

Matters of the Everyday In-Between: Making the Relationality Ac/Count

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While there are many fruitful and resonant threads on which I could tug in my response to Selena Couture's "An Account of Durational and Distributed Encounters with *Corpus CTR*" (this issue), it is her chronicling of care-full encounter that has stuck with me.¹ In the spirit of Selena's cohabitation with the CTR archive, I invite you, the reader, to think of my offering as a visit.

Selena's account begins with reflections on the hegemonic function of archives and the strategies through which they can be subverted and activated toward environmental justice and social change. She considers this, in part, through the concept of "uncertain practice[s] of experimentation," which, as she points out, Punjabi, German, and Jewish literary scholar Julietta Singh argues might be "the most powerful method by which to exceed mastery's hold in the everyday production of the human through neocolonial politics today" (Singh 42, quoted in Couture, this issue 153). The summaries and data analysis that follow in her account speak to the histories, content, and contexts of this particular archive, providing a glimpse into the changing terrain of the study of theatre and performance in Canada over the timespan of *CTR*. This type of unflinching scrutiny of the archived (and unarchived) record is a vital practice for any discipline as it traces the intellectual desire-lines that have been trodden to get to where we are today. Such accounts can assist in moving forward with care in defiance of stances of mastery that turn away from footfalls that have been rendered less visible.

¹ I use the term "care-full" as a way of slowing down the idea of care and thinking of its activated capacities in terms of duration, depth, and resonance.

While cohabiting with *Corpus* unearthed important patterns and elisions over the timespan of *CTR*, it is the accounting of care-full encounter that rises to the surface in the conclusion. This discussion addresses the extended time Selena and *Corpus* spent together both actively and passively, the exchange between the *Corpus* and her colleagues who visited, and the engagement between writer and reader embedded in the words, pages, and volumes of *Corpus*. This notion of encounter—of uncertain relational experimentation—is discussed alongside a speculative calculation of the “human work hours” (162) involved in the creation of *Corpus* as a whole, 700,000, and 3,500 for each issue. Ultimately, the conclusion situates *Corpus*, and the encounters with it, at the intersection of the everyday, time, labour, and relationality. For me, the conflux of these elements reflects a sense of unhurried care, a principle and practice that is central to catalyzing environmental justice and social change, within or outside of the archive.

In my nearly twenty years in academia, informed by decades as a practising artist that preceded and ran concurrently with this period, I have thought a lot about the qualification and quantification—the value(ing)—of labour and the ways this correlates with relationship building. In this time, I have written with interdisciplinary, community-engaged artist, singer-songwriter and critical thinker Cheryl L’Hirondelle, who identifies as cree/halfbreed; german/polish, as well as with Tahltan Nation/French-Canadian performance artist and scholar Peter Morin about the trust, duration and friendship that forms the bedrock of our collaborations. This reflects deep, accountable, and reciprocal approaches to collaboration that are not directed toward outputs, although what we may call outputs can and sometimes do result. These approaches live in the spaces in-between: The spaces between individuals and communities who are differently affected by systems such as colonialism and whiteness, the incommensurable spaces in-between that Cheryl and I discussed when referencing Māori scholar Kuni Jenkins and Pakeha (settler) scholar Alison Jones’s concept of “working the hyphen” (L’Hirondelle and Decter; Jones and Jenkins), which is sensitive to the uneven terrain of political and social power dynamics. The spaces of trust we create in friendship in the time in-between the *work*, as Peter and I discuss in reference to our project, *x: where our paths cross* (Morin and Decter). The spaces between divergent practices, between strengths and vulnerabilities, between territories as we cross paths of ancestries, geographies,

commitments and accountabilities. These in-between spaces are also spaces of the everyday.

Selena's discussion of the "time when *Corpus CTR* was irrelevant and part of the background," when it was being "ignored" (162), reiterates the value of the in-between as well as the value of duration in the everyday. Here we can see connections between unhurried care and the uncertain experiment as a "powerful method" for disturbance within the context of "everyday production" (Singh 42). To function as an irritant to the status quo of settler colonial whiteness or any other hegemonic structure, or to stimulate environmental justice and social change, this resistance to mastery must both confront and be present in the everyday because this is where the status quo is quietly and surreptitiously replicated. The everyday *in-between* adds a liminal quality that can be mobilized as experimental, undirected, and generatively uncertain. In this way, as well as refusing mastery, it has the potential to defy the colonial value/s of productivity that are pervasive across Western culture and glaringly so in academia and creative sectors such as art and theatre. As time shared at the intersection of mundane activities and uncertain encounters, the everyday in-between can seed genuine, sustainable relationship building. This is the kind of relationship building that extends beyond the office, theatre, or studio door, the confines of the gallery or the page, and outside of workshops, residencies, and conferences, the kind that is not contingent or focused on production or advancement, mutual or otherwise.

These in-between spaces make a home for unhurried care. However, unhurried care and, I argue, the durational quotidian labour of its necessary relationality—the labour of the in-between—are generally unrecorded, unrecognized, and as such, excluded from records and archives. By archives, I mean to include those resulting from practices of reporting—the qualifying and quantifying that shapes academic culture. This inattention to accounting, both in the narrative and numeric sense of the word, leads to a lack of visibility, and this tends to result in a devaluing—or perhaps more accurately, a non-valuing. In turn, these biases contribute to replicating "relational" practices in academia that are often expedient, extractive and transactional as opposed to being based in care-full in-between encounters of trust, time, reciprocity and accountability.

Throughout my time as an academic—particularly the years from 2020 to 2025, when I held the position of Canada Research Chair in Creative Technologies at NSCAD University in Kijikpuktuk/Halifax—I was subject, as academics are, to yearly reports. These reports included such categories as Research Highlights, Research Funding, Industry Engagement, Quality of Training, Impact of Research Results, Knowledge Creation and Mobilization, and Research Collaborations. Certainly, such categories are relevant to metrics of productivity in academia. Moreover, they gesture to accountability, which is vital, particularly in the context of academics who hold privileged and relatively autonomous positions. The scope of this text cannot extend to a discussion of to whom they/we are accountable; however, I suggest that this remains an urgent question. That aside, I endeavoured to approach these reports as an opportunity to take account of and reflect on the activities, offerings, and evolutions of my work. I always meant to keep track of and report on the relationship building behind each of these categories, not within an existing category like “Research Collaborations,” but rather a category of the everyday in-between that recognizes the labour of building trust over time. This would include visits that are not transactional, that have no intention of output or objects of production. Visits that, nonetheless, or perhaps *because* of this, profoundly inform our practices through time spent sharing the everyday spaces in-between.

I failed to find a way to mark and account for these everyday encounters, to insert this category into my reports. This was at least, in part and ironically, because of both the labour involved in tracking them and the concern that the act of tracking might imbue these experiences with transaction and extraction. I also recognized the tensions between external scrutiny and excessive labour, on the one hand, and asserting visibility and value, on the other. I learned the importance of what is shared in the in-between from community-based art projects beginning in the early 2000s, from attending open-ended artist residencies, particularly those convened by writer, artist, and cultural organizer Ashok Mathur in the 2010s, from the collaborators I have been fortunate to work with, and from many other experiences. From this I know that we can learn a lot more from one another by revealing, taking account of, and valuing the everyday uncertain experiments in the in-between. In other words, the ways we honour these labours in our practices and in the archives that render value and visibility within the systems in

which we work matters, even if doing so in a sustainable, ethical way often poses significant challenges.

With this in mind, and in the spirit of Selena taking the time to make space for, and account for, the uncertain experimentation of non-extractive relationships, perhaps our visit here can be motivation to do the same—to make space in practice for activating the everyday in-between, the unproductive and the uncertain, all of which is crucial to making relationality with integrity. Perhaps it's a provocation to think about how real relationship building might be accounted and recognized in tandem with other labours in our practices, and how this might be accomplished in ways that preserve the very features that make it so profoundly valuable.

References

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