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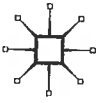
Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research

Scholarly Acts and Creative Cartographies

Edited by

Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter

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Theory/Practice as Research:
Explorations, Questions and
Suggestions

Lynette Hunter

What is Research?

- Searching for things that happen in the search, making presence like skilled improvisation.
- Searching more, finding copiousness, context, or the installation.
- Searching again, with the repetition necessary for commodity markets, seeking representation and desire.

These are three quite different searches, all of which can be made by research.

What is Art?

Short for "articulating"?

Or what happens before articulation, the attempts at saying what hasn't been "said" before.

Do they fit together? It depends on whether you think the "things" are there before you find them, *or* are constituted by the process of the search.

I argue: Art that searches and constitutes things through the process of articulating is research. This, by the way, is also a good definition for science.

As a practitioner I have developed performance art into a medium for exploring theory. Over the last 15 years there have been eight productions that I have toured to different places, that use either one-person scripts or performance installation scores to explore theoretical discourse.¹ The discursive fields of critical, cultural, and performance theory are usually mediated

to talk about things that haven't been said before. This makes it difficult to communicate theory within the conventional discourse of conference and publication, and we have probably all had the experience of drifting off at precisely the point where we know that the speaker or writer is trying to say something interesting and it's coming out obscure.

The performance art that I have developed simply extends the logic of this situation by foregrounding the difficult to articulate theoretical engagements and materializing them in an embodied way through performance or installation. Responses to these performances lead me to deduce that people at the very least have more fun with theory this way, possibly because they are suddenly given license to give themselves up to the energy of the moment rather than pin themselves into a pen of decontextualized logic, what Lorraine Code calls "s knows that p."²

But the "not-said" is more complicated than this. One of the central concerns of current performance theory is that powerful political structures train us to listen, speak, see, and feel in specific ways, ways that often exclude the possibility of recognizing people and actions, animals and environments, that do not fit the parameters of those structures. Much political theory is concerned with how to encourage the voicing of those unrecognized, and hence usually unvalued lives and landscapes.³ However, while sometimes the not-said is the result of this kind of obscuring and erasing discourse so that it is at times a not-heard, at others the not-said is the result of something that has not yet come into being, and at still other times the not-said is in effect the not-yet-said, simply existence for which we have not yet found a vocabulary – the whole field of tacit knowledge in philosophy is concerned with this last kind.

My performance work is concerned with all three: it usually employs analogical not-yet-said material from the realms of tacit knowledge such as food or make-up or sound (all of which are currently acquiring vocabularies, which have not yet been formalized). It is, as I note above, concerned with the precipitous edge of not-said concepts and feelings that theory attempts to bring into voice and being through the process of its performance. And it is fundamentally concerned with the rhetorics available to those not-heard by socio-political power that attempt to silence, exclude, erase, and obscure – willingly or by default.

The performances started by extending theoretical concepts, such as "Is the concept of the tragic subject appropriate for First Nations (Native American) culture?" (1995),⁴ or "Can a Man be a Woman?" (1994),⁵ or "Does theoretical discourse erase the socio-political immediacies of women's daily lives?" (1996).⁶ More recently the performances coalesce out of various installation energies and give rise to theoretical smelting. I did

being re-membered through the body placed in particular socio-geographical locations. For example, *Bodies in Trouble* (1997) generated a series of theoretical discussions among other people that had nothing to do with me.⁸ It was a nine-hour site-particular piece on women's labor, the textured and subtle modes of communication made by simple daily tasks, and the corollary enclosure in political structures. The piece transformed my practice away from demonstrative embodiment to embodiment that happens in the moment.

The move began to shift the authority for significance from me as "critic" to my body as medium, and this also had implications for how the work was evaluated because the scholar-performer was no longer in charge of the meaning. I was no longer interpreting work and "making theoretical statements," but providing the ground for others to think theoretically. Yes, I constructed the parameters for this, but the thinking that went into it was not generically communicated. "Bodies in Trouble" was a score for movement rather than a script with words, although for those with keen eyes words did emerge from the tapestry that was built on the hanging steel rods that were part of the installation.

The academy values words above all else. Even scientists need to put their experiments and interventions into nature into verbal form before they "count" as research. And despite the 18-month gestation of *Bodies in Trouble*, the exceptional amount of research and planning that went into it, and the exacting performative elements, even my own attempt with the help of a colleague to verbalize some of the implications after the fact fell far short of a script.⁹ At the same time the piece did generate critical and theoretical response in others and therefore some peer-review that could be recognized by the university system. But the experience underlined the fact that the academy can only value certain kinds of words, words that are certain, or have a set of *a priori* assumptions.

Yet words are rhetorically just as capable of embodiment and process as bodies. Scores and scripts are equally as capable of being generic as they are of being in process. For reasons dictated by the medium, I returned to a combination of words and body in *Coming to the End of the Line* (1999), but found the work prompted into poetics when it was transformed into a written version.¹⁰ The process marked a significant turn toward poetics in my critical writing as a whole, and to experimentation with words, voice, and text in performance. *Domestic Tragedy in the Household* (2003) is a media collage of webcam, present voice, recorded voice, present performance, and video performance that I am currently putting onto the page with a combination of Photoshop and text. And *De-Scripting Performance* (2007), which began as a poetic lecture (1995), is a rewritten version of a long poem by

terms – in the latter case literally so with the publisher having received "returned" copies on the basis of "misprinting."

The most recent work I've pursued focuses on collaboration, displacing the critical and authorial voice even further from the scholar. Despite the extensive work over the last decade or more on collaboration as an important rhetorical strategy for artistic, social, political, and cultural work, it is not a recognized form at university level. In science, groups of people work together in what has been defined as collective research, and famously the individuals are all named, often in order of proportion of contribution, at the head of each paper. Not only has this kind of research proved difficult to justify in the arts and humanities, but genuine collaboration in which there is no predictable outcome is virtually unheard of anywhere in the institution.

The piece *How Analytical Thought Stops You Thinking*, first performed as an unconventional keynote at the University of Birmingham conference, Beyond the Book (2007), brought together analytical bibliography with book construction, art-book concepts, and poetry. The hour-long scored, but unscripted piece explores the interface between hypertextual performance devices and hot-metal press printing and binding, and involves complex hand-press printing, and then the interactive (that is, involving all people present) staging of the folding, gathering, stabbing, and binding activities of traditional book production, and a radical intervention into cutting that impacts on the way the text can be read. Participants are invited to read from the final cut-books, and the piece becomes increasingly vocal. Its collaborative rhetoric made it quite unpredictable, and it remains to be seen whether the university will accept it as research.

It also remains to be seen whether or not I write it into words, and what kind of words those might be. The impetus was a long poem I wrote in 1994, which may constitute any evident need for a script. Yet it is fascinating how easily I get caught back into attempting to "write" the performed. Perhaps the crisis this generates has led to more performative writing. It is curious how many theoreticians have turned to the performance of the written, as if dwelling in the process of the words materializes their engagement with the world, brings the not-heard, the not-said, and the not-yet-said into being.

Connections

Connected to these developments toward collaboration and the dynamic between the verbal and movement in my own theory/performance work, is a deep-running interest in situated textuality and the philosophical thought around situated knowledge and tacit knowledge. This epistemological research focuses on collective and collaborative modes of knowing,

Much of my research has been concerned with how writing and reading and the verbal arts in general promote these different kinds of textuality, especially in poetics and the rhetoric that bridges the poetics into daily life. This concern developed in a particular direction: from 1994 I began to study the effects of dynamic movement in the Daoist tradition, studying a classical Chinese system brought to Europe from northeastern China in the 1920s. What fascinated me about the material was that the physical vocabulary was taught tacitly, and that the knowledge required collaborative strategies to articulate. In fact, the knowledge did not become knowledge until it was articulated and that articulation was often haptic, somatic, or kinesthetic. Yet collective articulation, an ability to copy the movements, even embody them, without attention to their situated qualities, fell short of Daoist knowledge, specifically of any subtle understanding of the paradoxes. Collaborative engagement that was attentive to responding to the situated was thus more likely to generate a textuality that was involved in articulating those ideas of complementarity, negotiation, reciprocity, and friendship that also emerge consistently in the philosophy of situated knowledge.

After five or six years' training in this Daoist system and learning its vocabulary it is expected that students go out and teach others, at the same time as maintaining their own study. Applications abound in the educational field, in the areas of mental and physical health, in sport, community centers, and leisure centers, as well as in business and industry. My own work in the UK was primarily with women's refugee groups from Cyprus and from Somalia, and in the United States I have worked with an alternative high school, in what a number of people would probably call Action Research. Over a series of projects, the work has concentrated on using the skills as a basis for communication between myself and the groups, between the group and the local society, among members of the group, and enabled Access accreditation¹² for further education. These projects generated a few scholarly publications, but the focus for me was on practicing my research into the system in different situations and exploring the kinds of textuality that were constructed.

Movement is just as likely as any other medium to use strategies that construct both positive and negative rhetorics. For example, a physical image can be liberatory, exploratory, evasive, and so on. People working with the theories of Augusto Boal can sometimes forget that the strategies he tried to foster among people unrepresented, or rarely/poorly represented, in mainstream power could also be used among the powerful to bolster their position. In other words, there is an ethics in tacit knowledge just as much as in verbal knowledge. And I saw my work as an attempt to articulate that learning, to explore and assess its impact, partly because it is such a strong methodological tool although relatively untested. As I practiced the research I realized that I

dynamics of bodies that respond to one another, and I have no doubt that both Greek and Daoist philosophies share a common interest and inspiration in practice as research. This insight may or may not result in a written article or monograph, but will continue to inform my study of the rhetoric and ethics of movement.

The primary aim of the projects is to produce research into new strategies and structures for democratic humanism and a more participatory democracy. The strategies and structures being developed come from arts practices, just as did the highly sophisticated strategies and structures for the classical argumentative rhetoric at the heart of liberal democratic discourse.¹³ What I am interested in is not subversive, but alternative rhetorics. Subversion feeds into changing hegemonic structures and is very effective. But alternative rhetorics usually focus on building the energy needed for any kind of change in the first place. This action research is not about Mouffe and Laclau's "articulation,"¹⁴ getting desire into representative forms that can be recognized, however valuable that is. It is more about Nicole Brossard's idea of installation which focuses on the "fiction-making" needed to install oneself into a place where we are recognized and valued for what we are,¹⁵ or Daphne Marlatt's idea of the energy that mobilizes that making,¹⁶ which is mostly about presence. This is the primary reason that I distinguish between "articulation" and "articulating" at the head of this essay. Mouffe and Laclau locate articulation within "discourse" and seem unconcerned with any activity that occurs outside of hegemony. In contrast "articulating" is more concerned with the process of work that occurs before a work or a person emerges into the hegemonic field.

Re-search

My own artistic practice as research is modest, yet it has contributed to my theoretical understanding and engagement with research being done in the field. It's interesting how I feel the need to write both those rather diffident phrases, probably because I've been brought up to downplay any practice that I've done in the arts, and this discursive excursion has been partly an attempt to value work that isn't often accorded value. I have the distinct feeling that the university tolerates my artistic and creative research because I continue to also produce bone-tiningly appropriate academic scholarship. However, there are increasing numbers of people who are involved in thinking through these issues, and this is a potentially exciting time to be building programs that encourage practice as research, value the arts, and promote the individual and social transformations of which they are capable.

- the Line (1999–2001); *The Face, the Mask and Classical Tragedy in the Household* (2003–5); *De-Scripting Performance* (1995–2007); *How Analytical Thought Stops You Thinking* (1994–2007).
2. Lorraine Code, *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 11, 73.
 3. Jane Mansbridge, "Using Power/Fighting Power: The Polity," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
 4. Written version: Lynette Hunter, "Standpoint Theory Approaches to Recent Canadian Autobiographical Text," in *Autobiographies*, ed. M. Dvorak (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1997).
 5. Written version: *ibid.*, "The Puppeteer: Being Wedded to the Text," *Open Letter* 9, nos 5–6 (1996).
 6. Written version: *ibid.*, "Learning to Read Writing from Non-Ruling Relations of Power," *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien* 18, no. 1 (1998).
 7. Simone Forti, *Handbook in Motion: An Account of an Ongoing Personal Discourse and Its Manifestations in Dance* (The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and Contact Editions, 1974).
 8. See T. Smalec, "Review (Re: Practice as Research in the U.S.)," ASTRA-L Discussion Listserv. Currently offline.
 9. Written version: Lynette Hunter and Susan Rudy, "Labour Notes," *Open Letter* 10, no. 8 (2000).
 10. Written version: Lynette Hunter, "Race-Work and Going to the End of the Line with Frank Davey's Writing," in *Axial Writings: Transnational Literatures, Cultural Politics and State Policies*, ed. C. Bati, E. Boehmer, and J. MacLeod (Wollongong: Kunapiji, 2003).
 11. Written version: *ibid.*, "bp Nichol's Selected Organs: De-Scripting Performance," *Open Letter* April (2008).
 12. Access accreditation is provided through the Open College Network in the UK.
 13. I am increasingly interested in how Plato drew an understanding of rhetorical figures and schemes, if not strategies, from the gymnasium. On a related topic, see Deborah Hawke, *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).
 14. I distinguish between "articulating" and "articulation" as used by Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, trans. W. Moore and P. Cammack (London: Verso, 1985), 113.
 15. Lynette Hunter, "The *Inédit* in Writing by Nicole Brossard: Breathing the Skin of Language," in *Nicole Brossard: Essays on Her Works*, ed. L. Forsyth (Montreal: Guernica, 2005).
 16. *Ibid.*, "What Is an Honest Man and Can There Be an Honest Woman? The Poetics of Daphne Marlatt in Context of Global Economic Pressure," *Open Letter* 12, no. 8 (2006).

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Dramaturgy: Conceptual Understanding and the Fickleness of Process

Jon D. Rossini

With the increasing interest in practice as research, dramaturgy, already understood as *the* research space within traditional theatre production, seems a logical place from which to generate an understanding of this activity.¹ To understand dramaturgy as a kind of practice as research – as opposed to dramaturgical practice as a kind of research – it is important to understand a sense of on-going process that is usually, but not always, highlighted in dramaturgical work, and to clarify the scope of dramaturgy, itself contested. One understanding of a dramaturg's role, often labeled a literary manager in the United States, is to help shape a season's offerings and assist an artistic director in thinking through the vision of the institution.² A second commonly invoked role is stewarding a new play through development. In new play development, the notion of working with a writer to shape a piece provides the clearest evidence of dramaturgical creative activity, but this contribution is often contested in relationship to questions of authorship (how much credit should a dramaturg's influence receive) and is troubled by a presumption, sometimes accurate, that the dramaturg serves the institution first rather than the playwright's vision. This latter concern emerges problematically in attempts (conscious or unconscious) to satisfy the conventionalized expectations of an institutional space's predetermined audience.

Perhaps the most recognized and least controversial role is the production dramaturg. Typically, the production dramaturg works with the director and creative team to help bring a production to fruition. According to Mary Luckhurst:

Production dramaturgs are theatre practitioners who form working partnerships with directors and are generally textual specialists of some kind. They develop the "concept" for the performance with the director in the