

Introduction: Mix and Stir

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At the outset of my course on theatre and performance research methods – a topic I have offered about twenty times – I ask the doctoral students to tally the number of years of education they have completed. In classes averaging a dozen students, some of whom have master's degrees, the tally around the seminar table quickly adds up to over two hundred years. Despite two centuries of diligent and successful studentship, virtually no one has ever taken a course on research methods, though information retrieval skills could stand in for this (among students who took the course in the early 1990s), cultural theory might be understood as this (especially during the 2000s), and practice-as-research (a legitimate but only partial substitute) has sometimes been mentioned (in the years since 2010). To think differently requires a new orientation to the making of knowledge. Two centuries is a lot of time to focus on accumulating knowledge of content – such as theatre history, dramatic literature, and performance theory – rather than on understanding how that content was derived. Most students excel at identifying what scholarship argues yet find it difficult to switch gears and focus on how research comes into being. Given that discovery is the hallmark of doctoral dissertations, I try to guide students to inductively recognize how others' research transpired so that, in time, they may propose their own project, justify a plan for how to do it, feel confident during the research process, and know how to switch up their tactics if circumstances warrant. Transparency about this process is the basic promise taken up in this book. This chapter explains how theatre and performance studies (hereafter, TaPS) research typically proceeds and how approaches combine to reflect the complexity of enquiries. This should ease the way for anyone seeking a firmer foothold by demystifying processes and providing vocabulary for what it is we do when we 'do research'.

Part of the challenge is learning to be precise about how we account for efforts. My course is organized on the book-a-week model – including the latest prize-winning titles – and arrays as many contrasting approaches

as possible. Students are charged with determining how the research proceeded. Their statements such as 'the author looked for sources on topic A' receive my rejoinder 'what is *look?*' Likewise, statements such as 'the author analysed the evidence' receive the response 'what is *analyse?*' I state these queries neutrally, yet relentlessly. This Socratic probing continues while everyone chimes in with verbs, trying to rescue classmates and beat the pattern. Finally, when someone pinpoints what they mean by 'collect' or 'read', and 'examine' or 'account', the fog starts to lift. One must 'collect', but *how?* By looking *where*, at *what*, on *which* criteria? Amidst the plethora of the possible, what is done and how is it justifiable? Once something has been 'collected', what are the criteria for noticing things of particular relevance, and thus for 'doing research'? (One *does* what? *Why?* And then one does *what else?*) It may not matter whether the name of a specific tradition can be attached to the thing(s) done, though understanding of that will come eventually; what matters is to be conscious of the steps undertaken, each of which represents a tradition of thought, makes sense in relation to the research question(s), and delimits the enquiry. Theatre and performance research is complex; complex research is *designed*; and to design involves forethought about what are likely to be the best ways to investigate a compelling question and derive explanations. In this book, we call these steps *planning* (the design of a project), *doing* (methods of garnering information), and *interpreting* (methodologies for explaining).

When conducting research, looking for and collecting information differs from construing information into arguments. This is a key insight for humanities projects: there will be a set of activities involving intentional effort to seek and identify stuff (not 'the topic', but something about the topic that a researcher hopes to learn through increments of data) and another set of activities dedicated to understanding and explaining what this stuff adds up to (doing something with the data). For the sake of differentiation, the first kind of activity involves *methods*: ways to gather information relevant to the project, whether that information is just data or, conversely, will later become evidence (data in service of claims). The second type of activity utilizes *methodologies*: analysis (preceding or coextensive with writing) will resemble prior studies' processes of making sense of the stuff that was gathered by deploying theories (these help make narratives about data comprehensible). Methods and methodologies almost invariably exist prior to a novice researcher stepping forth to investigate something. They are 'out there' for us to learn about, understand, selectively use, and ingeniously combine. They structure what and how we research and think. To name what these antecedents are, then to

purposefully engage them, is more art than science, and like arts there are techniques – protocols, skill sets, and ethics – necessary to their use. Their skilful (and defensible) use requires practice, though practice is done while learning, in smaller-scale studies that can scale up if the approach is promising. We often attain these capabilities without realizing it, which is a mercy given those two hundred-plus years of effort prior to understanding that we have choices of how to do what we do. Being asked to slow down and define ‘looking’ and to make considered decisions about ‘analysing’ holds us accountable: this is tradecraft.

Tradecraft

To know when one deploys a method and when one embarks on a methodology is helpful in a research process, even if it is a rare study that facilitates strictly consecutive deployment. Field research (say, observing a theatre company in rehearsal while taking notes on how artistic decisions are determined, using methods such as field observation, survey techniques, or interviews within the traditions of critical performance ethnography or practice-as-research) must precede analysis (reading notes, collating survey responses, or listening to recordings, and, after many iterations, listing the characteristics of the decision-making process, essential features, and variants). To take this hypothetical example further, once a list of characteristics of artistic decision-making is created, it is subject to methodological understanding in a corresponding intellectual tradition (e.g. content analysis). In tracking trends, the researcher might then want to investigate patterns; the findings could, for example, be accounted for as a system produced through activities representing deeply held cultural concepts or experiences superseding individuals (structuralism); as descriptions of actions and inter-dynamic interactions of sets of people and things (actor-network theory); or as individuals’ negotiation of genealogies of practice relating to language or social structure coalescing into institutionalized ways of thinking (discourse theory). There are more possibilities, but the point is that information gathered during field research may be subjected to multiple methodologies (traditions of interpretation), singly or in combination, and this predicates a lot about the conclusions.

Methods are selection criteria that strongly influence how a researcher spends their time. Which choices of methods will most likely facilitate finding what is germane to a question? What kind of vigilance while engaging with others, observing, or reading will result in notes useful for the analysis they will later undergo? If the research incorporates documenting

a production, one might gather insight at rehearsals and watch performances. The next goal may be to understand performance vis-à-vis culture, and so a researcher might discuss the production with contributing artists, consult what artists generated in preparation for the production (such as designs), or gather traces of performance reception from digital sites or in archives or libraries. One might even turn their attention to things referred to in the production – such as contemporary events, history, or other cultural knowledge – which are ‘not theatre’.

Multi-method as well as multi-methodological approaches may be needed. What is observed, who is engaged, and what is taken down as notes are consequential because the intended methodological traditions of interpretation will require that certain kinds of criteria were prioritized at the earlier stage of enquiry. Because one cannot necessarily know what matters most when setting out to design research, one must rely on skill and experience to ensure that the project’s data-gathering method(s) be more efficient and ultimately useful when data is analysed. One can decide between methodologies after the observations are made, but it is impossible to note-take everything and to prepare for every interpretive contingency, especially since insight is likely to occur throughout the process. With a set of (unoptimized) notes in hand, one might then ask: Which choices are conducive to deriving the best explanations? Which characteristics of what is observed should be correlated or contrasted?

TaPS allows eclectic approaches partly because it is the sum of an academic history engaged, successively and variously, with folkloric, archaeological, anthropological, literary, sociological, philosophical, and historical approaches dedicated not only to its own performative products (such as scripts, scores, designs, and other documentation) but also to art or architecture, culture and social behaviour, cognitive processes, governance, trade, and technology (influences that each have their own methods and methodologies that fall into or out of favour over time). In justifying the validity and importance of the live event (and live events from the past), TaPS adopts the premises of other disciplines and takes up the ways these disciplines pursued their insights, yet sometimes radically changes the context. For example, in *Building Character: The Art and Science of Casting*, Amy Cook (2018: 26) acts as a ‘disciplinary ambassador’ between theatre scholars and cognitive linguists, promoting understanding of the consequences of casting choices. Like many other TaPS scholars interested in cognitive science, she does not do anything empirical: instead, she utilizes semiotics and reception theory to reveal ‘where the character’s body is constructed from words’.

In different regions and scholarly organizations, TaPS has been defined through allegiance to a particular discipline or approach (McKenzie et al., 2010; Riley & Hunter, 2009). Lately, TaPS has generated its own, distinct, methods and methodologies, such as performance genealogy, (applied) practice-as-research, and critical media history. Collectively, TaPS is a sum of these parts. This allows for a tremendous variety of enquiries, which in turn means a significant burden in understanding the tradecraft of the many traditions of enquiry, along with the opportunity to mix traditions in research design.

Drama, Theatre, and Performance Research

TaPS research sometimes begins with dramatic texts. Whereas a ‘close reading’ of a play text may focus on genre and form, prosody, literary and linguistic devices, and any other formalist elements (in the New Critical or Russian formalist sense), a practised student of drama ‘stages’ performance in the mind’s eye (and ear) while reading. Anne Ubersfeld (1999: xxi) argues in *Reading Theatre* that reading a dramatic script differs from reading other kinds of texts, for ‘the key lies outside itself’, in the domain of performance. This is a distinction with a difference that reflects Otakar Zich’s contrast between a dramatic work seen from within (‘from the viewpoint of its inner relations’) and one seen without (from an audience’s perspective) (Gajdoš, 2007: 82). For a director or dramaturg, reading a dramatic text might entail noting the potential for double casting, picturing characters’ interactions, and connecting the plot to the visual or sonic world that the characters inhabit. An actor may think about what a specific character does and how they express themselves, experience or promulgate the consequences of ideology, and navigate their world. Setting out to do research, a scholar may find it advantageous to try to ‘experience’ the play from a spectator’s vantage, to inhabit one of these theatre makers’ identities, or to approximate a historicized perspective with culturally specific knowledge about staging, acting practices, dramatic theory, social history, and formalist norms.

The printing of plays has evolved in ways that presume readers’ engagement beyond what is on the page, necessitating a shift towards performative criteria (Peters, 2000; Worthen, 2005; 2010). Dramatic scripts tend to be replete with dialogue and sparing about everything else, yet specific methods become involved in reading practices when, for example, a phenomenological approach investigates the experience of stage time (which differs from both reading time and elapsed time), querying how

action unfolds through plot sequencing and how this temporal unfolding is conveyed through design elements, pacing, and visual storytelling. For a researcher, this predicates an infinite set of possibilities for a putative audience's experience, but stops well short of such an experience in the reading. The distinction that arises between the work on the stage and what the playwright calls for in staging is hinted at in Table 1.1.

Though a solely intrinsic approach to textual analysis in any tradition of criticism – psychoanalytic, structuralist, materialist, feminist, postcolonial, and so on – is a likely starting point in research, it is no longer a typical goal in TaPS (Walker, 2006). As scripts are regarded as performance-in-potential, a kind of companion to the *mise en scène* of performance, or a pale shadow of a complex production genealogy, a performative analysis is likely to occur, emphasizing what could transpire multi-sensorially in production. If productions have occurred, a researcher may also want to ascertain what was experienced and then recorded. There is mediation in all these steps. Eyewitness accounts of performance are not reportage (as with play-by-play real-time sports coverage) but what Patrice Pavis (2003: 9–10) calls 'analysis by reconstruction', whether as evaluative reviews or as descriptions. Even when scholars write about what they have witnessed, they do so after the fact, as historians. Their emphases typically fall upon: (1) what happens on and around the stage, (2) the holistic complexity of the event, and (3) theatre in culture (in which case extrinsic research is engaged).

Table 1.1 schematizes a set of play-related questions to differentiate practices of reading, staging in the mind's eye (and ear), accounting for staged choices, and explicating the event within its cultural setting. The first three types of enquiry – intrinsic, performative, and historical approaches – accord with what Christopher B. Balme (2008: 127) terms the theatrical text, the production (any specific staging of the text), and the performance on a given occasion. These lines of enquiry frequently combine in research projects. If the research highlights, for example, a key production within a project about a director's aesthetic, then the onus may be on specifying the choices in the case study's *mise en scène*, comparing and contrasting these with other examples from the director's oeuvre, and contextualizing them against other directors' productions of the play, thus incorporating all three approaches (intrinsic, performative, and historical). Each approach gives a focus for data collection (methods), and thus a sense of what to look for. If the researcher has seen the production, they must choose what to do with this knowledge, perhaps combining their own sense of the performance (e.g. notes and memories) with other available sources (such as designs,

Table 1.1 *Theatre and performance studies (TaPS) analysis template*

	Question	Focus for methods	Assumption	Predominant methodologies
Intrinsic (text)	<i>What characterizes this play as a work on the page?</i>	Genre, form, style Ideology Plot, sequencing Prosody, speech Settings, characters	Interpretation depends upon the use and combination of formalist elements	Deconstruction Formalism Philology Semiotics
Performative (mise en scène)	<i>How can the play be staged?</i>	Characterological inflection, interaction Incorporation of other performance forms Light, scenic, costume, and sound elements Onstage and offstage worlds Stylization, pacing, temporalities	Interpretation is a sensory experience, even as a reading practice, which calls forth imagined performance possibilities	Dramaturgical Phenomenology Semiotics
Historical (case study)	<i>What staging choices were made in a given production?</i>	Casting, acting, proxemics Producers' history (company ethos, relation to repertoire, intertheatricality) Production history Specific mises-en-scène: acting, scenography, etc.	Historical location of performance will affect production choices (relative to text) and predicate reception, subject to interpretation and misunderstanding	Performance genealogy Performance reconstruction Semiotics
Extrinsic (reception)	<i>What does the play have to do with the culture that produced it, and with concurrent concerns?</i>	'Context' for interpretation of the production Horizon of expectations for audiences Meaning in/for culture Performance as social rite Resonance with concurrent issues	Interpretation involves the 'cultural moment', which is seen differently in retrospect, and the habitus (habits, skills, and dispositions) of the producing and/or receiving culture	Discourse theory Material and object theory Reception studies Resistant critiques Semiotics

illustrations, reviews, and prompt books) to constitute evidence leading to understanding the production's genesis into a particular set of choices and results. Once there is data to work with, research on the case study can be further developed through methodological choices. For example, a post-structuralist approach may regard as 'dead' both the playwright (irrelevant to the autonomous artistic acts of theatre makers) and the director (irrelevant to spectators' critical acts of performance interpretation), whereas a psychoanalytic approach may dig deep into the playwright's and/or director's biography. The fourth approach, extrinsic, focuses on reception and is predicated on the circulating stew of cultural and political preoccupations and knowledge of performance repertoires that inflect how a given performance (or production) is capable of being understood and prompting reactions. Exemplary versions of this approach can be found in Ric Knowles's (2004: 17) case studies in *Reading the Material Theatre*, which model 'precisely *how* audiences produce meaning in negotiation with the particular, local theatrical event', following methodological antecedents by Marvin Carlson (1989) in semiotics and Susan Bennett (1997) in reader-response theory.

For Prague School linguist Jiří Veltruský, drama stands on its own as a work of art yet also transforms into another kind of art work, which he called 'the scenic situation' (Gajdoš, 2007: 87, 89). TaPS offers tailor-made approaches for identifying information about 'scenic situations', as well as approaches adopted from other disciplines. Pavis (2003: 9), who, like Ubersfeld and Erika Fischer-Lichte, is influenced by semiotics, allows for psychological, psychoanalytic, sociological, anthropological, and intercultural approaches to analysis of *mises-en-scène*. He also delineates phenomenological criteria to enable a spectator to specify an overall sense of a performance developed with 'neither the apparent objectivity of empirical observation, nor the absolute universality of abstract theory', lying between 'detailed yet fragmentary description and general, unverifiable theory, between formless signifiers and polysemic signifieds'. P. N. Campbell (1982: 11–21) refers to the facets of a play's existence (as script, staged work, and received production) as interdependent rhetorics that can strengthen, amend, alter, or oppose (the understanding of) a text. Rhetorics are specific to each play, and unique to each production, yet for them to be understood requires playgoers to have cultural knowledge that lies outside performance. Thus, Campbell considers it valuable to think across multiple categories to discern the full scope of a performance. The last column in Table 1.1 indicates some (but by no means all) of the concerns that may be engaged on behalf of indicative questions about matters

extrinsic to the play text, and the methodologies that accord to them. Not all kinds of analysis may be possible or sensible for every circumstance, and frequently the methodologies will be additively mixed to sustain different facets of an enquiry, account for different kinds of information, and craft a more replete account.

Table 1.1's schema is useful for approaching many kinds of performance, including non-dramatic (non-textually sourced) types. When one is considering performance art, for example, the focus may be on a case study (without either the antecedent or post facto 'trace' of a script), but formalist and phenomenological concerns of intrinsic and performative analysis still pertain. In this vein, when Patrick Anderson (2010: 91–93) marks 'the break from theatrical conventions signaled and emblemized' in Ana Mendieta's and Marina Abramović's performance art works (which took place in art galleries and the open air), he accounts for aesthetic elements and shows how these bear on extrinsic reception. He argues that the works have a performance genealogy distinct from theatre, and yet, he stipulates, 'I do not mean to consign these artists' work strictly to the domain of body art'; instead, he sees their work 'precisely as performance, in the broadest possible sense of that word'. He attends to the 'social, cultural, and political impact' of works, specifically the way that durationality in performance and spectacularity relates to affect's ability to shift cultural-political contexts. For analytical purposes, such 'impacts' of performance have common grounds with performative, historical, and extrinsic analysis of drama.

Likewise, in her explication of movement in contemporary performance, Rachel Fensham (2021: 3–4) signals a relationship between the performative and extrinsic analyses of Table 1.1. 'What' questions translate to 'how' questions predicated on spectators' connecting viewing to meaningful things in their own experience. This can be the essence of an analysis focused on extrinsic concerns. For example, she argues that performance strips down form, allowing for 'macro- and micro-levels of attention at one and the same time, with extension – spatial, rhythmic, haptic – into the world around the self'. This emphasizes the kinds of things a spectator attends to, deploying formalist criteria to experience a work phenomenologically. Attending to how we pay attention to the ways movement functions across a range of registers leads to a set of historically framed but culturally conscious questions: 'in what ways do the learned and specialized techniques of performing bodies contribute to understandings of social and political understandings of movement?'

With a performative (not textual) starting point, close attention to both traditions and choices in performance connects case studies to culture

and history with specificity (and through the explanatory work afforded by theory). This framework gives scope for many kinds of resistant critique (queer, feminist, Indigenous, Black, Global South, etc.) that track what Fensham (2021: 142) describes as ‘perceptions of movement [that] are both internal and observational, and eminently social and political’ for different bodies. Such modes of critique take into account viewers’ awareness of ‘lived possibilities in patterns of production, consumption and imagination’, while also relating to globalization, scaling up the nature of the enquiry (Fensham, 2021: 153). Through case studies of performance, Fensham demonstrates how distinct traditions and locations of interpretation connect the mechanics of movement to subjectivity. Subjectivity, in turn, is integral for applying methodologies related to postcolonial and feminist frameworks, which link formalism to phenomenology and affect studies. Relating production case studies to reception in such ways is a frequent approach, but it is not ubiquitous.

Incompleteness and Unrecoverability

Some TaPS research has entirely different points of departure. For example, Christin Essin’s (2021) *Working Backstage: A Cultural History and Ethnography of Technical Theater Labor* has little to no use for the analytical criteria of Table 1.1, for it is about the work of performance-making rather than performance per se. Essin shows how, from the perspective of scholarship, knowledge is gathered ‘out there’ (whether from live people or their artefacts) and synthesized as new insights for the academic sphere. Essin’s niche is the occupational landscape of Broadway’s technicians. Her case study contributes to the sociology of work, yet her methods are common in TaPS (interviews conducted over several years, augmented by archival research). Initially, Essin (2021: 22) relied on her own contacts from when she was a technician in regional theatre, but the scope of interviewees expanded as participants suggested and helped recruit additional participants (snowball sampling). From copious interviews, she derived a taxonomy of positions and their hierarchies, built up through profiles of individuals. There is no eventhood of rehearsing, opening, and running a production in these human profiles, but rather tasks, careers, and personal networks. Theatre-making is at the centre, yet performance is rather incidental to the professional ethnography, which widely skirts the idea of production histories (Essin, 2021: 18). Individual informants’ testimony facilitates network analysis of a cultural unit (Broadway theatre in general and the history and identity of the New York branch of the stageworkers’

union more specifically) in the structuralist tradition, and that is the basis of the methodology. Still, the work of specialists such as dressers and child guardians is revealed as affective labour: here, Essin (2021: 147–51, 172) pivots to affect studies to interpret these jobs, documenting how work in shows such as *Matilda the Musical* (2010) generates this type of labour.

Whereas Essin's approach is to find something knowable, research it, and then explicate it – creating a sense of completeness out of her data – since the 1990s much TaPS research has explored ephemerality, incompleteness, and the limits of the knowable. Odai Johnson excels at this, demonstrating the possibilities for thinking relationally even with the slightest of evidence. For example, in *Ruins: Classical Theatre and Broken Memory*, Johnson (2018: 129) draws on Franco Moretti's (2005) concept of mapping to posit the city of Rome and its ancient performances not as a calendar or typology of events but 'as a process through which imperial ideology and the topographies of power are enacted, disenacted, and rendered visible' a posteriori. This de-emphasizes the need for clarity of any single source or event in favour of many types of sources connected to social scripts, resulting in 'the palimpsest moments when the [social] script and the subscript create a sort of weirdly coherent bilingual exchange'. Though there are delimiters of place and period, this may be as far from a case study as one can get.

Whereas most researchers seek specific kinds of evidence rather than notice evidence that is lacking, Johnson (2021: 44–5) regards locating 'holes' as a valid discovery of another sort:

Evidence is the beam work that keeps the discipline [of history] upright. But that reliance also trains the eye to look for what is left, not for what has been left out, eliding the absence to alight on events. But the missing can sometimes be the most interesting part of the record.... A well-structured absence retains traces of the disappeared, like the curated frame of the stolen painting, or the odd staple holes of missing pages.

The staple holes in a document (like the postholes of an early Virginian theatre in another of Johnson's studies, his 2006 *Absence and Memory in Colonial American Theatre*) mark a former presence and thus a history for the pages or building foundations that are destroyed, rotted, lost, misplaced, or misapprehended. Holes are evidence of something, and even if that something cannot be seen or known it can be known about through its trace (Johnson, 2006). For Johnson (2018: 4–5), all data is relevant – especially theatre's 'scars, shards, and stumpage, its ruins, and the ruins beneath the ruins' – but not, however, as an empiricist cataloguing project (which would have no interpretive methodology). He embraces

non-repleteness, non-replicability, and non-recoverability with an exceptional level of comfort about absence (not merely ambiguity). Still, he will suddenly stop short of an inductive insight. For example, though intrigued by the dualistic opposition of presence and absence, Johnson does not resolve across known and unknown data points to mark a stratigraphic trend. This Derridean approach is not *anti-method* but rather reflects a profound *mixing* of methodologies, utilizing philology to connect language to its deep meaning; object-oriented materialism to consider the pre-history, history, and post-history of something's creation and usage, as well as its disappearance or negative trace; discourse theory's relations between language, social structure, and individual agency to broach institutionalized ways of thinking and being; and network analysis to cleave to descriptions (who or what did something) rather than concepts (society, capitalism, empire, norms, individualism, scapes, etc.). Gaps left unfilled can be resplendent emptiness (Davis, 2004).

In historical research, the sensory unknowability of performances and their reception is a commonplace. For the contemporary period, there are methods aimed at excavating reception directly from audiences. Historians' fascination with the sensory experience of theatre-going is broached by different means. Scott A. Trudell (2020: 370–1), for example, emphasizes aural reception: 'Sound studies offers a helpful model in which written texts act as acoustic records – transcriptions, imitations, or "earwitnesses", a term for representing or recalling sound.' This has been leveraged through approaches faithful to the overlapping of 'writing, speech, dance, musical composition, acoustic performance, and visual art' common to many periods and styles. Judith Pascoe's *The Sarah Siddons Audio Files* takes up this challenge, positing a search for the voice of the actress Sarah Siddons (active 1774–1812). The book documents a succession of approaches to identify, combine, analyse, and synthesize relevant information, dwelling on 'the notes taken by George Joseph Bell', a Scottish jurist expert in mercantile law, 'while he was sitting in Siddons's audience' (Pascoe, 2011: 96; see also Bell, ca. 1806). Because of Pascoe's eclectic approach (not despite it), her discovery maps a kind of resplendent emptiness: she concedes that no matter what she does, and no matter how hard she tries to listen, she – in contrast to Bell – cannot hear Siddons's voice.

Like an entire generation enthralled by Siddons, Bell was fascinated by her declamation. Seventy years before the invention of the phonograph, he sought to 'record' the actress's vocal performance by annotating a script, and Pascoe does what she can with these marks of emphasis and cadence, and descriptions of tonality, volume, and quality. Pascoe found Bell's circa

1806 notations, which were transcribed and published by H. C. Fleeming Jenkin in 1878, invaluable. But for what? Comparing the published transcript to Bell's manuscript, Pascoe (2011: 100) examined Bell's observations on Lady Macbeth 'at snail speed'. Observing how punctuation was (mis)transcribed by Jenkin from Bell, she also noticed a feature of Bell's diction: when accounting for 'reactions to Siddons's acting ... he did so in the second person, writing that her anxiety in the banquet scene "makes you creep with apprehension", and that her emotion "keeps you breathless"'. Through equally assiduous attention to the discourse of other ear witnesses, Pascoe tried to summon several historically specific facets of late eighteenth-century playgoers' habitus: scrupulous and undivided attention to key scenes and extensive experience of attending many performers' interpretations as well as Shakespearean recitations within social circles. To simulate the historical habitus within her research process, she dedicated time in the University of Iowa Libraries' media department to listen to a host of actresses' recordings of Lady Macbeth on a panoply of obsolete playback machines. She tried to align this with her own immersive experience in an introductory voice class, where she learned about and attempted mastery of breath control. The intent was to generate knowledge that integrated trace evidence of a phantom performance genealogy by listening to great performers from the era of sound recording, together with attaining embodied understanding of technique.

This incorporation of practice-as-research failed to recover early nineteenth-century theatre-goers' experience of Siddons's aesthetic. A spiralling hermeneutic of data generation and intentional acts of analysis could not approximate an alien consciousness. Bell had Siddons's *voice* in his head, which is exactly what Pascoe could not summon, and he knew what it *felt like* to hear it in contrast to other performers' instruments. These were two wraiths in Pascoe's perceptual quest. She concludes that not even time travel could breach this gap:

Even if I could be whisked back to 1809 and take a seat in the Covent Garden theater, even if George Joseph Bell was jabbing me with his elbow ... I would not be an equal sharer in the pleasures of Siddons's performances because I would not ... have a vast dramatic repertoire filed away in my brain, with subfiling for variant performances of particular roles. I would sit like a listening-impaired lump, clutching a sad little clothespin bag of Shakespearean quotations, while Siddons made the rest of the audience resonate like harp strings. (Pascoe, 2011: 103)

Despite the attempts at synthesis and recuperation, not even hearing Siddons's phantasmic voice would give a historically situated experience of

its timbre, cadences, and thrilling effects. This is a variant on researching absence: something known to have existed, its qualities described and its minutiae transferred from ear to pen, yet an unrecoverable aesthetic experience (and thus unrecoverable knowledge). The historian's role, in such circumstances, is to accede to the ephemerality and the elusiveness of sonic and affective performance genealogies. Utilizing these mixed methods and methodologies traces the contours of what is unreachable.

Johnson and Pascoe demonstrate how multiple methods can show the contours of information, but it is through methodologies that scholars account for what the gaps convey, which gaps can be plugged, and whether an answer is possible. To comprehend the nature of pluralities (as well as the disjunctions), and account for inexorable and ineluctable uncertainty, is the hallmark of deconstruction. Yet, given that there are limits to all endeavours in knowledge-seeking, how do scholars choose other approaches? What else has post-structuralist theory made possible?

Mixology and the Role of Theory

Graduate school puts a premium on learning 'theory' (an imperative best stated in the plural). Theories are scaffolded upon premises derived from extensive observation, category construction, and reduction. For example, observation of living species and fossilized remains, then recognition of variation and adaptation across many species, led to the theory of natural selection. Once established as an explanatory schema, natural selection could be tested in myriad circumstances and extrapolated to account for phenomena in macro and micro contexts. So, too, in cultural theory, but here there is tradecraft to consider. It is folly to take a theory and slam it on any phenomenon at will: natural selection cannot account for why one performance aesthetic takes hold while others fade away any more than it can explain the rise and ebb of civilizations. Theories are useful for some things, but not everything. As a case in point, Pascoe shows affect theory's limits: the detailed ekphrastic accounts of Siddons's voice from the past, combined with exegeses of later performers' recordings, cannot bring to the surface an empirical understanding of corporeal, expressive, or receptive practices in the twenty-first-century researcher (even if she is equipped with a time machine).

TaPS eclectically endorses the value of qualitative experiential and observation-based methods and methodologies (such as practice-as-research and ethnography) as well as techniques in which theoretical deduction is the basis of understanding (such as material and object

analysis, deconstruction, and speech-act theory). All these approaches are theory led, even when empirical. Some approaches combine better than others – socio-semiotics and structuralism, resistant critiques and phenomenology, or critical ethnography and discourse theory – so methodological eclecticism is not random or nominal. The designators of many methodologies in Table 1.2 have the tag word *theory* attached to them – affect theory, actor-network theory, material and object theory – which indicates a body of thought, with suppositions and protocols, that in adoption employs particular criteria to identify and gather evidence (through methods) and test its resilience to explain (through methodologies).

Theories are widely accepted concepts that explain many observed effects about fundamental things – special relativity, heliocentrism, climate change, pervasive gender bias, the social construction of race, all of which are theories whether or not the word *theory* is tagged on – whereas *hypotheses* are tentative suggestions subject to testing. A theory alone does not have propositional force, but an enquiry can proceed when a hypothesis relates a theory to the investigation at hand. For example, critical media history (a theory without the term *theory*) pluralistically accounts for performances’ function as a memory machine for human experience, yet an enquiry must posit something about a specific instance or pattern in order to draw out the relational meanings. Scaffolding an argument that validates or challenges how something is remediated out of prior performative instantiations can demonstrate not just that repertoires are recombinative (the theory) but also how they manifest (the analysis resulting from applying critical media history’s methodologies to evidence) (Davis & Marx, 2021).

In the humanities, research design may lean on theory predictively, though even with follow-through that engages appropriate methods and methodologies we are unlikely to ‘prove’ a hypothesis so much as proliferate interpretations. In archive-based work, for example, Maggie B. Gale and Ann Featherstone identify ‘evidence-gathering with a view to the destabilization, reorganization or reordering of a historical position or perspective’ as an approach to generating ‘a *version* of history’ (Gale & Featherstone, 2011: 37–8). They stress the value of entering an archive with a parcel of good questions, as well as being open to the serendipity of connecting points of information through a creative process. This inherently creative process is not conducive to proving hypotheses; historical research is fraught ‘with the dynamic complexities of memory acquisition and replay’ in new contexts (including the influence of new or additional theories) (Gale & Featherstone, 2011: 24). This is not simply a contrast between the empiricism of science and the qualitative bias of the humanities, or an

Table 1.2 *Analytical traditions and their associated methods and methodologies*

Analytical traditions, with key advocates	Tenets	Methods	Methodologies
Actor-Network Theory Bruno Latour John Law Michel Callon Annemarie Mol	Connections and exchanges: people, ideas, things across boundaries, inter-dynamics, and associations Allows for manageable scales of enquiry (especially micro studies)	Focus on human or object 'actors' and the relations between them Micro can mean looking at different scales, local to global – not all small-scale interactions can be observed, so seek evidence of their effects Historical researchers look for discursive, iconic, or other expressive accounts Empirical researchers look for emergent, corporeal, or expressive practices Affect escapes or exceeds analytic capture by reason, knowledge, language, and perception, so marking its existence (in others) can be challenging	Focus on descriptions (who/what does what), not concepts (society, capitalism, empire, norms, individualism, fields, etc.) Use 'immutable mobiles' to measure and represent connections (including charts, graphs, and texts) Exegesis or ekphrasis Affective labour, including performing, may be described relationally or functionally Corporeal repertoires emerge expressively, and can be perceived sensorially as performance Can trace how semiotics gets cultural take-up as social scripts in circulation
Affect Theory Silvan Tomkins Eve Sedgwick Lauren Berlant Brian Massumi Sara Ahmed Daniel O'Quinn	Refutes linguistic sources and explanations Eschews causal explanations in favour of fluid mental or somatic activity (feelings/ moods/corporeal states/atmospheres) that may not be valorized by other kinds of explanation In performance reception, this can account for a response spectrum that is not based in linguistic narrative, or semiotic comprehension In performance criticism, it privileges experience that is neither under conscious control nor within registered awareness; this may be correlated to politics, wellness, or pathology		

Content Analysis Harold Lasswell Bernard Berelson	Evaluate text/language for specific proclivities to infer about message, writer(s), audience, and culture Objective, systematic, quantitative description of communication Particularly useful to analyse media content	For conceptual analysis, code content of published texts, interviews, open-ended surveys, fieldwork notes, conversations, web content, iconic texts, film, etc. Coding 'rules' are determined by researcher Focus at the level of word, sense, phrasing, themes; code for existence or frequency; quantitative results can be generated through software or by hand	Observation and narrative based on relational analysis of coded content Track trends; determine psychological or affective content; make generalizations Cognitive mappings; proximity analysis
Critical Media History <i>Annalist historiography</i> Stephen Greenblatt Arjun Appadurai Paul Ricoeur Elizabeth Maddock Dillon Jonas Barish Friedemann Kreuder Tracy C. Davis and Peter W. Marx	Draws widely from Marxism, rhetoric, cultural analysis, formalism, reception studies, and resistant critiques Performance history as collage, inclusive of transregional contexts, continual change and recombination, and complex interdependencies Theatre and the wider field of performance are mutually constitutive and recombinative as repertoires Theatre, festivals, gatherings, and rites are co-constitutive of the performative field along with the technologies and ideologies they utilize for communication	Acts of spectating specific to cultures and specific formats for the apparatuses and materials of presentation manifest through practices that frame and shape media Materialist evidence of the sensorium allies through representation with the specificity of location; the social form of performance; and constructs such as nation-state and imperium	Account for how performance functions as a memory machine for human experience and communication to deploy the past and shape understanding Scenography, style, and technique are technologies of sensation derived through dramaturgy and subject to distribution by demographic contact and trade routes Pluralistic accounts Recursivity and remediatization Scales from single events to macrohistory

Table 1.2 (*cont.*)

Analytical traditions, with key advocates	Tenets	Methods	Methodologies
Critical Performance Ethnography Clifford Geertz Norman K. Denzin Dwight Conquergood Della Pollock D. Soyini Madison	Combines theorizing with empirically observed data Ethics in fieldwork are paramount; recognize that methodological choices are political Researcher's standpoint and intersectional identities are implicated	Participant observer, auto- ethnography, oral history, and field observation methods Can involve observation of performance; making of performance; everyday life	Incorporates a multitude of methodological traditions to account for fieldwork observations Qualitative interpretation; active reflection on theories and methods; advocacy; accountability Derives grounded theory Dramaturgical analysis of performance and social rites
Deconstruction Jacques Derrida Paul de Man Jonathan Culler J. Hillis Miller	Exposes unquestioned assumptions within philosophical and literary language, unquestioned metaphysical assumptions, and internal contradictions Metaphysical appeal to presence through <i>différance</i>	'Close reading' focuses on irreconcilable contradictions; boundaries between binaries Look for counter-examples to assumptions and paradigms	Recognize the given paradigm: build 'the structure' then introduce problems (what does not fit, and what contradicts it) Account for plurality Assess assumptions and evident assumed binaries, paradigms Dismantle logics of interpretation
Discourse Analysis Jacques Derrida Michel Foucault Fredric Jameson Julia Kristeva Louis Althusser Michel de Certeau Shannon Jackson	Relations between language, social structure, and individual agency are institutionalized ways of thinking Determines what can be taken to be true/real Language as social practice; reproducing (or subverting) political inequity Subsumes post-structuralist, normative- deliberative, and critical-realist discourse theories Theory arises out of specific contexts	Largely linguistic evidence; includes texts, surveys, quantitative data 'Close reading' attentive to how discourses create and reflect conflict (inclusive of language and other kinds of knowledge) Intertextuality	Relate genealogies of practice to political economy; class, or materialist analysis; connect structures, power, and subjectivity Identify how individual agents negotiate structures; account for context Anti-essentialize: problematize concepts taken as natural Question ontological centre; bring into relation with social control

Formalism <i>Russian formalism</i> <i>New Criticism</i> <i>dramaturgical analysis</i> Caroline Levine	Characteristics of formal analysis are meaningful of themselves: the text or production stands on its own Form offers clues to other types of corroboration	Identify literary figures, grammar, syntax; genres, etc.; performative characteristics (style) Engage surface/depth strategies to explicate multiple levels of meaning (the obvious as well as the hidden)	Demonstrate internal patterning (self-contained self-referential objects reveal interior logics) <i>What</i> literature or performance says arises from <i>how</i> it says it
Materialism <i>Marxism and Neo-Marxism</i> (Raymond Williams, Louis Althusser, Henri Lefebvre, Wendy Brown) <i>public sphere theory</i> (Jürgen Habermas, Michael Warner, David Harvey) Jean Baudrillard Jacques Rancière Pierre Bourdieu Bruce McConachie Tracy C. Davis Joshua Chambers-Letson	Ongoing re-evaluation of classical economics (the tradition of Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill, and Jean-Baptiste Say) in a spectrum of collectivist and liberal varieties Can be structuralist, post-structuralist, or postmodern in locus Meaning can be totalizing or elusive, saturating experience or eluding its impacts and traces Dialectical materialism Performance can reinforce statist prerogatives or facilitate emancipation and survival	Focus on questions about production, economics, labour, value, and consumption Relations and effects among the state, institutions, and individuals evident through space, investment, representation, and relative privilege and constraints Economic impacts scale from the economy as a whole (concerns such as employment, output, and trade) to micro systems (such as private and intimate life)	Analysis can reveal structural relations of hegemony or a 'hyper-reality' of delusion and simulacra Explanations may be epistemic Knowledge as theoretical practice; social theory may endorse or counter economic determinism Critiques of disparity and failures to achieve social and environmental justice

Table 1.2 (cont.)

Analytical traditions, with key advocates	Tenets	Methods	Methodologies
Material and Object Theory <i>thing theory</i> (Bill Brown, Maurice Merleau-Ponty) Bruno Latour Gilles Deleuze Pierre-Félix Guattari Karen Barad Timothy Morton Robin Bernstein Andrew Sofer Natasha Korda	Alfred Gell attributed 'distributed agency' to art and artefacts, suggesting a theory of 'inferred intentionality'; this counters Latour's tendency towards structuralist networking Connects how people transform the world of physical objects and how that world in turn transforms them Mutual constitution of subject and object, the animate and inanimate, person and thing, and with the ways objects mediate individual and group identities Counters long-standing emphasis on social and discursive construction with the 'textualization' of culture; instead focuses on objects (architecture, books, other human-made artefacts, as well as 'dematerialized' digital and performative media)	Focus on how people make, design, and interact with objects Recognize how everyday practices increasingly acknowledge the embeddedness of 'things' Agency is relational Performance may amplify or reveal the social circulation of meanings through material practices May focus on objects in use, in situ, or in collections (such as archives and museums) to investigate social relations	Aligned with phenomenological approaches to culture, accounts for how objects are mediated with unconscious power Objects situated in relation to belief systems, values, ideas, and assumptions Utilizes description, deduction, and speculation (sensory engagement, intellectual engagement, and emotional registers) to frame hypotheses Challenges assumptions that the object and subject are separable
Performance Genealogy Joseph Roach Diana Taylor Marvin Carlson	Performative events have performative antecedents Posits history and performance as subject to ghosting, recirculation, percolation, and surrogation Repertoires are ongoing embodied practices; archives are their counterparts in cultural memory	Recognize components (e.g. formalist compositional elements such as gestural, thematic, visual, sonic, and structural aspects of performance) Intermedia/intergene adaptation studies	Comparatively determine lineage and combinatory resemblance, (dis) continuity, returns, and sublimation Performance history (as lineage) Allow for direct (utelage or archival) and indirect (circulation, vortices) forms of cultural transference

Performance Reconstruction Robert Sarlós Scott Magdlessen Mark Franko Ann Hutchinson Guest Rebecca Schneider Kimberly Jannarone <i>Second Life</i> <i>virtual reality</i> <i>living museums</i>	Hypothetical, discursive, or actual ‘restaging’ of (or through) performance can access otherwise undiscernible social, cultural, and technical information about theatre of the past Reconstruction invariably alters facets, but that in itself is important Fidelity to the original format of performance in its reconstruction matters less than selected facets of performance to focus upon	Comprehensively examine documentation of historical event; or draw on field notes of observed experience Processes of proposing and making theatre (collaborative and experiential), execution of events, and the post hoc analysis of these processes renders data	Account for the site and/or event, holistically or in part (e.g. entire choreography or performance vs indicative acting style) Justify and compare consequences of choices, for example, locale, materials, spatial arrangements, mise en scène, casting in relation to the performance Measure and evaluate ‘difference’ and speculate on unquantifiable ‘incommensurate’ contrasts of past and present Applications may include practice-as- research staging (live or simulated staging) Results include physical, diagrammatic, or virtual visualizations; sonic facsimiles; or discursive renderings of sites, events, or choreographies
Practice-as-Research/ Research-as-Practice Augusto Boal Baz Kershaw Helen Nicholson Susan Leigh Foster Lynette Hunter Phillip Zarrilli Ben Spatz	An interdisciplinary research process that leads to and/or reflects upon an arts-related output; draws on arts practice as part of the process; or is otherwise integrated between scholarly methodologies and arts praxis	Knowledge is derived by ‘doing’ (know what/know how) Generates integral documentation (trace materials that the practice process creates, e.g. script drafts, notes, call sheets, camera reports, continuity notes, costume designs, laboratory reports, treatments, set designs, choreographic notation, sound designs) and external documentation (objects)	May involve a hermeneutic ‘spiral’ of data generation and analysis Privileges the art presentation rather than traditional (written) academic products, though reportage can be in the mode of participant ethnography Reflection on the process is integral to the process
	Influenced by ‘action research’ (business and education studies), participatory action research, applied theatre, and grounded research	documenting performance encounters, Stakeholders in art-making are also e.g. video, photographs, recordings). Stakeholders of knowledge about the practice Neither stands in for either the practice or the research per se Dramaturgy	

Table 1.2 (*cont.*)

Analytical traditions, with key advocates		Tenets	Methods	Methodologies
Reception Theory <i>phenomenology</i> Martin Heidegger Roman Ingarden Wolfgang Iser Maurice Merleau-Ponty Stanley Fish Bert O. States Alice Rayner Susan Bennett		Philosophy of experience; direct encounter of human consciousness with the world (or stage world)	Field observation; affective experience; cognition Identify meaning units; schematized perspectives; represented objectivities	Distinguish reader's/viewer's 'concretization' of the work from the work itself
		Description of appearances (not necessarily reality); reality consists of objects and events as they are perceived or understood in human consciousness and not of anything independent of human consciousness	Study work 'horizontally' through incomplete and perspectival points of views or experiences Reading/experiencing is a duplication of consciousness (real 'me' and alien 'me')	Correlate/distinguish 'aesthetic object' to/from the 'artistic object' Texts' orientations of the possible in relation to experience
		Art as mediator between author's consciousness and reader	May be empirical and quantifiable (e.g. through fMRI (functional MRI) testing) or entirely qualitative	Correlate internal (or even physiological) facets of spectatorship to forms of observable, unobservable, subjective, or objective facts of experience
		Leisure enables us to perceive aspects hidden from usual viewpoints by habit	Identify interpretive community that shares an institutional context or 'horizon of expectation'	'Intentional acts' correlated to 'intentional objects'

Resistant Critiques <i>Black feminist theory</i> (Kimberlé Crenshaw, bell hooks, Saidiya Hartman, Hortense Spillers, Barbara Smith) <i>decolonization of knowledge</i> (Frantz Fanon, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Achille Mbembe, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Fred Moten) <i>disability studies</i> (Petra Kuppers, Carrie Sandahl, Bree Hadley) <i>feminist performance theory</i> (Jill Dolan, Sue-Ellen Case, Elin Diamond) <i>Indigenous theory</i> (Jodi Ann Byrd, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Dylan Robinson, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Stephanie Nohelani Teves)	Builds from feminist and gender theory to anti-essentialize, challenge heteronormativity, and explore co-extant subject/object relations in the social world Recognizes the importance of biology, social relations, psychology, materiality, history, and language in conjunction with lived experience Recognizes racialization of bodies, spaces, and institutions; decolonization Performativity connects social, psychological, and representational realms Intersectionality; standpoint theory; environmentalism; postcolonial theory	Identify discursive, legal, and institutional operations of power and oppression (e.g. colonialism, racism, sexism) and dominance (e.g. white privilege, capitalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity), often in combination Focus on ways that power affects, defines, and delimits individuals and groups Identify the implications of structural determinism on thought and action, especially for minoritarian, marginalized, subaltern, or dispossessed communities Identify embodied and cultural decentrings of hegemonic privilege that counter systemic bias	Indebted to deconstructive methodologies, especially with respect to social categories, but also adoptive of other postmodern theories' methodologies Rhetorical techniques of analysis; broad and combinative approaches Storytelling (naming one's own reality) Revisionist interpretations Critique structural inequality Located holistic approaches Transnational/transregional/ supranational solidarities Redress for intergenerational trauma; healing practices 'Critical fabulation' links evidence to narrative, speculation, and intersectional knowledge to generate impossible-to-document histories that represent more replete versions of the past
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Table 1.2 (cont.)

Analytical traditions, with key advocates	Tenets	Methods	Methodologies
<i>queer theory</i> (Gayle Rubin, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Michael Warner, Teresa de Lauretis, Jack Halberstam, Lauren Berlant, Adrienne Rich, Sue-Ellen Case, José Esteban Muñoz, Valerie Traub, David Halperin)	Communicative processes (intentional and unintentional) based on signs and symbols (linguistic and non-linguistic) Equal concern with processes and signification as communication (generation and exchange)	Identify iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs; these may cohere as systems or stand apart In performance, ascertain para/linguistic, proxemic, kinesic, vestimentary, cosmetic, pictorial, and sonic systems Discern units constituting semantics (relations between signs and the things to which they refer; their denotata, or meaning); syntactics (relations among signs in formal structures); and pragmatics (relations between signs and the effects they have on the people who use them)	Can be applied to texts (drama, scripts), mises en scène (polyphonic synthesis of what is onstage), and performance texts (theoretical model of the observable performance on stage) Socio-semiotics directs attention to specific signifying practices in a culture Accounts for how theatre is experienced, giving a lexicon to separate or conjoined elements contributed by artists and experienced by audiences
Semiotics			
Charles S. Peirce			
Ferdinand de Saussure			
Roland Barthes			
Patrice Pavis			
Erika Fischer-Lichte			
Keir Elam			
Marco De Marinis			
Jiří Veltruský			
Marvin Carlson			
Ric Knowles			

Speech-Act Theory J. L. Austin John Searle Daniel Vanderveken Judith Butler Saba Mahmood Martin Puchner	Illocutions describe or commit to a future course of action (this can vary in strength, mode of achievement, propositional content conditions, preparatory conditions, and sincerity) This modifies the 'enactment' of calling something into being (performatives) and attempts at persuasion (perlocutions) with degrees of felicity	Linguistic analysis of discourse Performativity (e.g. in film, social enactments, everyday life)	Reveal normative structures of communication practice (not limited to spoken communication) and discrepancies between utterance and outcome Rather than 'refining' or reconceiving exegetic factors it brings particular aspects into focus
Structuralism Vladimir Propp Claude Lévi-Strauss Émile Durkheim Raymond Williams Richard Schickel Victor Turner Michel de Certeau	Human activity and communication form systems of meaning reducible to law-like behaviour Meaning is produced through practices, phenomena, or activities which serve as signification systems (reproducing deep structures within culture) Emphasizes what structures are as well as how they are produced, reproduced, and perpetuated	Identify a cultural category (e.g. a wedding ritual or locus of knowledge) and break it down into constitutive parts: symbolic objects and activities Observation, participant observation, immersion in community, textual analysis Binary oppositions and basic elements (e.g. plot points, keywords) reveal how human activity is part of a system of signs reducible to law-like behaviour	Interpret meanings identified in associated elements Essentialize the human experience through comparativism of deep structures of human behaviour Biological or deep cognitive structures across humanity determine behaviours cross-culturally Despite local (surface) variants, phenomena are subservient to abstract laws (structures) Everything is within ideology
Textual Philology Karl Lachmann Richard Bentley B. G. Niebuhr Milman Parry W. W. Greg Edward Said Erich Auerbach Jeffrey Masten Sean Gurd Shane Butler	Vernacularity is recuperable through comparative linguistic study Theory of textualized meaning and transmission Lexicography, sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, language geography Works of poetic imagination are products of history	Etymology, textual comparison Track linguistic specificity, diversity, and evolution over time Connect textual analysis with literary criticism and historicism Seek layered structures of texts based on particularized language use and development	Word- and text-based comparison deal with historical development, relationships of language (or languages), and usage Correlate how text or performance generate or reflect meaning (nascent, literal, figurative, affective, etc.) Multi- or interculturalism may align with philological evidence

effect of causal multiplicity in human affairs, but a consequence of virtually everything we assert remaining discursively propositional. Usually, claims to new theorizing are actually hypotheses. Grounded theory has a similar status while being subject to processes of validation internal to a research process based in a specific community as well as testing of the systematic relatedness of concepts, conceptual linkages, variation, broadened conditions, and change factors as benchmarks in the canonical published literature (Creswell, 1998: 210).

The idea of theory guiding choices about research design is widely accepted. Table 1.2 schematically lays out a selection of qualitative approaches prevalent in TaPS, including some conducive to generating grounded theory (critical performance ethnography, practice-as-research, and resistant critiques). Each example is glossed with a few key advocates and tenets that typify the premises of the theory. This is matched with methods of how phenomena/subjects/objects are observed, noted, or processed in order to gather information about them, and then methodologies that utilize what is gathered, accounting for it in research outcomes such as writing, performance, and exhibitions. The possible combinations are endless, and a few examples must suffice to demonstrate how this works.

Two recent full-length studies of play-going – one historical, the other contemporary – illustrate how theories are connected to research approaches and the building blocks of methodologies. In *Common Understandings, Poetic Confusion: Playhouses and Playgoers in Elizabethan England*, William N. West (2021) combines approaches to posit the ‘experience’ of Elizabethan playgoers and the way this reflected life in early modern London. West makes the most of limited sources through meticulous use of mixed methods, multiple theories, and sundry methodologies. He assembles a lexicon about plays and play-going – including the terms *understanders*, *confusion*, *supposes*, and *non plus*, which all arose during the period – and, utilizing philological analysis, considers the terms’ vernacularity in response to beholding and behaving at professional theatres. The instigation of London theatre as a regular and accessible business from 1576 gives a particular and concise timeline through which to track the emergent meanings within a tight geographic area. This is not sociolinguistics so much as an encounter-based approach that aligns the phenomenology of play-going with hermeneutics. Elizabethans actively sought ways to account for what they experienced in the theatre, and West discerns which versions ‘fit’ in recognition of what Stephen Greenblatt (1988: 1–20) calls ‘the circulation of social energy’ emergent in this specific context. To help account for this as a process of emergent meaning, West (2021:

10) draws on the philosopher Hans Blumenberg's (2010) concept of absolute metaphors – figures that 'give shape to human engagements with the world and with others' as new meanings emerged from older ones – in conjunction with George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's concept of 'metaphors we live by', which profoundly yet often covertly shape understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Thus, Elizabethan theatre created its own framing; through this self-figuration playgoers understood metaphors, and producers figured out how to capitalize on the metaphors. These 'matrices of affect' – an idea that draws on Raymond Williams's 'structures of feeling' – propositionally consolidated to pattern a 'repertoire of behaviors and affects', which, in West's (2021: 14) account, are a history of how playing and play-going developed across the period.

With the addition of each methodology and every theoretical construct, West creates a richer and more nuanced account. He establishes differences, not merely likenesses and correlations, with the goal of finding patterns, not hierarchizing or interpreting them. Instead of seeking formalism within texts, West utilizes texts' sense of formalism emergent in experience. This aligns with Miguel Escobar Varela's (2021: 34) observation that TaPS is invested in understanding what and how theatre means through 'verifiable patterns in the history and current practice of theater performance'. West's (2021: 58, 63) historicist focus identifies, in the act of playing, 'a verbal redistribution of the sensible' (alluding to Jacques Rancière), 'calling attention to how it produces meaning without seeming to', in conjunction with 'material, spatial, cultural, linguistic' circumstances of imagination circulating within and as a result of theatres. Thus, through semiotic and media-specific induction, West identifies how playhouses reinforced structures of feeling, both as a problem for culture (i.e. anti-theatricality) and as an instrument of it. West never conflates a theoretical principle – such as a *dispositif*, absolute metaphor, or structure of feeling – with historical evidence as proof. Rather, he uses these principles to establish relationships between data in an interpretive narrative that recognizes patterns, pluralities, and contradictions in an emergent genealogy of practice derived through the methodologies of philology and content analysis, then deconstruction and discourse analysis.

In scientific investigations, two steps in logical thought – hypothesizing (generating provisional suppositions drawn from known facts) and predicting (forecasting how something will work or behave, based on the hypothesis) – must be linked by a method: something *done* in order to test the hypothesis under specific circumstances. If the expected result is not forthcoming, the prediction is definitely wrong (the hypothesis is

less often under suspicion, and the theory even more rarely). Humanistic research works in much the same way; however, there is not an expectation of replicability to establish veracity, for humanities research proceeds on a relational basis and recognizes the subjectivity of a researcher as integral to insights as well as the uniqueness of a cultural situation or moment. No two researchers will derive identical data sets, apply the same method identically, or get precisely the same understanding. Neither the steps taken nor the conclusions drawn are reproducible by another (Escobar Varela, 2021: 23–5), though developing multiple case studies is often tried in order to stand in for replicability.

In contrast with the historical perspective taken by West, the study *Privileged Spectatorship: Theatrical Interventions in White Supremacy* by Dani Snyder-Young (2020) takes a contemporary approach. In this study of performance reception in the United States, Snyder-Young (2020: xxxi) investigates the potential for theatres' programming about race to have effects on predominantly white audiences, and her hypothesis – drawn from Caroline Heim (2016), by way of Erving Goffman – is that 'embodied actions of audience members constitute a performance' recognizable as a repertoire. But what is that behavioural repertoire? Snyder-Young utilizes qualitative participant-observation methods (attendance at performances, post-show talkbacks, and panels) to observe and record audience members' behaviours, their visible markers of racial identification (acknowledging that this does not necessarily equate to their racial identity), and verbal statements (subsequently transcribed). As Chris Rees and Mark Gatenby note, such ethnographic approaches are 'able to link the subjective understandings of individuals with the structural positions within which those individuals are located' (Rees & Gatenby, 2014: 135). (That is also a premise of discourse theory, which is heavily utilized at a later stage of Snyder-Young's research.) Case studies from a variety of cities and theatres over a five-year period consistently confirm Snyder-Young's (2020: xxxv–xxxvi) prediction that white spectators' behaviours and utterances are performatively distinct from those of people of colour, starkly bifurcating the data. This difference correlates to an important observation, evident in the coded content analysis: 'exclusionary responses [from] white audience members ... work against artistic and institutional efforts toward inclusion and equity', for at post-show talk-backs audience engagements efforts 'can amplify or interrupt a performance's potential to get audience members to take responsibility for helping to solve the [racialized] problem in the real world'. This has significant consequences. Despite viewing performances that demonstrate the need for decolonization and desegregation, white

audiences will avoid looking at their own life choices for how they ‘perpetuate and exacerbate white supremacy’. Does this mean that all white spectators will conform to the noted repertoires and that subversion of productions’ progressive arguments is inevitable when white audiences predominate? No. Does this signal a *predictive probability* of conforming to the noted repertoires? Yes, at least within the cultural parameters set out in the study, noting the ongoing challenge for artists and publics to disrupt (not just critique) white privilege (Snyder-Young, 2020: 131). Does it mean that despite the racial reckoning in the United States propelled by George Floyd’s murder in 2020, white spectators’ behaviour remained unchanged? Unknown: this postdates the data collection.

Theory is with us when we deploy methods and methodologies. For example, theory is the constant (if not always welcome) companion of anthropologists using field methods and ethnographic methodologies, and reflecting on methods (as a meta-critique) generates ethical stances (Prentki & Preston, 2009: 63–124). Even in practice-as-research, hypotheses are ‘*abductive* jumps or kick-starters of a process’ (Hansen, 2018: 37), and theory is prominent in practitioners’ ability to articulate positionalities (Cahill et al., 2019). These examples represent a few of the many ways to identify relevant information, traditions through which to analyse and relate information, ways in which to explain how knowledge is generated, and the locus of meta-critique.

Epistemologies of Knowing: Artisanal Knowledge

The historiographer François Furet (2001: 270–1) notes that any event, ‘if considered in isolation, is unintelligible’. Theory is one means by which scholars subsume knowledge and find intelligibility. Being a cultural insider is another.

In a study of early musical comedies, Peter Bailey (1998: 184) went in search of what made the character type of a naughty (but ultimately nice) ingénue legible to audiences. He wrote that, indicatively, ‘implications of prostitution or some kind of sexual buccaneering may help to account for the huge success of the hit song “And Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back” that helped *The Shop Girl* to run to nearly six hundred performances in 1894–5’. Meaning came only partly from the lyrics, for it was in performance that the character type was conveyed. Dale Evans gave a sense of the received tradition of the song in the 1944 film *Song of Nevada* (dir. Joseph Kane), smiling, gesturing with her hands, and swaying her hips during the chorus:

But Oh Flo, such a change you know
 When she left the village she was shy
 But alas and alack she'd gone back
 With a naughty little twinkle in her eye.

What gave Flo that twinkling eye is conveyed in the verses, as when she is persuaded to appear in a tableau vivant:

She posed beside a marble bath upon some marble stairs
 Just like a water nymph or an advertisement of Pears
 And if you ask me to describe the costume that she wears

Pause. In performance, a singer could use aposiopesis, suddenly stopping as if unwilling to proceed with the explanation, then provide the refrain:

Well, her golden hair is hanging down her back. (McGlennon & Rowenfeld, 1894: n.p.)

For Victorian spectators not equipped to fully understand, the song remained innocent, or perhaps confusing. But those whose visual imagination could summon the scene would see in their mind's eye that Flo appeared unclad in a *pose plastique*, her hair less advantageously arranged than Lady Godiva's on her famous ride. Thus, if they did understand, according to Bailey (1998: 185), the song exploited the genre's "'knowingness", the technique of hints and silences that left the audience to fill in the gaps and complete the circuits of meaning', while hearing and understanding (*entendre*) what is playfully on the verge of signification. 'Flo' may overstep to the equivocal of a double *entendre*, but the singer-narrator may not. This is how most Victorians understood the song, but how does a researcher come to 'knowingness' about a culture or era not their own? Historical research provides no laboratories for leveraging 'existential conditions and epistemological creativity' to foster an experimental situation (Spatz, 2019: 71).

Queer theory offers a related idea, anti-narrativity, which is key to non-hegemonic epistemologies and thus important for performance reconstruction and analysis. According to Tyler Bradway (2021: 712), by moving attention away from plot and instead towards other 'forms on which narrative depends, such as address, metonymy, description, point of view, and character ... suspense, simultaneity, and surprise', narrative can be discovered not working 'on behalf of the normative' but opening 'a condition of possibility for queerness ... through which queers forge, experience, sustain, renew, and reimagine relationality'. As a method, ferreting out this strategic formalism means 'conceiv[ing] narrative as

an ecology of interdependent forms – aesthetic and nonaesthetic – in contiguous torsion with one another’. This comes full circle to the concerns of Table 1.1, but how can formalist identification lead to semiotic understanding? When a scholar pushes beyond the limits of their own knowledge in search of keys not corresponding to their identity or their experience of signification, the project can be ethnographic, seeking criteria and developing knowledge for thick description, even if the source is textual and the text is historical. Theory per se is not necessarily going to provide the key to social worlds, though theory may explain why social worlds cohere and lock non-belongers out.

In *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*, Saidiya Hartman (2019: xiv) describes such a problem-oriented quest as her endeavour ‘to recover the insurgent ground’ of young women’s lives from ‘the journals of rent collectors; surveys and monographs of sociologists; trial transcripts; slum photographs; reports of vice investigators, social workers, and parole officers; interviews with psychiatrists and psychologists; and prison case files, all of which present a problem’ of data contextualization. She develops a counter-narrative to her sources, ‘liberated from the judgment and classification that subjected young black women to surveillance, arrest, punishment, and confinement’, in order to ‘exhume open rebellion from the case file, to untether waywardness, refusal, mutual aid, and free love from their identification as deviance, criminality, and pathology’ in ways more in accord with the women’s own experience. This process allows Hartman to identify who is occluded by Jim Crow racial hierarchy, white supremacist institutions and acts, and gender constraints compounded by racial and sexual intersectionality that preclude first-person perspectives in archived sources. This radical experimentation with critical fabulation to recover subjects hidden in plain sight entails what Hartman (2019: 228) calls ‘a practice of possibility’ that defies and smashes through all official and tacit barriers. Eventhood and narrative are both subsumed to reclamation.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018: 132–3) notes how such strategies depend on ‘artisanal knowledge’, or the kinds of knowledge inherent to communities past and present: ‘Through such knowledges the groups in struggle become cognitive subjects and cease to be the objects of those alien knowledges that have been used to justify their subjection and oppression.’ As in Hartman’s practice of critical fabulation, such artisanal knowledges arise from earlier social struggles and are here utilized and resurfaced through a focus on the ways that power affects, defines, and

delimits individuals and groups. The goal here is not simply to identify the implications of structural determinism for minoritarian, marginalized, or dispossessed people through deconstruction and discourse analysis, but also to utilize rhetorical techniques and intersectional approaches. This re-centres into narratives what Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson call the 'skeleton suggestions' in interpretable spaces (Kershaw & Nicholson, 2011: 6). Artisanal knowledge forces the question of how history (as a discipline and rhetoric) typically effaces certain kinds of experience, and how 'gaps' can be other than silhouettes of epistemological absence. Santos (2018: 136) argues that such epistemologies of the South 'do not disregard methodologies. But they do keep in mind at all times that the social construction of the agents in a struggle is a political act that precedes, exceeds, and conditions the use of methodologies', validating community insiders' knowledge.

TaPS research can engage resistant critique, including decolonization, subaltern studies, de-patriarchization, critical race theory (in conjunction with racialization and de-racialization), critical whiteness studies, critical Indigenous theory, and disability studies. The artisanal knowledge needed for this is often 'a performative kind of knowledge', existing collectively in the commons as 'a mix of knowledge/knower' (Santos, 2018: 140). Robin Bernstein's 2011 book *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* exemplifies this sort of performative knowledge, within the tradition of material object studies known as thing theory. She hypothesizes that childhood is a performance engaged with scriptive things: artefacts that prompt behaviours relating to the social struggles embedded in the objects. Bernstein (2011: 11, 91) examines a range of evidence from the nineteenth- and twentieth-century United States, such as dolls, advertisements, popular performance (including blackface minstrelsy), activity books, and illustrations, seeking patterns for the scripting and thereby generating of 'new' evidence through content and discourse analysis of 'what a thing invited its users to do'. This connects to what Santos (2018: 137) calls empirical, practical, erudite, and scientific knowledge to posit play as historical events in an ecology of knowledge wherein domination and resistance were disavowed yet, in the process, reinforced. Bernstein (2011: 12) analogizes scriptive things in ways akin to a playscript, so 'items of material culture *script* in much the same sense that literary texts *mean*' (i.e. by inviting agential behaviours). Bernstein's prediction comes full circle back to the TaPS analytic terms of Table 1.1: extrinsic analysis of objects' reception explains the structures of feeling as a 'problem-oriented' history that centres both scripts and play, interdependently with

a ubiquitous performance genre (onstage and everywhere else too, affecting even children who have no first-hand experience of the full, theatrical, expression of blackface) (see Furet, 2001: 271). This affirms Bernstein's (2011: 201) hypothesis and generates grounded theory: childhood performance immutably connects to white supremacy through the use of toys, dolls, and books, which shape play both for African Americans (servitude and violence) and white people (dominance and mercilessness), within a horizon of events that is infinite but indebted to symbolic interactionism.

Santos (2018: 174) acknowledges the long timeline for completing cultural reparation and restitution that aims to undo entrenched epistemologies uncovered by insights such as Snyder-Young's, Hartman's, and Bernstein's. The poet Dionne Brand (2001: 6) characterizes this kind of self-observation and feeling as 'sitting in the room with history'. This is part of the process – the tradecraft – of research. Rather than being complicit in the academy's destructive forces, disciplined to others' narratives, Christina Sharpe (2016: 13) argues that for diasporic Africans 'the work we do requires new modes and methods of research and teaching' to engage archives' and memories' consequences, unscientifically. New modes of knowledge-making and methodological mixology – particularly arising from critical race theory as well as queer, Indigenous, feminist, and disability studies – embrace theory and method in order to approximate grounded-theory approaches emphasizing 'description, understanding, and explanation' of qualitative data (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010: 258).

Methods and methodologies for accomplishing path-breaking research are emerging in our midst, bred in specific economic, cultural, and political milieux, like the ever-changing discipline of TaPS. In the chapters that follow, scholars provide reflections on their trials and tribulations, advice, cautionary tales, and new potentialities. Mix and stir.

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