Introduction: Performance and Pedagogy

Peter Dickinson

When the editorial consortium of *Performance Matters* first conceived this special issue on "Performance and Pedagogy," I had no idea that its preparation would coincide with one of the most transformative teaching experiences of my academic career. This past spring semester I co-taught a graduate seminar with Dara Culhane, my colleague at Simon Fraser University, and the Associate Editor of this journal. Our goal was to combine theories and methods from performance studies and sensory ethnography to investigate various embodied sites of research and ways of knowing as they are increasingly practiced across a range of academic disciplines, including anthropology (Dara's departmental home), literature and the fine and performing arts (between whose units I teach), and gender studies (where Dara and I both have faculty affiliations). In the end, our biggest challenge lay not in soliciting support from our respective program chairs (we did so fairly easily, and with surprising enthusiasm for our initiative), nor in getting the required enrolment (we were oversubscribed), nor even in convincing our students to interrupt their discussions of a given text to engage in some breathing exercises, or a game of Simon Says (they were all eager and willing participants). Rather, the greatest irritant was figuring out how to cross-list the course across three different units, a performative impediment our university's information management system proved singularly ill-equipped to handle.

Irritants can sometimes be "productive," especially when it comes to teaching and performing across disciplines. This is something I learned from Dara, who in conjunction with our pedagogical experiment introduced me to Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright's *Contemporary Art and Ethnography*, in which the authors argue that one's occasional flummoxing by or frustration with the different epistemological and methodological frameworks deployed by another research practice can help to expose the variable ways in which knowledge is constituted and valued, as well as to open up avenues for the cross-influencing and co-creating of different categories of knowledge (2006, 1-27; see also Westmoreland 2013; and Malcolm Whittaker's article in this issue). In performing an expressly interdisciplinary pedagogy, Dara and I were thus seeking to needle our students into rethinking entrenched and siloed ways of disciplinary knowing by, among other things, drawing attention to how a focus on "the senses in arts practice" has developed "[p]arallel to … and in some cases in collaboration with interest in the senses in ethnographic disciplines" (Pink, 2009, 20). Following from Sarah Pink, we also wished to foreground how such research is always entangled with the practice of place (41−2), a particularly vexed question given the settler-colonial history of British Columbia. Finally, Dara and I wanted to challenge each other to account for how, in our own research practices, embodied knowledge is transferred, documented, and valued in both academic and community-based contexts. In this, we were aided immeasurably by Ben Spatz's recent book *What a Body Can Do* (2015), in which he argues that technique is what structures an "epistemology of practice" across the performing arts, physical cultures, and everyday life, and in which he makes a case for the development of a multi-media archive of new embodied techniques in these areas as a way both of cohering the specific knowledge claims of practice-as-research programs in the university, and of making those claims transmissible to others.

Initially it was scary for both the students and Dara and I to embrace Spatz's "blue skies" scenario of "'research without a clear goal,'" in which practice itself is both the means and the end of inquiry, in the sense of producing "new knowledge" through the practical discovery of "new technique"

(Spatz 2015, 219, 233). What sorts of projects would the students develop, and how would we, as instructors, assess them? In the end, our students found success in forgoing traditional divisions between thinking and doing, and in embracing a multi-sensorial and multi-media archive that placed performance and its analysis/documentation along a continuum of embodied eventness and scholarly duration. Likewise, Dara and I realized that whatever training we might be imparting to our students was tied not just to the individual expertise we were bringing to our discussions, but also to our weekly groping experiments in the classroom to tie that knowledge to some kind of material reality that exists beyond our respective disciplines (see Spatz 238). Pedagogy, in other words, takes practice. And since the practice of pedagogy, like that of performance, frequently "exceeds our ability to 'capture' or articulate it in words, images, or digital information" (Spatz 239), journal issues such as this one become a rich resource for the transmission of new techniques across a broad range of instructional contexts.

To that end, we open with Malcolm Whittaker's auto-ethnographic and practice-based account of his hybrid art/educational project, *Ignoramus Anonymous*. A support group for the uninformed that has toured libraries, art galleries and festivals throughout Australia, the performance piece seeks to model the ideas set forth in Jacques Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, in which the French philosopher argues that intellectual emancipation begins from a mutual acknowledgement of what we do not know—in order to teach ourselves what it is that we decide together *we want to know*. Comparing his own observations of the process with the feedback he has received from several participants, Whittaker argues that the performance of pedagogy on offer in the piece shifts the focus from content to context, with the sociality of support becoming the primary means of tutelage in this respect. Xing Fan also grounds her discussion of the challenges and strategic rewards of intercultural performance pedagogy in the unknown or unfamiliar. Reflecting on her experience teaching Asian performance traditions and histories to North American undergraduate and graduate students in both Asian Studies and Theatre and Performance Studies programs, Fan outlines three case studies (complete with sample syllabi and course assignments) in which she has had success prompting students to be more self-reflexive in thinking about the aesthetics and ideology of "foreignness," as well as their own classroom communication and presentation skills.

The next two articles are linked in their focus on the work of a single artist, and more specifically what that work has to teach its audiences. Mabel Giraldo and Dalila D'amico focus on the "tactical performances" of the British artist Sue Austin, who in her ongoing *Freewheeling* project challenges public perceptions of what a disabled body can do—by, for example, diving underwater in her wheelchair, or flying with it in a flexwing glider. Giraldo and D'amico argue that in creating such spectacles Austin is simultaneously enacting a "personalist pedagogy" for her spectators, in which capability and competence are viewed not in terms of the singularity of the performed task but as the sum of the conditions of possibility that enabled the performance. In their reassessment of the oeuvre of Mike Kelley, Mary Anderson and Richard Haley contest the received critical narrative on the American artist, arguing that the characterization of Kelley as "antagonistic," a "cruel master" imparting harsh truths to his ignorant public, overlooks the ways in which his entire archive— including essays and interviews—can be viewed as a game, one in which he invites his viewers to co-produce, over time and from artwork to artwork, the evolving meaning behind his practice. Drawing, like Malcolm Whittaker, on the writings of Rancière, Anderson and Haley suggest that this dizzying and disorienting relationship with content posited by Kelley—what the authors call his "psychedelic pedagogy"—simultaneously invites viewers into a social relationship with the artist, and regardless of a specific acknowledgement of that contract. In this respect, Anderson and Haley ask of Kelley an ethical question pertinent to any educational exchange: "if you decide someone is your

teacher, but that person has not agreed to teach you and, indeed, that person is no longer alive—what is the nature of your relationship?"

Pedagogical disorientation is also at the heart of the contribution by Vikki Chalklin and Marianne Mulvey, who in their discussion of three adult courses that they devised and delivered in connection with programming at the Tate Britain and Modern in 2014−2015 are likewise interested in theorizing audiences' performative and affective encounters with visual art. Taking inspiration from the queer phenomenology of Sara Ahmed, the authors recount their attempts to "queer" the institutional space of the art gallery by encouraging course participants to think "across" or "beyond" traditional boundaries relating to: objecthood and materiality; gender, race, and sexuality; the human and the animal; and formal versus informal contexts of learning. In so doing, they formulate a notion of the "trans-pedagogic" as that which accounts for the situatedness of all knowledge, but that also allows for movement "between spaces, disciplines, and modes of thinking," and for the transgressive and frequently transformative potential of "going beyond where one was before." As Chalklin and Mulvey suggest, and as my own experience co-teaching with Dara attests, this "going beyond" is more easily enabled—and often so much more rewarding—if it is undertaken collaboratively, and so it is perhaps unsurprising that so many of the contributions to this special issue have been co-written.

Supplementing the different instructional and performative frameworks outlined in the main articles, each of the essays included in the Forum section is concerned with bridging, at a pedagogical level, theory and practice. For Alice Lagaay and Jörg Holkenbrink this means discussing how, at the University of Bremen, the resident theatre company attached to Holkenbrink's Centre for Performance Studies is engaged not just in conservatory training or repertory productions, but also in active classroom interventions in other disciplines, applying performance-based methods to a discussion of different scientific concepts, for example, including in Lagaay's philosophy seminars. Similarly, in a reflection on a dance improvisation class that she taught in the fall of 2014, Harmony Bench asks how philosophy and physical movement can be brought together to generate new "techniques-for-living" that will ideally enable her students to navigate with more sensory awareness the complex social choreography of a world in which some bodies seem to matter more than others. In her essay Sima Belmar is also concerned with troubling entrenched mind/body dualisms in the academy; specifically, she reports on a symposium she organized at Berkeley in which scholars from a range of disciplines discussed how they incorporate their different somatic practices into their classroom teaching. Finally, Patrick Blenkarn intervenes in current debates lauding failure as both an aesthetic goal and a critical politics in much postdramatic theatre practice and pedagogy by offering a spirited critique of Sarah Bailes's influential book *Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure*. As Blenkarn suggests, the ennobling of intentional on-stage acts of failure in the work of celebrated avant-garde companies like Forced Entertainment, Goat Island, and Elevator Repair Service comes at the expense of attending to those moments in the studio when "not getting it right" can have serious professional and personal consequences.

The issue concludes with Kelsey Blair's review of Kathleen Gallagher and David Booth's *How Theatre Educates: Convergences and Counterpoints with Audiences, Scholars, and Advocates*. While this collection was first published more than a decade ago, its arguments remain pertinent to the current analysis, not least in contributors' unabashed advocacy of theatre as a teaching tool. It is our hope that the materials collected here will function as a similar resource for those of us, regardless of our

discipline, interested in theorizing—and practicing—the relationship between performance and pedagogy.

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An Artist's Ignorant Turn

Malcolm Whittaker

Introduction

Throughout 2013 and 2014 monthly meetings of my project *Ignoramus Anonymous* were held at libraries throughout Sydney, as well as in gallery and festival contexts across Australia. *Ignoramus Anonymous* is a support group for ignorance and participatory performance work that involves coming together with strangers to share and revel in what you do not know, and what you do not know that you do not know. In so doing, each meeting provides collective support for the ignorance that is latent in every individual, from the everyday to the increasingly complex. Nothing new is necessarily learnt at *Ignoramus Anonymous*, but the support offered is a form of pedagogy in itself.

That *Ignoramus Anonymous* is simultaneously a support group for ignorance *and* a participatory performance work is integral to the project. I will assert, after French philosopher Jacques Rancière, that the self-containment of the support group employs a "self-sufficiency" that does not rend art and life into separate spheres. It is the appearance of a form of life in which art is not art (Rancière 2002, 136). I will argue that the support group form that I employ brings a temporary micro-community together in which intellectual emancipation is theoretically possible because it involves turning away from explication by another and turning toward self-analysis, ignorance, and the unknown. To make this argument I will begin with an outline of the project, chronicling its development in relation to Rancière, and how the event is framed and orchestrated through "dialogical aesthetics" (Kester 2004). Then I will position the project in relation to the "educational turn" in contemporary art observed by curator and critical theorist Irit Rogoff and focus on what possibilities reside in the turning toward ignorance and what *Ignoramus Anonymous* might achieve in doing this. Finally, I will draw on the voices of participants of the support group as "productive irritants" (Schneider and Wright 2006) to clarify my argument and provide the necessary objectivity to provoke an active ongoing debate.[1]

I offer this analysis as practice-based research, from my perspective as the artist behind the work, where I am what critical Grant Kester refers to as a "context provider" rather than a "content provider" (Kester 2004, 1). In *Ignoramus Anonymous*, the context I provide is a space to converse and reflect on ignorance, and I do so through adopting the social form of the support group.

My Adventure Toward Ignorance Begins

In 2012, I was Artist-in-Residence at Waverley Council in the eastern suburbs of Sydney. This meant that I was provided a free artist studio space to use as I wished for six months, and in exchange for this I had to provide a "community benefit project" that stemmed from my art practice. At the time, I was reading Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991), which chronicles French schoolteacher Joseph Jacotot's "intellectual adventure" in 1818 whereby he discovered that he was able to teach what he himself did not know: the Flemish language. He concluded that not only was knowledge not necessary to teach, but explication was also not necessary to the act of learning. The results of his radical examination of pedagogy led him to announce that all

Malcolm Whittaker is an interdisciplinary artist, writer, researcher and performer based in Sydney, Australia. His projects have taken the form of theatre and gallery situations, site-specific and pubic interventions, performance lectures, film shoots, phone calls, support groups, walks in the park, letters in the mail, and the borrowing of books from the library.

people were equally intelligent, including himself and his students, and that it was only in the will to use intelligence that people differ.[2] Jacotot referred to his philosophical methodology as "intellectual emancipation." Rancière uses the case of the Jacotot methodology to elucidate his own position on emancipation in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, and he further extends his position in *The Emancipated Spectator,*[3] in which he applies these ideas to artistic practice. Rancière reconciles the learning student with the art viewer, musing that in both cases there is a stultifying logic of straight uniform transmission. "There is a something on one side—a form of knowledge, a capacity, an energy in a body or a mind—and it must pass to the other side" (Rancière 2009, 14). What you must see, feel, and think, as both student and spectator, is what is communicated to you. Rancière calls for such stultification to be overthrown, and to establish an emancipation from this problem of one-way uniform transmission of content.

The Jacotot story inspired me to undertake an adventure of my own. I began to consider orchestrating a school of ignorance as my community benefit project for the Waverley Council residency, similar to the "universal teaching" method developed by Jacotot. In the project, a range of local people would teach a range of subjects that they did not know. My rationale was that this could be a method for discovery, because both those teaching and those learning would be unburdened by the known and prescribed, and so the results would be in flux with unknown possibilities. As a nascent idea, it was an ironic subversion of what constituted a "benefit" for the community in the first place, particularly in the wake of the fraught ethics regarding "benefits for the community" observed by critics like Claire Bishop. Bishop articulates these ethics most comprehensively in her book *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, in which she seeks a more nuanced language to address the artistic status of such work, rather than discussing these practices solely in positivist terms and focusing on demonstrable "impact" (Bishop 2012, 18). Rancière's point in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* is not to prove "that all intelligence is equal. It's seeing what can be achieved under that supposition" (Ranciere 1991, 46). For Bishop, this means that equality is a method or working principle rather than a goal. Equality is continually verified by being put into practice (Bishop 2012, 266). Exploring such a supposition and its verification through practice was to become the centre of my burgeoning project.

What subjects would actually be delved into and "taught" at this school of ignorance, I wondered. There was so much that I was personally ignorant about that I was not sure where to begin. In a brief survey of locals I met with on the idea, there seemed to be a degree of difficulty for everyone in discussing what they did not know, and how their particular ignorance might be harnessed. Maybe a school of ignorance is not what was needed at all, I thought. Maybe I had exposed what was a genuine need for the community. That need was a space to discuss all this ignorance, the sheer extent of which was halting progress on realizing this initial idea of orchestrating a school of ignorance.

The focus of the community benefit project shifted from subverting a transaction of knowledge to being a support group for the overwhelming lack of knowledge that I believed everyone grappled with (or hid from) on a daily basis. My provocation was that when something is encountered in life that is not understood, then it should be questioned. If it is not questioned, then ignorance is being hidden from, even with gracious acceptance. The support group was to be a space to admit our ignorance by tapping into child-like questioning, a performance that encouraged a transformative turn toward the unknown. This shift that the work took was the first emancipatory turn of the project, because it meant that the work was now a conversation between equals rather than involving the power structure of a presiding "school teacher" figure. This is what emancipation means for Rancière: "the blurring of the boundary between those who act and those who look; between individuals and members of a collective body" (Rancière 2009, 19). Because a support group space lacked the power structure of such a boundary, I had

the hunch that it was charged with alternative possibilities to those of a conventional educational space. As the work manifested, I continued to examine how this might or might not be the case. I noticed, for example, that a support group for ignorance might embody such an idea of emancipation because the unanswerable questions raised through the meeting devolved pre-existing intellectual authorities and assumed logics and that the collective body of a micro-community could form in their place. In these temporary micro-communities, an equality could be observed in our ignorance. This is not to say that I was developing a utopic state with an assessable efficacy. Rather that, through Rancière's thinking on education and emancipation, *Ignoramus Anonymous* was exploring what can be achieved under the supposition that collectively turning toward what we don't know and understand can create equality. For Rancière, "equality is not given, nor is it claimed; it is practiced, it is verified" (Rancière 1991, 137) and through providing the context of a support group for ignorance I was researching how it might be practised or verified.[4]

When it came time to deliver my community benefit project, I held a support group for ignorance in a side room of the Waverley Council Library. I titled the project *Ignoramus Anonymous*, after Alcoholics Anonymous, and billed it as "a support group for the ignorant, i.e. for anyone and everyone." In attendance were a handful of community members, council staff, and colleagues of mine. On arrival, I welcomed each individual and offered them wine and hors d'oeuvres and encouraged them to take a seat in a circle of chairs I had arranged in advance. When it was time to begin I re-introduced the event and what it was all about and asked the group to share confessions of their ignorance.

The result was rather forced, and no one really wanted to join in. It did not help that there was a "know-it-all" in the group who put people off by lecturing those that did put forward their ignorance. In the words of another participant he became a "bad character" and upon reflection I should have gently reeled him in to explain that this was not a space for teaching but a place for support, and his condescension was entirely unsupportive. I did continue to encourage him to share his own ignorance throughout the event, but he was not interested or willing to do so, and such a position became common in a number of future meetings of the project. What makes the actions of such individuals into "bad characters" in the group is that they assert themselves into a role of master-explicator, which as Rancière says "stultifies by telling [others] that they can't learn without him" (Rancière 1991, 28). Explication is not called for or wanted at *Ignoramus Anonymous*, and when it happens the hierarchy we are turning away from becomes palpable and the community fractured.

The feedback from this community benefit project presentation, which was essentially a trial of the work, was that I had tried a little too hard to get people to dive right in and talk about their ignorance. It was felt that the unease from this beginning stayed throughout the meeting. Apart from this criticism, feedback was promising, and there was a consensus that genuine benefits could be envisioned from such an event in the future. Benefits speculated on included the creative and critical faculties that the "think-space" inspired, talking through alternate perspectives on life, hubristic flaws as entertainment to learn from, and even free therapy. In debriefing, I recognized the "art of conversation" necessary in the craft of the performance of my role, that role being to facilitate invisibly in a more subtle hands-off fashion. The "art must tear itself away from the territory of aestheticized life," as Rancière wrote (Rancière 2002, 147), and I must "disappear" as the artist and become one with/of the support group.

An Adventure in Context Over Content

Some months passed and then the Australia Council for the Arts launched a new grant to fund artist residencies at organizations where artist residency programs were not yet in place. The short-lived program sounded similar to a government-funded version of the British initiative led by artist couple Barbara Steveni and John Latham in the 1960s, the Artist Placement Group (APG):

> The [APG] was premised on the idea that art has a useful contribution to make to the world, and that artists can serve society—not by making works of art, but through their verbal interactions in the context of institutions and organisations. To this end [APG] organized placements or residencies for British artists in a range of private corporations and public bodies. (Bishop 2012, 164)
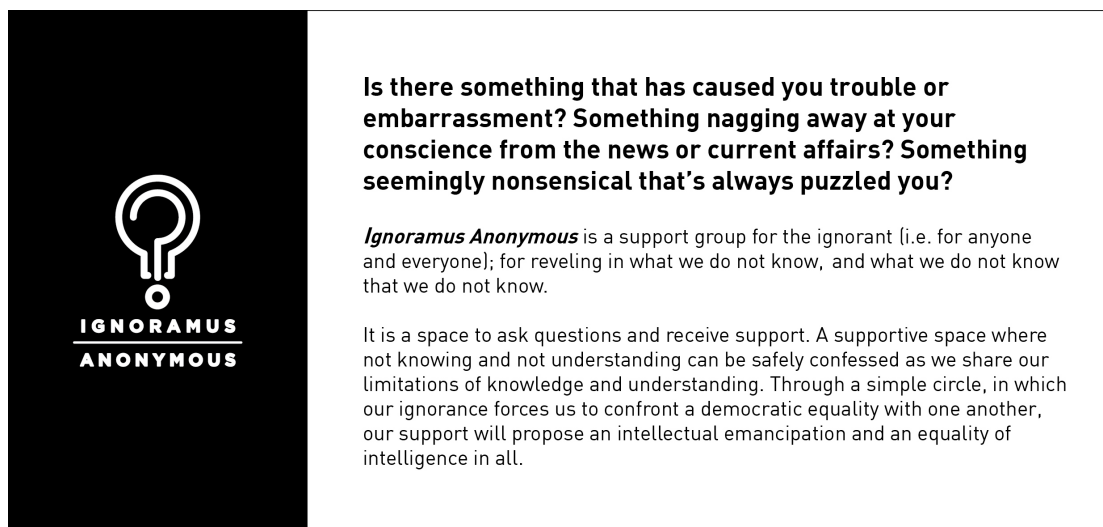
The APG's slogan was "the context is half the work," and it operated on the principle of pushing the artist out into society (Bishop 2012, 166). Like the Australia Council initiative, the APG was not only interested in the production of artwork as an outcome but also in reciprocal exchange, and learning and development from both parties. I managed to acquire myself one of these grants, making me artist in residence of the State Library of New South Wales. I was an "incidental person" (Bishop 2012, 164) at the organization, which was how the APG referred with much tactical humility to the artists that they organized residencies for, and I would use the residency to focus on *Ignoramus Anonymous*.

Context was half the work for me as well. Or even more than half the work. Context is what I am providing as an artist with *Ignoramus Anonymous*. This is how Grant Kester describes artists using a performative process-based approach, using the words of British artist Peter Dunn to articulate such artists as being "context providers" rather than "content providers" (Kester 2004, 1). Like Dunn's work, my practice also involves the creative orchestration of collaborative encounters and conversations, beyond the institutional confines of the gallery or museum (Kester 2004, 1). The context of *Ignoramus Anonymous* facilitated the manifestation of unknown content as a by-product of participating in self-analysis and verification, much like the context of Jacotot's pedagogical method, in which no pre-determined content is transferred either.

The first context for *Ignoramus Anonymous* was in situating itself in a similar space beyond the confines of an art institution, somewhere where the work would have a greater resonance and be more appropriate. I thought of the library as a perfect location for the work, where it would importantly also not be seen as "art" but more as an everyday "event" in a public program.[5] The second context for *Ignoramus Anonymous* was in the orchestration of the meeting itself. For this context of dialogical aesthetics, Kester suggests an image of the artist "defined in terms of openness, of listening . . . and of a willingness to accept a position of dependence and intersubjective vulnerability relative to the viewer or collaborator" (Kester 2004, 110). This is what I looked at harnessing in my second context, creating within the meeting a space of generosity from the commencement of the event.

I came to the idea of beginning the meeting with some guided meditation. I wrote a meditation text that focused on encouraging growing reflection on how little it was possible to know in life. I inserted honest examples of my own ignorance, and the text became demonstrative of how the project functioned. Through the meditation text, I was able to *establish the performance from within the performance*, without the terse outlining of rules or the need to encourage that I had commenced with in the earlier iteration of the project, or indeed without any frame of the performance as "art" at all. It was a Rancièrian refuting of "the hierarchical divisions of the

perceptible" and the "framing [of] a common sensorium (Rancière 2002, 150–51). For art historian Sophie Berrebi, Rancière's framing of a sensorium is the framing of "a way of being" but "in a context in which art has not been attributed a specific place" (Berrebi 2008, 2).[6] It is the framing of a consensual community "in which the spiritual sense of being-in-common is embedded" (Rancière 2010, 81). Now the sensorium of *Ignoramus Anonymous* began with my welcoming of individuals as they trickled in at the advised start time, based on advertisements for "Ignoramus Anonymous, a support group for ignorance," and I would memorize each person's name as I met them on arrival. I would offer them some hospitality and encourage them to take a seat in a circle of chairs. I would bring the meeting to a start by saying how good it was to see everyone there. I would go around the circle saying the name of everyone present. I would then explain that the event begins with some guided meditation to establish the meeting. I would suggest that it is best done with eyes closed, if agreeable, and then I would proceed with the meditation text.

Is there something that has caused you trouble or embarrassment? Something nagging away at your conscience from the news or current affairs? Something seemingly nonsensical that's always puzzled you?

Ignoramus Anonymous is a support group for the ignorant (i.e. for anyone and everyone); for reveling in what we do not know, and what we do not know that we do not know.

It is a space to ask questions and receive support. A supportive space where not knowing and not understanding can be safely confessed as we share our limitations of knowledge and understanding. Through a simple circle, in which our ignorance forces us to confront a democratic equality with one another, our support will propose an intellectual emancipation and an equality of intelligence in all.

Ignoramus Anonymous invitation example, which advertised the project at the libraries. Logo: Marissa Gillies, 2013.

At the conclusion of the meditation, there was often a pause as those present would open their eyes and look around the circle, waiting for someone else to speak and raise their own ignorance first. I would wait too, only intervening if someone looked like they had something they wanted to say but needed a little encouragement. Someone always had something to share and would do so after this initial moment passed, and then a question would be proposed.

From this point on the meeting would unfold, over the course of an hour, as what media critic Gail Priest referred to as an "analogue Google machine" (Priest 2014). As an analogy, it positions the support group circle as a DIY search engine that resituates the knowledge/ignorance and understandings/misunderstandings of those present as the content of the work.[7] The meeting exposes that knowledge and understanding are more lacking than first thought (particularly when cut off from the Internet). At *Ignoramus Anonymous*, we self-produce knowledge and understanding by reconfiguring our typical relationship with it, which is frequently a relationship of passive consumption to a superior master source. As Rancière points out, "the student is emancipated if he is obliged to use his own intelligence" (Rancière 1991, 15), and at *Ignoramus Anonymous* attendees have this obligation.

The mere consumption of knowledge is described in a foundational text of critical pedagogy, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) by Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire, as a "banking" model of education, in which a teacher deposits knowledge to the student. For Freire, this

reinforces similar subjugation and oppression in the learning individual, rather than inspiring awareness of their position as a historical subject capable of producing change. Bishop points out that Rancière omits from *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* the emergence of the critical pedagogy of the 1960s by the likes of Freire, despite similarities in championing an empowerment of learning subjects. She notes: "Unlike Rancière, it is significant that Freire maintains that hierarchy can never be entirely erased" (Bishop 2012, 266). For Freire, "dialogue does not exist in a political vacuum. Dialogue takes place inside some programme and content. These conditioning factors create tension in achieving goals that we set for dialogic education" (Freire 1987, 102). What the program of *Ignoramus Anonymous* seeks to do, through playing with the social form of a support group as performance (and with the conditioning factors that permeate intellectual hierarchies), is reconfigure goals of dialogic education: to encourage a turn toward ignorance, not necessarily for the pragmatic acquisition of knowledge, but to critically understand the possibility for equality therein. *Ignoramus Anonymous* proposes, like Rancière, that "we don't know that men are equal. We are saying that they *might* be . . . and we are trying . . . to verify it. But we know that this *might* is the very thing that makes a society of humans possible" (Rancière 1991, 73). That verification is taking place through the critical occupation of the social form of the support group.

An Adventure Through Social Form

Adopting social forms is part of what I do as an artist. In the 2011 "Creative Time Summit" on the major retrospective of socially engaged art *Living as Form*, artist and academic Ted Purves quoted sociologist Georg Simmel to define social form as "the mode of interaction among individuals through or in a shape [in] which specific content achieves social reality" (Purves 2011). The achievement of social reality through social form, for Simmel, is constituted by "reciprocal influencing" (Simmel 1909, 297) within the given mode of interaction. Purves delineates "social form" from "social content," with the content being the interest, purpose, or motivation of the interaction, and the interaction being the form. It is a space where reciprocal influencing is at play within the content, and the content achieves reality through the use of the social form.

I use existing social forms as ready-mades for re-framing as spaces in which audiences and collaborators participate in the work as a live performance. For me, the social form acts in place of Rancière's crucial third term in the process of the emancipation of the spectator: "spectacle" (Rancière 2007, 278). Rancière's spectacle, which derives from a Debordian situationist critique, mediates between the artist's idea and the spectator's feeling and interpretation, and he suggests that the spectacle produced by the artist is the thing to which these two other terms can refer in the process of emancipation. The occupation of the social form is similarly crucial for me in the process of emancipation, but the decisive difference is that the essence of human activity is not distanced or alienated from us in the exteriority of social form in the first place. The social form links people; it does not separate them, as Guy Debord observed the spectacle to do in his 1967 work of philosophy and critical theory *The Society of the Spectacle* (Debord 1994). It is my assertion that the shared space of the social form in *Ignoramus Anonymous* prevents stultification and that within the performance of social form the "aesthetic experience is effective inasmuch as it is the experience of that *and*" (Rancière 2002, 134). Rancière's italicized *and* is interpreted by Bishop as the necessary tension held between art *and* the social (Bishop 2012, 278). The performance of social form holds that tension, not collapsing the two but oscillating between the art and the social without ever quite being entirely one or the other.

In 1818, Jacotot used the bilingual edition of François Fénelon's *Télémaque* (1699), from which the students learned Flemish through comparing and contrasting with the French text they

understood. The book, for Rancière, represented the mediation between Jacotot as the pedagogue and his students. For Rancière, this book being foreign to both master and student is integral in his provocation toward intellectual emancipation, as "to prevent stultification there must be something between master and student" (Rancière 2007, 278). It was the "third term" to which the teacher and student could refer in the process of emancipation. In 2012, with *Ignoramus Anonymous*, my exploration of this provocation used the social form of the support group as a participatory performance that placed the mediation not just between an audience and myself, but *around* us in a temporal, self-mediating and democratic circle. A circle fittingly has no beginning/end or front/back, and when sitting in a circle everyone is equally viewable to everyone else. Education researchers Gert Biesta and Charles Bingham interpret such all-inclusivity as at the heart of democracy for Rancière (Biesta and Bingham 2010). It is my assertion that the support group circle is democratic for this reason and that the actions engaged in through the inclusive support group for ignorance are democratiz*ing* for this same reason.

The materiality of Jacotot's copy of *Télémaque* kept two minds at an equal distance, those of Jacotot and his students, whereas explication would have been "the annihilation by of one mind by another" (Rancière 1991, 32). *Ignoramus Anonymous* uses the support group to hold minds at an equal distance by similarly removing the act of explication and encouraging a turn together toward ignorance. For writer and researcher Steve Corcoran, the key principle of Jacotot's universal teaching method is to "go against yourself" (Corcoran 2016), in so doing understanding how you learn and the identifications you make, and demanding verification of what you say and think. The same can be said of the "turn" in *Ignoramus Anonymous*, in which those present demand a similar verification. It is a turn against ourselves and toward our ignorance. It is an ignorant turn in the wake of the much-discussed educational turn in contemporary art.

An Adventure in Turning

In her analysis of what has become known as the "educational turn" in art, Irit Rogoff reflects that learning itself is a series of "turns." She suggests that in a turn we are activated, as we shift *away* from something or *toward* or *around* something, and in so doing we learn. For Rogoff, in a turn, it is fittingly *who we are*, rather than *what it is*, that is in movement (Rogoff 2008). It is *we* who do the turning rather than the *subject*. The subject in the case of Rogoff's argument is education and the act of pedagogy itself. Rogoff calls for artistic practices to capture both the dynamics of a turn and the kind of activation that is released in the process of a turn. Advocacy for this drive that is released in the process of the educational turn in art is advocacy for the very act of shifting toward education in the public reception of artistic projects that deal with pedagogical aesthetics. Rogoff has difficulty reconciling this call, though, noting herself as being guilty at times of a fixation on the initial turn, toward education for the artist and curator, rather than what it releases in the viewers' experience of the artwork. It should be the viewer turning toward education and the act of learning, but for Rogoff the educational turn in art was a shift in artistic practice that did not necessarily lead to a shift in reception for commensurate "rethinking" by the viewer. The artist was turning but not necessarily the public. The educational turn in art

> signaled a shift away from . . . dominant aesthetics towards an insistence on the unchartable, processual nature of any creative enterprise. Yet . . . has led all too easily into the emergence of a mode of "pedagogical aesthetics" in which a table in the middle of the room, a set of empty bookshelves, a growing archive of assembled bits and pieces, a classroom or lecture scenario, or the promise of a conversation have taken away the burden to rethink and dislodge daily those dominant burdens ourselves. (Rogoff 2008)

For Rogoff, *conversation* was the most significant shift in the art world in the decade preceding her

2008 essay. She observes that *talking* has emerged as a practice, echoing Kester's earlier articulation of dialogue itself as an art form. In his book *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (2004), Kester champions "dialogical aesthetics" in which oral communication is the prominent centre around which the artwork revolves. Kester, like Rogoff, is interested in conversation for the possibility of outcomes outside of art institutions, and not simply for the avenue it provides to subvert dominant artworld paradigms. The artistic practices of verbal communication articulated by Kester can be observed to have many similarities with the pedagogical aesthetics in the educational turn noted by Rogoff. Indeed, the call from both Rogoff and Kester is for the turning of artistic practice to affect further turning in the public experience of the work, as both individuals and a collective, resulting in genuine *transformation*.

Transformation results from the rethinking and dislodging of dominant burdens. Rogoff refers to pedagogy as a dominant burden. The cause of the burden can be interpreted via Rancière's argument that the very act of pedagogy is necessarily subjugating of the individual because it asserts a primary authority from which knowledge is transferred. A dominant daily burden for the individual is more specifically on the other side of the pedagogical process, in what is *unknown* to them but *known* by someone else. This burden is a subjugating one for Rancière because what is unknown to the student is known by a therefore always superior pedagogue.

The artist is also always in a more knowing and superior place than the spectator of their work. Even in fields of naïve art and outsider art, where the artwork is produced by those who are untrained, or children, or have a disability, the artist still holds the superior position in the reception of their work because content is transferring from their side to the side of the viewer, usually in a one-way fashion at their instigation. For artists engaged in pedagogical aesthetics, then, rather than a turn toward education and what is known and transferred by one party or source to the other, what might be provoked by a focus on what is not known and a turn *together* with viewers toward shared collective *ignorance* and the *unknown*?

On a daily basis, each of us turns away from our ignorance. We do this to save face, to avoid embarrassment and conflict (both internal and external), and to retain the sense of identity that we have founded on what we believe we know. Cosmologist Carl Sagan gives an example of this in his introduction to theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* (1988), where he notes that it is only children who do not know enough to avoid stopping to ask really clever questions (Hawking 1988, ix). One such question might be: "Why does time move forward and not backward?" Adults on the receiving end of this question are most likely then confronted with their lack of understanding and ability to explain what is a fundamental law that governs life as we know it, particularly without sounding condescending to the child. In this case, the learning process that unfolds will likely trigger further questions in a situation more akin to an active conversation than the stultifying form of a lecture, in which the side of the student is often rendered subordinate.[8]

Imagine the humorous situation where the child continues to ask "Why?" in response to every answer the adult continues to give. The adult is increasingly confronted with his or her own ignorance as what is raised continues to feed back into the conversation in a reciprocal fashion. Every piece of knowledge drawn upon to answer the pesky child will only require more knowledge for clarification and confirmation, to a farcically infinite degree. Philosopher Roland Barthes makes the observation that writing is made up of a ready-formed dictionary of words that are only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely (Barthes 1977, 146). Similarly, an understanding of one particular subject only exists in its interplay with the understanding of other subjects, in such a way as to never rest on any of them, and suggests that conveying the understanding of any subject "can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior,

never original" (Barthes 1977, 146). Such a notion becomes palpable in this situation of a child's questioning, which is a situation at the heart of an *Ignoramus Anonymous* meeting. We continue to question each other, devolving the capacity for explication and overthrowing intellectual mastery.[9] Our "questions alone will be true questions compelling the autonomous exercise of [our] intelligence" (Rancière 1991, 30) because we have admitted our ignorance.

Confronting the inevitable lack of understanding and knowledge we have is a humbling experience. This experience, of facing how truly little we know, can characterize the beginning of a transformative turn. The transformation of this turn is not only the shattering of personal hubris. In the turn is also the release of an awareness of how little it is possible to know in life, and as such how little everyone else knows as well. The gaining of this personal insight when being questioned by a child, or at a support group for ignorance, could in itself be seen as the discovery of knowledge in the sense that "unknown unknowns" are made into "known unknowns."[10] Such a taxonomy of ignorance coincides with psychology professor Michael J. Smithson's articulation of the most popular distinction when it comes to ignorance as being "knowing that we don't know and not knowing that we don't know" (Smithson 2008, 210).[11]

Not knowing the unknown is key to the theory of subjugation for Rancière too. He notes in *The Emancipated Spectator*: "what the pupil will always lack, unless she becomes a schoolmistress herself, is knowledge of ignorance—a knowledge of the exact distance separating knowledge from ignorance" (Rancière 2009, 9). This is what empowers the schoolmaster. Reaching the known unknowns through the innocent questioning from a child or from *Ignoramus Anonymous* has come through sharing a reflective conversation and not a superior source, like a teacher or textbook that renders one subordinate. Such a teacher or textbook is always one step ahead in knowing the distance separating knowledge from ignorance. In so doing, this ignorant turning through reciprocal conversation and questioning, as opposed to educational turning, can be seen to represent an emancipation from the everyday hierarchy of intelligence.

In her reflection on the problematic educational turn in contemporary art, Claire Bishop dedicates an entire chapter of *Artificial Hells* to the subject, titled "Pedagogical Projects." She discusses artists such as Joseph Beuys, Tania Bruguera, and Thomas Hirschhorn in terms of their concern for education in their work. Locally, some of my peers were also showing an interest in the educational turn at the time of my developing *Ignoramus Anonymous*. Lara Thoms' *The Experts Project* and Dara Gill's *The Knowledge Barter Experiment* displayed an interest in knowledge economies and information exchange.[12] Both are examples of local Australian artists who have developed projects that implement processes of teaching and learning, encouraging participants to identify areas of their own expertise and positing these participants as teachers, employing the democratic sensibility of many barter-based exchanges where teacher becomes student and vice versa (Meagher 2011, 27). *Ignoramus Anonymous*, on the other hand, is about an emphatic turn away from what is known and can be transferred by teacher or student, or indeed artist or spectator, and a turn toward what is unknown and nontransferable. While Thoms and Gill engaged a playful subversion of the explicator role, this role was still in fact in place. Writer and curator Anneke Jaspers considers this the distinctive counterpoint of *Ignoramus Anonymous*:

> Here, the contemplation of ignorance "as a cultural phenomenon" is privileged over teaching and learning. . . . By virtue of its democratic structure, the work also encourages storytelling, speculation and the contestation of different perspectives: a mode of active formation rather than passive reception . . . while it occupies institutions in the business of cultivating expertise, *Ignoramus Anonymous* circumvents the kind of "pedagogical aesthetics" typically associated with the so-called educational turn in art. (Jaspers 2014)

My argument is that *Ignoramus Anonymous* makes this circumvention through the playing with/of a distinctive social form, taking the work beyond being an artwork involving pedagogy and into simultaneously being the autonomous event of a support group. As such, it is important for me to now turn to the voices of others who participated in the event.

An Adventure With Others

The reconfiguring of the support group form and the initial turning toward ignorance begins with the meditation text at the commencement of each *Ignoramus Anonymous* meeting. Jaspers refers to this opening as a monologue that "operates as an allegory for the work at large, self-consciously representing its entanglement of play and serious enquiry," after which my "hand in the remainder of the sessions is unobtrusive" (Jaspers 2014). Indeed, theatre-maker and writer Mark Rogers noted that after this opening the meetings tended to follow a pattern of:

> 1. Someone revealing their ignorance. 2. Someone else informing them or speculating an answer to the lacked knowledge. 3. The group deciding this practice of "filling in the gap in knowledge" to be not in the spirit of the session and then proceeding without too much more correcting or informing etc. (Rogers 2016)

Rogers' suggestion of this "spirit" of the group highlights the disappearance of myself as the artist, a disappearance recognized by dramaturge Jennifer Medway, who notes that I wasn't "positioned as authority from the moment the questioning started and instead became another participant" (Medway 2016). Medway considers that the support group formula has a beginning but not necessarily an ending and that this is important. "It's a form that has no final requirement (no required denouement/climax/third act/required resolution of a conflict)" (Medway 2016), and so the artist is no longer central once the meeting has been begun. This aligns with Rancière's assertion that "the circle of emancipation must be begun" (Rancière 1991, 16) in that I am calling the meeting to order, and in so doing drawing the metaphoric circle of emancipation through the quite literal support group circle. For Rogers, there was a feeling of a sense of a script or behavioural code embedded in the social form of the support group. He suggested that perhaps "it is this minimal level of 'playing along' that allows the group to be so open with each other . . . using the 'fiction' to arrive at the actual feeling of connection" (Rogers 2016). Here Rogers use of the term "fiction" can be read as the representation of a support group that proves real through the community it forms, through a Rancièrian art and non-art tension held in place through the fiction. For Rancière fiction is not a term that "designates the imaginary from the real; it involves a re-framing of the 'real' . . . building new relationships between reality and appearance, the individual and the collective" (Rancière 2010, 141), and I believe this to be the fiction of *Ignoramus Anonymous*.

There is a distinction between those who would have experienced the project as a participatory performance and those who would have experienced the project as entirely legitimate support group. Medway wondered if she perhaps thought of herself differently within the project than the rest of the group because she came with knowledge of my past work, and if she felt a sense of superiority because she knew the artistic frame of the project, whereas she was of the opinion that others were present at an actual support group meeting (Medway 2016). This is in contrast to her aforementioned view of me as no longer an authority within the project. In the space of the performance, I was not an authority to Medway, but she internally thought of herself as an authority. Medway also wondered if she retained perceived hierarchies around class, level of education, sobriety, and the mental health status of others present at the meetings she attended.[13] Medway had this inclination seemingly because of her insight into the performance frame. Regardless, both she and Rogers agreed that a certain "levelling of a playing field" was made

through the ignorant turn of the meeting.[14]

Such is the tension that was at play in the meeting that it is impossible to reconcile the project as either wholly "performance" or "support group."[15] It is also impossible to assess the actual emancipation and transformation attained through the project. Artist Christie Woodhouse wrote of the "glimpse of potential of emancipation" she experienced in the project and the feeling of an "invitation and gentle support" to go further if one wished (Woodhouse 2016). It this *potential* in the project that I am writing of here and that Rancière wrote of in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster.* Both are about *contexts* for what is potential.

That potential was found for artist Jane Grimley through the opening meditation, which she felt guided her, as she put it, "into a safe place of ignorance with strangers and it felt enough like a playful game that I was ready to be irreverent with my own ignorance and that of others" (Grimley 2016). Grimley, the most frequent attender of all *Ignoramus Anonymous* meetings,[16] "started to consider all meditations as some sweet acceptance of the empty vessel" that she felt individuals ultimately were. Such an expression corresponds with thoughts that arose for me throughout the project: that we are all equally ignorant of the infinite amount of what there is to know. Consider this understanding as represented in the diagram below:
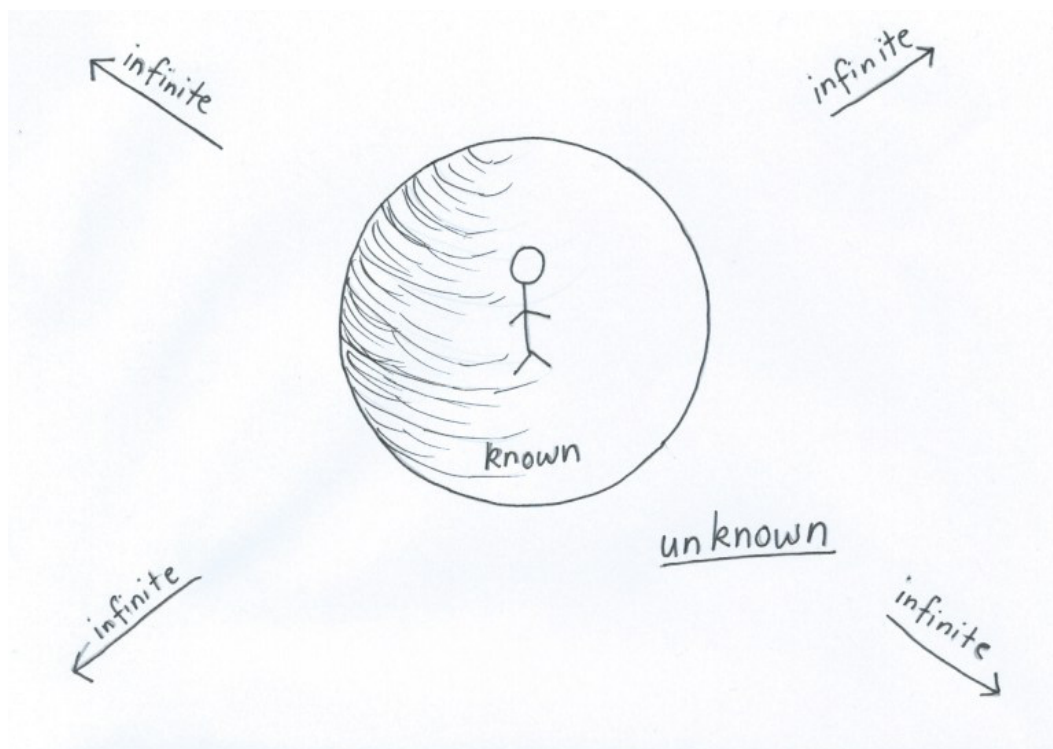

Diagram representing the sphere of the known, surrounded by the infinite unknown.

Some people may feel like they know more than others, or they might actually know more, or what they know might possess more cultural value or cachet and provide them with a higher paying or more lucrative job. In fact, we are all ignorant. Our ignorance surrounds us. We each live in a bubble of belief, familiarity, and specialization, a bubble of what we know.

Consider this bubble as more of a sphere, with an individual at the centre. The sphere can grow, when, for example, swing-dancing classes are taken, or where a country is on a map is learned, or when one becomes aware of certain machinations of how their place of employment works. What is known is increasing, and so too is the sphere that the individual occupies. The sphere might even grow to be bigger than the spheres of others. The size of these spheres becomes a

hierarchy, particularly in how the content is valued by other people in other spheres. One primary evaluation of the content of a sphere is what can earn the most money or provide the most power, but there are also specializations. Take swing dancing as a further example. If an individual has swing dancing in their sphere, then that has a particular value in a particular community. In that community they are a "good dancer" and superior to others, but it might not necessarily translate outside that community.

Or think again of the parent of the pesky child who relentlessly asks the question: "Why?" This parent probably *does* know more and does occupy a larger sphere than the child. Here is another diagram, which we could say represents that parent, with the earlier diagram representing the child:
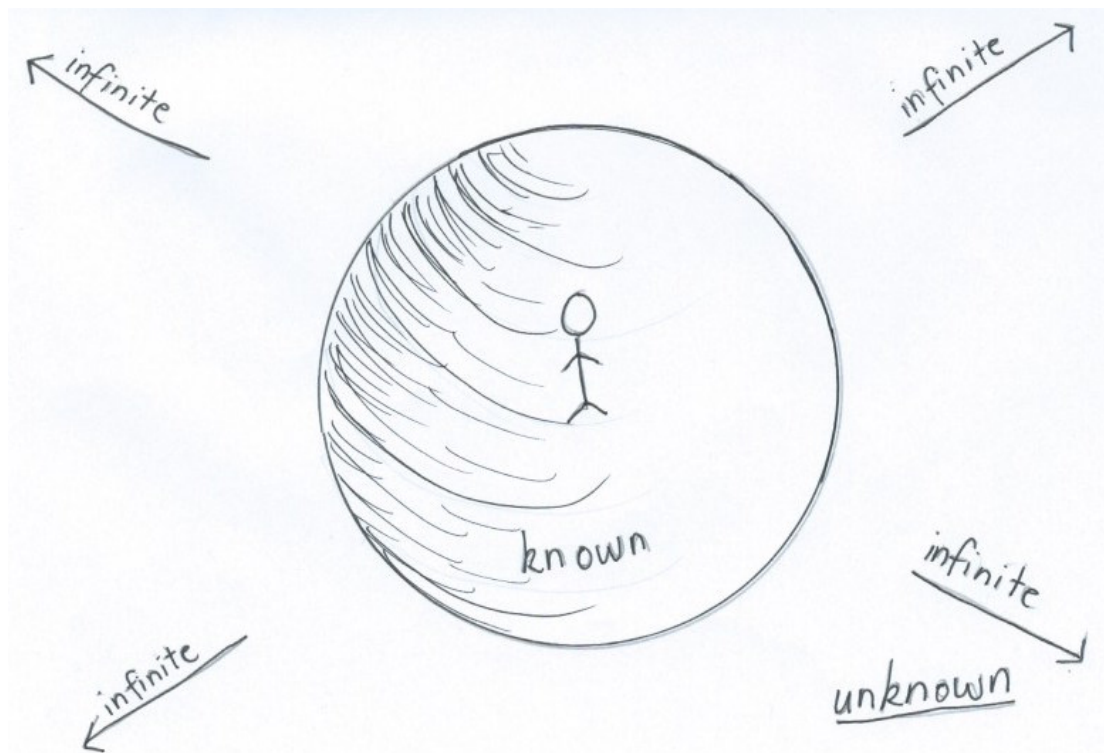

Diagram representing a slightly larger sphere of the known, still surrounded by the infinite unknown.

Regardless of how large the sphere of an individual is, outside that sphere the unknowns are still infinite. For Martin A. Schwartz, a professor of medicine and biomedical engineering, this is a crucial lesson: the scope of things unknown isn't merely vast; it is, for all practical purposes, infinite (Schwartz 2008). In relation to the unknown outside the finitude of the sphere, there is an equality in how little everyone knows together in the bigger scheme of things. A turn toward ignorance, then, which lies in every direction if only the individual would open their eyes and take notice, is an emancipatory one. It collapses both those hierarchies and what informed them in the first place. An individual might know how to save lives, but does he know how to Charleston? Another individual might know how to trade on the stock market, but does she know how to submit a practice-based research paper to a peer-reviewed journal? What is the validity of this knowledge in the first place? How do we all know what we know, how do we know it is true, and what is its value?[17] Schwartz argues that focusing on questions to which you don't know the answer puts you in the awkward situation of appearing ignorant, and that "productive stupidity" means making a choice to be ignorant, i.e. choosing to turn toward the unknown and ask the question. He recognizes that no doubt reasonable levels of confidence and emotional resilience help to ease this transition from learning what other people once discovered

to making your own discoveries. The more comfortable we become with being stupid, the deeper we will wade into the unknown and the more likely we are to make big discoveries (Schwartz 2008). It is my suggestion that *Ignoramus Anonymous* creates this convivial resilience, potentially leading toward transformative discoveries.

Over the course of an *Ignoramus Anonymous* meeting, spheres of the known fluctuate in size, as beyond the generally convivial banter that forms the first layer of the work a sincere self-reflexivity is prompted both during and after the fact (Jaspers 2014).[18] Jaspers notes that "the realisation of some things that we don't know, or half know, or thought we knew—and how these implicitly reflect certain attitudes and biases—can be acutely unsettling as well as genuinely transformative" (Jaspers 2014). This transformative turning toward taking note of our ignorance means that our spheres of knowledge also grow, as unknown unknowns become known unknowns. Known knowns also fluctuate into known unknowns through personal reflection and questioning ourselves and each other of what we truly understand, without a superior authoritative source such as a teacher or textbook (or Google).

Conclusion

New knowledge comes about by pushing at the unknown (or at least accidently dipping your toe in it), and that is always going to be unsettling (or surprising) on some level. On the surface of each of the spheres that we occupy is where the known meets the unknown, where knowledge forms and pedagogy happens. Turning toward what is outside the sphere and relating it to what is inside—this is the form of pedagogy that Rancière wrote about Joseph Jacotot in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and what is explored in *Ignoramus Anonymous*. Both are forms of pedagogy that come not from looking toward what is already known by others, but from what is unknown in oneself and from what is happening on the surface of our spheres. Both provide a context rather than content. Turning toward ignorance through *Ignoramus Anonymous* will help these spheres grow, but it will also humble the cultural value of what is inside the sphere and birth the possibility of a democratic community forming through the impossibility of knowing everything outside of each individual's sphere.

Making this turn through the performance of a support group for ignorance means operating at the dual horizon Bishop observes necessary, of facing toward art and the social field, "testing and revising the criteria we give to both domains in a double finality that avoids the work becoming 'edu-tainment' or 'pedagogical aesthetics'" (Bishop 2012, 274). It is a case of art involving the social process of most effective education, as Barthes suggests of the teaching relation, not of teacher to taught but of those taught to each other (Bishop 2012, 274). *Ignoramus Anonymous* brings these relations into play through the considered choreography of a simple conversation that crystallizes a sense of emancipation.

In a conversation I had with Jaspers at the conclusion of an *Ignoramus Anonymous* meeting she attended at the State Library of New South Wales in 2014, I referred to the social form of the support group as the "conceit" of my project. I meant that it was my artistic device for facilitating what I have described here as an ignorant turn. Jaspers disputed the word, though, feeling that it tended toward metaphorical allusions of the function of the work and away from the genuine support group that the performance was. Here I have shown how *Ignoramus Anonymous* might act as a metaphoric conceit for further exploring Rancière's theories of intellectual emancipation and be akin to a genuine pedagogical support group that uses conversation to elicit a turn toward and a discovery of that which we hardly pay attention: our ignorance.

Notes

1. Schneider and Wright propose (2006) the term "productive irritants" as a method for describing interdisciplinary conversations between artists and anthropologists. I use it here to describe conversations I had with serial participants of *Ignoramus Anonymous* that I tracked down in early 2016. *Ignoramus Anonymous* was a free walk-up event, and to honour it as a support group I never documented a single meeting. Given this, I have no record of who attended what meetings. This was slightly problematic for the gathering of information to write a paper. It meant I was only able to engage colleagues in feedback and not any strangers who attended from the general public. This limited feedback was generated through email conversations after I distributed an early draft of this paper to colleagues who I recalled attending multiple *Ignoramus Anonymous* meetings.

2. A contemporary rendition of the Jacotot narrative can be observed in the 1999 *Hole in the Wall* project in which poor young Indian children figured out how to use a PC on their own, in a foreign language, and then taught other children. This is recounted by educational researcher Sugata Mitra in his 2007 Ted Talk *Kids Can Teach Themselves*. For more on the project see Mitra (2007).

3. *The Emancipated Spectator* was originally presented, in English, at the opening of the Fifth International Summer Academy of the Arts in Frankfurt in 2004. That text appeared in *Artforum* in 2007 and was then slightly revised and re-published in 2009. I will refer to both these versions.

4. It feels important to note that a large part of this research took place through looking back in 2016 at the accumulation of experiences associated with the project. Analysis is ongoing as *Ignoramus Anonymous* meetings continue to be held sporadically.

5. Both the State Library of New South Wales and Waverley Library, where *Ignoramus Anonymous* went on to be held as monthly meetings, had a regular fixture of public programs into which the project fit.

6. This is part of what Rancière terms the "aesthetic regime" of art, which is "constantly caught in a tension between being specifically art and merging with other forms of activity and being" (Berrebi 2008, 2). For more on Rancière's regimes of identification of art see Berrebi (2008).

7. I would contend that this analogy is slightly off the mark. "Googling" is about filling in gaps in knowledge and understanding, whereas *Ignoramus Anonymous* is about recognizing, accepting, and sitting with your ignorance, in discussion with others. It is not a place for teaching; it is a space for support. It is a space for wondering rather than answering. After each question is raised at the meeting a conversation unfolds on that subject until the next question is raised.

8. This idea of learning through conversation is not new. It can be seen represented in the extensive writings of Plato's *Dialogues*, where several characters often dispute a subject by questioning each other. Writing in this way allowed a multiplicity of perspectives to be rendered and enabled the reader to draw their own conclusions as to the most valid (Hare 2010). However, the reader was not taking part in the dialogue. The question being asked in this paper is: What would happen if the live audience were to participate in such a dialogue? For examples of the Plato dialogues see Hare (2010).

9. *Ignoramus Anonymous* attendee Anneke Jaspers recalls discussing questions including "the crisis in Crimea, how an electrical switch operates, why February is a shorter month, the difference between Aboriginal clans and nations, the origin of one's name, why we have a Senate, how to roast a chicken, the meaning of neoliberalism" and discussing each "with an attendant sense of puzzlement, frustration and guilt" (Jaspers 2014). Another participant, Jennifer Medway, recalls that when asked, no one in the group knew beyond the first verse of the national anthem and that in so doing a collective ignorance was revealed (Medway 2016). A recurring question I would ask the group was why they believed the Earth was round and revolved around the sun, instead of a flat disc supported on the back of a giant turtle.

10. This is rhetoric adopted from former United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld at a US Department of Defense News Briefing in 2002 (Rumsfeld 2002). In the now infamous briefing, Rumsfeld acknowledged that the unknown unknowns were the most difficult category.

11. Smithson prefers the terms "conscious ignorance" and "meta-ignorance" (Smithson 2008, 210), which further suggests that known unknowns are preferable to unknown unknowns because the awareness of an individual of their ignorance means that at least there is a limit to that particular ignorance.

12. More on these projects can be read and viewed online in Meagher (2011).

13. Medway wrote to me of one meeting in particular: "There was a guy there who was for all intents and purposes a bigoted man, but who may also have been coping with a mental illness. . . . What started as a tirade against Muslims became accounts of having seen angels and been told information by voices no one else could hear. This was combined with a woman who . . . was there for an argument, there to be open with her opinions and thoughts and who challenged this man quite readily. It was clear that neither of them had come to a performance . . . they were all there and committed as attendees of a support group for ignorance. This conversation went on without mediation from you. At no point did you become an authority and break the understanding of us all being on the same level. In fact, it only ended when the man left (a very relieving moment for us all)" (Medway 2016).

14. Both Rogers and Medway used the analogy of the levelling of a playing field.

15. *Ignoramus Anonymous* was eventually presented in the form of monthly meetings at the State Library NSW and Waverley Council Library (Sydney), and then at the Performance Space "Sonic Social" program at the Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney), as part of the Festival of Live Art at Arts House (Melbourne), at Launceston Library as part of the Junction Arts Festival (Launceston), at The Wheeler Centre (Melbourne) and at the Bondi Pavilion Gallery (Sydney). In this paper, I focus just on the library presentations of the project, which the project was originally made for and most conducive within. The important tension between art and non-art is retainable within a library because, as mentioned in Berrebi (2008), "art has not been attributed a specific place" in such a context.

16. Grimley wrote: "I liked using them [the meetings] as places to bring dates. I wanted to learn about how my dates thought. Which ideas and people attracted them in the group, and what they might offer as their own ignorance. I wanted to see if they liked to think in interesting patterns. I liked showing off my ignorance too" (Grimley 2016).

17. Grimley noted of *Ignoramus Anonymous*, the appearance of the "subjective nature of all experience" and that the transfer of knowledge always requires a great deal of faith in others (Grimley 2016).

18. On this durational character, Woodhouse recalls "when leaving the room, the conversation went on in my head as I thought of many other things that I was ignorant of or could have brought up, that weren't triggered at the time" (Woodhouse 2016).

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Where Should We Start and What Could We Do?: Asian Performance and Pedagogy

Xing Fan

Prelude

What does "Asian performance" embrace, on page and on stage? What are some of the effective—and less effective—pedagogical methods and practices? How may I better design course projects to stimulate and assess student academic progress? And why do this in the first place? Contemplating these questions while studying and teaching Asian performance in North America has been, though sometimes frustrating, always thought provoking and rewarding. Several critical incidents from my journey highlight the necessity of further reflection on these fundamental issues.

Scenario #1: A professional *kabuki* performer leading an acting workshop was teaching a dance sequence to students—I was one of them—at the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Hawai'i. The artist asked us to imitate his movements in slow motion and paused occasionally to adjust student poses. Quickly, students began asking, "Which hand moves first?" "Should I point my fingers like this?" "Is my weight on the right foot?" Their constant inquiries puzzled the teacher so much that he commented in a very polite way afterwards, "They had many questions," which, in my understanding, meant "Why did they ask (instead of watching)?" Some years later, while teaching *jingju* (Beijing/Peking opera) movement sequences, I found myself facing the same situation as my *kabuki* teacher, though at different schools—the Department of East Asian Studies at Bucknell University, the Asian Studies Program at Bates College, and the Centre for Drama, Theatre, and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto. Students took the experience seriously and wanted to imitate well, but the task of visually grasping and physically embodying an unfamiliar style, to be manifested simultaneously with steps, eyes, hands, and body, seemed extremely daunting, and therefore they turned to verbal instruction for rescue. Pedagogically, a challenging moment like this offers a golden opportunity to discuss topics such as the significance of using observation for the teacher, student, and audience member; the reasons for repetitive imitation being an integral part of training; and the magnitude and dynamics of the master-disciple relationship in not only *kabuki* and *jingju*, but also many other Asian performance forms.

Scenario #2: For the course "Shakespeare in Contemporary Asia," I find the most challenging objective is to nurture student aesthetic sensitivity in order to facilitate communication regarding cross-cultural adaptations in an academic context. The student assignment in which I had the least confidence for its practical component, but which later proved to be the most successful, was the "scene-replication and reflection paper." Students worked in small groups and replicated a short section of a theatrical scene—mostly lasting for three to five minutes—from *Othello* (Dir. Kurita Yoshihiro), *Lear* (Dir. Ong Keng Sen), or *Romeo and Juliet* (Dir. Oh Tae-Suk). These short sections incorporate Asian performance materials and involve music, movement, and other vocal work but not spoken text. In their reflection papers and course reviews, many students identified this practice-

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based project, despite all their struggles with it, as the most beneficial assignment as it prompted them to reflect on such critical issues as originality and authenticity, internationalism and cultural identity, presentation and aesthetics, postcolonial modernity, and spectatorship.

Scenario #3: I once asked students at the University of Toronto about their expectations for the class "Theatre and the World." One response was, "I hope that I will learn about not only Asia, but also performance in Australia, Brazil, and Africa." Although the student's curiosity regarding unfamiliar performing traditions in a global context was credible, the answer struck me for two reasons: 1) Asia and Africa were conflated as countries, while Australia and Brazil were identified discretely; and 2) the assumption seemed to be that a one-semester medley of "a little bit of everything apart from the Western tradition" *would* be feasible and *could* contribute as an effective complement to students' Euro-centric learning experience. Granted, a course on "world theatre"— and it may span over more than one semester in some schools—is a common offering in many university-level educational institutions in North America; while the specific content depends on the instructor's expertise, the course's primary goal and value lies in the belief that it broadens student learning experience by covering theatre in places other than Europe and North America. This in itself might be taken as a justification for its academic legitimacy and pedagogical feasibility. And this cultural bracketing is not confined solely to North America. In the Academy of Chinese Traditional Theatre in Beijing, for students other than those in the Department of Dramatic Literature, the elective "Western Theatre" is often a one-semester, irregularly offered course covering "all" theatre in Europe and North America. And according to Jerri Daboo's communication with her student, in a university in Thailand, ballet, tap, jazz, and modern dance are bracketed in the module for "Western Dance" (Daboo 2009, 126).

Revisiting "Asian Performance": Concept and Scope

In the 2015 Annual Conference of the Association for Asian Performance (AAP) in Montréal, Canada, Jennifer Goodlander, an assistant professor in Theatre History, Theory, and Literature at Indiana University, and also a vice president of the AAP, hosted a roundtable discussion entitled "Defining the Field—What Is Asian Performance?" Goodlander (2015) proposed a series of fundamental inquiries in her initiative statement: What is Asian theatre? Who makes Asian performance? Where does Asian theatre take place? What kind of performances and artworks are considered Asian performance? Six participants joined Goodlander in addressing such critical issues as the primary disciplinary approaches involved—and more should have been included—in studies of Asian performance, the accomplishments and unfinished agenda of Asian performance's historiography, the interrelationship between "studying a form" and "performing a form," the magnitude of the effort to train students to perform Asian theatrical forms in educational and other contexts, the role of playwriting in studying Asian performance, and strategies to address pedagogical approaches in course titles and descriptions. With rich, inspiring, and diverse case studies from participants' first-hand studying and teaching experience, the roundtable discussion challenged both presenters and audience members to revisit the concept and scope of "Asian performance," a timely, courageous, and ambitious move. I call it ambitious simply because it seems to be an impossible task, given how fast this field has been expanding. A survey of a tiny portion of scholarship—those aiming at an introductory survey of Asian performance—may open a window to this growing discipline.

Asian performance entered North American theatre curricula during the decade immediately after the Second World War (Brandon 2011; Jortner 2011). Early academic endeavours were understandably efforts generated by single researchers, which was a challenge when presenting such a vast area as Asia, and a national—that is, country-based—practice was set from the very beginning. In *Theatre in the East: A Survey of Asian Dance and Drama* (1956), Faubion Bowers offers what he calls "essentially a journalist report on what dance and drama in Asia is like today, where it is found, and how to understand it from a practical and theatre point of view" (Bowers 1956, 361). Bowers's book surveys fourteen "nationals," including Hong Kong and Okinawa which were under the control of the UK and the US respectively, in an effort to briefly cover both traditional forms and modern theatre, introducing an array of performance forms including ritual dance, dance-drama, religious performance, social dancing, puppetry, and opera. Compared to *Theatre in the East*, A. C. Scott's *The Theatre in Asia* (1972) offers more detailed empirical knowledge of Asian theatrical performance as total theatre, introducing the integration of music, movement, and poetry peculiar to these forms, and how they evolve with time. With significant detailed attention to performance practices, Scott covered fewer countries, focusing on India, China, and Japan and omitting those in Southeast Asia, but complemented that emphasis with a separate chapter on "the Islamic World" (Scott 1972, 79–125), acknowledging the influence of the religious doctrines of Islam and Islamic civilization.

The Cambridge Guide to World Theatre (1988) opened a new chapter of theatre studies in a global context; James R. Brandon pinpointed its significance: "One of its great values was its ecumenical placing of European, North and South American, African, Arab, Oceanic and Asian theatres side-by-side and page-by-page throughout that substantial volume. It made a forceful statement that Euro-American theatres could no longer be the standard by which other theatres of the world were to be judged" (Brandon 1993, vii). This groundbreaking volume was the foundation and starting point for *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre* (1993), edited by Brandon and "designed to provide, within the space constraints of a single volume, an overall description of the theatre that evolved in Asia and the Pacific over the course of 2000 years, and of the performances that exist in this region today [1993]" (Brandon 1993, vii). Brandon's book follows the nation-based structure, but raises the study of Asian theatre to a higher level in many ways: in addition to the chapter on Oceania, it expands the coverage of Asia to nineteen countries (including Hong Kong which was under UK control in 1993); it contextualizes the current status of theatre in historical development, effectively linking past and present; it dedicates separate and specific entries to performance genres and performing artists, thereby offering a unique wealth of information; it lists important publications in this field and leads the reader to the best scholarship for further exploration; and it is a collective effort by leading scholars.

As the study of Asian performance became systematic, and as scholarship delved deeper into the study of performance in many individual countries,[1] thematic concerns in this field became increasingly important. The challenging balance between geographical and thematic concerns is accomplished in the *Routledge Handbook of Asian Theatre* (2016), edited by Siyuan Liu, which includes four parts. Part I surveys traditional theatre in India, China, Japan, and Indonesia. Part II explores dimensions of traditional Asian theatre, including dance, music, masks, puppets, costume and makeup, and architecture, with reference to those discussed in Part I, and their influence on other theatrical cultures. Part III surveys modern theatre in East, South, and Southeast Asia. And Part IV examines critical issues of modern and contemporary Asian theatre. Liu explains the structure of this study as follows. "It adopts a hybrid structure that seeks to balance country coverage with thematic discussion and cross-region comparison, give equal weight to spectacular traditional forms and vibrant modern and contemporary practices, and showcase recent scholarship" (Liu 2016, 2). This

handbook actually accomplishes much more. By contextualizing the relationship between classical performance and modern theatrical practice in critical thematic analysis of issues such as how spoken theatre uses traditional elements and how traditional theatre adapts to modern times, it presents a complex and intriguing picture that goes far beyond introducing the current situation of classical performance. By presenting—side by side—the historical context of national traditional performance and the thematic discussion of significant components of performance practices in multiple theatrical cultures, it concisely draws a larger picture of Asian performance aesthetics while combatting the homogenization of Asian performance traditions. Finally, by complementing the discussion of modern and contemporary Asian theatre with critical issues such as gender performance, colonialism and colonial modernity, intercultural theatre, and modern musicals in Asia, it successfully contextualizes Asian theatre studies within important scholarly disciplines such as gender studies, cultural studies, and post-colonial studies, among others.

From Bowers's *Theatre in the East* in 1956 to Liu's *Routledge Handbook of Asian Theatre* in 2016, the development of Asian performance studies during the past sixty years has been conspicuous and exciting. In this context, the challenges accompanying the concept and scope of "Asian performance" are also present. First, studies in Asian performance have been heavily focused on theatrical performance, while many other types of Asian folk performances such as folk dance, folk storytelling, and folk music demand closer academic attention. Second, Middle East performance has been a somewhat ambiguous component in the geographical scope of this field. Among the aforementioned survey scholarship, Scott's *The Theatre in Asia* (1972) has been the only one to include performance from the Islamic world. During his tenure as the president of the AAP (2011–2015), Siyuan Liu has been a passionate advocate for sponsoring paper panels for Arabic and Arabic-American theatre at the Association for Theatre in Higher Education conference, and he laments that the *Routledge Handbook of Asian Theatre* is confined to theatres in South, East, and Southeast Asia (Liu 2016, 2). Third, with increasing intercultural and international collaborations and with growing globalization, the concept of "Asia" in the context of Asian diaspora and Asian diasporic performance calls for further exploration.[2]

What Can I Do, In Class and In This Paper?

The accomplishments in Asian performance studies and the challenges accompanying the endeavours to define its concept and scope only prove that, as with other courses in higher education, what an instructor can do best may be to introduce students to appropriate knowledge and experience so that they sense what they do not know, to nurture their curiosity about the unknown, and to equip them with the academic and intellectual tools with which to explore further on their own. Although writings on pedagogy in this field have been limited in contrast to the wealth of excellent scholarship on Asian performance, they raise thought-provoking questions. For example, Jerri Daboo discusses Asian forms of bodymind training, established by Phillip Zarrilli, at the University of Exeter's Department of Drama. Contextualizing the discussion within both Paul Ramsden's notion of "a deep approach to learning" (Daboo 2009, 121) and her first-hand teaching experience, Daboo reflects on questions related to "exoticism, mysticism and appropriation" (Daboo 2009, 126), highlights challenges of training time and space, offers insights into ethical issues, and questions the marginal location of Asian performance forms in the curricula. Stacey Prickett examines the master-disciple tradition in South Asian dance in the current global context, within the two primary locations of India and Britain (Prickett 2007). Based on an analysis of teacher-student interaction modes, curricular construction, and assessment methods, among other

issues, Prickett presents a picture of the complex and continuously evolving interactions between traditional and contemporary training approaches to South Asian dance in both India and Britain.

In this paper, I offer further reflections on the challenges and strategies involved in teaching Asian performance to non-conservatory students in North America based on my experience teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses, and in both Asian studies programs and theatre departments. In the four schools where I have studied and taught, the demographics of student bodies are palpably different. However, according to my experience, students in mid-Pennsylvania (Bucknell University) and southern Maine (Bates College) are not necessarily less open-minded than those in metropolitan schools (the University of Hawai'i and the University of Toronto). Furthermore, students' majors do not seem to play a significant role in their learning experience in this field—those majoring in Asian Studies, East Asian Studies, Japanese, or Chinese, though with less experience onstage, are more familiar with Asian civilizations and the cultural settings of Asian performance; theatre majors, on the other hand, though often joining the class with no previous exposure to Asian cultures, are more comfortable talking about and participating in performance practices.

With specific case studies drawn from courses that I have taught, I discuss pedagogical approaches in three areas: 1) strategies of using interaction among the multiple aspects of language, musicality, costumes, scenery, and use of space to nurture student awareness of foreign aesthetics in both visual and aural dimensions; 2) evolvement of project design that takes advantage of textual analysis to foster critical thinking in dealing with foreign ideology; and 3) challenges and strategies to strengthen students' oral communicative skills with regard to Asian performance in an academic context.

The Power of Hands-On

In teaching Asian performance, aesthetic concepts are often challenging, because the sense of beauty and the communication of this sense are culture-specific. For example, verbal explanations of "stylization" in Chinese classical performance—even with audio and visual sources—are often abstract to apprehend. When an instructor's language is the only medium to assist students' audio and visual experience, it does not break the barrier between students—as spectators—and the concepts in discussion. In this case, I have found that the most effective pedagogy is to integrate practice into theoretical and aesthetic studies. While introducing the key concept of "stylization" in Chinese traditional theatre, I use *jingju* as the case study and design multiple one-hour-workshops with small projects to assist students' cognitive experience.

I use William Dolby's translation of *Hegemon King Says Farewell to His Queen* as the class reading for *jingju*,[3] and all workshops involve performance practices in the most important scene, which features Queen Yu's sword dance with song. I begin with a movement workshop, which introduces students to fundamental stage-steps, basic gestures for hands/palms, fingers, and fists, and a simple movement sequence. In choreographing the movement sequence, I integrate some basic poses from Queen Yu's dance so that students will gain physical familiarity with the body language as used onstage. During the workshop, we work on co-ordination, paying close attention to how eyes follow hands, how this leads to the torso's subtle movements, and how the core should control the entire body.

The movement workshop is followed by a voice workshop in which students experience specific techniques regarding breathing, vocal placement, and resonating cavities. I use Queen Yu's set-the-scene poem, also her self-introduction, to showcase the musicality in speech. Students receive the four-line speech in Romanized Chinese verse with English translation and are encouraged to take notes, using self-invented signs to denote intonations. After some initial surprise, hesitation, and embarrassment, most students are able to focus on vocal imitation. And following this experience, in the second half of the workshop, we learn Queen Yu's aria, which accompanies her dance. Students receive the music of the aria, with Romanized Chinese lyrics and English translation, and the association between lyrics and movements is revealed. At the end of the voice workshop, I demonstrate Queen Yu's dance with song and invite students to join me in whichever way they feel comfortable. Even though some students do not physically imitate what I do, after the experience of the two workshops, they are able to identify some of the salient performance elements in this scene and therefore begin to understand a bit more about *jingju* performance from the inside.

When time allows, I include two other workshops: *jingju* percussive music patterns, and *jingju* costumes. In the former, students are introduced to basic methods of vocalizing the percussive instruments in *jingju* orchestra and learn three to four important patterns used in Queen Yu's scene. In the latter, they put on standard robes used for refined female characters in *jingju* and review the movement sequence we practised earlier. Although Queen Yu does not wear a standard robe in this particular scene, this experience is important for students to understand the interrelationship between *jingju* costumes and *jingju* body language.

This sequence of workshops serves as a solid foundation for further in-class discussions during which students approach *jingju*'s style already aware of the interactions among its multiple aspects: from the intonation patterns in stage language to the conventions in speech and principles for melodic embellishments in song; from the coordination between vocal and physical performance to the cooperation between performers and orchestra; from the challenges in body control to the costumes and scenery required by this type of acting; and from the pursuit of well-rounded acting to aesthetics in visual and aural dimensions. This workshop sequence introduces students to the inside experience of the performance tradition. Although it appears overwhelming to first-time participants, the concept of how major artistic aspects are intricately linked to each other—the key stylization of *jingju*—is made clear through hands-on activities.

Being Critical vs. Being Disapproving

I consider critical thinking an integral part of a liberating education we offer students. My definition of critical thinking in arts and humanities encompasses four skills: the ability to pinpoint the question at issue; the competence to identify the hidden assumptions of an argument; the capability of delineating one's reasoning from evidence to arguments, and then to conclusions; and the capacity to reflect on diverse perspectives when analyzing an issue. I find my role of cultivating critical thinking, especially in classes addressing artistic creation in the context of ideological issues, both a pedagogical challenge and a valuable resource for the students.

Students often enter the first class meeting of "Theatre and Politics in China" with such keywords as "propaganda" and "censorship" dominating their thoughts. This oversimplified perception severely limits their critical thinking activities: some assume that the course is about the chronicles of artists being prosecuted under prevalent ideology. For students having this assumption, "being critical" and

"being disapproving" become indistinguishable, and this positioning actually compromises their analytical capabilities with regard to what really takes place in the realm of drama, theatre, and performance in China.

To facilitate a more sophisticated methodology of student inquiry, I have been polishing a pedagogy that combines critical reading, textual analysis, and in-class discussion during the early phase of the semester to set the tone of the class. This project focuses on Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art," the primary text for this course. This text, delivered in 1942, set the foundation for the Chinese Communist Party's ideological interpretation of literature and art, and their relationship to politics, thus prescribing all cultural policies of the People's Republic of China. My pedagogical goal is to lead students to an in-depth examination of CCP leaders' vision for the new culture, the major components of this vision, and the reasons for this vision. In other words, it is critical to understand how the CCP makes sense of culture before determining whether their assessment makes sense to us.

The project design has evolved through three major versions. In the first phase, I described the assignment via one paragraph on the syllabus: "Paper #1 (5–8 pages) should provide an original, thoughtful, detailed, and well-written analysis of Mao Zedong's 'Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art.' Paper #1 is due on Jan. 31. Paper should be typed, paginated, double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around, and with proper footnotes and bibliographic entries. Follow standard MLA style in your writing." I quickly realized that this instruction was inadequate, because about half of the students appeared to be distracted by Mao's authoritative, and sometimes aggressive, rhetorical style, several students only discussed the first half of the talks, and most of the class rephrased Mao's arguments instead of analyzing his points.

I made two adjustments in the course's second iteration: I worked out guidelines for this assignment (see Appendix 1) and assigned a chapter in *The Search for Modern China* as background reading. With five proposed questions as a suggested point of departure and with some background knowledge of the CCP during WWII from the reading, most students were able to focus on the content of Mao's talks and address its major arguments. But I felt further guidance was necessary because some students offered subjective reactions instead of objective analysis, and the majority of the class tried to cover more than one major argument and did not delve deeply into analysis.

Based on these observations, I further revised the assignment (see Appendix 2). Students are now required to focus on the first three questions proposed in the previous phase and analyze only one major argument in Mao's talks. Also, I clarified important expectations and emphasized objectivity, fairness, and awareness of context. In addition, I used about half an hour of class time for a brief lecture on the Rectification Movement in Yan'an and the specific historical context for Mao's talks, and I introduced important interpretations contributed by Mark Selden, Merle Goldman, and David Holm as the academic context for this project. From student papers, I feel that the third version of the assignment helps students focus on the substance of Mao's talks, and the historical and academic contexts make it easier to orient their analytical activities for this paper.

Depending on the length of the semester, the paper is submitted during the second or third week of class, and we use an entire session for in-class discussion of the text. With their writing assignment accomplished, most students bring to class a general knowledge of the major arguments in Mao's talks and have conducted an acceptably thorough analysis of one argument. This allows me to organize the discussion around two tasks: in-depth analysis and reasoning. During the first half of

class, I invite students to group themselves around one argument of their choice and, after ten minutes of discussion and note-taking, each group reports to the class, focusing on their understanding of the deeper meaning of the argument. For example, addressing Mao's argument that "the new literature and art should be for the proletarian," a student group might explain what it means for a literary and artistic piece to be "for the proletarian." With guidance, students are often able to examine layers of meanings contained in an argument, the inner structure of these different layers, and how a particular argument relates to Mao's vision for the new culture in China. I spend the second half of class on a discussion of the flaws in Mao's talks, focusing on identifying hidden assumptions of his arguments. In building on their work for the writing assignment and the in-depth discussion just finished, it is easier for many students to address the reasoning in Mao's argumentation and move beyond the level of (dis)agreement with his opinions. We wrap up the session with a reflective discussion on critical thinking activities involved in our understanding of this dense text.

How to Learn What to Ask

Assisting students to develop oral communicative skills in the academic context of Asian performance studies has been a long-term challenge in my teaching. To nurture a substantive in-class discussion is not easy for any classroom, but when the topics are related to an unfamiliar culture and/or ideology, it can be especially difficult. During the last several years, I have been polishing the pedagogy of training students as discussion leaders and have found this process both frustrating and inspiring.

I apply different approaches to graduates and undergraduates. In my graduate seminar on "Theatre and Politics in China," each student conducts a presentation on a specific script, a production, or a practitioner; on the day of presentation, they lead the in-class discussion of that day's reading assignment, which is closely related to their presentation topic. All students are requested to propose at least one discussion question on Blackboard, our online portal; it is the discussion leader's responsibility to organize questions proposed by other class members, to propose their own or add additional questions if necessary, and to guide in-class communication. With the double responsibility of presenter and discussion leader, students are able to bring to class a more in-depth comprehension of discussion topics, and this often enables them to organize a discussion more effectively. In the next phase of this ongoing process, I plan to revise three aspects of the project, with the goal of helping both the class and the discussion leaders to be better prepared for their in-class communication: 1) I will request the class, often consisting of ten to fifteen students, to respond to one online question proposed by a peer, so that their conversation will be ongoing before the class takes place; 2) discussion leaders will conduct a five-minute commentary on the discussion forum on Blackboard, offering his/her academic observations, so that the class will be familiar with what their peers may bring to the discussion; and 3) I will invite discussion leaders to recommend two to three titles that they have found particularly helpful for their own research and explain their choices.

In my pedagogical experiments, undergraduates need more carefully designed instruction. Part of the challenge is class size: I often have twenty to thirty students in the undergraduate course "Asian Performance." The size of this class precludes a productive class discussion, so my strategy is to conduct breakout sessions. I assign five to six discussion leaders to a particular day, and each of them leads a small-group discussion with four to five students based on questions they each bring to

class. After the breakout sessions, discussion leaders report to the class in a roundtable discussion (see Appendix 3).[4]

Students were immensely enthusiastic about this format. However, while the majority of the group could readily engage their peers, they needed guidance on proposing quality questions for discussion. Some students, when not sure how to make sense of Asian performance practices, tended to resort to superficial comparisons such as "Do we have a similar practice like this in the West?" Some students, with a passion for the unknown, tended to ask questions out of curiosity—"Why do you think the art of *bunraku* uses three puppeteers?"[5]—though no one in their group had the knowledge to further the discussion. And other students turned to assessment before delving into important concepts, with questions such as "Do you think *rasa* is a good way to describe performances?"[6]

Based on these observations, during the second round of pedagogical experimentation, I made two major adjustments: I now request discussion questions in advance and work with discussion leaders for one round of revision and, after the discussions, leaders are required to compose a reflection paper (see Appendix 4).[7] By facilitating at least one round of question revision, I have the opportunity to encourage students to design open-ended questions; I can remind students of the differences between "what I would like to know" and "what may lead all of us to a deeper understanding of it"; and I can challenge students to shift attention to the performance in discussion, rather than to focus on how we feel about them. With some guidance, some students are able to revise "Do we have similar practice like this in the West?" into "What are some similarities and differences between practice X in Malaysia and practice Y in the US? And how does this relate to their cultural contexts?" The reflection paper allows discussion leaders to further consider the entire process, thus offering another opportunity for students to engage critically with their learning experience. Towards the end of the semester, the class collectively reflects on the qualities of productive discussion questions, and their list often indicates an awareness of such important characteristics as open-endedness, consideration of context, self-evaluation of assumptions, and correlation of different perspectives.

Coda

I turn to my dilemma at the end of this reflection, because this journey—with exciting experiments and rewarding pedagogies—also presents intriguing, open-ended questions. After some years of teaching Asian performance in North America, I begin to realize that time is my biggest challenge. I say this for three reasons. First, many Asian performance forms, especially classical performance, have a history easily lasting for hundreds of years. These traditions came into being over a long period, and they are still developing. Is it necessary for students to understand this? I strongly believe so. But I have not yet found an effective strategy—simply to notify them of numbers and years does not offer insight into the meaning of time. Second, the experience of going through performance time is an integral part of many traditions in Asia, but it causes a pedagogical dilemma because our semester does not allow ample time to live it through. For example, the climactic moment of Atsumori dropping his sword at the end of a *noh* performance would only make sense if the class watches the entire performance in order to understand the meaning of every minute in this process, during which the tempo gradually builds through the ninety-minute piece.[8] A fast-metre section of a long aria in *jingju* would sound nothing but rushed if the class does not listen to its free-metre prelude, which is followed by multiple sections in other metres, in order to understand the power of acceleration in conveying emotions in melodic composition. The final night performance

of a *kuttiyatam* performance would appear simply as a show with a cast[9] if students do not have the experience of watching multiple nights of solo performance, allowing them to grasp the significance of the cumulative event after characters have been introduced one by one in advance. And last, the concepts of "traditional," "modern," and "contemporary" in interpreting Asian performance are troublesome. For many practitioners of Asian performance, "now" is part of tradition, and tradition lives through consecutive moments of "now."

Overall, my strategy for the challenge of time is to have faith in the time that is available to me. It involves carefully designed plans for the use of class time. For example, when it is difficult to dedicate a big portion of one class meeting to listen to a long *jingju* aria consisting of an array of metrical types, it is often possible to prepare the student by inserting a brief reference, with a short soundtrack or a section of one, to specific metrical types in prior class sessions on other topics, such as singing, dance-acting, and orchestra. With this exposure, it is much easier for students to tune into the world of musical composition, even with abridged versions of those long arias. Ultimately, this faith in time is about making peace with contributing to the curriculum only within the space that it allows. I join other colleagues' lamentation regarding Asian performance being placed at the margin of the curricula.[10] On the other hand, given that theatre did not become an independent academic subject—that is, acknowledged as worthy of department standing in a higher educational institute—in the US until 1914 (Kindelan 2012, 55), the growing prosperity of Asian performance in theatre curricula construction in North America is palpable and encouraging.

In 1965, the American Educational Theatre Association refused to recognize an interest group of Asian theatre or African and African-American theatre; the deal was to form a joint "Afro-Asian Theatre Project." Recalling this segment of history, James R. Brandon lamented that the two groups of scholars, teachers, and performers were turned down for similar reasons: being too small and unimportant—in the AETA officers' eyes, of course (Brandon 2011, 283). This "Afro-Asian" connection always reminds me of my student's expectations for the course "Theatre and the World": "I hope that I will learn about not only Asia, but also performance in Australia, Brazil, and Africa." But a major difference between the two reactions to Asian performance, fifty years apart, is that, though being unfamiliar with the subject matter, the student indicated a strong desire to study. Perhaps this is where we should start and continue to do what we can.

Notes

1. For example, the field of Chinese theatre studies has contributed excellent scholarship for which it is impossible to compile an exclusive list of monographs, not even including numerous journal articles. But the following titles may serve as a point of departure the reader. For historiography, see *Chinese Theater: From Its Origins to the Present Day*, edited by Colin Mackerras (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, c1983), Joshua Goldstein's *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-Creation of Peking Opera, 1870–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, c2007), Andrea S. Goldman's *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770–1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), Siyuan Liu's *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), Ye Xiaoqing's *Ascendant Peace in the Four Seas: Drama and the Qing Imperial*

Court (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, c2012), and Paul Clark's *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For performance practices of particular performing genres, see Elizabeth Wichmann's *Listening to Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, c1991), Alexandra B. Bonds' *Beijing Opera Costumes: The Visual Communication of Character and Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, c2008), Jin Jiang's *Women Playing Men: Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), and Bell Yung's *Cantonese Opera: Performance As Creative Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, c1989). For performers, see Li Ruru's *The Soul of Beijing Opera: Theatrical Creativity and Continuity in the Changing World* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, c2010), Min Tian's *Mei Lanfang and the Twentieth-Century International Stage: Chinese Theatre Placed and Displaced* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), and Ying Ruocheng and Claire Conceison's *Voices Carry: Behind Bars and Backstage During China's Revolution and Reform* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, c2009). For dramatic literature in translation, see *Eight Chinese Plays from the Thirteenth Century to the Present*, translated by William Dolby (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals: Eleven Early Chinese Plays*, translated by Wilt L. Idema and Stephen H. West (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2010)—among many other translations by Idema and West—, *The Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, edited by C. T. Hsia et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), *The Peony Pavilion*, translated by Cyril Birch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c1980), and *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Drama*, edited by Xiaomei Chen (New York: Columbia University Press, c2010). For political theatre and theatre during the Cultural Revolution, see Xiaomei Chen's *Acting the Right Part: Political Theater and Popular Drama in Contemporary China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, c2002), Barbara Mittler's *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, c2012), and Rosemary A. Roberts' *Maoist Model Theatre: The Semiotics of Gender and Sexuality in the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (1966–1976) (Leiden: Brill, 2010). For intercultural performance, see Alexander C. Y. Huang's *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, c2009). It is important to note that many of these titles cover more than one primary topic, for example Andrea S. Goldman's *Opera and the City* also contributes to urban studies and genre studies, Li Ruru's *The Soul of Beijing Opera* weaves practitioners' personal careers into a narrative of Beijing opera historiography, and Rosemary A. Roberts' *Maoist Model Theatre* associates performance studies with semiotics, just to mention a few. Furthermore, see "Modern Chinese Drama in English: A Selective Bibliography" compiled by Siyuan Liu and Kevin J. Wetmore Jr., *Asian Theatre Journal* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 320–51, for further reference for translations of modern Chinese dramatic literature.

2. The connotation of "Asia" to Asian diaspora, Asian diasporic performance practices, and their reflections on self-identification through performativity are beyond the scope of this paper. But geography of performance is a valid perspective from which to examine the concept and scope of "Asian performance." For further discussions on the concept of "Asia" in the context of transnationalism, see Amanda Sanders' *Performing Asian Transnationalism: Theatre, Identity and the Geographies of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2015) and Haiping Yan's "Other Transnationals: An Introductory Essay" *Modern Drama* 48 (2005): 225–48.

3. *Hegemon King Says Farewell to His Queen* is set in the war between Xiang Yu—the Hegemon King—and Liu Bang for the control of China during approximately 206 BC to 202 BC. In *jingju*, it used to be a play featuring male characters. In the early 1920s, the legendary master *jingju* performer Mei Lanfang (1894–1961) staged a revised version which features Hegemon King's Queen Yu as the female lead. The production highlights the couple's tragic romance at the end of the war. Realizing that they are trapped and not willing to be the Hegemon King's burden, Queen Yu dances for him for the last time and commits suicide. The scene with Queen Yu's dance and suicide, as performed by Mei Lanfang, has been the standard version of this production and among *jingju*'s most popular repertory.

4. I thank Heather Fitzsimmons Frey and Natalia Esling, my teaching assistants, for suggestions and contributions to instructions on discussion facilitation.

5. *Bunraku* is a puppetry performance tradition in Japan. Major characters/puppets are manipulated by three puppeteers: the chief puppeteer controls the head and the right hand/arm, the second puppeteer manipulates the left hand/arm, and the third one the feet. This practice was formalized during the 1720s and 1730s.

6. *Rasa* is an aesthetic concept discussed in *The Natyasastra*, the Indian treatise on Sanskrit theatre. *Rasa* refers to the sentiments, or "flavour," that sensitive spectators may experience, or taste, in well presented performance. *The Natyasastra* offers a detailed discussion of the *rasa* theory, including major types of *rasa*, how they are related to psychological states that performers present onstage, and how to successfully present psychological states through acting, music, language, etc. *Rasa* theory has a profound influence on performance traditions in India and has attracted academic attention in other fields, including cognitive experience with other forms of literature and art.

7. I thank Heather Fitzsimmons Frey and Natalia Esling, my teaching assistants, for suggestions and contributions to instructions on discussion facilitation and reflection composition.

8. Atsumori is the protagonist of the *noh* masterpiece *Atsumori*, by Zeami (1363–1443). The play tells the story of Atsumori, a renowned musician and brave warrior, who was killed during the battles in the twelfth century. Towards the end, the ghost of Atsumori recounts the battle in which he was slain; at the climactic moment of dropping his sword, he delivers the important message that enemies will "be reborn together on a single lotus petal" (Brazell 1998, 142), thus emphasizing the profound theme that "opposites are equivalents; enemies indeed are friends" (ibid., 127). This translation is based on the Kita school's performance; in the Kanze school's performance, Atsumori drops his sword a bit earlier, but the message is the same.

9. *Kuttiyatam* performances often last for multiple nights: characters in a particular repertory often perform together only on the last night; each of the previous nights often features an elaborate introduction of each character.

10. One strong voice is cast in Jerri Daboo's "To Learn Through the Body: Teaching Asian Forms of Training and Performance in Higher Education," *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 29, no. 2 (2009): 121–31. Although Daboo's discussion focuses on higher education in the UK, it is, to a great extent, also applicable to North America.

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Appendix 1: Guidelines for Paper #1

Write an analytical essay on Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art."

Of the Chinese Communist Party's cultural and artistic doctrines before 1949, Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art" is the most influential. In fact, during the following decades, the "Talks" not only remained in service as official policy itself, but also set the framework for the CCP's related policies on literature and art, as well as providing the foundation for prescriptive theories for artistic creations. Therefore it is imperative that we read it carefully and analytically.

Please use the following questions as a point of departure in your analysis.

- What are the major arguments in these talks?
- What is the deeper meaning of AT LEAST ONE of these major arguments?
- What were Mao Zedong's visions of the new culture in the new nation?
- Are there any flaws in Mao Zedong's argumentation?
- What do you think about the significance of these talks in our study?

Notes:

- The "only correct way of interpretation" does not exist. Feel free to elaborate on your opinions, but please provide sound evidence from the text to support your arguments.
- Feel free to discuss this text with other colleagues in this class, but WRITE YOUR OWN ESSAY IN YOUR OWN WORDS.

Appendix 2: Guidelines for Paper #1 (Revised)

Topic and Questions:
Write an analytical essay on Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art." In your analysis, please make sure to discuss the following issues:

- What are the major arguments in these talks? (What did Mao argue for and against?)

- What is the deeper meaning of ONE of these major arguments? (Make sure to support your analysis with evidence from the text.)
- What were Mao Zedong's visions of the new culture in the new nation?

If you have more energy and passion, please feel free to include further analysis. The following two questions may serve as a point of departure:

- Are there any flaws in Mao Zedong's argumentation? (Is the reasoning sound?)
- What do you think about the significance of these talks in our study?

Background to This Assignment:
Of the Chinese Communist Party's cultural and artistic doctrines before 1949, Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art" is the most influential. In fact, during the following decades, the "Talks" not only remained in service as official policy itself, but also set the framework for the CCP's related policies on literature and art, as well as providing the foundation for prescriptive theories for artistic creations. Therefore it is imperative that we read it carefully and analytically.

Important Expectations:
- This essay is about critical analysis, instead of subjective reactions. In other words, it is about what the text/message is, instead of how it makes us feel.
- Reasoning—The "only correct way of interpretation" does not exist. Feel free to elaborate on your opinions, but please provide sound evidence from the text to support your arguments.
- Fairness—pay attention to the context of the details that you decide to use.
- Clarity—present your arguments, including the issues that confuse you, in a logical fashion.
- Feel free to discuss this text with other colleagues in this class, but WRITE YOUR OWN ESSAY IN YOUR OWN WORDS.

Appendix 3: Guidelines for Leading a Small-Group Discussion and Participating in a Roundtable Discussion

Small-group discussion: approximately 25–30 minutes.
Roundtable discussion: approximately 20–25 minutes.

Important Expectations:
- Initiate discussion with original, thought-provoking, and well-written questions.
- Nurture an interactive, collective learning experience that leads your group to a deeper understanding of readings.
- Report to class on your discussion, with reflections on your experience, and respond to peer questions.

About Generating Discussion Questions:
- Please note that the purpose of our discussions is to develop deeper understanding of the readings, not to exchange ideas about how we feel about the readings.
- Be aware of context and (hidden) assumptions.

- Try to include as least one question that requires analysis.
- See if you may generate a question that embraces counter-arguments.
- Prepare at least 3 questions, and it is always good to have an additional, backup question.

About Facilitating a Discussion:
- There is no "the only right way" to do it. Design and try to find a way with which you are comfortable. Below are some strategies for your reference:
  - Have one-minute writing exercises to help participants collect thoughts;
  - Have a brain-storming exercise;
  - Create a visual schema with participants, like a mind-map, to encourage participants to see connections / contrasts / surprises;
  - Plan a moment for participants to articulate their major "take away" from your discussion, or from one of your questions;
  - Plan a strategy to make sure that you heard from all discussion participants.
- Do not be afraid of silence; good questions are often sophisticated, and your colleagues need time to collect their thoughts.
- Do not let good comments/arguments lapse quickly; ask follow-up questions.
- Help the class build connections among different opinions, and among readings and topics.
- <u>Take notes.</u>

About Participating in a Reflective Roundtable Discussion:
- Please note that your participation should be based on critical reflections on your experience; it is inadequate to simply narrate what happened, or what you talked about, in your group.
- Support your peer with constructive questions and suggestions.
- Think before responding.
- We will experiment with different reflective pedagogies; follow instructions in class.

Appendix 4: Guidelines for Discussion Leadership, Report, and Reflection

Due Dates:
- First draft of discussion questions is due at noon two days before class. Email them to xxx@xxxx.xxx.
- Final draft of discussion questions is due at noon the day before class. Email them to xxx@xxxx.xxx.
- Reflection paper is due at the end of the Sunday after discussion. Email it to xxx@xxxx.xxx, <u>with a copy to yourself</u>.

Important Expectations:
- Initiate discussion with original, thought-provoking, and well-written questions.
- Nurture an interactive, collective learning experience that leads your group to a deeper understanding of readings and topics; 30 minutes per discussion.
- Report to class on your discussion, highlighting the most interesting part.
- Compose a thoughtful 3-pager reflection on your experience.

About Generating Discussion Questions:
- Please note that the purpose of our discussions is to develop a deeper understanding of the readings, not to exchange ideas about how we feel about the readings.
- Try to cover all readings of the week, but do not limit your design by addressing each reading by a separate question.
- Prepare at least 3 questions, and it is always good to have an additional, backup question.
- It is fine to ask long questions, but be clear.
- Be aware of context and (hidden) assumptions.
- Try to include as least one question that requires analysis.
- See if you may generate a question that embraces counter-arguments.

About Facilitating a Discussion:
- There is no "the only right way" to do it. Design and try to find a way with which you are comfortable. Below are some strategies for your reference:
  - Have one-minute writing exercises to help participants collect thoughts;
  - Have a brain-storming exercise;
  - Create a visual schema with participants, like a mind-map, to encourage participants to see connections/contrasts/surprises;
  - Plan a moment for participants to articulate their major "take away" from your discussion, or from one of your questions;
  - Plan a strategy to make sure that you hear from all discussion participants.
- Do not be afraid of silence; good questions are often sophisticated, and your colleagues need time to collect their thoughts.
- Do not let good comments/arguments lapse quickly; ask follow-up questions.
- Help the class build connections among different opinions, and among readings and topics.
- Take notes.

About Reporting to Class on Your Discussion:
- Approximately 3 minutes for each report.
- Please note that your report should be based on critical reflections on your experience; it is inadequate to simply narrate what happened, or what you talked about, in your group.
- Highlight the most inspiring/exciting/confusing part of your group discussion.

About Reflection:
- Three pages, double spaced, please email to xxx@xxxx.xxx, with a copy to yourself.
- Please note that this should present your further critical engagement with your work during the entire process; this is not a diary or log.
- Do elaborate on what you have learned through process with concise and rich account of what worked or did not work. Below are some questions that may be helpful.
  - What went well during your discussion? In what ways did your planning, listening, and reading help to enhance the discussion?
  - What were particularly interesting/complicated/uncomfortable moment(s) in the discussion? How did you handle them?
  - What did participating in the discussion enable you to learn about the material? Assess what you learned about leadership from this discussion experience.

o   If asked to lead another seminar-type discussion group, how would you do things differently? Why?
o   If things did not go according to your plan, why do you think that was and was your discussion productive anyway?

When Actions Challenge Theories: The Tactical Performances of Sue Austin

Mabel Giraldo and Dalila D'amico

In the following paper, we attempt to highlight the pedagogical level of certain performances through an analysis of Sue Austin's production aesthetic. Austin is a multimedia, performance, and installation artist who transforms her life experience in a wheelchair into dramatic codes. The main hypothesis of our reflection is that her performances become a potential "teaching and educational moment" for the spectator, because they rewrite the meaning of disability by processing, comparing, and deconstructing its social images. In fact, her performative practices could be considered as an occasion, first, to take disability itself as a concept of critical aesthetics (Siebers 2010) and, second, to reflect pedagogically on some of the epistemological categories introduced by the artist in the field of the performing arts.

Additionally, the paper aims to integrate the cultural, political, and sociological perspective offered by Disability Studies with the principal categories of a personalist special pedagogy, which is founded on the Jewish-Christian concept of *person*. The singularity and uniqueness that distinguishes this notion is key for an educational action (both personal and relational). This kind of pedagogy, therefore, looks at the personal, unique, and substantial identity expressed, differently, in each of us.[1] Following this philosophical and pedagogical tradition, we would like to identify all the semantic and axiological richness that accompanies the theoretical definition of the concept of the human person and all the educational practices that follow.

The case of Sue Austin is most interesting in this regard because she is the artistic director of *Freewheeling*, a large-scale ongoing performance project aimed at addressing and challenging different public perceptions of disability through public encounters with spectators. Her aesthetic reflection becomes an occasion to reconsider the concept of "disability," not as a personal problem, as Disability Studies has already underlined,[2] but as a meeting ground to rethink the entire network of relationships in which the disabled person lives. Furthermore, we think this artist draws increased attention to the social model dominant in many disability theories and encourages scholars to give more attention to the body's creative potential.[3]

The social model, prevalent in Anglo-American criticism (Oliver 1983; Shakespeare 1994; Crow, 1996; Morris, 1996; Barton, 1996; Shakespeare and Watson 2002), derives its arguments from social constructionism[4] and is a powerful alternative to the medical model of disability. The latter situates disability exclusively in individual bodies and strives to cure them by particular treatment. In contrast, the social model reads disability as the effect of a hostile environment. In particular, the social model distinguishes impairment from disability, considering the first as an individual condition and the latter as a social creation. However, many scholars have pointed out that "the social model so strongly disowns individual and medical approaches, that it risks implying that impairment is not a problem" (Shakespeare 2006). Even if it has been an important key from a disability rights perspective, the focus on the social environment rather than the person would suggest that people

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are disabled by society, not by their bodies. As Tobin Siebers argues, the standpoint of social constructionism needs to be expanded:

> Constructionism posits that the body does not determine its own representation in any way because the sign precedes the body in the hierarchy of signification. . . . Disability scholars have begun to insist that constructionism either fails to account for the difficult physical realities faced by people with disabilities or presents their body in ways that are conventional, conformist, and unrecognizable to them. (Siebers 2008, 55–57)

In this regard, Austin once again brings our attention to her physical reality and reminds us that the body has the power to challenge social representations. The deconstruction of the commonplaces about disability passes through the displaying of her life experience with the wheelchair.[5] With the title of our paper, "When Actions Challenge Theories," we would like to suggest that Austin's actions cannot be explained through a univocal perspective or addressed to specific theories; rather, they require the simultaneous combination of approaches and arguments. After all, "crossbreeding" is also the main trait of her aesthetics. Using different media, like single-channel video, installation, and photography, she moves across and between artistic fields. Combining live action with various modes of presentation (festival, museum, gallery, Internet), she exceeds fixed areas of performing arts and displaces her body in a multi-spatial and multi-temporal dimension. Focusing her attention on destabilizing the common images of the wheelchair, she proposes a fluid image of the body that is a mix between flesh, prosthesis, and the surrounding landscapes. Her performances set her work in a liminal and unstable space in which all borders seem to blur with each other. In this sense, the borders of any prescribed category in relation to disability also reveal themselves as a *fantasy* (Samuels 2014). We have divided our analysis into two parts: Austin's artistic research; and the theories that it calls into question.

The Art to Be Free

Sue Austin's art practice[6] begins from an analytical study of the terminology and images used to describe disability. In particular, she focuses on the linguistic modalities used to describe the relationship between disabled people and their wheelchairs. Sue Austin writes: "I found that people's responses to me changed. When I asked people their associations with the wheelchair, they used words like 'limitation,' 'fear,' 'pity' and 'restriction.' . . . I knew that I needed to make my own stories about this experience" (Austin 2012). The first step for Austin follows the path already traced by social constructionism, that is, an analytical reflection "on the linguistic model that describes representation itself as a primary ideological force" (Siebers 2008, 55). As Simi Linton underlines:

> the phrases *wheelchair bound* or *confined to a wheelchair* frequently appear in newspapers and magazines, or conversation, but disabled people are more likely to say that someone uses a wheelchair. The latter phrase not only indicates the active nature of the user and the positive way that wheelchairs increase mobility and activity, but recognizes that people get in and out of wheelchairs for different activities. (Linton 2006, 163)

To challenge these kinds of preconceptions, in 2009 Austin started her first series of performances, called *Traces from a Wheelchair.* For this work, the artist used her chair as a paintbrush throughout the

city. The aim of the traces was to make a gap visible, underlining the presence of the wheelchair that socio-cultural concepts often translate into absence. The artist states: "When I first used an electric wheelchair, I felt an amazing sense of exhilaration at being free to speed through the streets, mobile again. Even though I had this newfound joy and freedom, people's reaction completely changed towards me. It was as if they couldn't see me anymore, as if an invisibility cloak had descended" (Austin 2012). Since the first action, Austin's aim has been to negotiate between her feelings and people's reactions. She started from the need to balance her personal experience of the wheelchair and the common image of this device, an image that limited her sense of freedom. She says: "I was working to transform these internalized responses, to transform the preconceptions that had so shaped my identity when I started using a wheelchair, by creating unexpected images. The wheelchair became an object to paint and play with" (Austin 2012).

The spectator is a prior and essential part for Sue Austin's works because he/she is like a mirror for her identity: "When I literally started leaving traces of my joy and freedom, it was exciting to see the interested and surprised responses from people. It seemed to open up new perspectives and therein lay the paradigm shift. It showed that an arts practice can remake one's identity and transform preconceptions by revisioning the familiar" (Austin 2012). In 2010, with a grant from the Arts Council of England's Impact Program,[7] she began building an underwater wheelchair for a work she called *Testing the Water,* which has since become the *Creating the Spectacle!* Project. With *Creating the Spectacle!* and the more extended *Freewheeling* project, Austin takes to the extreme the reconfiguration of public space, jumping into the Red Sea with her underwater wheelchair. In this perspective, she completely overturns the ordinary image of the chair, highlighting more the possibilities that this tool offers than its limitations on movement. *Creating the Spectacle!* emphasizes this feeling of freedom and surprise to the spectator, with unexpected and often antithetical juxtapositions for the collective consciousness. As well, the spectator's reaction is the enlivening agent of her production. She states: "And the incredibly unexpected thing is that other people seem to see and feel that too. Their eyes literally light up, and they say things like, 'I want one of those,' or, 'If you can do that, I can do something'" (Austin 2012).

Thus, on one hand, Austin rewrites on her skin the meanings inscribed in a long tradition of images of the disabled body, and on the other she invites other artists to enrich her scenario with personal and surreal re-presentations of disability equipment to facilitate new ways of seeing, being, and knowing. *Freewheeling* is a call to express individually and creatively the experience of being in a wheelchair, to create a collaborative artwork maintaining an emphasis on academic research and the status of disabled artists within the cultural sector of the contemporary arts. As Austin has underlined:

> It's because in that moment of them seeing an object they (the spectators) have no frame of reference for, or so transcends the frames of reference they have with the wheelchair, they have to think in a completely new way. And I think that moment of completely new thought perhaps creates a freedom that spreads to the rest of other people's lives. (Austin 2012)

Creating the Spectacle! is always in progress and consists of live performances, video works and installations. The first performances of the series took place in Dorset in the UK in 2012, when Austin dove into the water of the Fleet. During this performance, a sinuous red line appeared on the surface of the water as a trace of the "hidden" activity occurring below. When it was performed again at dusk, the traces were made by lights attached to the wheelchair. In both repetitions the

involvement of the Dorset community was crucial. The first time, the audience interacted with a celebratory procession of dancing across the bridge. During the second dive, the audience illuminated the perimeter of the Fleet, making it visible from miles around. One of the participants has reported on the dramatic atmosphere and unexpected emotions felt during this performance:

> We waited and watched the tide; a companionable silence of unknowing settled into the mist. . . . The crowd that had amassed to wave farewell were encouraged to cross the bridge and collect on the opposite side, eager to encourage and welcome the chairborne aquanaut back to dry land. The underwater wheelchair disappeared underwater—rapidly. The red marker balloon and three heads bobbed clear of the surface and the little party began to move in the water—but sideways. The people disappeared under the surface, and we focused on the bright red symbol. . . . We waited, we scanned the surface for bubbles, a cloud of red carnations bled out into the Fleet and a small voice echoed over the water: where is she? The underwater wheelchair had been grabbed by the strong tide, and dramatically, the rescue boat swept in to assist both chair and divers to their destination. Relief smiled on our faces as the red carnations disappeared into the breaking mist. Sue and the underwater wheelchair crossed the Fleet Lagoon. . . . The crowd dispersed with the "brave" word bobbing through departing conversations. (Gini 2012)

After this first experience on the Dorset coast, Austin has increased the project's reach, exploring the Red Sea. This latter performance was documented with footage by Trish Wheatley. Here Austin augmented the Dorset performance by introducing the use of a 360° filmic digital media format, a robust system of integrated 360° recording, editing, and display technologies, which offers the audience an immersive experience while seeing the underwater wheelchair flying free above their heads. Since 2012, Austin has been creating different mediations on the concepts explored in the live performances, moving her project from one art field to another. For example, *Creating the Spectacle!* has become an installation, exhibited with the name *360 Degrees—A New Angle on Access* at Salisbury Arts Centre in the UK, as well as a single-channel online video called *Finding Freedom.*

In her most recent experiment, from 2014, Austin has found another surprising way to de-construct the image of the wheelchair: flying during her performance *Flying Free.* This performance is also a documentary commissioned by a digital art website, The Space, and the Unlimited Festival.[8] Building on this current direction of her research practice, the artist is currently training to fly in a flexwing microlight aircraft with the Flying for Freedom Team, who are mounting a daring expedition to the South Pole to highlight how flying can help injured service personnel in making a successful transition back into civilian life.[9]

The various forms that Austin's *Freewheeling Project* assumes work to expand on many levels in the perception of disability. The first is the level of language. As Simi Linton writes, "Disabled people are frequently described as *suffering from* or *afflicted with* certain conditions. Saying that someone is *suffering from* a condition implies that there is a perpetual state of suffering, uninterrupted by pleasurable moments or satisfactions" (Linton 2006, 167). At the level of language, Austin makes a *détournement*[10] in the semantic sense because she alters and subverts images produced by society with unexpected angles to reveal the inner meanings that we accept by tacit agreement. Austin's work also operates on an iconic level, providing another image of the wheelchair: she simultaneously re-casts its position within the collective imagination. The stunning footage of a wheelchair soaring high in the air or floating on the water shows how something perceived as limiting can express beauty.

Finally, the last level is Austin's visceral engagement of the viewer, which makes the audience an active producer of the wheelchair's meanings. As Austin has stressed, she is concerned with

> enhancing narratives around the physicality of the wheelchair through the creation of surreal juxtapositions that work on both an immediate visceral level while at the same time operating on many other visual, conceptual and theoretical levels. These levels ('portals'/multiple entrances) are developed within the artwork so that, rather than being didactic, the viewer is able to derive their own understanding(s) from the different experiences they are exposed to. (Austin "Creating")

Traces from a Body

According to Petra Kuppers,

> In the area of disability, the late twentieth century has witnessed a local (mostly Anglo-American) discourse change, partly brought about by history's current attention to non-dominant voices and partly through local intervention by disabled activists. Our knowledge of "what disability means" is changing. That change of perception . . . has implications for art-practice, and for the way that we teach and learn about the social world. (Kuppers 2000, 120)

Building on Kuppers, we can thus talk about *disability as performance* across a wide range of practices and meanings: disability as a performance of everyday life, as a metaphor in dramatic literature, and as the work produced by disabled performing artists (Sandahl and Auslander 2005, 1).

In her performance practice, Austin introduces a powerful teaching moment in our understanding of disability by, first and foremost, overturning the ordinary image of the wheelchair. In fact, recalling the meaning of the Latin word *disposĭtus* (something that is placed against), the chair is usually considered a "device" that concerns those realities, objects, situations that impose themselves on a person, which she withstands passively and by which she is initiated. Austin, however, chooses to turn her chair into a "device for freedom." In this choice lies the pedagogical value of her art practice: everyone is influenced by cultural, social, economical, artificial, and biological factors but, since the body is alive, this means that it is capable of influencing and transforming social representations, just as it is capable of being influenced and transformed by the same representations (Siebers 2008, 180). We always have the opportunity to determine our being within society. Through her art, Austin shows herself as a free person who, as subject, decides to change herself by inverting the conventional wisdom that sees the disabled body as an impediment to mobility. In doing so, she invites the spectator with the same situation to find a personal way to transform her condition and the spectator who does not have the same situation to extend her imagination concerning disability.

Following the social model of disability, Austin believes that the common social representation of disability requires change: she can live her experience with that chair completely freely because the main limit that she feels is the reaction of society. But, in a certain sense, her performances go beyond the social model approach that, in opposition to the medical model's labelling of disability as an individual problem, considers disability to be the result of the dominant ideas, attitudes, and customs of society. The "strategy" adopted by Austin seems to approximate more closely what Tobin Siebers calls *complex embodiment theory*:

>Complex embodiment theorizes the body and its representations as mutually transformative. Social representations obviously affect the experience of the body, but the body possesses the ability to determine its social representation as well. As a living entity, the body is vital and chaotic, possessing complexity in equal share to that claimed today by critical and cultural theorists for linguistic systems. (Siebers 2008, 290)

Like Siebers, Austin feels the need to adjust the worldview that does not take into account the particular and always personal experience to live in a disabled body.

It is clear that what is changing within Austin's revolutionary aesthetics is not only the image of the chair, but also that of the body. As Petra Kuppers (2000) underlines, when a disabled performer enters into the field characterized by fights with physicality, her alignment with a "trapped body" disrupts the conventional extension of bodies and adds to culture new ways of conceptualizing them.[11] Johnson Cheu points out that "the disabled performance artist holds a double-edged sword. On one hand, the artist is exhibiting the body as corporal object; on the other, the body serves as metaphor, as a representation system that denotes a set of experiences, a way of being, as I term it, which revolves not around impairment" (Cheu 2005, 137). Without neglecting that the body is shaped by social forces, Austin's performances reveal that the body has its own resources through which to create a representational system. The sinuousness of Austin's movements underwater, the waves of her hair, the interaction between the propellers of the wheelchair and the fishes' fins, together create a sense of levity that overwrites the heaviness that commonly marks a body in a wheelchair.

Thus, Austin's performances become an opportunity to learn both for the performer—in relation to this decision to transform her device into a resource—and for the spectator—connected to a pleasure that is at once ethical and aesthetical, recalling the Aristotelian meaning of catharsis. In this sense, pedagogically, the personal transformation of the performer becomes, for the spectator, an experience of realized witnessing, which according to a personalist pedagogy allows for an idea of education as both a personal and relational experience.

As a performer, Austin has the occasion to know herself and to claim for herself the affirmation of a subjectivity without borders. As she has said, "For me, the wheelchair becomes a vehicle for transformation. In fact, I now call the underwater wheelchair 'Portal', because it's literally pushed me through into a new way of being, into new dimensions and into a new level of consciousness" (Austin 2012). Embracing complex embodiment theory, which challenges established habits of thought about "having" a body,[12] the artist presents her disability as a means to think about a new and different picture of *identity*. Through this kind of performance art, her personal identity can show itself renewed in its *exemplum* of individuality and uniqueness.[13]

Very often one's "identity" is mistreated on account of judgment (and prejudice) and the weight of the gaze of others. However, Austin dwells upon this "difference," letting us recognize it as a specific ontological condition of the person, a substantial not just empirical difference (Seifert 1989). Hence, it is no longer a matter of placing each person's individual case within a standard, a law, a scientific theory that explains it. Nor is it a matter of possessing the "power of techniques and technologies" to successfully fill this "lack" caused by disability. On the contrary, it is necessary to think exactly the opposite: we should consider in what ways and why each person is different, how the idea of the "individual" goes beyond standards and available scientific theories that can explain

and technically treat the "problems" that an individual manifests. It is a matter of understanding the unique and unrepeatable "substance" and essence of everyone, without levelling it to the "norm" (Gaurdini 1997). In this regard, according to Siebers, we could state that disability enlarges our vision of human variation (Siebers 2010, 3) and this variation is an ontological characteristic of the person and her personal, unique, and substantial identity. Every social and cultural label (super-abled, disabled, spastic, normal, psychotic, manic-depressive, schizophrenic, etc.) "betrays the contents of the cans" because people are always unpredictable and can never determined by an impossible condition.

Likewise, putting into question the value of these social and cultural labels can be a "pedagogical" moment for the spectator. Austin's art and actions contribute to design this new imaginary and, with this, a new perception of disability for those who assist her performance and, maybe, for the people who live her same condition. This "education for a new gaze" could be considered as one of the nuances of that political and educational function recognized by poetic art since the Greeks (Aristotle 1998). In this sense, the aesthetic experience offered by Austin could be considered for the spectator a kind of "witnessing" and, at the same time, a "transformation." As we will subsequently illustrate, thanks to this transformation, Austin's performances are intrinsically educative, as they transform themselves into a space for education.

Against the modern subjectivist theories that identify the end of education in the ideal of individual autonomy, this transformation, according to the perspective presented in this essay, may be read as a circular movement between the pedagogical process (personal and reflective) and its effects in everyday life. It is not a matter of teaching (from Latin *insignàre*, "fixing, embedding signs in the mind") but of learning ("to grasp with the senses and intellect") what is proposed, of internalizing it and of taking it on. So, the performance does not just teach something or convey instrumentally contents and knowledge. Rather, it transforms itself into an occasion for learning and, therefore, into an educational process in which the spectator is called to be a co-producer of the sense of the performance (Müller 1977). For instance, regarding the installation *360 Degrees—A New Angle on Access*, presented at Salisbury Arts Centre in the UK, Austin explains: "That's about creating multiple routes of engagement, and moving away from being didactic, and instead trying to create a thinking space. I think it's very important for the artwork to exist in many ways, on many levels; so people have an opportunity to re-engage, so the work keeps living" (Muehlemann 2014) From the point of view of the spectator, this educational model is based on *relational*, *reflective* and *ethical* considerations. Let us take each in order.

Concerning the first aspect mentioned, when we take part in a performance as spectators, we necessarily build some relationships with it (and with the performer) that are affected by social, cultural, political, and emotional dynamics. Such relationships are constitutive of the spectator as a person. In fact, following a personalist pedagogy, one's relational nature is not something that is added to the person from the outside (such that "the person has relations"); rather, the person is relational. For this reason, we have to look at that reciprocity, essential in any educational relationship, which constantly involves an "I-You" relationship. From this perspective, the person becomes "I" only in contact with "You" (Buber 1937), and it is thanks to this relationship with "You" that the world-mastering process begins. Furthermore, this relationship is always an *encounter* of two active subjects and, following Guardini's thought, such an encounter (considered as *novum*) represents the moment in which the person (opened to the encounter with "You") is invited to access the various dimensions of reality and to confront herself with particular events and circumstances (Guardini 1997); in the case of Austin's performance, one of those events would be a

new image of disability. For this reason, we could assert that the aesthetic experience of the performance can hold together the two dimensions of "educating someone else" and "educating yourself." This represents a way of reaching the inseparable synthesis (expressed in the etymological meaning of the word "education") of *educare* (as arise, grow, taking care) and *educere* (to lead or guide a person to be independent; to be able to respond in the first person to the insights coming from the outside and make them one's own) (Bertagna 2010). This second moment of *educere* (often overlooked by many educational theories) is inextricably bound with the first. It is important for the spectator who has the opportunity to know herself and the surrounding world to do so through her actions and those of the performer.

In this learning process, understood as assumption and appropriation, the reflective moment is also crucial. This second aspect of the education model concerns a critical examination operated by the spectator that happens *during* and *after* the performance. In this moment of reflexivity, the person has the occasion to involve her constant, reiterative and serious personal considerations (Dewey 1910); this is because any learning process does not *happen to* the subject, but, on the contrary, requires an active personal consciousness that guarantees the opportunity to realize it. This occasion is essential in order to transform the circumstances into a grounded experience and the recording of data into meaningful learning. The performer—in this case, Austin—accompanies the spectator along this path in which the reflection occurs, a path that can be conceived as follows: ex ante (to have a synthetic, but also analytical, outlook on this lived experience, contextualizing one's desires, needs, skills, abilities, etc., and also registering data that comes from past experiences); in action (in order to focus or refocus the performative action while it takes place); and, finally, ex-post (for a critical interpretation of that experience).

What is crucial in the case of Austin's work is that it rejects being read as an inspirational narrative that evokes sympathy and concern from the audience or "promotes the idea of the 'supercrip' who, against all odds, overcomes the burdens of disability in the face of pervasive adversity" (Chrisman 2011). The comedian and journalist Stella J. Young refers to these kinds of narratives as "inspiration porn." She points out that the whole idea of inspiration is grounded in the "assumption that people have terrible lives, and that it takes some extra kind of pluck or courage to live them" (Young 2014). Austin does not require identification, admiration, or pity; instead, she proposes to the spectator new images in order to re-posit the spectator's representation of disability. It is exactly through this re-assumption that the spectator spontaneously adheres to the values, norms, and codes of conduct expressed by that specific context. It is not something that is (or could be) imposed from the outside, but arises from a voluntary and intentional choice, made with freedom and responsibility (Mounier 1946). As the journalist Obi Chiejina has written, in reviewing *Creating The Spectacle*,

> the viewer is encouraged to look at this performance from two interrelated perspectives—namely artistic and cultural. From an artistic perspective Austin positions herself as a contemporary artist by combining performance, movement, video installation with the aquatic disciplines of diving and swimming. Adopting such a flexible position gives Austin the freedom to explore the water metaphor to ask questions related to culture and self-identity. Returning to the changing nature of the self-propelling wheelchair why do humans continue to use self-limiting cultural labels? (Chiejina 2012)

During such moments of deliberation, the spectator can achieve the maximum fulfilment of the *transformative process* that was mentioned earlier. However, following the lead of *transformative learning*

theorist Jack Mezirow, we assert that not all learning is transformative: transformative learning does not concern only adding more knowledge to our meaning schemes or applying these schemes to an experience; on the contrary, it always involves the reflective transformation of our beliefs, attitudes, perspectives, emotions, opinions, etc. This reflective transformation aims to bring the learner to identify and critically examine the epistemological, social, cultural, and psychological assumptions underpinning her beliefs, feelings, and actions through a reflective dialogue (Mezirow 1991). Such learning involves, inevitably, the transition to action to fully implement the indications produced by this critical dialogue (and reflection). In this sense, the purpose of education is not just functional and adaptive (responding to stimulus and engaging in effective solutions for problems coming from a given context). Rather, it is a matter of equipping the spirit of the person with a living and ordered knowledge that allows her to achieve wisdom (Maritain 1955).

When viewed this way, education is not about "normalizing" or "standardizing" (getting into a norm or a standard); it becomes a question of starting from everyone's personal skills and creating the educational conditions to enable a person to reach, through exercise, strain, dedication and satisfaction, her personal competences. After all, the term "competence" is derived from the Latin verb *cumpetere,* composed by *cum* (with) and *petere* (to head, to move in an oriented sense). That means, pedagogically, the sum of good potential capabilities is actually the best accomplishment in given situations (Bertagna 2004, 42). This idea aligns with Martha Nussbaum's *capability approach* (Nussbaum 2011) to pedagogical value in terms of human "educability" and personal development as self-fulfilment. This approach, elaborated with Amarthya Sen, states that personal wellbeing is not measured by economic progress, usually rated through the Gross National Product (GNP). Rather, it depends on the level of quality of (social) life (Nussbaum 2010). Hence, "capability" does not concern the mere ability of a person to fulfil a task performatively; it takes into account the real conditions of possibility for real persons.

In this sense, the capability approach recognizes that every person has the ability to imagine and wish for something that has not yet happened, to create something new, and to discursively re-build strategies for action that express the freedom of personal achievement. Addressing the issue of competence in the context of a capability perspective means moving from considering the appropriate action as a mere finalization centred on the means (productivity/income) to a purpose (agency/substantial freedom) that individuals seek to achieve, converting resources in projects of "operations" in terms of one's own life. In other words, according to a personalist pedagogy, "competence" is not only about an *object*—something accomplished—but also about a *subject*—a person who has this "something." It represents the demonstration of the unbreakable bond between *theoria, téchne,* and *phrònesis*, because competence, recalling the Aristotelian concept of *dynamis*, is the result of an exercise that is at once *theoretical* (related to knowledge), *poietic* (aimed at the realization of a task or a work), and *practical* (oriented to the virtue or perfection) (Berti 2010, 31–44). These concepts are not transversal, but their versatility lies in each person's opportunity to transform insights into action, theories into practice, and ideas into operations.

Sue Austin's competence is surely the capability to integrate a sensory spectacle with cultural and social aims, leaving the spectator free, as much as she feels herself to be free, to put into question social labels and meanings, and to provide her own answer. To conclude by way of Chiejina: "Now we must ask ourselves is Austin mimicking the swaying motion of the fish? The self-propelling wheelchair is no longer an unwelcome guest but a member of this natural marine world. Or was the inherent beauty of Austin and the wheelchair obscured by the dullness of the spectator's imagination? The questions and possibilities are endless" (Chiejina 2012).

Notes

1. In Europe, the theme of the Person, based on Stoic thought and the theological reflections of the Middle Ages, reemerged in France in the 1930s through the philosophical concept of *personalism*, as developed Emmanuel Mounier and of those connected with the magazine *Esprit*. In his book, *Personalism* (1934), Mounier offers a "new" pedagogical model far from the European tradition of his time. During the 1950s and 60s, some Italian scholars, influenced by the educational culture of French Personalism and by Neo-Thomism and Italian Neo-Scholasticism, translated into pedagogical terms the metaphysical and religious implications of the concept of the person in order to propose an idea of education that embraced a universe of practical, moral, and political attitudes to rebuild, after the Second World War, a new society. In the early 70s, however, we witnessed what Giorgio Chiosso, one of the most important historians of pedagogy in Italy, defines as the second phase of personalism (broader and more articulated than the first) (Chiosso, 2010, *Appendice*). This second phase does not represent the unitary expression of Italian Christian pedagogy, but a plurality of different positions. Between these various lines of thought, we follow the pedagogical group based in Brescia, which aimed to clarify in education—and in the context of a society in which were emerging the first instances of post-Christian secularism—the centrality of the person, illuminated by the force of a humanizing culture, critical reflection, a sense of proximity, and the conception of pedagogy as an expression of a culture far from any methodological reductionism (see Chiosso, 2001, 2010). The educational perspective embraced in this paper follows the implications of this particular cultural climate.

2. Scholars working in Disability Studies have mostly agreed to examine the meaning, nature, and consequences of disability as a historical and social construct. See Clare (2009); Lennard (2006); Johnstone (2001); Withers (2012); Garland Thomoson (1997); Stiker (2000); and Kuppers (2007). For an interdisciplinary reading of this movement in light of its possible connections with Performance Studies, see Sandahl and Auslander (2005).

3. In 1983, the English academic Mike Oliver coined the phrase "social model of disability." As the scholar Tom Shakespeare wrote, historically "the social model emerged from the intellectual and political arguments of the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS). This network had been formed after Paul Hunt proposed the creation of a group of disabled for the subsequent development of the British disability movement, and of disability studies in Britain. According to their policy statement (adopted December 1974), the aim of UPIAS was to replace segregated facilities with opportunities for people with impairments to participate fully in society, to live independently, to undertake productive work and to have full control over their own lives" (Shakespeare 2006). This British model has been a starting point for many other perspectives in studying disability, even if it presents different weaknesses concerning the neglect of the impairment as an important aspect of the understanding of disability.

4. Social constructionist theory has its origins in sociology and has been associated with the postmodern era in qualitative research. Proponents share the goal of understanding the world of lived experience from the perspective of those who live in it. They are concerned with the nature and construction of knowledge: how it emerges and how it comes to have significance for society. A major focus of social constructionism is to uncover the ways in which individuals and groups participate in the construction of their perceived social reality. It involves looking at the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalized, and made known by humans (Andrews 2012).

5. In order to understand how representation and disability have operated, particularly in the US context, and to situate Austin's performances within a broader cultural, social, and political framework, see Clare (2009).

6. Austin has been a wheelchair user since 1996, after contracting ME (chronic fatigue syndrome). In 2012, she was asked to be a part of the Cultural Olympiad in Britain, a celebration of the arts leading up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The work she created for the event, called "Creating the Spectacle!," is a groundbreaking series of live art and video works of an underwater wheelchair. For more information, see Austin's artist website, http://www.wearefreewheeling.org.uk/.

7. Arts Council England "champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives"; see Arts Council England.

8. The launch of the documentary coincided with the start of the third Unlimited Festival, which took place at Southbank Centre (2–7 September 2014). Since 2012, the festival has celebrated the artistic vision and originality of disabled artists; see the festival's website (Unlimited). To watch the documentary, see Austin, "Creating."

9. For more information about the "Flying for Freedom" project, see: http://www.flyingforfreedom.org.

10. A *détournement* is a technique developed in the 1950s by the Letterist International and later adapted by the Situationist International. It can be explained as a method that reveals the wearing out and loss of importance of cultural meanings of the capitalist system, and turning this system's media culture against itself.

11. This way of conceiving the body goes in the same direction of one of the peculiar characteristics traced by Hans-Thies Lehmann concerning the new role of the actor within the performing art scenario in the second half of the twentieth century. Lehmann writes about a shift in the perception of the body on the post-dramatic scene, that is, a theatre in which the dramatic text is no more the central aspect of the spectacle, but just one code in a multi-modal language. In what Lehmann calls post-dramatic theatre, the actor deconstructs the traditional psychological approach to character, exposing her own experience and the materiality of her body: "In the dramatic theater the body is a sign which is meaningful. In the post-dramatic theater the central theatrical sign, the actor's body, refuses to serve signification. Post-dramatic theater often presents itself as an auto-sufficient physicality, which is exhibited in its intensity, gestic potential, auratic 'presence'" (Lehmann 2006, 95).

12. Starting from this idea, some scholars have introduced, for example, the concept of *temporarily-able bodied*, inviting us to consider different sorts of vulnerability in which there is no guarantee that any of us will escape disabling encounters with the world. See, among others, Clare (2015) and Breckenridge and Vogler (2001).

13. Compared to *exemplar* ("object"), the Latin word *exemplum* recalls "a more complex assessment" because it cannot be reduced to something "sensitive," but involves "a moral and intellectual meaning" (Agamben 2008). It evokes, in short, something very different: it concerns an open and dynamic subject that is never completely predictable, countable, and crystallizable. In this sense, according to Mounier, endorsing the notion of *exemplum* and applying it to the concept of human person reminds us of the need for an education that never betrays the (constitutive and inexhaustible) "opening" of the person.

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Back and Forth: Mike Kelley's Psychedelic Pedagogy

Mary Elizabeth Anderson and Richard Haley

By the early 1990s, Mike Kelley had emerged as a crucial figure in the Los Angeles art scene, a once seemingly secondary market that had become an international hub of artistic production. Kelley (1954–2012), known as a leading figure in the art of the abject, is most notably remembered for sculptural works created from stuffed animals and crocheted blankets salvaged from thrift stores. Analysis of Kelley's work reveals a career-long investigation of the performative relationship between artist and audience. Characterized as "antagonistic" (Diederichsen in Miller 2015, 110 n.12) towards his audience, critics have described Kelley as a "master provocateur" (Roussel 2012) who "abused his audience on account of ideas it had not yet voiced and perhaps not even considered" (Miller 2015, 17). These characterizations are based on the presuppositions that Kelley harboured a fundamental mistrust of the viewer and held a concomitant fear that his work would be misinterpreted and devalued because of arbitrary biases. This essay identifies the limits of these presuppositions about Kelley, which are informed by art criticism's focus on the antimony and "oppositional fixation" (Jackson 2011, 56) of the avant-garde. Departing from the dominant narratives on Kelley-as-antagonist, we suggest that a more robust interpretation of the artist's work comes from the premise that his entire oeuvre is organized around a dynamic pedagogical game that invites the viewer to co-produce a conflicting set of meanings that change over time. Framing the totality of Kelley's production as a series of interrelated performances—including his actual performances, his sculptures and installations, his films, essays, and even the speech acts contained in interviews about his practice—amends the dominant narratives about Kelley. Instead of the "clever master" revealing didactic truths to an ignorant audience, Kelley is, in fact, fascinated with the multiplicity of interpretations that his works elicit and is ultimately dependent on these modes of exchange to produce his works. In the pages that follow, we will describe Kelley's performative pedagogy as it is articulated in his essays and interviews about several of his works, including *Framed and Frame* (1999), *More Love Hours than Can Ever Be Repaid (1987), Educational Complex* (1995), *Day is Done* (2005), and *Mobile Homestead* (2010–present).

Informed by Cull (2012) and Fleishman (2012), who advocate for processes of analysis in which performance is an autonomous agent in dialogue with theory and not simply the object of philosophical scrutiny, we are interested in theory-building rather than theory. As Geertz explains, "the essential task of theory building is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them" (1973, 26). In this spirit, we will examine the extent to which Kelley's promotion of a "back and forth" relationship between artist and audience cultivates and performs a form of interdependency that invites spatial and structural shifts in knowledge transfer. Our essay will thus offer new insights into the complexity of the technical and philosophical underpinnings of Kelley's work, as well as an expanded consideration of the function of "art's refusal" (Baldacchino 2005) in pedagogical processes.

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Framed and Frame

> Look back and forth, back and forth, a number of times. See if you don't find
> yourself subsumed in a macrocosmic/microcosmic spatial shift—one colored a
> sublime—and dingy—psychedelic hue. (Kelley [1999] 2004, 126)

In an essay entitled "The Meaning is Confused Spatiality, Framed," Mike Kelley provides readers with crucial information about how to interpret his work.[1] Describing his rationale for creating a simulacrum of a large-scale public fountain that exists in the Chinatown district of downtown Los Angeles, Kelley outlines his process in the following steps:

- fix shapes generally used to signify the formless;
- make clear some of the conventional devices used to give "amorphous" forms meaning;
- focus the attention of the viewer on discrete forms. ([1999] 2004, 123)

In this process, an object or artifact "becomes available for concrete viewing" (ibid., 123). As the title of his essay suggests, and as the title of the work he is describing—*Framed and Frame*—reinforces, Kelley is interested in the way that pictorial, architectural, and other spatial frames are related to narrative frames. Having identified the public fountain in Chinatown as a site of narrative complexity, Kelley created a copy of the sculpture and staged it in the gallery setting, thereby reframing it, in order to expose and twist existing narratives about the piece and its historical, cultural, and geographic location.

> The Chinatown wishing well represents a time in the recent past when cultural
> exoticism on the civic level could flourish unchallenged. It represents an era in Los
> Angeles when Anna May Wong—the Chinese American actress famous for her roles
> as a variety of "others"—could plant a willow tree, donated in her honor by
> Paramount Studios, on the concrete lump and make it seem a proud moment.
> (Kelley [1999] 2004, 124)

By replicating this "schizophrenic" public artifact and placing it in the gallery setting, strategically separating it from the "ramshackle cyclone fence decorated to resemble a Chinese gate" which surrounds the original fountain, Kelley exposes it as a "pastiche of conflicting cultural references" (Kelley [1999] 2004, 120–21 and 124). This tactic, combined with a series of other sculptural and narrative framing acts in the exhibition, amounts, to Kelley, to "playing a . . . game" (ibid., 123).

With whom is Kelley playing this game? Why? And to what ends? It might seem, on examination, that Kelley's list of instructions (*fix shapes; clarify conventional devices; focus viewer's attention*) is reflective of a somewhat didactic or pedantic relationship toward the viewer. We would suggest, however, that a more fruitful insight into Kelley's motivations may come from Hal Foster's idea of "parallactic" work which "attempts to frame the framer as he or she frames the other" (1996, 203). Although he is not writing about the work of Mike Kelley specifically, we believe that Foster has identified a language that is applicable to Kelley.[2]

Essential to note is the relationship between Foster's idea of parallax and Kelley's idea of the psychedelic. Foster's notion of parallax refers to the "apparent displacement of an object caused by the actual movement of its observer," underscoring "both that our framings of the past depend on

our positions in the present and that these positions are defined through such framings" (1996, xii). Mobilizing the idea of parallax to describe a range of postmodern aesthetic strategies, Foster explains the way in which such a framing shifts the discourse "away from a logic of avant-gardist transgression toward a model of deconstructive (dis)placement" (Foster 1996, xii). Further, it reflects the "turn from interstitial 'text' to institutional 'frame,'" placing the viewer in a reflexive position to the work (Foster 1996, xii). As Kelley engages directly with processes of framing, Foster explains that he creates a "fictive space . . . for critical play" (Foster 1996, 161).

If Kelley's work involves the creation of a fictive space for the purposes of critical play, then Kelley's tasks—of fixing shapes, clarifying conventional devices, and focusing the viewer's attention—are performed for psychedelic purposes. Shapes are fixed, conventions clarified and attention is focused so that the viewer can "look back and forth, back and forth a number of times" in a process that will lead to a "macrocosmic/microcosmic spatial shift—one colored a sublime—and dingy—psychedelic hue" (Kelley [1999] 2004, 126). For Kelley, the psychedelic participates in a dual reference system that is similar to Foster's notion of the parallactic. Parallax, which is "the apparent displacement or difference in apparent direction of an object as seen from two different points" (Merriam-Webster), is also a reference to the process by which human vision (produced by two eyes with overlapping visual fields) perceives depth and three-dimensional structure. In this sense, parallax as a phenomenon is a reference to both a failure of vision and an enhancement of vision. The psychedelic, which is a reference to a kind of cognitive disorganization (by way of drugs, music, or other media), is also a reference to that which is "mind-revealing." The psychedelic failure is therefore also an enhancement—a technology or extension. Kelley suggests that viewers look back and forth, back and forth at a set of images that he has fixed, clarified, and focused so that we might find ourselves subsumed into a psychedelic space. Although the back and forth process of looking and the resulting psychedelic experience is disorienting—a failure of organization, so to speak—it nonetheless is designed also to reveal submerged possibilities of interpretation which might ultimately be construed as an enhancement. For Foster, such a process is reflective of the spatiotemporal, moral, and body-image "splittings of the subject that occur with a new postmodern intensity" (1993, 20). Kelley was aware of such splittings (and, as a voracious reader, he would have also been fully aware of Foster's writings and ideas). Yet we wonder if perhaps Kelley's *concept* of the psychedelic and others' characterization of his work *as* psychedelic has suffered from a reductive tendency among critics.

In his interpretation of Kelley's work, specifically, Foster suggests that the artist's installations illustrate an "ethic of failure" (1994). Other critics have similarly organized Kelley's engagement with the psychedelic in relation to bleak bewilderment (Kostov) and dystopic vision (Jablonski). While it is reasonable to identify these sentiments and themes in the work, we do not believe that Kelley operationalized the psychedelic in his art to arrive at the bleak or the dystopic. Perhaps these are by-product effects for viewers. However, Kelley himself guides us away from the alignment of the psychedelic exclusively in relation to failure and toward the idea of the psychedelic as technology. The artist explains that the "pastiche aesthetic," which is the "primary signifier of psychedelic culture . . . promotes confusion, while at the same time postulating equality; all parts in chaos are equal" (Kelley 2000, 3). The psychedelic culture of 1960s radical youth, which, Kelley explains, "completely changed my worldview," offered Kelley a set of aesthetic strategies to dialogue with viewers. In the next two sections, we will trace the way that Kelley articulates the function of disruption, confusion, and chaos in his communicative processes, with special attention to how his methods of art-making have been influenced by these tactics over time. Though this material does

not reference the psychedelic explicitly, Kelley's explanations of how words and images operate in art are the foundations upon which his psychedelic perspectives are formed.

The Familiar Ungraspable

Kelley's words push and pull ideas across the pages of his exhibition catalogues, stretching our understanding of the objects and images he presents. This push-pull experience between his words and his objects seems to be by design, as Kelley explains that "by using a device which in our culture is the most common mode of explication—the written explanation—the expectation is destabilized. What looks so familiar becomes ungraspable" ([1997] 2003, 180). In this quote, Kelley is making reference to the work of his former teacher, Douglas Huebler. He prefaces this remark with an explanation of the difficulty of writing about his teacher's work, which makes him feel "confused" because "the text 'collides' or 'dances' with the image" (ibid., 179–80). "Look back and forth, back and forth," is his refrain at the conclusion of his 1999 essay for *Framed and Frame*. Eliciting viewers to repeatedly shift their focus between sites of meaning, Kelley hopes they will become "subsumed in a macrocosmic/microcosmic spatial shift." In the spirit in which Huebler creates collisions or dances between text and image, so Kelley has gone on to create collisions or dances between image and image and text and image and image and text again and again. To further dynamize the process, Kelley's text operates as a performance document drawing viewers into a set of requested actions to be repeated to psychedelic ends.

Kelley's essay for the Huebler exhibition catalogue, published in 1997, would have been written at a time when he was already many years into his thinking about the uncanny. John Miller explains a crucial shift in Kelley's work between 1983, when he produced a series called *The Sublime*, which "lampoon(ed) an aesthetic ideal," and 1993, when Kelley, in his *Uncanny* exhibition, moved into "eliciting visceral and emotional experience from artifice" (Miller 2015, 86). Miller argues that Kelley's exploration of the uncanny is an extension and also a tactical evolution of his exploration of the sublime. The uncanny retains its subversive power by virtue of its latent state. Yet Kelley's interpretation of Huebler's work is as something which exceeds the limits of the uncanny: "The result is not so much "uncanny"—that is, the familiar become unfamiliar—as it is annoying. We crave familiarity and instead we are made dizzy" (Kelley [1997] 2003, 179–80). Huebler's work makes the viewer dizzy as it specifically, per Kelley, disrupts implicit expectations about how meaning will be ordered by an erudite master:

> Like schoolchildren we seek to please the erudite master, the one who orders the visual chaos of the world, who renders it in clear language. We seek to please him through our understanding of his message, through shared communion with him. But this is a cruel teacher whose lessons elude understanding. You are left only with yourself, and the nervous laughter of doubt. (ibid.)

At this point in his thinking, has Kelley, who reads widely, encountered *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (Rancière 1991)? Or is the common trope of the master-apprentice relationship the only fuel in this scenario? Crucial, we believe, is Kelley's characterization of the "teacher whose lessons elude understanding" as "cruel." This characterization is consistent with other remarks that Kelley has made about the function of negativity in his own work. In his *Art 21* interview, Kelley says:

I think that's the joyfulness of it. But then it's a black humor. It's a mean humor. So, it's a critical joy. It's, you know, it's negative joy. [laughs] But that's art. I think, you know, for me. That's what separates it from the folk art that I'm going to. I still think the social function of art is that negative aesthetic. Otherwise there's no social function for it. (Kelley 2005).

Using this constellation of thought as a reference point, we believe then that Kelley's characterization of the cruel teacher in the Huebler scenario is a master who enacts cruelty that has a pedagogical and, ultimately, social function. Black humour, mean humour is, for Kelley, a kind of critical joy. This criticality is a negative aesthetic that is constitutive of the social function of art. Kelley draws viewers into a dizzying relationship with content that eludes the clarity and communion that they might expect to emerge out of a conventional master-apprentice relationship. This dizzying relationship between artist and viewer is also a social relationship—albeit a potentially isolating social relationship—in which "you are left only with yourself, and the nervous laughter of doubt."

Invoking the term "cruelty" in conversation with claims about the social function of art automatically sets into motion questions about possible relationships between Kelley's thinking and ideas laid out by Artaud in *The Theatre and Its Double* (1958). More to the point of the interests of this special issue on pedagogy, we look at Kelley's remarks and writings on the relationship he is trying to cultivate with the viewer and wonder if his ideas live somewhere on the continuum presented by Rancière in his "Emancipated Spectator" essay (2007). Rancière examines the ways in which the project of reforming the theatre has historically wavered between the poles of Brecht's epic theatre and Artaud's theatre of cruelty. Do Kelley's ideas about his work oscillate between, per Rancière, Brecht's processes of distant inquiry and Artaud's call for vital embodiment? It is precisely the oscillating quality of Kelley's work that we think makes it interesting. Kelley does not fall squarely into a Brechtian context in which the spectator is distanced and placed in the role of the objective observer, examining phenomena and seeking their cause. Neither does Kelley fully absorb the Artaudian impulse to eliminate the distance between spectators and the work in order to draw them into the magical power of theatrical action. With his *Framed and Frame* essay, Kelley suggests that he is attempting to leverage aspects of both processes. On the one hand, he provides the list that we shared in the opening of our discussion: fix shapes, make clear conventional devices, and focus the attention of the viewer so that the work becomes available for concrete viewing. This has many of the elements that one might associate with Brecht's thinking. But at the conclusion of the same essay, Kelley suggests that focusing the attention of the viewer is only the beginning, as he ultimately wants people to look "back and forth a number of times" until they become "subsumed by a macrocosmic/microcosmic spatial shift." This gesture seems productive of an Artaudian sensibility. Kelley's strategies for engaging his viewers draw on both Brechtian and Artaudian tactics, yet perhaps because he grounded his practice in humour, he is never fully aligned with either. Such forms of parody, role-reversal, and pre-emptive playing "disturb dominant culture that depends on strict stereotypes, stable lines of authority, and humanist reanimations and museological resurrections of many sorts" (Foster 1996, 199).

Manipulating Popular Narratives

In a 1992 interview with John Miller, Mike Kelley describes some of the early discoveries that he made while creating durational performances:

> Perhaps because people have a short attention span you can get away with illogical developments if you make them unfold over a long period of time. People will assume that it is logical because they can't remember what happened before. So in my performances, say an hour into it, I would use the same terms, but I'd say something totally in opposition to what had been said half an hour earlier, and nobody would know. (Kelley in Miller 1992)

This discrete, even subliminal shift in communicating with his audience in the context of performance marks Kelley's interest in the manipulation of narrative, a theme which would be drawn out consistently over the course of his career. As he says in his *Art 21* interview, "sense always comes after the fact in my work. . . . It has to be available to the laziest viewer. And then on the more sophisticated level, as well" (Kelley 2005). Kelley is aware of and intrigued by the notion of communicating on multiple levels, as he says, and the way in which art practice invites particular forms of play—word play, the interplay of sender and receiver in processes of communication, shifts in meaning over time, and the mindfulness associated with manipulating expectations. To this extent, one might observe Kelley's self-awareness and his corresponding acts of manipulation to be forms of "resistance"—ways of liberating himself from the confines of expectations, modes of liberating the audience from their expectations through subtle changes in content and delivery.

Building on these ideas of play between sender and receiver in the production of meaning in or as art, Kelley describes the development of what has become his signature project, *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* (1987), as a process of absorbing public perception (or misperception) into the interpretation of his work:

> When I first started working with stuffed animals, I was responding to a lot of the dialogue in the 80's about commodity culture. But I was really surprised that when everybody looked at these works I made, they all thought it was about child abuse. Now that wasn't anything I expected. And not only did they think it was about child abuse, they thought it was about *my* abuse. So I said, well, that's really interesting. I have to go with that. I have to make all my work about my abuse. And not only that, about *everybody's* abuse. That this is our shared culture. This is the presumption that all motivation is based on some kind of repressed trauma. (Kelley 2005)

In this sense, while the genesis of Kelley's idea for *More Love Hours* begins from one point of origin located within popular culture—"the dialogue in the 80's about commodity culture"—he is comfortable absorbing the fact that the public not only did not pick up on this meaning in the work, but that they instead read "abuse" into the work. Rather than taking an antagonistic stance outright to what one might see as misinterpretation, Kelley instead creates an endless loop of meaning in which the public's interpretation of the work as being about Kelley's personal abuse is then transformed into a work about "everybody's abuse."

In subsequent works, such as *Educational Complex* (1995) and *Day is Done* (2005), Kelley continues to create spaces that could be defined as an interiorization of the outside. With *Educational Complex*, he picked up on the popularization of "Repressed Memory Syndrome," which had gained quite a bit of media attention through scandalous televised court cases in which adult children accused parents of abuse, years after it had allegedly occurred, because therapists had helped them to "uncover" memories that had been repressed. Kelley responded to this public phenomenon by creating "an

architectural model constructed from foam core that amalgamates the floor plans of every school that [he] ever attended" complete with reconstructed "floor plans from memory, facetiously claiming that the spaces he could not remember were sites where he had been abused" (Miller 2012). Anticipating that the public—which was "infatuated" (Kelley 2006) with issues of Repressed Memory Syndrome and child abuse—would naturally read this content into his sculpture, Kelley intentionally invited, even coaxed this interpretation. Coyly, Kelley impersonates a hypothetical viewer when he says, "Like why can't Mike Kelley remember all these rooms in the schools he went to every day for, you know, most . . . half of his life," only to resolve the rhetorical question by remarking, "Well, nobody can" (Kelley 2006). He is aware that the reason he can't remember the specific details of all of the buildings from his childhood is that "nobody can"—everyone is inclined to forget these details over time. But the delicious joke is to toy with the contemporary public interest in this debunked syndrome and draw it into the work. As John Miller explains, "While the non-existence of evidence doubtlessly intrigued Mike in this work, he used it to put forward a kind of allegorical institutional critique: the abuse exacted by the institution concerns exclusion and legitimation, nothing less than a matter of symbolic life and death" (Miller 2012).

In relation to his 2005 piece *Day Is Done*, Kelley describes his relationship to popular culture: "Popular culture is really invisible. People are really oblivious to it. But that's the culture I live in and that's the culture people speak. My interest in popular forms is not to glorify them, because I really dislike popular culture in most cases" (Kelley 2010). And yet Kelley actively uses popular culture as his source material in *Day Is Done*, an elaborate film series in which Kelley directed performers to re-enact hundreds of rituals associated with high school—from pep rallies to quasi-religious celebrations. But the rituals are delivered through Kelley's characteristically warped perspective: the pep rally crowd does a familiar cheer, but some of the students are dressed in odd masks; a young girl riding a donkey is serenaded by a "kind of" barbershop group of male singers, but their tune is strange and dark.

Kelley further complicates his relation to popular culture, and its role in his understanding of his own experience and even of reality, when he explains that all of his work "is associative and comes from my own experience, but its very hard to, say, to disentangle memories of films, or books or cartoons or plays from "real" experience, it all gets mixed up, so, in a way, I don't make such distinctions. And I see it all as a kind of fiction" (Kelley 2005). Kelley regularly expresses fascination—even delight—with social ritual as well as the ritualizing of social practice through art, and the unique role that art can play in exposing the dysfunction inherent in these rites and rituals, given that "art is some sort of interesting area where dysfunction is allowed" (Kelley in Miller 1992). Kelley, then, through radical and perverse forms of inclusion (including elements of popular culture and both the associations he makes and doesn't make with it), offers a form of refusal (Baldacchino 2005). In this sense, he works not to replicate what he observes or interprets, but rather offers a form of rejection, which is built into a familiar container. And as he is characteristically interested in multiple modes of reception—as he says, from the laziest viewer to the most sophisticated—he creates in such a way that audiences might read the work only for its surface meaning, or they might seek to find new, unexpected or even "incorrect" readings of the work—which can then be reabsorbed by Kelley as the work continues to produce meaning over time.

Poetic Work of Translation

As we discussed earlier in this essay, John Miller has suggested that Kelley "trumped up" or otherwise inflated the possibility that the missing information in *Educational Complex* might actually be a literal manifestation of Repressed Memory Syndrome. This fabrication, in Miller's interpretation, is part of Kelley's particular typology of pre-emptive antagonism, which was a reaction to Kelley's perception that his audience would misinterpret or otherwise "dumb down" the reading of his work. Based on the extensive evidence that Miller draws on in his study, this interpretation of Kelley's motives is reasonable. And we are not in a position to question the validity of these findings. Yet we are concerned that perhaps Miller's characterization might contribute to the fetishization of the combative, the disruptive, the oppositional and the uncomfortable in contemporary art: "Despite a call to re-embrace modernist unintelligibility, the focus on a hyperbolic toughness risks framing antagonism as a quite intelligible—and marketable—crash between two opposing forces" (Jackson 2011, 56).

Accordingly, we would like to ask what we might identify regarding Kelley's implicit pedagogy if we set aside the idea that he was motivated by a fear that his artwork "would devolve into a morass of arbitrary biases," abusing his audience "on account of ideas it had not yet voiced and perhaps had not even considered" (Miller 2015, 17). Whereas Miller is suggesting that Kelley employs his pre-emptive antagonism to control the narrative and stave off idiotic responses, we are inclined to conclude instead that Kelley stages intentionally contradictory affective scenarios that produce discomfort for viewers. We return to this passage from Kelley's essay for the Huebler catalogue:

> His work seems to ask me to ponder it, to think it over. But my responses are generally in opposition to this apparent directive. I have an unconscious physical response—I laugh. I am confused, which is surprising, in that, on the surface, his work often looks so dumbly straightforward. (Kelley [1997] 2003, 179–80)

Does Kelley not ask the very same of his viewers? To ponder his work, to think it over while all the while provoking an unconscious physical response of laughter and discomfort—of confusion that is surprising and disorienting, even annoying. Yet it strikes us that even this framing continues to participate in the patterns by which "'discomfort' between art and receiver becomes the force worthy of critical interest" (Jackson 2011, 56).

Travelling back to Kelley's *Framed and Frame* essay, we wonder what we might learn from Kelley's interest in amorphous space—the "confused 'nothing' space of presexual consciousness" (Kelley [1999] 2004, 122). Kelley arrives at this point by explaining a phenomenon he noticed among beginning art students:

> In a naive attempt to create "natural" tonal shifts, novice painters add black paint to colored pigment, producing an extremely ugly and unnatural color palette. At first I was disturbed by such coloration, but I have grown to admire it and gone on to produce works attempting to utilize it. . . . Part of my admiration for such coloration is the murky unspecific "space" it produces. (ibid.).

In this passage, we see Kelley reflecting simultaneously on his experience as a student and as a teacher. As a student, Kelley learned that such colouration was incorrect. As a teacher, Kelley

became interested in what this otherwise erroneous space could become—for its potentiality rather than its literal failure. The potentiality of the amorphous space then loops back to a point that Miller makes later regarding Kelley's interest in the uncanny as that which "never permanently transforms reality" but instead "remains always *in potential*" which "allows it to be a constant yet always latent force" (Miller 2015, 86; emphasis in original). For Miller, Kelley pits his work not *above* the world, but *against* it (Miller 2015, 17). Miller suggests that Kelley's tactics serve a corrective function, pre-emptively interfering with processes of reception in order to elicit desired affects. We would instead ask: Is the "counter-" action that is built into Kelley's process not a conventionally antagonistic act, marked by a contrary or oppositional impulse but rather a catalyst for a series of counter-translations, with "counter-" in this sense being a process of response, a meeting, a return, in a circular or spiral pattern? Rancière explains:

> From the ignorant person to the scientist who builds hypotheses, it is always the same intelligence that is at work: an intelligence that makes figures and comparisons to communicate its intellectual adventures and to understand what another intelligence is trying to communicate to it in turn. This poetic work of translation is the first condition of any apprenticeship. Intellectual emancipation, as Jacotot conceived of it, means the awareness and the enactment of that equal power of translation and counter-translation. (2007, 275)

Such a framing is more compatible with John Welchman's characterization of Kelley's work as "an associative matrix within which Kelley negotiates an elaborate network of allusions and symmetries" (2004, 120). The associative matrix description invites us to depart from the dominant narrative of Kelley as antagonistic and shift toward an understanding that he foregrounds complications in the exchange between artists and viewers purposefully through a parodic "trickstering of these very processes" (Foster 1996, 199). In work such as Kelley's, "the nature of what it is to look is built into the work, itself. And certain strategies of representation are deployed to make us aware that part of the subject of the work . . . is something about the activity of looking" (Stone-Richards).

Mobile Homestead, a full-scale reconstruction of Kelley's childhood home, which lives on the grounds of the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD), opened just over a year after the artist's untimely death by suicide. In an account provided by Marsha Miro, founding director of the MOCAD, while Kelley exhibited his trademark "dark humor" concerning the project's future (as "doomed to failure"), he also expressed some uncharacteristically sanguine thoughts about the work's potential: "He kept saying to me, 'This is never going to happen—it's a joke,' because that's the way he was. . . . But he also said he thought it would be one of the most important things he ever did, partly because it would keep on being a living piece" (Miro in Kennedy 2013).

The house, which pairs a main floor dedicated to community engagement projects with an elaborate network of subterranean rooms inaccessible to the public, has a kind of "split personality" (Kennedy 2013). Retrospectively, those who knew Kelley and many who did not know him at all have contemplated the significance of this piece, his last work, which was constructed posthumously and which is designed to live on indefinitely through the activities of others. As a "living piece," it is a particularly poignant and disturbing commentary on his absence. Without wishing to speculate as to Kelley's frame of mind while he was conceiving of this project, we think it is useful to ask how the idea of a "living piece" connects not only with the *Mobile Homestead* but also with the fundamental ideas that inform Kelley's processes of meaning-making. Back and forth is the action that Kelley

promotes between the viewer and the objects and images that he provides. A psychedelic disruption is the desired outcome. Seemingly, the psychedelic is the end—the product of going back and forth, back and forth. But what if the psychedelic is not an end, but instead a system designed to begin again and again? A refusal to be fixed? Jonathan Fineberg explains that a work of art may provide "an opening and even a template for altering the way viewers meet the world . . . encountering something new in the world, the brain is forced to make something new in apprehending it" (2015, 147–49). In this manner, if we return to Kelley's list—fixing shapes, making clear conventional devices, focusing attention on discrete forms—then is this process simply a matter of a set of temporary, repeated interventions? He fixes shapes, but not in order to keep them fixed. He fixes shapes to stop or interrupt conventional processes of representation and interpretation, inserting new frames that then shift focus or inspire different foci. In this way, he choreographs "the intimacy between being and following: to be (anything, anyone) is always to be following (something, someone), always to be in response to call from something, however nonhuman it may be" (Bennett 2010, xiii).

Notes

1. Kelley's essay was published in the exhibition catalogue for a solo show entitled *"Framed and Frame (Miniature Reproduction 'Chinatown Wishing Well' Built by Mike Kelley after 'Miniature Reproduction "Seven Star Cavern" built by Prof. H. K. Lu') that ran 1999–2000)" "Test Room Containing Multiple Stimuli Known to Elicit Curiosity and Manipulatory Responses"* at Le-Magasin-Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France, October 16, 1999 to January 16, 2000.

2. In point of fact, the content of Kelley's work in *Framed and Frame* fits the critical conversation that Foster is trying to cultivate about "quasi-anthropological art" which is characterized by a "reductive over-identification with the other" (1996, 203). Although Foster does not specifically reference Kelley as creating the kind of parallactic work that he advocates, in a separate section of Foster's book, he does note that "Kelley plays on anthropological as well as psychoanalytic connections" (1996, 273 n.71).

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ARTICLES

Toward a Performative Trans-Pedagogy: Critical Approaches for Learning and Teaching in Art and Performance

Vikki Chalklin and Marianne Mulvey

The two authors of this paper met through a research seminar entitled "Trashing Performance" at Goldsmiths, University London, part of the UK-based research project Performance Matters; the seminar examined the value of marginalized, queer performance practices and feminist and queer theory. Vikki Chalklin is a performer and lecturer working at the intersections of performance studies and body studies, and Marianne Mulvey, whose research interest is in the pedagogic potential of performance, is Curator of Public Programmes, Tate London. Our ongoing discussions around performance, art, and culture led to a collaboration examining the radical potential of queering the institutional structures of the art museum. This paper looks at three evening courses for adults that emerged from these discussions, devised and delivered at Tate Britain and Modern by the authors. We identify and analyze key pedagogic encounters, theorizing our shared approach and its potential as what we are calling a performative trans-pedagogy. First, we describe our case studies and locate our pedagogical approach within the literature around critical and transformative pedagogies. We pay particular attention to how work on affect and emotion has been employed in this field, the crossovers between theories of situated learning and feminist epistemologies, and what queer theory can contribute to the locations and dislocations that are necessitated by radical forms of learning and teaching. This sets out the three nodes through which we build our concept of a performative trans-pedagogy: the trans-cultural, performative affect, and disorientations.

We propose that a trans-cultural approach, in which crossing the boundaries of academia and practice, art and popular culture, and the aesthetic and political, allowed us to teach art appreciation and criticism while at the same time providing a queer critique of its structures. Combining bell hooks' (1994) argument for the pedagogical purpose of pleasure, laughter, and enjoyment with recent queer and feminist work on the cultural value of "negative" affects, we suggest that the intentionally ambiguous affective register of the courses—where discomfort, embarrassment, enjoyment, and pleasure often combined—enabled difficult, complex, and confrontational issues to be considered and discussed. Finally, the notion of disorientation, key to the queer approach to phenomenological theory developed by Sara Ahmed (2006), is used to highlight the modes of location and dislocation staged in these courses, and in particular to propose that these disorientations were pedagogically effective in enacting the modes of questioning we wished to inspire in the students.

Context: Tate London's Course Program

Tate London's approach to course programming is theme-led and responsive to current exhibitions, collections displays and current cultural debate, rather than offering classic art historical courses covering periods or "–isms." The program suggests new ways of looking at, making, and talking and

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thinking about art through different theoretical approaches and practical methods. Painting, printmaking, poetry, and critical writing are offered alongside discursive courses covering philosophical and theoretical approaches to art. During a typical session of a discursive course, the tutor gives a mini-lecture outlining some critical theoretical tools that participants take into the galleries and use to discuss the artwork, or the building itself and the experience of being in it. Participants are a mix of art professionals, students, enthusiasts, and self-improvers, many of whom are Tate members and repeat course bookers. Many have no formal art education or background but see Tate courses as intellectual stimuli outside of their day job, or opportunities to keep learning after retirement.

The three courses that we analyze in order to elaborate our trans-pedagogy fall into the discursive category and took place over four to six weekly two-hour sessions at both Tate Britain and Modern in 2014–15. "Body Talks: Thinking Art Through the Body" and "Animal Magnetism: Art Beyond the Species Divide" were jointly devised and taught by Vikki Chalklin. "How Speech Acts: Art and Life" was taught by Marianne Mulvey with five guest artists. As well as learning through a diverse range of materials and concepts delivered by the course tutor, it was important that the theme of each course be broad enough for diverse adult audiences to both relate to them through their own experience and find elements of what was learned and discussed useful in their day-to-day lives.

Our first collaboration, "Body Talks," was programmed using Tate Britain's collection displays and temporary exhibitions to explore themes of the body and embodiment in art and culture. The aim was for people from different knowledge bases to encounter art in the gallery from a range of perspectives and feel confident to discuss it in a supportive and exploratory setting. The theme was deliberately open and pluralistic: we all have a body, senses, affects and emotions, the experiences of which were made an integral part of the gallery-based sessions. The discursive format also framed learning as a shared experience and endeavour. An example of such experience-based peer learning happened in the fifth "Body Talks" session, which centred on the hierarchy of the senses and included a wide-ranging discussion where participants' various cultural backgrounds were mined by the group as sources of knowledge. An excerpt screening of Derek Jarman's *Blue* (1993) brought out personal and cultural associations with the colour. The discussion then roamed around the linguistic associations between seeing and knowing in English and ended with one participant recounting her experiences of an Eastern European wedding ritual where a blindfolded bride must guess her husband from a line up of men by feeling their ears, a tradition that, counter to the Western visual hierarchy, proposes touch as true knowing. The session continued with a touch tour exercise in the gallery, discussed in detail below.

Our next collaboration, "Animal Magnetism: Art Beyond the Species Divide," followed a related line of enquiry and approach. Drawing on traditions of animal symbolism in art, literature, and myth, as well as concepts emerging from philosophy, feminist, and queer theory, the course looked at the wild, domestic, and mythical creatures portrayed in Tate Britain's collection, from the classical to contemporary. The intention was to reconsider what these representations of animals and animal-human relationships tell us about dominant cultural practices of their time, and how they speak to us now about what it is to be human. The variety of artistic and cultural practices covered raised questions around anthropocentrism, posthumanism, deviant sexuality including fetish and kink, and sentience and agency in animal and nonhuman species. With transgression of the boundaries between humans, animals and other nonhuman beings running as a theme throughout, the course aim was for participants to relate these questions to their views on, for example, what is considered normal or deviant and to expand their understanding of the limits of the human body. Following the

structure of mini-lecture and discussion in the galleries, the first session began with an ice-breaker question where the class was asked: "If you were an animal what would you be?" This offered up some interesting responses about individual participants' perception of, and possible identifications with, animals.

The course "How Speech Acts" brought together critical theories of performativity with contemporary artists' practice, popular culture, and current affairs. In the first session, students were introduced to J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things With Words* (1976) and the concept of performative speech—words that enact something in their very saying. The class then learned about subsequent re-readings of this text by Jacques Derrida (1982) and Judith Butler (1993) that develop the implications of theorizing performative speech: problematizing authenticity and destabilizing normative constructions of gender, identity, and sexuality, but also everyday behavioural practices. Over subsequent sessions, the class met five different artists whose work dealt with performativity, including Harold Offeh, whose session we return to later. Each workshop session began with a discussion of the homework reading or activity, followed by a presentation and discussion from the artists on their work. After a break, artists led a performative activity, ranging from a confessional writing exercise with Scottee to devising a gallery tour based on overheard conversations with Patrick Coyle.

We believe that these courses enacted an innovative approach to learning and teaching that has implications beyond the specific context of adult learning in the gallery within which they were located. In particular, we wish to argue that these courses were performative in their pedagogy—rather than simply relaying or transmitting information, they performatively produced the modes of enquiry they were introducing, bringing into being new ways of thinking, questioning, and being for all the participants, including those teaching the courses. We found that these courses enacted a form of enquiry that was specifically aligned with the prefix "trans," examined below as posing a particular intervention into ongoing debates around performative and critical pedagogy.

Beyond Critical Pedagogy

The concept of a performative trans-pedagogy developed in this paper is based on a drawing together of thinking around critical pedagogies, feminist epistemology, and the potential of "trans" as a prefix. Our interest in what are often variously termed radical, transformative, or critical pedagogies is rooted in the broad literature on non-traditional pedagogical models emerging primarily in relation and response to the concerns of Paulo Freire (2005). Challenging the tradition of "rote" learning he termed "the banking principle," one he deemed both a pedagogical and political failure, Freire argued that prevailing models of education inhibit, rather than foster, students' critical consciousness and ultimately work to further alienate marginalized students. His rousing treatise for a more liberatory model therefore proposed a pedagogy that could encourage students to gain a complex understanding of the social world and the workings of power and oppression by positioning them as active agents and producers of knowledge within the learning encounter.

As feminist scholar and activist bell hooks notes, education in the arts and humanities should by definition be "education as the practice of freedom" (1994, 4), an education that resists and disrupts rather than reinforces hegemonic oppressive power structures. hooks' pedagogical polemic draws on and develops Freire's work to argue for the necessity of a radical, liberatory, transformative *engaged* pedagogy, stressing the importance of the holistic spiritual well-being of students and teachers.

hooks argues that an engaged pedagogy must not only open the minds of learners and teachers but erase the Cartesian mind/body dualism (Henriques et al. 1998), which even in critical pedagogic frameworks such as Freire's locates knowledge within a disembodied and rational mind. hooks argues that to do this we must:

> open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions, I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries. (1994, 12)

In order to enable learning beyond the established boundaries of what is knowable and acceptable, we must engage our hearts as well as our minds, allowing emotions and feelings so often sidelined in pedagogic practice to work alongside rational debate. This therefore prompts a reconsideration of the role and value of affect in the classroom, which played a key role in all three courses.

The notion of "affect" has been at the centre of scholarly debate across the humanities and social sciences in recent years (for a more detailed account of what is often termed the "turn to affect" see Blackman 2008a/b; Clough 2010). One of hooks' primary arguments identifies the failure to address the value of excitement and even fun in the classroom as one of Freire's shortcomings (hooks 1994, 7). Challenging the suspicion with which academic environments tend to treat laughter emerging from a classroom, hooks wishes "not only to imagine that the classroom could be exciting but that this excitement could co-exist with and even stimulate serious intellectual and/or academic engagement" (ibid.). Her call for academics to loosen their attachment to seriousness is particularly pertinent in light of recent developments in queer theory which have positioned irreverence and frivolity as potentially fruitful modes of academic engagement (Butt 2005, 2007; Butt and Rogoff 2013), as examined in more depth below. While pleasure, excitement, and fun were central to these courses, we also found that embarrassment, discomfort, and anger were equally pertinent. Just as theorists of affect have worked to reconsider the generative value of negative affects (see Ngai 2004; Love 2007), we suggest that the need to "struggle over knowledge" (Giroux 2000, 258) positions tension, challenge, and contradiction as favourable and even necessary in the practice of radical pedagogy.

For hooks, this tension and challenge is necessary to empower minoritarian students within the bourgeois education system by disrupting the presumed "safety" of the environment for certain types of (white, middle-class, heterosexual) bodies (hooks 1994, 39). We are aware that hooks and Freire's critical pedagogies were not developed in the bourgeois, white, middle-class space of the art museum, which might seem a contradictory space to test them out. Indeed "Body Talks" confronted us with an all-female, almost all white and middle-class group of students. This lack of diversity was somewhat surprising to us, despite our awareness of the known socio-economic factors concerning access, spare time and income, level of comfort in the art museum, and interest in matters of the body, which we are unable to explore fully here. However, utilizing the framework of critical pedagogy in this environment presented a particular challenge to us as facilitators of learning. Rather than empowering marginalized students, then, our challenge was to use this model to destabilize the assumptions and expectations of the learners in order to produce new knowledge and experience. The underexplored territory of this particular setting and audience, and the difficulties it posed for teachers and groups, we felt worth exploring in the context of this special issue.

Another key foundation for the theoretical framing of our performative trans-pedagogy is to draw a link between what is often termed feminist epistemology (Stanley 1990) and work in education studies on situated learning. Feminist theory regarding the subjective nature of all knowledge emphasizes the importance of what Donna Haraway (1998) terms "partial perspectives"—the role that each individual's multiple and shifting subject positions, experiences, and perspectives have in what and how they research. This has led academics working within this epistemological framework to take up the imperative of being attentive to their positioning as subjects:

> Academic and other knowledges are always *situated*, always produced by *positioned* actors working in/between all kinds of locations, working up/on/through all kinds of research relation(ships). (Cook et al. 2006, 16)

Similarly, theories of situated learning have discussed how different skills and modes of communication are constantly being learned within different social environments in everyday life, not just in the classroom (Scott 2001). The movement inherent in both feminist epistemology and situated learning foregrounds the importance of location and dislocation in our trans-pedagogy. As discussed in more detail below, we draw from Sara Ahmed's (2006) queer phenomenology to work with the productive challenges posed by location and dis-location—where the need to be rooted in our subject position also calls for the requirement to be dis-orientated from the social structures that allow that position to emerge.

Finally, we have developed our pedagogic model through employing the prefix "trans" in order to indicate a model of learning and teaching that not only challenges traditional understandings of pedagogy, but uses the radical spirit of trans to transgress and transcend the assumptions and power structures remaining in some critical pedagogic frameworks. In using "trans" throughout this paper we are mindful of its employment in relation to academic debates both around transdisciplinarity (Sandford 2015; Pulkkinen 2015) and the emerging field of transgender studies (Stryker 2006). In contemporary popular usage, trans* is most commonly associated with its use as an umbrella term for transsexual, transgender, and queer gender identities that challenge or exist outside of essentialist binary gender models. Recent work in transgender studies has argued that the disruption of binaries and assumptions posed by trans bodies, identities, and politics has far-reaching implications for "powerful critical rereading[s] of contemporary (post)modernity in all its complexity" (ibid., 15). We found that whether intentionally or not, all three courses included discussion around trans identities in relation to the themes of embodiment, essentialism, difference, and constructions of the Other.

The prefix "trans" is also formative of our pedagogy in a broader sense. Denoting either "across" or "beyond" its suffix (Lund 2012, 8), trans is an animating prefix—it implies movement either from one place to another (as in transcontinental) or going beyond an existing boundary (as in transgressive). This dynamic crossing is closely linked to our aforementioned interest in critical pedagogies, situated knowledges, and dis-orientation—if all knowledge is located, anchored somewhere in space, it has the potential to move into a different position, or to be dis-located and cross from one place to another. Critical pedagogy also poses the necessity to challenge the assumptions and power structures of teaching encounters, pushing beyond the accepted dynamics and striving for a pedagogy that transcends what seems possible. If trans can thus be used as a *verb* (as with the more radical applications of the term "queer," see Hayward 2014, 256), then to "trans" pedagogy could be to productively employ this constant crossing and going beyond. Our project, therefore, is to build a pedagogy that is about always shifting perspective (for learners and teachers),

always moving between spaces, disciplines, and modes of thinking, speaking and writing, always going beyond where one was before.

Our performative trans-pedagogy thus combines the concerns of critical pedagogies with an investment and active interest in the role of affect in learning environments, debates around situated knowledges, and the transgressive and transcendent potential posed by the dynamic prefix "trans." From the outset, we intended to enact Freire's (2005) model of learning as empowerment by foregrounding independent thought, challenge, and the value of embodied knowledge. However, even the most radical theories around transformative and engaged pedagogy still tend to frame their approaches in relation to the rather formalized and privileged institutionalized space of the school and/or university. By focusing instead on adult learning that takes place outside of the structures of formal education, we wish to extend the lens of critical pedagogies to consider the importance of learning occurring in informal contexts, as a leisure activity, and/or in later life.

This "leisure" learning problematizes but also intensifies some of the questions raised in critical pedagogies around the power dynamics of the learning encounter, the "real-life" applications or relevance of the knowledge and skills gained, and the purpose and value of art, critical theory, and education. Adult learners present a challenge through the different kinds of minds coming into the classroom (or indeed the non-classroom learning space). Our students covered a large age span and varied in their backgrounds, intentions, and their approaches to the course material and art in general. Without the requirement to gain appropriate qualifications and/or knowledge for a chosen career path, adult learners may already come to the encounter more "empowered" than Freire's (2005) model suggests, while on the other hand an absence or only distant memory of formal education may incite intellectual and academic insecurities. Our performative trans-pedagogy therefore enacts its challenge to academic power structures by giving academic attention to a mode of learning often ignored in the education studies canon, as mentioned above. We suggest that this type of teaching and learning should be subject to similar questions and consideration around pedagogic practice, and that it can enact models that have potential impact in more formalized academic contexts such as higher education. It also further challenges the assumption questioned by hooks (1994) that education is a "serious" business—as a leisure activity, these evening courses needed to deliver enjoyment and reward beyond the acquisition of knowledge itself.

Taking into account the possibilities and challenges posed by what we were doing and how we have theorized our model, performative trans-pedagogy allows us to treat teaching as a practice of inviting different ways of thinking. Provoking innovative and difficult questions, we argue, is a performative process. These questions not only bring into being new ways of thinking and understanding the world, but they also become the catalyst to bring into being further questions in the future. This aligns our pedagogy with how José Muñoz views queerness, as "not simply a *being* but a *doing* for and toward the future . . . a rejection of the here and now and an insistence on the potentiality or concrete possibility of another world" (Muñoz 2009, 1, emphasis added).

Trans-Cultural Pedagogy

The foci of the courses were distinctly trans-cultural in their holistic approach to the body, theory, and art appreciation. They disrupted multiple disciplinary boundaries by drawing vocabularies and approaches from across art history and criticism, performance studies, cultural studies, anthropology, critical theory and philosophy, as well as the already interdisciplinary fields of body studies, human-animal studies, and queer, feminist, and postcolonial theory. Moreover, our

collaboration across different institutional and academic positions allowed us to address shared concerns through our differing approaches vis-à-vis the gallery and the classroom, curation, academia and art and performance practice. As well as crossing academic and institutional boundaries, we took care to present source material that drew connections between academia and varied, diverse forms of popular culture that would otherwise be unlikely to be framed in relation to one another. Tapping into ongoing debates within cultural studies and visual cultures around seriousness, taste, and the contested yet persistent distinctions between the "high" arts and "lowbrow" entertainment and mass media (Gans 1999; Butt and Rogoff 2013), we employed a frame of reference that we are calling trans-cultural—crossing boundaries between different academic, artistic, and cultural forms and mediums. Discussing, for example, Damien Hirst's use of animal carcasses alongside feminist theory regarding animal rights (Adams 1990) and the enactment of animal alter-egos in "Furry" fan subcultures allowed for new connections and insights to be made regarding the significance and varied roles animals play in art and culture. For adult learners wanting to expand their engagement with and ability to interpret visual art, this trans-cultural combination of references, materials, and approaches allowed for a different set of questions to emerge than those that dictate traditional approaches to art history and criticism. This was particularly significant in the context of the highly institutionalized gallery space of Tate, which is closely associated with the hierarchical structures of cultural, artistic, and academic knowledge production and the regulation of value in relation to art and criticism.

In week three of "How Speech Acts: Art and Life" Harold Offeh presented his performance practice that deals with queering gender and cultural identity and the ethics of appropriating language and performative practices from minority ethnic and other marginalized groups. Offeh's recent work includes *Covers* (2009–ongoing), where the artist attempts to transform three iconic music album covers posed by black female artists and models into durational performances, including Grace Jones' *Island Life* (1985). Offeh's session coincided with the breaking of the Rachel Dolezal story—a white American civil rights activist and Africana Studies lecturer "outed" by her parents as lying about her racial identity, who subsequently said she "identifies as black." Given the themes of Offeh's work, as preparation we set a discussion of the story on the *Huffington Post*'s website (July 2015) between Black Voices presenters Marc Lamont Hill and Lilly Workneh, alongside a short extract of sociologist Erving Goffman's (1956) analysis of everyday face-to-face interactions in terms of theatrical performance.

Alongside the Goffman reading, the Dolezal story and its media representation brought up anxieties in the class over a white woman "passing" as black, as a potentially offensive inversion of the expression that has been used in 18th-, 19th- and 20th-century America to describe mixed-race people passing as white—usually to gain access to social acceptance and/or privileges. There were also concerns about Dolezal claiming a history of trauma that is not her own and fighting for black civil rights from a false position. Interestingly, Dolezal's description of herself as "trans-racial" and *Huffington Post*'s representation of the evolving #AskRachel discourse on Twitter, which included questions about her knowledge of black culture ("ask Rachel to name two seasonings. Salt n pepper don't count"; or "ask Rachel if church starts at 9 a.m. on Sunday, when will it end? 11 a.m., 1 p.m. or tomorrow?"), were equally troubling to the class. Offeh suggested that what seemed particularly uncomfortable was the presenters reducing black identity to a set of essentializing signifiers or characteristics and attributing Dolezal's "trans-racial" identification to mental illness or post-traumatic stress because, in these ways, they dangerously echoed transphobic discourse. Drawing on both the Goffman and *Huffington Post* preparatory sources brought about an engaging class discussion around the performance of self and cultural identity that raised uncomfortable concerns.

These were later echoed in the performative "Snap Diva" workshop that concluded Offeh's session, where we found the affective responses particularly strong.

Performative Affect

As discussed above, hooks (1994, 2003) argues that affect can play a significant role in the development of a critical pedagogy. Beyond the practical considerations of navigating expectations associated with learning as a leisure activity, we found employing a combination of enjoyment, embarrassment, pleasure, and discomfort highly pedagogically effective in enabling critical thinking. Work emerging from queer and feminist theory in recent years has highlighted the critical and cultural significance of "negative" affect (Love 2007; Ngai 2004). In particular, the discourse of what is often termed queer negativity (Halberstam 2011) has examined the specific importance of pain, shame, loss, and disgust to queer subjects and cultural production. Lisa Blackman (2011) argues that some queer performance operates on a platform of negative affects which are employed in an ambivalent, ambiguous way to enable new modes of belonging and formation of subject positions for the queer subjects to which they attach themselves. Following Jennifer Doyle (2013), we consider affects to be inherently too diffuse to be understood through neat categories of this or that emotion and thus strive to position ourselves, and our pedagogy, in the complexity of the ambiguity between different feelings that may resonate in more positive or negative ways. We believe negative affects have as much to offer the pedagogic encounter as the "positive" feelings hooks (1994) calls for. Since feelings are always multiple and dynamic, we consider the affective register of our courses through a pairing of the two extremes of affect that often function closely together—pleasure/discomfort, and enjoyment/embarrassment.

In the second half of Offeh's session for "How Speech Acts" he led a "Snap Diva" workshop where we—the course participants and tutor—learned "snapping," a communicative body language allied to vogueing, from 80s/90s Afro-American Gay subculture. Using the YouTube video *How to Snap like a Diva* by Marlon Riggs to teach essential snap moves, Offeh took us through a series of activities to rehearse, develop, and perform our own Snap Diva sequence. Music and movement were essential to turning the classroom learning environment into a performative workshop, and collective laughter helped ease our self-conscious, tentative attempts at snapping. As a finale Offeh encouraged us to use the length of the room as a catwalk, which we sashayed down from opposite ends, performing our Snap Diva routine as we met our partner in the middle. In the post-workshop discussion one of the participants, a heterosexual white Swedish woman, likened the experience to her inability to master the vernacular nuances of Italian in a part of the country where she'd lived for some time. She found her attempts to learn and use an intimate language of a marginalized community—queer, African American men—felt similarly false and raised an uncomfortable affective response. Echoing the group's previous concerns around pretending, masquerading, and deceiving others through our self-presentations and interpersonal relations in the Goffman/Dolezal discussion, this particular participant found the snapping exercise offensive to the community whose language she was trying and failing to mimic. It was clear that the embodied experience of learning and performing this new language was an uneasy pleasure for the group; it had clarified *and* complicated some of the Dolezal/Goffman discussion and brought aspects of Offeh's own practice of appropriating and performing multiple cultural, gender, and sexual identities into sharp relief. The session ended with Offeh explaining that his work seeks to promote and proliferate the appropriation of these identities, which he sees as potentially accessible to a number of different subject positions.

"Snap Diva" workshop with Harold Offeh at Tate Modern, 2015. Photography by Jane Wells © Tate 2016.

Ambiguous affect also played a significant role throughout "Animal Magnetism." In the opening session, an explorative gallery tour asked students to consider the different ways in which animals appear in the works of Tate Britain's pre-20th-century galleries. It became clear that there were striking parallels between the representation of the bodies of naked women and horses. This alignment with a similar objectifying and potentially sexualizing gaze raised a discomfort around inappropriate sexuality but simultaneously also presented the pleasure of being able to discuss a taboo subject in a fairly safe way. This issue was raised again in the final session through the theme of "blurring the species divide." A course participant who worked at London Zoo shared incidents of animal behaviour that trouble our normative assumptions about sexual agency and inter-species desire: she recounted a story about a male gorilla looking up female visitors' skirts and his attempts to grab female zoo-keepers' breasts. In this setting, these anecdotes were at once shocking, amusing, and troubling, and enacted the powerful ambiguity of questions that have no straightforward or immediate answers.

In the same session, enjoyment and embarrassment also worked closely together through the semi-involuntary embodied reaction of laughter. Earlier in the course participants had been asked to describe what animal species they most closely identified with, and in the final session, drawing from exercises commonly used in the teaching of acting techniques, we asked them to consider the physical form and movement of their chosen animal. This was met with reluctance and embarrassed laughter as participants anticipated the inevitable next stage to act out this animal character through

their own bodies. Wishing to avoid a didactic teaching encounter, we gave them the option to carry out the exercise or not, and they collectively declined. This "failed" exercise is interesting with regard to the questions it poses around the limits of laughter and embarrassment when they lead to a shutting down of the pedagogic encounter. However, while the exercise itself was not realized, its intentions manifested spontaneously later in response to Nicholas Pope's *Liar Liar* (2008), a sculpture composed of fifteen tubular ceramic shapes resembling organic life forms. The discussion centred on the possibility of understanding these shapes as nonhuman or possibly extra-terrestrial life forms, particularly focusing on how these tubular beings would move, feed, and communicate. During the conversation, a few members of the group spontaneously performed how they imagined these forms might move in an animal or human-like way. Outside of the structured exercise, the pedagogic effect of encouraging the participants to embody a nonhuman form and thus learn through their bodies was able to emerge in an unforced and organic way. This was significant in enacting the blurring of the boundary between human and non-human bodies that was being proposed through the intellectual material of the course, but it also opened up the possibility of thinking *through, beyond,* and *into* another body. As discussed above, the course drew connections between diverse cultural objects and phenomena, theory, and art objects to encourage an open questioning and consideration of naturalized cultural norms, particularly around marginalized or Othered bodies. This attempt of (impossible) identification with an unrecognizable form (that only abstractly resembles an animal or human) thus acts as an extension of the challenge to normative assumptions around bodies and identities. If we suspend the clear-cut boundaries between human and nonhuman species, what boundaries may it become possible for human bodies to transgress?

Nicholas Pope, *Liar Liar 2008–9* © Nicholas Pope. Photo © Tate, London 2016.

Pedagogical Disorientations

> Moments of disorientation are vital. They are bodily experiences that throw the world up, or throw the body from its ground. . . . Sometimes, disorientation is an ordinary feeling. . . . I think we can learn from such ordinary moments. (Ahmed 2006, 157)

In setting out the parameters of a queer phenomenology, Sara Ahmed foregrounds the importance of experiences of orientation and disorientation as ways of understanding the social world and how it is produced. Importantly for our purposes here, she frames moments of disorientation in particular as pedagogical tools. What we can learn from these moments is closely tied to the relationship between disorientation and the discomfort discussed in the previous section. Ahmed's interest in phenomenology is rooted in the ways various "orientations"—toward certain objects and away from others—shape the social world, how we inhabit it, and how we relate to its other inhabitants (Ahmed 2006, 3). Certain objects, she argues, are positioned as "happy" or "good"—objects we "should" be oriented toward, which aligns a different orientation, toward different objects ("unhappy" or "bad" ones) as queering the straight line of the "normal" (Ahmed 2010).

As we have seen, "Animal Magnetism" provided ample opportunities for such productive discomfort—raising questions about deviant sexuality in relation to seemingly innocuous encounters and artworks, and through the challenge to our understandings of gender, sexuality, embodiment, and humanity posed by a discussion of species dysphoria. In addition to staging discomfort, we argue that each of the moments of complexity outlined across the three courses staged a productive disorientation, allowing for the opening up of new worlds of possibility that Ahmed considers a queer "source of vitality" (2006, 4). The session on monsters and hybrid creatures framed various embodiments that challenge normative assumptions around identity, bodies, and the limits of the human. Using the notion of the abject (Kristeva 1982) as that which disrupts dualistic distinctions between inside/outside, human/nonhuman, and male/female, we drew connections between mythical hybrid creatures and the ways in which "impossible" bodies (Weiss 1999)—ones that disrupt the ways we understand the world—are coded as "monstrous." Through press coverage of the 2007 furor around Thomas Beatie, a transgender man whose pregnancy was made public in the US LGBT magazine *The Advocate*, we examined experiences that transgress the structures through which we learn to understand ourselves and the social world. Framing the disorientation of a queer reproductive body alongside the question of how we are oriented toward variously "human" or "monstrous" bodies raised the possibility for the participants of queering the orientation they may take for granted. The possibility of being oriented toward or away from different cultural objects, or being oriented differently in relation to the same objects, "allow[ed] things to move" (Ahmed 2006, 154) in the way proposed by Ahmed—it opened up new worlds through the discomfort of being disorientated. This challenge to the participants to think outside of their own cultural experience laid the groundwork for the spontaneous action of thinking oneself into another body outlined above in relation to the Pope sculpture.

"Body Talks: Thinking Art Through The Body" course participants engaging in a touch tour, 2014. Detail of Henry Moore OM, CH, *Working Model for Three Piece No.3: Vertebrae*, 1968, Tate. Photography by Marianne Mulvey 2016 © The Henry Moore Foundation.

A more visceral sense of disorientation was enacted through the use of a "touch tour" in "Body Talks." A method usually reserved for visually impaired visitors to Tate, these are sessions where a sighted member of staff guides a tactile interaction with a small selection of more robust sculptures. Wearing white conservator's gloves, participants worked in pairs to explore Henry Moore's large bronze works: one with their eyes open guided the other whose eyes were closed. The latter described to their "sighted" companion what they were sensing and how it made them feel. This exercise was particularly pertinent to exploring Moore's sculptures because of the way their scale, material texture, and abstract but distinctly bodily form seems to invite a haptic exploration while also provoking a range of affective responses. In the context of a session questioning the visual paradigm of art history, criticism, and writing, as well as the dominant ocular-centrism of contemporary Western culture in general, the touch tour employed here with sighted participants orientated them differently to fairly familiar objects. Inviting the participants to touch the sculptures thus posed a pleasurable disorientation. In a group discussion that followed, several participants commented on the exhilaration of this transgression, which felt illicit and offered a unique sensual understanding of the sculptures themselves as well as a broader critical insight into modes of art appreciation. Significantly, this feeling of clandestine experience was both an infringement on the codes of acceptable gallery behaviour and a breach of the visual paradigm of culture at large. Foregrounding the sensual as a valid way of knowing or understanding in this way disoriented the Cartesian model of cognitive rationality, positioning the body as a vector of knowledge (Wacquant 2004). Touch here enabled an affective and intersubjective encounter with the sculptural bodies that

was able to suspend not only the hierarchy of the senses but also the inside/outside and self/other boundary.

"Body Talks: Thinking Art Through the Body" course participants engaging in a touch tour, 2014. Detail of Henry Moore OM, CH, *Working Model for Three Piece No.3: Vertebrae*, 1968, Tate. Photography by Marianne Mulvey 2016 © The Henry Moore Foundation.

Conclusion: The Implications of a Performative Trans-Pedagogy

An evaluative interview with an "Animal Magnetism" participant was useful in determining the impact and value of our performative trans-pedagogy. As the then Arts Programmer of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), she had signed up in a professional capacity. Our conversation touched on a wide range of impacts, from personal empowerment to intellectual nourishment and

practical application—she had used aspects of the session on animal symbolism directly in a week-long children's summer workshop at London Zoo and had gone on to lead tours of the National Gallery entitled "The Artist and the Animal." She derived pleasure from analyzing works of art in relation to the range of materials presented in the lecture portion of each class, discussing these concepts with the group, and particularly in thinking differently about her job. She not only found the confidence to talk about specific works of art at Tate, but also to "use the right language" to speak about gender and sexuality—an unexpected gain. Perhaps most importantly, the course provided nourishment and validation of her critical skills and questioning: she was able to have conversations at Tate about ZSL's ambiguous relationship to its colonial history that she had found it hard to broach, even informally, at work. Several times she expressed relief to find out she "wasn't mad to think about these things and ask these questions." Giving permission for such critical reflections during the sessions, our trans-pedagogic approach enabled her self-permission outside of them, and in this way chimes with artist and teacher Michael Craig-Martin's tenet that:

> the most valuable thing that I have been able to give students is permission . . .
> to do what they really want to do, without worrying that it won't be acceptable,
> won't be adequate, not serious enough . . . [and to] provide the support
> necessary to enable students to give themselves permission. (1995, 18)

In this paper, we have begun to formulate a new model for a performative trans-pedagogy to capture our insights, experiences, and methodologies in relation to teaching and learning in the art museum. With a group of participants whose opinions and subject positions came to class fairly formed, our challenge and approach was to introduce a range of materials and cultural objects around gender, race, and sexuality as a way to disorientate how they looked at art and the world. It is our shared belief that discussing these materials in relation to art and performance engendered criticality in participants, permitting them to ask new questions of the world and themselves. Drawing from, expanding, and challenging existing theory on critical and performative pedagogies, we set up three nodes through which to enact a trans-pedagogic model: the trans-cultural, performative affect, and pedagogical disorientations. We have found this mode of pedagogy to be enjoyable and rewarding and intend to continue developing and using it to inform further informal and leisure learning activities around art and performance. Furthermore, we believe that the context of adult learning in the art museum provided rich ground for a radical, transformative pedagogy, and we call for further exploration of such diverse extra-academic environments.

The defining feature of our pedagogy is a focus on the prefix "trans." Using trans-cultural materials and objects that straddle different art forms and disciplines, concepts of trans-gender, trans-species, and trans-racial appeared in different guises in all three courses. As facilitators of learning, mining the uncomfortable, disorientating and pleasurable possibilities of "trans" as a prefix and a verb has proved both productive and exhilarating. To transition, to transgress, and to transform is to move and be moved—enacting a change of state that can be both contained inside the individual (human) body and resonate within the broader culture simultaneously. Through the mediums of our trans-cultural approach, employment of ambiguous affect, and the queer potential of dislocations and disorientations, our trans-pedagogy performatively produced a challenge to dualistic and normative modes of thinking. It is our hope that sharing these considerations here will allow other trans-pedagogical modes of learning and teaching to proliferate in diverse spaces of culture and knowledge production.

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Performance in Philosophy/Philosophy in Performance: How Performative Practices Can Enhance and Challenge the Teaching Of Theory

Jörg Holkenbrink and Alice Lagaay

Jörg Holkenbrink is the director of the Centre for Performance Studies at Bremen University (Germany) and the artistic director of the *Theater der Versammlung* ("Theatre of Assemblage"), the Centre's very own theatrical ensemble. Alice Lagaay is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer in the Philosophy Department at Bremen University.[1] *Theater der Versammlung* participates in university seminars (throughout all faculties), bringing its own "experimental settings," open rehearsals and performances into proceedings in a way that has a profound pedagogical effect on the outcome of the class.

The theatre ensemble regularly accompanies Lagaay's philosophy seminars, and together they have recently begun to present the fusion of their methods (philosophy and performance) on various academic and artistic platforms internationally (e.g., the recent Philosophy-on-Stage festival at Tanzquartier Vienna[2] or the 2015 Performance Philosophy conference in Chicago[3]). For the present "Performance and Pedagogy" issue of *Performance Matters*, Lagaay and Holkenbrink propose a dialogue in which they discuss the pedagogical results of bringing performance strategies into contact with academic themes in general, and with philosophy in particular. This approach gives rise to many questions.

What can performance do to enhance the teaching of theory? To what extent is philosophy a performance in itself, and how can certain performative strategies help make this tangible? Can the experience of fusing performance and philosophy help identify wider pedagogical issues within and beyond the boundaries of academia? What happens when the language of science (*Wissenschaft*) is confronted with the performative arts? What artistic methods can be applied so that people who are used to thinking *about* certain topics are drawn out of their comfort zone and brought *into* contact with unfamiliar topics that might, in turn, broaden the horizon and impact of their own theoretical reflection?

To help readers visualize what this cooperation between a theatre company and an academic philosophy seminar might look like in practice, consider this example of a seminar on "Theories of Failure" that was held in the philosophy department at Bremen University in the summer term of 2014. The four-hour seminar sessions took place fortnightly. On this particular occasion, the seminar is not opened by the course leader (Lagaay), but by a group of young performers who enter the stage (a space created between the tables and chairs of the seminar room). Their director (Holkenbrink) promises to make the evening's topic (i.e., "failure") accessible to the seminar participants by way of a public rehearsal of Hamlet. "To be or not to be" is the issue. The actor in the role of Hamlet starts out with her own personal perspective on one of the "greatest procrastinators in world history" and then proceeds to launch into her monologue. However, whenever she's just about to immerse herself in her part, something pops into her mind that interrupts her, something that still needs to be pondered, discussed, or bemoaned. Increasingly eager to begin with the rehearsal proper, some of the other actors become irritated

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and impatient. Some even begin to worry about the well-being of the Hamlet actor, while others wonder how they can save face before the audience in the light of such an embarrassing situation. Various ploys are attempted to encourage the Hamlet actor to start her performance. But they only result in the opposite: the actor remains silent and motionless, caught up in her own thoughts. Finally, the director takes the initiative and asks the seminar participants (who double as the audience) for suggestions on how to resolve the situation. This triggers an improvised lecture and a conversation. The performers take up and discuss the various propositions and eventually propose a solution: to let the pensive Hamlet actor continue her pondering in private and, instead of having her perform the monologue, move on to rehearsing the king's council scene, in which Hamlet's inconsolable grief disrupts the government affairs of King Claudius and his wife, Hamlet's mother, Gertrude. The Claudius actor and the Gertrude actor thus begin to involve the recalcitrant Hamlet so as to draw him out of his disconcerting grief. Although at the end of *this* rehearsal, Hamlet is even more desperate, the Hamlet actor, however, is finally in a position to perform the Hamlet monologue.

The philosophy seminar now proceeds to discuss "failure" in relation to notions of success, "hesitation" as a productive force, and the manner in which a performative situation can flip from commentary (on a particular subject) to demonstration (of a physical condition), both intentionally and non-intentionally. Far from simply playing an illustrative role in the seminar, the performative opening has clearly provoked alertness to an experimental setting which, in turn, helps sharpen the attention and engagement of those present through embodied thought in a way that conventional text-based work alone only rarely manages to bring about—in a seminar context.

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The Bremen-based *Theater der Versammlung* ("Theater of Assemblage") is one of the very first research theatres in Germany. Based at the Centre for Performance Studies at Bremen University, *Theater der Versammlung* brings together students and academics from all faculties as well as professional performance practitioners to work in partnership on themes and questions that arise within academic contexts, using various means and methods drawn from performance art and theatre. This results in an intense collaboration with people whose expertise is in a wide range of discourses. The performances that have emerged from this interdisciplinary process have been presented and discussed throughout the German-speaking world and beyond, and in several professional and educational contexts, including businesses, schools, health institutions, and cultural centres. The Performance Studies curriculum at Bremen University is explicitly geared toward training students in the forms and methods of the theatre's engaged, investigative, and interventionist approach to performance.

Lagaay: Jörg, as the artistic director of both the theatre company and the Centre for Performance Studies at Bremen University, why do you think it is important to find ways of "disturbing" the academic world by using performative strategies?

Holkenbrink: Well, a first answer probably resides in the fact that to begin with it is the academic world that disturbs ME! Take the following anecdote as an example: Once, a few semesters back, I was walking down one of the corridors of the university, looking for a seminar room, when I got confused and opened the wrong door by mistake. (Perhaps theatre people do sometimes walk around a little dreamily.) Upon entering the room I encountered a group of six or seven students who were huddled around a table in silence, their heads hung low and their eyes all sleepy, with a stack of unopened books in front of them. Not having expected them to

be there, I was so surprised at the sight of them that I couldn't help but exclaim, "What on earth are you all doing here?" It was then that one of them looked up at me listlessly and in a bored, monotonous voice stated: "We're preparing a presentation on motivation theory."

My experience at the university has made me increasingly sensitive to contradictions of this kind, like the difference between cramming information for an exam and really embodying knowledge. Performance Studies can help students and teachers become aware of the relationship between *what* is discussed and taught at university and *how* that learning is achieved. One of the main challenges for a research theatre like ours that uses performative strategies to intervene in academic seminars is to address people who are used to thinking merely *about* things and to bring them *into* situations that lead them to think about the issues from a new perspective. This movement between talking "about" something and getting "into" it constitutes in itself a subject for research and learning. Regarding the discipline of philosophy, this means questioning when, or under what circumstances, philosophy can be considered an academic science, and when, or under what circumstances (and with what consequences) it might make more sense to consider it rather as an art to be practised. In working with you, Alice, as one of the initiators of the Performance Philosophy network, I often find myself thinking of this quote by Nietzsche:

> As for the superstitions of the logicians, I shall never tire of underlining a concise little fact which these superstitious people are loath to admit—namely, that a thought comes when "it" wants, not when "I" want; so that it is a *falsification* of the facts to say: the subject "I" is the condition of the predicate "think." *It* thinks: but that this "it" is precisely that famous old "I" is, to put it mildly, only an assumption, an assertion, above all not an "immediate certainty." (Nietzsche 2003, 47)

This quote often comes to mind when I hear you lecture. I experience you as someone who is not simply rehashing a pre-written, pre-rehearsed text, but as someone in whom "it" thinks. You demonstrate this "it thinks" in your lectures. One of the most concise definitions of "performance" that I know is by Richard Schechner, one of the founders of Performance Studies as a discipline. He speaks of performance as "showing doing" (Schechner 2002, 22). So I wonder if we might not get closer to answering the question "What is Performance Philosophy" by drawing attention to, and thematizing, the manner in which "it" thinks in you. And what would this "it" refer to from a philosophical perspective?

Lagaay: The idea is that it is not "I/me", no particular ego, that is "doing" the thinking, but that "it" is doing it "through" me, that I (anyone) could be a sort of medium for something that moves through me/them, and that the art of thinking, of performing and creating, has as much to do with a particular kind of letting something happen as it has with hard work and discipline. Yes, this all sounds very familiar. And it places the kind of philosophy that I tend to engage with closer to the boundary of what the art of performance is (or might be). It involves work of course—rehearsal, action and repetition, reading and re-reading—but also a form of *active passivity*, in other words . . . patience, which equates with a certain willingness and ability to expose oneself to and draw on the energy that comes from the present moment, at the risk that "it" might not come . . . but it always does.

Doing philosophy in this way is truly a creative process, and paradoxically giving way to the "it" requires that one give oneself over to the process completely. It is through giving oneself, putting oneself into the moment, not hiding—with all the vulnerability and risk that that might entail— that one invites, evokes, invokes, the "other" into the equation.

The history of philosophy, the history of culture, is full of references to a third instance that is neither you nor me, neither mother nor daughter, father nor son, neither this nor that, but something between all beings present that we can bear witness to and, in so doing, allow that something to colour the mood, atmosphere, timing, and rhythm of the event we have gathered together to attend.[4] It is this instance, I think, that provides the kind of cohesion that is capable of revealing the political in the aesthetic, the ethical in the artistic.

It is of course intrinsically connected to the live quality of performance, which is why talking *into* and *out of* silence is so important—because silence is what connects one to the present. And being (A)LIVE means being able to respond to the new, being open and available to serendipity, surprise and wonder.

Holkenbrink: In the context of the relation between performance and philosophy, you emphasize the notion of active passivity. This makes me think of *absichtsvolle Absichtslosigkeit*, "intentional non-intentionality," a common trope among theatre makers. Both formulations play an important role in describing staging processes in the theatre. So, for example, one of the important skills in directing is knowing when to interrupt players during rehearsals. Yet even moments before I intervene, I often don't know that I am going to interrupt, or who I am going to interrupt, or what I am going to say. It all happens in a split second. And, conversely, it depends on the flow of my observation being interrupted, which is what provokes my need to say something. Despite this, or perhaps even because of this, I often find myself making further suggestions (even before I have had time to actually think them). And this in a world in which university teachers warn their students to "think first, then speak"! At the same time, my experience has shown me that the quality of my spontaneous interruptions has increased over the years. So are "active passivity" and "intentional non-intentionality" learnable and teachable? And what part do interruptions play in your profession?

Lagaay: I wonder if your somewhat Zen-inspired notion of "intentional non-intentionality" might echo in a significant way Freud's "evenly-suspended attention" (*gleichschwebendeAufmerksamkeit*, Freud 1958, 109–20)? This is a kind of neutral, directionless listening that tries not to privilege one particular narrative over another, nor to allow preconceived ideas to get in the way of the free expression of unconscious associations. Freud's evenly-suspended or "hovering" attention describes an attitude or posture of being that is wary of the analyst's (or in this case let's say the philosopher's) tendency to want to appropriate, to be inclined to want to "grasp," focus and hold (and thereby often manipulate, for instance by means of reification) a certain train of thought, to make *one* thought, *one* narrative, *one* interpretation— the big bright one in front of you—somehow more valuable, more noteworthy than any other.

Resisting this tendency, in other words practicing a form of attentive disinterest, means being fundamentally open to the possibility that one might not be fully in control of the situation, nor fully in control of the thoughts or connections that an event provokes. It means letting go of the anchor provided by hierarchies of thought, and trusting in a radical form of immanence, by which one's own subjective perspective *by virtue of its fundamental equality with any other imaginable perspective* becomes virtually irrelevant—but not quite. For, of course, the actor, analyst, director, or performance philosopher remains engaged.

Practicing evenly-suspended attention means learning to attend not just to the salient or intentional, to the "major" action, but learning to listen to the minor, the unintended, the unfocused or indistinct, the sub-beat, the slip, the glimpse or spark from the periphery . . . and to move in-between and to draw on these, not by method, nor even by acquired skill, but in the

way that a good jazz singer might sometimes let the note trail off and, in missing the mark however slightly, allow it to open a new phrase, or become something new.

Practicing this form of attentive disinterest also brings you back to the present moment and therefore to the body, to *this* body. This is, of course, something that Nietzsche understood clearly, that thoughts and ideas are not somewhere out there in the ether, nor are they simply in the brain; they are not random figments or indeed (to put it more positively) achievements of a purely intellectual journey. They are not pure maths. For any intellectual journey is the intellectual journey of an embodied person, with a biography, a history, a rich and multidimensional experience, drawn from all the things and events that have happened to them, situations they have come through, lessons they have learned, pain they have borne. . . . And the force of life (call it will-to-power) that is at the root of this journey includes an implicit knowledge, an implicit *physical* knowledge, of how to live, how to grow, and how to become.

So when you describe, Jörg, how in your work as a director, you often do not know and cannot predict how, when, or whose dialogue or action you will interrupt, and when you cannot even say why this happens, it sounds as if it is not so much you, or a particular conscious part of you, that intervenes, but the experience you embody, the wealth of experience that is lodged in your body, that takes charge and knows when to intervene.

With regard to interruption, there would be so much to say here. Interruption suffers something of a bad name in our culture, and this despite the fact that the modern technological age comes with many and various interruptions, such that it seems to be becoming more and more difficult, hopeless almost, to concentrate on anything. But the creative interruption you are referring to is not the kind that disturbs or is at odds with concentration. Rather, what it perhaps signals is the end of, or at least the tendency to relativize what some call the "grand narrative(s),"and possibly even the end of "drama," and their replacement by a celebration of, or a newfound attentiveness to, the fragmentary, the incomplete, the non-linear, the inconclusive, the snippet, the snapshot, the infinitely repeatable . . . in a word: the aphoristic.

Holkenbrink: This is nothing particularly new. Attentiveness to the fragmentary has played an important role within the performative arts at least since the performative turn in the 1960s. With our performance entitled "C Copy A Encrypted," the *Theater der Versammlung* has invented an experimental field in which the audience brings the ensemble into movement and directs the players during the show using computer commands such as "copy," "cut," or "paste." The performers draw on snippets of movement and text extracts from roles they have played in other pieces. Over multiple rounds and at a rapid pace these fragments are randomly composed into new patterns of relation and meaning. The goal is to allow little islands of meaning to emerge from the random chaos. Everybody present has an influence on the outcome, but no single person drives the whole thing. The audience soon learns how to handle the commands, and their instructions end up mirroring themselves, insofar as through the speed of their calls they can create confusion or instead grant space for a particular role to evolve on its own without interruption. This click-performance can be seen as demonstrating whether, or to what extent, people remain able to act in complex systems and whether, or how, one can react to the ever-increasing interruptions in everyday life. It might also be read as revealing the political in the aesthetic, the ethical in the artistic, to refer to what you said earlier.

Fragmented worlds challenge the practices of the connecting arts. Our "Theatre of Assemblage" (*Theater der Versammlung*) between education, science and the arts attempts to offer a framework for just that. Here I would like to pick up on a few thoughts and formulations from articles I have written that take a closer look at these themes (Holkenbrink 2013; Bebek and Holkenbrink

2015). A typical production process that we experience in our "Theatre of Assemblage" can be broken down into the following stages:

a) Free improvisation on the themes and questions that are being handled theoretically in the seminars we intervene in and cooperate with.
b) Improvisation using theoretical, documentary, and literary texts that relate in one way or another to the themes and questions of the teaching context we are involved with (this could be a seminar held in any faculty of the university).
c) Selection of the material arrived at through improvisation and its organization into scenic fragments/sequences that will continue to be developed until they are ready to be performed (using the principles of collage and montage/assemblage).
d) Experimentation with various alterations and re-organizations of the scenic sequences within the framework of a context- and dialogue-oriented performance practice (*recycling*).

In concrete terms, within the context of "C Copy A Encrypted," this "context-oriented performance practice" also refers to the fact that the same or a similar performance can generate a multitude of different meanings, connotations or questions depending on the context in which it is performed, be it for instance within the realm of computer science, cognitive psychology, political science, research on dementia, or philosophy. On the other hand, the dialogical aspect of our performance practice means that each performance is always discussed within the particular field in which it is performed. In turn, this leads to the experimental action continuously being developed further.

The strategies and methods required for this form of research are consciously acquired. Students at Bremen University can only sign up for Performance Studies as an additional course to be taken in combination with studies in another discipline. The curriculum is thus structured to allow students from various faculties to come together in trans-disciplinary projects, and it is explicitly geared to them bringing their knowledge from these different areas into the performative work of the Centre for Performance Studies.

Conversely, students receive training in performative methods that they subsequently learn how to apply to their respective disciplinary backgrounds. They soon begin to interrelate, both critically and constructively, the practical-aesthetical methods they have acquired with the more theoretical/traditionally academic approaches to reality they encounter in the course of their studies, thus combining and enriching both aspects of their education respectively. Needless to say, this remains an important resource that students can draw on later in whatever professional capacity they eventually choose. This may be in an artistic realm, where the ability to combine different forms of knowledge is increasingly valued, or even, and especially, in non-artistic work fields, where a wide range of artistic competences are also increasingly becoming acknowledged as fundamentally important. Another perspective and further synergies occur when both artistic and non-artistic worlds are combined, for example when someone is active as a performer while carrying out a second or third profession of a different kind at the same time.

It is important to remember, however, that people who are at home in both science/academia and the arts, and who actively seek to facilitate a dialogue between these two realms, are taking a significant risk. Indeed, seeking new forms of cooperation between the two worlds requires that each world change its habitual manner of dealing with that which otherwise falls outside its respective zone of knowledge. In other words, to embark on a process in which a certain "foreignness" with regard to particular objects and situations is responded to productively means being sovereign enough to risk one's own sovereignty; being strong enough, one could say, to embrace one's sense of weakness.

Carolin Bebek is a regular performer with *Theater der Versammlung* and also a qualified scientist of education (*Erziehungswissenschaftlerin*). As part of a qualitative analysis, she carried out a series of episodic (narrative) interviews with former students in Performance Studies at Bremen University. She recounts how these interviews reveal different forms of interplay between self-assertiveness and submission, in the sense of risking one's own sovereignty. Drawing on Judith Butler, she refers to the phenomenon in question in terms of "post-sovereignty" (Butler 1997, 139, 145). For Bebek, the notion of post-sovereignty captures a basic principle of movement:

> It marks a tension between sovereignty and non-sovereignty that does not resolve itself one way or another, but hangs between letting oneself into something/exposing oneself and asserting oneself, between submission to the factors at work/acceptance of the given and transgression or exceedance towards something new. Post-sovereignty points to a kind of being in movement, within which it becomes possible to experience the other and oneself differently. Only a subjectivity that is capable of appreciating other foreign subjectivities, on the one hand, and its own foreign otherness on the other, can connect to this principle of movement. (Bebek and Holkenbrink 2015, 80, passage translated by A. Lagaay).

Lagaay: Thank you, Jörg, for bringing the notion of post-sovereignty into our dialogue here. It gives me the opportunity to relate once more to the one who might be considered the original modern performance philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, whom I feel has been our subliminal chaperone throughout the course of these reflections. For me, one of the most salient and troubling things about reading Nietzsche, and also therefore what I find to be most provocative and inspiring in his writing, is the clear tension that is to be found between, on the one hand, his unquestionable celebration of empowered subjectivity, the idea that it is all up to "Me," this damned "EGO," to create its own world, define its own values, launch into its own becoming, take what it needs, stop at nothing, embrace the plant-like drive towards the sun (will-to-power), etc., etc., and, on the other hand, his very idiosyncratic, at once incredibly compelling and hugely challenging, recognition and call to acceptance of a fundamental human powerlessness. On the surface of things, and even upon closer analysis, these two thoughts would appear to be profoundly at odds with each other, mutually incompatible. And yet, in Nietzsche they are not. And within this very contradiction, that is, in the challenge that resides in the Nietzschean call to become your own person, emancipate from the burden of moral traditions and define your own values on the one hand, but ultimately, on the other hand, to emancipate from your emancipation to reach a state of consenting being—*amor fati*—in which you accept everything that has been (the good and the ugly) and embrace "eternal return." What could be more preposterous than the latter for even the most humble of egocentrics? Yet within this very contradiction lies a mystery, which I take as a kind of guiding principle in my attempt to approach the teaching of philosophy through the lens, and drawing on the methods, of performance. It is therefore not so much a question of merging the two "Ps" (performance and philosophy) to create a new disciplinary field (and here I am referring to the on-going Mind-the-Gap discussion in performance philosophy circles, e.g., Cull 2014) so much as of allowing and welcoming, indeed actively preparing the ground (in the pedagogical sense of a "prepared environment"[5]) for a dynamic movement to occur, e.g., from emancipation to the emancipation of emancipation, or from powerlessness to sovereignty to post-sovereignty. My passion is to facilitate the arrival of humble moments of recognition on this circular course and to help them be experienced not just in a consciously lived life, but also in the philosophy seminar. Here what can be witnessed is not only how performative practices can enhance and challenge the teaching of theory, but also—and more importantly still—how theory can enhance and challenge the experience of life.

Notes

1. Since completing this dialogue Alice Lagaay has been appointed Interim Professor of Media Studies and Cultural History at Zeppelin University Friedrichshafen where she continues to explore the pedagogical potentials of performance philosophy.

2. "SCORES N°10 // Philosophy On Stage #4 Artist Philosophers—Nietzsche et cetera" was a large international festival held 26–29th November 2015 at Tanzquartier Vienna. The event was conceived and organized by Arno Böhler and Susanne Granzer (Vienna) as part of the FWF-funded PEEK project "Artist Philosophers. Philosophy AS Arts-Based-Research," in collaboration with Walter Heun (Tanzquartier Vienna), Jens Badura (Zürich University of the Arts), Laura Cull (University of Surrey) and Alice Lagaay (Universität Bremen). Retrieved December 29, 2015. www.tqw.at/de/events/scores10-philosophyonstage4.

3. "What can Performance Philosophy Do?" Second Biennial Performance Philosophy conference held 10–12 April 2015 in Chicago, co-organized by Will Daddario, John Muse, and Laura Cull. Retrieved December 29, 2015. www.performancephilosophy.ning.com/page/chicago-2015.

4. An example of this third in-between instance, "neither this nor that," is the figure of the neutral e.g., in the writings of Maurice Blanchot or Roland Barthes (Blanchot 1993; Barthes 2005).

5. The importance of a "prepared environment" is central to many reform pedagogical methods, especially for example, the pedagogical approach of Maria Montessori (Montessori 2008).

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Improvising Philosophy: Thoughts on Teaching and Ways of Being

Harmony Bench

I teach in the Department of Dance at the Ohio State University, where the majority of our students are engaged in honing their craft as movement artists, whether they ultimately intend to be performers, choreographers, teachers, or all of the above.[1] In Fall 2014, I taught a dance improvisation course, called "Being Here, Being With, Being Together." I took the opportunity to set up a space in which we might draw out ways that dance improvisation could teach us something more than how to acutely feel sensation and materialize intellection through movement. Or rather, I hoped that through focused engagement with the thinking-feeling and feeling-thinking of dance improvisation, we might also cultivate alternate modes of being and acting in the world.

When this course began, we were coming out of a summer that sank with the weight of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, of Ferguson and #blacklivesmatter, a long summer that seeped into previous months and years to include the likes of Trayvon Martin and Oscar Grant, and persisted into the autumn with John Crawford III and Tamir Rice. That summer reached a crescendo with "Hands up, Don't shoot," but it had not yet ended when fall arrived. Perhaps it will never end, because the refrain of fatal racism is not one that invites closure. We therefore used this dance improvisation course to reflect on contemporary political thought regarding life and livability. As Kent de Spain has suggested, dance improvisation acts "not as a vehicle for showmanship but as an entry into an investigation of the relationship of self to the world we inhabit" (2014, 13). What better modality to discern possibilities for living together, and to confront their limits than a dance improvisation course?

A couple of caveats: 1) I am a beginning teacher of improvisation; 2) I have never previously written on dance pedagogy or pedagogical experiments conducted in studio or classroom settings. But this journal, *Performance Matters*, and this special issue on performance and pedagogy, explicitly ask us to consider what matters in teaching performance practices. For me, what matters is the ways movement improvisation allows us to test, experiment with, and play alongside philosophical concepts in arenas carved out for exploration and discovery rather than arenas geared toward artistic or scholarly production per se. While my scholarly work is what I call practice-informed and explicitly not affiliated with the discourses of practice-based research, the language of the latter does reflect my approach to teaching students of dance. As Kim Vincs has observed,

> Studio-based research in dance . . . shifts the focus of dance research from the idea that dance is a product, a repository of knowledge or ideas that can be interrogated and interpreted to the notion of dance as a field in which knowledge is produced. . . . Rather than dances being the outcomes of thinking done previously, dances are the actual process of thinking, and this process is the core methodology of studio-based dance research. (2014, 100)

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Whereas Vincs suggests that dances themselves are processes of thinking, I would suggest that danc*ing*, in this case improvised dancing, is where we find thought in process. Such corporeal thinking is not about entraining a body toward a given choreography, but about inhabiting and cultivating habits of mind and body. Such thought draws from both technical knowledge and personal experience to craft ephemeral social relationships in the studio that can rehearse and intervene in the social choreographies that both enable and constrain our performances of everyday life. More to the point, as Randy Martin has argued, dancing is a "kinesthetic practice that puts on display the very conditions through which the body itself is mobilized" (2007, 217–18). How might dance improvisation not only reveal these conditions but also reorient them? How might self-composition at the level of the group or collective foster new social arrangements beyond the space of the classroom? And as we asked over and over in this course, how can we engage dance improvisation as a life practice—which is to say, not only a life-long practice but a practice through which life itself, bios and zoe, is the focus? What techniques for living might be developed through such a practice of improvisation?[2] As a form of self-fashioning, to what extent is movement improvisation also a worlding (Nancy [1996] 2000) and even, perhaps, a "form-of-life" (Agamben [2011] 2013)?

Rather than study dance improvisation independently of political and performance philosophies, keeping each in its respective domain, the members of this course tackled them together over seven weeks. A mixture of undergraduate dance majors and graduate students, fourteen of us in all, moved with Erin Manning (2009), Elizabeth Grosz (2008), Judith Butler (2013), Bernice Johnson Reagon ([1981] 2000), Jacques Rancière ([2008] 2009), and others, with physical practice offering a way to think through the texts—*performing* philosophy, setting it in motion by transforming the texts into scores that structured our movement investigations. Our collective practices were buttressed by weekly private and public practices such that the themes for each week—Freedom, Relationality, Sensation, Solitude, Recognition and Responsibility, and The Productive Non-Coherence of Community—were explored individually, collectively, and publicly. My particular concern as a teacher was exploring what Rachmi Diyah Larasati has described as a somatic experience of inclusion (2013, 12), without that inclusion being predicated on sameness, a common sensibility or sensorium (Rancière, 2010).

This was a university dance course, so inclusions and exclusions were already implicit in the populations that were invited to participate, yet students brought different styles into our collective practices, with their histories, training, and epistemological frameworks. Classical jazz, release technique, ballet, animation, and a little contact improv: the point was not to reduce our possibilities to the narrow field of gestures we shared in common, it was to manifest a community of movement through what Susan Foster calls "co-motion" (2002, 108), an unruly but accommodating being-together rooted in what Simone Forti describes as an "emotional posture of continual dilation" ([1974] 1998). Open wide. Wider. Now deepen, soften.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Walking, only, to begin. Meandering through the space, discovering it anew at a pace set by each participant. Some rush, verging on a run, while others hesitate or halt. A rhythm emerges, a consensus punctuated by shifts of energy or direction and broken by the irregularity of my own combinations of crutching and hopping along after an Achilles tear added unfamiliar apparati to this most familiar of preparatory steps—the ritual of walking before an improvisation. A glance, a

gesture, an invitation extended; it is accepted or refused or unnoticed without preference or judgment.

If we agree to move together, how do we move? What does this "co-motion" look like, as we shift ourselves and the relations between us, manifesting this unruly "we" through collective articulations? Erin Manning suggests that "when articulation becomes collective, a politics is made palpable whereby what is produced is the potential for divergent series of movements. This is a virtual politics, a politics of the not-yet. . . . politics in the making" (2009, 27). This not-yet, semantically aligned with communities and democracies to-come, is not a future to be realized but a futurity without telos. A politics of the not-yet that produces and gathers within it divergent potentials is nothing other than a practice. Practice is the thing. Practice does not make perfect, it makes potential. Only the doing then, and when the doing is done, it is still not finished. It continues to resound, making other potentials possible, spinning out world after world, "as many worlds as it takes to make a world," says Jean-Luc Nancy ([1996] 2000, 15).

If we agree to move together, what kind of world can hold our difference? How can we create a world for being-with, a with-ness that is a witness that authenticates my own and your own being-here, that validates and testifies to our presence, our co-articulation that belongs neither to you nor me, but to us, now. A gaze returned with eyes exploded across a body where eyes become hands become a we shaping mutuality through holding, caring, and support. What kind of voluntary vulnerability is required in this dilated emotional posture—an openness that also opens onto hurt? And when does such exposure become intolerable—too painful to sustain? Nancy argues that "existence is *with*: otherwise nothing exists" ([1996] 2000, 4), yet coexistence is "Always subject to weak and unpleasant connotations, . . . an 'unsociable sociability'" ([1996] 2000, 43). Coexistence is the social choreography that enables and constrains our Being: the irreducible plurality that offers with-ness as well as withdrawal, compassion as well as cruelty.

In this course, we were all committed to our coexistence. It is difficult to articulate commitment as an ethical orientation to a practice when commitment has become an aesthetic commodity. Audiences have come to equate commitment, qua performance of sacrificial devotion, with "good dancing," and young dancers have come to know it as the pinnacle of self-expression. However, commitment as an attitude need not look like commitment as an aesthetic.

Against this backdrop, in this committed albeit temporary community, are a trickster and a novice— one a constant tease, the other uncertain and therefore deliberate in her approach to movement. The novice's face reveals a cerebral rather than sensory or relational motivation in her movement. She's talking herself through, like a surgeon before her very first cut. The other playfully provokes her, eliciting a few smiles. Trickster is buoyant, quickly changing levels and directions, peeking over shoulders and through legs. Novice watches trickster closely but remains unflustered by her antics, and trickster does not tire of finding spaces where novice has left room for her to enter. Old man joins them, old in energy, not in age. He rarely leaves the vertical; his legs are always planted deep, leaving his upper body and torso free to sway loosely. With his hands, he recounts forgotten stories in a forgotten tongue. His presence immediately calms trickster, who relaxes into his stolidity. She drapes herself over his shoulders like a wet dress hung over a chair after a romp in the rain. Novice encircles them and then departs. They follow, momentarily tethered to her vector of energy, pulled along behind her until their momentum sends them spinning into new encounters.

Rancière suggests that aesthetic experiences—and here I would suggest that dance improvisers create aesthetic experiences for and amongst themselves rather than outside viewers—offer "a multiplication of connections and disconnections that reframe the relation between bodies, the world they live in and the way in which they are 'equipped' to adapt to it" ([2008] 2009, 72). These multiple connections and disconnections create new communities from their alternate sensory distributions. But, like political action, the results of this sensuous reconfiguration and bodily capacitation cannot be foreseen. There is no causal relationship that links aesthetic experiences to specific, predictable effects in governance or social relations. Which is why maintaining a practice of improvisation is not about realizing an idealized community in the future, but of rehearsing and enacting models of communities, worlds upon worlds, in the present.

For Rancière, artistic processes and productions that seek social and political transformation as their proper endpoint misunderstand the nature of both politics and art and can only be a disappointment insofar as they will never be able to deliver on their promises. Instead, Rancière suggests that the link between the domains of aesthetics and politics rests in "a shift from a given sensible world to another sensible world that defines different capacities and incapacities, different forms of tolerance and intolerance. What occurs are processes of dissociation: a break in a relationship between sense and sense—between what is seen and what is thought, what is thought and what is felt. Such breaks can happen anywhere and at any time. But they cannot be calculated" ([2008] 2009, 75). Given that the course came out of an attempt to grapple with the fatal effects of anti-black racism and other considerations of 21st-century precariousness, what is the benefit of distinguishing aesthetics from politics in a course that explicitly brought the two together? In part, it is to recognize the limits of artistic practice as political praxis, but it is also to emphasize the importance of imagining otherwise, or as Augusto Boal has argued, rehearsing revolution ([1974] 1985).

Practitioners bring different agendas to their improvisations (de Spain 2014), and for the purposes of this course, we were interested in exploring improvisation as a life practice. Such a practice is not deployed toward developing set choreography or even for the purpose of performing a process as a quasi-theatrical event, though we all practised in view of others. Instead of these now-common approaches, we engaged dance improvisation as a laboratory for living. That is to say, we wanted to discover ways in which, as a practice, improvisation assists in developing techniques for living,[3] articulating where and how we live, and what kinds of lives we wish to make possible. We developed exercises around seeing and being seen, which included abandoning embarrassment and judgment; corporeal attentiveness, including sensitivity to and awareness of environment; affective and energetic modulation; accommodating, supporting, resisting, and withdrawing from others; and articulating points of difference and commonality without reifying either, which also included interrogations of commitment, persuasion, and compromise. Finally, we investigated ways of finding and making space with and without displacing others.

Examining the social projects to which we voluntarily and involuntarily lend our bodies, we opened ourselves to the investigation of other possible projects—not to dictate their outcome, but to make them available through the very process of our co-motion. Kim Vincs remarks that dancing "bring[s] together a range of ideas, stories and ways of moving to produce a danced subjectivity" (2014, 110). This danced subjectivity is a form-of-life—not in the total collapse of life and law as Agamben describes in his analysis of monastic lives, although many artists disavow any distinction between their life and their work. But in the context of this course, over the span of a short seven weeks, we pursued a microcosmic life-law, a score that demanded continuous exploration into the relation between self and sensory and social worlds, that asked us not only to discover but to invent

worlds predicated on our coexistence, on the knowledge that while it seems that we cannot live together, this is nevertheless our mandate.

In an economic environment that demands rhetorical embellishment of how innovative or transformational every educational experience is, I wish to make only small claims regarding this short course. In pursuing dance improvisation in the context of livability, in developing an improvisatory form-of-life, we did not change the world. But large-scale change is impossible without first imagining worlds upon worlds in which lives, including #blacklives, are livable.

Notes

A version of this paper was presented as "Improvisation and Philosophy: Being-with, Being-in-common" at the 2015 Performance Philosophy conference in Chicago.

1. PhD students are in the minority compared to those pursuing degrees in creative practice at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

2. Here I differ from Ben Spatz's recent articulation of technique in *What a Body Can Do* (2015). Though Spatz acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between technique and practice, he emphasizes that technique structures practice. While acknowledging the same in principle, I would prefer to emphasize how techniques emerge from practice.

3. In using the term "technique," I am not implying adherence to a specific technique of improvisation. Rather, I wish to suggest that dance improvisation can assist in articulating approaches to, methods for, or ways of living.

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Somatic Approaches to Academic Pedagogy: Notes from "Somatics, Scholarship, Somatic Scholarship: Materiality and Metaphor"

Sima Belmar

I organized the symposium "Somatics, Scholarship, Somatic Scholarship: Materiality and Metaphor" on February 27, 2015 at the University of California, Berkeley. This one-day event convened scholar-practitioners Marianne Constable (Rhetoric, UC Berkeley), Galen Cranz (Architecture, UC Berkeley), Michael Lucey (French & Comparative Literature, UC Berkeley), and Petra Kuppers (English, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), to share their reflections on the relationship between their body-mind practices and their academic research and teaching. We began with morning workshops in Iyengar yoga (Lucey), the Feldenkrais Method® (Constable), The Alexander Technique (Cranz), and social somatics/participatory performance (Kuppers). In the afternoon, we gathered for a roundtable discussion with graduate students from various departments at UC Berkeley, UC Davis, and the Graduate Theological Union, including Theater, Dance, & Performance Studies, South and Southeast Asian Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Psychology. The event culminated in a panel discussion and Q&A with the symposium participants.

Most somatic practices are tied to the healing arts and are a complex blend of physical actions, thinking practices, verbal cues, and hands-on work. As a field, they focus on the efficient function of the self via a "somatic mode of attention" (Csordas 1993), an increased awareness of one's physical and mental habits. The academic classroom is often a site of "from the neck up" processing, where the body fades into the background of all that mental labour. How, then, does the practice of attending to our habitual modes of thinking, reading, writing, and speaking appear in the classroom?

In line with this issue's theme, this essay focuses on what the panellists had to say about how somatic practices shape pedagogical practices in the context of the university. Although the panellists differ in their approaches to "the body" and in the degree to which they explicitly mobilize somatic exercises in the classroom—Kuppers and Cranz have long integrated somatic principles in their research and teaching, whereas Constable and Lucey have drawn firmer boundaries between their academic and somatic pursuits—all four locate the academic seminar room as the site in which their embodied practices most clearly intersect with their academic work.

<div style="text-align:center">*</div>

Lucey, who stumbled into an Iyengar yoga class in England in 1982 while he was a student at Oxford, connects his yoga practice with his intellectual life through a set of conceptual issues that "push at the distinction between practical knowledge and intellectual knowledge."[1] For Lucey, both French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of bodily knowledge (Bourdieu 2000, 128−63) and B.K.S. Iyengar's notion of attentive awareness (Iyengar 2005, 21−64) influence his academic projects and physical practice. Attentive awareness, as Lucey understands it, is a particular state of

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mind in which "your mind is full, focused, and relaxed at the same time." Lucey seeks to work from and impart to his students "a knowledge that would not have to be processed through the brain but that would be in the body," a bodily knowledge that exists "in a space that is not intellectual and yet is not exactly bodily but a space of awareness or attention."

Like many students of somatic practices, Constable came to the Feldenkrais Method® via physical ailments, which, in her case, a doctor had labelled "sciatic pain." The Method includes group lessons involving verbally guided movements taught in Awareness Through Movement® or ATM classes, and one-on-one, hands-on work called Functional Integration®. Constable describes the bones of a Feldenkrais exercise as follows: "Notice what we're doing, notice things that we haven't noticed that we've been doing before, notice the difference between what we're doing and what we think we're doing, and then see whether we can come up with other ways of either doing the same thing or of noticing and doing it differently. Once you have that kind of awareness in finer and finer ways, you start adjusting and adapting what your responses are in particular situations." Initiating from the Method's idea of "learning to learn," Constable finds that "a safe way of talking to undergraduates is to explain to them that they have certain habits of thinking, reading, writing, and that instead of changing those habits what we are interested in is expanding the options that they have available."

Cranz, who pioneered the field of body conscious design and has been teaching a body conscious design course since 1989, starts with The Alexander Technique principle of "paying attention to the means whereby." This principle is opposed to "end gaining, which would be getting the task done at any cost. Architecture students are willing to stay up all night and ruin their metabolism, and we're all willing to hunch down over things and push our heads forward and do other lousy things for our bodies. How about caring about the quality of the means by which we accomplish things, writing our papers and reading books and speaking? This would mean application at an everyday, every moment basis, not in specialized meditations, poses, postures, anything. So it's trying to be integrated with life."

Kuppers is well known for how she engages body-mind practices in scholarly and artistic research that cuts across disability studies and performance studies. She gave us an experience of her somatic teaching method as a form of collaborative political labour. She had us stand up and participate in a centring exercise, swaying forward and back, side to side. As we gently rocked together, she told us a story of teaching community dance classes to mental health system survivors in Wales: "A wonderful group of my fellow people, people with significant experiences of hospitalization. Many of them had been homeless, had been in prison, had had depot medication, and I was a young one. I had Brecht under one arm and Augusto Boal under the other arm, that was my training, I knew what to do. That didn't really work very well because this is what happened. While we're doing nicely here, everybody's swaying, I was doing this in my classes and people would try to sway and they couldn't stop themselves, they would just fall forward. People were literally not finding centre, people often in situations where they've been told there's no space for you here, or you'll be put in this box, or you'll have medication injected under your skin against your will, or you'll be put in this institution. So given that there was no sense of ownership of one's body, there was no diaphragm to breathe from, there was no place to find a centre in, we had to come up with somatic practices that enabled us to get to what we would then call community theatre. And that's become my career now. What I do is sway with people."

Kuppers offers weekly relaxation sessions in all of her classrooms to help transition students into the space of learning. "Just three to five minutes. Feel where you're at, keep your feet down if you

feel like it or nicely crossed, or whatever, breathe in and breathe out in your own rhythm, become aware of how gravity falls through you, you don't have to change anything, you're just paying attention. I do this in the main because over the years I've also noticed how scattered most of us are as we enter a classroom. I've found students find it much easier to concentrate on what we're doing after we've done this."

Cranz also regularly includes awareness practices in her body conscious design course: "Every week I teach a different technique for increasing sensory awareness, feet, sitz bones,[2] shoulders, spine, eyes, on and on, and then we read stuff from history and comparative anthropology about how culture shapes the body, and then we do three design problems: a shoe that is not anatomically harmful but still fashionable—that's a nice contradiction for everyone to work with; then a chair, another contradiction because you really can't design a good right angle chair; and then a room interior that supports the body in at least five or six different postures or, better yet, for sequences of movement."

Without necessarily thematizing it, Constable incorporates embodied awareness training in her undergraduate classes: "In my teaching, it's not that you have feelings, and that's a different project than the practice academically that you're engaged in," Constable said. "I had students in a course on narratives of the self read Kafka's *Letter to his Father*, and I told them to read it twice. 'The first time just read the way you would normally—underline, highlight, and do whatever it is you think you would do. The second time, notice what you didn't do.' One student said, 'But that's not going to be objective since we already know that we're doing it a second time.' So then we had a whole conversation about the difference between subjective and objective, why a student might think that an 'objective' stance should be privileged here, and how one becomes aware of ways of reading. You notice and draw on their immediate feelings, sensations, responses. It's all clustered, the thinking, the doing, the sensing, the feeling."

Lucey offered an example of how certain pedagogical principles from Iyengar yoga might function in a graduate context. After leading us in an extended exercise in attentive awareness that focused on very subtle movements of the foot as it rests against the floor, with breaks in between to notice our state of mind, Lucey explained how he transfers the practice of sequencing that is central to the teaching of Iyengar yoga to his university teaching. Always striving to "find a way to work with the body that is in front of you, you sequentially teach things, so that people can handle the first thing, and then you add the second thing; sequencing within a particular exercise and sequencing from exercise to exercise, so that each exercise builds the capacity to be attentive to what is coming next. There was this one PhD qualifying exam I was on, where I found myself asking questions like, 'If you were going to teach a novel by Jean Genet, and you know that he is difficult to teach, whose novel would you teach before so that the students were able to approach a novel by Genet? And then they give an answer to that question, and you say, 'Ok, great, that gives you one aspect of Genet that they study. What's another aspect and who could you teach so that you could prepare them for another aspect of Genet?' So then you would imagine a syllabus in which you would teach three things first so that you could arrive at something at the end and you would be preparing people's ability to pay attention to something by the way that you structure a syllabus. My colleague said, 'Wow! Do you design syllabi like that?' Well, yes!"

The panel made it clear that somatic principles can imbue academic teaching in ways that address the social. Kuppers talked about an African American history walking tour her class took in Ypsilanti, Michigan: "We are trying to pay attention to the fact that we are not only hearing about

African American history in our neighbour village, we are also engaged in the act of walking. We're walking the same paths that people will have walked. We feel what it's like to be outside this particular church, to enter this particular kind of church, where a certain kind of legislation was enacted. We try to pay attention to the formal means with which we are learning. Those sorts of practices are for me the crossover practices. It's not just this very personal journey but it's the crossover between personal practice and social practice. Finding different kinds of cultural attentiveness as to what that might mean is really central to my teaching journey right now." Thinking through how to cope with our emotional responses to current social crises—anti-Blackness and police brutality, gentrification, climate change—Lucey said, "One of those things that can help you tolerate those emotions is to have a technique that can every now and then put your mind in a place of open and attentive awareness. So for me we live in a very fraught moment and these practices are a life raft in that fraught moment. There is this surround that can be quite difficult, and I see every reason to acknowledge but to be able to stand up in it, and I think these practices help us do that."

During the Q&A session, an undergraduate in Berkeley's Department of Theater, Dance, & Performance Studies (TDPS) said, "I've found through somatic exploration and modern dance practice in TDPS I've been able to reclaim my body, it has become a site of vibrancy and not shame. Why is this work so transformational? How can body awareness shift understanding of self and empowerment?" Cranz answered that her design students have had similar responses to her classes in body conscious deign, noting that, "They're always trying to copy who's published and look at the masters, and with body conscious design, I'm taking them inside to their own experience and that becomes the basis of authority. Your body becomes the measure of what is useful and comfortable and so forth, your body and some rethought intellectual ideas perhaps in there too." Constable said, "One of the things Feldenkrais teaches is that you learn by variations, and your variations would be things that, if you were judging yourself, you would think were mistakes or errors or failures. But once you stop seeing the differences you are aware of as failures, you're able to grow. I think this is how some somatic practices enable one to transform not only one's self-image, but relations to others and to the world." Kuppers added, "I think to my students it's very important that it's not just about ourselves, but the letting go of shame is also about stepping up to take responsibility to change the world that is out there. So you are feeling better in yourself in order to have the basis from which you can begin to change the world." Lucey said, "Shame is one of those things that the world does to you, that people would call a call to order or a call to normativity. And it is experienced bodily; it inscribes itself in the way that you carry yourself. So just the fact that you suddenly start to notice what certain things feel like in your body, means that you notice shame more. One of my great inspirations, Eve Sedgwick, has written a lot about how shame has in itself so much energy that it becomes a generative force, that a deep experience of shame, once you notice it and look at it and feel it in your body, then your body can act out of that energy."

Ayelet Even-Nur, a PhD student in Near Eastern Studies and Ashtanga yoga practitioner, asked the panel about "language usage in the somatic realm vs. the intellectual realm or in the space in between." She elaborated, "In a class where you're teaching someone how to do something physical, sometimes you need to use different types of language. To learn how to do something physically, we need to use language in a certain type of way. So there's a clear interaction between the somatic and linguistic in that setting and I'm wondering how that transfers to here." Both Cranz and Lucey discussed the centrality of direct, precise, and succinct language that has a physical base and avoids abstraction in helping students learn new bodily practices. But Lucey admitted that the sort of language he uses in the yoga studio does not transfer very well to the seminar room and vice versa:

"Mr. Iyengar had very specific ideas of what constitutes direct and effective language. And I think that he's right that in the yoga classroom there have to be images, words, instructions, but they have to be direct and concise. So it's not that there's no complexity, but complexity happens through sentences that are not long but are layered in certain ways. I just accepted a difference that I would be one speaker when I'm teaching yoga and another speaker when I'm in front of a class at the university."

Constable took the question to be about "how language changes us," adding, "I think in a way you can do some of the same kind of study of language that you can do of the body. I think that what Michael was saying about attentive awareness, of expanding the possibilities instead of just always going back to the same habits, you can learn yourself in a new way, you can learn the same language in a new way. And what happens when you do that is instead of reading and it becoming rote what you're reading, it ends up becoming alive to you in the same way." Earlier in the discussion, Constable noted that her field, Rhetoric, deals with "very specific words like 'of.' 'Of' can either belong to a subject or an object. So if you think about bodies of knowledge, you can do all of that playing around with what a 'body of knowledge' is: a body that belongs to knowledge, the knowledge one has of the body, or, conversely, that knowledge itself is a body."

Moving the question from how to find the language to teach somatic and intellectual practices to how to "interrogate academic language practices through somatic practices," Kuppers cited the example of having Native Two-Spirit activist Quo-Li Driskill come to her disability culture classroom to teach a Boal class about decolonial methodologies: "I would say zero of the students in the room had any good sense of what the heck that might possibly be about. And they created with him a Boal sculpture that allowed them to get at quite a few interesting things about what that might mean. Our body does know quite a lot about how certain words come to mean. So when we were creating that image together, we got to a quite differentiated place of what decolonial methodologies might mean in relation to disability practices. That was just a really exciting example for me to see how many of us use academic language to influence the shape of the world. We're using language complexes that need unweaving, that need to stop us in our tracks, that have the agenda to stop us and not let us go past them, to be a roadblock for a while. There's some use in that, and we can use our embodied knowing to understand the poetics of what these kinds of words are."

Julian Carter, body worker, dancer, and professor of critical studies at California College of Arts, asked about how to "assess students in classes that centralize embodied practices that produce a range of personal transformations." Cranz replied, "It's a measure of success if they just come to class if it's [a course] about embodiment. I take roll and don't judge their experiences." Constable described one assessment method she uses in her course "Language, Truth, and Dialogue." She places students in groups of three and has them switch the roles of two speakers and a listener. Then she asks them to write down their experiences of being in each role and then has them read each other's writing. "All that sort of switching around responses, so that you're not the one always in the position to assess and have them respond to your assessment. They're getting responses and assessments, and they're not all going to be the same, but they get patterns and learn things from that."

Constable continued: "If I'm teaching them, for instance, to write papers, what they need to do in their writing is tap into how they sort of feel and sense already, and then translate that into an appropriate reading and writing practice that shows that they're thinking about material in effect with their whole sense, with their whole self. But I'm not going through and saying, 'How do you

feel?' I can't grade their feelings. What I'm doing is having them tap into their feelings, which they can do in more or less sophisticated ways."

Before closing the symposium with another group exercise, Kuppers said, "This social change only ever happens in us who sit together doing this kind of work together. I can see the world changing right now."

Notes

Special thanks to two somatics teachers, Shelley Senter and Mary Armentrout, who have supported not only my psychophysical health but also my effort to cultivate embodied research practices.

1. All quotations come from my transcription of the video of the panel discussion.

2. The sitz or sitting bones (ischial tuberosity) are the bones of the lower part of the pelvis.

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Symposium Participant Bios

Marianne Constable is a professor of rhetoric at UC Berkeley, where she specializes in legal rhetoric and philosophy. She is especially interested in silence and speech and is currently writing a book on the "new unwritten law" that ostensibly exonerated most women who killed their husbands in Chicago at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. Constable has been a certified Feldenkrais Method® practitioner since 2005.

Galen Cranz integrated sociology, architecture, and the Alexander Technique to write *The Chair: Rethinking Culture, Body and Design*. She is a professor of architecture at UC Berkeley, a PhD sociologist from the University of Chicago, and since 1990 a certified teacher of the Alexander Technique. Professor Cranz teaches social, cultural, and somatic approaches to architecture and urban design.

Petra Kuppers is a disability culture activist, a community performance artist, and a professor at the University of Michigan. She also teaches on Goddard College's Low Residency MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts. Kuppers leads The Olimpias, a performance research collective (www.olimpias.org). Kuppers is the author of numerous

books, including *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge* (Routledge, 2003) and *The Scar of Visibility: Medical Performance and Contemporary Art* (Minnesota, 2007).

Michael Lucey is a professor of French and comparative literature at UC Berkeley. Professor Lucey specializes in French literature and culture of the 19th and 20th centuries. Having recently completed his fourth book, *Someone*, he is now at work on a new project with the title "Proust, Sociology, Talk, Novels: The Novel Form and Language-in-Use." A certified Iyengar yoga teacher, he teaches in Berkeley and San Francisco and is also currently the president of the Board of Directors of the Iyengar Yoga National Association of the United States.

On Failures

Patrick Blenkarn

I find myself more and more often in contact with artists, students, and scholars interested in championing "failure" within theatrical practice, pedagogy, and discourse. This championing merits some consideration, particularly from those of us interested in performance and pedagogy. For, when spoken of *in general,* failure is not the clearest of concepts. To define it, we might say it articulates some kind of disjunction, or falling short—can such a general and highly relative concept actually be thought of in isolation? To make more sense of failure, we require identifiable reference points—a context. And if this is so, then perhaps different kinds of contexts or events produce different kinds of failures that we risk collapsing conceptually when we encourage "failure" *tout court*.

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In her book, *Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure*, theatre scholar and practitioner Sara Jane Bailes champions failure within the context of contemporary experimental performance theatre.[1] She seeks to affirm the political possibilities of failure through an exploration of the methods and works of three major experimental theatre companies in the English-speaking world: Forced Entertainment (Sheffield, UK), Goat Island (Chicago, USA), and Elevator Repair Service (New York, USA).[2] As I read it, a familiar Marxist critique lies at her book's core: x identity or image does not fit y norm, and the distance between these categories gives the "failing" x, now separated from the normative consciousness, a kind of mobility for political action to *change* the normative consciousness. The book's project and rhetoric is, in all honesty, quite inspiring.

Importantly, Bailes tries to speak of failure without generalizations. From start to finish, she focuses upon failure as happening within the greater context of representation. For Bailes, drawing explicitly upon Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's argument in *The Communist Manifesto* that the bourgeoisie "'creates a world after its own image'" (quoted in Bailes 2011, 35), this link to representation necessarily politicizes the discussion. She writes: "representation offers an arena in which to refract, deflect, extend, challenge, or entirely reject dominant political assumptions and beliefs" (146). Any process of producing images (which includes creating theatre) necessarily invokes a certain injunction to "*produce* a different world *after* a different image" (36, emphasis added). In short, if you aren't fitting the mold, make a new mold.

With this in mind, the representations Bailes pursues and finds throughout her case studies, as well as in her reflections on the British punk movement and, to a lesser extent, in early cinema's slapstick, are ones that try to expose or break through cracks in our institutional molds. Bailes reads these specific forms of representation as, thanks to their "making and becoming," unable to arrive at the culturally demanded normative outcome (39). This paradoxical process of making images of failure is, she writes, a *poetics* of failure—a poeisis and a becoming of something against the grain of dominant cultural expectations.[3] The specific examples that Bailes considers of these poetic becomings vary. While I admit the one I will discuss here is a bit simplistic, it's one of the clearest expressions of Bailes's approach to putting the above theoretical framework into practice.

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In the performance *When will the September roses bloom? Last night was only a comedy*, by the now disbanded Chicago group Goat Island, Bailes describes a moment in which actor Lito Walkey "performs" standing on one leg. Walkey's stillness, writes Bailes, "is at the same time difficult to endure (keeping one leg raised)" and the integrity of the action "is threatened by bodily movements she cannot control—her foot quivers as does her thigh, her fingers tremble as she tries to hold her arms rigidly by her side" (124). Bailes reads this section of the performance through the reflections of Frankfurt School thinker Ernst Bloch on the impossible and hope. For Bloch, Bailes writes, "the realm of the possible is enlarged by the inclusion of the notion of the impossible" (116). Bloch, according to Bailes, understands the impossible to be a "different approach to *possibilization*"; it is not "nonsense" but always in the position of a "countersense" due to its ability to be conceptualized (117). In Walkey's performance, Bailes finds the "non-performing body" struggling to uphold its task of remaining absolutely still (124). With Bloch's concepts in mind, Bailes asserts: "It is precisely the perseverance of an event in the face of difficulty [such as Walkey's] that turns impossibility from a category of negation [a nonsense] into a strategy of hope [a countersense] in Goat Island's performance theatre" (125). In other words, Walkey's performance draws attention to the possibility of the impossible.

Bailes's other investigations, especially those of work by Forced Entertainment, focus much more on the aesthetics of a broken theatre (fragmented identities and fragmented narratives, etcetera) and the line between representations of failure and failures of representation. However, all of these investigations stay committed to the same logic of inspiring other ways of seeing and realizing the impossible or utopic through the cracks (failures) of aesthetic process and production. In this sense, I think it is fair to say that Bailes understands these works to be attempting to "teach" the viewer about these political possibilities through form.[4]

<div align="center">*</div>

What is troubling about these analyses, however, is that they are subtended by a surprising distinction within the concept of failure. Bailes subtly suggests that planned representations, or "performances *of failure*" on stage, such as that of Walkey described above, can hold more significance than "performances *that fail*" (2011, 62). In other words, Bailes is concerned with a performance *of failure* that is built into the performance at a structural level—not a pretend failure (such as a choreographed pratfall), but a moment in which the performers set themselves up to try to accomplish something they cannot.[5]

For Bailes, this distinction between a performance of failure and a performance that fails relies heavily upon a limited conception of representation. Despite setting representation as the scene of action, Bailes leaves a detailed interrogation of this concept outside the scope of her work. It would seem that, to her, a performance *that fails* does not also participate in some kind of category of a representation *of failure*. She separates a domain of "doing" from the representation of that doing. With such a limited reflection on representation, her conclusion flies in the face of much poststructuralist thought from the last 60 years and its various theories of signification. While we need not hold up poststructuralism as a standard, the very extent and range of discussion of signification and representation (and their being doomed to fail), from Roland Barthes to Jacques Derrida or Luce Irigaray to Gilles Deleuze (whom Bailes does briefly acknowledge), makes the absence of this kind of thinking in Bailes's book, let alone a justification for bracketing it, strikingly noticeable.

This division between representational failure and non-representational failure is twinned with, and co-determined by, a similar division between intentional and unintentional failures. The failures of those pursuing failure intentionally seem to have, for Bailes, more political affect than those who fail in ignorance or who fail but would really rather have succeeded. These intended failures, she claims, are more likely to bring about changes we desire consciously: "When failure is inscribed into the conceptualization of the work, the work's ontology alters and a different economy is established. What new economies are activated here that might topple aesthetic power structures, or cause the theatre event to hierarchically realign?" (99). This ontological alteration suggests a number of things. First, *the very concept of failure* appears to Bailes to be understood as an *(im)material component* of the performance event. A distinction is thus being made here between a failure that is an unavoidable possibility for the work and a failure that is able to be *consciously* included into the work—or consciously excluded. Finally, Bailes suggests a fundamental politicization and aestheticization of theatre. In other words, if failure is "inscribed," we are talking about a different kind of theatre, one that may or may not be limited to or synonymous with her notion of performance theatre.

To be fair, Bailes does consider one, and only one, example in which an unintended failure has the same political clout as an intended failure (34). In discussing Walter Benjamin's reflections on a production of *Le Cid*, Bailes comments on Benjamin's interest in the amateur performer playing the role of the king. "In this amateur production, [Benjamin] observes the actor himself playing at being a king whilst at the same time failing to do so properly because his crown has slipped…. In this moment, Benjamin observes the failure of representation made visible to him through the unconscious ineptitude of the non-professional" (33–4). In this section alone, Bailes appears to suggest that both accidental performance errors (unconscious ineptitudes) and the "willful deployment of error" can participate in the same process of political and cultural destabilization and image (re)making (34). She writes:

> Intention plays an intrinsic part in the distinction between amateur and professional as opposing categories of proficiency. Yet amateur and professional, intended or otherwise, the slip that evidences the moment of breakdown creates the possibility of showing more than one thing at a time, revealing more than itself as it illuminates the duplicitous system entangled in its operations. The slip indexes a break in the integrity of an action or object, and in doing so reveals the contingencies that surround it. (34)

Her point here reiterates the political logic I have already discussed. But, unfortunately, Bailes does not explain how these "intended or otherwise" acts could both share the same function or indexical quality while also being split over a border between the representational and the non-representational, between the performance *of failure* and the performance *that fails*. Nor does she share any nuanced position on how intention is fully present to the artists.

I understand Bailes's reference to Benjamin's viewing of *Le Cid* as something of a mild concession at the outset of her project. It is the kind of exception that might remind a Performance Studies reader of a similar one made by J.L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words*. In this foundational study, Austin rigorously taxonomizes performative speech acts into various categories, all of which might be said to be reducible to whether or not the performatives can be deemed "happy" or "unhappy." For Austin, this distinction judges whether or not a speech act, such as "I promise to help," is successful. A happy performative brings about the intended effect: i.e., the proffered help is realized. An unhappy performative—or what Austin predominantly calls an "infelicitous" one—is a speech

act that misses its mark or "muffs" the execution: i.e., the promise is broken (Austin 1975, 14). And yet, despite this distinction, Austin does concede that every performative utterance can be infected by infelicity and fail. "As *utterances*," Austin writes, "our performatives are also heir to certain other kinds of ill which infect *all* utterances" (21).

Bailes segues into theorizing about failure in performance through this very moment in Austin's lecture and his own concept of infelicity. She writes: "The description of the muffed 'execution of the ritual' [quoted from Austin] where the *procedure* is nevertheless right (which is key to its performance) is of particular interest here and in a discussion of failure and representation as a framework through which acts of subversion and reinvention in performance theatre can be identified" (Bailes 2011, 4–5). Though Austin plays a minor role in Bailes's book, one does not have to work too hard to see an affinity between the two thinkers' logic. In the same way that Austin famously brackets theatrical speech acts as the unhappiest of infelicities, Bailes brackets unintentional failures.[6] In other words, while the performances Bailes analyzes may all be infelicities in that they are "failures" to normative expectations, they are quite clearly in her eyes *happy* performatives of infelicitous acts. She herself might as well have written: "As events, our performances of failure are also heir to certain other kinds of ill which infect all events—namely *unintended failures*." And despite her hope for the "theatre event to hierarchically realign" both itself and a greater politics, Bailes's casual distinction between types of failure would seem to propagate, even propagandize for, the opposite.

Moreover, the passing acknowledgement of Benjamin's example of an "error of presentation" in the 200-page book seems another testament to her ultimate devaluing of the unintentional as a sphere with any real political potential, excluding it from the *poetics* at the root of her project (34). I wonder: in all of her time spent with these three well funded and frequently touring companies, did no performance have any unintended failure worthy of comment? Or are only the performative failures that these companies have already incorporated and ironed out deemed worthy of playing a role?

I don't mean to suggest that a theatre of accidental catastrophes should flourish for political inspiration's sake. I am suggesting that Bailes's emphasis on intention: 1) assumes intention to be fully understandable; and 2) assumes that the intention to (successfully) resist the demands of certain kinds of successful representational conformity (i.e., fail) *determines* political potency. These assumptions need to be unpacked, for if the performance of (intended) failure is to create an image after which to fashion the world, what of this world? In what way, for example, is the category of the unintentional performance *that fails* comprised of all the agents that cannot "consciously engage" with failure on terms of their own choosing (13)? Even if the companies Bailes discusses use intentional "failure" as a concept in their processes to emphasize a certain lack of mastery over the world, or to point to an ever-changing flux, this wouldn't make Bailes's conceptualization of intention and representation any less problematic.

To summarize, the political value Bailes's concept of failure creates is dependent upon a certain reshaping, if not limiting, of representation itself. Bailes's reconfiguration of the representational plane results in her defining a certain aesthetic territory in which any misstep is understood to be politically more "successful," or charged, on the basis of a self-conscious and fully present intention.

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Bailes's concept of intentional failure, hiding behind the signifier "failure," is having a subtle trickle down effect in theatre criticism and practice. In the process, her admirers perpetuate Bailes's unquestioned assumptions about intention. In his book *Theatre of the Unimpressed*, playwright Jordan Tannahill borrows much from Bailes and even upgrades her concept of failure to the capital "F" Theatre of Failure. Like Bailes, Tannahill regards failure as a "profoundly optimistic and human proposal" (2015, 123). And even though he is much more willing to write of failures of the "that fail" variety, he still holds Bailes's conceptual party line: "Sometimes things fuck up and do not yield an exciting or electric liveness … Such shortcomings [failures?] demonstrate that effective failure often requires an exacting hand to frame and implement it to full effect" (141–2).[7] While failure is here being used to subvert starchy old methods of theatre making and storytelling with, as Tannahill writes, a "#Nofilter," it seems to also have an idealized form—with a capital "F," no less (124). A failure shaped by "exacting hands" is better—more effective?—than one shaped by a surprise fire alarm going off again and again mid-performance. Here again we see failure being managed according to the distribution of value across those various events that do not meet a normative standard. And yet despite placing different values upon different failures, our discourse seldom pauses to elucidate what those failures and values are, or at least confront the fragility of our valuations.

Before concluding, I would be remiss were I not to at least mention Samuel Beckett's infamous line, "Fail again. Fail better," from *Worstward Ho* ([1983] 2009, 81). The line has a special place in the visions of lovers of failure—and Bailes in particular, since "Fail again, Fail better" was the original title of her book in its earlier version as her dissertation (2005). "Perhaps no singular artist of the twentieth century," Bailes writes, "has so precisely articulated failure as an existential human predicament than Samuel Beckett." In light of her understanding of this "predicament," she claims: "We cannot 'do' without failure, in both senses of that expression (we cannot make, nor can we manage without)" (2011, 25).

Despite Bailes's affinity for Beckett, *Worstward Ho* has little significance in her book beyond supplying the infamous line. Bailes isolates the line from the story it comes from and uses it to stand in for Beckett's general worldview. But the line is so disconnected from a critical attempt to understand Beckett's work itself that it is even misquoted in Bailes's original title—she replaces the period with a comma. And while that might be a small, technical, unintended error, such a change allows the reader to entertain the idea that "again" and "better" are part of a more coherent progression, as opposed to two ideas in fully separated clauses.

As I read it, Beckett's text (including the infamous line) is much less self-evident with regards to failure than Bailes would have us believe. It is full of puns and paradoxical language that try to trouble the very idea of progress and thinking "better." It makes us suspicious of our very concept of value. Here is the full paragraph immediately following "Fail again. Fail better":

> First the body. No. First the place. No. First both. Now either. Now the other. Sick of the either try the other. Sick of it back sick of the either. So on. Somehow on. Till sick of both. Throw up and go. Where neither. Till sick of there. Throw up and back. The body again. Where none. The place again. Where none. Try again. Fail again. Better again. Or better worse. Fail worse again. Still worse again. Till sick for good. Throw up for good. Go for good. Where neither for good. Good and all. (Beckett [1983] 2009, 81)

The ambiguity of "better" here ("Or better worse"), I think, makes it fair to at least read Beckett's infamous line two ways. For some, a better failure might be the one that—surprise, surprise—is actually a success and allows one to live, pay the rent, and fail again another day. In this case, despite being a "failure," some value is still created and gained. But for others, the better failure might be the one that doesn't allow you to fail again, the failure in which the possible value gained from the experience isn't actually valued by the context in question as something contributing to any kind of progress. And yet, "Somehow on." With regards to performance more broadly, these latter failures could bloom from any number of things. I would consider, for example, snowstorms, blackouts, and heart attacks as possible catalysts.

Again, I do not mean to suggest that valuing intention, whether to "establish new economies" or to inspire a "better" political world, is parasitic to our discourse. As a student in an art school, I am well aware of the importance of articulating intention within an artistic work. I am also aware that institutional pedagogues are not in positions to encourage a kind of failure from which nothing can be gained with regards to education. However, while the above breakdown of Bailes's thought might seem particular to her, the principles and assumptions at work in her thought regarding intention and representation are the same as those that support the classroom studio or rehearsal hall claim, "failure is okay." The difference is that Bailes's assumptions are articulated in such a way that we can see them for what they are, while "failure is okay," thanks to its more general rhetoric, obscures the possibility of there being failures that are *not okay*, even when we say otherwise. If Bailes and those who find inspiration in her work are any indication, the failure that fails at being a failure is unintentional failure—the failure that has no roots, that can't be tracked, that doesn't conform to any logic of progress and development (for which, ironically, Marxism, like capitalism, is guilty).

I have no doubt that, for some artists, all of this may be far too pedantic—or perhaps just too semantic. The openness to failure by many artists is likely grounded in something more pragmatic. Maybe it gets them in a certain mood in the rehearsal studio, a mindset for experimenting—feeling *like* they can do anything. So if that's you, and chanting to yourself "Fail again. Fail better" (or "Fail again, Fail better") helps you make whatever you make, then chant away. However, for those who are eager to champion a certain kind of failure as an idealized aesthetic, let alone politicized concept, we might at least consider provisionally (this being the key term) granting intended and unintended failings their own conceptual categories. A linguist might propose writing them failure$_1$ and failure$_2$, but we could also say faylure and feilure. For, like Bailes, I too believe that representations are key to helping us shape the world otherwise. But I would argue to include words in that sphere of representations as much as any other signifier. Any promotion of "failure" that does not attempt to nuance, and hopefully also trouble, this distinction between intended and unintended events, or recognize the implied hierarchies being set up in any "failure"-friendly context, seems an example of lazy discourse and lazy pedagogy—two qualities, I imagine, most of us would want to change if we could make a new image for the world.

Notes

1. Performance theatre is Bailes's term. She uses it to distinguish the practices of the experimental theatre artists she is interested in from theatrical practices that do not, from her view, have questions of performativity at the heart of their work.

2. While it would be difficult to connect the English language to the problems here discussed, we should not be oblivious to the Anglocentric historical moment out of which concern for failure has emerged. Failure, as

discussed in Bailes book in both denotation and connotation, is not necessarily a universal concept shared by all languages.

3. Bailes borrows the terms poeisis from Heidegger (1971) and becoming from Deleuze and Guattari (1983).

4. It's possible that a strong influence on Bailes's thought here is Walter Benjamin's notion that "An author who teaches writers nothing teaches no one" ([1934] 2008, 89). For Benjamin, formal innovation is a way to remind a society that change is possible. In other words, if art forms can change, so can the structures of our institutions. A writer who teaches other writers is a writer thinking at the level of form.

5. Further research could be done here on the relationship these performative styles have with clowning methods, such as those of Jacques Lecoq or Philippe Gaulier.

6. I am surprised that Bailes does not even footnote Jacques Derrida's lengthy critique of Austin's thought in "Signature, Event, Context" (1988). Derrida's text is a direct response to Austin's devaluing of speech acts in theatre as merely citational. His argument has two main tenants. For any speech act to be understandable (happy or unhappy), Derrida believes it must already have been part of a repetition and, thus, in some way, be a citation of a previous speech act in a new context. This is what Derrida calls iterability. On the basis of this claim, and in conjunction with Austin's claim that any performative is by definition subject to infelicity—that is, the possibility of infelicity is part of the definition of even happy speech acts—Austin should not be able to assert a difference between these acts to the extent that he does. Their separation is completely constructed. Derrida's interpretation of Austin embraces failure just as much as Bailes's, but Derrida goes a step further to tear down the separation between all speech acts.

7. Tannahill wants liveness or vitality more than explicitly just political images, though he clearly understands the former to be part of a fight for the latter.

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BOOK REVIEW

How Theatre Educates: Convergences and Counterpoints with Audiences, Scholars, and Advocates. Edited by Kathleen Gallagher and David Booth. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. 272 pp.

Reviewed by Kelsey Blair

In *How Theatre Educates*, editors Kathleen Gallagher and David Booth bring together academic essays, personal reflections, plays, speeches, and interviews on the topic of theatre and education in Canada. The diverse pieces in the collection are linked by a central argument: one of theatre's most powerful attributes is its ability to teach. The collection was published in 2003 and has some minor weaknesses that have become more pronounced with time; on the whole, however, the book continues to be an essential resource for thinking about pedagogy and performance in Canada.

The strength of the collection is, undoubtedly, its breadth. It is divided into six sections: a double Introduction by the editors; Theatre, the Arts, Pedagogy, and Performance; Critical Voices; Culture, Community, and Theatre Practice; Theatre for and with Young Audiences; and Creative Processes, Audience, and Form. Each of the sections includes traditional essays alongside plays, dialogues, and personal reflections. The formal diversity in each section makes the collection highly accessible for readers and reflects the range of work being produced in the field of theatre and education in Canada. The academic essays are particularly strong, and there are several pieces that deserve special mention. Belarie Zatzman's essay "The Monologue Project: Drama as a form of Witnesses," part of the "Arts Pedagogy and Performance" section, clearly lays out the "memory-work" model she used to help students consider their own relationship to historical events such as the Holocaust. The article lucidly details the project, which resulted in student-written monologues, and convincingly argues for the potential of reflection and performance as powerful pedagogical tools. Similarly, "The Land Inside Coyote: Reconceptualising Humans Relationships to Place through Drama," by Cornelia Hoogland—and included in the "Theatre for and with Young Audiences" section—deftly combines theory and practice and considers how drama and theatre might be used to help children reconnect with the natural world. As with Zatzman's piece, the essay provides a theoretical framework for future teachers and researchers while also convincingly arguing for drama's potential to develop an ecological consciousness of the world.

The academic essays in the fourth section, "Culture, Community, and Theatre Practices," include many highlights. Walter Pitman's essay, "Drama through the Eyes of Faith," about a theatre-viewing group based out of a church, intriguingly considers the relationship between contemporary faith-based practices and theatre-going, and Lori McDougall's essay, "As the World Turns: the Changing Role of Popular Drama in International Development Education," about the evolving place of drama and television in international development education, is informative, even if it did make me wish for an update which could account for the changes in the global media landscape in the last ten years. The most effective piece of this strong section, and perhaps the entire book, is Janice Hladki's "Negotiating Drama Practices: Struggles in Racialized Relations of Theatre Production and Theatre Research," which examines how people learn across racial differences in drama. The nuanced article focusses on Hladki's interviews with Indigenous theatre artist/activist Monique Mojica and Mojica's collaboration with Djanet Sears and Kate Lushington on their co-authored play *Onions, Strawberries, and Corn*. Hladki's approach—in which she carefully positions herself in relation to her research—is

thoughtful and rich, and she convincingly argues for the potential of collaborative theatre production to function as an educational site to learn about identity and racial relations.

Of the personal reflections, interviews, and speeches, there are also a number of excellent pieces. The dialogues conducted by Gallagher, including conversations with Linda Griffiths and Ann-Marie MacDonald, are impressively dense. It helps that the interviewees are two of Canada's leading female theatre artists and both provide a number of anecdotal gems, like a story told by Griffiths about writing *The Book of Jessica* with Maria Campbell. The personal reflection pieces are more varied. It is interesting and informative to read leading scholars, critics, and playwrights discuss their pedagogical practices; however, the tone of these pieces—which include Judith Thompson's "'I Will Tear you to Pieces': The Classroom as Theatre," Lynn Slothink's "Confessions of a Theatre Addict," and Diane Flacks's "Education through Empathy: Using Laughter as a Way In"—sometimes relies so heavily on personal narrative that they left me craving deeper engagement with their subject matter. I also could not help but notice that the majority of the personal reflections are written by women and that the two keynote addresses anthologized in the collection—John Murrell's to the National Symposium on Arts Education and Richard Rose's commencement address to Thorneloe College— are both by men. The result is that the men are granted a more authoritative voice and denied a more personal voice; similarly, the addresses lack a female perspective. Gender balance in these pieces would have further strengthened the collection as a whole.

While many of the individual contributions hold up incredibly well, in the twelve years since its original publication, the collection as a whole has some pronounced weaknesses. Throughout the collection, the essays primarily focus on theatre and education in urban centres. One might argue that this is, at least in part, because universities tend to be situated in cities. Nonetheless, theatre and education in Canada is not an urban-only issue, and the lack of a rural perspective is pronounced. In addition, the book's contributors and the subject matter of their contributions are primarily focussed on Ontario. Including perspectives from multiple provinces would have provided a more detailed and nuanced exploration of theatre and education across the country. Finally, reading the collection in 2016, the lack of Asian-Canadian voices is striking, and while there are a few pieces that highlight works by Indigenous theatre artists, there are no considerations of Indigenous pedagogy and knowledge. If there was to be a second edition of the book, these are gaps that would, surely, need to be filled.

Despite these weaknesses, however, the individual pieces are so strong that the collection remains an essential resource for students, teachers, and critics who wish to consider the place and potential of theatre and education in Canada.