**What They Said:
Verbatim Theatre's Relationship to Journalism**

by

Joel Bernbaum

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the relationship between verbatim theatre and traditional journalism. It begins by recognizing journalism as a creative art that can benefit from looking to other creative disciplines for enrichment. It continues with an examination of the history of verbatim theatre practices, and an analysis of three recent Canadian verbatim theatre productions. Examples from other creative arts show a continuum or representation from reportage to metaphor.

This thesis maintains that verbatim theatre is a disputed territory formed by the overlap of traditional theatre and traditional journalism. This thesis concludes that the careful application of specific journalistic elements within this disputed territory could create a “verbatim theatre journalism” that could complement traditional journalistic reporting.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Journalism is made; it doesn't just happen. So the language we use to see it and to teach it must be akin to the language of art. The language of art encourages students to enter the imagination of the artist and meditate on how the artist does what he or she does.

(Adam 1993)

Journalism scholar G. Stuart Adam begins his book *Notes Toward a Definition of Journalism* with the above statement adorning the second page. By adopting Adam's creative notion of journalistic practice and journalism itself, this thesis will explore the idea of looking outside the traditional realm of journalism for engaging practices that achieve journalistic goals.

The world of journalism and the world of the theatre are similar. In both disciplines, the practitioners share a common task: they tell stories. Of course, their methods of research, interpretation and presentation are at times very different. However, there are certain characteristics of the world of the theatre and the world of journalism that are shared. These characteristics are most evident in the realm of documentary theatre. Documentary theatre is roughly defined as theatre based on, inspired by, or dealing with factual information. This is a broad and somewhat vague description. Underneath the umbrella term of documentary theatre practices, there is a type of theatre that is both interesting and pertinent to the world of journalism: verbatim theatre. Verbatim theatre involves the use of interview transcripts or documents as source

material for the construction of play scripts. This thesis will explore the relationship between verbatim theatre and journalism.

Research Question and Rationale

The main research question to be explored in this thesis is: What is the relationship between verbatim theatre and journalism? It is important to approach this research focusing on the *relationship* between verbatim theatre and journalism, because it leaves every possible kind of relationship open as a possibility. In fact, *no relationship* is a form of relationship. However, due to the similarity between the practices of verbatim theatre and journalism, it is very unlikely that no relationship exists. Perhaps there is a border or a seam between verbatim theatre and journalism. If this is the case, it is interesting and beneficial to investigate the location of that border/seam and the criteria that determine it. Perhaps verbatim theatre is a form of journalism – or is journalism a form of theatre? If either of these relationships proves to be the case, it will be useful to discuss how and why the practices of one fit inside the boundaries of the other. At the outset of this research, the preliminary hypothesis is that the coming together of the worlds of journalism and the theatre creates a “disputed territory” that is verbatim theatre.

By discussing and evaluating verbatim theatre practices and products in relation to some of the pertinent elements of journalism, this thesis will promote better understanding of verbatim theatre practice and its journalistic potential, if any. There are three main reasons why this research is interesting and important. Firstly, the methods, skills and devices used in both the world of journalism and the world of the theatre are mutually beneficial. That is, the techniques (and knowledge surrounding the techniques)

used within journalism could be useful within the practice of verbatim theatre, and vice versa. For example, verbatim theatre practitioners often use interviews in their research. Knowledge of journalistic interviewing techniques would surely benefit this area of verbatim theatre practice. Conversely, journalists use narrative structures to present their stories. Knowledge of playwriting practices would surely enrich a journalist's ability to craft her or his stories. Secondly, this research will contribute to the discussion about journalism in society. Hopefully, the points of resonance and dissonance along the way will provoke further thought, discussion and study. For example, the spectrum that encompasses reporting, representation and creation (spanning from factual description through interpretation to complete inventions of fiction) allows for a rich discussion. Finally, if the preliminary hypothesis is indeed correct and verbatim theatre is a disputed territory created by the coming together of journalism and the theatre, at some point within this spectrum, the definition and possible uses of this territory will yield new and interesting opportunities. By exploring the relationship between verbatim theatre and journalism, it is possible to discuss traditional journalistic practice in a new way, and begin a new discussion surrounding a theatre practice that can possibly serve a journalistic function.

The Art of Journalism: Adam and Burke

Adam's creative notion of journalism is useful as a catalyst for analysis of non-traditional journalistic practice. Before becoming a journalism educator and scholar, Adam worked as a journalist in both print and broadcast (Carleton University). His practical and scholarly work allowed him to conceive a preliminary definition of

journalism as “an invention or form of expression used to report and comment in the public media on the events of the here and now” (Adam 1993: 11). In his work, Adam aims to “inspire a belief that journalism can be, and often is an art form” (5), explaining that by virtue of journalism being made by the journalist, it requires that journalists use their imaginations. In his analysis, Adam discusses the elements of journalism and the importance of drawing on other disciplines to achieve the best possible results. This sharing of ideas offers the opportunity to broaden the traditional notion of journalism. He clarifies that he is “trying to define journalism in terms of what it is rather than by the medium through which it is circulated” (23). He lists five “elements or principles of design” that work together to mark and define journalism. These principles are: “(1) of news, (2) of reporting or evidence gathering, (3) of language, (4) of narration, and (5) of meaning” (23). Each of these principles has relevance to verbatim theatre. However, this thesis will focus largely on the 4th and 5th elements.

Adam’s definition allows for creative flexibility, as the theatre is clearly both a form of “public media” and an “invention or form of expression.” Adam furthers this creative notion by calling for journalism to draw on other disciplines in order to enrich its practices. This interdisciplinary growth is similar to the sharing and borrowing that led anthropologist Clifford Geertz to describe the 20th century social sciences borrowing from the arts as an “era of *blurred genres*” (Donmoyer and Donmoyer 209, italics theirs). Verbatim theatre and journalism are similar in their practices and products. These two genres continue to blur below the surface due to their similar tools and ideals.

A relationship between journalism and the theatre can begin to be illuminated through the theories of philosopher and rhetorician Kenneth Burke. Burke actually began

his career as a poet (Simons 3). In the 1920s, his artistic endeavours developed into the desire to become a writer and literary critic, pursuing his curiosity about the stylistic literary elements that connected people, words and reality (Heath 1). However, just as he was beginning to construct what he felt were ingredients of mass literary appeal, the 1930s Depression hit, forcing him to re-evaluate his own work and the contribution of artists to society in general (1). In search of an ideological answer to this question, Burke “broadened his mission to produce a comprehensive analysis of how language influences human relations... to understand the use and misuse of words so that he could explain, in particular, the causes and shattering effects of the Depression” (1). This early artistic passion and these circumstances clearly shaped both Burke’s outlook and his analytical framework.

Burke believed in a “dramatistic” approach to language. In the introduction to his book *Language as Symbolic Action*, Burke defines humans as “symbol-using animal[s]” (2). He continues by explaining that language is only a construct of simple symbols that facilitates communication between humans and allows us to invent or destroy ourselves. However, Burke further explains that the symbols in language alone are “sheer emptiness, as compared with the substance of the things they name” (6). His outlook sees the use of language as an exercise of “symbolicity” or “symbolic action” (29). Burke uses examples of poetry to illustrate how language use can have a motive of its own – a “poetic motive” (303) (e.g. “art for art’s sake”), when language is used to impress with prowess in representation. He also explains that language can be (and is) interpreted individually and universally in different ways. In a similar way to G. Stuart Adam, Burke

believed languages should be developed and interpreted as art, as opposed to being scientifically named (44).

Burke believed that art was truly a special kind of experience, and in addition to being beautiful, it was also functional “equipment for living” (Heath 82). For Burke, drama was not “a metaphor to be used in certain areas of social life but a fixed term that helps us discover what the implications of the terms ‘act’ and ‘person’ really are” (Gusfield 36). It is important to understand this approach, in order to see the larger scope of Burke's theory of “dramatism.” Burke’s “dramatism” is not a metaphor, and it is also not constrained to discussion of traditional theatre or drama. The larger scope of Burke's theory acknowledges that “the dramatic possibility exists in everyday life, in junctures where the social actor is called upon to utilize theatrical resources and is aware of the drama of the scene, including the scrutiny of one's own performance” (Combs 8). The application of this framework has already proven to be useful in other disciplines.

Although Burke's theories are rooted in the theatrical world, they are certainly not confined to that space. Sociologist Erving Goffman has further defined the “dramaturgical” perspective, interpreting Burke's dramaturgical principles in order to

consider the way in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may or may not do while sustaining his performance before them. (Goffman 1)

Goffman uses dramatism to analyze human behavior. In the same way, Burke’s theories can function as a dramatic framework with which to analyze journalistic practice and products.

Burke’s theories have been applied to journalism. In his book, *Permanence and Change*, Burke discusses drama with a group of five elements he calls the “dramatistic

pentad.” The pentad consists of: “act, actor, scene, agency and purpose” (466). These elements can be identified in and applied to any communication interaction. In Burke’s view, these elements are used to create a sympathetic audience for the symbolic action they represent (Milburn and McGrail 621). Psychologists Michael Milburn and Anne McGrail cite Burke’s pentad in their paper “Dramatic Presentation of News and Cognitive Complexity.” They discuss Burke’s belief in the importance of recognizing the pentad’s elements, specifically pointing out that actions are interpreted in terms of the circumstances in which they are taking place. They apply the pentad to their study of the dramatic (or melodramatic) presentation of television news (621). This is one example of a correlation between journalism and Burke’s theories. Milburn and McGrail also reference the work of communications scholars Dan Nimmo and James E. Combs, who have correlated the elements of Burke’s pentad with the traditional “who, what, when, where and why” questions of journalism (621). Communications scholar James Carey has made a similar connection, stating that journalism provides what Burke calls “strategies for situations.” Carey argues that journalism shares a certain quality with all literary acts, in that it “provides audiences with models for action and feeling, with ways to size up situations” (245). This “dramatistic” perspective will be explored in greater detail in chapter four, but is an important theme for this entire thesis.

An Era of Blurry Definitions

The purpose of this thesis is not to define “journalism” or “the journalist.” However, examples of the discrepancy surrounding these definitions are useful in illustrating three key foundations for this introduction: the changing role of the journalist,

the changing arena of journalism and the role of journalism in the democratic public sphere.

Media scholar and former journalist Barbie Zelizer argues that there is uncertainty regarding the meaning of journalist and journalism (2004: 13). Zelizer explains this vagueness is borne out of the large degree of contention over the boundaries of both what journalism is and who is a journalist. She provides examples ranging from talk radio to weblogs to reality television as potential journalism and everything from typesetters to Zulu news runners as potential journalists. The vast and vague pool of possibilities is further complicated by the commodification of journalism and the rapid advance of technology. The uncertainty and debate about umbrella terms is important to identify, as it spawns multiple tentacles of discussion for other terms and concepts in the “journalism lexicon.”

Zelizer continues with discussion of the terms “media,” “communication,” “information” and analysis of how journalists and scholars each look at journalism. Zelizer writes that the term “media” can be seen as socially empowering or disempowering. It also recognizes the “industrial, institutional environment in which journalists are presumed to work” (2004: 26). Industry opens the door to discussion about the huge spectrum of technology, and therefore asks if media content should be evaluated in terms of the medium, citing the span of difference between independent online news to television news to travelling African theatre troupes (28). Zelizer concludes that “all lexical choices remain alternatives,” and that the terms we use to discuss our common journalism “almost never convey all there is to know” (37).

Similarly, journalism scholar Winston Mano argues popular music can be

considered journalism in Zimbabwe “in the way it expresses social reality in its themes and content” (62). Mano believes that popular music fulfils a journalistic function in Zimbabwean society, and that this function is what should be judged as journalistic, as opposed to the medium or even the process. He clarifies his view by explaining he is “not saying music can be journalism in terms of journalistic conventions such as objectivity, deadlines or ethics. Rather I advocate a view of it as a form of cultural expression, a way of inscribing the world that is informed by what takes place in society” (62).

The blurry boundaries of journalism are being questioned both inside and outside of academia. There are recent examples of journalists themselves calling for an examination of the broader horizon of journalism. The *Columbia Journalism Review*’s Megan Garber voices concerns about the blurry definition in her examination of *Time* magazine’s coverage of American talk show host Glenn Beck as a new kind of journalist. Garber points to a current transition in the world of journalism and entertainment, arguing that we are moving “from journalism as a narrowly professional identity to journalism as a broader cultural activity” (1). In her review of the coverage and following of Beck, Garber describes him as

a tongue-wagging metaphor for the cognitive confusion of our journalistic moment. He is, among everything else, a reminder of the new world that professional journalists must come to terms with—a world in which one answer to the question of ‘who is a journalist?’ might just be: Glenn Beck. (2)

Journalist Susan Dominus, in her *New York Times* article on American verbatim theatre icon Anna Deavere Smith, continues to broaden this lens. Dominus reports on Smith’s new verbatim theatre play, *Let Me Down Easy* (2009), that deals with health and health care, discussing whether or not Smith’s work adds additional voices to the health

care debate. Smith's work is an example of verbatim theatre's journalistic quality to support and contribute to the democratic public sphere. This example also relates directly to Zelizer's continued call for constant and creative examination of journalism theory and practice in her more recent work, claiming that "scholars have tended to favour uniform, unidimensional and unidirectional notions of how journalism works" (Zelizer 2008: 1), as opposed to looking at journalism's "multiple facets, definitions, circumstances and functions" (1).

The current state of the journalism industry can inhibit creativity. Journalism scholar Paul Manning argues that the pressures facing journalism as an industry have worked against growth or enrichment from within the craft. He notes that "much, often most, of what appears in daily newspapers or within our television news broadcasts is the product of neither enterprise nor creativity but of routine procedures of information gathering and processing" (52). He argues that due to a combination of financial pressures and the fast pace of technology "the opportunities for the injection of enterprise or creativity appear to be diminishing in a multi-channel broadcasting era in which the growing number of news broadcasting operations generates an ever-growing appetite for news copy as raw material" (52). Under these circumstances, a medium such as verbatim theatre could provide journalistic enrichment from outside the world of traditional journalism.

Conversely, the current state of the industry can also prompt creativity. In his article "A New Horizon for the News," *The New York Times*'s Michael Massing recognizes the economic challenges facing journalism, proclaiming, "the American news business today finds itself trapped in a grim paradox" (1). However, he goes on to discuss

examples of hope in both the audience and the industry. Massing cites a study that found Internet consumption by people of all ages on the rise from 2007 to 2008, with a particular nod to youth. He writes that “the MTV generation, known for its indifference to news, has given way to the Obama generation, which craves it, and for an industry long reconciled to the idea of its customers dying off, the reengagement of America's young offers a rare ray of hope” (1). Massing discusses several independent for-profit “experiments.” He calls the international news website the *GlobalPost* the “most intriguing.”¹ The *GlobalPost* was “launched in January with close to \$10 million in start-up funds from private investors, and already has seventy-four part-time correspondents in fifty countries” (Massing 1). Massing cites *GlobalPost* co-founder and editorial chief Charles Sennott’s claim that “the ‘void’ created by the cutbacks in foreign reporting has created ‘an opportunity.’ We [the *GlobalPost*] want to be one of the sites that Americans regularly go to when they think about the world” (1). The *GlobalPost* and other experiments Massing describes are examples of non-traditional forms emerging within journalism.

The void left by traditional journalism producers in other areas can also be seen as an opportunity for new journalistic forms to arise. Massing explains that the financial factors facing journalism may now actually be contributing to creative innovation. After unsuccessfully implementing a “pay for content” model in 2005, *The New York Times* returned to a “free for all” model due to a concerning drop in Internet traffic. As a result,

¹ The *GlobalPost* is a for-profit news website dedicated to international coverage. It employs freelance local reporters in countries around the world in an effort to fill the voids left by the closure of traditional foreign bureaus.

Massing describes how *The New York Times* has since geared up its online content by adding several other features. He explains:

Now, in addition to reading Nicholas Kristof's descriptions of malnutrition in Africa, you can watch a video of him interviewing some of the victims. On an interactive photo feature titled "Casualties of War," a click on a montage of photos of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan summons up mini-profiles of each. A "word train" offers a snapshot of what's on reader's [*sic*] minds by displaying in varying type sizes the adjectives they send in based on the frequency of their mention. (1)

Diversity of style is here to stay. Although the above examples of diversity are dependent on the technology of the internet, there is no reason why non-traditional journalistic forms cannot come forward outside of its web. Massing concludes that the time is ripe for action, claiming, "the retreat of the giant corporations and conglomerates is creating the opportunity for fresh structures to emerge" (1). Media entrepreneur and founder of news website *The Huffington Post* Arianna Huffington agrees, proclaiming "the future of journalism is to be found, at least partly, in the rapidly growing number of people who connect with the news in a whole new way" (1). As content becomes more creative, both as a response to or reaction within the current financial climate, the important question for innovators to ask is: What similarities are there between journalism and other media that can be used to enrich journalism?

Communications scholar Peter Dahlgren claims that new genres in the mass media are indicators that journalism is straying from one of its main functions. Echoing the concerns raised by Zelizer, he argues the current definitions of "journalism" and "the journalist" are in question (Dahlgren 147). Dahlgren discusses classical journalism as "providing reports and analyses of real events and processes, and contributing to the public agenda" aimed at a "homogeneous citizenry that basically

shares the same public culture” (147). Dahlgren compares this past ideal with the current condition, updating his statement to “the fundamental role of journalism in democracy is to link the citizens to public life” (150). He points to a recent UK study on “mediated public connection” (150). The study found that among citizens who felt a public connection to the media, the majority of people did not feel there were “opportunities for civic action” that would allow journalism to “make a difference in their life as citizens” (150). He sees this as a perpetual slide away from journalism’s fundamental role in the public sphere.

The Public Sphere

A critical element of journalism is its democratic function in supporting citizens and creating a forum for their discussions (Kovach and Rosenstiel 5-6). This forum can be thought of as a public sphere. Sociologist/philosopher Jürgen Habermas’s public sphere is often noted in such discussions. According to Habermas, the public sphere “was characterised as a mediating space between the state and society, allowing public discussion in which both sides recognized the power of reason and the richness derived from the exchange of ideas between individuals” (Mattelart and Mattelart 65). Habermas’s theories continue to be relevant today in the face of ever increasing commercialization of the media, as he also believed the ideals of the public sphere were threatened by “a commercial model of ‘manufacturing opinion’ ” (65), calling this process a “refeudalisation of society” (65). Communications and theatre scholar Jeffrey Jones points to an erosion of trust among the public, pointing to increasing skepticism of political, cultural, and corporate media elite. Jones argues this has resulted in the mass

media and journalism becoming “an amorphous mass of rhetoric for many citizens, with little in the way to help delineate the value of different discourses” (133).

The concept of the public sphere relates directly to the argument for more and diverse approaches to journalism practice. Forms of communication that are not traditionally thought of as journalistic have the potential to expand the public sphere and strengthen its democratic function by offering different and additional perspectives.

Political scientist Benedict Anderson has expanded on Habermas’s theories, arguing that the media are not “mere chroniclers” of the public sphere, but rather major players in the shaping of its boundaries (Heaman 146). Forms of communication that are not traditionally thought of as journalistic can also achieve one of the standards of traditional journalism: to provide agency for those who do not have means to make their voices heard. In his writings on how to reinvigorate journalism, communications scholar Robert McChesney looks back at his notion of great journalists, claiming “they saw journalism as representing the interests of all those outside power, those without a voice” (212). Similarly, journalism scholars Tanni Haas and Linda Steiner argue that one of the benefits of “public journalism” is its ability to catalyze civic commitment and participation (239). One of the main historical functions of documentary and verbatim theatre has been to represent people and issues that would otherwise not be heard in the mainstream media.

The current state of the media provides an opportunity for verbatim theatre to contribute to the public sphere. Theatre scholars Michael Anderson and Linden Wilkinson argue that the “lack of diverse voices and stories in our community may be a contributor to the resurgence and evolution of the verbatim theatre form, both nationally

and internationally” (154). They assert that increasingly homogenized media content and oversimplified packaged news stories are threatening to democracy (153). In promoting the benefits of verbatim theatre, Anderson and Wilkinson explain they are not arguing for verbatim theatre as a replacement for traditional news or current affairs programming, but “rather, that such theatre ventilates narratives that cannot be heard in other parts of the community, including mainstream media” (167).

Verbatim theatre can therefore be seen in the same vein as Mano’s argument for popular music in Zimbabwe. He concludes that popular music fulfils a journalistic function “because it represents aspects of social realities in Zimbabwe at specific times. It denotes social realities but it is not reality itself but reality as represented by music and musicians. Like journalism, it imagines and captures time-slices of social reality for educational, information and entertainment purposes” (74).

This thesis will explore verbatim theatre’s potential to fulfil journalistic functions in a creative, educational, informative and engaging way.

Breakdown

Chapter two introduces verbatim theatre as a medium that can satisfy many of the same goals as journalism. It outlines the definition, history and social contexts of verbatim theatre practices. It includes a concise review of the evolution of the Living Newspaper movement and the links between documentary theatre and verbatim theatre. It concludes with an assessment of the current climate of verbatim theatre practice worldwide, and a brief analysis of verbatim theatre practices in Canada, which will be the groundwork for chapter five.

Chapter three examines some of the different debates surrounding the tension across the spectrum of reporting, representation and creation in various media. By briefly examining the literature regarding representation in narrative and journalism, literary journalism, photography, documentary and the theatre, this chapter foregrounds some of the relevant themes in the relationship between journalism and verbatim theatre.

Chapter four flips to the inverse of the focus of the thesis, and analyzes journalism as a theatrical space, focusing on the journalist as a performer/character within the story. It includes examples and analysis from the theatre of playwrights becoming characters in their own pieces, and correlates this discussion with examples of journalists stepping into their own stories. By applying the theatrical analysis, it examines how the journalist can step into a story in a way that maximizes the gains of this convention and minimizes the consequences.

Chapter five analyzes three recent examples of Canadian verbatim theatre by applying journalistic elements through discussion of the practices, ethical considerations and the products themselves. It concludes by establishing some criteria for a “verbatim theatre journalism” project by comparing the three case studies to journalistic criteria.

Chapter six continues to develop the guidelines for “verbatim theatre journalism” by applying them to the discussion of a piece of applied research. Through discussion of the process and development of this new piece, this chapter tests some of the conclusions from the previous chapters.

The conclusion provides some possible applications for “verbatim theatre journalism” and explains how it can provide a product that is complementary to traditional journalism.

Summary

This chapter has presented the idea of the relationship between journalism and the theatre, and it has identified verbatim theatre as one relevant point of analysis within this discussion. It has also introduced G. Stuart Adam's creative notion of journalism and Kenneth Burke's "dramatistic" outlook, two perspectives that shape the trajectory of this thesis. Finally, this chapter has included a discussion of the blurry definitions of "journalism" and the "journalist," shifting the focus from the definition of these terms to the role of journalism in nurturing the public sphere. By outlining some of the democratic aspects of verbatim theatre, this chapter foreshadowed one aspect of the discussion surrounding the relationship between verbatim theatre and journalism. The following chapter will describe the evolution of verbatim theatre practice, including description of possible early influences such as the theatre of Bertolt Brecht and the Living Newspaper Movement.

Chapter Two

Multiple Beginnings: *History and Influences of Verbatim Theatre*

It is impossible to pinpoint the exact beginning of the documentary theatre tradition. What is possible is to acknowledge that dramatic representation has been used as a medium of communicating contemporary events for quite some time. In 492 B.C., the Greek poet Phrynicus wrote the play *Capture of Miletus*, exploring a real life battle that occurred two years earlier (Aquino 11). There are probably earlier and comparable examples from indigenous cultures around the world. One of the challenges of the documentary theatre genre is how difficult it is to define the range of practices it encompasses.² Verbatim theatre exists within this broad category. British theatre scholars Will Hammond and Dan Steward provide a concise definition of contemporary verbatim theatre:

The term *verbatim* refers to the origins of the text spoken in the play. The words of real people are recorded or transcribed by a dramatist during an interview or a research process, or are appropriated from existing records such as the transcripts of an official enquiry. They are then edited, arranged or recontextualized to form a dramatic presentation, in which actors take on the characters of the real individuals whose words are being used. (9, italics theirs)

Like the art forms that preceded it, it is difficult to trace the exact evolution of verbatim theatre practices. However, there are some early influences in the development of documentary theatre that have helped shape verbatim theatre. This chapter traces some of these early influences, including the Living Newspaper movement and the “epic theatre” of playwright Bertolt Brecht and his collaborator, director Erwin Piscator. After

² These challenges are further discussed in chapter three.

introducing these stylistic influences, this chapter details the history and social context of verbatim theatre practice. Finally, this chapter also includes a brief history of documentary theatre in Canada, and introduces some recent Canadian verbatim theatre productions that will be discussed in detail in chapter five.

A Note on “Theatre”

As with any art form, there are a multitude of different interpretations and definitions of “theatre.” Theatrical performances can be played out in a variety of ways, in a variety of media. The wide range of examples includes Elizabethan Shakespeare, African rituals, television dramas and virtual performance online. For the purposes of this research, theatre will be defined as: live performance for a live audience that is sharing the same physical space as the performance taking place.³

The Living Newspapers

A brief history of the evolution of documentary theatre will help illuminate the genre’s relationship to journalism. There are several examples of early documentary theatre-type practices including (but not limited to) German political theatre, American vaudeville, British film documentary and Italian variety theatre (Mally 5, Holdsworth and Luckhurst 201). One of the well-known examples of documentary theatre practice in the 20th century is the Soviet “Living Newspaper” movement, a genre which was later replicated in China and the United States (Forman 94, Mally 20). Freelance journalist and writer Harrison Forman describes a Chinese theatre troupe performing Second World

³ This definition, and the concept of live performers and audience sharing the same space (known as “liveness”) will become especially important in chapter six, during the discussion of how verbatim theatre might complement traditional journalism.

War news in a rural setting as “vivid and actual, designed primarily to bring the news of the day to the illiterate masses, to enlarge their vision, and to make them conscious of the greater world in which circumstances have made them an integral part” (94).

Similarly, the Soviet Living Newspaper movement largely took shape during the Russian Civil War, when both the government and the opposition used theatre as a means of communicating their messages and rousing support among largely illiterate masses (Mally 4). In this way, the medium of the Living Newspaper contributed to expansion of the public sphere. Historian Lynn Mally acknowledges that the “Soviets did not invent the idea of acting out the news” but that their political theatre in the 1920s was the first to use the name “Living Newspaper” (5). The Moscow School of Journalism began its own Living Newspaper troupe in early 1920 called “Blue Blouse,” named after the performers’ plain work shirts (5). The Blue Blouse troupe “developed a basic format for performances that was widely copied around the country, presenting the news of the day in a mix of satirical songs, skits, dances, and pantomimes” (5).

In the mid-1920s, the Blue Blouse troupe became a part of the “cultural division” of the central Moscow trade union organization. The structure of this theatre did not use headlines and different sections in an attempt to recreate the format of a newspaper, but rather evolved to focus on spreading thematic messages (Mally 5). The troupe’s methods of integrating actual documents such as newspaper texts and proclamations “won the interest of a segment of the leftist avant-garde called ‘factographers,’ who advocated the use of concrete details from daily life as the basis for a new and utilitarian artistic form that they called a ‘literature of fact’ ” (7). Mally explains that the Soviet Living Newspapers always presented single uncompromising messages from the state, but that

the mix of “political speech” and “satirical limericks” created a strange avant-garde combination that did not match the emerging social standard (7-9). The Soviet government ended support for the Living Newspaper in 1932, pushing for art forms that had simpler story lines and clear communist values, and that would appeal to more than the urban working class (9). As Living Newspaper practice decreased in the Soviet Union, it began to develop a following in the United States (9).

The American Living Newspaper movement came into being as one of the programs under the Federal Theatre Project. Between 1935 and 1939, the American government provided the Federal Theatre project with more than forty-five million dollars of funding for the production of a wide range of plays across the nation (Witham 1).⁴ At the beginning of the project, and throughout October 1935,

there was some doubt as to what form the Living Newspaper would take. To begin with it was to be called the “animated newspaper” theatre with shows at 5:00, 6:00, 7:00, and 11:00 P.M., midnight and 1:00 A.M. The performances, which were originally thought of as short news bulletins, were timed so as not to compete with other news shows. But eventually those ideas were compromised and the New York Living Newspaper Unit was organized as a full dramatic company with a staff of 130, including journalists, researchers, playwrights, and performers. (Brown xi)

Headquartered in New York City, the American Federal Theatre Project’s Living Newspaper unit shifted its focus to issue-based productions. Plans were also made for “regional Living Newspapers that would reveal the nation’s geographic diversity,” resulting in productions tailored to the issues of the region – ranging from land rights to agriculture to the destruction of forests (Mally 17). These regional Living Newspaper productions “spoke to the hopes, concerns, and fears of millions of Americans outside the

⁴ This sum included salaries of playwrights, actors, directors, designers and others involved in productions that ranged from classic stage plays to circuses (Witham 1).

principal metropolitan areas” (Witham 50). The Living Newspaper headquarters placed a premium emphasis on factual accuracy. According to guidelines from the Federal Theatre Project’s document titled “Writing the Living Newspaper,”

Authenticity should be the guiding principle in Living Newspaper production... let it be kept in mind that some of the most fascinating and also dramatic statements are to be found in the daily columns of the press. Assemble a wide, firm foundation of factual material and upon this can best be built the architecture of good theatre. (qtd. in Mally 17)

The scripts spoken on stage were in fact often comprised of “direct quotations from daily newspapers, checked and rechecked for their accuracy” (Mally 17). This penchant for facts was no doubt aided by the New York Living Newspaper unit’s partnership with the American Newspaper Guild. In 1935, members of the Newspaper Guild began participating in the activities of the unit, creating employment for some of New York’s thousands of unemployed journalists (Brown x). Writers and researchers also often sent drafts of scripts to lawyers “who guarded against potential charges of libel” (Mally 17). In this way, the American Living Newspapers’ link to the press and thirst for accuracy truly foreshadowed the advent of documentary theatre.

American theatre practitioner and director of the Federal Theatre project Hallie Flanagan was interested in “the entertainment value of the fact” (qtd. in Witham 78). She was dedicated to developing “documentary plays modeled after the pages of the morning news” (78). Flanagan testified before the United States House of Representatives’ Special Committee on Un-American Activities that “it is a rather remarkable fact... that in the three years of the existence of the Living Newspaper not one allegation has been made that the news were [*sic*] untrue. Nobody has ever proved that we have ever misquoted a person” (qtd. in Mally 22). Practitioners and critics alike “recognized that the power of the form lay in its critical engagement with current events and their history”

(Kruger 160). The reactions to the form were positively parallel, as productions “attracted large audiences who applauded and quarreled over this unique theatre form” (Witham 105). Indeed, none of the Federal Theatre Project’s other initiatives received as much press attention (Mally 23).

There are several similarities between the Soviet and American Living Newspapers that are relevant to the evolution of documentary theatre practices. Similar to the Soviet Living Newspaper, there was an inherent activist bent to Flanagan’s American movement, which she described as “a thorn in the side of the body politic” (qtd. in Kruger 160), serving to inform and inspire. Both the American and the Soviet models had similar “didactic goals” as “both were designed to educate audiences about how to behave as citizens” (Mally 22). Both incarnations of Living Newspapers used a narrator to tie together the at times disconnected scenes within the performance (20).

Interestingly, the Soviet narrator was usually improvised, while the American “Voice of the Living Newspaper” was tightly scripted, “sometimes becoming the focal point of the performance” (21). Due to the fact many of the narratives in the American productions moved abruptly and broadly through time and across space, the narrator “provided useful cues to alert the audience to the changes” (21). The final similarity between the two versions was that even though they were “designed to facilitate political and social change, living newspapers in both countries offended their political overseers. Both ended when their sponsoring governments decided to cut support for this inventive – and potentially subversive – theatrical experiment” (29). The work of the Living Newspapers clearly demonstrated the power and desire for fact-based theatre, a model that foreshadowed contemporary documentary theatre practice and its challenges/benefits. To

further emphasize the intertwined development of these arts, it is interesting to note that the style and content of German theatre director/producer Erwin Piscator and German playwright/director Bertolt Brecht's productions were very similar to those of both the Soviet and American Living Newspapers (Filewod 16).

Epic Theatre: Brecht and Piscator

Brecht is often credited with the concept of "epic theatre," an idea that shares several influences with documentary theatre. These include Piscator's German agitprop theatre⁵, Charlie Chaplin and American silent film, the Soviet revolutionary theatre and even Shakespearean and Elizabethan chronicle plays (Brooker 187). The concept of epic theatre was seen as a contrast to that of dramatic theatre. In Brecht's view, dramatic theatre "invited its spectators to empathise with the emotional destiny of its central and individual characters. Audiences were encouraged to surrender to the suspense and consolations of a well-made play, faithful to the unities of time and place and their naturalistic depiction" (Brooker 188). In contrast, Brecht's concept of epic theatre would be anything but naturalistic. By using non-naturalistic structure, staging and effects (such as a narrator or stage projections), and tackling relevant social issues of the time (such as class conflict or war), Brecht hoped the audience would completely understand they were watching a performance and therefore be stimulated both analytically/intellectually as well as emotionally.⁶ Brecht explained the epic theatre in his own words:

The stage began to tell a story. The narrator was no longer missing... Not only did the background adopt an attitude to the events on stage... the actors too refrained from going over wholly into their role... The stage began to be instructive. Oil, inflation, war, social struggles,

⁵ Agitprop theatre was leftist political protest theatre.

⁶ Brecht called this creation of space between audience and performance the "Verfremdungseffekt" or "alienation effect" (Schechner 146).

the family, religion, wheat, the meat market, all became subjects for theatrical representation. Choruses enlightened the spectator... Films showed events from all over the world. Projections added statistical material. And as the 'background' came to the front of the stage so people's activity was subjected to criticism.... (1978: 71-72)

Brecht used these devices to promote the teaching and learning aspects of the theatre. The work of Brecht and his collaborators such as Erwin Piscator has no doubt shaped documentary practice in both the theatre and beyond. Canadian theatre scholar Alan Filewod argues that out of Piscator's work we can see the "fundamental principle which distinguishes documentary theatre from the documentary genre in other arts" (16). He compares early documentary theatre to documentary cinema, defined as a "mass medium, a powerful tool of persuasion designed to reach as wide an audience as possible" (16). In contrast, he claims that Piscator's work was grounded in two principles: the presentation of actuality⁷ on the stage and the content being directed to a particular community with a common experience (16). An example of this type of play is Piscator's 1925 production *Despite All!*, a play about communism in Germany, which Filewod claims is of a "non-literary genre" and is the "first play to consist entirely of documentary material (newspaper reports, testimonial, and projected slides figured prominently)" (15).

Documentary Theatre in Canada

Documentary theatre in Canada was evident as early as 1942, with the work of Irish-born playwright John Coulter (Filewod 8). Before arriving in Canada, Coulter had

⁷ In this context Filewod uses the term "actuality" to explain Piscator's transparency of production and integration of "real world" material. For example, as with Brecht and the Living Newspapers, Piscator would project informative titles on to the stage during the performance (16).

worked in New York writing for CBS radio's *Living Newspaper* series, and Filewod speculates that during this time Coulter was exposed to the Federal Theatre Project (8). He quotes a description of Coulter's play *Mr. Churchill of England*, claiming the new style introduced "a new stage technique which I think has not yet been seen in Canada nor in any but a few big towns in the U.S.A. It is the technique of the stage documentary, the so-called 'living newspaper' " (Bridle qtd. in Filewod 8). The play was produced by Toronto's Arts and Letters Club in 1942 and then later on CBC radio, but never published (Filewod 8). Filewod explains that although the play included interesting highlights from Churchill's career, "with the exception of montage techniques derived from radio and the Living Newspapers, it is not in essence different from standard dramatic biographies" (8). Throughout the next several decades, Coulter wrote several plays that vacillated between documentary and historical fiction, due to his own paraphrasing of factual documents and his added invention. Although this may be the earliest example of documentary theatre in this country, "the dominant form of documentary theatre in Canada had its birth in an unused barn near Clinton, Ontario, in August, 1972" (Filewod 24).

That summer, Canadian director/playwright Paul Thompson decided to take a small group of actors from Theatre Passe Muraille in Toronto to a rural Ontario farming community. Thompson believed that theatre had the power to "locate and define the motifs and images which identify a culture" (Filewod 25) and proclaimed that he was interested in "Canadian textures and nationalism in the sense of putting Canadian voices and people on stage" (Bessai qtd. in Filewod 32). The resulting play, *The Farm Show*, was performed for the community in Clinton and then again for Toronto audiences, and according to theatre scholar Alan Filewod, it is "one of the finest works of Canadian

theatre” (24). In 1973, Thompson described his work on *The Farm Show* in an interview, explaining how he and his collaborators

went out into a community to bring back a kind of living community portrait or photograph, filled with things that we observed and that they would like to say about themselves. I suppose that’s based on all sorts of traditions of documentary that we have in this country, like the work of the CBC and the NFB. (Johns qtd. in Filewod 4)

The Farm Show’s actor/researchers (including Thompson) immersed themselves in farming activities as a way to investigate the play (Filewod 35).⁸ Thompson noted that the interaction with the residents of Clinton was crucial, explaining that

we didn’t just talk to the people we ended up portraying, we listened to their speech patterns trying to understand them through a kind of verbal interplay. The actor’s ear for detail was a very strong point. They were not just recording cameras. In the midst of talking and listening they were already imbuing the experience with a mythic dimension. They were already conscious of how the person they were talking to represented more than himself; like he may be one person, but he was a type. (Livesay qtd. in Filewod 4)

A noteworthy stylistic choice about the presentation of the material was the way the “actors transfer their experience of the process to the audience, through direct reportage... or by implication” (Filewod 38). An example of this technique is a monologue at the beginning of Act I, Scene iii, when the character of Betty answers a knock at her door, addressing the audience directly:

BETTY FEGAN

Oh hi! (*other actors freeze*) Come on in. No we’re not busy. We saw the light on over there. We knew you were there but we didn’t go over. You know, we didn’t know what to expect. You must be Janet. Look who’s here, Ross! (*The Farm Show* 26)

In this example, the playwrights literally put the audience into their shoes. Another way they remind the audience of the process is by including “interview scenes” within the

⁸ One of the original actors actually quit the project due to Thompson’s insistence that the troupe perform difficult farm labour.

play. In addition to providing transparency, this type of scene also provides comic relief and illustrates the contrast between urban and rural characters (Filewod 36-37). A good example of this interplay is actor Miles Potter introducing himself to farmer Jack Merrill (see Appendix A).

The discussion of early Canadian documentary theatre is important both as an influence for current verbatim theatre practice, and because these examples highlight some pertinent issues that continue to resonate with the practice. For example, the idea that the troupe was capturing not just characters, but a larger truth about the people of Clinton is one that was ground breaking at the time, and is certainly pertinent to this research. The situation of the audience inside the story and the actor/researcher becoming a character are also relevant choices that will be discussed later in this thesis. Finally, the great variance in style between these two early Canadian examples is an accurate representation of the vast assortment of documentary theatre practices.

Contemporary Documentary Theatre

Theatre scholar Carol Martin defines documentary theatre as theatre “... created from a specific body of archived material: interviews, documents, hearings, records, video, film, photographs, etc.” (9). In order to gauge the current climate of documentary theatre, Martin identifies six main functions of documentary theatre itself. The functions include: reopening trials in order to criticize justice; creating additional historical accounts; reconstructing events; intermingling autobiography with history; critiquing the operations of both documentary and fiction; and elaborating on the oral culture of the theatre (12). Martin recognizes the third category as the most popular among current

practitioners. In her critique of the medium, she argues that documentary theatre's "blurring of the real and the represented" is extremely problematic (13).⁹ Theatre scholar Janelle Reinelt also writes about this challenge, but she feels there is still value in the genre. She explains that the main promise of documentary theatre is "to provide access or connection to reality through the facticity of documents," but that "desire outstrips what is or can be provided. The shreds of the document are tattered and thin. The mediation is always suspect" (qtd. in Forsyth and Megson 23). However, she concludes that "it has a measure of efficacy; it is a way of knowing" (23). Martin furthers her argument of caution to the discussion of verbatim theatre, claiming that the same challenges very much apply:

In the U.K., documentary theatre is known as "verbatim theatre" because of its penchant for direct quotation. However, verbatim theatre does not necessarily display its quotation marks, its exact sources. "Verbatim" can also be an unfortunately accurate description of documentary theatre as it infers great authority to moments of utterance unmitigated by an ex post facto mode of maturing memory. (Martin 13)¹⁰

Verbatim Theatre

Director/playwright and theatre scholar Mary Luckhurst writes about the importance of understanding verbatim theatre as a distinct genre within the documentary theatre umbrella (201). Stephen Bottoms, a professor of English and theatre director/critic, has also argued for distinct recognition of verbatim theatre amongst documentary theatre, claiming that "where the latter may be said to imply the foregrounding of documents, of texts, the term 'verbatim theatre' tends to fetishize the notion

⁹ The tensions surrounding questions of truth and representation will be further explored in chapter three.

¹⁰ There is a lack of clarity regarding the interchangeable naming of verbatim and documentary theatre. This will be addressed further later in this chapter when various contemporary productions are compared.

that that we are getting things ‘word for word,’ straight from the mouth of those ‘involved’ ” (59). Verbatim theatre is a spectrum of theatre practices in itself, with a history of activity around the world.

The term “verbatim theatre” was first coined by British theatre scholar Derek Paget in a 1987 academic journal article (Luckhurst 201). Paget was at the time completing his doctoral thesis on verbatim theatre and its development in England since the 1960s. In the introduction to Paget’s article, the editors of *New Theatre Quarterly* position verbatim theatre “as a political weapon which can be wielded against the very broadcast media which inspired it” (Luckhurst 201). They introduce verbatim theatre by noting:

Quite simply, the form owes its present health and exciting potential to the flexibility and unobtrusiveness of the portable cassette recorder – ironically, a technological weapon against which are ranged other mass technological media such as broadcasting and the press, which tend to marginalise the concerns and emphases of popular oral history. (Paget 317)

The portability of the tape recorder allowed interviewers to record people outside of the mainstream. Paget echoes this sentiment, claiming that verbatim theatre seeks to empower those normally disempowered, add voices to public debate and operate by “seeking to extend the space left by the ‘official’ recording and reporting media” (326). British playwright Rony Robinson, whom Paget credits as one of the pioneers of the verbatim theatre method, further defines the boundaries of the practice, describing verbatim theatre as

a form of theatre firmly predicated upon the taping and subsequent transcription of interviews with ‘ordinary’ people, done in the context of research into a particular region, subject area, issue, event, or combination of these things. This primary source is then transformed into a text which is acted, usually by the performers who collected the material in the first place. As often as not, such plays are then fed back into the communities (which have, in a real sense, created them), via performance in those communities. In verbatim theatre, the firmest of

commitments is the use made by the company to *the use of vernacular speech*, recorded as the primary source material for the play. (Paget 317, italics his)

Paget acknowledges that verbatim theatre has been present in Britain since around 1965.

He notes that verbatim theatre's early influences included Britain's 1930s/1940s documentary film movement and the 1950s radio ballads (318).¹¹ He also gives credit to the influence of Piscator and Brecht, whose thinking was not seen as overly relevant in the U.K. until the documentary style gained popularity after the Second World War (319).

Twenty years after Paget published his article on verbatim theatre, theatre practitioner Linden Wilkinson investigated verbatim theatre for her graduate research, situating its practice under the heading "performance ethnography." She explains the verbatim theatre product as "the juxtaposition of different accounts, [in which] spoken data is presented in a theatrical form and multiple meanings are created, enhancing connectivity" (8). The genre of verbatim theatre continues to grow into a spectrum itself, but in its purest sense, director/playwright and theatre scholar Mary Luckhurst explains it is "understood as a theatre whose practitioners, if called into account, could provide interviewed sources for its dialogue, in the manner that a journalist must, according to the code of ethics, have sources for a story" (201). Luckhurst provides a detailed history of verbatim theatre practice and a discussion of the genre's relationship to the media and ethics.

¹¹ According to the BBC's website: "producer Charles Parker described a radio ballad as 'a form of narrative documentary in which the story is told entirely in the words of the actual participants themselves as recorded in real life; in sound effects which are also recorded on the spot, and in songs which are based upon these recordings, and which utilize traditional or 'folk-song' modes of expression.' " The BBC's radio ballads were praised for their style and content – as they brought everyday people on to the airwaves. (BBC)

Luckhurst uses examples of verbatim theatre productions in England that have made powerful contributions to the public sphere. She identifies the varieties of ways the term and techniques of verbatim theatre have been used in more contemporary contexts. She also initiates discussion on some of the ethical questions associated with its practice, such as the inherent issues of gate-keeping and dramatic representation. She presents examples ranging from *My Name is Rachel Corrie* (2005) to *Stuff Happens* (2004) to demonstrate the malleable application of the genre.¹² Luckhurst focuses the bulk of her analysis on British Playwright Richard Norton-Taylor's "tribunal plays," which "dramatized the edited transcripts of legal enquiries" (204). Norton-Taylor's first tribunal play, *Half the Picture* (1994), was co-written with playwright/theorist John McGrath. *Half the Picture* combined monologues from marginalized voices in the debate with "dramatized edited transcripts of the Scott Inquiry," otherwise known as 'the arms-to-Iraq' inquiry' " (Luckhurst 204). The production was successful in attracting attention across the country, and was filmed to air on BBC 2. It is also notable that *Half the Picture* became the first ever play to be performed at the British House of Commons (204). The Scott inquiry and subsequent play exposed the government's illegal exporting of arms to Iraq. The Conservative government of John Major survived the threat of the affair and the play, but "the power of this form of theatre had been demonstrated as never before in England" (205).

The tribunal plays provide a good springboard into both the benefits and the challenges facing verbatim theatre practice. Norton-Taylor approaches his work with a

¹² For example, *Stuff Happens* uses some verbatim speeches but also has imagined scenes. *My Name is Rachel Corrie* is constructed out of Rachel Corrie's journals and e-mail correspondence. These examples (and others) are described in greater detail later in this chapter.

journalistic sense, as he has worked as a political journalist for the *Guardian* since 1975 and received the Freedom of Information Campaign Award for Journalism in 1986 (Luckhurst 205). As of 2008, Norton-Taylor had compiled five more tribunal plays including *The Colour of Justice* (1999), a widely successful dramatization of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. Lawrence was an 18-year-old black British teenager who was killed by five white racist youths in 1993 (Reinelt 2006: 73). In his Editor's Note to *The Colour of Justice*, Norton-Taylor defines his goal by writing, "Above all, I wanted to select evidence to the inquiry which presented as fair, balanced and rounded a picture as possible. It was not an easy task. But if it contributes to a greater understanding of all the issues involved, it was, I hope, worthwhile and valuable" (6).

In all of his plays, Norton-Taylor works to make a tremendous amount of information accessible by distillation. Luckhurst claims "editing seems an insufficient term to describe the stringent selection and dramatic shaping that he has to do..." (206). According to British theatre scholar David Barnett, verbatim theatre is "driven by a need to locate tendentious themes within authentic material that resists the claim that the dramatist has distorted the facts through fiction. A perennial problem is, however, the editing of the documents – how is one to be 'fair' when cutting potentially millions of recorded words down to a few thousand?" (17). Barnett believes that "insistence on the document and its supposed truth is the dogmatic rock on which this type of verbatim theatre will inevitably founder" (18). Norton-Taylor defends his process as fulfilling a function that the press could not:

The public were not present at the Inquiry, and the vast majority of people are not going to read the Inquiry report. Press coverage is restricted to column inches and occurs over days, weeks and even months: the intricacies of the proceedings cannot be covered by the broadcast media and their world is a sound-bite medium not suited to the unfolding of long narratives.

My point is that dramatising Inquiry transcripts allows for the main details of a protracted story to be drawn together, and the crux of the political agendas to be laid forth. The compression allows the public to get to grips with the salient issues. (qtd. in Luckhurst 209)

In this way, verbatim theatre literally adds voices to the public debate. The inherent ethical question is – how legitimate are these voices? In addition to the interviewing and editing stages, “the question of how one portrays the verbatim characters on stage will clearly colour our response to them” (Barnett 18). Reinelt argues that verbatim theatre, specifically the theatrical version of the Stephen Lawrence case, “demonstrate[s] the explanatory power of performance to shape ideas, question[s] truth claims, sway[s] public opinion, and construct[s] an aesthetics that sometimes functions as an epistemology” (72). Questions of truth and representation provide for ongoing ethical debates about verbatim theatre practice. Barnett criticizes a Tricycle Theatre Company production of *Bloody Sunday* for using the theatre only “as a natural expression of the text” (18) as opposed to acknowledging the creative frame of the play in order to promote discussion. *Bloody Sunday* is one of journalist and verbatim theatre playwright Richard Norton-Taylor’s tribunal plays, based on the Bloody Sunday inquiry.¹³ Barnett would prefer the audience be made fully aware of the editing and representation used to create the performance, instead of the performance implying that it is an exact replica of the inquiry. He contrasts this lack of transparency with a 1982 production of Heinar Kipphardt’s *Brother Eichmann*, which was “alive with critiques of documentary sources that implicated his own work. The spectator was encouraged to question just how accurate Kipphardt’s version of the events was by the very play they were watching”

¹³ The Bloody Sunday inquiry investigated the deaths of 14 civilians who were shot by British soldiers during a civil rights march in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, in January 1972.

(Barnett 18). In this way, a possible solution may be to recognize that there is no objective “truth” and that the democratic role of verbatim theatre can be best fulfilled with transparency or reflexivity.¹⁴ If verbatim theatre pieces are transparently and ethically produced and presented, they have greater potential to contribute to the public sphere in a journalistic way. As Luckhurst concludes, “what verbatim theatre seems to represent, is the importance of alternative stories, which symbolize the way that it is still possible for the mechanisms of democracy to function” (216).

In addition to the ethical challenges to verbatim theatre practice, there are also practical and artistic criticisms. Paget concluded in 1987 that making verbatim theatre practices and philosophies available to a larger public “would surely, also be ‘a decent and democratic thing to do,’ given it involves nothing less than the continued re-claiming and celebrating of that history which is perennially at ‘the margins of the news’ ” (336). However, he also predicted there would be a limited future for verbatim theatre practices. He hypothesized the non-traditional methods of verbatim theatre would not be overly embraced, due to the cost and challenge of the creation process and the box office risk of production. Does limiting a theatrical product to factual parameters provide crippling

¹⁴ The term “reflexivity” is used throughout this document and is therefore worthy of definition. In the context of this thesis, reflexivity refers to outsider characters openly stating their position and attitudes within the piece. For example, the first line spoken in *The Laramie Project* is by the narrator, who says: “On November 14, 1998, the members of the Tectonic Theater Project traveled to Laramie, Wyoming, and conducted interviews with the people of the town. During the next year, we would return to Laramie several times and conduct over two hundred interviews. The play you are about to see is edited from those interviews, as well as from journal entries by members of the company and other found texts...” (5). This is an example of reflexivity regarding process. However, as will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four, if one is fully reflexive, she or he must also be transparent about her or his inherent biases. Therefore, in this example, the members of the Tectonic Theatre Project should have indicated whether or not they had previous exposure to the region and explained their personal points of view. Additionally, commenting that shows the limits (or complicated nature) of reliability is even more important when the material is gathered by sources other than the playwrights.

constraints on creativity? As Barnett asks, is verbatim theatre's factual base the "dogmatic rock" on which it will "inevitably founder" (18)? An examination of contemporary verbatim theatre practice helps us move toward answering these questions.

Contemporary "Verbatim" Theatre

For the purposes of this study, I have constructed a continuum to illustrate the range of recent verbatim theatre practices (see Figure 1).¹⁵ There is a lack of clarity surrounding the current use of the terms "verbatim theatre" and "documentary theatre."¹⁶ As was noted above, it is important to differentiate between these two titles, as the term "verbatim" makes a certain kind of claim to accuracy. There is some overlap between the two terms, which is why it is useful to compare the plays along a continuum of practices. By roughly contrasting a wide range of plays that use verbatim techniques, it is possible to see similarities and differences between practices and further reveal some of the challenges and opportunities of the genre.

Fig. 1: Continuum of contemporary plays that use verbatim techniques

¹⁵ The three case studies discussed in this document are outlined with a thick border on the continuum. As this analysis progresses the relative placement of the three Canadian case studies becomes clear.

¹⁶ For example, Will Hammond and Dan Steward's 2008 book *Verbatim, Verbatim* is subtitled "Contemporary Documentary Theatre." The tendency to use "verbatim" and "documentary" interchangeably seems to be a more common occurrence among British theatre practitioners and scholars.

The left side of the continuum is labelled “unorthodox,”¹⁷ including plays such as Peter Morgan’s *Frost/Nixon* and David Hare’s *Stuff Happens*. Like the early Canadian example of Coulter, these plays include some factual documents, verbatim speeches and text, but the script is largely and openly embellished by the playwright’s imagination. *Frost/Nixon* is based on the post-Watergate television interviews between British Journalist David Frost and former American President Richard Nixon. Although Morgan did extensive research and interviewing to inform the script, he writes in his Author’s Note to *Frost/Nixon* that: “... it is a play, not a historical document, and I have on occasion, perhaps inevitably, been unable to resist using my imagination...” (Morgan Author’s Note). *Stuff Happens* (2004) deals with the Bush Administration’s decision to invade Iraq. Mary Luckhurst points out that David Hare is “remarkably unclear about the demarcation between what he may have read or seen in the media and what he has invented” (212). In his introduction to *Stuff Happens*, Hare claims “this is surely a play, and not a documentary” but also compels the audience with a tease of truth by writing: “What happened happened. Nothing in the narrative is knowingly untrue. Scenes of direct address quote people verbatim. When the doors close on the world’s leaders and on their entourages, then I have used my imagination” (Hare n.p.).

Towards the middle of the continuum are plays such as Erik Jensen and Jessica Blank’s *The Exonerated*, Katherine Viner and Alan Rickman’s *My Name is Rachel Corrie*, and the Tectonic Theatre Project’s *The Laramie Project*. *My Name is Rachel Corrie* is based (like the tribunal plays) largely on documents. As the “editors” of *Corrie*

¹⁷ The uses of the terms “unorthodox” and “orthodox” for this continuum were developed during a highly enjoyable and interesting telephone conversation between the author of this thesis and Dr. Roy Peter Clark of the Poynter Institute.

(a play about the life and death of American peace activist Rachel Corrie), Viner and Rickman tried to “do justice to the whole of Rachel” by using almost solely parts of Corrie’s journals and correspondence as script (Rickman and Viner 57). Viner acknowledges the challenges of constructing theatre from documents, and the resulting bias of representation. As with the tribunal plays, the editors play a gate-keeping function in deciding what and how to choose material. She notes that “the difference between my usual job, journalism, and theatre, became obvious: stagecraft is what makes theatre what it is and there was no point creating scenes that read well on the page if the actor playing Rachel, Megan Dodds, could not perform them” (57). In *The Exonerated*, Jensen and Blank use verbatim transcripts of interviews, but take creative licence by adding small pieces of dialogue or having the characters repeat themselves (Jensen). In *The Laramie Project*, interview transcripts are also used, but they are interwoven with diary entries and testimonials from the actor/playwrights.

To make *The Laramie Project*, Moisés Kaufman and the members of the New York-based Tectonic Theatre project travelled to Laramie, Wyoming in the aftermath of the brutal homophobia-motivated murder of Matthew Shepard. The play is comprised of interview transcripts and entries from the actor/playwrights’ diaries. In explaining his approach to the project, Kaufman argues:

In an age when film and television are constantly redefining and refining their tools and devices, the theatre has too often remained entrenched in the nineteenth-century traditions of realism and naturalism. In this sense, our interest was to continue to have a dialogue on both how the theatre speaks and how it is created. (vi)

The Laramie Project certainly did open many doors to dialogue, and “triumphs in its determination to explore a cultural crisis... without presenting a panacea, a cure or ‘a happy ending’ [...] the play opens the audience up to acknowledging the existence of

uncertainty” (Anderson and Wilkenson 163). The powerful piece continues to be performed around the world to promote awareness of the horrible dangers of intolerance. Interestingly, the project’s representation of the actor/playwrights themselves also raises the issue of the journalist as a character.¹⁸ As much as Kaufman seemed to be opposed “realism,” his play walks a very fine line by seeming to present the actor/playwrights as objective.

In addition to expanding the public sphere with discussion that is not usually heard, verbatim theatre can also give voice to people who are not able to talk through the regular channels of communication. *Talking to Terrorists* (2005) includes verbatim accounts from former resistance fighters, victims, authorities and citizens. The play “offers insights into the multiple cases of terrorism: the juxtaposition of testimonies from activists, both militant and drafted, does more than inform; ‘it opens your eyes and alters your attitude’ ” (Anderson and Wilkenson 165). In *To Be Straight with You*, Britain’s DV8 physical theatre company combines recordings of interviews, verbatim performances of monologues from interviews, and dance to powerfully open the door to discussion of what director/creator Lloyd Newson calls “tolerance/intolerance, culture, religion and homo/sexuality” (5). The anonymity granted to their interview subjects allows both gay and homophobic people to speak openly and honestly without fear of repercussions. By explicitly layering the recordings and monologues with choreography, DV8 creates an even more pronounced space between the actual fact and the vehicle of representation. This technique further raises the question of the effects of mediation on accuracy. The comparison described in this continuum is not meant to judge one

¹⁸ The notion of the journalist as a character is discussed in chapter four.

interpretation of verbatim theatre practice as “better” than the other. It does however illustrate that there are a wide range of practices under one heading.

Recent Canadian Verbatim Theatre

Verbatim theatre is becoming more prominent and popular in Canada. In its November-December 2007 issue, *This* magazine profiled verbatim theatre’s return to the Canadian scene, outlining several different companies that have adopted their own variations on the verbatim method and the criticisms that accompany them (Siggins). The final three examples on the spectrum are recent Canadian verbatim theatre productions (outlined in bold). These include Oonagh Duncan’s *Talk Thirty to Me* (2007), Geraldine Pratt and Caleb Johnston’s *Nanay: A Testimonial Play* (2009) and Project:Humanity’s *The Middle Place* (2009).¹⁹ *The Middle Place* is situated as a more orthodox piece of verbatim theatre, as it was constructed solely by using interviews conducted by Toronto-based playwright Andrew Kushnir with youth at Toronto’s Rexdale Youth Shelter – voices that would not normally be heard by (or not be willing to speak to) the mainstream media. Kushnir has attempted to counter some of the ethical issues mentioned in this thesis by including himself as an equally verbatim character in the piece (to address the issue of bias), performed by another actor (to address the issue of representation) (Kushnir). The content of these three productions and the rationale for their relative placement on the spectrum will be discussed in detail in chapter five.

¹⁹ An example of verbatim theatre’s increased prominence is the recent success of Project:Humanity’s *The Middle Place*. *The Middle Place* has been included in several theatre’s 2010-2011 seasons. At time of writing, these include Victoria’s Belfry Theatre, Toronto’s Theatre Pass Muraille and Ottawa’s The Great Canadian Theatre Company.

Summary

Verbatim theatre practices have a spectrum of different meanings. In order to continue to conceptualize this spectrum, it is useful to zoom out and establish what the two extreme ends of the spectrum might look like. Ethical questions come into play throughout the construction and performance processes. Let us speculate what examples of the extreme verbatim theatre performances might entail. For discussion's sake, we can divide the production into stages of interviewing/research, compilation/editing and performance/presentation. The extremely unorthodox side would involve practitioners choosing specific people to interview, asking them specific questions about a specific issue, and editing and arranging their responses, to present them in an entertaining and informative way. Conversely, the extremely orthodox form would involve practitioners who interview a random sample of people about a random issue and record word for word exact questions and answers. They would then present/perform the entire conversations as plainly and accurately as possible, as “in its purest form verbatim theatre is performed with actors in a line before the audience” (Luckhurst 214). This example is both impractical and almost impossible, and would certainly not be very engaging or interesting. This is why this extreme orthodox level of “purity” is not even achieved in traditional journalism. In actuality, most verbatim theatre and journalism practices lie closer together on the unorthodox side of the spectrum. This analysis will be furthered more concretely in chapter five, when three verbatim theatre productions are assessed using several elements of journalism.

This chapter has outlined the history and social context of verbatim theatre practice and described some of the early influences of documentary theatre. In doing so,

it has begun to illuminate a relationship between verbatim theatre and journalism.

However, it has also raised several questions about the tensions surrounding representation and creation. There are several other genres that encounter this tension.

The following chapter will survey arts such as literary journalism, photography and film documentary, in order to compare and contrast their treatments of these challenges to verbatim theatre practices.

Chapter Three

Spectrum of Creation: *A look at several representational arts*

... journalism can never be a simple, straightforward account of events in the world. It is always a likeness, a semblance, a simulacrum. Journalists function much as artists – good and bad artists. We impose on reality the conventions of literary and cinematic art. We transform disparate and often chaotic data into an acceptably organized sequence. (Fulford 80)

The last chapter presented verbatim theatre as an interesting and important territory that is worthy of study in relation to the world of journalism. By outlining examples of verbatim theatre history and contemporary verbatim and documentary theatre practice, it also opened the door to discussion of the criticisms of verbatim theatre and the challenges that arise once verbatim theatre practice begins to be seen in relation to journalism. In order to continue to discuss and further understand these complex issues, this chapter presents a survey of the approaches in several other art forms to some of the issues raised by the process of creation, including the tension between fact and fiction, the use of representation, and the communication of meaning.

Journalism scholar G. Stuart Adam describes journalism as an art because of its creative design. The journalist uses a set of tools and practices to perform her or his job – but so does a plumber. So what makes journalism art? One could argue that it is art because it is intended for public use/display – or, that it follows a specific design. However, a wall that is built by a bricklayer satisfies these criteria as well. We do not think of the bricklayer's work as art. As we have discussed in the past two chapters,

Adam calls our attention to the way journalism is created by the journalist. The design for a piece of journalism is born from the imagination of the journalist. As Adam says, “[j]ournalism is an imaginative form, like the poem or the novel, within which individual imaginations function” (1993: 18). This means art is not just the use of creative tools and techniques, but the employment of these tools and techniques by the artist’s own imagination. Using the events and elements of reality, the journalist creates a piece of art that “reports or comments on the events of the here and now” (11). In addition to journalism, this combination of imaginative creation and reporting/commenting exists in several arts and is the basis of this chapter.

It is helpful to first acknowledge a similarity between journalism and the theatre. Journalists and theatre artists both use language and narrative as tools to create representations of reality. Communications scholars Dan Nimmo and James E. Combs use philosopher Kenneth Burke’s dramatisic outlook to define what they call the “vital character of myth” (16). They describe myth as “a credible dramatic, socially constructed re-presentation of perceived realities that people accept as permanent, fixed knowledge of reality while forgetting (if they were ever aware of it) its tentative, imaginative, created and perhaps fictional qualities” (16). In this way, products of both journalism and theatre are representations of perceived realities. Sociologist Jean Baudrillard has questioned the equation of representation and reality, theorizing that representation “starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent (even if this equivalence is Utopian, it is a fundamental axiom)” (404). In this way of understanding the world, all of the “signs” that represent reality are constructed.

Some of the territory of this chapter's discussion has been covered by the literature regarding semiotics. Philosopher and linguist Charles S. Pierce (1839-1914) is one of the founders of semiotics, the "theory of signs." Pierce explained semiotics as a triadic relationship between the actual sign, the idea the sign conjures in the viewer's head and meaning generated when the two are linked (Mattelart and Mattelart 24). In other words, a person sees a red traffic light, they think of the idea that red means stop, and so they understand they are supposed to stop. Theatre semiotician Otakar Zich writes that "everything that makes up reality on the stage – the playwright's text, the actor's acting, the stage lighting... all these things in every case stand for other things. In other words, dramatic performance is a set of signs" (qtd. in Dawson 30). Film and television scholar Christine Geraghty writes about the relationship between semiotics and media studies. Geraghty claims that semiotics "seemed to offer a scientific approach to the construction of meaning," challenging "the notion of transparency in mediation" (46-47). Geraghty explains that semiotics suggests

a process where a pre-existing given, whether it be a physical object or philosophical abstraction, is translated so that it can be comprehended and experienced by a recipient, an observer, an audience. In the process, the mediation may be presented as reflection with the implication that the original is relatively unchanged by the process; or there may be questions of bias, distortion, re-framing so that somehow the purity of the original is lost. (46)

In other words, a media message is constructed, and therefore its authenticity is not guaranteed. To begin her discussion of semiotics and the construction of meaning in performance, Geraghty cites the work of philosopher and semiotician Roland Barthes regarding image as rhetoric, and presents a question that is pertinent to this analysis: "If media texts were a construction, what was the significance for audiences of their claims to represent reality?" (47). All signs may be created, but surely they are not all equal in

their connection to reality? In discussing this issue in relation to documentary theatre, theatre scholar Gary Fisher Dawson describes theatre sign systems as a continuum between “factuality” and “metaphor” (30). In order to apply this question to the relationship between verbatim theatre and journalism, it is helpful to survey some other arts for examples to place on this type of continuum and note some of the issues that arise within these examples.

For the purposes of this chapter, we will take a slightly more tailored approach to understanding where and how various arts sit on the spectrum of creation. Building on Dawson’s notion of a continuum between factuality and metaphor, it is helpful to further define our spectrum. Communications scholar Jane Chapman describes how representation “can be construed in three different ways: as a photographic or aural likeness of something; as a way of standing for the views of organizations, groups or agencies; and as making a case or proposition for some aspect of the real world” (29). Our spectrum will take a slightly different approach, by including representation as a category under the broader heading of “creation.” In order to visualize our continuum, we can imagine the broader spectrum of artistic creation as ranging from reality to fantasy. In the process of reporting information or representing meaning, the product created must begin with real events. However, there is no limit to artistic creation, and that is why our spectrum of creation extends all the way to fantasy. What is interesting and pertinent for this analysis are the categories between the two extremes. For the purposes of this discussion we can subdivide the spectrum into three main categories (see Figure 2). Of course, the borders/progression between these categories are malleable, resulting in consequences that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Fig.2: Spectrum of Creation

For now, let us identify the first zone on the spectrum as “reportage.” Closest to reality, this zone includes any practice where the information an artist is trying to portray is reported to the audience in a straightforward way, with the intention of capturing the literal reality. Most traditional journalism fits into this category. An example from this zone is a photographer taking a picture of a house fire. The house is actually on fire and the photographer has managed to capture that moment in time and report it to the audience. We can identify the middle zone on the spectrum as “representation.” In between reality and fantasy, we have examples of art forms that represent the information they are trying to portray, by presenting something that is a likeness to reality – but that is not actually real.²⁰ Continuing with a photography analogy, an example from this zone is a posed photograph of two people kissing. The photographer wants to illustrate a scene of two people kissing, but the kiss would not actually be happening without the photographer creating the scene. The posed kiss picture represents the reality that is being acted out. The final zone on our spectrum is “metaphoric.” In this zone, artists move away from both reality and representation by crafting something in order to represent something “beyond” what is literally depicted. An example from this zone would be a

²⁰ In other words, something that is not precisely as it existed or occurred spontaneously in nature.

photograph of a flock of birds where the photographer has used a computer program to alter the photograph and include a flying pig. This example is close to fantasy, in that it does not exist, but it evokes a broader meaning in the viewer's mind.

The remainder of this chapter will apply this spectrum of creation to different artistic modes of creation, including: literary journalism, photography, film documentary, and verbatim theatre. By briefly discussing a few examples of each art, we will begin to understand some of the issues involved in creation that are pertinent to the overall goal of this thesis. Before beginning our survey of the different arts, it is useful to once again acknowledge journalism as a creative product, constructed from reality.²¹ As journalism scholars Elizabeth Bird and Robert Dardenne argue, “news is not fiction, it is a story about reality, not reality itself” (qtd. in Carey 1988: 82). Narrative sequencing is prevalent in the creation of contemporary journalism, and is therefore a clear example of how the journalistic product is creatively constructed.

Narrative in Journalism

The use of narrative in journalism has become the norm, but this has not always been the case. In 1934, philosopher Walter Benjamin described the newspaper as an “arena of... literary confusion” (89), critiquing its “unselective assimilation of facts” (90). Journalist Robert Fulford provides a succinct description of the evolution of the newspaper story. He explains that as newspaper chains and wire services developed, “the need for efficiency and the doctrine of least cost drove them towards standardization. Articles fell into calcified, predictable patterns, and journalists slowly lost the ability to

²¹ In this case, “from” refers to both the materials used to construct the product and the starting point from which the creation of the product begins.

tell engaging stories” (75). Fulford then provides examples of journalists like Henry Luce and George Orwell, who embraced more creative approaches to story structure, using narrative to their advantage. He believes “that journalism is an imaginative construction. It follows the rules of its maker as much as it imitates reality” (Fulford 78). A brief discussion of narrative in journalism helps to illustrate that the journalistic product is indeed an “imagined construction.”

Sociologist Catherine Kohler Riessman addresses the broad and relatively undefined category of narrative. She explains two schools of thought on the matter: one is an expansive definition that allows almost anything to be interpreted as narrative and the other that assumes “narratives are stories about a specific past event and they have common properties” (17). Riessman acknowledges Aristotle’s main criteria for narrative as having a beginning, middle and end. She further explains that most scholars treat narratives as “discrete units, with clear beginnings and endings, as detachable from the surrounding discourse rather than as situated events” (17). For the purpose of this research, the second way of thinking will be adopted. In this way, narrative seems to be more easily defined in the context of a question, rather than by a definition. Riessman says, “A narrative... is always responding to the question ‘and then what happened?’ ” (17). This reporting function is of course very present in journalism.

Sociologists Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein note that performance of a narrative changes its meaning. They devote an entire chapter of their book to the “performance of narrative.” They introduce this chapter with this claim:

If stories are actively composed, storytelling is staged. It is animated and transpires somewhere, in relation to some audience, for some purpose. Stories are designed accordingly,

with their linkages and composition shaped for, and by, listeners. This again takes us outside story texts, to their performative circumstances. (81)²²

To illustrate their claim, Gubrium and Holstein point to the work of anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod in Egyptian Bedouin communities. Abu-Lughod claims “since audience and purpose are always in play, there is no sense in pretending that one can obtain and convey objective stories” (83). In her research, Abu-Lughod found Bedouin women would combine “cultural details in different ways, accenting them for different purposes in relation to listeners” (86). In this way, even the source of the original narrative is controlling and shaping her story.

One of the main values of “story” is that it aids understanding. Anthropologist Elizabeth Bird discusses narratives in tabloid journalism, arguing that “storytelling is an essential component in effective journalism” (Bird 2009: 44), and claiming that “the ability to tell complex stories effectively and authoritatively may be the key to the survival of newspapers” (44). Bird points to her 1993 study, which found people were both more likely to care about and even remember story-based current affairs news items as opposed to hard news (Bird 2003: 27). She quotes several of her respondents, summarizing the responses and distilling some of their “key elements of the satisfying story” (29). The element most pertinent to this analysis is the notion that a satisfying story was one with a coherent narrative with a point (Bird 29).

In his investigation of the processing needs of radio listeners, journalism scholar David Tait directly addresses the use and shaping of narrative as a language strategy in

²² Performance studies scholars mark the difference between the words “performance” and “performative.” For the purposes of this thesis, “performance” refers to action that has been rehearsed with the intention of being performed. “Performative” refers to action that is theatrical in nature.

presenting radio news (99). He cites philosophy scholar Louis Mink's work on the relationship of literary form to historical understanding:

Even though narrative form may be, for most people, associated with fairy tales, myths, and the entertainment of the novel, it remains true that narrative is a primary cognitive instrument – an instrument rivaled in fact, only by theory and metaphor as irreducible ways of making the flux of experience comprehensible. (qtd. in Tait 100)

Tait explains that both the length and the structure of an oral narrative factor into how well the listener receives the information. He charts basic narrative structures drawn from Aboriginal storytelling and other oral traditions, focusing on the actual sequencing of narrative events. Tait takes the shell of “beginning, middle and end” and fills it in with “Orientation,” “Complication,” “Response,” “Resolution,” and “Closure” (Tait). He explains a predictable story framework draws the listener's attention and aids the listener in following and retaining the story (103). Tait then applies his framework to case study examples in order “to see if lessons learned by countless generations of bards – and more recently, by ethnographers and linguists – are still worth teaching to the radio journalist” (106).

In his first example, he deconstructs and then reconstructs a “tangled” news story that was produced under rushed circumstances. Tait describes the “original news story's drastic ‘violation’ of traditional (or what Mandler and Johnson call ideal) story sequence” which “could have had an extremely serious impact on comprehension and recall” (115). By labelling and re-arranging the narrative elements according to his framework, and slightly altering the vocabulary to smooth out these changes, he produces a much clearer story. Tait's work with narrative as a tool for understanding in radio journalism illustrates that it is advantageous for a journalist to employ narrative sequencing. While Tait's

research demonstrates the value of the chronological rearranging of information, one could infer that (if it aided understanding) thematic shaping of information would also be useful and acceptable. This authority in structuring and shaping a story conjures questions about the acceptable extent of shaping a story. How do created products change as they move from reality to fantasy? This brings us back to our survey of different creative arts. By providing examples from the zones of reportage, representation and metaphor, this survey will help answer this question and gather some pertinent issues for the overall analysis.

Literary journalism

Literary journalism has been defined as “the marriage of depth reporting and literary techniques” (Berner 22). The form has been traced back to the 1700s and the writing of Daniel Defoe,²³ and includes (among many others) the work of famous writers such as Mark Twain, John Steinbeck, Truman Capote and Tom Wolfe (Sims and Kramer 21). Literary scholars Ben Yagoda and Kevin Kerrane introduce their anthology *The Art of Fact* by describing “literary journalism” as a “profoundly fuzzy term” (13). In order to compile their anthology, they worked towards better defining the term and its criteria. Beginning with the second half of the term, they define journalism as factual and comprised of gathered facts relating to a current issue (13-14). They qualify literary journalism as journalism that is “thoughtfully, artfully and valuably innovative” (14), placing emphasis on the importance of innovation. Yagoda and Kerrane believe innovation is crucial both in terms of variance from traditional journalism and in advancing techniques and practices within literary journalism itself. Literary scholar

²³ Author of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Norman Sims shies away from a definition by instead claiming that writers have different approaches to literary journalism, but that their work shares common characteristics (4).

Literary scholar Mark Kramer describes these characteristics in the form of “Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists” (21-34). Kramer takes issue with the term itself, saying “the ‘literary’ part [is] self congratulating and the ‘journalism’ part masking the form’s inventiveness” (21). While these qualms help to reveal some of the tensions surrounding representation and creation in literary journalism, Kramer believes the term to be “roughly accurate,” in that “the paired words cancel each other’s vices and describe the sort of nonfiction in which arts of style and narrative construction long associated with fiction help pierce to the quick of what’s happening—the essence of journalism” (21). Kramer’s rules (which are more like characteristics) include interesting qualities, such as the fact that literary journalists are often immersed with sources for longer periods of time than traditional journalists, that literary journalists usually focus on routine events and that literary journalists talk about following certain guidelines to “keep things square with readers” (25). The accountability of literary journalism is a pertinent and interesting issue. Kramer writes that contemporary literary journalists maintain their credibility by avoiding techniques such as constructing composite scenes, inventing quotations, attributing thoughts to sources without their confirmation and misstating the chronology of events (25). However, as the title of Kramer’s paper clearly suggests, these are “breakable rules,” and in the arts, rules are made to be broken.

Within the realm of literary journalism, the work of British writer Henry Mayhew provides a good example for our zone of reportage. Mayhew (1812-1887) lived in Great

Britain, and his literary career included “stints as a novelist, educator, magazine editor, and satirist,” but he found his true calling when he became the “Metropolitan Correspondent” for the London *Morning Chronicle* in 1849 (Kerrane and Yagoda 34). Kerrane and Yagoda point out that one of Mayhew’s stylistic innovations resulted from the limited space allotted in a newspaper. To condense and frame his material, Mayhew “edited out his own questions and wove the interviewee’s words into a continuous testimony, a kind of life statement, a dramatic monologue in prose” (Kerrane and Yagoda 34). Novelist William Thackeray describes Mayhew’s work as “a picture of human life so wonderful, so awful, so piteous and pathetic, so exciting and terrible, that readers of romances own they never read anything like it” (Kerrane and Yagoda 34). An example of Mayhew’s work is the piece “Watercress Girl” from his 1861-1862 publication *London Labour and the London Poor*:

It’s very cold before winter comes on reg’lar – specially getting up of a morning. I gets up in the dark by the light of the lamp in the court. When the snow is on the ground, there’s no creases. I bears the cold – you must; so I puts my hands under my shawl, though it hurts ’em to take hold of the creases, especially when we takes ’em to the pump to wash ’em. No; I never see any children crying – it’s no use. (Mayhew 151)

This section of the watercress girl’s monologue illustrates the power of preserving the common speech patterns and vocabulary. Although Mayhew is attributing the speech to the girl, the absence of his questions does raise the question of the journalist’s presence in the story and the transparency of process. We are also not totally left to generate our reality from the reported statement itself, as Mayhew introduces his character by describing their interaction and her “little face, pale and thin with privation... wrinkled where the dimples ought to have been” (Mayhew 151). In this way, Mayhew is providing context and guidance to the audience. This kind of shaping of the reportage illustrates

how items in the reportage zone can have elements that move them toward the zone of representation.

The work of English author and journalist George Orwell²⁴ (1903-1950) provides an example for the zone of representation. For his 1937 book *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell lived with workers in a depression-afflicted British mining town (Fenwick 51). He did a great deal of journalistic research including performing interviews, studying health and housing reports, and even spending time in the mines themselves (Fulford 85). However, the technique most pertinent to this analysis was not evident in his research, but rather in his writing. At one point in the book, Orwell describes the view from his train window, including the “monstrous scenery of slag heaps, ... piled scrap iron, foul canals, paths of cindery mud” (18). In the same passage, he describes seeing a poverty-stricken woman, detailing the profound human suffering he could see in her face. Years later, biographer Bernard Crick noted that Orwell did not actually see the woman on that train ride, and that he in fact had seen her when he was out walking one day, and that he “rearranged events to serve his narrative,” transplanting her to the train window scene for reasons of “poetic force” (Fulford 87). Although Orwell was creating a composite scene out of two real experiences he had, the scene as represented did not actually happen. This raises questions of transparency and introduces the slippery slope of representation. The use of composite characters and composite scenes will be discussed later in this chapter, and in detail in chapter five.

The metaphorical zone of creation is well represented by the work of American author and journalist Tom Wolfe (1931-). Wolfe is best known for his association to the

²⁴ Orwell was born Eric Arthur Blair.

concept of “new journalism,” the title of an anthology he published in 1973.²⁵ In the new journalism movement, Wolfe “credited the new journalists with creating journalism that read like a novel – a non-fiction novel...” (Shomette xvvi). Wolfe began moving from representing what he experienced into the realm of representing a bigger concept. In the first sentence of his 1964 piece “Girl of the Year,” Wolfe attempts to communicate a feeling, a pace, some sort of reality greater than normal description can describe:

Bangs mane bouffants beehives Beatle caps butter faces brush-on lashes decal eyes puffy sweaters French thrust bras flailing leather blue jeans stretch pants stretch jeans honeydew bottoms éclair shanks elf boots ballerinas Knight slippers, hundreds of them, these flaming little buds, bobbing and screaming, rocketing around inside the Academy of Music Theater underneath that vast old mouldering cherub dome up there – aren’t they super-marvelous! (204)

Moving into the realm of metaphor we can still see traces of reportage and representation. For example, by using observational techniques Wolfe is still technically reporting. The description itself is a representation of what he experienced. However, the creative element pertinent to this analysis is that Wolfe was attempting to represent something other than the actual event. Literary scholars Ben Yagoda and Kevin Kerrane address this in recognizing that

for Wolfe, traditional cadences and structures simply could not do justice to the sheer manic energy of the early- and mid-sixties zeitgeist, and so here he gives us present tense scenes, over-the-top cinematic lap dissolves, a narrative voice bordering on hysterical, and high-octane punctuation (dashes, ellipses, exclamation points, and italics) that collectively evoke the era. (Kerrane and Yagoda 269)

This representation and metaphoric stages of creation raise questions of accuracy and accountability. Yagoda also makes a comment against the use of quotations that is an

²⁵ The term “new journalism” was originally coined by English poet and cultural critic Matthew Arnold in 1887 to “describe the style of Stead’s *Pall Mall Gazette*: brash, vivid, personal, reform minded – and occasionally from Arnold’s conservative viewpoint, ‘featherbrained.’ ”(Kerrane and Yagoda 17).

interesting example of how the tension between reportage and representation/metaphor manifest themselves within literary journalism. After acknowledging the purpose of accuracy and authenticity that quotations serve, he critiques the use of quotations as “antiliterary,” writing that quotations

take the reader away from the moment in question to some vague and indeterminate present in which the quote is uttered. They take the writer away from his or her voice. And they take away from the writing the deep-down appeal of once-upon-a-time storytelling. Compare: *‘I knew I had to get out of there,’ said firefighter Ken Jones* with *Jones knew he had to get out of there*. The first is the boilerplate; the second, a cobblestone in the road to art. (Yagoda 14, italics his)

While the author of this story may have interviewed the firefighter and then turned his quotation into a thought—this convention is problematic in that it leads the reader to believe the author has knowledge of and authority over what is going on in the “real” subjects’ minds at all times. This example also brings us back to the questions of transparency raised in the Mayhew section. Further exploration and identification of these issues is possible in a brief survey of photography.

Photography

Creative issues are abundant in the medium of photography. As with the literary journalist, a photographer relies on the real world for ingredients, making a picture out of what exists in reality.²⁶ Both arts use their tools to describe the world around them. In fact, the following piece by literary journalist John McPhee inspired photographer Edward Burtynsky to photograph scrap tires (Pauli 25):

At rest on sloping ground, the tires are so deep that they form their own topography – their own escarpments, their own overhanging cliffs. Deposited from a ridgeline, they border a

²⁶ Nowadays with the prevalence of Photoshop and other computer programs that allow the alteration and creation of photographs, this statement is of course alterable in itself. However, for the purposes of this discussion, non-manipulated photography shall be focused on.

valley for nearly half a mile. When you first glimpse them, you are not sure what they are.
(McPhee 151)

Are the photographs of the tires Burtynsky produced more genuine than the description provided by McPhee? Certainly, the photograph has an added truth claim. It is a record of something that actually exists, or something that actually happened. The dominance of realist photography during the Depression and war years in the United States is captured by photographer Ansel Adam's observation that the highest function of photography "will be to relate the world of nature to the world of man, and man to men in the fullest meaning of the term" (Grundberg and McCarthy Gauss 17). Literary theorist Susan Sontag argues that "what is written about a person or an event is frankly an interpretation, as are handmade visual statements, like paintings and drawings. Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire" (4).

As Sontag says, photographs are miniature representations of reality that are made. They only *seem* to be pieces of the world. They are, in fact, created just as much as the articles of a literary journalist. Philosophy scholar and art critic Arthur C. Danto writes about the creative impact of the photographer, describing a photograph as "in effect, a kind of writing, in which, in addition to whatever truth is written down, the writer discloses to the eye of the handwriting analyst as much about himself as about the subject of his inscription" (47). Film and television scholar Christine Geraghty elaborates on the complexity of the relationship of the image to the object in photography, explaining that "a photograph of a cat might signify the concept of a cat but it also relied on the concept of resemblance by referring to this cat, at this moment, in this place" (48). In other words, because the cat is a specific cat that actually exists, the image is a

representation of both the idea of a cat and that specific cat. The fact the cat exists serves to enhance the truth claim of the photograph by doing what literary theorist and semiotician Roland Barthes calls reinforcing “the myth of photographic ‘naturalness’ ” and generating “an awareness of its having been there” (Barthes 44). Additionally, from the mere fact the photographer chose to take a particular picture at a particular moment, we are seeing a selected viewpoint. A photograph is not a reproduction of reality – it is a creation. This distinction allows us to discuss photography along our spectrum of creation, resulting from the photographer’s interaction with reality.

Examples for the zone of reportage on our spectrum can be found in the work of American photographer Walker Evans (1903-1975). Evans was born and raised in the United States, but spent an important period of his early adulthood in Paris (Rathbone 2, 23, 307). It was there he was exposed to various inspirations, including the work of French writer Gustave Flaubert (Szarkowski 9). Historian and photographer John Szarkowski speculates that Evans read this advice from Flaubert:

An artist must be in his work like God in Creation, invisible and all-powerful; he should be everywhere felt, but nowhere seen. Furthermore, Art must rise above personal emotions and nervous susceptibilities. It is time to endow it with pitiless method, with the exactness of the physical sciences. (qtd. in Szarkowski 11)

This type of early formative thinking led Evans to craft his own work standards and style. He “thought of photography as a way of preserving segments out of time itself, without regard for the conventional structures of picture building. Nothing was to be imposed on experience; the truth was to be discovered, not constructed” (Szarkowski 12). Evans wanted his work to be “literate, authoritative and transcendent” (qtd. in Szarkowski 13).

He condemned “artiness,”²⁷ believing it was an unnecessary shaping of fact. Even as photographic technology advanced, Evans rejected artificial lighting equipment and instead worked with natural light (Szarkowski 16-17). His work captured seemingly mundane subjects such as the walls of rooms, main streets and junkyards – the last of which was an inspiration to Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky (Pauli 26).

In a similar vein to Evans, Burtynsky (1955-) largely photographs landscapes rather than people and uses natural lighting and already existing circumstances. Burtynsky is known for his large-scale photographs of industrial sites. He claims his large-format camera allows him to “slow down his way of seeing” (qtd. in Pauli 13). Although Burtynsky’s work chronicles landscapes that have been influenced by industry, curator Lori Pauli points out that his photographs “are not overtly political. They do not assign any blame – neither on society as a whole, nor on the companies that operate mines or refineries. These images force us simply to contemplate our imprint on the land” (22). However, Burtynsky himself strives to make his art achieve a balance between form and content, stating that “in photography, if you go too far one way, it becomes reportage, too far the other way it just becomes a formalist exercise” (50). In this way, Burtynsky is acknowledging that the image is constructed both by the artist’s technical capturing of reality and her or his idea of what she or he wants the image to represent.

In the same way, while working for the American Farm Security Administration photographic project during the 1930s, Walker Evans and other photographers would take “dozens” of pictures of their subjects until they had captured “the precise expression on the subject’s face that supported their own notions about poverty, light, dignity,

²⁷ Szarkowski defines artiness as “an exaggerated concern for the autographic nature of personal style” (10).

texture, exploitation, and geometry” (Sontag 6). Sontag describes this control over how the picture looks as the photographers “imposing standards on their subjects” (6). This notion of control brings up questions of transparency of authorship and illustrates how the work of Evans (like the pattern developing in our spectrum) leans from reportage toward the next zone, representation.

A famous photograph by French photographer Robert Doisneau continues our transition into the zone of representation. Doisneau (1912-1994) is well-known for his photographs that captured Paris in the early half of the twentieth century (Hamilton 11, 12, 356). One of his most famous photographs is the 1950 portrait “Le Basier de l’Hotel de Ville” (The Kiss at City Hall). In the picture, two young people are caught in a passionate kiss. This photograph was part of a relatively high-paying assignment commissioned as part of a *LIFE* magazine article titled “Speaking of pictures... In Paris Young Lovers Kiss Whenever They Want and Nobody Seems to Care” (Hamilton 137-138). Even though Doisneau found the assignment “a bit corny,” the photos in this series stayed true to his naturalistic style. The assignment had been designed for Doisneau and he “knew the only way to carry out such a task was to use *figurants* (models) and to place them in interesting situations using very ‘Parisian’ settings as backdrops” (Hamilton 136). Doisneau found inspiration for the poses in real life situations – in fact would often recreate a situation that he had seen in everyday life but had been unable to capture with his camera. However, these particular pictures were presented as “un-posed” when they were displayed in *LIFE* (Hamilton 180, 138). The details behind the famous kiss photograph came under public scrutiny in the early 1990s, when a pair claiming to be the

kissing couple sued Dosineau for royalties. During the trial, Dosineau revealed he had paid actors to perform the kiss (Hamilton 354).

An example for the metaphoric zone is the work of American photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. Mapplethorpe (1946-1989) was well known for his photographs that combined classical style with distinct and often pornographic content (The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Danto 23-24). Subjects in Mapplethorpe's photographs are clearly "staged" in a certain way, as opposed to being caught by the camera. Philosophy scholar and art critic Arthur C. Danto writes that there is "no way of confusing" Mapplethorpe's work with "the guileless photographer who merely points and clicks" (49-50). Clearly Mapplethorpe's works are not in the zone of reportage. What moves Mapplethorpe out of the zone of representation is that instead of representing the actual (or *only* representing the actual), his photographs represent meaning in addition to what is in the photograph. Literary theorist Susan Sontag observed that what Mapplethorpe looked for was "the quiddity... of something. Not the truth about something, but the strongest version of it" (Howard 155). For example, his 1984 photograph *Annamirl* features a fully clothed woman with composed expression, exposing one of her breasts through her shirt. Danto describes this photograph, observing that "one feels she is reminding the viewer that the breast is a source of nourishment and warmth and comfort as much as or more than a target of arousal and stimulation" (33). Similarly, Mapplethorpe's 1979 photograph *Brian Ridley and Lyle Heeter* prompts viewer to challenge their expectations and question what statement the photographer wants to make. The photograph features two grown men fully dressed in S&M gear, in an ordinary living room. One man is bound by

chains and sits in a chair, while the other man stands dominantly above him (Danto 37-40).

This has been a brief survey of a very small sampling of these photographer's bodies of work. For example, the kiss photograph is only one photograph out of Dosineau's entire career. While the posing (and payment) of actors may seem like a large step along the spectrum, it is important to realize it is actually not all that different from Evans doing multiple retakes to capture his desired image – and, in fact, it is quite similar to the practice of “stage-managing” a photograph that photographers had used due to the cumbersome equipment of the era (Lester 115). After all, the two people Dosineau captured were accurate representatives of young Parisian lovers. Is there a problem with the fact that they are not actually kissing spontaneously? As with the last example, this brings forward the question of the truth claim being made by the photograph. Until his moment in court, Dosineau led us to believe that it was a “real” moment he had been fortunate enough to capture. There are no rules for transparency in art – and the purpose of this chapter is not to argue that there should be. However, as the challenges associated with representation begin to crop up in these different arts, it is notable that some of them have more extreme consequences when measured against some of the elements of journalism.²⁸ These contrasts will become more apparent in chapters four and five. The similarity between the posing of Dosineau and the retakes of Evans also reinforces another pattern in the discussion of our spectrum: the very blurry boundary between the zones of reportage and representation.

²⁸ For example, photojournalist Norman Zeisloft was fired after taking the “staging” of a photograph too far and asking a subject at a baseball game to write something on his feet for the camera (Lester 115).

Issues associated with Mapplethorpe's work also add to our broader discussion.

While this brief analysis only touched on two photographs, there are many more (and many more provocative) examples to explore. Many of Mapplethorpe's photographs garnered significant controversy and even caused exhibitions to be cancelled (Danto 60-67). Although interesting, the debates surrounding freedom of expression and pornography are not particularly relevant to this analysis. What we can take from the controversy surrounding Mapplethorpe's metaphoric work is that the controversy obscured the artistic message that he was trying to communicate.²⁹ For the purposes of our discussion, the issue of clarity of communication is notable. Film and television scholar Christine Geraghty applies philosopher and semiotician Roland Barthes' term "to anchor" to the discussion of clearly communicating the intended meaning of the photograph. Geraghty writes that written text accompanying a picture (such as a caption or a headline) can work to rule out inappropriate meanings and highlight others as correct (49). The concept of the anchor (and the possible consequences of not having one) can also be added to our list of issues stemming from these creative arts. A brief survey of film documentary allows us to continue our investigation of these issues.

Film Documentary

In many ways, the practices and inherent issues of film documentary are extensions of those discussed in the photography section. Photography scholar Robert Graham writes that there can be "no doubt that photographic imagery is composed of a contingent selection of perspective, focus and emphasis and is subject to the general and distorting effects of local and general interests" (10). In other words, photography is

²⁹ Though perhaps the controversy was the message.

clearly a creative act, shaped by influences outside of the frame of the photograph.

Film documentary follows the same path, using even more advanced technology to further explore its investigation and portrayal of reality. Communications scholar Jane Chapman defines documentary as “a discursive formation, presenting first-hand experience and fact by creating a rhetoric of immediacy and ‘truth’ using photographic technology” (8). Pioneer documentary film theorist and documentarian Dziga Vertov was a strong believer in the power of the camera and the editing process, a combination which he called the “kino-eye” (Cousins and Macdonald 51). Vertov believed the “kino-eye” was far superior to the human eye, and that it therefore allowed a much greater understanding of the world. In Vertov’s own words: “I am the kino-eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it” (Cousins and Macdonald 55).

Like photography, film documentary is an extremely broad and diverse genre. Communications scholar John Corner describes documentary studies as a “rather unstable category” (Chapman 8). From the early 1920s, films captured “real people in everyday situations,” but it was not until 1932 that documentarian John Grierson distinguished documentary from other fact-based films (Chapman 9). For Grierson “documentary went beyond arrangement and description because of the way it used ‘a creative treatment of actuality:’ this aesthetic shaping offered a unique capacity for revelation rather than merely mechanistic observation or reflection of the real” (qtd. in Chapman 9). From this early definition, it is clear that although (like photography) there is an enticing element of reality – documentaries are also very much created. The examples outlined in this section are only three discussion points selected from a vast and diverse pool. As with the

preceding sections, the particular examples have been selected in order to chart certain trends and issues that are relevant to our broader discussion of artistic creation.

The ethnographic documentaries of French anthropologist and documentarian Jean Rouch provide an interesting example for the zone of reportage. Rouch (1917-2004) is known as one of the filmmakers whose work exemplifies the French Cinema Verité (Eaton 1-8, Chapman 50). Chapman draws on film scholar Paul Arthur to describe the reporting nature of Cinema Verité:

The omnipresent camera becomes a silent ally of the people that are being filmed, for the filmmaker is a chronicler of what is happening, in every detail, no matter how boring. This is how the truth is reached – and the Verité filmmaker argues that the approach is objective because it does not mediate or manipulate, maintaining “a fly-on-the-wall reserve as it gleaned supposedly deeper, more intimate perceptions filtered out by conventional reporting.” (Chapman 50)

Cinema Verité is similar to the “direct cinema” techniques employed in United States in the 1960s. Film scholar Stephen Mamber argues that “the essential element of Cinema Verité is the act of filming real people in uncontrolled situations” (2). This “uncontrolled cinema” documented events without narration, interviews or direction of the films subjects (Mamber 2-3). Rouch’s work was similar in that he provided “images that defy simple explanation, images that trigger our imaginations” (Rothman 132). By presenting the images as a direct record of what happened, Rouch is reporting information. However, similar issues arise with this style as with the literary journalism of Henry Mayhew and the realist photography of Walker Evans. Namely, the concept of the omnipresent documentarian. Rouch felt it was misleading, believing in “the necessity of acknowledging the impact of the filmmaker’s presence” (Renov xxi). As opposed to being authoritative or authenticating, Rouch used the voice-over to create a “testimonial

presence tinged by self doubt or bemusement” (Renov xxi). In other words, he wanted to be reflexive³⁰ about his presence and role in the process that was unfolding. Film scholar Michael Renov argues that Rouch’s use of the voice-over is a “crucial historical link” to the “autobiographical outbreak of the 1980s and 1990s” (Renov xxi-xxii). The autobiographical style plays into the work of Michael Moore, discussed later in this section.

Jean Rouch saw the camera as “a psychological participant in the unfolding of events, so that the filming situation will sometimes draw us nearer to the truth” (Chapman 50). In other words, Rouch felt that by participating in a situation, the camera (and person behind the camera) could help aid understanding of that situation. The bulk of Rouch’s ethnographic work focused on the Songhay-speaking people of Niger and Mali. Many of his films documented Songhay rituals, including the spirit-possession ceremonies (Rothman 128-130). Film scholar Paul Stoller points to the example of Rouch’s short one-take film *Les tambours d’avant: Tourou et Bitti* (1971), where Rouch recorded a ceremony where a spirit priest and musicians work to help summon spirits to possess a dancer. At the start of this film, Rouch says to enter into his film “is to plunge into the real” (Stoller 131). Perhaps this statement represents Rouch’s own amazement regarding the fact someone was about to be possessed. Surely, it is an acknowledgement of his presence behind the camera.

Even once they have declared their presence, documentarians still carry both a cultural and personal bias towards the subject of the documentary. Films such as Rouch’s are noted as having a quality of “visual imperialism” (Chapman 34), due to the fact that

³⁰ For a detailed explanation about the use of the terms “reflexive” and “reflexivity,” please see chapter two, page thirty-five.

the filmmakers are usually outsiders capturing pieces of another culture. As well, like the examples from other media, the person behind the camera in this type of documentary is rarely seen or heard from, creating illusions of no mediation and no bias. Chapman calls this a “representational imbalance” and suggests that one solution is to “introduce a level of reflexivity” (35) as Rouch has done in his work. According to Chapman, the trend in film documentary over the past twenty years “has been towards greater reflexivity and subjectivity, with more prominence given to the author/filmmaker” (48). The notion of reflexivity as a substitute for objectivity is an important addition to our tally of issues, and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four. In acknowledging both the presence and reflexivity of the documentarian, it is interesting to note film scholar Mick Eaton’s interpretation of Rouch’s *Touhou et Bitti* as an example of the effect of the observer on the activity being observed. Eaton describes how after the possession ceremony finished, the musicians turned toward Rouch. When they noticed he was still filming, they began playing again, performing the ceremony once again for the camera (Eaton 23). This is not overly apparent from the film itself. However, if Eaton is correct, this is an example of how a real event, featuring real people, can easily become a representation. Although the “fly on the wall” style is a good starting point for discussion of reportage – this example (and other works by Rouch) helped shape film documentaries into an “interactive mode in which the filmmaker-subject encounter takes precedence over externalized observation” (Renov 178).

The work of American documentarian Errol Morris is an interesting example for the zone of representation. Morris’s documentary style combines interviews with reenactments and recreations – all based on what is being said in the interview. Morris

believes that the interview is the most important part of the documentary and he uses interviews as the central feature of his films. From early in his career, Morris “attempted to film interviews in such a way as to convey the illusion – if it is an illusion – that the camera’s subjects are speaking to us, not to him” (Rothman 3). In order to have the interview subjects look directly at the camera, Morris invented what he calls the “Interotron” – a machine that uses teleprompter technology to project his live video image on the lens of the camera. This way, the subject could talk directly to the camera. As Morris puts it, thanks to this technology, “there was no looking off slightly to the side. No more faux first person. This was the true first person” (qtd. in Rothman 4). This technique works to involve the audience in a way similar to *The Farm Show* characters described in chapter two. Casting the audience as the other half of the conversation is one way to be reflexive, and hopefully communicate that what they are watching is an interview, constructed by an interviewer, whose shoes they now fill. This technique will be further discussed in chapter five. For the purposes of this chapter we must look further at Morris’s use of representations and reenactments.

Errol Morris’s film *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) garnered him considerable fame when it was “submitted in court as evidence to secure the retrial and eventual release of the man who, the film reveals, had wrongfully been convicted of murder” (Rothman 3). In the film, Morris presents detailed interviews with several people who were involved in the murder case, including police officers, lawyers, the man who says he was wrongfully convicted, another suspect, and friends of the other suspect. If these interviews were simply presented back to back, they would be an example fit for the zone of reportage. However, between and during the interviews, Morris has added recreations or

reenactments depicting what the subjects of the interviews are talking about. For example, while one of the subjects talks about a pistol, the visuals cut away to a pistol. While another subject discusses the difference between two different cars that were suspect in the case, the visuals cut away to shots of both types of car. Several times, we see newspaper headlines or photographs from the events described. Do these representations compromise the legitimacy of the interviews?

In addition to the visual recreations, Morris also uses actors throughout the film to reenact the information in the interviews. For example, when the police officers describe what they think might have happened at the murder scene, we see their theory acted out. As they describe multiple theories, we see other versions acted out. Do these reenactments compromise the legitimacy of the interviews? The issue immediately raised by reenactments is the blurring of the line between reportage and dramatization. Morris was not the only one to use reenactments on the screen. In 1974, playwright David Edgar created a 45-minute made-for-television documentary play, *You Know What I Meant*, constructed verbatim from White House Watergate transcripts. Edgar had to edit the transcripts for reasons of brevity, but every single word spoken on screen has been spoken in reality (Edgar 62).

In the late 1980s, American television news networks were also experimenting with reenactments, ranging from recreations of historical to contemporary events. NBC's "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" recreated a trial (where cameras were originally not allowed) by reassembling half the jury, the judge and the prosecutor, while the remaining parts were played by actors (Alter 2). The only added dialogue to the transcripts was what the program's producer "calls 'wild lines' – bits of 'absolutely benign' dialogue to 'move

the story along' without 'changing its substance' " (Alter 2). This type of reenactment is especially complicated – due to the fact that many of the original people are playing themselves. However, because they are reenacting an event, even the original people involved become actors. Edgar points out that his play “was bristling with impurities: the whole process of making it had consisted of value judgments, from my judgments about what to put in and leave out, to the director’s judgments about what to look at, and the actors’ judgments about pace and inflection and gesture and mood” (62). In other words, a reenactment is not reality, nor is it accurate reportage. It is clearly a representation.

On one hand, both the recreations and reenactments serve the function of providing information and clarification for the viewer. However, film scholar Carl Plantinga also believes they have a more dominant role to play in Morris’s work. Plantinga believes that by implementing this style, “Morris seems to be commenting on the nature of memory itself as built on isolated and tenuous bits of visual images, words, and symbols.... Perhaps this is a metaphor for the search for truth under many circumstances” (54). So, while the reenactments in Morris’s work once again raise the issue of the blurry line between the zones of reportage and representation, they also bring about a new issue for our tally: the blurry line between the representational and the metaphoric. For example, Morris notes that none of the staged scenes in *The Thin Blue Line* are meant to represent the truth; instead, he has “steadfastly claimed that what they do illustrate is the subjective testimony of the witnesses” (Rothman 55). The consequences of moving into the metaphoric zone in film documentary can be further explored by looking at the work of American documentary filmmaker Michael Moore.

The work of Michael Moore is a telling example for the zone of the metaphor.

Moore (1954-) is arguably the best-known documentarian of the 21st century, and is certainly one the most talked about documentarians of all time (Schultz 12,18). Moore's trademark ball cap and often-scruffy face are recognizable largely because he always plays a prominent role in his documentaries, playing the role of himself. Or, as his biographer Emily Schultz puts it: "Moore has become not a man from Flint, but the idea of a man from Flint.... By being that 'idea' of a man from Flint, Flint's own struggles and ideals – and Michael Moore's – become those of America" (12). In this way, Moore's documentaries are metaphors for the ideals he wishes to communicate.

Moore is a proponent of the reflexive style of documentary, which was pioneered by Russian documentarian Dziga Vertov.³¹ Vertov was reflexive "about process, not self, because he believed that a visual consciousness would enable people to see the world in a different, more truthful, way" (Chapman 121). Film scholar Jane Chapman points out that Moore's films have been criticized for falling into the trap of too much reflexivity. By making his process, views and politics the central element his films, Moore can "create an impression of overt narcissism, while reducing the amount of knowledge of the subject matter the audience may be able to acquire through the viewing experience" (124). Additionally, "these 'performative' documentaries raise questions about the role of style and subjectivity as elements of reflexivity that are used to interpret reality" (Chapman 114). Chapman notes that there have been several recent British television personalities that cast themselves as characters (like Moore) by adopting and adapting "the mantle as

³¹ Vertov's 1929 film *Man with a Movie Camera* "records everyday life in 1920s Russia at the same time as how the [filmmaking] process works....The filmmaker appeared on the screen only as a worker who is part of the process" (Chapman 120-121).

performers in formulaic ethnographic series” (114). This brings forward the issue of the interviewer as a performer, which will be explored in greater detail in chapter four.

In addition to his overtly active role in his documentaries, Moore’s films also all have extremely political tones in common. Moore was very open about his two main motivations for making *Fahrenheit 9/11*: he hoped the film would generate debate around the issues raised in the film, and he hoped the film would arouse anger and action that would lead to the defeat of President George W. Bush in the 2004 elections (Toplin 91). The film was certainly popular, as it currently still stands as the highest grossing non-concert documentary of all time (Schultz 9). Supporters of the film applauded Moore’s “chutzpah, panache and originality,” while critics challenged that the piece was “propaganda” as opposed to a documentary (Toplin 138-139). One common criticism of *Fahrenheit 9/11* is that Moore did not communicate truth but rather communicated “*his* truth” (Toplin 4-6, italics his). Vehement anti-Moore writers David T. Hardy and Jason Clark are extremely critical of Moore’s work, claiming he manipulates facts to suit his political narratives. Hardy and Clark interview theatre scholar Dana Benelli, who wonders if Moore is “just a prankster – if he is in fact playing the documentary form and, like *This is Spinal Tap* or films of that sort, making fun of documentaries by doing something that looks like a documentary to make his points” (qtd. in Hardy and Clark 106).

Fellow documentarian Albert Maysles says Moore’s methods are “shameful,” explaining that “left to its own devices, the documentary filmmaker – in seeking truth – has to be open minded.... Moore’s mind is closed to everything but his own preconceptions” (qtd. in Hardy and Clark 112). At a 2004 conference on political

documentaries, a few scholars “expressed distaste for Moore’s strongly biased approach to interpretation and identified Errol Morris’s documentary *Fog of War* (2003) as a much better model of sophisticated filmmaking.³² *Fog of War* was “less incendiary and more responsibly presented, they argued. Morris tried to make audiences think about war, they said, while Moore preached on the subject of war” (Toplin 4). In addition to Moore’s role as a participant in his documentaries, the controversy surrounding the way he expresses his opinions is another issue for our running tally. Moore’s political messages are similar in style to the political theatre of Piscator, Brecht and the Living Newspaper discussed in chapter two.³³ However, perhaps the contemporary title of “documentary” also carries with it a claim of balance.

Back into the Theatre

Many of the issues prevalent in film documentary are shared with documentary theatre. Indeed, the issues discussed across the different creative media are also relevant to traditional theatre. Even in a fictional play, it is interesting to think of the playwright as the original voice – and the director, production crew and actors as the communicators of the playwright’s message.³⁴ However, artistic expression is at the root of the theatre process – and it is the director’s (and others’) job to interpret the play in their own way. This leads us to ask – how accurate are most theatre productions to the playwright’s original vision? And, in traditional, fictional theatre, does this accuracy matter?

³² *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara* (2003) won the Academy Award in 2004 for best documentary feature. It is about the career of McNamara, the U.S. secretary of defense during the Vietnam war (Jaffe 20).

³³ There are also many differences between Moore and Brecht/Piscator. The similarity here is the desire of the artist to prompt a critical audience.

³⁴ This idea of theatre as a “straight line” will be further discussed in chapter four.

Theatre scholar Tibor Egervari says this is a complicated debate that has been going on for a long time. He points to the mechanicals scenes in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as an example of Shakespeare himself making a commentary on the way artistic expression and interpretation changes a play. The mechanicals are a group of workmen rehearsing and performing a play (within a play) for the Duke's wedding. We see the workmen and their play in three distinct scenes: the assignment of parts, the rehearsal and the performance. At each stage in the process, the play-within-the-play changes. Egervari says that this is Shakespeare using comedy to acknowledge the way artistic expression distorts his original work (Egervari). This distortion is acknowledged and more or less accepted in traditional, fictional theatre. However, when we move into the realm of documentary theatre, the issue of interpretation becomes more contentious.

As was outlined in chapter two, documentary theatre is a very broad concept. Film scholar Bill Nichols captures the ambiguity of the documentary genre: "Documentaries adopt no fixed inventory of techniques, address no one set of issues, display no single set of forms or styles. Not all documentaries exhibit a single set of shared characteristics" (qtd. in Forsyth and Megson 7). The same can be said about documentary theatre. However, while there are few commonalities among the content of documentary theatre plays, they do share the common challenge of representing "truth" and the mission of bringing silenced voices to life. The subjects or characters of documentary theatre productions are "the absent, unavailable, dead and disappeared" who "make an appearance by means of subrogation" (Martin 10). In other words, the audience meets live actors representing characters they would otherwise not be able to meet.

Theatre scholar Carol Martin argues that documentary theatre is provocative because of the “way in which it strategically deploys the appearance of truth, while inventing its own appearance of truth through elaborate aesthetic devices” (10). In this way, the audience is connecting to the material through a construction of truth. Martin describes this as both a strength of and a challenge facing documentary theatre. She further explains that issues involving truth and representation are inherent in this genre (Martin 9). Issues of selection and editing are also very present. This gate-keeping function of documentary theatre practitioners is a valid criticism in the discussion of what is “truth.” Martin questions whether documentary theatre is just another form of propaganda, explaining that “[t]ypically its texts and performances are presented not just as a version of what happened but *the* version of what happened. The intention is to persuade spectators to understand specific events in particular ways” (Martin 11, italics added). As with a Michael Moore film, documentary theatre practitioners often present the information in a way that favours a certain stance.

Documentary productions construct meaning in a process that involves several players. Theatre scholar Janelle Reinelt further defines the documentary theatre process as one where although the value of the document is “predicated on a realist epistemology,” the actual documentary is “connected to reality but is not transparent, and is in fact constitutive of the reality it seeks” (7).³⁵ She explains the documentary experience is not in the object, but in the relationship between all players in its mediation (including audiences) (6-7). This is a convenient reminder of our definition of “theatre”

³⁵ This point is very relevant to this discussion, but the wording is a bit academically dense. What Reinelt means by “constitutive” is that the documentarian constructs the “reality” she or he desires to portray.

given at the outset of chapter two. The audience must be accounted for as a part of the shared experience.

In order to return to the discussion of verbatim theatre, and to continue tallying and comparing relevant issues among the creative media in this chapter, it is helpful to briefly include three different examples of verbatim theatre productions that fit into our zones of creation. Two of these examples were already described in chapter two, and an additional example helps to further accentuate the merits of making representations reflexive.

One could argue all verbatim theatre fits into the zone of reportage. However, as the review and analysis of this chapter helps illuminate, the content of the creation is only a part of the equation. In verbatim theatre (as in journalism, literary journalism, photography, film documentary and traditional fictional theatre), there is artistic licence taken by the director, actors and other members of the production team. Simply having the actors sit in chairs in a line at the front of the stage and read the text is a form of artistic interpretation. Therefore, even when the words being spoken are verbatim reports of real people's words, the interpretation of the material can fall into our three different zones of creation. For example, journalist and verbatim theatre playwright Richard Norton-Taylor's tribunal plays are examples fit for the zone of reportage.

As mentioned in chapter two, the tribunal plays are constructed from transcripts of trials and public inquiries. Their purpose is to lead the audience to "assess or surmise what is stated and left un-stated in the material evidence as well as spoken testimony," in order to reveal the "rhetorical gymnastics" of politicians and other public figures (Megson 196). According to theatre scholar Chris Megson, the bulk of Norton-Taylor's

tribunal plays attempted to portray “the seamless representation of inquiry proceedings with an uninterrupted illusionistic frame” (196). Fitting within the zone of reportage, the plays were (like the made-for-television trials discussed in the last section) attempting to report the material as it had occurred. However, as we concluded in the last section, this instantly creates a very slippery slope between reportage and representation – and results in a misleading “danger zone” where the audience is led to believe what they are watching is reality. Megson points out that in addition to being the first of Norton-Taylor’s tribunal plays, *Half the Picture* (1994) is stylistically distinct from the tribunal plays that followed it.

Megson explains that *Half the Picture* is “unique amongst Norton-Taylor’s tribunal plays in featuring interpolated monologues written by socialist playwright and director, the late John McGrath, whose prolific writings on theatre... espouse a commitment to devising a contemporary theatrical aesthetic that restores a socially-critical dimension to the staging of documentary material” (196). In other words, in *Half the Picture*, Norton-Taylor inserted fictional monologues written by playwright John McGrath as a way of breaking the illusion of the trial. We hear from characters such as a British office worker who alerted the government her employers were manufacturing tools to make bombs (Norton-Taylor 1999: 216-217) and a Kurdish man whose people were killed by Iraqi bombs made by a British company (230-231). These monologues help the audience understand the impact of what is being said in the transcripts. However, they are confusing in that their inclusion implies that they too are drawn from some sort of transcripts (or perhaps interviews). For our purposes, the continued issue here is the use of representation as reflexivity.

The degree of representation and mode of reflexivity are also important. For example, *Half the Picture*'s fictional monologues are useful in that they provide context for the trial dialogue, and they interrupt the trial "illusion" – but they are also factually conflicting. It is unclear by reading the script that these monologues have been written – as opposed to transcribed and edited like the other dialogue.³⁶ Norton-Taylor has described these added voices as "composite characters" and defends their presence as representing marginalized voices. However, critics have claimed these types of characters are shaped to meet the needs of the plot (Megson 201). Again, for our purposes, the concern with these plays is that the courtroom illusion makes the claim to be reportage, and so these fictional monologues are inaccurately blended into this claim. There are other examples of reflexivity within verbatim theatre where the representation is more obvious and therefore less conflicting with the "verbatim" claim. The following two examples fit into the zone of representation.

American verbatim theatre practitioner Anna Deveare Smith is well known for her virtuosic one-woman shows, in which she performs absolutely verbatim monologues from a variety of different characters. Smith (1950-) is best known for her verbatim plays *Fires in the Mirror* (1992) and *Twilight Los Angeles* (1993) in which she "embodied individual responses to the violent crimes" that shook the communities of Crown Heights, N.Y., during riots between African Americans and Jews in Los Angeles during the Rodney King Riots (Schechner 205). Smith performs the monologues back to back, and "by carefully juxtaposing one character, one incorporation, to another, she opens

³⁶ Perhaps this was made clear in the program or in the performance. The script's disclaimer is: "With the exception of a very few phrases added only to clarify points of fact and identify individuals, the words are those exchanged between Lord Justice Scott and Presiley Baxendale and the witnesses" (Norton-Taylor 215).

Brechtian spaces for humor, irony, and social dialogue” (Schechner 206). In other words, as an African American woman, Smith is obviously not trying to make the audience think she *is* the range of characters she represents. Her representation is clear, and therefore her audience can think about what she is saying without getting tangled in a representational illusion.

An even better example of obvious representation is the South African verbatim theatre production *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, written by Jane Taylor in collaboration with the Handspring Puppet Company. Theatre scholar Yvette Hutchinson explains the significance of using puppets to deliver verbatim testimony from survivors of apartheid crimes originally spoken as a part of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

While the wood carved puppets are powerful and moving in their depiction of real people, the puppets draw attention to their own artifice. They declare that they are ‘spoken through’, as we see their manipulators onstage with them, speaking and manipulating them as they are being translated, and so they poignantly demonstrate the complex relationship between testimony, translation and documentation. At the same time, there is a dignity and great sadness to these puppets that allows us to hear their stories and feel their emotive impact, while not being so overwhelmed by the particular that we lose sight of the wider issues. In this, *Ubu* goes beyond more conventional forms of verbatim theatre: this both demonstrates and exposes the paradoxes of the form itself through the puppets. (219)

As in Errol Morris’s documentaries, the puppets offer their representations as a form of reflexivity. However, these examples are also similar in that they begin to drift into the zone of the metaphoric. An even more blatant example of verbatim theatre for the metaphoric zone is *To Be Straight With You* (2009), the verbatim theatre/dance production that was mentioned in chapter two. In *To Be Straight With You*, the actors spoke verbatim testimonies in support of or against homosexuality, while at the same

time performing varied dance and movement choreography.³⁷ For example, during one actor's testimony about living as a gay man with a wife and children, the actor performed a beautiful and challenging dance duet with another actor. The verbatim testimony was combined with the dance to produce a greater meaning. As has been noted in this chapter, there is no reason for limits to artistic expression and creation. However, for the purposes of this discussion, it is noteworthy that once an example becomes metaphoric, the clarity of the message being communicated can be compromised. It is clear that the creators wanted the audience to take something away from the dance duet, but it is not clear exactly what. This production could have the same effect as a Mapplethorpe photograph or a Moore documentary. The audience may feel confused or alienated as opposed to engaged and informed. This is an important issue to note, especially as we return the focus of this discussion to the relationship between verbatim theatre and journalism.

Summary

This chapter has provided a review of the use of narrative in journalism and a brief survey of examples from several creative arts. The look at narrative structure was useful in illustrating a clear example of how journalism is a created art. The survey of the other arts is useful for several reasons. Firstly, it has allowed for the tabulation of several different issues, which will be discussed in the remainder of this thesis. Issues of transparency, accuracy and reflexivity are all explored in the next chapter's discussion of journalism as theatre. Issues surrounding editing, the treatment of the audience and the

³⁷ I attended the November 26, 2009 performance of *To Be Straight With You* at Canada's National Arts Centre in Ottawa.

stance of a playwright are all discussed within chapter five's comparison of contemporary verbatim theatre productions to the elements of journalism.

Secondly, the survey has given us specific examples for our spectrum of creation. In doing so, this discussion shows that the borders between the zones of creation are extremely fluid and permeable. This discussion can now be applied to the broader focus of this thesis: the relationship between verbatim theatre and journalism. Why might this spectrum of creation matter? As will be further discussed in chapter five, the elements of journalism favour the zone of reportage, as opposed to the zones of representation or metaphor. This is because journalism pursues reality as opposed to fantasy. However, because the journalistic product is created, its factuality is not automatic and it lies on the spectrum between reality and fantasy.

As has been illustrated in this chapter, as soon as creative elements are added to reportage, the product very quickly moves toward a different zone along the spectrum. For example, a composite character may be defended as an accurate representation of the "truth" – but because the person does not actually exist, it is in fact a lie to depict them as a part of a journalistic product. The audience's expectation for a journalistic product is that it is factual. Therefore, the area between reportage and representation becomes a "danger zone" – if audience members are not aware they are seeing a representation, they are left to believe what they are watching is reportage. As a result, if representations are to be used for a journalistic product, they must be made clear to the audience.

However, making representation clear to a journalistic audience also undermines the assumption of factual reliability, and as a result, compromises the entertainment value. An unlikely parallel is provided by overly theatrical American daytime talk shows

such as *Rikki Lake* and *Springer*. Film and television scholar Christine Geraghty points out that these types of programs draw attention to their own construction, but that “the allegation that the shows actually make up, rather than provoke, the emotional displays on which they rely calls into question their status. It is not just their integrity but their value as entertainment that is diminished if they are revealed as only construction” (56).

This is the same as a composite character. If a person does not actually exist – then they are of no interest to a journalistic audience. Verbatim theatre, however, can safely operate within the zone of representation. It can bring forward the actualities of interviews and transcripts while at the same time being reflexive. By presenting itself as theatre, and not as journalism, it can provide a material to complement traditional journalism, without contravening journalistic guidelines. The discussion of composite characters, as well as other creative techniques, will be more fully pursued in chapter five.

The next chapter will take a slightly different approach to this discussion by looking at journalism as theatre. By considering the world of journalism as a theatrical space, we are able to begin to understand more clearly the role of the journalist as a performer and character, and the implications of her or his actions within a created story. The analogy to the theatre will also allow for exploration of some of the issues raised in this chapter, such as transparency and reflexivity.

Chapter Four

Journalism as Theatre: *The “Journalist” Character*

This chapter is an intermission from the direct discussion of verbatim theatre. The purpose of this chapter is to flip the focus of this thesis to its inverse, in order to begin looking at how journalism relates to the theatre. This chapter is structured in four main sections: the first section presents the analogy of journalism as a theatrical space, describing some parallel roles between traditional theatre and traditional journalism and how these roles change when the journalist steps into the story. The second section examines several levels of performance within journalism practice, focusing on an example of a journalist “stepping into” her story, and the gains and consequences that resulted. The third section is a brief review of the “theatre of stepping in,” outlining some of the gains and consequences of playwrights stepping into their stories, focusing on *The Laramie Project* and *I Am My Own Wife*. A distillation of these examples allows for a clearer view of how this research can be applied to the world of journalism. The fourth section examines the construction of the character of the journalist, and focuses on another example of a journalist inside her story, contrasting the level of involvement and transparency. The conclusion to this chapter outlines how journalists can continue to work towards capitalizing on the gains and minimizing the consequences of stepping into their own stories.

Journalism as A Theatrical Space

The worlds of theatre and journalism are at the same time parallel and opposite. Sociologist Erving Goffman defines performance as “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (15). Conversely, we have already noted G. Stuart Adam’s definition of journalism as “an invention or form of expression used to report and comment in the public media on the events and ideas of the here and now” (11). These two definitions are quite compatible. However, a contrast arises when we approach the issues of “truth” and “objectivity.” On one hand, the theatre is “a place where we go to be lied to” (Egervari), a place “premised on lying, appearance, and the construction of false worlds” (Puchner 41). While the common expectation of journalism is that it is (at least ideally) fact-based, and that “journalism’s first obligation is to the truth” (Kovach and Rosenstiel 5). As Adam notes, “[j]ournalism, after all, is about reality, not fantasy; there are no fairies or dreams in journalism, only the contours of nature and the dreary but familiar faces and words of our fellow beings” (14). However, Adam is just establishing the world of fact as a canvas for the art of journalism. He is leading us toward a creative, created space. He points to the work of British philosopher Michael Oakeshott, who wrote about the imagination, construction and framing of images in poetry. Adam provides this proviso:

Journalists work under varying conditions and deadlines. Some have much more time than others. But more to the point, just as the imaginative gifts of poets and novelists are unequal, so to are the imaginative gifts of journalists. Some are much more creative than others. Some are artists, which means they can invent with invention, and some are bureaucrats, which means they can reproduce the invention without inventing. But all are imaginative in the sense in which Oakeshott uses the word. They imagine and fabricate images. (16)

Continuing with Adam's creative notion of journalism as an artistic

construction, the world of journalism and the world of the theatre are indeed very similar.

American sociologist Norman Denzin argues that the dramatistic theories of Kenneth

Burke continue to be applicable, noting three implications that have followed the

cinematization of American society:

First, reality has become a staged, social production. Second, the real is judged against its staged, cinematic or video counterpart. Third, the metaphor of a dramaturgical society or "life as theater" has now become an interactional reality. It is no longer necessary to restrict "the language and mask of the stage" to theatrical performances. The theatrical aspects of the dramaturgical metaphor have not only "creeped into everyday life"; they have taken it over. Art not only mirrors life; it structures and reproduces it. (Denzin 138)

Journalism scholar Barbie Zelizer explains that the connection of journalism and its

dramatistic process is promising, noting that "... journalism scholars have begun to

examine the unfolding of news, rather than the finished product..." (qtd. in Berkowitz

25). Zelizer continues with presenting the idea of "journalism as performance":

When seen as performance, news is understood as a situationally variant process that is neither static nor fixed. Reporters negotiate their power across a variety of situations, allowing analysts to map out the patterns of cultural argumentation by which an event becomes news. Given a news event's inherently unstable meaning, this frame may turn out to be particularly useful for considering journalism. (25)

The notion that this analogy may be valuable is an important step towards constructing a

bridge between the theatre and journalism. A closer look at this analogous space will

assist in the analysis of what goes on within it.

Similar to Adam's outlook, the theories of Kenneth Burke can be applied in this

chapter's discussion. With his dramatistic approach, Burke was in pursuit of "a

calculus—a vocabulary, or set of coordinates, that serves best for the integration of all

phenomena studies by the social sciences" (Burke 1941: 105). Burke explains that "the

broad outlines of our position might be codified as thus: 1) We have the drama and the scene of the drama. The drama is enacted against a background. 2) The description of the scene is the role of the physical science; the description of the drama is the role of the social sciences” (114). From this notion, Burke developed the “dramatistic pentad,” a “theatrical scheme of universal applicability” (Puchner 45). As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Burke’s pentad includes five different elements for analysis. Theatre scholar Martin Puchner explains that “four of these terms – agent, agency, act, and purpose – offer different perspectives on action, the primary dramatic quality, while the fifth term – scene – describes the setting or field within [which] action occurs” (47).

The scene of journalism in general is the “real” world, but the scene of any particular journalistic story is constructed. “Scene” is a bit of an arbitrary and abstract term. For the purposes of this discussion, this constructed scene refers to the space within a story that a journalist produces. While Burke’s dramatistic frame can be applied to all journalism, it is perhaps particularly relevant and evident in the broadcast media. Communications scholar Kimberly Meltzer provides a thorough description of the advent of television news anchors and the production process. She explains the “role of the producer in radio, and subsequently in television, followed the notion of radio news as a production that took place in a production studio with an assembly process” (16).

If journalism is seen as a constructed performance, then this space becomes very theatrical, and we can infer parallel roles of traditional journalism and traditional theatre. Purely for example, the Editor-in-Chief at a newspaper could be seen as a theatre producer, the section editor as a play’s director, a layout artist as a set designer, the copy editor as the stage manager; these are all production roles in the staging of a journalistic

story. The reporter can be seen as an actor. The exact parallels between the job responsibilities of these roles are not as important as the understanding that they all work together to construct the space of the story. This brings us back to our abstract “scene.” In order to conceptualize this space, we can imagine it as a house.

Picture a traditional theatre. You are seated in the audience, the lights dim, and you are about to share the space with the performers. The stage lights come on, and the actors enter. There is a house on the stage that is missing its “fourth wall” so the audience can see what is happening inside. This house has been envisioned, designed and constructed by the theatre’s production team. The actor acts her or his story within the constructed house. For a journalistic story, the story production team also constructs a “house.” They work with the reporter to build a space inside which her or his story can live. The reporter performs inside this space, inviting the audience to look into the “story house” constructed and supported by the entire team.

In traditional theatre, the audience’s main access point to the work of all theatre artists is the actor. This sort of straightforward construction is reminiscent of theatre scholar Vsevolod Meyerhold’s “theatre of the straight line” (Figure 3). According to Meyerhold, the concept represents a structure in which

the actor reveals his soul freely to the spectator, having assimilated the creation of the director, who, in his turn, has assimilated the creation of the author... The actor’s art consists in far more than merely acquainting the spectator with the director’s conception. The actor will grip the spectator only if he assimilates both the director and author and then gives of himself from the stage. (50-51)

Fig. 3: Theatre of the Straight Line

(qtd. in Schechner 252)

In this model, artistic creation is a progressive process from author to director.

The director must interpret the work of the author and communicate this interpretation to the actor, who will then communicate the interpretation to the audience. Artist and contemporary art scholar Suzanne Lacy presents a diagram that looks quite similar to Meyerhold's in its straightforwardness (see Figure 4). This diagram describes a continuum of roles an artist may play during the artistic process (Lacy 174).

Fig. 4: Spectrum of Artists' Roles

(Lacy 174)

However, Lacy is quick to point out that “[a]t any given time, an artist may operate at a different point on the spectrum or may move between them” (173). Meyerhold also notes that although the roles and responsibilities are important, the audience will always comprehend “the author and the director through the prism of the actor’s art” as “[a]bove all, *drama is the art of the actor*” (52-53, italics his). This is where things get interesting.

As the actor assimilates the other roles in the analogy, she or he is less likely to be able to perform the responsibilities of each role. Lacy acknowledges that when the artists shift to the role of activists, they are positioned as “contributors to intellectual endeavour and shift our attention toward the shape or meaning of their theoretical constructs” (174). In other words, artists that become activists steer their art in a certain direction based on their personal attitudes and beliefs. In the same way, as the reporter steps further into the

story, she or he begins to influence the story more than usual. She or he is taking over other roles, and therefore is eliminating the roles of her or his colleagues and the support they provide. She or he is knocking down the walls. As a result, the reporter/actor is left without a house for her or his story to live in. Instead of seeing the story as framed by the reporter, we begin to see the story of the reporter. There are, of course, varying degrees of stepping into a story and gains and consequences that accompany the decision.³⁸ Before discussing specific examples of this choice, it is helpful to examine examples of journalism as performance.

Levels of Performance

There is a wide spectrum of levels of journalism as performance. On one end of the spectrum is the newsreader almost mechanically reading the news. An excellent example of this type of performance is CBC Television reporter Gaétan Montreuil reading the text of the FLQ Quebec Manifesto on October 8th, 1970. He consciously reads the manifesto in a straight, even tone with almost no expression.³⁹ This is a stark contrast from how the same manifesto would be read at a rally of protest, such as the recent rally in Quebec City commemorating the 250th anniversary of the battle of the Plains of Abraham. Singer-actor Luck Mervil performed the manifesto on September 13th, 2009 with great enthusiasm, raising his voice and gesticulating.⁴⁰ Montreuil's monotone reading of the Manifesto is an example of how, in challenging situations, "the

³⁸ Although a "gain" is technically a form of consequence, I have chosen to also use the term "gain" because there are some results that seem unambiguously positive (such as the increased understanding and ease of following the material). I have chosen to use the term "consequence" for other outcomes that may be of debatable or ambiguous value.

³⁹ http://archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/civil_unrest/clips/613/

⁴⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wLzn6QmNIQ>

journalist must hide his personal feelings so as not to appear biased to the viewing audience and so as not to influence their opinions” (Meltzer 81). Longtime television journalist Dan Rather reflects on audience members writing about such seemingly minute facial expressions as the slight arch of the anchor’s eyebrow (274).

In addition to “turning off” their emotions and expressions, television journalists are often encouraged to turn on a certain personality on air.⁴¹ Former Ottawa CJOH television reporter and assignment editor Colleen McKernan says she always thought of her on-camera work as performance, remembering how she was constantly “focusing on the presentation – how I project, how the words come out, my tone of voice, where I am standing... my hair” (McKernan). Meltzer argues that the current cultural obsession with beauty has made preoccupations like McKernan’s hair the norm, claiming that reality television makeovers and increased exposure to plastic surgery are all cultural shifts that, “combined with an increased national and international obsession with celebrities, have formed the stage upon which television journalists’ appearances are increasingly placed under the microscope” (50). The advent of television brought appearance and performance to the forefront of journalistic practice, but there are performative aspects of the profession outside of the realm of broadcasting.⁴²

McKernan furthers the idea of journalistic performance to other aspects of the job, explaining that in interviews and even in investigating stories, that “all journalists, in terms of how they present themselves – it’s a form of public role playing” (McKernan). Conversely, the concept of presentation and performance can be applied to interviewees as well as interviewers. Verbatim theatre practitioner Alecky Blythe reflects on her early

⁴¹ See Meltzer ppg 69-79 for a detailed discussion of on air “personality.”

⁴² See Melzer ppg 20-24 for early effects of television on a journalist’s job.

interviews, when “there was a danger that you only ever got the characters’ thoughts and opinions, which lack emotional colour, because the very fact they were being interviewed makes them conscious of presenting themselves as they wish to be seen” (qtd. in Hammond and Steward 92).

There are even more explicit examples of performance. Recently, we have seen CNN’s medical correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta performing surgery for the camera in post-earthquake Haiti. *Toronto Star* columnist Rosie DiMano has been criticized for violating cultural dress codes in Afghanistan, and then reporting on the adverse reactions (Taylor 1). Journalism scholar Jeff Sallot critiques doctors like Gupta (and the networks that assign them) as grandstanding celebrities (Sallot 2). These are extreme examples of journalists carving out their own performance spaces and performing roles other than that of a traditional journalist.

The examples in the middle of the performance spectrum (between raised eyebrows and on-camera surgery) are most pertinent to this analysis. Communications scholar Richard Campbell describes the style of television’s *60 Minutes* where reporters “emerge not merely as recorders of information but as participant-performers who are intimately involved with their subjects. Through such presentations – reporters performing as detectives, referees, therapists and tourists – the program offers role models on how to attend to the world” (30). Campbell compares the *60 Minutes*’s reporter characters to the Stage Manager character from Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town* or the narrator character from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, in the way they “step out of their character roles in the story to address the viewer directly in both on-screen and voice-over narration” (37). Radio documentaries offer a similar style of performance,

as it is easy to chart when and how far the reporter is stepping into the performance space.

Example 1: Tanya's Trial

The radio documentary *Tanya's Trial* is an excellent example for this analysis. *Tanya's Trial* was produced by CBC journalist Sandra Bourque and documentary editor Aaron Brindle in the spring of 2009. It is a story about Tanya (a prostitute and drug addict) and Detective Wendy Leaver (the Toronto police officer in charge of investigating crimes against sex trade workers). Tanya and Leaver's lives came together through assault charges against one of Tanya's clients. At the time of the story, Tanya is set to be the main witness for the prosecution in the case. The story follows Leaver and Tanya in the weeks leading up to the trial. At several points during the documentary, we hear the voice of journalist Sandra Bourque. This trait is not unusual in radio documentary. What is pertinent to this analysis, however, is the degree to which Bourque becomes involved in the story. She lends Tanya money to do laundry, makes her bed, and takes her to lunch. A clear example of this involvement is when the trial has been delayed and Bourque takes Tanya to an art gallery. As we hear the background sound of Bourque and Tanya travelling to and arriving at the gallery, Bourque tells us that:

Tanya's court date has been postponed by a week. I decide to take her to an art gallery in downtown Toronto. Tanya hasn't painted since she did that portrait of the man accused of viciously assaulting her. Tanya races towards a painting and presses the palm of her hand against it. I tell her not to touch. (The Current May 27th)

Bourque has clearly stepped into the story. There are gains and consequences to this involvement. On one hand, the trip to the gallery (as with the whole documentary) is quite dramatic and engaging. On the other, the trip to the gallery (or the lunch, or the

laundry) is a staged event. It would not have happened if Bourque had not instigated it.

This seems eerily similar to the *Star*'s Rosie DiMano or CNN's Dr. Sanjay Gupta creating her or his own performance space. In this way, journalist/actors are trying to rebuild the walls for their story houses with fictional or self-invented circumstances.

Bourque agrees there were gains and consequences to her involvement. She acknowledges "when you have a reporter in it, it changes the story" (Bourque). Bourque says she did not want to be a part of the story, nor did she intend to. It was a suggestion from her editor, during the final editing process, when she expressed that it was difficult for her to record any communication between Tanya and Detective Leaver.⁴³ Bourque recalls that: "It was hard to get them together, so I became a minor character" (Bourque).

Editor Aaron Brindle describes *Tanya's Trial* as an "access documentary" (Brindle), explaining that it would not have been possible if Bourque had not built a great deal of trust with Tanya. Brindle felt the documentary was about the challenge of getting Tanya to court. He saw Bourque as a "parallel character" to Detective Leaver, in that she had the same maternal qualities in developing a trusting relationship with Tanya as Leaver did. However, because Leaver was working full-time to take care of a number of people, she did not have the time to focus exclusively on Tanya. Bourque did, and therefore she developed a relationship that added more depth to the piece. Brindle feels that the challenges Bourque had in her relationship with Tanya were symbolic of Leaver's relationship, and that the nature of Bourque and Tanya's relationship provided a great deal of information about Tanya's character. Brindle also notes that in addition to

⁴³ The fact that the decision to include Bourque as a character in the documentary came in the editing process is pertinent and interesting. While she was doing the interviews, Bourque did not think her voice would be included. Therefore, *Tanya's Trial* provides a fair record of what goes on in the presence of the microphone.

being less interesting, if you did not include Bourque's interactions "that you might risk being disingenuous with the story" (Brindle). He reflects that while doing the story he did realise that "journalistic hackles" might go up due to Bourque's degree of involvement, but that in the end, he felt including Bourque as a character was more honest: "Once it became clear that she was a character, it opened up a lot of scene-work... it opened up these very compelling scenes where you get Tanya opening up to her, where you get Tanya doing drugs in front of her... I think you would have had to have done a lot of fine editing, on the verge of fabrication to try and extract Sandy [Bourque] from those scenes" (Brindle).

Bourque and Brindle both insist the gains of Bourque stepping into this story outweigh the consequences.⁴⁴ She explains she was "the common element. They [listeners] can relate to me in this story. I think it helped them relate to what was going on in the story" (Bourque). She explained that with characters as diverse and different as Tanya and Leaver, her presence allowed the audience to have an intermediary or translator. She acknowledges the fact that she constructed the art gallery scenario, but claims that she would have done the same thing even if she was not heard in the story – as this is just an extension of what journalists always do. Brindle agrees, noting that "there is always somebody there, holding a microphone" (Brindle). In Bourque's opinion, the staged scenes (art gallery, lunch) are just farther along the line of investigation from the interview. She explains her choice to take Tanya to the art gallery: "When you take people out of their environment, they are not comfortable, and you get to know them better" (Bourque). She agrees that the art gallery trip would not actually have happened,

⁴⁴ Both Brindle and Bourque noted that this choice was specific to the circumstances of this particular story.

but argues that it *did* happen, and it helps the audience get to know Tanya better.

Brindle defends the art gallery scene as a “natural extension” of Bourque’s relationship with Tanya, and says that it is an “accurate scene” in terms of how it informs listeners about Tanya’s disconnect with the world and Bourque’s care for Tanya.

Additionally, rather than always having the reporter invade the sources' space, Bourque believes that by taking a source out of their natural environment, a “neutral middle ground” can be created. Bourque concludes that she would do the story the same way if she did it again, adding the proviso that “... the only way I would ever do it is to do it the way I did it – to spend an incredible amount of time with the people” (Bourque). She explains that she spent several months time on the story, getting to know both Tanya and Leaver, to the point she felt she “belonged” in their world. In order to continue to illuminate this example, it is helpful to take a look at some of the theoretical approaches to performative inquiry and representation.

Performative Inquiry

There are theoretical approaches that assist in furthering this discussion. Communications scholar Ron Pelias identifies three stances of scholarly approach to performance: “performance as a cultural and artistic object worthy of investigation,” “performance as a generative vocabulary for understanding human behavior” and “performance as a way of knowing” (185-186). He sees “how the journalist might be constructed as a performer. In that sense, I think the second category – performance as an explanatory metaphor seems apt... journalists, like everyday performers, go about the business of doing, a doing that matters as an interventionist strategy” (Pelias). However,

he also agrees that there might be some overlap into the third category, with journalists' performances representing a way of knowing. For the purposes of this discussion, the focus will be on this area of overlap of the second and third categories. In his discussion of performance as a way of knowing, Pelias explains, "[p]erformative inquiry cannot be accomplished from an observational stance; it demands participation. It asks performers to become others, to commit to others' ways of being. Performers, of course, seldom forget that they are performers. Keeping in touch with their performing selves allows them to do the work they must do on stage" (Pelias 187). He points to the work of ethnographer Dwight Conquergood, who notes that performance ethnography "privileges particular, participatory, dynamic, intimate, precarious, embodied experience grounded in historical process, contingency and ideology" (qtd. in Pelias 188). There is an inherent effect of the involved inquirer.

The performance inquirer constructs a reality largely influenced by her or his own bias. Pelias explains that "the presenting body sees the stage as its site of publication" (Pelias 191). The performance is tailored by both the performer's personal history and desire for the performance outcome. Pelias points to speech communication scholar Craig Gingrich-Philbrook's notion that the body offers "an opportunity for error as much as wisdom" (qtd. in Pelias 191). In this way, the conscious or sub-conscious biases of the performer affect the way the performer acts. Pelias explains that this "lying body is a reminder that the body is a habituated site that carries its historical and cultural markings. The fact that I gag at the sight of mayonnaise tells more about my unfortunate encounter with some rancid mayonnaise in my childhood than it does about the nature of mayonnaise" (Pelias 191). In addition to performing within the story, the performer is

simultaneously acting as a filter or frame for the story itself by engaging “in a process of selection and shaping, of deciding what to share. Both [the actor as performer and the actor as editor] are always making a rhetorical case, and in doing so, they face issues of truthfulness: What information can be buried, minimized, or altered? What particulars can be dropped or added to create aesthetic interest?” (Pelias 190). There are consequences to this specially constructed realism.

The danger of dramatic realism is that it can be represented as “truth.” English scholar Elin Diamond references this danger in her discussion of the link between identification and identity. She argues against the acceptance of dramatic realism, explaining the consequence:

The lifelike stage sign reinforces the epistemology: an objective word for the referent is not simply implied, it is reaffirmed in the activity of reception. Which is to say, realism is more than an interpretation of reality passing as reality; it produces “reality” by positioning its spectators to recognize and verify its truths. (Diamond 406)

In Diamond’s view, this interpretation of reality is dangerous, because the audience is led to believe the staged reality is real. This ties in well with Pelias’s view about the role of the performer. He discusses performance ethnography, explaining how researchers present their data through performance. For example, a researcher may reenact a scene she or he observed. In this scenario, Pelias notes:

Equally tricky is how performance ethnographers decide to script themselves. In some shows, the ethnographer is implied but not embodied on stage. In others, the ethnographer functions as narrator who provides an interpretative frame for the audience. In still others, the ethnographer becomes a central character, a participant in ongoing cultural practices. (Pelias 189)

The constructed performer in a constructed space seems to be plagued with problems, but both Pelias and Diamond offer suggestions for improvement. In order for the performer

to construct a more “truthful” and realistic performance, she or he must be reflexive – somehow acknowledging the fact she or he is involved in a performance. Pelias believes the performer’s innate bias “suggests that what the body knows requires critical reflection, a constant ethical testing, a reflexive turn” (191). Diamond points to the work of philosophy scholar Bruce Wilshire, who “understands identification as a strong heuristic whereby spectators and actors explore the mimetic structure of all human relations” (Diamond 408).⁴⁵ According to Diamond, there is one clear course of action:

Only by attending to the projections, the narcissistic, self-transforming fantasies of historical subjects can we begin to imagine a politics of identification – a politics that dismantles the phenomenological universals of transcendent subjects and objects; that places identity in an unstable and contingent relationship to identification; and that works close to the nerves dividing and connecting the psychic and the social. (Diamond 411)

In a rather Brechtian way, Diamond acknowledges Wilshire’s notion that: “Through the actors’ deliberate identifications with and standings in we discover our largely undeliberate identifications with and standings in... [T]he actor models modelling, enacts enactment” (qtd. in Diamond 408). Diamond believes that by revealing the involvement of the performer to the audience, critical insight is allowed. In order to further investigate and test the gains, consequences and solutions alluded to in this section, it is beneficial to shift our analysis towards examples of artists stepping into their pieces.

The Theatre of Stepping In

While the scholarship surrounding journalists stepping into their stories is limited, there are examples and analyses of playwrights stepping into their own pieces. Although this technique has become increasingly popular in contemporary theatre, there are early

⁴⁵ In other words, by seeing real life situations represented on stage, the audience can move towards exploring and understanding the representations in everyday life.

examples, such as Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of An Author*. In the opening scene, the family of characters are in a debate with the aggravated stage manager, and the father (no doubt the voice of Pirandello himself) calls out the creational genre of the theatre when he argues for his own existence: "Exactly, perfectly, to living beings more alive than those who breathe and wear clothes: being less real people, but truer! I agree with you entirely. One is born to life in many forms, in many shapes, as tree, or as stone, as water, or as woman. So one may also be born a character in a play" (Pirandello 1931: 8). The father is calling for acknowledgement of his existence as a character by acknowledging the form of the play.

In explaining the piece, Pirandello himself confesses: "All that lives, by the sheer fact of living, has a form and so must die; all except the work of art which, on the contrary, lives forever insofar as it is form" (Pirandello 1925: 49). The form is the story of the play. However, Pirandello also makes it clear that the characters' agency and imagination (fuelled by him) are what make the play work. He believed his approach "made clear to everyone witnessing the play that Life cannot be created by artifice, that the play of the six characters, lacking as it does an author to nourish it in the womb of his spirit, cannot be represented for the vulgar satisfaction of someone who wishes merely to know how an event developed" (Pirandello 1925: 52). The combination of the imaginary form and the "real" characters alive and operating within that form is what creates a compelling and engaging pull in the story.

There are also contemporary examples of this fusion. Lethbridge-based visual artist David Hoffos combines miniature models with digital projections, reflecting images of people that appear in scale inside of the world of the models. This combination creates a

striking illusion. However, Hoffos intentionally exhibits all the parts of his artistic system with obvious transparency, in the hopes of creating a greater space for critical thought. At the entrance to Hoffos' November 2009 exhibition at the National Gallery, curator Shirley Madi's welcome message claimed that: "Hoffos forms a pact with the viewer; he asks us to suspend disbelief and enter his world." Hoffos himself explains this "pact" as his belief that "people need to see the trick for what it is after being brought in by it," and that he is "not a magician" (Hoffos). He believes the illusion is a failure if the audience does not become active and ambulatory, constructing ideas along with the artist himself.

The concept of creating clear space of representation is inherent in the ideas of Bertolt Brecht. Qualitative research scholars Robert Donmoyer and June Yennie Donmoyer describe applying these ideas in order to perform effective readers' theatre.⁴⁶ They explain "[t]he holding of scripts, in fact, is one of a number of Brecht-like distancing devices used in readers' theater productions to stylize what happens on stage" (Donmoyer and Donmoyer 213). By holding the scripts, the actors invite the audience to recognize the story they are hearing is a construction. Donmoyer and Donmoyer explain the Brechtian view that theatre "should encourage thought as well as emotion, and provoke analysis, not just empathy" (Donmoyer and Donmoyer 213). Brecht himself clearly explained his stance against realism in the theatre. He believed theatre should

always aim at smoothing over false contradictions, at creating false harmony, at idealization. Conditions are reported as if they could not be otherwise; characters as individuals, incapable by definition of being divided, cast in one block, manifesting themselves in the most various situation, likewise for that matter existing without any situations at all. If there is any development it is always steady, never by jerk; the developments always take place with a

⁴⁶ Readers' theatre is another type of performance ethnography, where research is performed as a mode of presentation.

definite framework which cannot be broken through. None of this is like reality, so a realistic theatre must give it up. (Brecht 1992: 277)

For Pirandello, Hoffos and Brecht, acknowledging the form allows for the critical space of analysis to be created within it. One way to acknowledge the form, as Pirandello clearly did, is to step inside of it. An examination of two contemporary examples of both the challenges and gains of “stepping in” allows for further insight.

The Laramie Project and I Am My Own Wife

The Laramie Project and *I Am My Own Wife* are contemporary examples of actor/playwrights stepping into their own stories. For *The Laramie Project*, artistic director Moisés Kaufman and the members of the Tectonic Theatre Company travelled from New York to Laramie, Wyoming to learn more about the brutal murder of Matthew Shepard and the city of Laramie in general (Kaufman vi). As Kaufman himself puts it, “[a] theatre company travels somewhere, talks to people, and returns with what they saw and heard to create a play” (Kaufman vi). Kaufman and his troupe edited their interview transcripts to make the script and also included themselves as characters in the play. In *I Am My Own Wife*, Doug Wright includes himself as a character in the piece, reliving his own interview process with German transvestite Charlotte von Mahlsdorf. Wright describes the piece as “a wonderful vehicle for some rather hefty themes: self invention, the unreliability of historical narrative, and the subjectivity of authorship” (qtd. in Schiavi 197). Both *The Laramie Project* and *I am My Own Wife* are examples of playwrights stepping into the story. In both plays, there are benefits and consequences within the categories of the actor/playwright as interpreter, the search for truth, and the space of representation.

In both *Laramie* and *Wife*, the actor/playwrights act as teachers and interpreters for the audience. In his character's first line, Doug responds to hearing about Charlotte by agreeing that his interest is "piqued indeed" (Wright 12-13).⁴⁷ This opens the door to his role as guide through the play, as he "sets himself up as an intrepid reader set to deconstruct a promising tale" (Schiavi 209). Schiavi notes how Doug's presence "steadies" the story with its interviewing process (209). Wright explains this role, noting his choice to "appear as a character, a kind of detective searching for Charlotte's true self" (xv). Schiavi writes that "Doug's forthright, vulnerable passion for his subject heightened an audience's need to learn about this person who had so captivated him" (218). Schiavi also argues that "Wright presents himself to the play's interpretative advantage. The character Doug serves bewildered audiences as an example of how and how not to process Charlotte in her conflation of truth and myth" (217). Similarly, the *Laramie* actor/playwrights act as passionate and compassionate bridges between the issues and the audience, in order to "create a play as a place where the promise of human community and even democracy might be momentarily enacted" (Dolan 114). Theatre scholar Jill Dolan argues there is great value to this role, likening it to Anna Deavere Smith's *Fires in the Mirror*, in that "the play creates a conversation among people who might not have otherwise spoken to each other – or not spoken these words in this way – creating a new public sphere in which to scrutinize the events leading up to and following Shepard's death" (Dolan 113). In doing so:

The Laramie Project probably succeeds as well as Smith's interview-based plays in staging a conversation about a deeply divisive public event. Here, however, the essential agon⁴⁸ arcs

⁴⁷ To differentiate between Doug Wright the playwright and the Doug Wright character in the play, "Doug" is used to refer to the character and "Wright" is used to refer to the playwright.

⁴⁸ Debate or argument.

between Laramie and its outsiders, rather than, as in *Fires in the Mirror*, for instance, two halves of the inside of a tension-filled, racially or otherwise fraught event. (Dolan 118)

In her work, Smith uses only verbatim interview material from interview sources, and does not include her questions. In contrast, both *Laramie* and *Wife* use the actor/playwright characters as guides. As well as creating a clearer path for the audience to follow, their presence also “reassures audiences that their own search for truth – a principal root of their spectatorship – is reasonable and will be rewarded by the playwright figure who, because he is based squarely on the author, will provide more immediate knowledge than even an omniscient narrator” (Schiavi 209). This change in role from narrator to player demands the playwright to step farther into the story.

By stepping into the story, playwrights make the story about themselves. Wright is the first to admit that adding himself as a character is “the most flagrant act of narcissism a writer would commit” (xv). Reviewers were not overly endeared by Wright’s presence as a character. Theatre critic Bruce Weber called it “the one gnawingly imperfect aspect” of the play “announcing itself as a solution to a playwrighting problem” (qtd. in Schiavi 216). Similarly, theatre critic Charles Isherwood critiques Wright for playing “the professor, providing neat interpretations the audience might better be left to discover for itself” (qtd. in Schiavi 216). There is also criticism of the actor/playwrights’ interpretive role in *The Laramie Project*. Their role as interpreters paints the illusion that they are “insiders” more than they actually are. For example, the script’s stage direction relating to the mainstream media suggests that their “cacophony... should feel like invasion” (46), but Dolan points out the hypocrisy that “such an injunction begs the question of why the ethnographers’ presence, too, shouldn’t also feel like a breach in the rightful boundaries

of townspeople's homes" (Dolan 116). Dolan further explains that "the text tries to even the score by shining the white light of inquiry onto the performers as well as the people they interview; the company's journals for instance, become part of the public record plumbed here for ruminative effect" (116). The actor/playwrights themselves describe their uneasiness, with statements such as "I have no real interest in prying into such a town's unravelling" (Kaufman 10). Finally, in response to the positive aspect of the creation of a new public sphere, performance studies scholar Tessa Carr points out: "We see a community discussion occur that *did not happen*" (qtd. in Dolan 124, italics hers). This search for and construction of "truth" can be seen as both a gain and a consequence of this effect.⁴⁹

The allure of "truth" is a great dramatic tool. It is both compelling and controversial. Schiavi notes this:

What compromises staged truth, and how such truth tantalizes audiences who should know better, informs the most rudimentary mechanics of performance and spectatorship themselves. Trying to arrive at definitive articulations of truth or falsehood determines the pleasurable interpretative work that can keep audiences invested in spectacles of slippery credibility. (Schiavi 204)

Schiavi also explains that *I Am My Own Wife*'s link to the real is its anchor, as "Wright's extensive reference to written records functions as the play's documentation" (208). It serves the compelling purpose, as theatre scholar Freddie Rokem suggests that "even if what is presented on the stage is a theatrical performance, it actually presents or refers to events that have really taken place" (7). Theatre critic Robert Brustein believes that Wright's autobiographical role in *Wife*, combined with his quest for knowledge creates "an extraordinary stroke of theatrical transformation, unquestionably one of the most

⁴⁹ For an explanation of the use of the terms "gain" and "consequence," please see the note earlier in this chapter, on page ninety.

mesmerizing events of recent seasons” (26). He feels Wright’s journey draws the audience in, because “the sense that the play is being written and researched at the same time that it is being performed lends a certain Pirandellian urgency to the production” (26). Just as in Pirandello’s *Six Characters*, the story is being constructed for/with the audience as it goes along. As Schiavi explains, “*Wife* succeeds by positioning its spectators as active, thoughtful, flexible decoders of a character and a story nearly too theatrical for itself” (Schiavi 219). Both the construction process and the representation product are compelling and beneficial. What is pertinent in this discussion is the clash of expectations in the documentary genre. Rokem explains how the genre “and its closely related forms of staged realism are not primarily interested in drawing attention to the time-lag between ‘real’ events and their theatrical enactment” (7). This real-time realism is also at play in *Laramie* as “the ethnographers transform themselves into duly self-reflexive reporters, but the audience is positioned to see through their outsiders eyes and to reflect implicitly from a distance on the events that the townspeople in Laramie suffered” (Dolan 116). Whether the audience is aware of it or not, they are watching a representation (as opposed to reportage), crafted through the eyes of the Tectonic actor/playwrights, in a way that moves toward the metaphoric.

The Laramie Project is structured to reveal the representation. This conscious choice was made in order to create space for critical thought. Dolan notes the “Brechtian strategy of presenting what the company saw and heard offers a creative alternative to theatrical realism, since *Laramie* explicitly questions the performers’ ability to capture or relate the truth of the experiences they gathered in Wyoming” (116). However, this critical space of representation has to be managed effectively. Dolan explains:

The play uses Brechtian accents: the actors speak to the audience directly; they announce their characters before they perform them, highlighting the separation between themselves and those they play; the play is divided not into scenes but into “moments,” which are carefully captioned in the text; the actors transform, visibly, among the various townspeople they play, always returning to themselves afterwards. But in *The Laramie Project*, the *Our Town* effect – with the narrator and subsequently some of the performers serving the stage manager’s function as it’s assigned in Thornton Wilder’s text – works to create a folksy, friendly, atmosphere, rather than a Brechtian, critical pose. (Dolan 121)

Issues of representation truly come to light when Dolan contrasts two different productions of *The Laramie Project*: one by the original actor/playwrights in New York and the other by a different theatre company in Austin, Texas. In the first case, she found the performers “captured the townspeople’s dialogue and the iconicity of their clothing and mannerisms, but I felt they remained aloof from these people’s souls, because the production told the ethnographer’s story more fully than it did Laramie’s” (Dolan 127). The Austin production, “on the other hand, was more conventionally ‘method,’ rather than completely Brechtian, since the local actors performed two layers of characters who remained characters, and reverted less frequently to the bedrock of self” (Dolan 127). This separation allowed for contemplation. In this way, the space of representation is seen as a positive. The actors played two levels of character, and “as a result, the performer-ethnographers were held up for a certain level of scrutiny instead of being played for truth” (Dolan 129).

This acknowledgement of representation was also evident in *I Am My Own Wife*. At the end of the play, the audience is treated to a recording of the real Charlotte’s voice. Schiavi argues there is a space of representation created, as “Charlotte’s voice simultaneously invites spectators to (1) gauge by comparison the remarkable vocal imitation perpetrated all evening by [the actor] Mays; and (2) suspend anew any disbelief of Charlotte’s tales, despite all the evidence laboriously built up against them” (Schiavi

221). Director Moisés Kaufman added a further layer of “triangular identification” to the ending by having the actor [Mays] remove Charlotte’s trademark black kerchief that was worn throughout the play (Schiavi 221). Schiavi argues that the audience could easily see the similarity between Mays and Wright, and that “this ending suggested that Mays had morphed into Wright, playwright-acolyte, and also back into himself, demoted from star to rapt auditor – thus tripling the immediacy and believability of Charlotte’s tales” (Schiavi 212). In a fully transparent representation, the audience is provoked to think about both the content and context of the piece. As with the interpreter role and the search for truth, the construction of representation is a compelling and controversial aspect of the actor stepping into the story.

Distillation

In order to apply this analysis to the world of journalism, it is helpful to summarize the above discussion and distill the relevant links to the role of the journalist. The main gains (for the audience) from having the playwright step into the story are a clearer understanding of the story and the facilitation of more voices. The main consequences of the interpreter role are the story’s focus shifting to the interpreter and the interpreter’s interference with the story. The main gains of the search for truth were the compelling and dramatic process and the allure of fact-based characters and events. The main consequence of the search for truth is that what is on-stage is not truth; it is a created and constructed representation. The main gains of representations include the ability to reveal the lack of truth to the audience and creating a space for critical reflection. The main consequence of the construction of representation is that the representation could be

misleading and/or lacking in transparency. To capitalize on the above gains, and minimize the consequences, journalists stepping into their stories must therefore aim to affect the action of the story as little as possible and be as transparent as possible about their actions, opinions and biases.

Example 2: Of Paradise and Failure

In order to apply and test the analysis from the last section, it is helpful to compare another radio documentary to *Tanya's Trial*. The award-winning documentary *Of Paradise and Failure* is an excellent contrasting example. *Of Paradise and Failure* was produced by journalist Nelofer Pazira and CBC senior documentary producer Dick Miller and aired in early 2008. Pazira plays a role in the story, but in a way different from Bourque in *Tanya's Trial*. The documentary is about suicide bombers, and follows Pazira as she learns about the history of suicide bombing and some very personal and contemporary reactions to suicide bombing. In an effort to both set high dramatic stakes and present a transparent frame of reference, the documentary begins with a short monologue from Pazira describing a suicide bombing. Throughout the documentary, we hear directly from Pazira about her role in the story, and her own thoughts and feelings.

In one such aside to the audience, she notes that:

As a journalist, I have gone to the scene of many suicide bombs. I have smelled the smell of burning flesh, seen the body parts on the ground. And I have been struggling to understand why on earth anyone would want to waste one of the most precious things: life. How are we to understand this obscure, appalling and terrifying human action? In what language? With the help of what set of words and perceptions? These questions led me to the Mieh Mieh refugee camp in Lebanon in the first place. Where I met Labiba Huada, that distraught mother who had lost her son to suicide. And where I now will meet her other son, also a young man, who seemed the antithesis of everything I had imagined and thought about a suicide bomber. (The Current January 15th)

At several times throughout the documentary, we hear Pazira talk about her difficulties in the story. At one point, she even admits to being unsure about crossing a journalistic line by trying to convince her interview subject not to become a suicide bomber. This involvement in the story is similar to Bourque taking Tanya to the art gallery in *Tanya's Trial*. The difference is that Pazira is constantly transparent about her involvement in the story, allowing for the audience to understand what is happening. Pazira says that by acknowledging her involvement in the story, she is being honest. Pazira also feels that by stepping in, “you are humanizing the story. And if you go back to the idea of what a journalist is – to communicate, to reach out to people, to convey information, to tell them the story, then that is one way of doing it” (Pazira).⁵⁰ She also insists the involvement has to happen naturally – in that the reporter has to be genuinely involved in the story due to a personal circumstance or opinion. If this is the case, Pazira feels the journalist’s presence actually authenticates the story as opposed to delegitimizing it (Pazira). In order to maximize the gains of stepping into the story and minimize the consequences, Pazira says she follows three main steps: firstly, she does a self-check to monitor her role, to avoid becoming a “journalist missionary.” Secondly, she asks for the opinion of other professionals (in this case Miller) to make sure she has not crossed a boundary to making the story too much about her. Finally, Pazira says it is always necessary to try shaping a story in multiple ways, testing to see if the journalist’s increased presence is truly useful to tell the story (Pazira).

Senior editor Dick Miller is a proponent of radio documentary narrators stepping further into the story. According to Miller, the traditional CBC style for radio

⁵⁰ Pazira stresses she is not advocating that stepping in is the only/best way to tell a story, or that it is right for every circumstance.

documentaries is to have the narrator's voice talking to the audience from the studio

– even if the same person was actually on the scene collecting the sound and interviews.

This creates an “omniscient narrator, providing a perspective to some degree, but never really involved in the story” (Miller). Miller feels that by not having the narrator involved in the story, the audience is cheated out of helpful and interesting information. He believes that when journalists

narrate directly from the field as something is actually happening, it puts them into the scene, it makes them visually, to the audience, to my mind anyway, visually they are now in the scene, and not a disembodied voice. I have tried to work a little bit in that context to bring my narrators deeper into the heart of the story. So that they are, not participants of the action, but sort of bearers of witness. They bear witness to the events that are actually going on, but they bear witness in actuality, not just through scripting that's done later. (Miller)

Miller believes there is no objectivity, only transparency, fairness and balance. He believes that even as a disconnected “disembodied voice,” the reporter is subjective.

Miller acknowledges that if the narrator steps in, she or he becomes a character in the story. He believes this is okay, recognizing that the narrator should not “drive the action” (Miller) and should strive to be fair and balanced in her or his actions. The narrator can even be the main character (and Miller points to Pazira as the main character in *Of Paradise and Failure*), but only in situations where it serves the story. He presents another example in order to further illustrate the gains of having the reporter step in to the story. In the radio documentary *Weighing the Balance*, journalist Kelly Ryan investigates a story about child pornography. At the police station, she is shown a horrendous clip of a four-year-old girl being raped. Miller believes Ryan had to react to the clip, not only to be transparent with her actions, but to allow a way into the story. He explains:

Kelly has to react to that. If she doesn't react, if she just stays as an omniscient narrator, you don't give the audience permission to react as well. By her being able to absorb the pain of that, it allows the audience, to my mind, to do it as well, so she is the audience's proxy, in

those moments. And that's what a journalist being more involved in the story actually gives you. It gives you a way into the story through the experiences of an individual... We tell stories through the experiences of an individual. It's the same thing with the narrator. It's their experience as an individual, telling the story about the experiences of an individual. (Miller)

Although he did not work on *Tanya's Trial*, Miller agrees with Bourque's point that though the trip to the art gallery would not have happened, it indeed *did* happen, and it helped us learn more about both Bourque and Tanya.⁵¹ Miller calls this "good character development" (Miller). What is missing is more character development from Bourque herself in order to be fully transparent: "If you are becoming a character in your piece, you need to expose the flaws that are relevant to this piece" (Miller). In order to do this, "Sandy [Bourque] probably should have revealed at some point, if this was true, that she never really liked hookers very much, or that she was afraid of them, or she always thought hookers and drug addicts were the scum of the earth, and she didn't want anything to do with them – that kind of bias" (Miller). He says those biases are Bourque's obstacle in the story – and once she becomes a character, she must treat her character development in the same way she treats anybody else's character development.

Summary

Miller's stylistic choices and rationales are in line with the other themes noted in this chapter. A common thread in this discussion is transparency. If an actor/journalist is transparent, she or he can maximize the gains and minimize the consequences of stepping into the story. The notion of transparency is well served by Brecht's ideas of epic theatre and the "alienation" effect. As with the parallels drawn in the third section of this

⁵¹ While *Tanya's Trial* was under development and construction, Miller was working on a different assignment. Aaron Brindle was filling in as Documentary Editor.

analysis, Miller's style brings the performance of the journalist into the spotlight. In Brecht's words, the alienation effect "consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one's attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected" (Brecht 143). Instead of the journalist's presence as a "disembodied voice," the audience should be fully exposed to her or his performance. In his description of epic theatre, Brecht points to Aristotle, noting "the difference between the dramatic and epic forms was attributed to their different methods of construction, whose laws were dealt with by two different branches of aesthetics" (Brecht 70). Brecht provides further description by acknowledging the epic writer Döblin's criteria that an "epic work, as opposed to a dramatic, one can as it were take a pair of scissors and cut it into individual pieces, which remain fully capable of life" (qtd. in Brecht 70). This can be applied to the journalist character. The journalist character, like one of Pirandello's six, must be developed transparently enough to stand apart from the story. The journalist can then be satisfied that they have done enough character development, not only for their sources, but for their own role as well. In order to go further towards capitalizing on the gains of "stepping in" and minimizing the consequences, journalists can and should look to Brecht's ideas as stylistic tools that enable more transparent performance.

We can now return to our story-house. The walls are still created by the members of the production team. However, they are now decorated with description and transparency provided by the journalist character. Like the well-known "Stage Manager" character in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, the journalist character hosts the audience

inside the story-house. In his discussion of *Our Town*, literary scholar Arthur H.

Ballet explains the

... stage manager serves as the human link with the audience and personifies the *milieu* of society. Joining the audience with the events presented in the space-less and timeless stage, he explains and interprets, fills in, and establishes the background for each episode. He is, however, more than just a narrator... The stage manager represents the observing community; he is biased, sympathetic, informed and concerned... [A]s the agent of the human community in the drama, what occurs within the play makes a difference [to him] and must be sensitively considered. (Ballet 246)

The journalist character, like any good host, welcomes the audience into the story-house, making sure they are both comfortable with and aware of their surroundings. Through the journalist character's interactions with the other characters, she or he acts as an agent for the audience, furthering their understanding of the story.

This chapter has examined the scene of a journalistic story as a theatrical space. It has briefly outlined several levels of performance, ranging from a journalist's tone of voice to journalists who are performing events to create news. This chapter focused on examples from contemporary theatre where playwrights step in to their stories as a springboard for the discussion of the journalist as a character within the story. Finally, two recent contrasting Canadian radio documentaries were examined, in order to compare and discuss the level of performance of the journalist. The gains and consequences discussed in this chapter are relevant to the thesis as a whole, due to the fact verbatim theatre practitioners are very much involved in the stories they are creating, to the point of being included as characters in the script. The next chapter will explore this and other issues, returning to this thesis's direct discussion and evaluation of verbatim theatre's relationship to journalism. After a brief description of some of the advantages of verbatim

theatre, three recent Canadian verbatim theatre productions will be evaluated in comparison to several elements of journalism.

Chapter Five

Recent Canadian verbatim theatre: *How does it compare to the elements of journalism?*

The last chapter flipped the perspective of the thesis, by looking at journalism as theatre. As a result, we were able to identify characteristics of journalistic performance and creation that are theatrical in nature. It was also useful to examine the role of a journalist performing as a character within her or his story. This chapter returns to the discussion of verbatim theatre's relationship to journalism, and is divided into four main sections. For clarity, this chapter begins with the description of three recent Canadian verbatim theatre productions and includes comments from the three plays' creators regarding their ideas about verbatim theatre and their creation and production processes. The discussion returns to these examples after looking at some journalistic standards. In the second section, journalism scholars Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel's ten "elements of journalism" are examined as the journalistic criteria for this chapter. This examination also provides the ingredients for the third section: a discussion of how some of the relevant characteristics from the three verbatim theatre case studies fit within the journalistic criteria. Many of these characteristics were also identified in chapter three, in relation to the artistic creation process. However, it is necessary to discuss these points at length in this chapter, in relation to journalistic criteria. Finally, the fourth section provides a summary of this chapter and outlines the beginning of some criteria for a "verbatim theatre journalism" project.

Three Recent Canadian Case Studies

During the past several years, documentary theatre has increased in popularity in Canada. In particular, in the past three years, there have been three Canadian verbatim theatre productions produced to great acclaim. In addition to their popularity, these three case studies have been included in this analysis for two reasons. Firstly, although the continuum of verbatim theatre does include theatre constructed from transcripts or documents, the study of scripts constructed from interviews is most advantageous for this research.⁵² Secondly, the three productions have been constructed by different playwrights, each with a particular approach to verbatim theatre practice. Some of these different philosophies and methodologies will be highlighted in contrast to the elements of journalism in the later section of this chapter. Before beginning that analysis, it is important to introduce each of the case study productions. It is important to note that all three of these productions fit into our definition of the “theatre,” in that the audience and the performers shared the performance space.

Talk Thirty to Me

Playwright Oonagh Duncan developed her verbatim theatre piece *Talk Thirty to Me* from interviews she conducted with more than fifty Toronto-area twenty-nine-year-olds in the summer of 2006 (Carley 3). Duncan decided to do the project because she was approaching thirty, and she noticed several of her friends were rather anxious about this seemingly significant birthday (Duncan). The piece was originally produced in July 2007 at the Toronto Fringe Festival, and has been published in the 2008 Canadian play

⁵² Plays rendered from historical transcripts or documents face additional challenges in accurately representing the people they are portraying. The need for accurate representation as well as accurate text is discussed in the following chapters.

anthology *5 Hot Plays*, edited by Dave Carley.⁵³ Duncan was introduced to verbatim theatre while pursuing her graduate degree in acting at the East 15 Acting School in London, England. As a part of her thesis work, she created her first verbatim theatre piece *The Outsider*, which examined “local attitudes about changing demographics in an Essex, England town represented by the anti-immigration British National Party” (Carley 2). Upon completing her training, Duncan returned to Canada and founded Oyster Productions in Toronto. According to its website, Oyster Productions’ mandate is: “telling stories to explore our community and expand our world.”

Duncan derives her definition of verbatim theatre from British verbatim theatre playwright Max Stafford-Clark, whom she interviewed at the Royal Theatre in England for her graduate research. Duncan explains:

What he told me is that verbatim theatre is anything where every word in the play was once said in real life. Which is like a hugely broad definition which really kind of includes every play, right? So he said that is the definition and you can play with that – and most verbatim theatre practitioners they allow themselves a lot of creative licence with that. The only thing is that you, I think, as a verbatim theatre practitioner, have to be aware of the expectations of the audience. If you say that this is a verbatim play, every word was spoken in real life – the expectation of the audience is that you are portraying that pretty true to what the real life situation was. (Duncan)

In *Talk Thirty to Me*, Duncan had volunteers faithfully transcribe all of her interviews absolutely verbatim, maintaining all the “ums, pauses, verbal deliciousness that people say” (Duncan). She then proceeded to edit the material into eight composite characters. The characters are grouped into thematic sections. These themes include relationships, career expectations and the mortality of parents. A monologue by the

⁵³ A staged reading of the production was held in May 2007 in Toronto and workshop of the piece was held in December 2007 in New York (Carley 5).

character “Tim” provides a good example of the vernacular speech, the perspective, and the thematic content (see Appendix B).

Throughout *Talk Thirty to Me*, the characters speak directly to the audience. Their monologues vary in length, and there are also lines which all of the characters speak in unison, such as “It’s not like I’m forty!” (Carley 29) When asked about these shared lines, Duncan explained that she chose them because they were lines that were said by several of her interview subjects – but not necessarily all of them or a certain number of them (Duncan). Duncan also notes that although she is quite faithful to the text, she will change a word or two if it suits her purpose, because “we (verbatim theatre practitioners) are not journalists” (Duncan). The piece also features the interjection of several “information slides” that were projected behind the actors. They featured a range of content, from statistics to thematic quotations on the topic, such as “25% of men have begun to display baldness by age thirty” (Carley 23) or “The great thing about getting older is that you don’t lose all the other ages you’ve been. (Madeleine L’Engle)” (Carley 28). Projections are also used at the beginning of the play to introduce the play and the process of creation. These slides read: “In the summer of 2006, the playwright interviewed dozens of Toronto-area twenty-nine-year-olds and asked them how they felt about turning thirty. This is what they had to say. Word for word” (Carley 7).

There is no mention of the technique of composite characters in the slides or play text, and in fact, various character names and their birthdays are projected at the beginning of the play, creating the illusion of specific people. In the published version of the play, there is a note under the description of the eight characters explaining that “in the premier performance, four actors played all of these roles, limiting cast size and

reinforcing the sense of these characters as amalgams of the original interview subjects” (Carley 6). Duncan recognizes the subjectivity of this process, but she believes the eight characters are accurate representations of the themes and issues that were expressed in her interviews (Duncan). Finally, in *Talk Thirty To Me*, the audience is positioned as the interviewer. For example, in the first line of the play a character speaks to the interviewer/audience and asks: “Are you recording already? Agh! It’s all on tape now! Does it have to be about turning thirty?” (Carley 7)

Nanay: A Testimonial Play

Geographer Geraldine Pratt developed *Nanay: A Testimonial Play* in collaboration with one of her PhD students, Caleb Johnston, as well as other theatre artists and community activists. The project was constructed out of interviews Pratt had done for more than fifteen years as part of her research on the Live-In Caregiver Program, in collaboration with the Philippine Women Centre of British Columbia (Pratt and Johnston 123-127). The piece was produced by Johnston’s Urban Crawl Performance Society in 2009 at Vancouver’s PuSh International Performing Arts Festival. It was presented again later that year at the Your Nanny Hates You! Festival in Berlin (Pratt). Pratt had not planned on crafting her research into a play, but had been interested in the theatre and was excited by the idea when Johnston suggested it (Pratt). According to Pratt, verbatim theatre is “kind of literal... that the words that are spoken are verbatim. From an interview, or a text, or a court case or some documents, so it’s that there is some sense that these words have been spoken in some, you know, non-theatrical context” (Pratt).

In comparing her definition of verbatim theatre to her final product, Pratt believes *Nanay* is quite faithful. She explains that all the words were spoken verbatim to her, except for the customs and immigration official, which is the only “constructed” text. Pratt wrote the words of this character because they did not have verbatim transcripts of a customs official and they needed to construct a monologue efficiently (Pratt). Pratt and Johnston reflect on the challenge of representing research as theatre, explaining (among other things) the concern of the University of British Columbia Research Ethics Board about whether Pratt had the permission from the original interview subjects to use their words. That particular set of concerns was resolved by conceiving of the play as a “knowledge translation initiative” (Pratt and Johnston 123), but it is a good entry into the discussion of representation. Pratt and Johnston realize that “like any translation, ours was far from straightforward: the protocols of research line up imperfectly with those of theatre, and live performance is so much more than words” (123).

While Pratt feels the employee characters were portrayed accurately, she felt the original production’s representation of some of the employers was inaccurate (Pratt).⁵⁴ The example she uses is a scene between a married couple discussing their nanny situation. An excerpt from this scene (including the stage directions) helps illustrate this point (see Appendix C).

Pratt explains that as a researcher, the way that two of the employers were interpreted by the director made her uncomfortable. Although she acknowledges the theatrical value of the director’s use of “parody,” she (as the person who did the original interview) felt the portrayal was inaccurate, as the particular employers “hadn’t actually

⁵⁴ Pratt notes that she felt the representation was much more accurate in the Berlin production.

given their testimony drunk in their bedroom as they had in the scene in the play”

(Pratt). Pratt says she expressed her feelings to the director and that there was some compromise. The script describes *Nanay* as a “a hybrid installation-performance event” (Pratt).⁵⁵ The audience for the performance was split into groups and guided through the performance space, encountering different characters in different rooms. The end of the play flowed into a “talk-back” session with the audience, facilitated by Pratt and a member of one of the collaborating community organizations. Johnston and Pratt reflect that these sessions were extremely successful and that “perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of the eventfulness of theatre is the opportunity it creates to stage public conversations between people who would not ordinarily speak to each other on an equal footing” (130).

The Middle Place

Toronto-based actor/playwright Andrew Kushnir constructed *The Middle Place* from interviews he did at a youth shelter in Rexdale over two years. He describes it as “essentially a documentary play. I spoke to dozens of homeless youth, sixteen of them appear in the play... It is a non-linear story. It is the story of an outsider experiencing this community he is unfamiliar with” (Kushnir). Kushnir was approached in 2007 by Toronto’s Project:Humanity to work on a play to take into youth shelters during the winter holidays. According to its website, Project:Humanity is “a not-for-profit organization that raises social awareness through the arts.” Kushnir says he was inspired by reading some of the work of British activist playwright David Hare, and he decided to

⁵⁵ At time of writing, *Nanay* has not yet been published. Geraldine Pratt kindly shared the script in an e-mail correspondence.

pitch the idea of a verbatim theatre piece to Project:Humanity (Kushnir).⁵⁶ The piece was originally presented at Toronto's Summerworks Festival in 2009 and at the shelter of origin, and has since toured to several schools and a few shelters in the Toronto area (Chapman-Smith). Kushnir says he has (at this time) decided to not publish the piece because he wants to respect the words of the original sources, and not have them performed in ways other than the production (Kushnir). Kushnir was present in the rehearsal hall to keep the actors true to both the text and representations of the people whom he interviewed.

The Middle Place features sixteen shelter youth and three case-workers. These characters are portrayed by four actors. The set, costumes, staging and blocking of the performance are extremely minimal. The actors use obvious gestures to shift between characters, and their physicality and vocal adjustments make it obvious which characters they were representing.⁵⁷ A sample of one of the scenes provides a good example of the range of topics covered, the perspectives of the characters and the diverse vernacular of speech. In this scene (a part of Act IV, titled "Imagination") the outsider/interviewer character has asked the shelter youth characters what they would do if they had \$10,000 (see Appendix D).⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that the outsider/interviewer character in the play is based on Kushnir himself, and the questions are verbatim quotations from the interview process. Kushnir says the inclusion of the outsider character was a conscious decision, explaining that:

⁵⁶ Hare's work was previously categorized in this paper as being "unorthodox" on the continuum of plays using verbatim theatre techniques.

⁵⁷ I attended the Saturday, November 28th 2009 performance of the *Middle Place*, presented at the OISE campus in Toronto.

⁵⁸ Andrew Kushnir kindly provided a DVD containing excerpts of the play and an e-mail document with several excerpts for analysis.

By inserting the playwright character into the piece I've tried to re-enforce that an artist inserted himself into a community that was not his own. My hoped link is that an audience taking in the piece begins to feel like they themselves have been inserted, that there is a kind of transferability of experience (much in the same way there is the transfer of voices from originators to actors). The audience becomes the interviewer and as was my experience, what we hear (or need to hear) from the subject becomes, in part, a reflection of ourselves. (Kushnir)

Kushnir also adds that this piece was possible only because of the fact the youth were granted anonymity, as he says they would not have been willing to speak to the traditional media (Kushnir). In his opinion, the medium of verbatim theatre afforded the shelter youth an opportunity

... to give voice to an experience that they would otherwise keep to and between themselves. Verbatim theatre is so inherently human – and there's something so potent about a piece of art that activates both the imagination and the conscience. We don't need to use our imaginations much when we watch a documentary and we're not necessarily rendered socially-aware by a straight drama. Verbatim theatre has a real tension, a tug-of-war between the two. (Xtra)

These three recent Canadian verbatim theatre productions are useful to this analysis for several reasons. Firstly, it is interesting to be able to gauge current Canadian verbatim theatre practices against the other examples mentioned throughout this thesis. Secondly, by discussing the characteristics of these examples, we can continue to understand what verbatim theatre has to offer. Finally, the characteristics described in each of the above examples provide some specific points for analysis, relative to some of the elements of journalism.

The Elements of Journalism

As was noted in the introduction, there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding the definition and parameters of the terms “journalist” and “journalism.” Therefore, instead of attempting to define or describe these broad terms, this chapter will instead rely on the examination of several “elements” of journalism. It is, in fact, more useful to

examine the elements and characteristics of the craft, as this allows for greater discussion and analysis. American journalism scholars Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel outline some guidelines for journalistic practice clearly in their aptly titled book, *The Elements of Journalism*.⁵⁹ At the outset of their book, Kovach and Rosenstiel list ten “principles” that “journalists agree on – and that citizens have a right to expect” (5).

They are:

1. Journalism’s first obligation is to the truth.
2. Its first loyalty is to citizens.
3. Its essence is a discipline of verification
4. Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover.
5. It must serve as an independent monitor of power.
6. It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
7. It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.
8. It must keep the news comprehensive and in proportion.
9. Its practitioners have an obligation to exercise their personal conscience.
10. Citizens, too, have rights and responsibilities when it comes to the news. (5)

The goal of this chapter is to discuss the relationship between these elements and the three recent Canadian verbatim theatre productions described above. By evaluating how the specific characteristics of the productions relate to the elements, we will be able to continue opening the door to the discussion of verbatim theatre’s relationship to journalism.

Before discussing the relevant characteristics of the verbatim theatre productions in detail, it is useful to take a closer look at each of the ten elements listed above. Many

⁵⁹ While there are several different books that could have been used to outline the journalistic criteria for this thesis, *The Elements of Journalism* was chosen because of its clarity and because it has received high praise from journalism scholars. For example, in her review of media related books titled “Common Knowledge: Further Reading,” journalism scholar Megan Garber calls *The Elements of Journalism* “a classic that deserves to be.”

of Kovach and Rosenstiel's elements are actually quite compatible with verbatim theatre practices. However, by briefly and methodically working through each element, we can understand which elements are problematic and which are unproblematic when compared to verbatim theatre practices. The discussion surrounding both the similarities and differences to verbatim theatre practice also allows us to gather a list of characteristics to focus on in the analysis section of this chapter.

1. Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.

Kovach and Rosenstiel emphasize the truth element as “the first and most confusing principle” (35). They explain that while there is a unanimous agreement that journalists should tell the truth, the confusion arises around defining what exactly truth is. Is it possible to define truth? Is there such a thing as a “greater truth”? Should journalists strive for the greater truth or only pursue facts? These are questions that have been discussed within journalism for some time and are very pertinent to this thesis. For example, in the discussion of *The Farm Show* in chapter two, it was noted that the actors in the troupe were attempting to capture not just characters, but a larger truth about the people of Clinton.

Kovach and Rosenstiel point to journalist Jack Fuller's philosophical way of testing truth by dividing it into two categories: correspondence and coherence (Kovach and Rosenstiel 42). They translate these categories into the journalistic terms of “getting the facts straight and making sense of the facts” (43). In order to make sense of the facts, journalists must interpret them. Kovach and Rosenstiel explain there are several levels of interpretation. They use the example of reporting on a football game: communicating the

score is straightforward, getting the facts straight. Describing *how* or *why* the game led to that outcome is more complex, but necessary in order to make sense of the facts (Kovach and Rosenstiel 40). The range of possible interpretations of the football game takes us back to the spectrum of representation discussed in chapter three. However, in that chapter we were discussing a range of art forms that are not necessarily subject to any ethical expectations or scrutiny. Journalism is. Therefore, we now need to look at the techniques used in the process of creation, in relation to the elements of journalism.

Journalism and verbatim theatre both work to make sense of the world by presenting factual information. According to Kovach and Rosenstiel, the search for “journalistic truth” is a process or a “continuing journey towards understanding” (43). They argue that over time, journalism works to interpret the world with the help of the community and “the search for truth becomes a conversation” (44). Verbatim theatre performs the same function. By gathering voices in conversation about pertinent issues, verbatim theatre practitioners are functioning in a similar way to traditional journalism. Nicolas Kent, artistic director of London’s Tricycle theatre, has directed several verbatim theatre plays. He says he does not look at verbatim theatre plays as art, but rather as “a response to a moment... I’m looking at them as a journalistic response to what’s happening” (qtd. in Hammond and Steward 165). However, as we saw in chapter three, along the spectrum of representation, there are several different creative practices and also challenges that accompany these. The same can be said for the spectrum of interpreting truth in this chapter.

Journalism scholar Jeffrey Olen divides this discussion into truth vs. the facts. He uses the example of *New Yorker* journalist Alastair Reid creating a “minor uproar” in

1984 after admitting he regularly used composite characters, invented settings and fictional dialogue in his work (Olen 82). Olen then provides Reid's reaction to the criticism he received, citing an interview Reid gave to the *Wall Street Journal*. According to Reid, "Facts are only part of the reality... You have to get over this hump that it's fact or else. There is a truth that is harder to get at and harder to get towards than the truth yielded by fact" (qtd. in Olen 82). However, Reid was heavily criticized by those who felt the journalistic promise to readers was to deliver the facts, without added fiction (83). For the purposes of this research, we are interested in which practices within the verbatim theatre examples outlined above present possible problems to this element. It is therefore worthwhile to further discuss the use of fictional characters, composite characters, the editing of material and the use of actors to represent people.

2. Journalism's first loyalty is to citizens.

Kovach and Rosenstiel describe the tension between journalism practice and the fact that it is supported by a business base. They conclude that "journalists must reestablish the allegiance to citizens that the news industry has mistakenly helped to subvert" (75). Although verbatim theatre productions need to sell tickets to attract audiences, there is relatively little pressure on theatre practitioners compared to journalists in terms of the subject of their content and the style of their product. This is what Australian theatre scholars Michael Anderson and Linden Wilkinson were quoted as describing in the introduction. In fact, as Anderson and Wilkinson point out, verbatim theatre can act as an antidote to the kind of packaged news stories they feel are threatening to democracy (153). Therefore, this element is unproblematic to our

discussion of verbatim theatre – unless and until it were to be added to the journalistic palette, potentially placing on it the same requirements currently experienced by conventional journalistic practice.

3. Journalism's essence is a discipline of verification.

Kovach and Rosenstiel claim “verification is what separates journalism from entertainment, propaganda, fiction or art” (79). They explain that fiction “invents scenarios to get at a more personal impression of what it calls truth” (79). This element raises several questions similar to those discussed regarding the truth element, such as issues of creation and invention of characters and scenes. It also presents questions regarding relationships with sources. What is the effect of anonymous sources upon a discipline of verification? Anonymous sources are often used in verbatim theatre – and are also used in journalism. Therefore, in addition to the issues already gathered from element one, further discussion about anonymous sources will be worthwhile as a point in our analysis.

4. Journalism's practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover.

Kovach and Rosenstiel expand on this claim to describe the different ways in which the journalist's opinion/beliefs, experiences, other work commitments or race/gender/ethnicity can conflict with their journalistic work. Although they emphasize the importance of independence for the journalist from their topics, they conclude “it is good judgment and an abiding commitment to the principle of first allegiance to citizens that separates the journalist from the partisan. Having an opinion is not only allowable, not only natural, but it is also valuable to the natural skepticism with which any good

reporter approaches a story” (137). In other words, they believe that if handled correctly, opinion and life experience are valuable to a journalist’s work. The conflict of interest issues addressed by Kovach and Rosenstiel are equally pertinent to the practice of verbatim theatre – as the audience (in both cases) deserves to know if the producer of a story has a bias. As with previous elements, Kovach and Rosenstiel’s solution is transparency. This is similar to the discussion of the journalist as a character in chapter four. It proves the continued need to discuss the journalist’s role within the story. In chapter four, this role was discussed from a theatrical standpoint, but in this chapter we will include this issue as one of our specific characteristics for discussion.

5. Journalism must serve as an independent monitor of power.

Kovach and Rosenstiel explain that journalists continue to feel their duty as investigative “watchdogs” is very important, and that the watchdog role “also extends beyond simply making the management and execution of power transparent, to making known and understood the effects of that power” (143). They title the chapter that deals with this element as “[m]onitor power and offer voice to the voiceless” (134). These ideas of investigation and empowerment are parallel to the possibilities offered by verbatim theatre. Verbatim theatre practitioner Robin Soans explains a powerful encounter he had with a drug addict whom he interviewed for a verbatim play. In doing so, he objects to the idea of “giving voice to the voiceless.” The drug addict turned out to have a keen understanding and articulate perspective on social issues such as poverty, drug misuse and anti-social behaviour. Soans explains this source “has a voice already – but it (the play) does provide his voice with listening ears: mine when he tells me his

story, and those of the audience when the actor tells it to them” (qtd. in Hammond and Steward 32). Soans says he believes verbatim theatre is important because it provides “a setting, a stage... to provide an amplification of an otherwise lost voice” (32).

In order for these voices to be amplified, they have to be found. Kovach and Rosenstiel provide three categories for investigative journalism: original investigative reporting, interpretive investigative reporting and reporting on investigations (143-147). Each of these categories can be associated with a verbatim theatre production. Original investigative reporting “involves reporters themselves uncovering and documenting activities that have been previously unknown to the public” (145). *The Middle Place* is an example for this category, due to the fact playwright Andrew Kushnir decided to introduce the widely unheard from shelter youth to the public. Interpretive investigative reporting “reveals a new way of looking at something as well as new information about it” (146). *Nanay: A Testimonial Play* is an example for this category. Playwrights Geraldine Pratt and Caleb Johnston interpreted several years of Pratt’s research data in order to construct their story. Finally, reporting on investigations “develops from the discovery or leak of information from an official investigation already under way or in preparation by others, usually government agencies” (148). In relation to verbatim theatre, this category can easily be expanded to include Richard Norton-Taylor’s tribunal plays, based on court hearings. Although not as immediate as the definition suggests, this type of verbatim theatre still investigates investigations that are not otherwise easily accessible to the public.

Verbatim theatre is in line with the guidelines of this element. Therefore, this element is unproblematic to our discussion of verbatim theatre. Additionally, while it

does not provide any specific characteristics for our analysis, it does present an important idea of alternative viewpoints. As will be discussed further in relation to the next element, both journalism and verbatim theatre can and should add voices to the public sphere. Kovach and Rosenstiel note a few criticisms that are relevant. They write that critics of the interpretive form of investigation call for the investigators to provide “sufficient outlet for alternative views” (147) and that investigative reporting in general has been called “advocacy reporting” due to its implied stance on issues (153). These are noteworthy points. As has already been discussed, balance and reflexivity are important principles for journalists to follow. They also apply to verbatim theatre practitioners.

6. Journalism must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.

Kovach and Rosenstiel point to the 1947 Hutchins commission on the freedom of the press in the United States. The commission concluded that the media acting as a public forum was second only to their obligation to tell the truth, stating “the great agencies of mass communication should regard themselves as common carriers of public discussion” (qtd. in Kovach and Rosenstiel 165). Kovach and Rosenstiel add that journalism’s public forum “must be for all parts of the community, not just the affluent or demographically attractive” (167). In this way, verbatim theatre and journalism are very similar. Verbatim theatre practitioner Robin Soans explains that verbatim theatre offers voices not usually heard from a chance to be amplified. For example, he reflects on his play *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook*, stating he is

often struck by the fact that when subjects such as the Israel-Palestine conflict are debated, they remain the province of politicians, experts, professors and academics. Conversely, the people who are hardly ever asked for their opinion are the people who have to live with the situation day after day – in the case of *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook*, a hairdresser in an Arab village, a student working in a shopping mall to earn his tuition fees, a gay couple in Tel Aviv,

a priest's wife in Bethlehem, a felafel maker in Jerusalem, a houmus maker near the wall. These are the people whose lives are most affected by the conflict, and yet they have traditionally been the least consulted. Surely, if we want real insight into any situation, we shouldn't listen only to those with an academic overview. (Hammond and Steward 31)

This element is not problematic to our discussion. In fact, it emphasizes some of the attributes of verbatim theatre that could be beneficial to journalism.⁶⁰ Kovach and Rosenstiel discuss challenges to journalism's public sphere, such as the "argument culture" of television talk programming that creates "shouting matches" out of public debates (171-175). They explain the value of civic participation on the Internet but question the verifiability of Internet blogs and chat rooms (184). Verbatim theatre can provide alternatives to both of these problems. It can deconstruct debates, by reporting the opinions expressed in a way that is engaging without being an argument. This achieves a goal that Kovach and Rosenstiel call for: public exchanges that are "more thoughtful, more focused on discussion, and drive at something – a resolution" (176). Verbatim theatre can also bring chat room culture into the mainstream view, by seeking out and interviewing these people, or presenting material found in these settings in a more accessible form.

Theatre scholar Chris Megson describes tribunal theatre as having "potentially transformative agency in oxygenating the public sphere" because of the way it widens and deepens the "terms of debate that have been narrowed or else rendered in fragmentary form by the press and broadcasting media" (206). He argues that the tribunal plays have the ability to create a new public forum for debate by representing the trial and involving the audience as participants.

⁶⁰ The benefits verbatim theatre may offer journalism are further explored in chapter six.

7. Journalism must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.

Kovach and Rosenstiel describe storytelling and information as “two points on a continuum of communicating” (188). This is again similar to the spectrum of creation in chapter three. As was also discussed in chapter three, Kovach and Rosenstiel point to the use of narrative as a way to make journalism clear and engaging. However, they caution that the “form can never determine substance – technique should never alter the facts” (205). As the discussion in chapter three pointed out, narrative sequencing occurs and is encouraged in journalism. Therefore, this element is not problematic to our discussion, as both journalism and verbatim theatre employ narrative sequencing in order to be more engaging. However, Kovach and Rosenstiel’s caution about form interfering with substance merits a further look at the use of narrative in our analysis.

Furthermore, this element goes beyond the discussion of narrative – and into the realm of topic selection. Kovach and Rosenstiel note that journalism should not be lured into the realm of “infotainment” (191-196). In other words, a journalistic product must make the significant interesting, as opposed to making the interesting *seem* significant. This is an important element to keep in mind when choosing a topic for any journalistic product, and will be further discussed in chapter six.

8. Journalism must keep the news comprehensive and in proportion.

At the beginning of their chapter discussing this element, Kovach and Rosenstiel pose some important questions, such as “[w]hat is news? Given the limits of space, time, and resources, what is to be left in and what is to be left out?” (208). In order to begin to answer these questions, they present an analogy to map-making, likening journalism to “social cartography” (209). With this analogy, they attempt to illustrate that journalism’s

map must do its best to comprehensively cover as much territory as possible, in order to learn about less travelled areas and chart new territory. Kovach and Rosenstiel caution against journalism's tendency to stick to the known, arguing that "if journalism provides people only with information they say in advance that they want to know about, we are telling them only about the part of the community they already know about" (219).

Verbatim theatre can be helpful in this department. In addition to speaking with sources not usually consulted by the traditional media (as discussed in element six), verbatim theatre done well approaches issues with questions, as opposed to pre-conceived notions. Verbatim theatre practitioner Robin Soans explains that while he may bring along his own preconceptions, he tries not to anticipate what he is going to find when doing interviews for a project (Hammond and Steward 29-30). Soans is interested in what his interviewees say about issues, as opposed to using his sources to fill a hole in his story with quotes that he has already imagined in his own head.

In addition to diversity and accurate representation of issues, this element also deals with sensationalism and over-reporting. While verbatim theatre plays are usually focused on under-reported issues and events, this element does bring forth a few questions about diverse voices. Are the often extremely diverse voices heard from in verbatim theatre comprehensive and in proportion? Is the investigation of issues (discussed in element five) too in-depth, too specific? These questions prompt a further look at the diverse sources in our analysis.

9. Journalism's practitioners have an obligation to exercise their personal conscience.

While the chapter discussing the second-last element deals largely with the importance of a healthy and open newsroom, there are a few parallels relevant to this analysis. Kovach and Rosenstiel acknowledge that “since there are no laws of journalism, no regulations, no licensing, and no formal self-policing, and since journalism by its nature can be exploitative, a heavy burden rests on the ethics and judgment of the individual journalist and the individual organization where he or she works. This would be a challenge for any profession” (230). How does this sentiment relate to verbatim theatre? As with journalism, there are no laws for the theatre, and certainly much less expectation of ethical behaviour, or consensus or consideration of what would constitute this ethical behaviour. This is especially significant since a verbatim theatre practitioner operates without the supervision of an editor, a person who can hold a journalist accountable for context and conduct. This is not to say that there should be guidelines for the theatre. However, as was touched on in chapter four, transparency is important for any performance. As was discussed in chapter two, there is a wide range of practices under the umbrella of documentary and verbatim theatre. These productions are appealing because of their claim to contain a certain amount of truth. The specifics of this amount must be made clear to the audience, case by case, in order for the productions to be ethically transparent. Therefore, this element is problematic to our discussion. If verbatim theatre practices are used for purposes beyond the theatre (such as a complement to journalism) the requirement for these types of guidelines is greater. Unlike the other elements that have led to specific features for further discussion, these ethical standards must be reflected in how the practitioner interprets each of the other

elements mentioned. In this vein, the whole discussion in this thesis could be seen as an exploration of how this might happen. Examples of how a verbatim theatre practitioner might adhere to journalistic elements are explored in detail in chapter six.

10. Citizens, too, have rights and responsibilities when it comes to the news.

In the discussion of their final element, Kovach and Rosenstiel outline how each of the preceding elements provides both rights and responsibilities to citizens (249-253). This chapter in their book does not directly relate to verbatim theatre, and this element is certainly not problematic to our discussion. In fact, in calling for citizens to be more active and involved in the journalism process, this element allows for a broader interpretation of ways in which citizens can have an impact on and be involved in the world of journalism. Kovach and Rosenstiel write that “the marketplace fails if we as citizens are passive, willing to put up with a diminishing product. It used to be that there was no alternative, but today traditional news organizations don’t hold a monopoly on some of the content” (253). In this example, Kovach and Rosenstiel are arguing that citizens should be vigilant in responding to lackluster journalism by voicing their concern. Verbatim theatre is a further pronouncement of that concern. In the absence of adequate coverage on a particular issue – why shouldn’t verbatim theatre bring more voices into the discussion?

In summary, the four main elements of journalism that conflict with the verbatim theatre examples are: journalism’s obligation to truth, journalism as a discipline of verification, journalists’ need for independence from those they cover, and the need to keep the news comprehensive and in proportion. These are healthy conflicts that will

assist in moving this analysis forward. By exploring these conflicting elements, and the elements with similarities to verbatim theatre practice, we have been able to gather characteristics of the verbatim theatre productions that are problematic to the elements of journalism. By further probing these areas of healthy and resolvable conflict, and their relationship to the elements of journalism, we can continue this analysis.

Transitional Points

All of the techniques gathered in the last section (such as composite characters, or narrative structure) are acceptable within the confines of the theatre. However, how do these techniques fit within journalistic criteria? In this thesis, we are looking at combining theatre with journalism. We have identified journalism as a creative, created art. However, depending on which techniques are added into a creation, and to what extent, a different product will be produced. The process between inspiration and final product could be considered a sort of transitional phase during which the nature of the finished product is still uncertain.⁶¹ During this period in the creation of a piece of verbatim theatre, the types of techniques applied at certain points and the ways in which they are applied will determine if the final product can be considered journalistic, or as something that is not journalistic. These points of transition are helpful to identify, in order to further our examination.

Discussing these specific points will allow for more grounded look at what some of the guidelines for “verbatim theatre journalism” could be. The transitional points gathered through the analysis in the last section are:

⁶¹ This analogy is loosely based on the uncertainty of end results when a chemical reaction is in progress.

1. The use of fictional characters
2. The use of composite characters
3. Total anonymity of sources
4. Editing of material
5. The use of narrative structure
6. The journalist as a character within the story
7. Inclusion of rarely heard from / diverse sources
8. The performance of material by actors

Evaluation

Transitional Point #1: Fictional Characters

In *Nanay: A Testimonial Play*, Geraldine Pratt invented one character to speak alongside the characters who were speaking verbatim transcripts of interviews. This feature prompts the question: How does the use of invented/fictional characters compare to journalistic criteria? In a 1976 essay titled “Journalism, Fiction and Other Alliances,” journalism scholar Roger Bird contrasts the outlooks of the journalist and the fiction writer. He explains the journalist “works primarily with an *observation* of current, objective, external phenomena; the writer of fiction works primarily with a *vision* of reality or truth” (Bird 34, italics his). Although Bird explains there is overlap and sharing of these vantage points of creation, his initial distinction is helpful in the discussion of this transitional point. Rather than thinking of a distinction between objectivity and subjectivity, the distinction between observation and vision allows us to think more concretely about where that product is created. In *observation*, the content of the product

is created externally, as the journalist is using their tools to shape a reality that exists independent of their mind. G. Stuart Adam clarifies while he uses the word “invention” to define journalism, he is referring to inventing with a set of practices (Adam). On the other hand, *vision* refers to an internally constructed truth or reality. Seen in this way, invented/fictional characters clearly go against one of Kovach and Rosenstiel’s two updated ideals for navigation between fact and fiction: “Do not add” (90). The literature on this transitional point is unanimous: invented/fictional characters compromise the journalistic criteria. Therefore, if they are included in a creation, it cannot be seen as journalistic.

Transitional Point #2: Composite Characters

In *Talk Thirty to Me*, Oonagh Duncan combined more than fifty verbatim transcripts into eight composite characters. This feature prompts the question: How does the use of composite characters compare to the journalistic criteria? G. Stuart Adam believes that this practice “deviates from journalism” because a person is being created who does not exist outside of the journalist’s imagination (Adam). This would be parallel to Kovach and Rosenstiel’s second updated ideal: “Do not deceive” (91). If the audience is left to believe a composite character is a real person (as opposed to a composite), there is deception. For example, in *Talk Thirty to Me*, Duncan did not explain her composite character technique in the beginning slides.⁶² As a result, the audience is left to believe they are witnessing real people. This is a form of deception. Journalism scholar Roy Peter Clark adds that while composite characters are “strongly associated with fiction” they can

⁶² Perhaps the methodology was explained in the play’s program. However, to ensure transparency, the technique must be explained in a way that makes sure all audience members receive and understand it.

be useful and “serve a journalistic purpose” if there is total transparency (Clark). In Duncan’s case, a slide could have projected that: “These are fifty interviews grouped into eight different composite characters. The words are all verbatim, but they were said by several different people.” This is transparent, and not deception. Therefore, the use of composite characters (without transparency) compromises the journalistic criteria. The use of composite characters with transparency is acceptable. However, as discussed in chapter three, in a journalistic product the value of a composite character is greatly decreased when the technique is made transparent.

Transitional Point #3: Total Anonymity of Sources

It is often (but not always) the convention in verbatim theatre productions to grant total anonymity to sources. This is the case with the three productions mentioned above. Geraldine Pratt points out that granting sources anonymity follows the protocols of social science research (Pratt). Andrew Kushnir says that the shelter youth he interviewed would not have been willing to talk without total anonymity (Kushnir). This feature prompts the question: How does granting total anonymity of sources compare to journalistic criteria? Journalism scholar Lee Wilkins argues that “contemporary journalistic thinking about the role of news sources assumes an active audience. The notion is that readers and viewers may better understand and evaluate journalistic accounts if those accounts identify journalists’ information sources” (117). In a similar way, veteran *New York Times* journalist Jim Dwyer describes journalism as a business of providing “reproducible results” (Clark 2001). According to Dwyer, a citizen should be able to take a piece of journalism and follow the trail of the journalist to re-create the

same story if they should so desire. In order for the citizen to talk to the same sources, she or he would have to know who they are. G. Stuart Adam recognizes that although granting anonymity is practised in journalism, the presence of an anonymous source weakens the journalistic product (Adam).

Journalism scholar Jeffry Olen writes that journalists should use moral reasoning in order to decide where their obligations to sources lie (42-43). Roy Peter Clark elaborates on this point, explaining that the importance of clear identification of sources depends on “what is at stake” (Clark). Clark believes that when legal issues (such as libel or slander) are at stake, source identifiability is more important than in stories that have no legal issues (such as more thematic or human interest stories) (Clark). According to Wilkins, the professional standard in journalism is that “sources should be named and that journalists must have compelling reasons for withholding a source’s identity,” adding that “anonymous sources are expected to be the exception rather than the journalistic rule” (117). However, Wilkins does add that the use of anonymous sources is ethically justifiable if journalists “are preventing either physical or emotional harm to a source; protecting the privacy of a source, particularly children or crime victims; and encouraging coverage of institutions, such as the U.S. supreme court or military, which might otherwise remain closed to journalistic and hence public scrutiny” (120). However, Wilkins also cautions that sources can seek anonymity for reasons of self-interest. Olen adds that there are two circumstances that outweigh any moral obligation of confidentiality to a source: if there is knowledge of a crime that is about to be committed or if the confidentiality prevents a fair trial (145).

For the most part, verbatim theatre productions fall into the category of thematic or human interest stories. Furthermore, in the case of *The Middle Place* and *Nanay*, the anonymity does protect the participants' privacy and does not benefit them, and is not harmful or preventing a fair trial. In addition, Wilkins provides an interesting example that proactively prevents many of the issues arising from anonymous sources. Prior to Senator Brock Adams's reelection campaign in 1992, the *Seattle Times* crafted an agreement with eight of Adams's staff members, who claimed to have been victims of sexual abuse by the Senator. The women did not want to go on the record in the story, but agreed to sign an "affidavit asserting the events they recounted were true and that, should Adams sue the *Times* for libel, they would reveal their identities in court" (Wilkins 121). The *Times* ran the story with the women quoted as anonymous sources, Adams dropped out of the campaign and never sued. While this does not allow readers to retrace the steps of the reporter, this is an example of the dangers of anonymous sources being minimized. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that anonymous sources are acceptable in a journalistic product, but that identifiable sources strengthen the journalistic criteria.

Transitional Point #4: Editing

One characteristic common to all verbatim theatre productions is the fact that all transcripts are edited down from their original length to become scripts for the productions. All three of the verbatim theatre playwrights profiled in this thesis mentioned the immense amount of editing that they had to do. This feature prompts the question: How does the editing of source material compare to journalistic criteria? G. Stuart Adam believes it would be impossible to create any text (journalistic or otherwise)

without editing, and that editing “represents in a way the supervision of certain norms that are based in journalism,” such as efficiency and authenticity (Adam). However, there is an important distinction to be made between editing and massaging a text.

In his 1986 essay, “The Legend on the License,” Pulitzer prize-winning author and journalist John Hersey writes that “every journalist knows the difference between the distortion that comes from subtracting observed data and the distortion that comes from adding invented data” (156). Roy Peter Clark amends Hersey’s point with the contemporary analogy of digital photography. He explains that while it is acceptable to crop a person out of a photo, it is not acceptable to put a different person into the photo (Clark). To further Clark’s analogy, it is important to note that even in editing by subtraction, the meaning of what is being communicated should not be distorted. For example, in the cropping of the photograph, the editor should avoid cropping one of the subject’s arms, making him/her look like an amputee. Furthermore, journalism scholar Jeffry Olen argues that the “cleaning up” of quotes is misleading. In line with the theme of transparency that has developed throughout this thesis, Olen writes that readers should be made aware when words have been altered within quotations (98-101). Once these sensitivities are established, it is clear that editing with transparency, and without distortion, is a characteristic and requirement of journalism.

Transitional Point #5: Narrative Structure

Another characteristic common to all verbatim theatre productions is the ordering of the material into some sort of narrative structure. This is also common practice in journalism, as discussed in chapter three. However, to continue our analysis, it is helpful

to ask: How does the implementation of narrative structure compare to the journalistic criteria? G. Stuart Adam says that in journalism there is always a story and a storyteller and that the ordering of information into a chronological or different narrative structure does not compromise the story (Adam). Kovach and Rosenstiel include narrative in their list of ways to experiment with new storytelling techniques (198-199). Roy Peter Clark adds the proviso that “composite scenes” should be treated with the same caution as “composite characters” (Clark). As long as the above expectations regarding distortion, adding, and transparency of storytelling methodology are met, it is reasonable to reaffirm the judgment from chapter three that narrative structure is a characteristic of journalism.

Transitional Point #6: The Journalist as a Character

In *The Middle Place*, playwright/interviewer Andrew Kushnir appears as an “outsider” character. In *Nanay*, there are guides giving information and direction. In *Talk Thirty to Me*, Duncan puts audience members into her interviewing shoes by having the characters speak directly to them. While different in style, each of these approaches is a way of crafting the outsider as a character within the story. As was discussed in the last transitional point, journalism is always a story and there is always a storyteller, even if at times it is the overall media outlet and not an identifiable individual. However, as evidenced even by the different approaches to the outsider character in the verbatim theatre examples, there are different ways/degrees of stepping into the story. This feature prompts the question: How does the involvement of an outsider character stepping further

into a story compare to the journalistic criteria?⁶³ Writer and journalist John Hersey addresses this issue in his discussion of objectivity and subjectivity. He feels a fallacy of the New Journalism is the belief that “since perfect objectivity in reporting what the eyes have seen and ears have heard is impossible, there is no choice but to go all the way over to absolute subjectivity” (162). He explains the problem with this scenario is that it makes the reporter the centre of attention and therefore “the report becomes a performance” (162). In a recent journal article titled “Who Says: Narrative Authority in A Fragmented World,” journalism scholar Megan Garber agrees. She describes the recent tendency of journalists’ personalities and opinions encroaching on their reporting, arguing that reporters are now seen “not merely as *purveyors of narrative*, but as people *who purvey narrative*” (4, italics hers), elaborating that focusing on authorial identity “shifts the focus from the text to the subtext” (5). In other words, as we saw in chapter four, there is a risk of the journalist becoming a dominant character in their story. Therefore, the journalist must be a minimal, transparent, and justifiable part of the story.⁶⁴

Transitional Point #7: Rarely heard/diverse sources

A common (although not definitive) aspect of verbatim theatre productions is that they feature the voices of people not often used as sources in traditional journalism. Part of the interest value of these productions is that they facilitate the introduction or increased exposure of these voices into the public sphere of debate. This is evident in *The*

⁶³ This issue was explored in detail in chapter four, but in order to continue our analysis, it is helpful to investigate further.

⁶⁴ This is not to say that pieces of journalism where the reporter steps into the story or first-person accounts are “improper” journalism in any way. Rather, that the rationale for and impact of the journalist’s presence in any story must be clearly explained.

Middle Place, as shelter youth are an example of a group of people not often heard from in the traditional media. This feature prompts the question: How does the use of diverse or rarely heard from sources compare to the journalistic criteria? This issue has been discussed in a relevant way by Canadian communications scholar Greg M. Nielsen. Nielsen uses poverty coverage to discuss the gaps that are often created between news consumers and those being covered. He describes how newspaper coverage of homeless people enhances the divide between the homeless and the readers by creating an “imagined, though not fictional, audience implied by the institution of news reporting itself” (Nielsen 616). In other words, because of the way both the homeless and the audience are framed in the way the story is reported, the audience understands less about homelessness than they possibly could – and the homeless people are further alienated. Roy Peter Clark expands on this point, explaining that a constant reliance on traditional sources can actually distort the worldview being portrayed (Clark). Kovach and Rosenstiel point to the work of the late American communications scholar James Carey, who believed that “in the end journalism simply means carrying on and amplifying the conversation of people themselves” (12). Seen in this way, diversity of sources supports the journalistic principle of balance. Specifically, a production like *The Middle Place* introduces audiences to people (and their opinions) outside of their daily experience. This introduction of diverse voices, and the depth and breadth of information this allows, complements and extends the traditional media.

Transitional Point #8: Material Performed by Actors

The one common characteristic among all verbatim theatre is that the material is performed by actors. This technique is similar to the dramatic reenactments discussed in chapter three. However to continue our analysis, it is helpful to ask: How does the material being performed by actors compare to the journalistic criteria? G. Stuart Adam believes this feature “represents a deviation from a journalistic standard”; he claims that in journalism, the standard is to have people speak for themselves (Adam). However, Roy Peter Clark believes that “oral presentation of a work is a legitimate expression of the journalistic craft,” explaining that (for example) news anchors are storytellers and that television news is not presented silently off the page but rather with pictures and sounds (Clark). Clark believes that “inevitably there is a certain theatricality in a well written journalism script” (Clark).

Is theatricality the same as representation? If it is possible to equate these two concepts, it is important to strive for accuracy within the representation. Verbatim theatre playwright Oonagh Duncan has written about audience reactions to her play *Talk Sixty to Me*, describing the reaction of a sixty-year-old audience member who felt misrepresented compared to the “overwhelming positive” response from interview subjects and sixty-year-old strangers who saw the play (Duncan 2008: 1).⁶⁵ This positive response can be credited to both the verbatim accuracy of the play and to Duncan’s involvement in the rehearsal process, as the actors’ interpretations of the text also influence its accuracy. However, now that the play is published and widely available, it would be difficult for the accuracy of interpretation to be ensured. For the purposes of this discussion, the

⁶⁵ *Talk Sixty to Me* was Duncan’s follow up piece to *Talk Thirty to Me*. It was produced at Toronto’s *Summerworks* Festival in 2008.

pertinent conclusion is that the performance (or “re-production”) of the piece must endeavour to be as accurate as possible to the original material. It is particularly important to honour the trust placed in the playwright by the sources of the verbatim material. In addition, as discussed in detail in chapter three, representations in performance must be clearly transparent in order to not be confused with reality/reportage.

Summary

Before going any further, it is helpful to summarize the conclusions from the above evaluation. By comparing the recent verbatim theatre productions to the elements of journalism, we were able to determine several characteristics that warranted further discussion. These characteristics (labelled transitional points) were points that (depending on their use) could make a theatrical creation journalistic or not. From the discussion of these eight transitional points, the following eight conclusions are evident:

1. Fictional/invented characters cannot be used in a journalistic product.
2. Composite characters can be used in a journalistic product only if the technique is made fully transparent. However, making this technique transparent weakens its function. Therefore, the use of composite characters is not recommended in a journalistic product.
3. Anonymous sources are acceptable in a journalistic product, but identifiable sources strengthen the product.
4. Editing with transparency, and without distortion, is a characteristic and requirement of journalism.
5. Narrative structure is a characteristic of journalism.

6. The journalist character must be identified in the story in some way. She or he must be a minimal, transparent, and justifiable part of the story.

7. A greater range of diverse voices, and the depth/breadth of information this allows, strengthens a journalistic product.

8. The performance (or “re-production”) of material in a journalistic product must endeavour to be as accurate as possible to the original material. The fact that it is a performance must also be transparent.

These conclusions form the basis for the criteria in chapter six. Before concluding our summary, it is useful to assess the three recent Canadian verbatim theatre examples, according to these conclusions.

There are several characteristics that are similar in each play. However, due largely to the use of fictional characters in *Nanay* and the use of non-transparent composite characters in *Talk Thirty to Me*, *The Middle Place* stands out as the production of the three discussed that conflicts the least with the above points. *The Middle Place* does use anonymous sources, but there is very little legally “at stake” in this production. It is also important to note that according to playwright Andrew Kushnir, the shelter youth would not have agreed to participate unless they were given anonymity (Kushnir). *The Middle Place*, like the other two case studies, has the outsider character involved in the piece, but his words are taken verbatim from the interview transcripts, just as the answers are. Finally, *The Middle Place* makes every effort to ensure the representations are accurate, yet transparent. One of the reasons Kushnir has decided not to publish the script is to make sure the characters are represented as authentically as possible. During the rehearsal period, he was present to help the actors achieve accurate representations of the interview subjects. In the performance of the piece, the actors are dressed in plain

clothes and use dance-like gestures to openly indicate they are shifting from one character to the next. These simple techniques work to both inform the audience about who is talking, and to make the act of representation clear. In this way, *The Middle Place* uses techniques similar to Brecht's epic theatre. The actors are showing they are not the real people. This makes the audience think about the words being said, as opposed to trying to sort out the illusion.

The purpose of this study was not to rank or be critical of these three productions. However, by evaluating how these productions compare to the journalistic elements, we have been able to work towards understanding the relationship between journalism and verbatim theatre.

In closing, it is safe to say that the recent Canadian verbatim theatre productions have both journalistic and non-journalistic elements and characteristics. It is also safe to say that a relationship between verbatim theatre and journalism exists. The discussion generated through examining verbatim theatre history, some of the elements of journalism and the transitional points illustrates that there is a coincidence of practices, ideas and ideals between the two arts. But what is the nature of the relationship? G. Stuart Adam believes verbatim theatre is an extension of journalism, born out of its practices (Adam). Canadian communications scholar David Skinner details the difficulty of defining the category of "alternative media," citing theatre as a possible alternative medium. One of the definitions he uses to describe alternative media is "representing the perspectives of the socially, politically and culturally excluded" (222). The verbatim theatre examples discussed in this paper fulfil this definition. Roy Peter Clark has recently coined the term "collateral journalism," which he defines as "any act of reporting

or analysis that attempts to take a current story and frame it to view its higher social, political or cultural significance” (1). Although Clark uses his concept to suggest collateral coverage of tabloid issues, a parallel can be drawn to the way verbatim theatre allows for different and diverse perspectives on an issue that is often understood only on the macro level. For example, *The Middle Place* is collateral to stories about poverty levels and youth alienation. British communications scholar Charlie Beckett has called for “networked journalism,” which he explains is an outlook that recognizes that “mainstream professional journalists must share the very process of production” with other sources, such as so-called “citizen journalists” (4). In this way, verbatim theatre practitioners can be seen as bringing new perspectives into the network. The practices of verbatim theatre resonate with all three of these definitions. However, rather than classifying verbatim theatre as something within these categories, these three examples are most useful in proving that the practices and ideas of journalism are rapidly and constantly expanding. Verbatim theatre has been evolving at a similar pace.

As the worlds of the theatre and journalism expand, they have begun to overlap and have created a disputed territory, a region where the respective borders of journalism and theatre blur. A section of this territory can be temporarily labelled “verbatim theatre journalism.” The standards, uses and potentials for this territory are yet to be fully defined, but this chapter has advanced the discussion. There are plenty of reasons to explore potential uses for “verbatim theatre journalism.” Further criteria for this territory, and its applications, will be discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter Six

“Verbatim theatre journalism”: *What might it look like?*

The previous chapter began outlining some of the criteria for a piece of “verbatim theatre journalism”⁶⁶ by comparing recent Canadian examples of verbatim theatre with the core elements of journalism. It concluded that there was indeed a relationship between verbatim theatre and journalism, and defined this relationship (as was hypothesized in the introduction) as a disputed territory that has been produced by the expansion of the practices of both journalism and the theatre. This chapter is made up of two sections. To begin, the discussion from the last chapter continues, in order to more fully define some possible criteria and uses for the disputed territory. The second section includes some examples from a work in progress piece of “verbatim theatre journalism,” in order to demonstrate how guidelines from the first section could be realised.

Criteria

In order to more fully develop the criteria/guidelines for “verbatim theatre journalism,” it is helpful to revisit the eight conclusions from chapter five. This section will build on each of these conclusions by turning them into more positive, proactive guidelines that can be used in the creation of a “verbatim theatre journalism” product. Two additional points are added in order to provide ten guidelines that allow a “verbatim theatre journalist” to proceed with a “verbatim theatre journalism” project. These

⁶⁶ These quotation marks are used to indicate that this term is not yet presumed to be fully legitimate and acceptable. They will recur as we continue to explore the boundaries, rules and applications of this disputed territory.

guidelines have been arranged in an order more helpful to beginning such a project. Examples for some of the guidelines will be illustrated in the following section, in reference to a piece of applied research.

The two additional guidelines regard the “newsworthiness” of a “verbatim theatre journalism” piece. In addition to following the elements of journalism in regards to style and technique, “verbatim theatre journalism” must also have some sort of journalistic focus in terms of content. Any piece of verbatim theatre may be interesting, but in order to be “verbatim theatre journalism,” a piece must have timeliness or currency. Timeliness refers to events that have occurred recently. Currency refers to subject matter that deals with issues that are currently seen as important. These two new guidelines begin the list of steps for a piece of “verbatim theatre journalism.”

Ten Guidelines for a “verbatim theatre journalism” project

- 1. A “verbatim theatre journalism” piece must have timeliness; and/or*
- 2. A “verbatim theatre journalism” piece must have currency.*

In order to serve a journalistic function, the subject matter must deal with an event that is happening, that has happened in the recent past, or is going to happen in the near future. Without this link to a timely issue or event, “verbatim theatre journalism” verges on “verbatim theatre history.” Examples of a timely event include a crime, a trial, a fire, an accident, the passing of a law or a public inquiry. In the absence of a timely link to actual events, a piece of “verbatim theatre journalism” could qualify as newsworthy if it addresses a current issue that is relevant to the public.

The ideal current issue is one that is often in the public's view, but not often dealt with in a detailed or humanized way. Examples of such issues include immigration, poverty, health care, human rights and religion. These issues are of course broad categories – and the “verbatim theatre journalist” (like the traditional journalist) must endeavour to find a story/angle within the issue, based on interviews with the people involved.

3. A “verbatim theatre journalism” piece must facilitate voices that would not usually be heard in the traditional media.

As has been discussed several times in this thesis, one of verbatim theatre's strengths is its ability to facilitate the entry of new voices, or those that are not often heard, into the public sphere. Therefore, verbatim theatre should always seek to fulfil this role. However, just because a person (or group of people) is often heard from in the traditional media does not mean they are “off-limits” to a verbatim theatre piece. If the verbatim theatre piece engages the people in a different way (e.g. by allowing them to talk about a different subject) or provides new information (e.g. by presenting new aspects of the issue), then the facilitation of voice is still valid. Examples of these two situations are Robin Soans's *Talking to Terrorists* or Richard Norton-Taylor's “tribunal plays.”

4. A “verbatim theatre journalism” piece must be constructed from actual interviews or transcripts from court or other proceedings.

As was discussed in chapter two, there is a wide range of documentary and verbatim theatre practices. These include a blending of factual gathering and fictional invention. In order to be seen as a journalistic product, a “verbatim theatre journalism”

piece must avoid fictional invention, and instead rely on transcripts of interviews done by the practitioner or transcripts of trials/other hearings. If necessary, the “verbatim theatre journalist” must be able to provide the same verification of material as a traditional journalist.

5. A “verbatim theatre journalism” piece must attribute quotations to the person who spoke them.

In line with the guideline regarding the use of fiction, the use of composite characters is a form of invention. As was discussed in chapter five, a composite character exists only in the mind of the person who constructs it. As was discussed in chapter three, it is possible to use a composite character with transparency – but some of the engagement value is lost as a result. The promise (and appeal) of “verbatim theatre journalism” is that it presents real words spoken by real people. A composite character does not actually exist and is therefore less engaging and not journalistic.

6. A “verbatim theatre journalism” piece must strive to use identifiable sources, or be transparent about the reasons for granting anonymity.

As was discussed in chapter five, identifiable sources strengthen a journalistic product. However, some sources are not willing to provide their identity to the traditional media, but are willing to speak to verbatim theatre practitioners (as was the case with *The Middle Place*). Verbatim theatre’s value is not greatly weakened by the use of anonymous sources, but for a “verbatim theatre journalism” product, the use of anonymous sources must be explained. If there is a risk of legal reaction to the piece, a practitioner should investigate options for protection. A solution for this issue was

mentioned in an example in chapter five, when a journalist granted sources anonymity but also obtained an affidavit that the sources would appear in court if need be.

7. A “verbatim theatre journalism” piece must edit the material in a transparent and respectful way.

As was discussed in chapter five, if the editing process transforms or alters the meaning of the transcripts, the playwright is inventing material, and it ceases to become a play constructed out of verbatim accounts. Therefore, a person’s words in “verbatim theatre journalism” must accurately represent what they said.

8. A “verbatim theatre journalism” piece must use narrative sequencing in order to aid in the audience’s understanding.

As was discussed in both chapter three and chapter five, journalists use narrative as a tool to aid in the audiences understanding. Therefore, simply transcribing and editing transcripts does not merit the title of “verbatim theatre journalism” – as it would not be engaging or easy to understand. In order to construct a narrative, practitioners could use either a chronological or a thematic narrative structure. For example, a piece of “verbatim theatre journalism” that deals with an event (e.g. a car crash) might reconstruct the series of actions within the event by arranging a chronological narrative from the testimonies of witnesses and observers. A piece of “verbatim theatre journalism” that deals with an issue (e.g. immigration) might arrange scenes based on different sub-issues that immigrants encounter. Either approach could also be used for the other category, depending upon the vision of the “verbatim theatre journalist.”

9. *A “verbatim theatre journalism” piece must be transparent about the role (and the degree) a journalist is involved in the story.*

As was discussed in chapters three, four and five, the journalist plays a role in her or his story, and this role should not be disregarded. In a “verbatim theatre journalism” project, the journalist character must be recognized as being present, as opposed to being a “disembodied voice” or ambiguous identity. This might mean including the journalist as a character, including references to the journalist in the transcripts of the sources, or explaining the process with projections. These approaches will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter.

10. *A “verbatim theatre journalism” piece must perform the material in a way that is as accurate as possible to the original material. The fact that it is a performance must also be made transparent.*

As was discussed in chapter five, there is a danger that meaning can be transformed by inaccurate representation. While this may be acceptable in verbatim theatre, it is not acceptable in “verbatim theatre journalism.” Therefore, the person who does the interview(s) must be involved in the rehearsal process to ensure the accuracy of performance. This does not mean that actors need to imitate every gesture or vocal tone of an interview subject. It does mean that the physical and emotional representation of a character should be accurate to the original person. For example, a person should not act drunk if the original person was not, or a person should not giggle and laugh throughout a monologue if the original person was sad or serious.

Research Applied

From the outset, this examination was framed as looking for a *relationship* between verbatim theatre and journalism. At the end of the last chapter, it was concluded

that the preliminary hypothesis was correct, and that there was a relationship between verbatim theatre and journalism. More precisely, verbatim theatre is a disputed territory, created by the overlap of the expanding worlds of journalism and theatre. As has been stressed – the purpose of this thesis is not to argue that verbatim theatre should be considered journalism, nor is it to evaluate or enforce a set of standards upon current verbatim theatre. However, this chapter is beginning to tie together the ways that a portion of this new territory, if governed by elements from within the world of journalism, can make a complementary contribution to traditional journalism.

As a way to continue to understand the use and application of this research, it is helpful to ask: What would a piece of “verbatim theatre journalism” look like? In order to do this we will explore an example of a current work-in-progress piece of “verbatim theatre journalism” by looking at stages of the process and how they reflect and resonate with this research.⁶⁷ For clarity’s sake, it is useful to methodically work through short examples from the piece of applied research, referencing each guideline from the above section, in order to illustrate the way (or ways) in which the “verbatim theatre journalist” might construct the material to adhere to the criteria.

⁶⁷ All examples used in this chapter’s discussion are taken from an unpublished work-in-progress “verbatim theatre journalism” piece by the writer of this thesis with the working title *This Land is My Land* (Bernbaum). At time of writing, five hour-long interviews have been completed. The complete transcript of one of these interviews is attached as an appendix to this document (see Appendix E). Selections from this transcript and the other interviews will be drawn on in order to illustrate the preceding guidelines. The long-term vision for this project is to continue to interview immigrants in different cities across the country, in the hopes of constructing and producing a fully realized piece.

Analysis

1. + 2. Is the topic either timely or current?

The piece of applied research is a work-in-progress verbatim theatre play, dealing with the topic of immigration. This is a “current” issue in Canada, as our country is continuously processing (both accepting and rejecting) immigrants.⁶⁸ Immigration is an issue that is therefore constantly in the public eye, whether or not there is a timely event related to immigration that is underway. A current issue, such as immigration, allows for an issue-based application of “verbatim theatre journalism.” This is one of the four applications that will be discussed in the conclusion. The “issue-based” approach allows for the widest amount of interpretation, and is therefore an ideal choice for an emerging “verbatim theatre journalist.” The initial angle/central question for the piece is “What is the immigrant experience like in Canada?” Sub-questions that have come out of the initial interviews and research include: “How has the immigrant experience changed over the years in Canada?” and “What do past and current immigrants in Canada feel is important for future immigrants to Canada?”

3. Is there facilitation of voices not usually heard in the traditional media?

It is difficult for the traditional media to constantly humanize a broad issue such as immigration. As with many social issues, there are several dimensions to this issue that are newsworthy, and that demand the time and attention of the traditional media, including policy stories, legal stories, labour stories, and humanized profiles of people actively in the news. The traditional media do attempt to humanize their immigration

⁶⁸ Of course, with the exception of Canada’s aboriginal peoples, every Canadian is an immigrant, or a descendent of an immigrant.

stories as much as possible. For example, a story on immigration policy or an immigration issue might begin with how the policy or issue affects an immigrant, then go to interviews with government officials or lawmakers.⁶⁹ In this case, we have heard from the immigrant population, but only for a very limited amount of time – and only in reference to a specific question. Therefore, the facilitation of more voices would be a definite complement to the reportage of the traditional media, especially if the voices are facilitated in a way (as is possible in “verbatim theatre journalism”) that allows them to speak more freely about what they feel is important.

4. Is the material for the piece going to be constructed from factual interviews/transcripts – or will there be fictional/invented characters?

This is the easiest guideline to satisfy. While there are plenty of compelling and acceptable reasons to use fictional/invented characters in a theatrical product, it is clear that for a “verbatim theatre journalism” project, fictional/invented characters are not appropriate and must not be used. Therefore, for the piece of applied research, the only material used is based on the transcripts of interviews done by the author of this thesis and past, recent and in-progress immigrants to Canada.

5. Are composite characters used?

The issues related to composite characters have been discussed in chapters three and five. However, to further understand the dangers of creating a composite character, it is helpful to go through the process of creating one. This first example is a combination

⁶⁹ An example of this type story can be found in the web, radio and television versions of a March 18th, 2010 CBC story about the Quebec government trying to lure immigrants to the Gatineau region. In all three of these stories, Eric Rakotomena, an immigrant from Madagascar, is used to humanize the story (CBC).

of a recent young immigrant to Canada from Cameroon, and an older Canadian who immigrated to Canada in the 1950s from the Netherlands. This is a combination of the two individuals talking about what was/is difficult for them upon arriving in Canada. The underlined section signals the point where the second person's speech has been added.

COMPOSITE IMMIGRANT CHARACTER 1:

In the restaurant for example, for me. I don't know yet, I don't know, the types of food, of the type of meal here in Canada. When I am in the store I have the difficulty to, to buy the thing I want, I have a difficulty to know where I can find this and this. (*laughs*) *Hu huh huh huh yeah huh*. So, *emm*, but it's not bad, it's not bad, in Canada. It's the difficulty for me, but it's not bad. It's very good, it's normal *ne* for me, but for me it's a difficulty. I found it very difficult when I came here, and I didn't dare to speak. That was another thing, I did not dare to speak English because I knew I had this funny accent.⁷⁰

Even without the underline, it is not hard to spot where the two speeches have been combined. In order to create a more fluid and convincing composite character, one would have to either edit out some of the text from the first speaker, or add text from the second speaker. The question of editing will be dealt with in greater detail in point seven below, but it is important to note that if one were to massage the text in order to make one speaker speak like the other, she or he would be defeating one of the main purposes of "verbatim theatre journalism." This is a medium that allows for a word-for-word transmission of speech. If dialogue is then massaged to create a composite character, what is the point of the verbatim interview and transcription process in the first place?

Now, the above example was chosen purposefully to illustrate the contrast of different people's speaking styles. Perhaps a younger man who recently immigrated to

⁷⁰ The challenges of transcription and interpretation of interview material is discussed more fully later in this chapter. For now, it is worthwhile to note that for our purposes, non-verbal sounds, laughter and non-English words are all written in italics. Stage directions are written in italics within parentheses, and commas are used to represent when the speaker paused during the interview (as opposed to representing correct grammar).

Canada from Cameroon and an older man who immigrated to Canada years ago from the Netherlands are not realistic candidates to become a composite character. Verbatim theatre playwright Oonagh Duncan explained her use of composite characters as a way to deal with many different people who were talking about the same thing (Duncan). For the sake of further discussion, it is useful to construct a second composite character, from the same older man who immigrated to Canada from the Netherlands in the 1950s and a woman who immigrated to Canada from Israel in the 1970s. These two people are more similar in age and lifestyle than the above pairing, so their speaking styles are similar. They are both reflecting on their experiences with war. Let's begin with a speech from each of them that deals with war:

IMMIGRANT FROM THE NETHERLANDS: My childhood? My goodness that's a long time ago. That's war years. Nineteen forty to forty-five. Planes going overhead, dropping bombs. Lots of sirens, lot of hiding, lot of finding... Uh well it wasn't very nice. Lots of noise in the street with uh German soldiers walking, making that awful sound of blang bang bang with the heels. Yeah, was terrible... It was very sad...

IMMIGRANT FROM ISRAEL: Because we felt, you know I, we felt that we de-don't have our heart which was the Wailing Wall. Although I have to say, I never thought that in my lifetime, I would be able to see it. That was really, when I remember the first time going to the Wailing Wall, I, I, Et-was really taken over by feelings. An I said I, I just couldn't believe do to I'm actually there, because you know because of the, you know because of being living under divided city and you know from time to time having-k people shooting f-through that i-da-I-da from the other side, I could never believe that this is it's gonna happen because I knew that Israel will not start anything an I just didn't think we its gonna ever happen. And little did I know that in nineteen sixty-seven, I would be able to go to the Wailing Wall.

If these two examples were combined, it would be more difficult to spot the point where one speech is combined with the other. The styles of speech are much more compatible than in the first example. The content is also similar. However, in order to create a composite character, you would still have to alter the text in one of two ways. The first way to make a composite would be to strip away all of the identifying information. This

is important because in actuality, the German soldiers were marching through the streets of the Netherlands, and the Wailing Wall is in Jerusalem. The two separate dates given within the monologue make it conceivable that this person could have heard gunshots in the '40s and seen the Wailing Wall in the '60s. However, this would create a highly specific set of life circumstances. Rather than broadening to a general composite that represents a wide range of people, this creation narrows the applicability of the character. A composite character with no identifying information would look like this (as with the first example, the two original speakers are differentiated by the underlined text):

VERSION 1

COMPOSITE CHARACTER 2:

My childhood? My goodness that's a long time ago. That's war years. Planes going overhead, dropping bombs. Lots of sirens, lot of hiding, lot of finding... Uh well it wasn't very nice. Lots of noise in the street with uh soldiers walking, making that awful sound of blang bang bang with the heels. Yeah, was terrible... It was very sad... we felt that we didn't have our heart. Because you know because of the, you know because of being living under divided city and you know from time to time having-k people shooting f-through that i-da-I-da from the other side.

With all of the identifying information (place names, dates) removed, a more generic monologue about war is created. This monologue sums up the general experience of war. However, even without the identifying information, it creates someone with a highly specific set of life circumstances. This is the same trap as the first version, except we are now trying to cover our tracks, which makes the technique even more of a violation.

The second way to combine these two speeches would be to use only a few lines from one speech and apply them to the other. In this version it is possible to retain one of the original character's identifying information, while using a line or two of more potent speech from the other character.

VERSION 2

COMPOSITE CHARACTER 2:

My childhood? It was very sad... Because we felt, you know I, we felt that we de-don't have our heart which was the Wailing Wall. Although I have to say, I never thought that in my lifetime, I would be able to see it. That was really, when I remember the first time going to the Wailing Wall, I, I, Et-was really taken over by feelings. An I said I, I just couldn't believe do to I'm actually there, because you know because of the, you know because of being living under divided city and you know from time to time having-k people shooting f-through that i-da-I-da from the other side, planes going overhead, dropping bombs. Lots of sirens, lot of hiding, lot of finding... I could never believe that this is it's gonna happen because I knew that Israel will not start anything an I just didn't think we its gonna ever happen. And little did I know that in nineteen sixty-seven, I would be able to go to the Wailing Wall.

In this version, the personal experience described is more believable. However, both examples clearly violate the guidelines outlines in points five and seven. By creating a composite character, the practitioner is attributing words to someone who did not speak them, and, editing in a way that leads the audience to believe an imaginary person exists. As with the example about massaging the language, what is the point of doing interviews if people who do exist are going to be created? The more one looks at the technique of composite characters, the more apparent it is that this technique compromises journalistic criteria, and does not even make much sense.

6. Are sources granted anonymity? If so, are the reasons for granting anonymity justifiable and made transparent to the audience?

This piece of applied research is issue-based, and does not deal with material that is legally controversial. Therefore, the requirement of identifiable sources is not as great as could be in a piece that was legally sensitive. Out of the five interviews conducted at the time of writing, one source asked that her or his name not be used, and another asked that only her or his first name be used. The immigrant from the Netherlands did not want

her or his name to be used because she or he was speaking extremely frankly, and if this person was identified, her or his reputation and community status could be affected. She or he would most likely not have spoken as honestly if anonymity was not granted. The source's honest opinions are more important than naming her or his identity. Again, because this piece is issue-based, and deals with personal experiences and opinions relating to the issue of immigration, there is no legal threat apparent in granting the sources anonymity. In fact, in the case of the immigrant from the Netherlands, withholding her or his identity protects her or him from any repercussions. However, granting sources anonymity does affect the editing process. While a person's name could be left out of a script, several other identifying factors could remain. For example, if the source mentions identifying factors such as age, occupation, city of residence and country of origin, someone could likely combine this information with description provided by the playwright, such as gender, to attempt to identify the source. Therefore, in the editing process, a "verbatim theatre journalist" must be carefully aware of what type of identifying factors she or he is including in the script in cases where anonymity has been promised.

The simplest way to make the anonymity transparent is to use a projection at the beginning of a production. Projections are often used in verbatim theatre productions to convey information about the process, sources or theme. This is similar to an editor's note before an article, which explains the reasons why anonymous sources were used.⁷¹ For example, the projection could explain that the sources were granted anonymity

⁷¹ For example, *The New York Times*'s policy on using anonymous sources states: "When we use such sources, we accept an obligation not only to convince a reader of their reliability but also to convey what we can learn of their motivation – as much as we can supply to let a reader know whether the sources have a clear point of view on the issue under discussion." (*New York Times*)

because they would otherwise be in danger. Additionally, a “verbatim theatre journalist” might want to make all of the characters nameless, as a way to frame the characters as representatives of the broader immigrant experience. If this was the case, a projection could explain this convention.

7. Is the material edited in a way that stays true to the meaning of the original interview?

The editing process was discussed in detail in chapter five. It was concluded that editing (without distortion) was not only acceptable, but an important element of a journalistic product. The same judgment certainly applies for a piece of “verbatim theatre journalism.” No audience will be interested and engaged by watching an entire interview transcript performed. In order to distill the interview transcripts down to be interesting and engaging, yet still be accurate scenes, careful editing must happen. For example, here is a selection of the transcript from the interview with the recent immigrant from Cameroon. He is describing the challenges of not yet being able to speak English fluently in the workplace. The underlined sections are the proposed edits to be deleted:

JB: Tell me the story from the beginning here? About your first time working...

SM: In Handyman?

JB: Yeah.

SM: Oh, *bon*, the first time that Handyman send me out to work. I meet the boss, um, I had to

JB: Did he speak, does he speak French?

SM: Yeah, he duh, he doesn't, I mean, any word in French, but he want me to make sweeping, sweeping in the construction. Um, he send me, he ask me to bring the broom (*laughs*) *ah ha ha ha ha ha*. Me, I, I never understand I uh, I told him, broom is what? He say broom broom, bring your broom, (*laughs*) *Uh ha ha ha*. Broom, I don't understand broom broom. (*makes sounds*) *Sshwep Sshwep Sshwep*. (*laughs*) *Ah ha ha ha ha ha*. (*makes sounds*) *Sshwep Sshwep Sshwep Sshwep*. I say *ahhh*, okay.

JB: (laughs) Ha ha ha.

SM: The *balai*, okay. (laughs) *Ah ha ha ha ha*. That was very funny.

JB: And how did, what did your boss do? Was it funny for him too?

SM: Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah, now he knows that, he knows that um, the name of things in English, I don't know but, *em*, yeah we, everytime we speak in English, but the name, for example.

JB: So how do, how does he instead of saying the name, does he say something different? How does he ask you to get something, now?

SM: Oh, now, um, now, when, he ask me to, take some material, if uh, if he know that I don't understand, I don't know the material, *eh*, if for example is the, vacuum, he make the sound now, (makes sounds) *Vvvvv Vvvv Vvvv Vvvv* (laughs) *Da ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha*. (makes sounds) *Vvvvv Vvvv Vvvv*, Vacuum. Oh yeah, okay.

JB: (laughs) Ha he.

SM: (laughs) Ha ha ha ha. It's like that.

JB: (laughs) Ha ha ha ha. That's a good system.

SM: (laughs) Ha ha ha ha. If there is the, well the hammer for example, say, hammer (makes sounds) *Po po*. And now it's okay. (laughs) *Ah ha ha ha*.

JB: It's a, a new language.

SM: Yeah yeah yeah, ve-ve-very strange for me. (laughs) Uh ha ha ha ha.

JB: Oh that's funny.

SM: Ohh.

The issue of the journalist as a transparent character will be discussed in the next section.

For now, it is safe to conclude that as long as the “verbatim theatre journalist’s” presence is made transparent in some way, it is not necessary to have the her or his words as a constant presence. Some additional cuts have been made to the beginning of the answers, because they were in response to the questions, or unrelated to the story being told.

However, nothing has been edited within the sentences of the responses.

VERSION 1

IMMIGRANT FROM CAMEROON:

The first time that Handyman send me out to work. I meet the boss, um, he doesn't, I mean, any word in French, but he want me to make sweeping, sweeping in the construction. Um, he send me, he ask me to bring the broom *(laughs) ah ha ha ha ha ha*. Me, I, I never understand I uh, I told him, broom is what? He say broom broom, bring your broom, *(laughs) Uh ha ha ha*. Broom, I don't understand broom broom. *(makes sounds) Sshwep Sshwep Sshwep. (laughs) Ah ha ha ha ha ha ha. (makes sounds) Sshwep Sshwep Sshwep Sshwep*. I say *ahhh*, okay. The *balai*, okay. *(laughs) Ah ha ha ha ha*. That was very funny. Now he knows that, he knows that um, the name of things in English, I don't know but, *em*, yeah we, everytime we speak in English, but the name, for example. Now, when, he ask me to, take some material, if uh, if he know that I don't understand, I don't know the material, *eh*, if for example is the, vacuum, he make the sound now, *(makes sounds) Vvvvv Vvvv Vvvv Vvvv (laughs) Da ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha. (makes sounds) Vvvvv Vvvv Vvvv, Vacuum*. Oh yeah, okay. If there is the, well the hammer for example, say, hammer *(makes sounds) Po po*. And now it's okay. *(laughs) Ah ha ha ha*.

It is important to reiterate that none of the words (or sounds) within the sentences were altered. The challenge of transcribing and reproducing some of these words and sounds will be more fully discussed in point ten. As was noted in the discussion of composite characters, one of the merits of the verbatim transcription method is that the actual diversity of human speech words and sounds are included. If they were edited out, the above speech might look like this:

VERSION 2

IMMIGRANT FROM CAMEROON:

The first time that Handyman send me out to work. I meet the boss, he want me to make sweeping, sweeping in the construction. He ask me to bring the broom *(laughs) ah ha ha ha ha ha ha*. I never understand, I told him, broom is what? He say broom broom, bring your broom. Broom, I don't understand broom broom. *(makes sounds) Sshwep Sshwep Sshwep*. I say *ahhh*, okay. The *balai*, okay. That was very funny. Now he knows that the name of things in English, I don't know. Everytime we speak in English, but the name, for example. Now when he ask me to, take some material if he know that I don't understand, I don't know the material, if for example is the vacuum, he make the sound now, *(makes sounds) Vvvvv Vvvv Vvvv Vvvv*. Oh yeah, okay. If there is the, well the hammer for example, say, hammer *(makes sounds) Po po*. And now it's okay.

By editing out some of the laughter, pauses, and several of the “ums” and other seemingly non-essential words, the speech is considerably shorter and arguably clearer. However, the “um” words, the repetition of words, laughter and other non-verbal sounds are in fact essential. Words like “um,” or other false starts, repetitions, or pauses are examples of “speech disfluencies” (Shirlberg 153). Speech disfluencies carry meaning and happen for a variety of different reasons, such as the speaker changing their mind, expressing emotions, or nerves.⁷² For example, in version one of the above monologue, the speech disfluencies inform the audience about the character’s difficulties with speaking English as much as the story does. The laughter allows the audience to understand how the character feels about the situation and her or his general character. The extra time and space in “verbatim theatre journalism” (in comparison to traditional journalism) allows for the inclusion of such material. Therefore, the editing process must not disregard its importance. Furthermore, the word-for-word (or um-for-um) accuracy of verbatim theatre is a strength of the medium. As was discussed in chapter five, editing is acceptable as long as it does not change the meaning of the material. A good example of this challenging balance is the ongoing debate in traditional journalism about cleaning up quotations. Journalist Fawn Germer explains that

The debate over quotes stretches from the newsroom to the courtroom. While most agree it’s no crime to fix a simple grammatical error, there is wide disagreement over the extent to which journalists should alter quotes. If only sources could say it right the first time. If only they didn’t ramble, switch tenses, inject “ummm” or “ah” into sentences and use “gonna” instead of going to. If only their subjects agreed with their verbs. Then there wouldn’t be the temptation – or necessity – to ever clean up a quote. (1)

⁷² Further investigation into the meaning of speech disfluencies and speech intersections would be interesting and valuable to dramatists and journalists alike, not just those engaged in “verbatim theatre journalism.”

“Verbatim theatre journalism” sidesteps this challenge. In “verbatim theatre journalism” there is no temptation to clean up quotations, as the “verbatim theatre journalist” endeavours to represent a source’s speech as exactly as possible. In this way, this allows “verbatim theatre journalism” to report in a way more accurately than print journalism, especially with sources who are not naturally exact or articulate in their speech. The challenges of transcription are noted in point number ten.

8. Is the material constructed in a way that makes the journalist character transparent?

As was discussed in detail in chapter four, it is important that the “journalist character” is transparent in a journalistic product. The same applies in a piece of “verbatim theatre journalism.” There are three main ways that this can be achieved. The first way is to use projections that explain the context and conventions of the piece. For example, a projection could explain who did the interviews, how many were completed, as well as when and where they were completed.

Alternatively, a “verbatim theatre journalist” could cast herself or himself as a character in the play. As was done with the outsider character in *The Middle Place*, the “journalist character” could speak verbatim lines just like the other characters. She or he could be involved throughout the script (as was the case with *The Middle Place*), or just at points to indicate/establish her or his presence. For example, off the very top of the piece, the interviewer character could ask

INTERVIEWER CHARACTER:

So we’ll just do a check of the microphone first, if you can tell me your name and how old you are and when you came to Canada?

Perhaps a line like this is enough to establish the convention. It should be noted that in this circumstance, there would not necessarily have to be an actor cast solely as the interview character. Composite characters are different than doubling roles. In fact, if actors play more than one character, it may actually benefit the convention, by helping to communicate that the presentation is indeed a representation, and not an attempt at reportage. This line of thinking is parallel to the discussion surrounding the use of puppets at the end of chapter three. That an actor is changing roles can be signaled by changes in voice, demeanour or costume to reflect the different person, so as not to create a de facto composite character through lack of clarity. This will be discussed further in point ten.

Finally, the “verbatim theatre journalist” may choose to cast the audience in her or his shoes, instead of having an actor play the part. This technique was first referred to in chapter two, with an example from *The Farm Show*. In the following example, the interview character talks to the audience as if the audience were interviewing her or him.

IMMIGRANT FROM ISREAL:

I don't know, I said, I talked a lot. *(laughs)* Uh ha. ... Was it one hour? Oh boy yeah. So what are you gonna do with this now?

Who else are you talking to?

Doesn't matter from where?

You got to talk to some Muslims.

This framing allows the audience to be made aware of the convention of the piece, without being crowded by all of the interviewer's original questions. In fact, leaving the spaces for the audience to imagine what questions the interviewer may have asked serves to further involve and engage them.

9. Is the material arranged in a narrative way that is easy to understand and engaging?

One of the exciting attributes of any creative product, including journalism or “verbatim theatre journalism,” is the multitude of ways in which the product can be shaped, based on the design inside the practitioner’s head. This is the quality of imagination that journalism scholar G. Stuart Adam refers to in his argument for journalism to be seen as art. In this vein, a “verbatim theatre journalist” could arrange the material for a piece in countless ways. In order to continue imagining what a piece of “verbatim theatre journalism” might look like, it is helpful to look at three different ways that one might structure this piece of “verbatim theatre journalism.” These examples are by no means the only options, and they also need not necessarily exist independently from one another. In other words, a “verbatim theatre journalist” might blend these structural options (and others) in order to create an engaging piece of “verbatim theatre journalism.” For all of the following examples, the criteria for editing outlined in point seven has been followed.

Chronological Narrative Structure

If a “verbatim theatre journalist” wanted to follow a chronological structure, she or he might want to start with the characters introducing themselves by talking about when they when/where they were born, and sharing a bit about their country of origin.⁷³

SAMPLE SCENE 1 – “IN THE BEGINNING”

IMMIGRANT FROM ENGLAND:

⁷³ As has been noted, the actors portraying the characters are not in fact the actual people whose stories they are sharing – they are representing the actual people. However, for ease of language, in this section’s discussion I refer to the “character’s stories” as a short form of the stories that the actors are telling as representatives of the actual people.

I was born in Kent, an' at age four moved to Sussex, which is on the south coast, and, lived there until I was twenty-one, and then travelled actually on cruise ships for a couple of years, working as an esthetician and then as a photographer on the ship, and so, made a lot of friends an' I always wanted to travel, so this was perfect for a young woman to travel relatively safely, and I kind of made notes of places that I wanted to go back to, and *(laughs)* *ha* he mostly never have, 'cause then I moved here. But I was, I was not afraid of making big changes. I wasn't really a home girl, I was, ah, yeah open to doing new things.

IMMIGRANT FROM ISRAEL:

I was born in Jerusalem, the year, I am giving my age away, nineteen forty-four. I was born in Jerusalem on Mount Scopus, and actually, my, if you're asking about my birth, in my birth certificate, I'm a Palestinian, and I was born on Mount Scopus which is East Jerusalem, although it was an enclave of *ehm*, Israel after the Forty-eight War. An' my parents and I lived in East Jerusalem, an' had to flee when Jerusalem was under siege an' uh subsequently Jerusalem, the old part of Jerusalem was surrendered to the Jordanian and my parents fled and lost everything that they have, and my parents and me never had any refugee rights. Contrary to Palestinians, who lost, some of them lost something, but all of them have refugee rights, so.

Alternatively, one might choose to begin the narrative with characters talking about when they arrived in Canada. This allows the audience to be made aware of how long each of the immigrant characters has been in Canada – while at that same time contrasting their different arrival experiences.

SAMPLE SCENE 2 – “ARRIVAL”

IMMIGRANT FROM FRANCE:

I'm like thirty-seven, born in seventy-two, uh, immigrated from France, um, but was a little slight uh, um, not directly to Canada, um, moved to the US and moved there when I was about twenty-three, twenty-four. An' I stayed there until I was thirty, thirty-one, an' then I moved to Canada.

IMMIGRANT FROM THE NETHERLANDS:

I immigrated from the Netherlands, in fifty-eight, and came over with one of the ships, one of the, the Mazdom, one of the Holland American line cruise ships. At that time it was an old cruise ship. Three of those chimneys in the middle, an' *th th*, took about ten days to cross the ocean and most of the time you were sick... Yeah, it was fun. I landed in Halifax Pier twenty-one of course, like everybody else at that time. And then I think it was a one or two day trip to Ottawa with uh CN rail, and we were given little boxes of corn flakes, little things to eat while we were travelling across the country, and we looked outside – this was in April – we looked outside the window and we saw nothing but... white... frozen, flat country, all the way from Halifax up to Quebec an' coming into Ontario it started to be a little more hilly but it was scary, just while snow nothing! Horrible. Are we going to live here in this *vfu*? Twas terrible. Anyway, we arrived in Ottawa, train station used to be right in the middle of the city at that time – ah it should still be there, anyway – it was nineteen

fifty-eight, the uh arrived by train, people picked us up and we went to someone's home, the people who sponsored us.

IMMIGRANT FROM CAMEROON:

My name is Salif Mbombo, my full name Sali Mbombo, but I like when uh when you call me Salif (*laughs*) *a ha ha ha*. An' I am twenty-seven year old. Yeah. *Mmma*, I am in Canada since, uh three months and a half, yeah.

In both of these examples, the narrative of the full piece could proceed chronologically – as the audience hears how the character's stories progress from either starting point, up until the present.

Thematic Narrative Structure

A different (or complementary) approach to creating a narrative would be to focus on different themes that several of the interview subjects have talked about. By arranging the interview transcripts so that two (or more) of the characters are discussing the same general issue, the audience is able to hear both the similarities and differences in the characters' stories.

SAMPLE SCENE 3 – “WHERE AM I?”

IMMIGRANT FROM ENGLAND:

Um, there's this strange, alienation feeling that happens, every now and then, an' I haven't had it for years, and I'm glad to say that I haven't. One time I was reading a National Geographic and it had a huge article about London, an' I was looking at the pictures of London, an' all of a sudden, it was, it was similar to the sensation of waking up and not knowing where you are. From waking up from a dream.

IMMIGRANT FROM FRANCE:

It's uh, it's difficult to find an identity. Um, 'cause it's, you know I moved when I was yeah, about twenty-two, to the U.S., and now I'm thirty-seven, so you know I spend a lot of time in North America. Ah, there is always things that make me feel French, I mean look, World Cup, I'm cheering for France, right? If it would be France-Canada, I don't know who I would cheer for.

IMMIGRANT FROM ENGLAND:

It's a sudden realization of, not relating completely to where you are living. Not feeling you are the same as the people who are around you. Even the house that I had lived in for some years, well I lived there for eighteen years in Forrester's Falls, there were times when

I didn't feel at home there. Um, an' I heard other people on the CBC talking about the same feeling, which I found very reassuring. Because it's very hard to describe it, but it is like, not knowing where you are.

IMMIGRANT FROM FRANCE:

To be honest, I don't know. That would be a good question. Probably, hopefully that will happen someday, when Canada start playing soccer, uh, di-difficult to say it's, it's, it's, to a point where you know sometimes nationality is not, I don't know, that uh... Difficult, I don't know, I would not be able to really answer that, 'cause, yes I'm French, yes I'm Canadian, yes I spent time in the U.S. I'm not an American, *un*, you know, it's just, uh... It would be French or Canadian, as that easy thing like I say I can be a French-Canadian, but that's kind of tricky, because I'm really from French French as you say here. Uh, so I no... But if I had to give up one, it would be the French one...

IMMIGRANT FROM ENGLAND:

An' it might last for a day or half a day, an' I learned, too, once I had heard this interview on CBC and that it, I wasn't the only one who sensed this uncomfortable feeling, I then learnt to accept when it came, Oh here's that alien thing again, and to just let it, *suf*, sail its course and just disappear. And I really don't get it anymore.

IMMIGRANT FROM FRANCE:

Well, obviously you move toward something, because, you know, I'm like, when I don't like something, I actually do move towards fixing it, towards something better. So is, it's probably not a-any accident that I finish here, or that I end up here. An', before I moved to Ottawa, I moved about every two years, in the different places. Since I moved from my home, I went three years to my engineer school, two years in Paris for my military service, two, three years in Alabama, two years in Colorado, two years in Boston, well, eight months in Florida. An' here, I've been here for seven years. So...

This approach allows for more interaction among the characters. By splicing shorter chunks of interview transcripts on a similar subject together, the characters almost begin to seem like they are talking to each other, discussing the issue at hand. During four out of the five interviews completed at time of writing, the interviewees addressed the subject of cultural dress. The following sample scene provides an example of how a thematic narrative might suit that discussion.

SAMPLE SCENE 4 – “YOU ARE WHAT YOU WEAR”

IMMIGRANT FROM THE NETHERLANDS:

We have two groups of people now in Canada, there are the people that have come to work and to integrate, to become Canadian, and they're the immigrants that came in the Forties the Fifties and the Sixties. And now we have a new wave of people an' I can, I can not call

them immigrants, they're they're, most of them, many of them, I don't want to say most, many of them are just squatters, they're here to take advantage of whatever this country has to offer. And they don't integrate, they don't want to integrate.

IMMIGRANT FROM ISRAEL:

Yes of course they can have freedom of religion and they should be able to educate their kids, the way they want but, not go beyond this. And yes, I am for not having the burqa in Canada. Because I really think that it is humiliation for women... Don't expect to change us, okay?

IMMIGRANT FROM FRANCE:

Yesterday I saw a lady with a burqa, you know, walking on the street. I don't mind that, I mean I'm not like uh, I mean oh-in France we banned that for some, for some reason, um, I don't know, I'm like, yeah, no, I think that you should be able to wear whatever you want, I mean it's like... Well because I'm not to impose you know, I mean like I'm raised Catholic and um don't believe much in it, right? But I'm not too like impose a cross on anyone or whatever and you know, I don't want anybody to impose me something, but if I want to wear one, I would not like if someone told me not, that I can't.

IMMIGRANT FROM THE NETHERLANDS:

The way that some people are dressed in the burqas and special head covers and shawls and that type of thing. I, I, don't think that's right, but that's me. Other people might think it's right, I don't think it is right... You want to integrate into a country, you don't want to set yourself apart. By setting yourself apart, you don't become part of the country itself, and therefore you are continuously thinking about your old country your old way of life, speak to your country people all the time, speak the same language that you used to speak and don't listen to the CBC, now this is, this is the difference that I'm seeing right now, and, by not integrating, people are not allowing this country to give them what it could.

IMMIGRANT FROM ISRAEL:

But a burqa, you know, is really a very, it's a terrible sign for a woman, and this is not a society w- I'd like to, to have here. I'd like to be toler- if you are visiting you could be, but if you live here, if this is the only way that's probably not a bright choice for you... Th-thi- this burqa bit, is you know we're losing a lot soldiers in a- Afghanistan to try and give them some kind of freedom, and some times of equal equality, we don't wanna bring it here.

IMMIGRANT FROM FRANCE:

Um, an, but at the same time it's true that, I'm not to walk naked in the middle of the street because I know there's people that it will disturb right? So but it's, that's where you need to find your own, you know middle between okay, you know what can you do and what can't you do. And that's always a fine line to draw right? An' I think, like, you know I think that's, I believe Canadian are pretty good at that, it's not right in your face, you know nobody's to be right in your face imposing their culture. I've never seen that or experienced that here.

IMMIGRANT FROM THE NETHERLANDS:

They want to keep on speaking their own language. We did not speak Dutch at home anymore after I came here, we learned English and we spoke English. I didn't wear my wooden shoes (*laughs softly*) he he he he he. Nope.

This approach allows more flexibility in editing than the chronological approach, as the “verbatim theatre journalist” is able to more freely weave the different voices together, using shorter, punchier chunks of text.

Creating Dialogue

Similar to the thematic narrative approach, the “verbatim theatre journalist” might try to create dialogue among the characters. In verbatim theatre productions, it is rare that there is dialogue between characters – unless the dialogue is between the interviewer character and subjects, or dialogue from a trial in a piece based on courtroom/inquiry transcripts. Usually the characters speak directly to the audience – as was the case in the recent Canadian verbatim theatre examples in chapter five. Although there is nothing wrong with continuous direct address – the addition of dialogue to a piece of “verbatim theatre journalism” could serve to make it more interesting and engaging. As the “verbatim theatre journalist” begins to track themes within the responses of the subjects, she or he might try asking them similar questions about these subjects. Furthermore, the “verbatim theatre journalist” could ask the interview subjects what questions they might ask other subjects about a topic, and then ask them how they would answer the question. This simple technique allows for dialogue to be created among the characters – even though the original interview subjects themselves have never met.

For example, an issue/category that surfaced repeatedly in the first several interviews for the piece of applied research was the important qualities for an immigrant

to have. The following sample scene provides an example of how dialogue might be created in this way:

SAMPLE SCENE 5 – “QUESTIONS FOR A GOOD IMMIGRANT”

IMMIGRANT FROM CAMEROON:

Yeah they, oh, they, they ask *fthe*, well firstly they ask where you from how old are you? Why, why are you coming in Canada? What do you want to do in Canada? Um are you married?

IMMIGRANT FROM THE NETHERLANDS:

I would possibly ask them if they speak one of the two official languages. And if they are willing to learn it. Uh... I would ask them if they believe in monogamy or how many children they'd want to have.

IMMIGRANT FROM CAMEROON:

Do you have a kids? Do you have the kids? (*laughs*) *ah hey oh ho*. And um, they ask you if uh, if uh, you have the food with you, if you bring the food with you from your country. Whe-if you did the prison already, yeah, something like that.

IMMIGRANT FROM FRANCE:

Of course it's interesting to know why they want to come to Canada. Umm, that's interesting because that's actually a political question, because it's true that I probably will ask questions uh, maybe I would not have been selected. I guess, you know, why do you come to Canada?

IMMIGRANT FROM ENGLAND:

Well I came as an entrepreneur, and, I can see why that would be a value. Because, it's still a fairly young country, and, obviously everyone's ancestors a few generations ago are from somewhere else. So, I think that bringing skills and leadership is valued, here.

IMMIGRANT FROM FRANCE:

If I said, well you know I was fed up with the U.S. an', have you been to Canada for instance, no, never, so how do you know you want to come here? I would probably, you know like, so, so fair enough that's like, I can't really, if I am honest with myself I can't ask you know, well have you been to Canada before, and is that important? Because, if you look at me I'm super happy here, I want to, you know, be here... No, why you want to move to Canada?

IMMIGRANT FROM CAMEROON:

Yeah, exactly. Oh, firstly, I follow my wife. (*Laughs*) *Ha ha ha ha ha*. Nice *wyeah*. Because, because of her, uh yeah, I am in Canada. An um, *bon*, you know, in the life, you have to work, to live you have to work, huh? That's the obligation. So, after my wife, I have to work in Canada. Yeah.

IMMIGRANT FROM ENGLAND:

So I think I would want people to know more about where they are coming to. And really have more of an idea of what they were going to be bringing.... What they were going to do when they got here?

IMMIGRANT FROM CAMEROON:

I have uh, I work at Handyman. And *ma* find the job, now I am in the Monarch. Monarch Construction, yeah. You know, I think, do you know the Handyman? The Handyman is the company find you the job. And uh, they send you to work and they pay you for cash, uh, yeah. S'like that. After, the company want to take you from Handyman. Okay. Yeah, they very, they can, *emm*, assist the business, no? The business. Handyman is very very good for, I think for the new immigrants, who, who want to work hard, who want to catch many experiences, you have to start at Handyman.

IMMIGRANT FROM ENGLAND:

I don't know. If they were going to be, become a part of Canada, or if they were going to live in their own existence within Canada? Well, if they were going to maintain customs that were, maybe, opposing Canada's ways. What do I mean by that? Yeah, I don't know, that's a very good question.

IMMIGRANT FROM CAMEROON:

Ah yeah, that's a very good question. (*laughs*) *Ha ha yeah (breathes in). Emm*, I *wou've*, I would like to know, if the new immigrant has uh way to live in Canada. If he has the support in Canada. If, he won't, if he need to work in Canada, umm, I would like also to know if uhh, if he did a prison, already. That is very important for everybody. (*Laughs*) *Uh ha ha ha*. So I think, my first question *weed*-was uh, if he has where to live? If he will work in Canada? Um if he did a prison already. That's very important, to ask for a new immigrant.

This technique takes a greater degree of planning on the part of the “verbatim theatre journalist.” However, because she or he is asking interview subjects what questions they might ask someone, the open-ended approach is still possible. This effect could be sharpened by asking the interviewees to pose the questions as if they were speaking directly to another immigrant, and then posing that question to a future interviewee exactly as worded.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ This is a technique not unlike those used by radio journalists producing a no-narration documentary.

10. *Will the piece be performed in a way that is as accurate to the original material as possible?*

This is the most challenging guideline to satisfy. In traditional theatre, a playwright can write any amount of stage directions and details about the world she or he creates and the words her or his characters speak. However, if the play is published, the playwright then has little or no control over how her or his play will be produced. As was discussed in chapter three, this issue is very applicable to the creation and production of verbatim theatre. For example, a “verbatim theatre journalist” could perfectly and precisely follow each and every one of the above guidelines to a tee, but then hand her or his piece over to a director and actors... and lose control. This is the reason playwright Andrew Kushnir has decided (at time of writing) not to publish *The Middle Place*. By keeping the script in the private domain, Kushnir feels he can control when and how the piece is performed, ensuring that it is as accurately translated to the stage as possible.

In a sharp contrast, playwright and director Moisés Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre Company’s *The Laramie Project* has been published and widely produced by professional and amateur theatre companies around the world. In these cases, Kaufman and Co. have no control over how the play is performed. They do make recommendations in the script about how the play be staged. However, these are only recommendations, and once the script is available to the public, characters may well be portrayed dramatically differently from the actual people they claim to represent. An example of this inaccurate representation was mentioned in chapter five, in the discussion of *Nanay: A Testimonial Play*. Playwright Geraldine Pratt pointed out that she was uncomfortable with the fact that in the first production of the piece, the director had represented one of the employer couples as drunk, when at the time of the interview they were, in fact, not

drunk. This is a pertinent example of how a presentation can still be word-for-word verbatim, but the meaning can be significantly changed. Due to this risk, in a “verbatim theatre journalism” project, the “verbatim theatre journalist” must be present for the rehearsal process, either as the director or an associate, to ensure that the representations are as accurate as possible. If the piece of applied research is ever produced, this will be the case.

As was mentioned in point eight, it is also important for actors playing multiple characters to make clear distinctions between those characters to prevent the creation of de-facto composite characters. In *The Middle Place*, the actors used several techniques to make the distinctions between characters clear. Firstly, they made very obvious changes in physicality to demonstrate which of their characters they were playing. They also moved in dance-like spins to indicate a transition from one character to another. Finally, there was a circle on the floor in and out of which they buzzed (with the help of a sound effect), to show that they were either representing a shelter youth (inside the circle) or a shelter staff member (outside the circle). These techniques made it clear that each actor was portraying multiple characters. The doubling of roles, and the techniques described to make that convention clear are also valuable because they clearly indicate that the performance is a representation, avoiding the “danger zone” discussed in chapter three.

It is also worthwhile to note some of the issues associated with transcribing interviews for verbatim theatre. How does the transcription affect the performance? During the transcription of the interviews it became very apparent that there were several challenges to face, in addition to typing the words that were said by the actual source. For example, as mentioned in point seven, speech disfluencies, pauses and laughter are

important elements of speech that are not as simple to transcribe as known words.

Additionally, interview subjects (especially in a piece about immigration) may have accents or dialects. For example, the recent immigrant from Cameroon has a very strong accent. He would often not pronounce the letter “h” at the beginning of a word (e.g. “’uge” instead of “huge”) or not pronounce the letter “r” at the end of a word (e.g. “afta” instead of after). He also sometimes said certain words or phrases in French. Finally, there were certain words that he simple pronounced differently (e.g. with a different emphasis, as in “infor-med” as opposed to “informed”). How should these differences be transcribed?

In most theatre scripts that include characters who speak in an accent or dialect, the playwright will not phonetically change the text to indicate the dialect. Rather, she or he will indicate that the character speaks with a certain accent and it will be the responsibility of the actor and director to find the rhythm, tone and phonetic alterations of the dialect. In this way, the transcripts included in the sample scenes have not been phonetically transcribed to indicate accent. There are, however, some ways in which the transcription will hopefully aid the reproduction. Words spoken in French have been italicized to indicate they are a different language. Short pauses are indicated with a comma (,) and longer pauses with an ellipses (...). Speech disfluencies are spelled out phonetically, and so have alternative pronunciations. Finally, laughter has been noted in parentheses, and then with basic phonetic sounds. In all of these examples, it is important to note that the job of actor is to interpret the character’s text – not imitate it. Therefore, clear meaning in the text is more important than exact phonetic transcription, and a balance must be struck between phonetics and the communication of meaning. It is most

important that the actor understand what was said.⁷⁵ However, as discussed in the guideline regarding accuracy of representation, the presence of the original interviewer in rehearsal would help ensure accurate representation.

The above methods for transcription were guided by instinct. The transcription and reproduction of the spoken word is an area that would benefit from further investigation. Anthropology scholar Dennis Tedlock has covered some of this area. In his book, *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation*, Tedlock provides a “Guide to Reading Aloud” to assist the reader in achieving an accurate oral reproduction of some of the indigenous stories. This guide includes a comprehensive list of how both vowels and consonants should be pronounced. Additionally, Tedlock offers some guidance relating to the tone and rhythm of speech, by visually notating the text in a way that almost resembles a musical score. For example:

some cha meeeeee
 one is sing e
 e
 e

Chant split lines, with an interval of about three half-tones between them. Draw out repeated letters (and hold vowels followed by long dashes) as long as it would take to say the words occupying an equal amount of space. Spilling letters indicate a glissando. (Tedlock 20)

⁷⁵ A good example striking this balance while maintaining clarity is the ways the immigrant from England pronounced the word “and.” At times, she or he pronounced the “d” and at times she or he did not. However, if one phonetically transcribed “an,” it would be misleading to the actor, as “an” is a different word than “and.” However, if one transcribed “and” both times, the difference between “an” and “and” is lost. Therefore, I have chosen to resolve this issue by transcribing the word with an apostrophe: “an’ ”

Tedlock's guide has been composed specifically for the interpretation of the cultures that he studies. In the same way, a "verbatim theatre journalist" might wish to consider making a similar guide or key for each of her or his pieces.

This chapter has applied the theoretical discussion from the preceding chapters to a work in progress piece of "verbatim theatre journalism." By methodically working through each of the guidelines developed from the discussion in chapter five, these examples allow for insight into how a "verbatim theatre journalist" might deal with some of the issues raised in chapters three and four. Furthermore, by beginning to illustrate what a piece of "verbatim theatre journalism" might look like, this chapter positions "verbatim theatre journalism" as a new development in the evolution of the practices described in chapter two. The next chapter brings this thesis to conclusion by outlining several ways that "verbatim theatre journalism" might be used, and how it has the potential to complement traditional journalism.

CONCLUSION

The theatre can be an enriching extension of traditional journalism, even of multimedia, and no more so when it addresses contemporary issues... The only difference is the platform, and that in the theatre their words become part of a live dialogue. Perhaps the term "multi-media" should embrace the theatre as well as film and the blogosphere. (Norton-Taylor 2009)

In the introduction to this thesis, three main reasons were given for why this research is interesting and important. They were: the mutual benefit of studying the techniques (and knowledge surrounding the techniques) of both journalism and verbatim theatre, the broader discussion of traditional journalistic practices, and finally, the investigation of how the disputed territory of verbatim theatre could yield new and interesting opportunities. A brief review and assessment of each of the chapters allows for a clear understanding on whether these three reasons for study were justified and fulfilled.

The discussion in chapter two introduced verbatim theatre as an example of an art that is similar to journalism. This chapter also outlined some of the possible influences of verbatim theatre, and introduced the varied range of verbatim theatre practices. This historical overview allowed for the introduction of verbatim theatre as an art that is similar to journalism, and therefore one that may be beneficial to study in relation to journalism. In chapter three, the discussion of the spectrum of creation across different arts supported the first two reasons for this research. This chapter charted some of the ways in which different arts use representational and creative techniques, and it also

identified specific points to be discussed later in the following chapters in relation to traditional journalism. Chapter four continued to support the first two reasons, by looking at journalism as theatre, and discussing the journalist as a performer. The specific performance and production techniques identified within journalism help to support the first reason, and the discussion surrounding the journalist's degree of involvement in the story supports the second reason. Chapter five also continued to support the first two reasons, and began laying the foundation for the third reason. By taking a close look at three recent Canadian verbatim theatre productions, this chapter identified some techniques worthy of closer analysis in comparison to the elements of journalism. The results of this analysis were two-fold: the conclusion that verbatim theatre is indeed a disputed territory created by the coming together of the theatre and journalism, and the beginning of some guidelines for an area within this territory. Chapter six fleshed out the guidelines from chapter five, and used a piece of applied research to illustrate how a "verbatim theatre journalist" might proceed with constructing a piece of "verbatim theatre journalism." In retrospect, all of the original reasons for this research have been covered.

However, although all of this discussion has been interesting and beneficial, there are two final questions that now need to be answered: Why is "verbatim theatre journalism" important? And, what would it look like? Before providing our examples of its possible applications, it is helpful to look at how "verbatim theatre journalism" has the potential to emulate, enrich and expand on traditional journalism.

Emulation, Enrichment and Expansion

The current state of the media provides an opportunity for verbatim theatre to provide a journalistic product to audiences. Theatre scholars Michael Anderson and Linden Wilkinson point to an Australian study of current affairs programming in Britain, the United States and Australia that shows audiences “have responded to the increasingly formulaic television news and current affairs by switching off” (154). Anderson and Wilkinson point to the financial factors of news production, arguing that “complexity is both expensive to produce and difficult to debate... and is therefore becoming increasingly absent from the public domain” (153). They argue

Verbatim Theatre provides a unique vehicle for the enrichment of an audience starved of debate, denied an identity by the dictates of global enterprise. The main reason for its resurgence lies more in the community's need to hear diverse and authentic voices, to be presented with multiple voices and perspectives, to be informed, engaged and transformed. (167)

“Verbatim theatre *journalism*” has the potential to go a step further – to emulate traditional journalistic practices, in order to do the above in a way that is not only engaging but *reliable*. One of the strengths of verbatim theatre is that it begins with a question. It does not pre-write the story and then go out to look for quotes to add. In fact, practitioners of interview-based verbatim theatre often do not know what their piece is going to be about until they do their interviews. This was the case with all three of the recent Canadian case studies examined in chapter five. The practitioners gathered material and then sorted through it to find themes and issues that resonated among the participants they had interviewed. This allows facilitation of issues and ideas chosen by voices rarely heard from in traditional media, in a way that does not attach these voices to stereotypical storylines. Theatre scholar Allison Forsyth argues that the work of verbatim

theatre practitioner Anna Deveare Smith works to “ ‘document’ aspects of tumultuous and traumatic social experience before the experience is subjected to any potential or subsequent appropriation or indeed elision within hegemonic historical narratives” (149). In other words, verbatim theatre allows for a more first-hand account of issues and ideas from sources themselves, i.e. outside of (or free of) the frame of ongoing coverage of news, events and debates.

This is an ideal that is shared with journalism. In an ideal journalism world, journalists would have enough time and resources that they could find stories through similar means. The beat reporter is a good example of this ideal. If a reporter is assigned to the labour beat, it is her or his job to be in constant contact with people associated with labour issues. She or he should be out of the office interviewing union leaders, government and city officials, and most importantly, workers themselves. Similarly, a reporter on the City Hall beat would attend meetings in the community, listening and talking to people on a daily basis. A reporter on the arts beat should not only be attending arts events, but seeking out artists to talk to them about what they are working on or issues they feel are important. The purpose of these daily conversations is to find stories, to bring issues and ideas into the public sphere that would not otherwise be there. In this way, journalists and sources work together to cultivate stories. However, due to the restrictions of time and money, this type of reporting is declining. There are fewer and fewer beat reporters. The pace and pressures on the journalistic product are increasing. Journalist and verbatim theatre practitioner Richard Norton-Taylor criticizes journalism for its “perforce brutal and inconsistent editing” and “constant fight for space or air time” (qtd. in Hammond and Steward 122). He believes the theatre “can be an extension of

journalism in the best possible way – that is by communicating and explaining contemporary issues, scandals and events in a unique, fair, positive and intellectually honest manner” (122). In this way, verbatim theatre has the potential to emulate a very journalistic ideal, and perform a function that could enrich traditional journalism.⁷⁶

Along the same lines, “verbatim theatre journalism” has the potential to enrich traditional journalistic practices. As was discussed in chapter five, one of the common characteristics of verbatim theatre productions is that they feature voices not commonly heard in the traditional media. This trait is parallel to the elements and ideals of journalism. However, the addition of more and more voices into the public sphere will only strengthen the journalistic ideal. Interview-based “verbatim theatre journalism” plays could alert the traditional media to issues and ideas they are not currently covering. It could cause the traditional media to investigate further into these issues. At the very least, the performance of these plays could act as a medium in itself, allowing these voices to be facilitated to public attention, serving a democratic function. Theatre scholars Michael Anderson and Linden Wilkinson argue that the “lack of diverse voices and stories in our community may be a contributor to the resurgence and evolution of the verbatim theatre form, both nationally and internationally” (154). They believe that

⁷⁶ It is important to note that “verbatim theatre journalism” is not a free alternative to traditional journalism. Whether verbatim theatre playwrights are commissioned by a theatre company or a traditional journalistic organization to produce a piece, it would still have a significant cost. It would be most fair to compare this rate to the fee for a one-shot television documentary. For example, at the time of writing, the collective agreement between the CBC and the Canadian Media Guild indicates that a freelance television documentarian is remunerated \$5,744.68 for a documentary between sixty and ninety minutes. It is important to note that there would be additional costs for a verbatim theatre production, including the payment of actors and theatre production personnel and the rental of theatre space. The financing of verbatim theatre is an issue that merits further exploration and investigation. However, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the journalistic credibility and uses of verbatim theatre, not to weigh its cost-effectiveness or develop a business plan for including it in the presentation of journalistic material.

increasingly homogenized media content and oversimplified packaged news stories are threatening to democracy (153). Verbatim theatre can offer a fresh and perhaps less processed perspective on the issues of the day. Hammond and Steward point out that “no play, like no newspaper article, is without bias and inflection, but, [playwright David] Hare argues people who work in the theatre tend simply to have much less to gain from lies and spin, and much more interest in being honest. This sort of theatre provides what journalism fails to provide, and at a time when it is sorely needed” (10). This is, of course, a broad generalization that is unfair to a vast number of journalists (and likely over-flattering to many dramatists), but theatre does place an emphasis on empathy beyond conflict. In this way, verbatim theatre can also serve democratic functions that are not currently being addressed by traditional journalism.

Transcript-based “verbatim theatre journalism” can also expand the public sphere. Theatre scholar Chris Megson points to the “point-of-view” monologues by Richard Norton-Taylor in *Half the Picture* as fulfilling this function, by establishing “the consequences of the arms-to-Iraq scandal for those directly affected by it” (200). As was mentioned in chapter three, these monologues included characters like a British office worker who alerted the government her employers were manufacturing tools to make bombs (Norton-Taylor 216-217) and a Kurdish man whose people were killed by Iraqi bombs made by a British company (230-231). Although these particular monologues were fictionally composed (see the discussion in chapter three), there is no reason why verbatim interviews with people affected could not serve the same function in a transcript-based piece – and bring voices into the discussion.

Norton-Taylor's "tribunal plays" (verbatim theatre based on transcripts of government inquiries) provide "an opportunity for non-experts to grapple with the detail of important public enquiries for themselves, and in the process, if they're lucky, to spur a powerful person into positive action" (Hammond and Steward 11). In addition to providing further and clearer access to issues already in the public sphere, verbatim theatre can facilitate the opportunity for people to become involved in this public sphere. Hammond and Steward point to verbatim theatre playwright Alecky Blythe's plays as being even more accessible to everyday people because "you can be in them" (12).⁷⁷ In this way, verbatim theatre is more accessible, and therefore more democratic. This is what verbatim theatre playwright Geraldine Pratt calls "staging conversations between ordinary people" (Pratt). Theatre scholar Janelle Reinelt describes documentary theatre as a "performative public sphere" in the way it is politically engaged and because it summons "public considerations of aspects of reality in a spirit of critical reasoning" (12).

Lastly, "verbatim theatre journalism" has the potential to expand traditional journalistic practices. Journalist Sheena MacDonald writes that verbatim theatre practitioners are

demonstrating that theatre can reach those parts of the mind apparently cauterised by media coverage, and they do it by highlighting the individual's responsibility for humanity's actions by focusing on the word. The investment of time and concentration needed to watch and hear is repaid with a terribly enhanced understanding of the human capacity to hurt and deny responsibility. (MacDonald 3)

⁷⁷ In this case, they mean that because of the everyday topics of Blythe's plays, anyone can identify with the characters.

Theatre director Nicolas Kent has directed several verbatim plays. He believes that theatre has taken over the role of documentarian once performed by television, and that “people rather like coming to the theatre and spending two hours really examining an issue, listening to the arguments and coming to their own conclusions” (qtd. in Hammond and Steward 163). Interestingly, several of the plays Kent has worked on have subsequently been broadcast on the BBC. So what does verbatim theatre offer that traditional journalism does not?

Verbatim theatre has a quality of personal experience or “liveness” that journalism lacks. As was noted in chapter two, for the purposes of this research, “theatre” has been defined as live performance, for a live audience which shares the same space as the performers. In contrast to traditional journalism, verbatim theatre offers the intimacy and attraction of this shared experience. Theatre scholar Michael Schiavi clarifies this attribute as “the appeal to an audience of seeing such figures stems in part from the thrill of the anachronism: to observe in three dimensions an image previously confined to film, still photographs, or, at greatest remove, secondary accounts” (206). Theatre scholar Michael Goldman writes about the “terrific energy” of the actor: “We feel an energy present in any good actor’s performance that goes beyond the demonstration of what some ‘real person’ is like” (Goldman 5).

The concept of liveness is relatively abstract and even contentious. Performance studies scholar Philip Auslander argues that the “liveness” quality of the theatre is misrepresented and inaccurate. He points to English scholar Steve Wutzler’s notion that with the high value placed on the abstract value of liveness, “the live comes to stand for a category completely outside representation” (qtd. in Auslander 3). Auslander claims he is

impatient with what I consider to be traditional, unreflective assumptions that fail to get much further in their attempts to explicate the value of “liveness” than invoking clichés and mystifications like the “magic of the theatre,” the “energy” that supposedly exists between performers and spectators at a live event and the “community” that live performance is often said to create among performers and spectators. (2)

Auslander objects to the idea that “live” performance leads the audience to believe they are not watching a representation. However, although it is performed live, verbatim theatre is also a representation. As was discussed in chapter three, journalism is also a representation. It was also stressed that the fact that these two arts are representations should be made clear. For now, the pertinent fact is that a live theatre experience is different than a traditional media experience. It is still a representation, but the presence of live actors in a theatre gives the audience a different experience.

The fact that a theatre audience sits together in the dark, watching a performance uninterrupted by phones ringing or e-mails arriving creates a more engaged, more concentrated atmosphere for the communication and reception of a message. More importantly, audiences can feel considerably more connected to theatre performers as opposed to mediated performances. Audience members at a performance of Andrew Kushnir and Project:Humanity’s *The Middle Place* felt that “this form of theatre was able to bring a sense of intimacy as the audience was drawn right in [and] faced the issues that the characters were facing. The audience became engaged with the issues and the interactions between the characters. It became quite clear that these characters are real people” (Lieberman). One drama educator in attendance at the performance concluded that:

This kind of theatre communicates authentic stories... this kind of theatre brings life-stories onto the stage. We can “read” these stories as we watch... Other kinds of documentary work would involve these processes, but with verbatim theatre, we are committed to enacting,

respecting and honouring the work. There would have to be an unwritten contract to present the work with authenticity – out loud photocopying of the voices. (Swartz)

Verbatim theatre can connect “real people” to audiences. But why not just film the real people, as is done in film documentary? Firstly, as was outlined earlier, one of the main functions of verbatim theatre is to facilitate voices that are not often heard. This function relates to people who do not want to appear in the traditional media (such as the shelter youth in *The Middle Place*), those who cannot appear in the media (such as the terrorists in Robin Soans’s *Talking to Terrorists*⁷⁸), or those who would not speak as openly or as honestly if on camera themselves. More pertinent to the discussion of liveness is the level of engagement that verbatim theatre brings to audiences. Audience member Sinead Knickerbocker⁷⁹ reported being very moved while watching *Aftermath*, a documentary theatre play about Iraqi refugees. She feels theatre has an advantage over a medium such as television documentary (Knickerbocker). Similarly, audience members came to a rousing standing ovation at the end of Anna Deavere Smith’s *Let Me Down Easy*, a verbatim theatre play about health and health care. Audience member Rosalinda Perron said she finds verbatim theatre clearer and much more engaging than journalistic documentaries. She explained, “a documentary may often – you have a narrative voice over – you don’t have that in there, [in Smith’s work], you have many separate characters. In these she brought a lot of character and brought the whole theme together” (Perron). Fellow audience member Eleanor Eisenberg also felt the value of the theatre

⁷⁸ A verbatim theatre piece in which Robin Soans granted anonymity to sources in order to use their words in his piece.

⁷⁹ Knickerbocker and all the other audience members interviewed in New York were selected at random following performances of *Aftermath* on Saturday, October 10, 2009 at the New York Theatre Workshop and *Let Me Down Easy* on Sunday, October 11, 2009 at Second Stage Theatre.

compared to television documentary, commenting that “the theatre is always more direct. There is emotional contact in the theatre” (Eisenberg). Although Auslander is correct in pointing out the intangible nature of the theatre’s quality of liveness, it is fair to say that the theatre experience offers something different from the traditional journalistic experience. This different level and style of engagement allows “verbatim theatre journalism” the potential to expand the scope of traditional journalism.

Four Applications for “Verbatim Theatre Journalism”

There are several ways in which “verbatim theatre journalism” could be used to complement traditional journalistic practice. For the purposes of this research, four different applications are discussed. However, as with any art, further creative applications are no doubt waiting to be realized.

1. To take an in-depth or humanized look at a current issue.

This application focuses largely on current issues, although it could also be used in relation to timely events. The purpose of this application is to examine a current issue in a way that humanizes the debate, by involving people close to the issue who are not often heard from (or at least not often heard from in great detail). This application was discussed in detail in chapter six, in reference to the immigration example. As was noted in chapter six, in this application, the “verbatim theatre journalist” must choose a particular angle or question within the larger issue. Ideally, this choice is made based on research and discussion with people central to the issue itself. This approach offers the opportunity for an in-depth presentation of people’s stories. “Verbatim theatre journalism” allows space for truly heartfelt narratives to be included. By bringing these

expanded perspectives into the public sphere, this application of “verbatim theatre journalism” could complement traditional journalism.

2. To take an in-depth look at a recent event.

The purpose of this application is to take an in-depth look at a recent meaningful event in order to promote further understanding. Such an event may well have been covered by the traditional media – and those reports would be an excellent place for the “verbatim theatre journalist” to begin her or his research. To carry out this application, one would have to interview as many of the people involved in an event as possible, in order to flesh out the actions that happened within the larger event – actions which most likely were not fully explored in the traditional media due to time and space constraints. For example, a “verbatim theatre journalism” piece could be constructed after a fatal car accident. The “verbatim theatre journalist” would begin by interviewing the people at the epicentre of the story, including any survivors of the crash, witnesses, and emergency response personnel. The interview process could then fan outwards, as the “verbatim theatre journalist” interviewed the family members, and people who knew the victim. Fanning outwards further still, the “verbatim theatre journalist” would then interview the friends and family of the emergency response personnel that responded to the scene. This kind of concentric storytelling could allow for a greater understanding of both the root causes and the impacts of an event.

As well, in stories dealing with tragic events (such as car accidents), traditional journalists are often challenged to strike a balance between getting the story and respecting the privacy of grief. “Verbatim theatre journalism” can offer an alternative.

Instead of feeling like they are intruding upon sources to get a quick quote, a “verbatim theatre journalist” would take the time to sit with sources and hear their full stories. If “verbatim theatre journalism” became a commonly known genre, perhaps grieving sources would be more open to sharing their stories, with the knowledge that their story would be recorded and then reported word-for-word in a way that was respectful. This would be a contrast from the defensive feelings a grieving source might feel in response to a camera crew. In addition to allowing for more respectful gathering of these interesting stories, more extended speeches also prevent sources from feeling that they have had their words misused or misinterpreted.⁸⁰ By allowing for in-depth exploration of events, this application of “verbatim theatre journalism” could complement traditional journalism.

3. To portray a trial or other proceeding in court.

The purpose of this application is to scrutinize a legal trial that has relevance to the public, in order to promote greater understanding. Due to the fact that cameras are not usually allowed in courtrooms in Canada, a “verbatim theatre journalism” piece may well be the first time the public is exposed in detail to what is said in a court. To carry out this application, one would have to obtain the court transcripts. It would also be imperative (in terms of ensuring accuracy of representation) that the “verbatim theatre journalist”

⁸⁰ An example of this happening is evident in comment posted in response to a recent *Ottawa Citizen* story. The story, “Eyewitness who gave media account of jet skidding off runway loses position,” is about an airport volunteer being fired for speaking to the media. When the story was posted on the *Citizen*’s website, a reader identifying as “Plane Lover” posted the following comment: “Having been involved in the now infamous WestJet scandal in 2008, my CBC interview was factual based [sic] on the events that I had seen and heard.... Stephanie had to have known the rules, they were implemented after my interview was aired and half the truth lay on the CBC cutting room floor so the incident could look more sensational” (*Ottawa Citizen*).

attend the trial in its entirety – or at least those portions to be depicted. In addition to the transcripts, one might also want to conduct interviews with the participants of the proceeding to further probe their insights or opinions. This is not just research for the representations. These interviews would be to gather further verbatim material for the piece, by getting sources to give background that would supplement the transcripts. In this case, it would be crucial that the “verbatim theatre journalist” ask sources to describe what they saw (as opposed to purely providing comment). While evaluative comments may be useful as well, it is important to note that the different players in a trial have different motivations for what they are saying. In a situation where the “verbatim theatre journalist” is not able to attend a trial, this type of “witness testimony” could be used to build an integrated picture of the trial.⁸¹ By allowing for reproduction of court trials, and comments on the context of the trial, this application of “verbatim theatre journalism” could complement traditional journalism.

4. To communicate information from an inquiry or hearing.

The purpose of this application is to distill hearings from a public inquiry in order to portray meaningful information relevant to the public. Although public inquiries are indeed public, they are often long ordeals that go into great detail and are covered sparsely by the traditional media. A “verbatim theatre journalism” inquiry piece has the potential to synthesize the highlights of an inquiry and bring them to the public in an engaging way (similar to journalist and verbatim theatre playwright Richard Norton-Taylor’s tribunal plays discussed earlier in this thesis). Perhaps of more value, it could also bring together types of testimony or recurring themes that may have been overlooked

⁸¹ The need for transparency would require that the sources of the material be made clear.

in ongoing media coverage as not newsworthy, but which have their own insights to share. For example, in a piece on a public inquiry dealing with water safety in a rural town, perhaps it only became apparent at the end of the inquiry that in each water inspector's testimony was an experience of workplace stress. At the time of the individual testimonies, the stories about stress might not have been seen as newsworthy. However, at the end of the inquiry, if all of the inspectors had shared stories about stress, perhaps the theme should be explored. A "verbatim theatre journalism" piece could juxtapose these stories to bring attention to this theme.

As with a trial piece, one would have to obtain the transcripts from the inquiry itself. It would also be very helpful (in terms of ensuring accuracy of representation) if the "verbatim theatre journalist" attended the inquiry in its entirety. However, due to the length of some inquiries, full time attendance may not be possible. In these cases, the same techniques detailed in the section above could be employed. In addition to the transcripts of the inquiry (again, similar to a trial piece) one might also want to conduct interviews with the participants in the inquiry to further probe their insights and opinions. In addition, a "verbatim theatre journalist" should check into other sources that may be affected by the content of the inquiry. By editing down vast amounts of information into relevant and interesting scenes, and presenting the relevant themes of public inquiries in an engaging way, this application of "verbatim theatre journalism" could complement traditional journalism.

Looking forward...

This thesis has focused on verbatim theatre's relationship to journalism – confirming the preliminary hypothesis that verbatim theatre is a disputed territory created by the coming together of the world of journalism and the world of the theatre. As has been stressed, the purpose of this discussion is not to call for the implementation of certain standards by all verbatim theatre practitioners. Rather, the discussion in chapters five, six and above has shown that if a portion of this territory is governed by journalistic elements, it could produce something that is complementary to traditional journalism. The guidelines and some of the potential applications for “verbatim theatre journalism” have been explained in detail. It is exciting to begin to imagine these types of projects coming to fruition.

It is now safe to remove the quotation marks: the disputed territory labelled verbatim theatre journalism can be seen as a quasi-journalistic form. However, as in any area of not yet fully charted wilderness, there are some inherent dangers. For example, what checks would be in place to ensure accuracy of transcription and representation? How could emotional manipulation of sources be avoided? How could sensational and fabricated reporting be guarded against? These are all legitimate concerns. However, they are also dangers that are shared with traditional journalism, as the likes of Jayson Blair and Stephen Glass have well shown.⁸² The best and only protection from these dangers is the diligence and integrity of colleagues. The existence of danger does not mean a new

⁸² American journalist Stephen Glass was found to have fictionalized a great deal of his reporting throughout his highly acclaimed but short lived career. Twenty-seven out of thirty-one articles he wrote for *The New Republic* were found to contain fictionalized characters, quotations and events (Bissinger). American journalist Jayson Blair was caught fabricating and plagiarizing after a similarly short and fast rise to acclaim with *The New York Times* (Rosen).

tool should not be used. The important question to answer is: If we are going to use a new tool, how can we use it correctly? This thesis has begun to lay the groundwork of what verbatim theatre journalism might look like and how it could be used. The argument is not that it will necessarily be extremely successful, but that it is worth a try.

Afterward

How might verbatim theatre journalism be used in the workplace? As a final note, it is interesting to imagine a hypothetical example of how this technique might be used to complement traditional journalism. Imagine a journalist trying to do a story about women who wear burqas (or other total covers) for religious reasons. Is this a timely or current issue? Certainly, several of the interviewees in the work-in-progress piece notice and question these strangers. What if these people observing these women could meet and hear from the human beings behind the burqa? This is an example of how verbatim theatre journalism might be of assistance.

If the burqa story were to be done for traditional print or television, the only visuals the journalist could capture would be the women wearing their burqas. If the journalist was female, and if the sources were comfortable with the convention of verbatim theatre journalism, perhaps the sources would agree to be interviewed by the journalist while not wearing their burqas. This would allow the verbatim theatre journalist to record the sources' words, while at the same time observing their facial expressions and physical behaviour. However, the audience would not be able to have this encounter themselves. The interviews could be shaped into a piece of verbatim theatre journalism about who these women are, what their daily lives are like, how they

feel about themselves as women and how wearing cover makes their lives different.

Actors would then perform the words and reenact the facial expressions and gestures, as accurately as possible, directed by the verbatim theatre journalist. This type of story would serve to humanize the women who wear burqas, as opposed to furthering the lack of understanding between women who wear burqas and those outside of the Muslim tradition. Repeatedly in this thesis, the term “humanize” has been acknowledged as a journalistic goal. Quite simply, this means showing the human behind a label, an issue, or a burqa.

The question of staging is where the *art* of verbatim theatre journalism comes in. The production team must work with the verbatim theatre journalist to ensure a collaborative staging that furthers understanding and is not offensive. It is also important to remember our definition of the theatre: the performers and audience sharing the space. In addition to the emotional impact, this sharing of space brings people together who would not necessarily share an experience. What kind of discussion might occur between audience members? If the audience was comprised of a mix of people of different races and ethnicities – what would they talk about?

Imagine the performance coming to an end. The audience will have just had the opportunity to look face to face with women who wear cover, and hear their stories. The lights in the theatre come up and a moderator comes to the front of the stage. She or he invites the audience to share their reactions. Perhaps the immigrant from the Netherlands has come to the performance. What would he ask in response to the piece? How would the other audience members respond to him?

A piece of this kind could very well create a public sphere through this discussion, in a way more interactive and immediate than letters to the editor, talkback or comment pages. What other kind of reporting can lead to this kind of dialogue among citizens?

Appendices

Appendix A – Farm Show Excerpt

MILES

...Boy it must be great being a farmer...

JACK

Oh?

MILES

I mean you get up in the morning and get down into that good honest dirt. What time do you get up in the morning, Mr. Merrill?

JACK

Oh, six, sometimes earlier.

MILES

Six! Eh. *(a little surprised pause)* Boy this sure is a great old barn, Mr. Merrill. *(whistles)* Hand-hewn beams! I'll bet it's one of those antique barns.

JACK

It's pretty old, I guess.

MILES

Sure would like to get some of those boards...take them back to Toronto and make a coffee table out of them. *(pause)*

JACK

We'll go in and get some supper now.

MILES

Look if there's anything you want to do...dig some posts, plant some corn, anything.

JACK

No, we'll have our supper first.

MILES

Oh, you mean like organic vegetables from your garden and all, far out!

JACK

Well, we eat where we scratch. *(exit)*

MILES

(to audience) What?

(The Farm Show 23-24)

Appendix B – Talk Thirty to Me Excerpt

TIM

Earlier this summer I had to go to a wedding and I thought, ‘Oh I’m turning thirty,’ so I sucked it up and I bought a suit and, like as I was buying the suit I thought, ‘Well I’m only going to own one suit and, like as I was buying the suit I thought, ‘Well I’m only going to own one suit, let’s face it.’ And I remember thinking, ‘I should buy a dark one because I’ll probably have to wear it to one of my parent’s funerals.’ Not in a...morbid way. It was just a practical thought that invaded my mind. ‘Cause like, my dad is seventy. And my mom is sixty-five, I think. They’re good—they’re healthy, you know. But my mom smokes. She says she doesn’t. I mean it’s fine, but...you know. Anyway, I actually went home after I bought the suit, just for unrelated—you know just for a visit. And I came back and I put the suit on a couple days later to go to this wedding and I burst into tears. And my roommate’s like, ‘What’s wrong?’ And I’m like. ‘I just saw my parent and they seem so old and I bought this suit’ and I—yeah. I don’t know. I felt—I just felt their clock ticking a little bit. (Duncan 2008: 25)

Appendix C – Nanay Excerpt

Projection: Blurry images of domestic worker (possibly with the child from the previous sequence) moving through the room. Music fades into live action with Richard and Stephanie laughing at the

same joke. The sequence is accompanied with evening cocktail music, which fades to live action with Richard sitting in bed reading a book, and Stephanie on corner of bed.

RICHARD: Actually we loved Marlena, but when she left we decided in lieu of a Filipino nanny to go with a European nanny, because of the learning skills, the interaction. We were finding that Marlena was really good and loving and hugging and doing everything proper for him and feeding him. But the alphabet, the numbers, the colours, those things aren't happening. We would do tests from time to time. We say to her, "Today do nothing in the house, we want you to read to Stephen." And we put books in a certain position, and we come back at the end of the day and the books hadn't moved.

STEPHANIE: You feel a little strange doing these tests, but – really – how else can you know what's going on during the day? You're not there. You can't see it. Your child is too young to tell you.

Projection: Image of room with a European nanny with her back to us. Richard and Stephanie looking at her. Evening cocktail music fades to live action with Richard standing while Stephanie stares at picture on wall.

RICHARD: So we finally made the decision to get a European nanny because we thought stimulation would come intellectually. I think that's the trade-off.

STEPHANIE: But European nannies are a lot more demanding and they're looking at you thinking, "Well, you live in a million dollar house and you say you can't afford." You know, you can just see their minds working. So it's hard but the bottom line is, I mean we had to pretty much say "Listen Brigit, this is how much I make and this is how much Richard makes. If we pay you any more than \$1100 a month it's not worth me going to work.' You have to say that to them. We had to do that with Marlena too.

RICHARD: I finally had to sit her down, and

Stephanie was explaining our salaries and weighing it all out, and how we can, as a family, make, you know, six figures, and not have any money left at the end of the year. She cannot fathom that.

STEPHANIE: Well, I think she probably thinks that we're wealthy. In order to spruce it up a little bit, we've taken in a neighbour's child. We've done that for 2 years. They pay \$25 a day. We give Brigit \$10, so she makes an extra \$240 a month. We take \$15.

RICHARD: It's a win-win situation. (Pratt)

Appendix D – The Middle Place Excerpt

Kaaliyah: Wouldn't take any for myself.

Neill: Well, my cousin is going to school. So I would have to give her like at least 3-4 grand to do something with cause she's a smart person and I know, if I had any, if, ever, if I had any need she would be the first, that at least, I go to and she would, if she could you know, give me whatever yo. I'd give her the money.

Outsider: How would she react?

Neill: She would react, like thank you. An' give me a hug. An' that's probably it cause I'm not actually looking for anything back. I'm looking for...just the love, man, I guess man. I know I don't have to pay for it but...y'know, I know the love is there so I'm jus'...getting' it a little fatter, I guess. I love my cousin an' she loves me.

Kaaliyah: I love my mom.

Neill: You know, I love to fat up the love, man.

Kaaliyah: I love my mom.

Neill: If there's love there, I'll fat it up (*laughs*) Y'know what I mean, man.

Kaaliyah: My mom, when I was young, my mom took care of me like I didn't, my dad is nothing to me, like my dad was whatever and the only thing that represented a father figure in my life was the \$200 paycheck he deposited in my mom's account so he's nothing to me and I noticed how times were hard for me and my mom's house and my mom, like, if you asked for \$20, most parents would say (*chipper*) "OK, yeah, here." My mom would *try* to give me the \$20, if not twenty, it's like 15 or 10, you know what I mean. You know, so whatever *I* have, even if I'm in a shelter right now, whatever I have I give it to my mom, it doesn't go to me, it goes to my mom. (Kushnir)

Appendix E – Interview Transcript

Salif Mbombo
June 6th 2010
Ottawa

Note: This is a complete transcript of an interview between Joel Bernbaum (JB) and Salif Mbombo (SM). Salif is a recent immigrant from Cameroon. The interview lasted just over an hour. Salif's wife Calla Barnett (CB) was also present at the interview in order to assist in translation if necessary. As is described at the end of chapter five, I have transcribed the interview to the best of my abilities, and used certain transcription techniques based on my instincts as an actor. Non-verbal sounds, as well as words spoken in French, have been italicized to indicate they are a different language. Short pauses are indicated with a comma (,) and longer pauses with an ellipses (...). Speech disfluencies are spelled out phonetically, as have alternative pronunciations. Finally, laughter has been noted in parentheses, and then with basic phonetic sounds.

JB: So we'll just do a check of the microphone first, if you can tell me your name and how old you are and when you came to Canada?

SM: Ok? My name is Salif Mbombo, my full name Sali Mbombo, yeah, but I like when uh when you call me Salif (*laughs*) *a ha ha ha*. An' I am twenty seven year old. Yeah. Mmma, I am in Canada since, uh three months and a half, yeah.

JB: Wonderful. Where did you uh, immigrate from?

SM: Uh, I'm from Cameroon. Cameroon in cent-Africa. (*laughs softly*) *ah hah ha*

JB: And had you ever been to Canada before?

SM: No no no, this my, this was my first time to come in Canada. Yeah. *(laughs softly) uh huh.*

JB: Excellent. Tell me about, a little bit about your home country? A little bit about Cameroon?

SM: O, Cameroon in general, Cameroon is umm, ah country like Canada, a little bit. Friendly, very calm. *(laughs softly) Uh huh huh. Annnnnn*, oh I don't know if um you want me to com—, to make comparison between Cameroon and Canada?

JB: Well, tell me what uh. You can just talk about Cameroon first—

SM: Oh yeah Cameroon is a 'uge 'uge country. Yeah 'uge country and uh it contains ten regions, yeah, ten regions, an' mmm, many culture in Cameroon, yeah you can find many culture, many languages eh, *ah mm. (clears throat)* if French is firs' language, official, English is second, yeah an' mmm afta' that uh we have uh many many first, native language, native language yeah. An' mmm, sure Cameroon is uh political country uh yeah, cause people like politic in Cameroon *(laughs softly) uh huh huh huh huh*. Like everywhere, uh huh. And mmm the young people like to play football, soccer, yeah. Ummm about education, many people don't like to go to school, they like to do ss-business by themselves *(laughs softly) hah hah hah hah*. An' mmm, yeah they like, they like uuh too enjoy life, they like moving uh yeah *(laughs softly) huh huh*.

JB: What would you do, obviously soccer, but what else would you do for fun, in you country?

SM: For fun? Ohhh, in my country we 'ave um many many way to, to make fun. Theatre, um uh, dance, many dancing for fun yeah.

JB: Did you do any theatre or dancing?

SM: Umm, when I was, I was old— I was young, yeah yeah yeah, I did, but now, *huh (laughs softly) uh huh huh*. No, stop it *(laughs softly) huh huh*.

JB: Before you came to Canada, were you working in Cameroon?

SM: Yeah.

JB: Can you tell me a little bit about what your job was?

SM: Before Canada, I did many many businesses. Uh like um, I work with gas station, I make business so, when I bought the cars, I sell them again, something like that, and um I, I was like a manager, yeah, if somebody have uh, uh, 'is house for example to sell he can contact me an' uh, I can find him somebody to buy *(laughs softly) heh he* that was

my business, so I made many many things in Cameroon yeah. Until now I like to move, yeah, (*laughs softly*) *he he he*, like business. Yeah.

JB: Can you tell me about what city where you born in in Cameroon?

SM: *Mmmm*. Um in the East Cameroon, Bamoun. I am Bamoun in a Fouban. Yeah, Fouban is in East, East Cameroon. I think yeah, yeah.

JB: Big city, or small?

SM: Oh the very yeah big city, its 'uge. Ya ya ya 'uge, and um, the particular in my coun—in my village is um, they have they only one language. Yeah, Bamoun people, in general, they have only one language. So in *o da*, in otha', in otha' village they have uh many many language. Native languages.

JB: How many people would be in Bamoun village?

SM: Oh, in Bamoun village there, in Cameroon they um the first, the first village with the more population, I think if I have a good mind umm it umm ehh fifteen, fifteen thous—*quinze milles kilomètres carrés?*

CB: Fifteen thousand kilometers square

SM: Fifteen ala fifteen something like that. Yeah, Bamoun people are very 'uge. Very big village. (*laughs softly*) *a ha ha* yeah.

JB: And now, if Bamoun people speak Bamoun language, and then, and then another village maybe doesn't understand?

SM: Is that way, is that way.

JB: Oh really, okay.

SM: Bamoun people, Bamoun people has uh, their um, their language, their um *écri—écriture?*

CB: Writing.

SM: Yeah, their writing. They are very specific in Cameroon. Because it's the dynasty, Bamoun is the dynasty and um our king he creates the hospital before colonization, he creates ummm the machine to *machine à écraser?*

CB: Mortar and pestle.

SM: He creates school, before the colonization. So um many particular, particularitive (*laughs*) *uh huh huh huh*. Yeah.

JB: How do people in Cameroon feel about the king?

SM: *Mmm*. In Cameroon, about the king. Well that just depends of the region. In uh Foumban for example, we have a lot of uh respect for the king yeah because um our cus— customs, oh yeah our customs depends on the king, oh yeah. Many many things come from eh our dynasty. So we have a lot of respect. Everywhere, oh by the way, everywhere in Cameroon where eh the king exists, yeah they have a lot of respect, yeah.

JB: What kind of things come from the king? You said many many things?

SM: The culture for example, umm, when uh you 'ave the twins in the family, normally you 'ave to go to, to the... uh mmm how to say in English. *Sultanat*?

CB: To the to the palace.

SM: To the palace, exactly, thank you. To the palace to show the your your twins to the king and he has to make some culture, yeah, and umm he has to give them the name. Yeah.

JB: Twins are special?

SM: Yeah, is very special in my country, yeah. Ummm, because, *mmm*, in my village between symolize uh hh the symbolization, yeah, very import, uh when you have the twins, that means that you have um some special thing in the village yeah something that you don't know yeah some uh (*breathes in*).... uh some *dons*? *Le dons*?

CB: Gifts.

SM: Yeah some gifts, natural gifts. (*laughs*) *Uh ha ha ha ha*. Some natural gifts.

JB: I have to say, he was teasing us, he's doing—

CB: I know, you're, you're. You don't speak English around me, your English is fantastic.

SM: (*laughs*) *Ah ha ha ha*.

JB: Because I'm, I'm talking to you and I am watching her and her eyes are going—

SM: Yeah yeah yeah (*laughs*) *ha ha ha ha ha*.

CB: No, I didn't know you could speak this well, in English. We, we, we speak French at home because I'm so fluent, but, I had no idea.

SM: Oh, I think—

JB: Very impressive, you need to do more interviews.

SM: Oh, sure. No problem. I would like.

(All laugh.)

JB: Ye, ye, do you have brothers or sisters, at home?

SM: Yeah. Yeah. Ummm, you know in Camer— in Africa in general

JB: Yeah

SM: There... Africa, especially Africa is polygamy you know? 'uge family big big family, I 'ave uh many many sisters and many many brothers yeah.

JB: Older, younger?

SM: *Mmm*. Yeah, yeah. Older, younger, yeah.

JB: Do you remember, obviously its difficult to remember uh being born, birth, because we're babies, right. But tell me, what it would have been like, what would your birth have been like? Were you in a hospital? In a village? In a home?

SM: To born?

JB: Yeah, when you were born.

SM: Oh, yeah. That's very good question. *(laughs)* Ha ha ha ha ha ha. You know, but for me, me for example. I was born in the hospital, but I know many many person, yeah, in my village, it's very easy to... to to born at home, yeah at home. Hospital born many people don' don't like to go to hospital.

JB: Why not?

SM: Because um, ehhhh... Naturally, they know how to, how to catch the baby, how to do any thing without problems, yeah. So, sometimes, um, when the woman, woman are pregnant, umm from first months until they they born they don't go to the hospital.

JB: Really?

SM: Yeah. *(laughs)* uh huh huh. An' they don't have problem and everything is okay. So the hospital in my country, in my village, *bon*, the hospital is when you feel, you are feeling very very bad, maybe then go to hospital.

JB: Tell me about your favourite, the best place for you in your country? Maybe it's your village, but a specific place that you love.

SM: Oh yeah, the specific place I love is uh... Douala. Economic capital of Cameroon.

JB: Okay. Can you describe it for me?

SM: Yeah, Douala is um, eh a, *bon*, it's Littoral, it's in centre, centre Cameroon, a little bit. Yeah, centre Cameroon, I can say it like that. And uh, in Douala, Douala is like um, Came— Cameroon in miniature. You can find everything in Douala, you can do everything in Douala. Yeah, so um if um you are person who likes to do business, it's very good for you. Everything you want to do you can do in Douala. Yeah, that's why I like—

JB: Describe what it looks like for me?

SM: Douala is a very big city. Very nice city. It look like Ottawa, yeah like Ottawa, but, the rules, the rules are different. Yeah.

JB: Okay, for example?

SM: Well, for example to drive on the road, um. Here in the Canada, we have a lot of respect for the roads, but in Douala it's not the same. Yeah is not the same, you are are you able to cross the road very fast? Okay. Yeah, down no respect for the road, yeah, and um...

JB: So if I, if I go to Douala, and I walk onto the street, what do I see around me?

SM: Around you you will meet uh, a lot of people, on the road, yeah. You will see uhh um, the very big big building, the side, we see building everywhere. We see umm many cars in circulation. Yeah...

JB: Why do you like, why is that your favourite place?

SM: Because, um, in Douala is very easy to make money. *(laughs)* Huh ha ha ha ha ha. Doing business um, win the money. Yeah.

JB: Excellent, thank you. Let's talk a little bit about when you met your, your wife. Describe for me uh, this is uh, Canadian woman, tell me a bit about your first meeting.

SM: Oh, our first meeting, oh. *Mmm, bon*, you know, every young, every young, every young people, every young guys like to see uh people play music uh, like to hear to hear the music. Our first meeting was in North Cameroon, North Cameroon. So you know in Cameroon sometimes you can, you can pass one week two weeks without electricity (*laughs softly*) *ha ha ha ha ha* it's very easy like that. So (*clears throat*) one day uh in the city we didn't have electricity an' and uh the friends made uh, some um, something like a meeting, to play music to drink beer to enjoy the night life eh no elec—no electricity yeah so, but our first contact was there. I saw her when she was playing Tracy Chapman, do you know Tracy Chapman?

JB: Yes.

SM: (*laughs*) *Oh ho ho yeah*. I like, I likes Tracy Chapman. So she played Tracy Chapman an' I was very very, I was like, look this girl, (*laughs*) *ha ha ha ha ha ha*.

JB: She was playing on guitar and singing?

SM: Yes, she plays the guitar, she play very well, yeah.

JB: Do you remember what song she was playing?

SM: She play Tracy Chapman, she play Bob Marley too. Do you know Bob Marley?

JB: No, I've never heard of him.

SM: Oh (*laughs*) *Ha ha ha ha ha ha*. Tracy Chapman, which song. Umm. Ahhh. Which song which song. I can't remember. (*laughs*) *Ha ha ha ha ha*.

JB: How did, so how did you decide to come to Canada? Big decision.

SM: Oh it a big decision, exactly. That wa— that was *mm* easy to make decision. You know me, I like my country, and I didn't want to move to Canada (*laughs*) *ha ha ha ha ha*. *Bon*. We spoke a lot before making decision for me to to come here and um she let me know that in Canada, everything can be like in Cameroon. Everything I like, I can find in Canada. Oh, she told me like that. I say okay. Ya mun. Why not? (*laughs*) *Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha*. So that was the, the beginning. (*laughs*) *Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha*. Hey mun, why not? (*laughs*) *Ha ha ha ha ha*.

JB: I like your attitude.

SM: Yeah.

JB: Did you get married in Cameroon, or in Canada?

SM: In Cameroon. In maybe, maybe in the follow in the following following weeks, following months, maybe we make the wedding here in Canada too. Maybe yeah. That is our wishes. *(Laughs) Uh huh huh huh huh.* So we make, uh made a marriage in Cameroon.

JB: Tell me a little bit about your wedding?

SM: A-ohh. A-ohh— it was very, very cool. Not very, not a very big big party. We wanted something small and just to invite the friend, yeah, so we go to the municipality, because in Cameroon, we celebrate, people celebrate the wedding in the community, the community. *(laughs) Eh ha ha ha ha ha. Que l'ai me ris quoi, oui.* So mm we invite some friends and um that wa—, that our wedding was very very spec— very particul— particular, because they made it outside. That's very very difficult in my country. To celebrate a wedding outside.

JB: Why?

SM: I just say that it's not a it's not a rule. Camerooni rule. But we, we made decision to celebrate it outside, and they accept, finally. *(laughs) Ah ha ha ha.* They accept it finally. Um.

JB: Describe what, what, I would see at your wedding?

SM: Yup. *Emm.* We celebrate it in two, two cities. Eh we went to the municipality in Maroua downtown. After that we went to Mokolu, Mokolu city. Yeah, we stay in hotel, um, we make the night dancing, how do you say

CB: Night club.

SM: A night club, yeah, yeah. We make the big big party in Mokolo city. Yeah. And uh, we dance until five o'clock, something like that, yeah. A lot of beer, a lot of food, *(laughs) uh ha ha ha ha.*

JB: What type of food is Camerooni food?

SM: Oh. Many many many types of food. We have many many types. Like couscous, *bon* couscous is uh, my prefer in Bamoun, in Fouban, Bamoun people like to eat couscous, yeah, couscous. So um in our wedding we cook couscous, beans, rice, many things. A lot of meat, because we like to eat meat. Yeah.

JB: Are your parents still alive in your country?

SM: Yeah. Yeah.

JB: Were they at the wedding as well?

SM: No no, they because uh they were very far, that wasn't in my village. We celebrated wedding in North Cameroon. So they, to travel is very trickle is very far. So they, they, they just wish us a good wedding. Like that. After the wedding we make the, um, *lune de miel*, yeah we travel, we travel to to the village

CB: Honeymoon.

SM: to meet the parents, yeah. Honeymoon?

CB: *Oui*, honeymoon, *lune de miel*, honeymoon- it's the same thing.

JB: Sounds nicer in French.

SM: Ah, yeah. (*laughs*) *Huh ha ha*. We travel to meet the parents in my village. So, uh, I am in the very big family. So we, we visit my father, after we visit my mother, sister, brothers, (*laughs*) *huh ha ha ha*. Uncle, dancing. In Foumban, yeah.

JB: Before we talk about Canada, I want to ask you a little, one more question about Cameroon. What about your childhood memories, when you were a child? Before school, before work, what do you remember about what would you do as a child.

SM: Oh, I like that question. (*laughs*) *ha ha ha ha ha ha ha*. *Emm*. In general, Salif, me, Salif Mbombo, (*laughs*) *ha ha ha*. I have the very very very very, chil— the very nice child life. (*laughs*) *Ha ha ha*, when I was chil—, um, but you know, by the way, my parents separate when I was three months, so I I passed the very very specific particular child life. *Ennn*, I live, I didn't stay with my mother for a long time, I didn't stay with my father for a long time, so if I stayed my mother for one month, I stayed with my father for maybe three weeks or two months or so yeah. So I wa' like that. I was like that. So, *mm*, I didn't catch (*clears throat*) the my mother education, my father education, no. That was uh like this and *bon*, I like it, I like it. Because um, when I was young, I was child, I belong to everybody. (*laughs*) *Ha ha ha ha ha ha*, yeah, I belong to everybody. And that um make me catch many experiences about ev— about many things. Yeah.

JB: Do you have a favourite memory from childhood you could share with me?

SM: *Mmmm bon* ya. *Bon* when I wa', I was young, in in prim— in primary school?

JB: Mm hmm.

SM: Primary school yeah. I was very very very clever in school. Wh— I was very very good in school but I... um to go to high school, I had a small problem, because eh, because of my, eh, *licence* birth?

CB: Uuuh, birth certificate.

SM: Yeah, birth certificate, something like that *(laughs)* *Ha ha hum ha ha ha. (breathes in)* So I had this small problem with that and that make me *taxtornin* for maybe four years, yeah *(clears throat)*. And when the— after that—

JB: What did you do in that four years?

SM: *Bon* every every every year uh I was uh I was obliged to, to go to, to eh *(breathes in)* *comen deux, comen deux, comen deux, (to wife)* primary school “c”- “m”- *deux*

CB: Oh yeah, primary school

SM: Yeah yeah

CB: *(overlapping)* to continue in the last grade of primary school.

SM: Yeah every year yeah. I was obliged to continue waiting for my... birth uh certificate. So that uh...

JB: Same classes every year?

SM: *(overlapping)* Yeah, every year, every year every year. So that made me catch many many experiences, um understood uh, many things in the life *(breathes in)*. So after that, when I went to high school, I didn't like to school again *(laughs)* *Ha ha ha ha ha ha (breathes in)*. I didn't wan', I didn't want to school again, because I thought that maybe I have a small knowledge to to live by myself *(laughs)* *Ha ha ha ha*. I don't need the, I don't need the education to live. *(laughs)* *Mhm ha ha ha ha*. Something like that *(laughs quietly)* *Ha ha ha (breathes in)* *Ha ha ha ha*.

JB: So what kind of, what kind of trouble would you get into as a, as a teenager in Cameroon?

SM: Eh, trouble?

CB: *Est-ce que um (laughs quietly) hu uh he. Tu dérangeais comment, tu faisais quoi quand tu étais dans ton adolescence?*

SM: Oouuw.

CB: *Tu faisais quelles uh quelles choses que tu devrais pas faire? (laughs)*

SM: *Oui*. Yeah. When I was young, yeah sure, I was very very, I was very *uhhhm, omm*, I don't know how to say in English, I disturbed, a lot, yeah, I disturbed a lot. I was, I played a lot um, *ehn*, I, I damage everything in *(CB laughs)* in our house. *(Laughs)* *Ha ha ha ha ha*. Like, uh, glass, something like that. I was very curious. Everything, I wanted to

learn by myself, yea, yeah, so, I was very very very miserable. (*Laughs*) *Mh he he he he he he*. I know yeah.

JB: How many years did you go to high school?

SM: *Em, bo*— high school I stay in high school for eight years I think.

JB: Eight years?

SM: Yeah, eight years, yeah. I supp— yeah.

JB: After high school?

SM: After high school umm, I begun to, um, the active life. I begun to do business, yeah, after, after that. I begun *de* with the *basserie*. *Basserie de Cameroon*. The company who makes *de*— the beer.

JB: Okay.

SM: Yeah, I work there.

JB: Mmm.

SM: Yeah (*laughs quietly*) *ha ha ha ha ha*.

JB: Now, I think I know, but I wanna ask, why did you come to Canada?

SM: Yeah, exactly. Oh, firstly, I follow my wife. (*Laughs*) *Ha ha ha ha ha*. Nice yeah. Because, because of her, uh yeah, I am in Canada. An um, *bon*, you know, in the life, you have to work, to live you have to work, huh? That's the obligation. So, after my wife, I have to work in Canada. (*laughs*) *huh ha ha*. Yeah.

JB: Have you been able to find a job in Canada?

SM: Yeah yeah I think, uh, I think uhm, everything will be very okay with me because uhm, in the beginning *bon*, I see, I see many many opportunities *mmm*, you know (*laughs quietly*) *He he hem*. Whe—, when you understand, you forget, when you see you remember (*laughs*) *a ha*, when you do you understand. *Bon*. (*laughs*) *He he he he he*.

JB: Uh huh, that's an important rule, no, I understand--

SM: Yeah, when you hear you forget, when you see you remember, when you do you understand.

JB: Ahh.

SM: So I think I will, I will find a very nice job in Canada. The job I will like. (*laughs softly*) Uh huh huh huh.

JB: What would you like to do?

SM: *Mmm*, I like to, *mmm*, to work hard, I like to be in movement. *Bon*, maybe in the construction, *mécanique*. Uh, yea my myf— my favourite is mechanic. But ehh, is ve—, it's not easy to do mechanic in Canada, for me.

JB: Do you have a job now?

SM: Umm. *Bon*. Cons— I have uh, I work at Handyman. And *ma* find the job, now I am in the monarch. Monarch construction, yeah. You know, I think, do you know the Handyman?

JB: No.

SM: The Handyman is the company find you the job. And uh, they send you to work and they pay you for cash, uh, yeah.

JB: Good.

SM: S'like that. After, the company want to take you from Handyman. Okay. Yeah, they very, they can, *emm*, assist the business, no?

JB: Yes.

SM: The business. Handyman Handyman is very very good for, I think for the new immigrants, who, who want to work hard, who want to catch many experiences, you have to start at Handyman.

JB: Um hmm.

SM: But there is no publicity (*laughs*) *hm hm hm* for handyman. Because, with handyman, you have contact with many companies. An uh, when you work with many companies, you catch also many experiences

JB: Umm hmm.

SM: Um, finally if the company decided to to take you.

JB: Umm hmm.

SM: Oh, that would be perfect for you. Yeah.

JB: So, I wanna talk now about uh arriving in Canada.

SM: Yeah.

JB: When you first come to Canada, now, what do you notice is different?

SM: Umm, different about my country?

JB: From comparing Canada to Cameroon.

SM: Oh yeah (*breathes out*), s-umm, Canada en Cameroon, is like um, is like uh, the night and de, *le jour et la nuit*?

CB: Night and day.

SM: (*laughs*) *Mu ha ha ha ha ha*. Yeah because the first thing, who, *ehhh*, the first thing that I see in Canada, oh in in interest me very well. It's *ehh*, them, you know, when e— here in Canada, fo' ya, you have to pay many taxes. That's very cool. And the government helps people with that money. That is very, the first thing that, that uh, I found, uh, is very well in Canada. The government take care for um Canadian people. That's very nice. It's not the same in my country. Sure we pay the taxes, but you don't you don't know what they are doing with the money uh so um yeah. In Canada, in Canada also, people are very friendly. Very very friendly. I never imagine like that in my country, um people respect each other, they respect for each other, yeah, that. Uh also, in Canada, everywhere you go everything is uh in order, everything is clean uh you know, everything is uh beautiful, in general. (*laughs softly*) *Uh huh huh*. Yeah.

JB: Do you think there is a difference in safety, in the countries? Is Cameroon more dangerous, or Canada more dangerous?

SM: Um, about that um, Cameroon. If Cameroon is uh, very very, Cameroon is good, Cameroon is not dangerous. *Bon*, in Canada, it seems um, I am in Canada, I think, I think, *bon*, I am, I have only three month an' half so eh my first vision now oh— I think Came— Canada is not dangerous too. (*laughs softly*) *He he he*. I think Canada, it's like Cameroon. (*laughs softly*) *Ha he he*. You know, in Cameroon for example, if you want to have dangerous life, oh you, you will find the dangerous life, if you want to, to have the nice life, okay, Cameroon is like that. Um, it seem that Canada also is like that. If you, you want to have problem, uh, you will find the problem, I think it's easy.

JB: Hmmm.

SM: (*laughs*) *Uh huh huh huh huh huh*.

CB: Mm hmm.

SM: If you want to have problem in Canada, you wi— you wi— you will have the problem. Very fast. So, about *emm*, stability, Canada and Cameroon have something in, in common. Yeah. (*laughs softly*) *Uh huh huh huh*, is stability.

JB: What in in, now only three and a half months is a very small amount of time, but what has been difficult, for you? What has been hard or challenging, difficult for you as a new Canadian?

SM: Um. That's very good question. (*laughs*) *Uh huh huh huh*. You know um, here in Canada exist many many rules. So, in the beginning, *em*, everything, everything, here in Canada, like uh, I have a difficulty for many things, for example, umm, to find a job for example. The manner to to to a— to apply. It's not the same for my country. The interview, for example, before job, in my country you don't know the interview, you don't do that, an' umm

JB: What do you do?

SM: Oh, in my country, sometimes uh the *commun*— the *communiqué*, they send a *communiqué* sometime you will go by yourself to ask for a job. If they accept, okay, they send bring your re— resume, you will see, we will see your resume an' it's okay or sometime they don't ask for your resume. They look li— they look at you, if you are okay. So in Canada that was very difficult for me, for *em* when *em*, you want to make the cleaner for examp— cleaning, for example. They have to make the interview. For the cleaner they ask you for Canadian experience. I don't know (*laughs*) *Eh he he*. To clean something, I don't know what kind of experience you have to carry before that. So, for me that was, that was pretty funny to me. (*laughs*) *He he he he he no he*. (*breathes in*). So, in the beginning when they call me to make interview for me, that was like a joke, de joke, oh you know? (*laughs*) *Oh ho ho ho ho*. I know, I know, deep down, I know that I am able to do many things, and uh, oh, when they ask for my experience, that was very funny. (*laughs*) *He he*. So now eh, yeah yeah yeah, (*laughs*) *He he he*. In Canada, that was funny, that is very funny to me. Um, also, um. In Canada, ummm. In Canada the difficulty also is, uh yeah. In the restaurant for example, for me. I don't know yet, I don't know, the types of food, of the type of meal here in Canada. When I am in the store I have the difficulty to, to buy the thing I want, I have a difficulty to know where I can find this and this. (*laughs*) *Hu huh huh huh* yeah *huh*. So, *emm*, but it's not bad, it's not bad, in Canada. It's the difficulty for me, but it's not bad. It's very good, it's normal *ne* for me, but for me it's a difficulty.

JB: What, what do you think is the important qualities, important things for immigrants? What's important to have? Personal qualities for an immigrant.

SM: Umm, to immigrate here in Canada?

JB: Mmm.

SM: I think that you have to, the thing who can make the immigration easy for you? I think that is your question?

JB: Sort of, but I am interested in that too.

SM: Oh.

JB: But, but, um, I am more interested in, what is a good immigrant? You know what I mean?

SM: Oh a good, yeah.

CB: Do you want me to say it in French?

SM: No, I uh, understood. *(Laughs) Uh huh huh huh.*

JB: No it's my, my uh, poor question. I am interested in, what makes a good immigrant. If you had to say, this kind of person

SM: Yeah

JB: is a good immigrant.

SM: Oh yeah. *Emm*, to say that you are a good immigrant, firstly you have to, you have to come in Canada, legally uh, legally. That is the first um, qualification. An' also, the good immigrant, is uh, the person who are, who is able to work hard, to work, and not to stay like this to enjoy uh, maybe the nice building, nice sight in Canada. The good immigrant, he has to do, *em*, you have to do the different, different thing, like um oh I don't know how to say. You have to be able to work, you have to have um, you have to be friendly, you have to have the good comportment, something like that. Yeah. Yeah.

JB: What was the, now back to your point about the process, im— uh, immigrating, what did you have to do to become Canadian?

SM: Ummm, I think. To become Canadian you have to stay in Canada for three years.

JB: Okay.

SM: After three years you have to make application, to ask for the, cit— citizen, for the citizen uh

JB: When you came this time, you had to prove your, what did you say this, when you arrived in Canada?

SM: Oh, oh when oh,

CB: (*overlapping*) Oh, *ce*, eh, um, okay. He's not Canadian, he's a permanent resident. Okay, so, your question is confusing. *Il demand qu'est-ce qu'on a faire pour avoir la résidence permanent, pas pour devenir Canada, Canadien, mais pour deven— devenir au Canada. C'est ça qu'il demande.*

SM: Oh yeah.

JB: Up to that, sure.

CB: Yeah, okay, yeah, worry.

JB: No no no that's great

SM: *Mmm oui.*

JB: We have to give you some work because we've been so—

SM: (*laughs*) *Mm he he he he he he he*

CB: Yeah I know this is going well, I should have stayed home. (*laughs*) *Uh huh.*

SM: Yeah to come, to come in Canada, you have to, oh that is not, it's a little, a little complicate, because *mm*, you have to, make, you have to, apply?

CB: Mm hmm.

SM: You have to apply, you have to do um, eh, medi— medical test.

JB: Mm hmm.

SM: Medical test. Tha— it's very important, before all, before beginning. The medical test is very very important, and um, *em*, *bo*— in my country for example, they have to see if I wa— I was, if I did the prison. If I am a bad Cameroonian. If I did the bad thing. That is the, in the beginning. They make the, I don't know how to say in English *enquêtes*

CB: *Enquêtes de quoi?*

SM: *Enquêtes de ta vie?*

CB: Oh, they, they uh, essentially evaluate your life... *C'est un evaluation de la vie?*

SM: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You have to tell, about your young, young life. Until that time you want to make immigration, yeah. You have to tell them everything you do, everything

you did. In the past yeah, and uhm, what you want to do in Canada. Yeah, in the beginning. And uhm, when you, you are already in eh Canada, in the airport, you don't have to, you can't go out like that, you have to make interview, also, yeah, eh...

JB: What questions did they ask you in your interview?

SM: Yeah they, oh, they, they ask fthe, well firstly they ask where you from how old are you? Why, why are you coming in Canada? What do you want to do in Canada? Um are you married? Do you have a kids? Do you have the kids? *(laughs)* ah hey oh ho. And um, they ask you if uh, if uh, you have the food with you, if you bring the food with you from your country. Whe— if you did the prison already, yeah, something like that.

JB: Now, long question *(laughs)* he he

SM: Yeah.

JB: Pretend, what if you are a, working in the airport, in immigration. What questions would you, Salif, ask new immigrants, if you are, you are the immigration police?

SM: Yeah, no, yeah.

JB: What questions do you, would you think to ask new immigrants, to make sure we have good immigrants?

SM: Ah yeah, that's a very good question. *(laughs)* Ha ha yeah *(breathes in)*. Emm, I wou've, I would like to know, if the new immigrant has uh way to live in Canada. If he has the support in Canada. If, he won't, if he need to work in Canada, umm, I would like also to know if uhh, if he did a prison, already. That is very important for everybody. *(laughs)* Uh ha ha ha. So I think, my first question would— was uh, if he has where to live? If he will work in Canada? Um if he did a prison already. That's very important, to ask for a new immigrant.

JB: Why?

SM: Ah, because if you are in Canada without house, that's very very dangerous for you. You can't live in Canada without, without house. You can't live in Canada without work, you have to work to live in Canada. And umm, if you don't have these two things, of the umm, you'll be, you'll be in obligation to do the bad thing, just to to to alive and that will sen' you the prison, for sure. Yeah.

JB: Yeah.

SM: Because when you don't have, uh, where to live.

JB: Yes.

SM: When you don't have, when you don't know how to eat, for sure you will uh, make the, make the bad, the bad thing, the bad things (*laughs*) *Uh huh huh huh* yeah *he he*.

JB: Interesting. Thank you. We talked about, what is, what makes a good immigrant. Now, this is a bigger question, but, what makes a good Canadian, do you think?

SM: Umm. I think, *bon*, for me, for me Salif (*laughs*) *uh huh ha ha ha* (*breathes in*) I think a good Canadian is, a person who has to be friendly, it's a very important. You don't have to be eh, um, *égoiste mais c'est... Qu'on, qu'on...*

CB: *Il faut être quoi? Il faut pas?*

SM: *Il faut pas être égoiste.*

CB: Oh, don't be selfish.

SM: Yeah yeah yeah, you have to avoid to be selfish. (*laughs*) *Eh he he he*. The good Canadian, have to be friendly, uh, don— don't be sel-fesh, selfish? Yeah, and um, *bon*, the good Canadian have to, to, to accept, to accept the new immigrant, like the (*laughs*) *Uh huh huh huh*. Like he meet him, yeah um—

JB: Why, why is that important?

SM: Important to show the opportunity, for the new immigrant. To show the oppor— the opportunity. That what to do to have ah, to find a thing we want hmm? If you need to work for example, Canadian people for sure they know how to help you to, to apply for the job, if you want to, to move another city, they know how to, to make your, your trip easy, for example yeah. Though so, in general the know, the Canadian, Canadian thing, Canadian have, have to give information for the new immigrant. The information is very important.

JB: Uh-huh.

SM: (*laughs*) *Uh huh huh huh*. Information. (*laughs*) *eh he he he he*.

JB: Why did you choose Ottawa?

SM: Oh, I like this question. I choose Ottawa, my, my mind, my mind uh, *bon*, it's because uh, I wou' I would like to speak English, to be able to speak English, to hear English, to understand English, to speak also yeah. So I would like to hear very well, to understand and to speak. Ah, English is *de*, very important for our life, actually, yeah. An' also, in Ottawa. The rule in Ottawa, is like uh I can in *de inderal* rule is very very

good, um *dial a rule*. In Ottawa, in Ottawa there are many many opportunities to, to find a job. Yeah. Ottawa is very good, to find a job.

JB: What, what is your dream? If you could have, you could tell me, you know, dream job, dream life now in Canada, what is your dream?

SM: Oh, *emm*. Thank you for that question. (*laughs*) *He he he he (breathes in)*. Here in Canada, I am dying... to, I am dying to live with people in Canada, to, to, meet the nice people, to find a very good job, to be able to... to... to have, kids, with my wife. And to go everywhere you want. Yeah, and to be, to be love of Canadian people. *Être aimé par les canadiens?* (*laughs*)

CB: To... to be... to *peut être accepté peut-être par la société canadienne, c'est ça?* Okay, yeah. I mean, to be accepted by the Canadian society.

SM: Yeah (*laughs*) *uh uh huh huh huh huh*. To be the very welcome Canadian, between Canadian people. (*laughs*) *uh uh huh huh*.

JB: What do you think Canada will look like in fifty years?

SM: Oh. In fifty years, I think, Canada will be like *bon*, now Canada is like *em*, U.S. Canada accept people came from, from anywhere, like that. I think in fifty years, Canada will be, um, if Canada continue like this, I think uh, Canada will uh (*makes sound with tongue*), will be uh the best, the number one in the world. Yeah. Canada will be the best. I think.

JB: Why?

SM: Yeah because uh, everybody of who like to come in Canada... to, you know the business is very important for every country. If uh, many many businessmen like in Canada, Canada will be nice forever. Canada will become nice forever. The usual. An', I think in Europe for example, I have many many friends from Europe. Very very bus—they very very big businessmen, who want to, to come to live in Canada, forever. If uh, many businessman come to live in Canada, I think Canada will be the best in the world. Yeah.

JB: What advice, what suggestions or advice, would you give to a new immigrant? For example, you have been here for three

SM: Three, yeah

JB: and a half months. But maybe tomorrow, a new person comes from Cameroon to Canada, first time. What advice do you say to them?

SM: Firstly, to be informed. To ask for more information, before doing something, yeah. Because here in, here in Canada, in Ottawa, particularly, in Ottawa if you don't have information, you can't do something. Yeah, to go to the immigrant office, to ask for more, many many information before doing something. Yeah, that is my, my main advice.

JB: And what was the most helpful information you got, when you came?

SM: Oh, when I arrived in Canada, *emm*, they showed me *emm*, where I can, learn English for free. That was, that was very surprised. 'Cause that was my first time to (*laughs*) *uh ha ha* to know that a place like that exists. Yeah, and *em*, an' eh work. Oh, oh I think, the e-e-e M-C-A, the M-C-A

CB: Y-M-C-A

SM: Yeah Y-M-C-A. That was uh the first opportunity that uh they showed me, to learn, to learn English, because no English in Ottawa you can't speak ay people. (*laughs softly*) *Eh he he he*.

JB: We talked about your favourite spot, in Cameroon.

SM: Yeah.

JB: Where is your favourite place in Canada? Or favourite place in Ottawa?

SM: Oh, it—

JB: A place where you really like to go.

SM: Oh in Ottawa my favourite place, I would like to go to visit, not to live, to visit for a few days, is Vancouver (*laughs*) *Uh ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha*. Vancouver.

JB: Why?

SM: Because uh, many many people eh, speak about Vancouver, and to live I prefer Ottawa (*laughs*) *Mm ha ha ha ha ha ha*. Vancouver, I would like to visit, to visit.

JB: What do people say about Vancouver?

SM: *Bon*, they say that Vancouver is very tourist and um, (*breathes in*) um, oh yeah, many things like in Africa.

JB: Hmm.

SM: Yeah they say that, many things like in Africa, the lake uh, yeah, so, the tourist, tourist, tourism *(laughs)* hm ha ha ha ha ha ha. I would like to to to to visit Vancouver.

JB: What about in Ottawa, where is a, Ottawa, in the city, what's a one spot you like to go to?

SM: In the city?

JB: Yeah.

SM: *Mmm. (clears throat)*

JB: Your favourite spot.

SM: Oh yeah, it's um, The Rideau Centre. I like to, to make doing window shopping. *(laughs)* Ma ha ha ha ha ha ha *(breathes in)*. Yeah, Rideau Centre. Now actually, Rideau Centre is my favourite place, because I like to, to walk everywhere, to see the same thing, to see um *(laughs softly)* Uh huh huh huh.

JB: Why?

SM: Uh, I like to, I like to do window shopping, you know, to, make comparison in the prices, for example. This thing, oh it's expensive, it's cheaper *(laughs)* ha ha, an' um when I eh, I need to buy, to buy things for example, okay I will have already the experience how to find a good place for the good price. *(laughs)* Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha. *(breathes in)* Yeah.

JB: Yes *(laughs)* Ah ha ha ha. Absolutely.

SM: *(laughs)* Eh he he he. Yeah.

JB: Have you ever had, this is a strange question, have you ever had a, a near death experience, when you were in danger?

CB: *Tu as déjà presque tu as déjà presque mourir? Tu as eu un expérience ou tu as presque mour— mour— tu es presque mort? Tu as jamais senti ça?*

SM: In Canada?

JB: Or either one.

SM: *(mumbles)* Oh in is fe oh eh *(laughs)* He he he he he

CB: *Je peux penser à un.*

SM: *Oui, yeah, bon. Oui, j'ai* uh a bad *accident*. I made accident one time. I made a very very very bad accident. Car accident.

JB: Oh dear.

SM: Yeah, that was very very dangerous. But yeah (*laughs*) *Uh huh huh huh*. And uh, *bon*, I never, I didn't have uh, I didn't have uh, *des blessures, je n'ai pas de blessures*

CB: He wasn't hurt.

SM: Yeah yeah, I wasn't, I wasn't hurt. And they, my car was very uh, *c'était irréparable*.

CB: He couldn't save the car.

SM: Yeah yeah, but I was *sain et sauf*

CB: Safe and sound.

SM: I can' save the car yeah.

JB: Mm, Oh, Oh dear

SM: Only that yeah.

JB: That was in Cameroon?

SM: In Cameroon yeah.

JB: Not, okay.

SM: No, in Ottawa, not yet.

JB: Hopefully not. (*knocks on table*)

SM: Not yet (*laughs*) *Mm he ha ha ha*.

JB: (*laughs*) *Ha ha ha ha*.

SM: Not yet (*laughs*) *he he (breathes in) hm hm*. Ah, you, when you live the difficult, the difficult moment, that may, that make you strong.

JB: Yeah.

SM: It's very important to live the difficult moment (*laughs*) *ha ha ha*.

JB: Absolutely.

SM: Yeah. *(laughs softly)* Uh huh huh.

JB: Anything else that you want to say about what do you miss about Cameroon?

SM: Oh, *bon, em*, sometimes I miss, I miss to speak my native language, yeah I, sometimes I want to speak but I, I can't *(laughs)* he he he. Because I am alone uh, my wife uh, she can't speak my native language for the moment. And umm, our meal, couscous *(laughs)* Ha ha ha ha ha ha. I can't find it in Canada.

JB: What makes your couscous special?

SM: Couscous *maïs*.

JB: Yeah, what is, what is uhh, special or different about that couscous than couscous in Canada?

CB: *C'est, on a le, unh, I need to explain to him. On a le couscous sénégalais ici unh? Il veut savoir la différence entre notre couscous et le couscous de Cameroon.*

SM: Uh, yeah, umm. *Enh.* The couscous from Bamoun people, is heavy, here the couscous is light *(laughs)* ha ha ha ha ha. So, from my village is heavy, here is light *(laughs)* Ha ha ha ha ha ha. Yeah *(laughs softly)* is very light.

CB: Umm, *pardon, est-ce que le couscous c'est, on met dans un bol, on mange avec un pierre là, et le couscous le couscous là-bas c'est pas sal du tout.*

SM: Oh, in my country we, the couscous is *em*, we mix the *farine*

CB: Flour.

SM: Fi-flour with to a hot water

JB: Mm hm.

SM: For a few minutes, an' we make the, the bowl, and we eat with, with the hand. *Mo (laughs)* Ha ha, yeah. It's like that, not not with the fork or spoon, no. Yeah, an' it's very heavy.

JB: Yeah?

SM: *(laughs)* Oh ho ho ho, yeah.

JB: And what is the taste?

SM: The taste, ooh, umm, I don't know how to, how show the taste, the taste is very nice, the taste very very it's like umm, the taste of, of um m-m-*maïs*?

CB: Corn.

SM: The corn yeah, it's of corn.

SM: When you put the corn in the *pock*, in the cooker, for a long time, like popcorn.

JB: *Uh ha. (laughs under) Ah ha ha.*

SM: Ya the taste *(laughs) Ha ha ha.* The tastes same, like popcorn.

JB: Okay. Okay.

SM: Do you know popcorn?

JB: Yes, yeah.

SM: Exactly. It tastes, the same. The good couscous. *(laughs) Ha o ha ha o ha.*

CB: It's true.

JB: Yeah.

SM: *(laughs) Ha ha ha.* Yeah. Ah, it's very, very good for your, for your health.

JB: Really?

SM: A lot of energy, oh *(laughs) A ha ha ha oh ha ha. He he he.*

JB: Well I had many many questions and you, very impressive English and in, and thank you for sharing your thoughts, is there anything else you wanted to share, maybe that I didn't think of?

SM: *Mmm. (clears throat)* ah yeah eh, my experience to uh about the renter *(breathes in)* The renter in Cana— in Canada yeah. *(laughs) Uh ha ha ha ha, yeah.*

JB: Please, please tell me.

SM: Yeah because eh... *emm*, you have to know that, in Canada, electricity for example, the *hydro* in general is very cheap, very cheap, than my country. Electricity is very expensive in my country, yeah, the water too. So, that uh, I am very happy to know to

know to to find that in Canada the electricity and water is very very cheap (*laughs*) *uh huh huh huh huh huh huh huh*. And *oui*, we have to do many things with electricity no?

JB: Mm hmm.

SM: No sin the, yeah, doing many things in Canada with electricity. And the bills, the bills are really cheap, *bon*, that's very good for Canadian people. (*laughs*) *Ah ho ha ha ha*.

JB: A nice surprise.

SM: Yeah. You have to be happy (*laughs*) *Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha*. (*breathes in*) *Ha ha*.

JB: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely.

SM: You have to be happy, because you are Canadian. (*laughs*) *Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha*. *Ah ha ha*.

CB: Mm hmm.

SM: Yeah, Canadian, my experience is also about Canadian's people and Europe people another people, yup, *bon* my little experience, *em*, if you are Canadian, sure, you have, you have to be happy. Uh, because uh, Canad—, Canadian, Canada, Canada is, I don't know how to explain it, Canada is very, exceptional, exceptional, yeah, for the moment, many things in Canada are very very lovely, very very... they are right. Yeah, it's very good in Canada. The mentality of people, the mentality of people, yeah (*laughs*) *Ha ha*. An' is not because I am in Canada now, is because I ma— I made many friends from everywhere and uh I got the experiences also (*laughs*) *uh huh huh huh*. Though I think, actually, Canada is very, the best, so, you have to be happy. (*laughs*) *Ha ha ha ha, ha ha ha*.

JB: I'm glad.

SM: Yeah.

JB: Have you met a, when your friends in Canada, have you met Canadians, or other immigrants or both?

SM: Mmm, mmm, *bon*, another immigrant, I don' I don't um, I didn't meet another immigrant like friends yet. *Bon*, when I learn English, I learn English for one month, I met them. Only in school, after school, *bon*, yeah. Not yet. *Bon*, Canadian's people, I have maybe two three, friends yeah.

JB: Four.

SM: Yeah, exactly, now four. *(laughs)* Ha ha ha. Once more.

JB: Great, well, I'll turn this off.

Track #2

JB: Tell me the story from the beginning here? About your first time working...

SM: In Handyman?

JB: Yeah.

SM: Oh, *bon*, the first time that Handyman send me out to work. I meet the boss, um, I had to

JB: Did he speak, does he speak French?

SM: Yeah, he duh, he doesn't, I mean, any word in French, but he want me to make sweeping, sweeping in the construction. Um, he send me, he ask me to bring the broom *(laughs)* ah ha ha ha ha ha. Me, I, I never understand I uh, I told him, broom is what? He say broom broom, bring your broom, *(laughs)* Uh ha ha ha. Broom, I don't understand broom broom. *(makes sounds)* Sshwep Sshwep Sshwep. *(laughs)* Ah ha ha ha ha ha ha. *(makes sounds)* Sshwep Sshwep Sshwep Sshwep. I say ahhh, okay.

JB: *(laughs)* Ha ha ha.

SM: The *balai* okay. *(laughs)* Ah ha ha ha ha. That was very funny.

JB: And how did, what did your boss do? Was it funny for him too?

SM: Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah, now he knows that, he knows that um, the name of things in English, I don't know but, *em*, yeah we, every time we speak in English, but the name, for example.

JB: So how do, how does he instead of saying the name, does he say something different? How does he ask you to get something, now?

SM: Oh, now, um, now, when, he ask me to, take some material, if uh, if he know that I don't understand, I don't know the material, eh, if for example is the, vacuum, he make the sound now, *(makes sounds)* Vvvvv Vvvv Vvvv Vvvv *(laughs)* Da ha ha ha ha ha ha ha. *(makes sounds)* Vvvvv Vvvv Vvvv, Vacuum. Oh yeah, okay.

JB: *(laughs)* Ha he.

SM: *(laughs)* *Ha ha ha ha*. It's like that.

JB: *(laughs)* *Ha ha ha ha*. That's a good system.

SM: *(laughs)* *Ha ha ha ha*. If there is the, well the hammer for example, say, hammer *(makes sounds)* *Po po*. And now it's okay. *(laughs)* *Ah ha ha ha*.

JB: It's a, a new language.

SM: Yeah yeah yeah, ve— ve— very strange for me. *(laughs)* *Uh ha ha ha ha*.

JB: Oh that's funny.

SM: Ohh.

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