"Please Look at Yourself": Insecurity and the Failure of Ethical Encounter in Autobiographical Performance

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Encounter between "I" and "You" is a central feature of autobiographical performance as the performer attempts to communicate an intimate sense of what it means to be a particular self to a second-person assemblage of curious witnesses. Ostensibly, the intention is that through this performative encounter, knowledge is imparted and the stranger becomes less strange. *RARE*, created by playwright Judith Thompson and an ensemble of disabled performers with Down Syndrome, stages just such an encounter between the audience and the autobiographical real. Using the lens of disability performance theory, this analysis of *RARE* considers how all autobiographical performance is entangled in questions about how the encounter with the real is shaped and to what end. The ethical instability of the situation combined with the risks of failed transmission invite the question: Why do we watch? Drawing on Sara Ahmed's description of the source of fear in intercultural encounter with the stranger as founded in hybridity, this article traces several points of hybridity in *RARE*. First, *RARE* presents a thematic thread that reifies popular perception of Down Syndrome as itself characterized by an uncomfortable hybridity between child and adult, between dependence and independence. Second, the production's staging choices present the performers' bodies as hybrid, challenging mimesis with irrepressible presence. Finally, it will be shown that the autobiographical form in performance itself expresses a hybridity that unsettles theatricality. Ultimately, autobiographical encounter does not authentically illuminate what it means to be another, but instead confronts the means of encounter, generating productive self-reflexive disruption of ingrained biases about both autobiography and strangers.

La rencontre du « Moi » et du « Toi » est un élément central du jeu autobiographique, où l'interprète tente de transmettre une vision intime de ce que signifie être soi à un assemblage de témoins curieux. L'intention apparente de cette rencontre par la performance est de transmettre un savoir qui permet à l'étrange(r) de devenir moins étrange. La pièce *RARE*, créé par la dramaturge Judith Thompson et une troupe d'interprètes ayant le syndrome de Down, met en scène une telle rencontre entre le public et le réel autobiographique. À l'aide de théories de la performance avec handicap, Stephenson analyse cette production et montre comment toute performance autobiographique est traversée par des questions sur la façon dont la rencontre avec le réel est façonnée et à quelles fins. L'instabilité éthique de la situation, associée au risque d'une transmission ratée, soulève la question suivante : pourquoi regardons-nous? Partant de la description de Sara Ahmed, pour qui la source de la peur dans la rencontre interculturelle avec l'étranger réside dans l'hybridité, Stephenson retrace plusieurs points d'hybridité dans *RARE*. D'abord, la pièce suit un fil thématique qui concrétise la perception populaire du syndrome de Down comme relevant d'une hybridité gênante de l'enfant et de l'adulte, de la dépendance et de l'indépendance. Ensuite, la mise en scène présente les corps des artistes sur scène comme étant de nature hybride et mettant la mimésis à l'épreuve d'une présence irrépressible. Enfin, Stephenson montre

que la forme autobiographique de la performance, plutôt que de mettre en lumière authentiquement ce que signifie être un autre, problématise la rencontre et nous force à confronter nos préjugés sur l'autobiographie et l'étranger.

Near the end of *RARE*, the cast of nine disabled performers respond to the prompt "You know a word I hate?" with a litany of words they have heard others use to name them: "Mongoloid idiot. Deformed. Special Ed. Handicapped... . Freak. Alien. Strange. Disabled" (*RARE*-Toronto 26). By way of conclusion, one of the speakers, Andreas,[1] confronts the audience with another freighted derogatory word: "You think I'm retarded? Please look at yourself" (26). The effect of this direct challenge is twofold. First it positions the audience, interpellated as "You," as distinct from the performers, and secondarily it imposes (rightly or wrongly) on this now-estranged and homogenously projected "You" a particular set of values and perceptions, expressed by what we "think." This encounter, variously configured, between "I" and "You" is a central feature of autobiographical work as the performer attempts to communicate an intimate sense of what it means to be this particular unique self to a second-person assemblage of curious witnesses. Rooted in the values of second-wave feminism, autobiographical performance acts on the credo that the personal is indeed political, claiming space in the public sphere for previously undervalued and neglected self-stories. It is no coincidence then that autobiographical performance was from the outset and continues to be primarily the domain of voices from the margins, with the majority of work being produced by women, gay, lesbian, or transgender individuals, disabled people, and performers from racialized cultures. The simple act of bringing the quotidian into view through autobiography stakes a claim to visibility and awareness, saying, "I am here. This is my life." *RARE*, created by internationally-lauded Canadian playwright Judith Thompson and an ensemble of young performers in their twenties and thirties with Down Syndrome, is very much a collective work of autobiographical performance in this vein and as such adheres to the conventional dramaturgical structures and tropes of the genre.[2]

Through a series of bodily present, first-person narratives, the performers articulate their hopes and dreams, what makes them angry and what makes them fearful. They offer a rainbow of answers to the question: Who am I? By doing so, they tap into the political potential latent in performative storytelling. As I have argued elsewhere, following Deirdre Heddon in *Autobiography and Performance*, the embodied activity of autobiographical performance can have profound real-world effects as the retelling of self-stories regenerates those experiences in the subject-body where they can be reshaped and transformed. Autobiographical performers thus do not simply report on past memories but instead leverage the power of performative creation to bring into being new selves and imagine new futures (Stephenson). Focus on the transformative impact of the journey through self-performance on the character/performer herself has been a dominant strand in recent studies of both literary and theatrical autobiographical works.[3] Moreover, a number of disability performance scholars have emphasized the transformative impact of disabled performers who explicitly cite their own particular body, autobiography, and identity-based politics in

performance (Sandahl, "Queering the crip"; "Black Man, Blind Man"; Garland-Thomson, "Staring Back"; Lobel). In her recent monograph, *Disability, Public Space Performance and Spectatorship*, Bree Hadley also takes up a number of what performance theorist Rebecca Schneider has taught us to call "explicit bodies in performance," although in Hadley's case she is most interested in those performances that take place outside theatre sites and frameworks. Surveying disability performance and scholarship, however, she argues that:

> Even the most cursory survey of the field indicates that when people with disabilities turn to performance as a political practice, they tend to avoid natural, autobiographical narratives about diagnosis, crisis, overcoming and cure. Though popular on the mainstage, these are, it seems, the stories that others would tell about disabled people, not the preferred mode when they work as instigators of their own performances rather than interpreters of other people's well-made plays about them. (Hadley 9-10)

The example of *RARE* supports this claim as the narrative does not follow trajectories of diagnosis, crisis, overcoming and cure, nor does it follow the pattern of a well-made or naturalistic play. Instead, individual performers share autobiographical details devising scenes around key themes. Beyond the usual confessional monologue style of autobiographical performance, the *RARE* ensemble dances, sings, recites in unison, and responds to personal questions, blending found text with self-storying. Indeed, as Andreas's interpellation of the audience as "You" suggests, the play resists naturalistic form, making space for other narratives and other modes of political transformation.

This autobiographical activity does not happen in isolation, however. For scholars of autobiographical performance, it behooves us to consider the nature of this bivalent interaction between the "I" performer and the "you" audience. Shifting focus from the positive political potential granted to the self-storying autobiographical subject to examine that of the audience that bears witness to this generative act invites us to ask: What real-world benefits might inhere to the autobiographical audience? What challenges manifest for this audience in effecting the ethical uptake of autobiographical stories? The potential pitfalls latent in the reception of autobiographical performance are many. As Heddon reiterates, the revelation of "personal narratives might bring hidden, denied or marginalised experiences into the spotlight. [...] This is just some of the work that autobiographical performance might do" (157). The attention-pulling element here is the repeated word "might." Transmission is fragile and inherently unstable; its power is held as contingent. Tempering Heddon's hopeful belief in the transformative promise of autobiographical performance is her awareness that in reception these stories are subject to the "dangers of problematic essentializing, construction of limiting identities, reiteration of normative narratives, the erasure of difference and issues of structural inequality, ownership, appropriation and exploitation" (157). Bound up in the autobiographical performative statement, "I am here. This is my life," is the risk of too easily extending the presentation of a single marginalized experience into a generic understanding of all similar persons. This statement, "I am X. I am like this," might lead to the false and unconscionably simplistic conclusion "All X are like this." The potential for this essentializing interpretation is unfortunately heightened in autobiographical performances that feature a collective rather than an individual, where the kaleidoscopic presentation of

Nada Marie Christiane Mayla, Nicholas David Herd, Krystal Hope Nausbaum, James Hazlett, Suzanne Love, Michael Liu, Dylan Harman Livaja, Andreas Prinz. *RARE* by Judith Thompson. Photo by John Grundy.

individual difference within the group is in competition with the essentializing tendency to perpetuate the sameness of the group as a group.

The same ontological bridge that carries theatrical impressions from the performed self back to its actual-world doppelganger activates another pitfall as performative subjects are drawn to the stage from the real world in the first place. Autobiographical performance work, which employs "real" people portraying themselves, presents a strong reality effect stemming from the close association of the actual real-world self and the constructed character self. This reality effect is further augmented when, as is the case with *RARE*, the work emerges from a community-engaged performance context, since the performers often exhibit fewer traditionally-recognized performance skills than professionally trained actors and so seem even more actually like themselves than a mimetic representation of themselves, no matter how adept. Reality theatre strategies that make use of actual-world elements like non-actors are often used with the overt political intent of augmenting the audience's understanding of contemporary individuals and society. The idea is that by putting living people on the stage, the work can productively "generate (and in some cases destabilize) an impression of close contact with social reality and 'real' people" (Mumford 153). That said, a recurrent criticism raised with regard to this kind of community-engaged work that brings paying audiences into autobiographical encounters with strangers is that this fabricated meeting that has been specially marketed to sheltered elites is an inferior substitute for real, personal, engaged experience. The ethical instability of the situation, combined with the risks of failed transmission, invite the question, "Why do we watch?" Is it to gain insight into someone else's life? Is it plausible to suggest that bearing witness to another's story might lead to tolerance and acceptance of difference through exposure? Yet, problematically, performance is always enmeshed in the power imbalance of ostention and the gaze. At best, there is an educational

profit in the second-hand exposure to another life; at worst, it is an exploitative freak show, offering a "weird" Other for vicarious, touristic consumption. Given the long, vexed history of disabled people's performances in freak shows and other venues that objectify and dehumanize their experiences, this risk is profoundly significant.[4] It is also important to remember, however, that this is the risk of all autobiographical performance.

As a recent local example of autobiographical performance largely by ostensible non-actors, *RARE* provides a good case study using the lens of disability performance theory for the general consideration of how all autobiographical performance is entangled in ethical questions about how the encounter with actuality in the theatre is shaped and to what end. As witnesses to autobiographical intimacy, we are compelled not to shy away from Andreas's challenge and to look into the mirror of the performative encounter and consider candidly how we arrived here. We are challenged to ask how we too might be changed by the consumption of autobiography. Who am I in my audience role? Why does Andreas exhort me to ask how I am "retarded"? Why does he invoke this powerfully oppressive word and how does he expect me to answer?

As Nicholas Ridout asserts, "When the promise of direct face-to-face encounter between two human beings is made within the theatrical set-up either the act of delivery or the act of collection is always compromised" (4). It is this feature of compromised or troubled meeting that is the primary focus of my analysis of *RARE*. Situating the play in the context of intercultural encounter, I propose to use *RARE* to illuminate general features of postdramatic autobiographical performance. The "old school" intercultural performance patterns invoked by *RARE* serve to establish an oppositional relationship here between the source culture of the performers and the target culture of the audience. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's theory describing the source of fear in intercultural encounter with the stranger as founded in hybridity, I will trace several points of hybridity in *RARE*. First, I will outline a pervasive thematic thread in *RARE* that reifies popular perception of Down Syndrome and by doing so presents a ticklish hybridity. Second, I will investigate how the production's staging choices present the performers' bodies as extraordinary and hybrid, challenging mimesis with irrepressible presence. Finally, I will demonstrate that the autobiographical form in performance itself expresses a hybridity that unsettles theatricality. These examples of ontological hybridity cause uncertainty and destabilize dramatic representation. Ultimately I will show how this persistent uncertainty leads to failures of mimesis, exposing the mode of the work as consistent with the ideals of postdrama. As exemplars of Hans-Thies Lehmann's postdramatic theatre, *RARE* in particular, and autobiographical performance in general, through their concern with foregrounding the real reveal the structures of that impossible encounter with reality, exposing the framework. The encounter with a stranger then does not actually facilitate contact, authentically illuminating what it means to be another, but it does confront the means of encounter, and is therefore productive in its self-reflexive disruption.

Attention to the phenomenological frisson associated with the theatrical real is a key feature of early twenty-first century postdrama. Postdramatic theatre, a genre identified by Lehmann in his book of the same name, is characterized primarily as theatre that eschews mimesis. It is theatre that does not work to create a fictive cosmos. Lacking a fictional referent, postdrama remains resolutely grounded in the real, concentrating attention on these real elements and on our experience of their essential realness. Inviting real people to the

stage to tell their stories works in just this way. Despite their very different production profile and aesthetic context—one the darling of the international festival circuit, the other a new initiative driven by a high-profile artist and featuring emerging artists from the local community—the shared practices of avant-garde German-based company Rimini Protokoll and the homegrown production of *RARE* display their commonality and thereby impel consideration of *RARE* as also a work of postdramatic theatre. A quintessential marker of the practices of Rimini Protokoll is the importation of cultural strangers to the stage, people who are "strangers" because they are foreign or insufficiently known due to occupation, class, and ethnic background. Some of their best-known works include *Crossword Pit Stop*, featuring octogenarian female residents of a neighbouring nursing home, *CallCutta*, in which audience members chatted to Indian call centre workers, and *Cargo Sofia X*—a mobile tour in the back of a transport truck narrated by the Bulgarian drivers (Malzacher). *RARE* shares some impulses with this work insofar as it also brings to the stage a group of people with shared experiences and claims to minority identity: people with Down Syndrome.

Over the past decades, disability culture activists, scholars, and artists have critiqued medical, moral, and other models of disability to forge a self-conscious disability culture interested in linking the experiences of people with a vast range of disability experiences. Within and alongside this disability culture, people with Down Syndrome also constitute a similar minority culture of "strangers." Although lacking a geographical homeland, the shared experiences of this community in diaspora still may be understood to constitute a culture, composed of seminal historical events and trends. Disability studies scholars and cultural activists have asserted shared cultural ties between disabled people both over time and in specific contexts.[5] See, for example, Chris Nancollas' book *Down's Syndrome: The Biography*, in which he charts the effects of the eugenics movement from the 1880s onward leading to forced sterilization of people with Down Syndrome in Germany, the US, and elsewhere, and the widespread acceptance of necessary institutionalization through the early-twentieth century continuing into the 1960s. Likewise common (albeit asynchronous) personal experiences also contribute to the conception of a coherent culture: navigating systems for integrative participation in a mainstream classroom, accessing independent living structures, or worrying about the future with aging parents. Taking this to the logical extreme, all autobiographical performance might constitute intercultural encounter as the audience is brought into contact with a culture of one.

Whether staging a culture of many or one, the patterns and practices of intercultural performance productively inform our understanding of *RARE*. As mentioned at the very beginning, *RARE* establishes as part of its modus operandi a certain tension in the relationship between performers and audience. The actors ask rhetorically: "How does it feel to be us? … You wanna know?" (*RARE*-Toronto 5). This positioning of "us" and "you" explicitly separates performers from audience and makes each into a coherent and homogenous group. More than this, however, the challenge "You wanna know?" exposes the heart of the autobiographical project, revealing both its desire for contact and its uncrossable distance. Yes, the audience does want to know, but is knowledge possible and what is mutually risked in this transaction? Projecting what "you think" and what "you wanna know" onto the autobiographical audience, the play interpellates this audience as ignorant yet curious travellers seeking insight into the lives of a heretofore unknown population. At the conclusion of Jacob's song "Out There," the

singer declares, "All we want is to be out there with you / So don't be afraid" (11). In this construction, their role made manifest as a "normate" audience with limited exposure to people with Down Syndrome, an audience who is exhorted not be afraid of the performer-strangers, there is little space for audience members who share the performers' experience, who might not be afraid, who might in fact be themselves an "us" rather than a "you."[6] As Ric Knowles points out, the assumption of the target culture as a monocultural audience as well as the perpetuation of a "west and the rest" dichotomy are problematic features of outdated intercultural practices (*Theatre & Interculturalism*), practices that *RARE* seems to reenact. Framing autobiographical performance, specifically in the case of *RARE*, but also in general, as intercultural encounter makes clear the ethical imperative. As Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo note, the challenge is "to avoid essentialist constructions of race and gender [and, I would add, disability] while still accounting for the irreducible specificity of certain bodies and body behaviours" (47).

Michael Liu, Dylan Harman Livaja. *RARE* by Judith Thompson. Photo by John Grundy.

In her book *Strange Encounters*, Sara Ahmed articulates some of the distinctive features of intercultural encounter. To begin, it is important to note that in terms of her title a stranger is not simply anybody whom we do not know. "[The stranger] is a figure that is painfully familiar in that very strange(r)ness" (21). That is, some strangers are stranger than others. The stranger is a person in my world—known and unknown—who is, however, excluded for some reason. But this exclusion does not arise from an innocent ignorance, rather it is active, an attentive policing of the boundaries of my community to divide "us" from "them." Stranger fetishism can only be avoided by examining the social relationships that are concealed by this fetishism (6). A key feature of this social relationship is that the encounter with the stranger is marked by an irreconcilable tension between what we think we know and what we cannot know, what is shared and what is necessarily hidden, between fixity and the impossibility of fixity. Given this unstable oppositional duality of certainty and uncertainty, how might encounter engender an ethical relationship? "What are the conditions of possibility for us meeting here and now?" (145). In partial answer, Ahmed first invites consideration of proximity as a key component of the encounter:

> An ethical communication is about a certain way of holding proximity and distance together: one gets close enough to others to be touched by that which cannot simply be got across. In

> such an encounter 'one' does not stay in place, or one does not stay safely at a distance [...] It is through getting closer, rather than remaining at a distance, that the impossibility of pure proximity can be put to work, or made to work. (157)

Holding proximity and distance in balance, the potential exists for becoming closer, permeating existing boundaries and communities, while at the same time resisting the intention to see the stranger as easily assimilable, and respecting an inherent and inaccessible foreignness.

After proximity, a second feature of ethical encounter is particularity. Particularity, here, does not require a descriptive catalogue of personal characteristics—a project which risks turning specific "this-ness" of one's body or speech into a generalized portrait. This is the error that Heddon cautions against. Instead, particularity for Ahmed speaks to the modes of encounter through which others are faced (*Strange Encounters* 144). "Differentiation happens at the level of the encounter, rather than 'in' the body of another with whom I am presented" (145). From this perspective, attention is directed at the social processes that structure that difference and the separation arising from difference, rather than on the difference itself as distinct and autonomous. The phrase that Ahmed uses to describe this active contemplation of interrelation is "the sociality of the 'with'" (144). What does it mean to be "with"? To look but also to be seen. To look but also to fail to see. Failure of the "with" is also necessarily implicit in the ethical encounter. "There is something that remains a secret [...] my missing it, my failure to face up to it, is also an encounter with it, and a responsibility for it [...] How to get closer, to take responsibility, and yet to take up the impossibility of that very gesture, at one and the same time?" (148).

My first approach to the failed encounter through uncertainty and hybridity as thematized in *RARE* starts with the play's title. The play partly takes its title from the idea that people with Down Syndrome are becoming increasingly rare in societies that permit/encourage the abortion of fetuses that test positive for this congenital condition. Down Syndrome, also known as trisomy 21, is a genetic disorder caused by the presence of an extra (third) copy of the twenty-first chromosome (Patterson 195). In recent years, an increasingly reliable and increasingly non-invasive screening procedure has allowed prospective parents to know whether or not their child possesses this anomaly. Among parents who are offered genetic testing for Down Syndrome, seventy percent accept the testing (Morris and Alberman). Rates for those with positive results who elect to terminate the pregnancy vary, with sixty-seven to eighty-five percent of women opting for abortion in the US (Natoli et al. 142), a figure that rises to ninety-two percent in the UK (Morris and Alberman).[7] In the US, babies with Down Syndrome represent one in 691 live births (Parker et al. 1011-12). The rate in Canada is slightly lower where babies with Down Syndrome represent one in 740 live births (Public Health Agency of Canada). In the UK, that number is closer to one in 1000 (Morris and Alberman). In Ireland, where there is no legal access to abortion, that number is one in 550, nearly double that of the UK ("Down Syndrome" HSE). So clearly, the combination of genetic testing and a widespread inclination toward terminating fetuses with a Down Syndrome diagnosis is effectively reducing the contemporary population of adults with Down Syndrome.[8] In the play, the performers invoke Shakespeare to express anger and confusion at this situation:

> KRYSTAL. To be or not to be? That's a question for people who are pregnant and have found out they have a baby with Down Syndrome, to keep it or not to keep it.
>
> NICK. Exactly Krystal. You know what pisses me off? Most parents terminate the pregnancy when they find out their baby will have Down Syndrome. When I was born the nurse told my mother "You know, you don't have to keep him."
>
> DYLAN. Me too the same thing happened to my Mom.
>
> JAMES. Me too.
>
> [...]
>
> NICK. And that is wrong, that is discrimination. It is against our rights to be who we are, what we are. We are unique, we're ... rare! We stand together.
>
> (*RARE*-Toronto 24)

Then Dylan thinks about why society, represented here by the nurses, might make this suggestion. "I don't know. I think they're afraid because they don't understand Down Syndrome. Maybe they are worried that there will be health problems?" Nick counters, saying "Doesn't everyone have health problems?" (*RARE*-Toronto 24). Krystal lists her food and digestion related health issues and then the play goes off on this new vector, with everyone listing their favourite foods.

Thus, while the production does not pursue the question of this fear further in this moment, it invites audiences to think about how the kinds of discriminatory medical experiences the performers described are tied to fear. Further, the play's exchange also locates the disavowal of people with Down Syndrome's human value in the mouths of medical professionals, both invoking and speaking back to medical framings of disability. Tobin Siebers, in his book *Disability Aesthetics*, helps to make sense of these framing choices: "The mental and physical properties of bodies become the neutral symbols of inferiority via a process of disqualification that seems biological, not cultural—which is why disability discrimination seems to be a medical rather than a social problem" (24-25). This construction of Down Syndrome as a medical problem goes a long way to explain the resort to screening and abortion as a prevention strategy. The preference is to "fix, cure, or eradicate the disabled body rather than the discriminatory attitudes of society" (25).

In his plain-speaking treatise, *The Politics of Down Syndrome*, Keiron Smith, himself the father of a daughter with Down Syndrome, writes:

> There is a sort of middle class fear about Down Syndrome. [...] Down Syndrome seems to have transformed into a metaphor; a metaphor primarily for stupidity; a shared 'other' which represents idiocy and contempt [...] represents a diminution of people with Down Syndrome to something akin to sub-humanity. Where people with Down Syndrome exist in a world where they remain forever dependent, forever children. (49-50)

Smith continues, pointing out that culturally Down Syndrome finds itself in conflict with many of the trends of late capitalism: being unrecognized as beautiful, being outside of society, being unable to self-actualize, being dependent (52). He argues that what potential parents fear stems from existential anxiety on the one hand as they imagine existence with and of a Down Syndrome child would threaten their vision of a satisfactory life, as laid out

Nicholas Herd (foreground); Michael Liu, Sarah Carney, Andreas Prinz, Krystal Hope Nausbaum (holding hands). *RARE* by Judith Thompson. Photo by John Grundy.

according to the late-capitalist values above. And, on the other hand, fear also stems from aesthetic anxiety as again life with and of a Down Syndrome child might not adhere to accepted norms of beauty and behaviour as promoted by embedded contemporary cultural values which we must (albeit shamefully) acknowledge (Hahn 39-40). The fear that Dylan muses about, then, exists in the liminal space between self and stranger, and is activated by proximity. As Ahmed insists, "Fear does not reside in the object—this lack of residence allows sliding across signs and bodies. [...] Fear works by establishing others as fearsome in so far as they threaten to take the self in." Ahmed gives the provocative example, "The nigger's going to eat me up" (*Emotion* 64). The fear of dependency that characterizes the disability of Down Syndrome is similarly transitive.

As already noted, the intercultural encounter with the stranger is a moment marked by hybridity. The stranger is both fixed as known and is also essentially unknowable, resulting in a moment of inherent epistemological and ontological insecurity. This characteristic of general hybridity of the stranger maps directly onto the locus of fear in neurotypical adults in relation to Down Syndrome imagery featuring a specific hybridity that blends normatively defined elements of childlike social expression with adult physical maturity. In other words, normate understandings of contemporary Canadian culture's division between adult and child experiences do not fully account for critical differences in the lived experiences of adults with Down Syndrome. There is a marked absence of robust social understanding, recognition and acceptance of Down Syndrome adults. Indeed, numerous books are concerned with the "transition" of twenty-somethings with Down Syndrome from a dependent life at school and at home with their parents to a more independent adult life with all the responsibilities and risks that entails.[9] Not surprisingly then, this is also a key theme of *RARE* where it is demonstrated as a central preoccupation of its performer-creators who

inhabit that same demographic. In their speeches, the performers demand independence in employment, in living conditions, and in self-determination. They want to be adults. They want to have sex, to get married, to have children. Yet, as much as these speakers lay claim to their status as adults, their statements in this production are consistently problematized by a sense of hybridity rooted in normate conceptions of the division between adult and child, resulting in insecure identity positions.

In the opening section of the play, the cast introduce themselves in typical autobiographical fashion by name, age, and a defining statement:

> NICK. I am Nicholas Herd. I'm 28 years old. I'm looking for a serious boyfriend. I'm ready for romance before I turn 30.
> SUZANNE. I am Suzanne. I am 35 and don't mess with me.
> KRYSTAL. I am Krystal. I am 23 and nobody owns me.
> [...]
> DYLAN. I am Dylan. I am 22 and I am the spirit of a boy.
> [...]
> MICHAEL. I am Michael Liu. I am 29 and sometimes I feel like Batman.
>
> (*RARE*-Toronto 4)

Mixed with some of the more unassuming portraits—"I am James. I am 28 and I love music"—are some statements of marked hybridity. Both Suzanne and Krystal assert their power and independence, drawing my attention both to their vociferous statement and to the explicit necessity of this statement in a world where this autonomy, in contrast to most adults who assume this silently, is notably contested. Dylan expresses precisely the hybridity of a twenty-two year old man who embodies boyishness. Likewise Michael, echoing the women's powerful self-characterization, does so by invoking a childlike projection onto a fantasy superhero. Two short stories demonstrate another way that the dependency/independency hybrid presents itself in *RARE*. Krystal recounts a time when, "I was at this party and suddenly there was a knife. I was scared, I was really scared. I thought I might get stabbed but I couldn't leave because I didn't know how to get home" (14). In a lighter tone, Erin is listing who and what she loves: "I love everybody. But my dad is sometimes bossy about what I can eat. Why can't I have two cheese slices? I'm an adult!" (*RARE*-Kingston 6). In both of these vignettes, the performer's assertions are demonstrated as challenges to normative ideas about adulthood. Here, Krystal and Erin find themselves in situations—one serious and one slight—which highlight dependent relationships in their adulthood. Another example occurs when listing things they love; one cast member says, "When my Dad picked me up to the sky and I felt like Peter Pan" (*RARE*-Toronto 6). The image communicates the thrilling feeling of flying, but it also carries an intertextual reference to the boy who never grows up. As a single mention this might not be noteworthy but taken with other examples it contributes yet one more citation to a thematic montage that permeates the play.

Augmenting the verbal self-portraits and memories that position the cast of *RARE* as caught in an irreconcilable hybridity of dependence and independence, the play also scripts performances-within that exhibit this same unstable relation. In scene 4, titled "Love," the cast repeats "I love you" in several languages. Scene 9 is titled "Language." In this scene, the

cast display their linguistic talents, speaking various conversational phrases like "I would like to make you a Greek salad" or "I love to eat chocolate ice cream in the summer" in Greek, French, Arabic, Mandarin, and Italian (19). Mike sings a whole song about friendship in Cantonese. The ability to speak several languages is a laudable skill and the production might have developed these skills in different directions; however, the recitation of words in other languages by rote here risks echoing the cliché of faux intellectual sophistication performed by precocious children. Along the same lines, *RARE* features numerous recitations of poetry, featuring verses by William Butler Yeats, William Blake, Emily Dickinson, and William Shakespeare, as well as Odette's dance of the Dying Swan from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, demonstrations which, when performed out of context as they are here, risk yet another showcase of precocity. From another perspective, however, these recitations speak to ability and attempt to efface difference, proposing that the speakers can master second and third languages, and can participate in canonical literary culture at the "highest" levels. We might then read these sections as postcolonial appropriations and revisionings of the cultural property of the target culture to hear the texts afresh and to make them sing a new song. Whether progressive reclaiming or retrograde mimicking, either way, these relations rise from the child-adult hybrid and are founded on an unequal power dynamic of encounter between these two groups.

The trope that equates disability with being childlike is outdated and, frankly patronizing, and yet despite the apparent efforts to suggest that the performers are capable adults, *RARE* seems to get caught up in its unfortunate repetition. In his review of the Toronto production in the winter of 2013, Robert Cushman of the *National Post* locates his review in precisely this territory, finding common ground between the audience and the performers in the experience of childhood: "[The scene between Sarah and Michael] also seems like everybody's fumbling, hopeful youth, caught forever. [...] The pleasures and pains recounted and enacted here should relate to everyone's remembrances of childhood, with the confounding difference that we're experiencing here through people who, physically and intellectually, are not children" (Cushman). This is precisely the challenge (and failure) of proximity in encounter and the extending corollary of fear of hybridity. One way, the stranger is so familiar—everyone's childhood onstage. This is the simplicity that we must avoid. Moreover, who is "everyone"? Cushman appears to accede to the production's interpellation of "you" in the audience (and in his newspaper's readership) as able-bodied adults whose hopeful and fumbling youth is in the past. The other way, there is profound and uncrossable distance. Fear and anxiety bubble up. Cushman writes that, "it's possible—actually very likely—to approach this production feeling queasy; or, equally, with a determination to avoid that feeling." Through formal choices that do not unsettle the normate framing of the adult/child divide mapped onto dependence/independence, this ostensibly adult stranger appears childlike, where the audience by contrast audience does not. Nostalgia is tempered by uneasiness.

But this insecurity can (and must) be productive. "Hybridity involves the transgression and destabilization of identity" (Ahmed, *Strange Encounters* 12). It is in this destabilization that we might renegotiate the terms of identity. Herein lies a performative opportunity. Ashamed as I may be to own up to it, the fear in uncertainty illuminates my prejudices. As Meg Mumford writes in relation to the work of Rimini Protokoll, the sense of proximity to cultural strangers unfixes oppressive views and in that radical unsettling we can experi-

Krystal Hope Nausbaum (foreground), Nada Marie Christiane Mayla, James Hazlett, Michael Liu, Andreas Prinz (back row). *RARE* by Judith Thompson. Photo by John Grundy.

ence fresh ways of engaging these strangers (154). Therefore, it is not simply a matter of accepting without question the insistent declarations by the performers that they are adults. Rather, in the "sociality of with" the production assumes an audience of unfamiliar strangers, pressing them to experience hybridity and to reassess the value contemporary Canadian society assigns to independence as the marked feature of adulthood. How might the social sphere be re-imagined such that dependence is not disavowed or faulted as a feature of being less, but instead presented as an opportunity for the expression of our commonality? How might society benefit from valuing mutual dependence over independence? What is lost when society champions mastery and virtuosity? The same values that predicate success in late capitalist society also seem to predicate success as an actor on the stage. In its particular dramaturgy and performance style, *RARE* also invites us to consider the relationship of mastery and virtuosity to the actor. What aesthetic ideals castigate mistakes made in performance or those moments when the façade slips?

Near the end of *RARE*, scene 12 is titled "I am nobody! Who are you?" The text of the scene is composed (mostly verbatim with a few transcriptions) of a poem by Emily Dickinson. The cast declares in unison: "I'm Nobody. Who are you?" Then Suzanne turns the question to a fellow actor "Are you nobody too?" Krystal replies, "Then there's a pair of us." Whispering and seeming pleased with themselves, the performers (and the poet) revel in this community of nobodies. Shifting to the male actors, the second stanza of the slightly altered poem opines: "How dreary to be somebody! / How public, like a frog / To tell your name the livelong day / To an admiring bog" (23). Anonymity here is figured as desirable, as long as the anonymity is collective. And yet, the central ethos of the autobiographical project runs counter to the possibility of being nobody. Charged with answering the question "Who am I?," the autobiographical performer becomes somebody and some body.[10] The extra chromosome of trisomy-21 enacts a distinctive characteristic physiognomy that triggers the dynamics of staring and the spectacle of disability articulated by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson in her influential book *Staring*. In the theatre of the public sphere, people with Down Syndrome cannot be nobody. Thus the autobiographical performer who is also a person marked by physical difference is doubly some body, public like a frog, telling your name to the admiring bog. By contrast, the target audience of *RARE* (cast as "the admiring bog") prefigured as "normate" is invisible in their dominant ordinariness, passing as uniformly non-disabled, as "white" in this intercultural

exchange, recipients of all the privileges entailed in that position. Visibility of the body, of being some body, in performance functions as a strong reality marker, drawing attention to the correlative actual-world existence of that body. In the same way that nudity on stage tends to short-circuit representation, bodies marked by their strange(r)ness also prioritize presence over mimesis. Thinking about the postdramatic peeling apart of reality from fiction, Erika Fischer-Lichte cites as a specific example a production of *Guilio Cesare* by the Italian company Societas Raffaello Sanzio that placed (in her words) "bodies on the stage that blatantly deviated from 'normal' bodies, demonstrating frailty and decay, as well as physical excess" (85). The hyper-attention directed to the simple presence of these marked bodies detracts from their mimetic potential and reifies the kinds of traditional western theatre aesthetics that Carrie Sandahl criticizes in her article "The Tyranny of Neutral." Sandahl traces how only non-disabled bodies, or those that seem so physically, are privileged as being able to achieve "neutral," the idealized condition from which fictional character can emerge. Although "neutral" is axiomatically unachievable, she demonstrates how disabled bodies, like other stigmatized or marked bodies, are inhibited by dominant training methods and aesthetics from laying claim to the position. From her demonstration of the disabled body's inability to achieve neutral flows the argument that "a character cannot be built from a position of physical difference" (Sandahl, *Tyranny* 262). As Sandahl suggests, this aesthetic assumes that actors with Down Syndrome "cannot 'act', they can only 'be'". A central part of the attraction of an audience to autobiographical performance is a desire for access to authentic being-ness, an access that is held at arms-length by the theatrical frame. Once again, the autobiographical performances in *RARE* are caught in hybridity, mired uncertainly between presence and performance.

The same uncertain hybridity expressed in the ambiguous status of the actor-subject also manifests in the chosen genre of autobiographical performance. On the surface, one might expect that reality-based theatrical performances like autobiographical performance and like verbatim plays would offer a strong, unambiguous reality effect, easily encouraging audiences to take what they see and hear to be a stable truth and directly transferrable to people and events in the actual world. Yet, as David Shields argues in his manifesto *Reality Hunger*, in fact the opposite is true. Genres like memoir that purport to offer stable epistemological experience instead create more uncertainty and doubt (132). This is because each fact audiences are given opens their awareness of the infinity of details they still (and always will) lack. Literary, journalistic, and dramatic secondary forms that represent life can never be fully determinate in the way that life itself is.[11] Inherent to their form situating ostensibly real voices inside a theatrical frame, the plays "create ontologically unstable phenomena that oscillate between authentic and manufactured" (Garde and Mumford 151). This undecidability "is caused not only by the creation of phenomena that do not sit clearly within one or the other of these problematically binarised categories but also by representations whose very nature is uncertain" (151). Confronted with this uncertain epistemology latent in these plays, Garde and Mumford suggest that the unstable "reality status" of the work rises up, displacing any conventional reading of what the play is about. Our dramatic understanding then is necessarily filtered through this disorienting audience affect they call "productive insecurity" (148). Shannon Jackson makes a similar observation in her work on social art practice, writing that "the unsettling of reality and fiction in contemporary documentary theatre provokes new knowledges but also invites reflection upon the conventions of knowing itself" (168).

The same productive ontological ambiguity identified in verbatim performance by Garde and Mumford inheres in autobiographical performance as well. Both genres are founded on a promise of truth that neither can possibly fulfill.

As Jens Roselt writes, "Real people on the stage are disorienting. You are never sure where you are" (47). *RARE*, despite the care and determination manifest in its preparation and rehearsal, relies on the performers' assertions of their "real" bodies and selves. Through various fractures in normative expectations of transparent actorly skill, the majority of the performers' lack of traditional performance training is revealed.[12] Sara Jane Bailes's list of theatrical failures includes "unconvincing acting, coping (or not), awkwardness, and inability" (22). In the performance that I saw, there were several missed lines where actors called out to the stage manager for a line prompt and received the text of their line shouted from the auditorium, which they then repeated. One performer had a habit of tapping out the number of words in her speech with her fingers on the side of her leg, betraying her unique memorization technique. Also noticeable were moments when one actor would touch another on the back or shoulder to communicate the cue for the next action. I am cataloguing these observations here, not to find fault with the performers, not at all, but rather to raise to view a range of performance strategies that are not compatible with expected (that is, trained, professional, naturalistic) standards of performance. The cast of *RARE* displays a consistently vocally flat, near-monotone delivery. Songs are spoken rather than sung. The speech of some of the performers is not sharply articulated and so I admit that there were many points where I did not clearly hear and comprehend what was being said. One performer in particular in the Kingston cast has a distinctive vocal quality; all her speeches are delivered in a shouting, seemingly angry tone regardless of the content, a characteristic that engenders a disconcerting disconnect between what she is saying and the perceived emotional attitude. Disruptions to standard aesthetic practices are generative sites for understanding the value systems informing the aesthetics themselves. If we consider the disruptions cited above as moments of "failed" mimetic representation and of our basic theatrical expectations for speech, we have an opportunity to reconsider the value system that labels them as such. To this end, it behooves us to ask, "What are the political effects of failure?" Bailes astutely notes that failure "exposes the economy of value and exchange through which live performance conducts its business; it offers new conceptions of virtuosity and mastery" (13). This is absolutely critical for *RARE* since how we measure skill applies here not only to theatrical performance but also to life skills and maturity. How do we judge performance success and good acting? How do we judge life success? A poetics of failure requires us to consider that failure might lie not with inferior performance but with my application of a (possibly wrong but) pervasive and implicit assessment scale that declares certain performance characteristics to be inferior. In this light, the failure is not the performers' but mine. More than this, having opened up the values of failure to interrogation, I am now uncertain about whether these contested performance features are failures at all.

The second effect of these failures of theatrical behavior is a postdramatic exposure of the real. On the surface, the transparency of untutored non-acting is a desirable quality that appears to admit access to an authentic persona and an authentic experience. By nominating the amateur performers "experts of the everyday," Rimini Protokoll deflects concern from

what they cannot do—act—to what they can do. The audience remits aesthetic judgment. Indeed, "the very fact that their words do not appear spontaneous, but rather as somewhat uncertain presentations by not-especially well-trained speakers paradoxically increases their appearance of honesty" (Malzacher 40). In *RARE*, a costume change is used as a simple metaphor to establish authenticity by rejecting theatricality and exposing the "real." Near the end, one by one members of the cast strip off the grey smock-like shirts they have been wearing to reveal T-shirts beneath. Some of the tees display attachment to favorite hobbies or express fandom. Some others are more explicitly connected to the politics of Down Syndrome. Anna wears a purple shirt with the logo from the television show *Glee*,[13] Nathan's shirt is a souvenir of playing in a Special Olympics soccer tournament representing Ontario, Ashaya's shirt cheekily declares "Keep calm. It's only an extra chromosome." We are to understand that these are "real" tees from the personal wardrobes of the performers and that these items have been specially selected to "speak" on their behalf. Removing their uniform costumes and marking the end of performance, this striking costume change is offered to signal a moment when they seem to revert back to themselves. Just as uneven or untutored acting skills and awkwardness mark autobiographical "experts" as authentic, likewise the change from "costumes" to "my real clothes" generates the same understanding. Consistent with what has gone before in the scripted portion of *RARE*, the T-shirts are intended to communicate something about "who I really am." But now the context of the message attempts to transcend the performance proper. These examples represent an attempt to shift the rules of the game from the indeterminate uncertainty of non-fiction to the fully determinate context of the actual world itself, unmediated by art. Although that said, it is a failed attempt as I am doubtful that this is in fact even possible given the immense fictionalizing power of the theatrical frame. Indeed, as argued above, secure proximity in the encounter with the stranger is an illusion—a fraught illusion that leads to facile and condescending conclusions about how easily the stranger may escape the theatrical frame to be assimilated as "just like me."

But there is another way to think about this tactic of stripping away theatricality to foster revelations of authenticity. Viewed through the lens of the poetics of the postdramatic, we can redirect attention away from the simple ontological status of the object as either fictional or actual to the co-constitutive processes whereby the object is transformed. Petra Kuppers addresses the misplaced attachment to authenticity specifically with regard to disability: "'Authenticity' is not the object of these performances: the emphasis is on the new created in the encounter, not on a presentation of an essential self, or a fullness of disclosure" (2). Although the attempt to shed the fictional frame and stand on the stage free of theatricality is as I have argued an impossible project and will not reveal unadulterated authenticity, the failure itself functions as a postdramatic device that draws attention to the now unsettled structures of theatricality. We are again uncertain: Are these indeed clothes or costumes? What aesthetic assumptions govern our ability to recognize what the performers are doing as acting or sharing their authentic selves? What is acting or authenticity in this particular kind of theatre? What distinguishes acting from recitation, the performance of character from the performance of self, representation and presentation on stage? These questions, of course, obtain for all performances. As Jacques Rancière notes, "To be a spectator is to be separated from the capacity to know and the power to act" (2). Spectators can never be

certain because opacity of production is a key aesthetic feature of contemporary drama. The focus then on theatrical artistry metatheatrically reminds us of the existence of the frame, emphasizing how even the ostensibly real speeches and actions are always also framed. The effect is one of persistent, undermining doubt. Bailes argues that the collision of reality effects with their functional failure remind us both of the art of making or expressing and the impossibility of doing so (9). From this insecure stance, we can consider what else the frame is doing. For example, we are invited to recall that "it is not about the contrasting of professionals and amateurs, or about "real" and "fake" people, but rather about the confrontation of perfection and non-perfection. [...] The work of non-perfection [...] casts doubt on the entire notion of directing people and their performances according to some definitive ideal" (Roselt 62). And so again, we are sharply brought back to reassessing what counts and what doesn't count; who counts and who doesn't count.

In addition to not being trained actors, the cast of *RARE* are not experienced theatremakers, and so again we in the audience are invited to open the roots of authorship and performance creation of the play we are watching to this same unsettling insecurity. In the case of *RARE*, Judith Thompson, with musicians Victoria Sweet (Toronto) and David Archibald (Kingston), and supported by creative and technical crews, employed professional theatrical capabilities to write, direct, stage, and ultimately to present the plays. The governing aesthetic of the production is to render this labour visible. The cast are often cued for the next section by the musician who announces the scene titles, the stage manager's voice can be heard prompting forgotten lines, and at the top of the show two assistant stage managers come out on stage to receive and stow the characters' masks as they are shed. When visible, this assistance ruptures the seams of the fictional world and the kind of theatrical virtuosity noted above. These ruptures or "failures" of traditional aesthetic forms are hallmarks of postdramatic theatre. But when this labour is invisible, a different kind of insecurity arises. Ahmed writes, "When the reflexive ethnography presents the native informant as equal co-author, it conceals the relations of force and authorization embedded in the desire to know (more) about strangers" (*Strange Encounters* 63). It comes as no surprise to any audience of documentary theatre that there have necessarily been selections made, edits, and omissions. We know this to be the case. But what we don't know, and what preoccupies us, like the gaps of nonfiction highlighted by David Shields, is precisely what has been omitted. In an interview for the Theatre Museum Canada artists' video archive, Judith Thompson talks to R.H. Thomson about the obligations of the professional playwright/director to an amateur cast of autobiographical subjects. She asserts that she is committed to "creating the play using only their words [...] I will not put my [...] unless there's a little stitching I have to do. And I mean with *RARE* there's a bit of stitching. And sometimes people just blanked and I say, 'Well what about this? Do you think this?' [Ultimately,] they had to endorse it [or else it wouldn't be used]" (Thompson, "Interview" 2:33-2:46). Here Thompson affirms what we suspect to be the case in this kind of work. Then, taking another step, she goes on to relate an example of a bit that she felt that she couldn't use in the play, even though as she says the actor, Krystal, was strongly passionate about it and made the statement several times during the devising process. Thompson reports that Krystal says "I want to have a romance with someone who doesn't have Down Syndrome." Thompson continues, "I couldn't let her say that." First, Thompson was concerned that it would hurt the feelings of the rest of the cast. Moreover, Thompson

Krystal Hope Nausbaum, Suzanne Love (backs) Judith Thompson (center). Andreas Prinz, Suzanne Love, Michael Liu, James Hazlett (back, reflection). *RARE* by Judith Thompson. Photo by John Grundy.

also thought that thematically this sentiment was at odds with the attitude of the play, which aims to assert and celebrate the shared cultural experiences of people with Down Syndrome (4:57-6:05). My intent here in reporting this revealing moment is to recapitulate the epistemological unsettling inherent in the unequal creative partnership between neurotypical theatre experts and non-expert autobiographical subjects, an inequality which is exaggerated by the performers' broad lack of formal theatre training combined with the labour division that puts neurotypical artists in the position of being able to censor and craft material generated by Down Syndrome performers. And with the information I have just here related regarding this one omission, we are now even more provoked to the frustrations of uncertainty by our newly heightened awareness of the myriad other omissions floating invisible in the ether. "If we cannot overcome the relations of force and authorization implicated in 'knowing' itself, then, is the answer to come to know how to not know" (Ahmed, *Strange Encounters* 72).

By way of conclusion, I must admit that what I have been doing here, perhaps perversely, is reading *RARE* through the wrong end of the telescope, as it were. Whereas the show is premised, like much conventional autobiographical work, on an open sharing of the intimate life of the self-storying subject, I am suggesting here that this project is, as all autobiographical performance is at some level, always doomed to failure. What is being produced here is not simply confident security and socially progressive illumination. We are thwarted by failure at every turn. And as Bailes notes, failure leads to unpredictable outcomes. There is no longer a single planned outcome but a range of outcomes that are indeterminate and prolific: "Failure *produces*, and does so in a roguish manner" (3). What emerges as a product of the insecurity generated here is the need to admit and bear witness to the impossibility of knowing strangers. Critically, however, ungraspability is here a positive value. The ethical encounter embedded in autobiographical performance is doomed to fail and perhaps that is a good thing. In the humbleness of insecurity, we are asked to strive without guarantee of success. In the combined attempt of two groups of unfamiliars to establish mutually democratic exchange, we are indeed, as Andreas exhorted, pressed to turn the mirror on ourselves and interrogate our assumptions not only about him and the ensemble as strangers, but more fundamentally about our own impossibly estranged desire for knowledge in autobiographical looking in the first place.

Notes

1 It is conventional in autobiographical performance criticism to refer to the eponymous character by first name only and to the performer by their full first and last name.

2 A workshop production of *RARE* premiered at Toronto's Fringe Festival in 2012 where it was a Patron's Pick. The following year, the revised play had an extended run at the Michael Young Theatre at the Young Centre in Toronto's Distillery District (28 January to 7 February 2013). The play was subsequently extended to 9 March. The Toronto productions featured nine performers—Sarah Carney, Dylan Harman Livaja, James Hazlett, Nicholas David Herd, Suzanne Love, Mike Liu, Nada Marie Christiane Mayla, Krystal Hope Nausbaum, and Andreas Prinz. In 2014, *RARE* was produced again in Kingston, Ontario with significant adaptations by director Kathryn Mackay and a new ensemble featuring Jacob Ballantyne, Kevin Beauregard, Erin Bennett, Natasha Daw, Ashaya Garrett, Anna Gervais, and Nathan Sikkema. In Kingston, *RARE* ran from 27 November to 6 December 2014.

3 See, for example, Bennett; Couser; Eakin; Egan; Heddon; Knowles, "Documemory."

4 See, for example, Garland-Thomson, *Freakery*; Chemers.

5 See, for example, Johnston; Peters.

6 I use the word "normate" here following Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's coinage of the term to reference the play's ostensible interpellation of its audience as uniformly able-bodied and ignorant of Down Syndrome culture (*Extraordinary* 8). However, when I saw *RARE* performed in Kingston in an adaptation by a local cast, the audience was notably not all as imagined, as the members of the original Toronto cast of *RARE* were present that afternoon, along with their families and supporters. Moreover, in Kingston *RARE* was performed in the physical space, and under the auspices, of the H'art Centre. The H'art Centre is a charitable arts-hub with a mission "to offer high quality opportunities for people with disabilities and those facing barriers to create, study, and produce works in the arts" ("Welcome to H'art Centre").

7 Similar statistics are not available for Canada. However Dr. Gregor Wolbring, an ableism and disability studies professor at the University of Calgary, says in an interview with the CBC: "Down's Syndrome, we all know has a termination rate of 90%" (Brown).

8 Morris and Alberman conclude that "the number of diagnoses of Down Syndrome has increased by 71% (from 1075 in 1989/90 to 1843 in 2007/08), whereas that of live births decreased by 1% (755 to 743), owing to antenatal screening and subsequent terminations. In the absence of antenatal screening and subsequent terminations, the numbers of Down Syndrome births would have increased by 48% due to parents choosing to start families later."

9 See Chamberlain and Strode; Simons.

10 See Stephenson, "Portrait."

11 Whereas the actual world is always wholly determinate with every detail complete, fictional worlds are by nature not fully determinate, that is they are full of holes where they do not accurately map the actual world in a one-to-one copy (Ingarden).

12 Two of the actors in *RARE* boast professional acting credits. Krystal Nausbaum appeared in the Emmy-nominated TV movie *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* and Dylan Harmann Livaja performs in *The Rainbow Kid,* which premiered at TIFF in 2015. Training and professional performance opportunities for disabled actors are notoriously difficult to access. Madeleine Greey, Krystal's mother, produced *RARE*, "partly, she admits 'so Krystal could work'" (Timson).

13 The popular high-school musical drama *Glee*, created by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk, and Ian Brennan, features character Becky Jackson who has Down Syndrome. Becky is co-captain of the Cheerios cheerleading team and minion of villainous Sue Sylvester, the cheerleading coach. Becky Jackson is played by actor Lauren Potter.

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