term “historical ossification” to refer to the ways in which certain ideas about performance history become hardened or ossified, as we transmit them from critic to critic, or practitioner to practitioner. Over time, the effect, I think, is to confirm those historical ideas—very specifically historical, historicized ideas about how performance meant—as truth even as we, good scholars, always resist firmly the notion of any kind of historical truth outside of our discipline.

My own research and Roberta’s, singly and together, has focused recently on thinking about realism in new critical ways. And thinking very specifically about what we think we know when we talk about realism. As part of that project, I have been thinking about my own heritage as a scholar, my training heritage, my heritage as a reader and a writer. I have been trying to think about when I first decided that realism “sucked”—I did at some point—and about how that decision animated a lot of my early work. I know that is very cheeky to say, but when I think back to my Master’s days and my first encounter with major feminist performance theorists, particularly those who have influenced an enormous amount of my work and to whom I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude, I realize that I figured out that being against realism was a good position to take for a lot of different reasons. So I’m interested in thinking about the ways we become stuck, to use that [Sara] Ahmed-ian term again, in certain positions, and the violence that those positions can potentially do to our ability to unpack our performance and theatrical pasts effectively. I am interested in exploring the problems that arise when we attach specific kinds of academic currency to those “ossified” positions.

I chose the term ossification over various other options because ossified stuff is bio matter (like muscle, robust and powerful), which is turned to hardened bone. It is a good thing because, of course, from bones come our strong human bodies, our capable human bodies, but it is also a hard thing; it is the kind of thing you can use to clobber someone or something softer or less firm over the head. It is also an assimilating practice: ossification draws surrounding matter in, and that matter becomes part of existing ossified matter, growing it and lending it force. A bone carries its own performance genealogy; it tells living histories, and those histories are evidence of what we have become and are becoming. The bone

can knock us all out, if we clobber each other over the head with it, but if we attend to its living, breathing, mobile qualities, we can also change it, make it stronger and better but also more versatile, and maybe change performance history as well.

HDF: Thank you. As I said earlier we have three questions for the roundtable participants to discuss. We developed these questions to link some of the conversations we've already had and to provide ways of thinking through the relations between the keywords. Our first question is about the role affect plays in our lives as scholars and historians and about how our keywords operate affectively and might influence how performances of the past are remembered and transmitted.

MS: Affect can help to explain why many Canadian theatre and performance scholars have been reluctant to think hemispherically. Scholars in English and literary studies have recently suggested that this apparent reluctance stems from the nationalist project of the 1960s and the 1970s, the deep investment in exploring Canada's history. There was (and is) a great deal of pride associated with that important scholarly project. But the flip side of that project was fear—fear of cultural appropriation, fear of assimilation—and now the fear is that if we adopt a hemispheric perspective and turn away from an archly nationalistic focus, then we will somehow be subsumed within the American project. There is fear that the term hemispheric, for all its emphasis on thinking about performance throughout Americas, is really just a code word for American, i.e. the United States. Although hemispheric scholars like Diana Taylor and Jill Lane reject this idea entirely, some Canadian scholars remain suspicious. They say, “We fought so hard to establish Canadian theatre studies, Canadian theatre history, and if we move outside of these borders, we are at risk of losing the centre, of losing everything.” So from an affective perspective, historical narratives have been shaped by pride and the corresponding fear that what so many people struggled to gain... will be lost.

RB: I want to address the question of affect as it hooks into the archive and the repertoire, and also to Heather's discussion of Nora's work. One of the things that Heather talked about in her postings on *lieux de mémoire* was a conception of history as an effort to evacuate affect, to make everything objective, dry, distanced. But the archive and the so-called history it carries are steeped in affect, steeped in tense affective engagements between past actors and between past and present investments. It is helpful for us to consider how affect works in archives. Such reconsiderations might help us to look again at familiar genealogies and to break down easy binaries both about how memory is preserved and about what it has to do with nation. We need to see how intense affective engagements shape both the archive and the repertoire, creating constant slippage between them and helping to determine our understanding of “Canada” and its history.

KS: One of my reactions upon first reading Heather's contribution to our blog was to think about the way our affective engagements with performance write histories onto our bodies in particular ways, and then come into scholarship via that mind-body engagement. I'm thinking again in the terms that Sara Ahmed has given us: when I go to a certain kind of event I am *impressed* upon by parts of that event more than others, and my memory of that

event then influences my writing about that event, and that event's transmission into performance history via my writing. During Helen [Gilbert]'s very compelling opening talk this morning, I started thinking about what happens when you are faced with a performer who places himself at risk in a way that creates fear or anxiety in your body, and how that bodily reaction becomes in turn a source of critical transmission. So perhaps thinking more dynamically and self-critically about how affect engages our bodies and minds as scholars in writing performance history can be a very useful way of putting these two terms, affect and performance genealogy, together.

HDF: We are talking about affective jumps, too—the idea behind *lieux de mémoire* is that affect gets stored outside the body in a place or site, and then we can somehow reanimate it without having the original body. Rebecca Schneider talks about how the archive can be restored in the body, but the idea of *lieux de mémoire* is almost the reverse, that affect and memory are stored outside bodies and then we return to those sites and access stored memories of the past.

LL: Schneider addresses that specifically when she talks about sensations experienced in [US] Civil War reenactments. She says that when a reenactor is eating salt pork or uttering a full-throated battle cry, the past rushes into the body; you are feeling the past in a way that repels linear time. She also draws upon affect theorists like Kathleen Stewart who talk about how emotions jump between bodies and she challenges us to think about this jump not just in spatial terms but in temporal terms as well.

MS: When Sara Ahmed talks about affect, she rejects the idea that it resides in the body, arguing that it is produced through circulation between/across bodies, even though we might think that it resides inside our bodies. Using a Marxist understanding of commodities, she argues that affect gains value, that emotions grow and gain currency over time through their circulation from body to body (Ahmed 15, 44-49). So there is a temporal dynamic there, but the idea of circulation also makes me think about ossification and about why certain ideas or keywords come to seem so significant (for example, “archive and repertoire”). Why do some phrases gain a kind of currency? It's not just through citation in our published works. Keywords or theorists gain affective value in conference settings, as for example, when a keynote speaker mentions a new name or term and everybody in the audience responds with a collective “Oh!” In that moment, affect leaps from body to body—all collectively take up the idea. These are crucial moments of transmission, cultural and affective transmission.

LL: This reminds me of Roberta's post, where she talked about how we fall in love with certain theorists. She used the example of her student falling in love with Diana Taylor's work and finding it difficult to think outside the archive and repertoire binary. We have to care more about and reflect on why we become attached to specific theorists at specific historical moments.

RB: And this takes us back to Sara Ahmed's work on affective communities. Love—and, for that matter, hate—are not individual or simple emotions. I am living in Nova Scotia where there have been debates about the memorialization—speaking of lasting narratives in

Canadian theatre and performance history!—of Marc Lescarbot’s masque *Le Théâtre de Neptune en Nouvelle France*. For a long time, there was a tremendous emotional weight associated with that event (and people in this room have written about this very well) as the “beginning” of theatre in Canada. In Annapolis Royal, a plaque still constructs the site of Port Royal as a “birthplace” of Canadian culture, striving to create quite an intense nationalistic affect. Now, however, I find that when my students first read Lescarbot’s text they are deeply disgusted by the racism they perceive as driving it, and do not like to think of it as the foundation stone of Canadian theatre. Such reactions form another affective community around the work. And then, after expressing their disgust, a lot of them—especially those who come from the Annapolis Basin—have a fascinating moment of inter(in)animation with the past, a fusing across time and space, when they truly start grappling with the setting of the play. They say: “Seriously? This is talking about taking canoes out in November in Annapolis Royal? I’ve been there, it is freaking freezing, butts are going to fall off!” Such moments of encounter encapsulate multiple affective relationships to a canonical past event across time and space. *Le Théâtre de Neptune* can seem extremely dead, and even repugnantly alien, and yet also very living. These affective relationships shape the ongoing role of that event in Canadian performance genealogies.

KJ: Roberta’s examples of performance histories’ continuities and ruptures, as well as the strong feelings they raised for her students, brings me back to ossification, our terms, and Heather’s query about affect. In our group discussions we talked about surrogation and substitution as useful terms but also wondered about the difference between the two. In some key texts the terms seem to be used interchangeably; however, when we start to think about how those two terms are used in other contexts, we sense that they have potentially different affective freight. For example, while it is common to speak of substitute teachers and surrogate mothers, de-ossifying these terms, what happens when you speak of surrogate teachers and substitute mothers? Suddenly you sense different affective qualities associated with each term.

HDF: I want to turn the conversation to thinking further about how our keywords complicate understandings of temporality and spatiality, thinking specifically about how temporality and spatiality work in Canadian contexts.

KJ: Referring back to when Marlis spoke about the anxieties raised for Canadian studies by the hemispheric approach, one further way we can think about where those concerns might come from is to consider the material qualities of national borders that can have profound effects on different people’s ability to build shared senses of history and community across them. As Marlis noted, while Taylor and others are clear that a grounded understanding of national contexts is valuable in the hemispheric approach, one anxiety is that the emphasis on patterns across national contexts risks occluding nationally-specific histories that have not yet been fully explored. East-west or north-south, some bodies trip lightly over national borders, where others might not. For example, there can be very different levels of access to immigration and movement across borders on the basis of corporeality, perceived ability and the body’s status in relation to different national contexts and services (e.g. healthcare).

MS: Accessibility plays out in other ways as well—for example, when we think about access to conferences. Not everyone can afford to attend or get to CATR every year, depending on location and resources. As a result of the nation’s geography, you have certain kinds of clusterings, certain partnerships and opportunities developing where people share ideas that shape certain understandings of what’s happening in the discipline. This can have both positive and negative effects: negative in that some people are excluded or kept out of the conversation; positive in that new regional alliances can develop, including those that cross provincial or national borders.

HDF: Because of our keynote speaker this morning [Helen Gilbert] and because of my own work, I am thinking about how the temporality and spatiality of Canada were influenced by its status as settler colony. The border is not a natural line and the moment of Canada’s creation is not a natural one. In disability studies the concept of the border refers to real material differences and then in Indigenous studies the border is often seen as an imposed boundary that is incredibly problematic because of the history it recreates.

KS: Perhaps there is another term we might want to introduce here, which is one that I toss around with my students a lot: paradox. It seems to me that we are talking about challenging the notion of irreconcilable differences in some ways: Canada can be both a nation that is urgently bounded and a nation whose boundaries are porous and problematic and need to be engaged hemispherically. Part of what we are trying to do is to think about how we can be multiple things at once, about how our performance histories can be animated by multiple, contradictory ideas and yet not fall apart at the centre. I wonder if Canadian performance genealogy could best be characterized as animated by paradox and local contradictions that do not necessarily need reconciliation: they need for us to come to terms with them, they need embracing, they need exploring, but they do not need us to fix them.

HDF: And there is something about our field of investigation—of performance—that allows us to address those contradictions, to have a kind of double vision. But when we move into text this complexity often gets ignored or erased. But in that moment of performance, we can have contradiction in front of us and not feel compelled to reconcile it.

LL: This presents a teaching challenge. We do not have very good language for describing what is happening in those moments. I really appreciate how this group has been trying to come up with new words to address these complexities. That’s something that Schneider is trying to do when she plays around with words like “takes place” to describe how events continuously occur in non-live media. Roberta, when you used the word “score” in your posts, you were also getting playful with language in a helpful way.

MS: The conversation around scoring came from a discussion of Robin Bernstein’s concept of the scriptive thing, which challenges the way we understand our relationship to the non-human world. I think this is another important intervention into more traditional theatre performance genealogies, thinking about the more-than-human world as performing with and alongside humans. Bernstein talks about how things script us—for example, when we

pick up a book, the layout and design might lead us to interact with it in a certain way. We respond to the book similar to how we might respond to a play script. But one of the challenges with this concept is that Bernstein is using a very textual model, still focused on the script. And so I was suggesting that the term “choreographic thing,” to borrow a term from dance studies, might help us get away from a textual focus. And then Roberta, you suggested the idea of scoring as a way of troubling our understanding of archive and repertoire.

RB: Yes, that came from spending a number of weeks directing an opera. I am very interested in the way that singers interact with the operatic score. On the one hand, the score is a great example of an archive—it annotates a performance, holds it in place, gives it a kind of permanent written form that one can reproduce. And yet there is another way in which the score invites reinterpretation, bringing a work of the past into the present in a very living, fluid way. Gestures that we can see in the rhetorical acting manuals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—gestures that singers will feel are bad acting when they are speaking—suddenly emerge from them when they start singing the score. Somehow the music brings a past performance language into the room as a present vocabulary. So I became fascinated by the idea of scoring as a concept that might bridge the archive and the repertoire. Of course, the word “score” is used in physical theatre and devised theatre practice to talk about the sequence of embodied actions, so we might consider a continuity between the musicological and theatrical uses of the term.

This experience of working with modern singers on a nineteenth-century work has encouraged me to think again about those historical moments we consider “past” and those we consider living. It has been a really exciting experience at CATR for the last years to see a lot of scholars complicating a traditional narrative of Canadian theatre history that begins with settlement, continues to the nineteenth century when we did not have our own theatre but suffered the annexation of our stage by the touring companies of Europe, and then celebrates the moments in the twentieth century when “our” theatre emerged and the dark ages ended. Some of this new scholarship has emphasized the unique hemispheric performance culture that existed here in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—a performance culture that served destructive political purposes and harmed many people who live on this land, but that also had productive consequences for many and that is still affecting our stage. As historians and performance practitioners we have to play across time as well as across space, and to play perhaps in a spirit of recognizing the dark sides of our history without throwing out its beauties and complexities.

LL: Don’t we also have to stop thinking about resurrecting a “previous” performance culture and instead recognize that that culture is *here*, has always been here? In doing so, we can acknowledge the ongoingness of certain cultural traditions. This is especially important when we talk about Indigenous performance. It did not simply precede or follow the arrival of Canadian theatre; it has always been here. There are political consequences to recognizing Indigenous performance as ongoing.

HDF: Our final question is about ossification, about how we contribute to the process of ossification, and how we evaluate when or whether ossification is a productive process.

MS: One challenge that arises from this new way of thinking is methodological: how do we do this work? We want to think in multi-temporal, multi-spatial ways...but how do you get around the very linear research and writing methods that we have been taught and continue to teach. I know there are people working in the digital humanities and other fields who are trying to trouble linear models but this remains a major challenge for us as theatre scholars. And this connects to the point Laura raised about communicating with and training students. Many students want a clear cut, “just tell me what you think” “tell me what to believe” “what’s the timeline?” I remember being in one of Richard Plant’s Canadian theatre classes [at the University of Toronto], and he was always asking us to unpack complex ideas and narratives. And as an MA student, I thought, “What do you mean? Just give me the dates. I just want to know how to understand this.” And it took me a while to realize, “Wait a minute. We are not trying to develop a linear understanding. We are just exploring.” But how do we communicate this complexity effectively both in our scholarship and in our teaching?

HDF: And it ties into the point about the language we use to describe these moves. The keywords approach illuminates the problems with language—not only the problems with the language we use but also the relationship between the language we use and the way we understand it.

LL: The process of asking these questions has been productive for me and led to some important realizations. For a long time I have been frustrated with the chronologically-bound narrative of Canadian theatre history, which begins with the alternative theatre of the 1970s and is followed by “alternatives” to the alternative theatre—theatre by women, queer, and non-white subjects. I was taught to work against this simplistic narrative by seeking *alternative genealogies*, by going back to find different origin stories and then using those to chart a different route through theatre history. But following our conversation, and in engaging more with Schneider’s work, I wonder if the “alternative genealogies” method reproduces the same linear structure. Maybe the approach that we think of as “alternative” to the linear model is in fact quite linear. Is genealogy as problematic as methodology?

HDF: Yeah, and that is the real question, right?

LL: We need to also critique genealogy *as* a methodology.

HDF: As Marlis pointed it out in her blog posts, genealogy emerged as an alternate to linear teleological approaches. It allows for multiple ancestors and more multiple configurations but it still reproduces that A begat B, begat C form, even though A can lead to a Z and a Y.

KS: On the blog, we discussed the possibility of introducing ourselves by tracing our intellectual genealogies. A lot of my own scholarly heritage comes from my longstanding engagement with feminist performance criticism and now I’m faced with a fascinating dilemma, as I find myself positioned *against* feminist performance criticism’s longstanding resistance to realism. In *Belle Reprieve*, the Split Britches satire on *Streetcar Named Desire*, there is a wonderful moment when Peggy Shaw as “Butch Stanley” says something like, “Didn’t we all agree

that realism is bad for us?” Thinking about that moment again recently reminded me how crucially important the *resistance* to realism was as an affective galvanizing force within feminism performance criticism at a time when it was such a crucial movement politically (in the 1980s and 1990s). I invested in that resistance, in the critique of realism, as a feminist scholar. But now, as also a scholar of twentieth-century performance history and of contemporary realism, I am interested in resisting that critique, too. I want to inhabit both positions. I want to see the critique and the larger community of feminist performance criticism that encompasses it, but perhaps not as genealogy or lineage or that thing from the past that I have broken with. I would like to think of these outstanding scholars and their work as a crucial part of my complex community of influence, as a group or community that I inhabit, even in my contradictory impulses to certain ideas. I want to find a way to communicate these abiding contradictions to my students, to show them how good it can be to think in a spatial way, rather than in a linear way.

MS: As you were talking, I started thinking about the feminist term “intersectionality,” first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe complex identity positions, to acknowledge that we are never just one thing, one identity, but a plurality of identities. An intersectional perspective recognizes that there are moments when we more closely associate ourselves with a particular identity but that when the context shifts we might define ourselves in another way. As scholars, we perform multiple identities and inhabit multiple spaces—at conferences, at our home institutions, when we shift from one disciplinary context to another—and so intersectionality may be another helpful keyword to throw into the mix.

RB: One idea that has been coming back to me from the generation of feminist scholars you are talking about, Kim, is Gayatri Spivak’s concept of “strategic essentialism” and Chela Sandoval’s notion of “tactical subjectivity.” Though their terms differ, both emphasize how one can strategically position oneself within an identity category for one purpose that one might take issue with for another purpose. In terms of theatre theory, we might say at certain points, “For now, I want to talk about archive and the repertoire as two completely separate things,” and at others, “No, look at how they are interpenetrate.” To give another example, I think we still need strategically to say, “There is a Canada, there is a Canadian theatre history.” But at other times, strategically, we very much need to trouble that idea. Perhaps we do not need to be ossified in a position in the sense of being stuck there, but perhaps we can allow the bones to bend while also keeping the structures tight enough to support us when we need them.

HDF: There is a way of acknowledging our role as performers dancing in our own archives and repertoires—acknowledging that you can choose your take on this role and think self-reflexively about it and then make those jumps.

Notes

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