

Researching the Body in/as Performance

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Uses of the term 'the body', in terms of contemporary performance writing, bring with them a veritable network of values (*measures*) and potential unfoldings; its use in that particular context identifies a momentarily and artificially stilled site, within networks of relations, and not a material being as such . . . [in] these highly specific situations, unqualified use of the term 'the body' is a nonsense. (Melrose 2006: 9, emphasis in original)

Bodies are the material through which theatre researchers most often discuss performance; they are scrutinised, critiqued, displayed, transformed, gendered, controlled and determined in critical reviews, historical accounts and theorisations of practices such as theatre, live art and dance. Whether performing or spectating, bodies are often the means for understanding how performance operates and makes meaning. The interdisciplinary nature of performance studies has encouraged theatre researchers not only to analyse bodies *in* spaces of performance but to consider how bodies might *become* or *produce* performance spaces. As Richard Schechner has noted, in the twenty-first century it is increasingly difficult to make clear distinctions between the bounded events understood to be performance, by context, convention, usage and tradition, and human experience and its by-products that we are able to understand and analyse 'as' performance (2006: 49). The use of 'in/as' in the chapter title points to our consideration of body-centred research under both rubrics (as well as their blurring), and signals the dynamic disciplinary interplay between theatre studies and performance studies for researchers of bodies and performance, many of whom are as invested in researching bodies 'as' the locus of performance as they are in researching bodies 'in' performance.

In this chapter we will identify some of the methods – that is, tools and techniques – that researchers use in body-centred performance research and

explore their prevalence, purpose and organisation (how they are combined to create bespoke research methodologies). We will address many ways in which researchers engage with 'performing' bodies: on stage, in media, in everyday practices or in other cultural forms and events; how researchers negotiate the differences between spectating and performing bodies; and what tools they might use to work with historical bodies in archives, photographs, in video documentation or notational systems. Methods, as we consider them here, are the ways in which researchers encounter bodies to collect evidence and information, and to gain deeper understanding about performance. As indicated in our epigraph, the term 'the body' is itself problematically generic and its use varies across disciplines and practices; moreover, boundaries are often porous when researching bodies and performance. We consider certain researchers to be 'body-centred' because their enquiries – whether from a performance-making, spectatorial or historical perspective – are provoked by and increase understanding of particular bodies.

The examples we offer in this chapter indicate a fluidity in addressing bodies. They are in part selected from more than forty papers presented to the Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA) Performance and the Body Working Group at the organisation's annual conferences between 2006 and 2009, and in part from a broader range of published research through or about performing bodies. In addition to identifying some of the key methods we have used ourselves to encounter and engage a range of bodies as performance researchers, our methods in developing this chapter include the reading, seeing, hearing and analysing of a breadth of research by others about bodies and performance, as well as the circulation of a questionnaire among Working Group members in December 2007. This questionnaire requested information about their topics, projects, methods, methodologies, forms of dissemination, the role of theory in their research and what they felt was unique to researching bodies in performance. Our methodology thus combines our own understandings of research material made public (including written and spoken reports and the documentation of practices) with the researchers' own reports on their methods. This methodology has enabled us to include both quotations from abstracts, conference papers and published written research as well as the informal voices of e-mails and questionnaires. We have tried to allow researchers to tell their own stories in their own terms, treating them as brief case studies to exemplify the research methods that have recurred in our investigation.

When we discuss 'body' and 'bodies' in this chapter, these refer to specific subjects of study, usually the present corpus of humans or non-humans, but also bodies within archives, historical bodies, absent or overlooked bodies. What begins to distinguish body-centred research is the very notion of 'body' as interpretable and flexible, yet materially and culturally specific. It often

plays with the provocative tension between the notion of 'the body' which, as Melrose argues, is 'a shifter, able to move endlessly between contexts of use, slipping easily, and apparently without loss of identity, into multiple relational sets' (2006: 8) and the more specific use of the term 'a body', which may help to prevent a slippage into generic and essentialist categories. Body-centred research tends to work at the intersection of this tension to address specific qualities of individual bodies as distinguishable subjects and as interconnected beings in the world. We at times use the adjectival term 'corporeal' to refer to the physical practices and techniques of material bodies, and we also engage with the notion of 'embodiment': that is, the sense of being in a body or having a body, a conscious engagement with the materiality of sensing bodies, or the experience of practices that are physically manifested. According to Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'By emphasizing the bodily being-in-the-world of humans, embodiment creates the possibility for the body to function as the object, subject, material, and source of symbolic construction, as well as the product of cultural inscription' (2008: 89).

The ubiquity of acting and performing bodies at the centre of theatrical activities, epistemologies and cultures often makes them both the subjects of and the tools for communicating performance research. Indeed, it might be argued that without bodies there is no theatre or 'live' performance. Simon Shepherd writes that theatre is 'a practice in which societies negotiate around bodily value and bodily order. In that negotiation, theatre is not simply an art of bodies but an art of bodily possibility, an event where the limits of body are negotiated, fetishised, imagined somehow else' (2006: 20). A researcher might, for example, analyse puppet theatre's seeming absence of bodies for the 'bodily possibilities' it envisions, or by imaginatively reading the puppet body as 'somehow else' than a body. Hence, our focus on 'bodies' rather than 'flesh' or 'self' generates a broad category exceeding either biological substance or a singular sense of identity, a category open to various becomings rather than fixed notions of subjectivity. This correlates with contemporary body scholarship in other fields; sociologist Bruno Latour, for instance, defines the body as 'an interface that becomes more and more describable as it learns to be affected by more and more elements' (2004: 6). This chapter therefore explores a wide range of methods used to interrogate a complex 'body of knowledge': that is, what it might mean when bodies learn to be affected.

GROUNDING THE RESEARCH ENQUIRY: METHODS AND MEANS

These methods emerge as a result of questions about the body's location and function in performance contexts: How do I encounter a/the performing

body? How does my/a body participate in, or generate, performance? What challenges are posed by archival bodies? How do/should/might we encounter unfamiliar bodies? How are bodies understood, imagined and re-embodied through notating practices, stage directions, images and memorabilia? If bodies are placed at the centre of research processes, then research questions and methods must be inflected by corporeal concerns.

The archival body of Pina Bausch's dance-theatre work presents a rich example of the wide range of methodological possibilities available to body-centred researchers. Before her death in 2009, Bausch – dancer, choreographer and director of the German-based company Tanztheater Wuppertal – created a unique body of work that is documented in a wide variety of forms: written, photographic and as moving images; in the bodies of the dancers who performed with her company; in memories of those who witnessed her body dancing and those who have seen her company perform, as well as the subsequent documentation of these bodies and memories. Within an archival setting a researcher might examine a wide variety of this documentation, viewing it closely to understand, for example, how movement choices create a somatic through-line in performance or to develop a movement-based performance analysis. Alternatively, the researcher might analyse reviews to form a sense of how a performance choreographed by Bausch was evaluated by critics, or apply critical perspectives, such as feminism or power relations, to the use of bodies in this work. The researcher might have movement training that would allow her to form kinaesthetic understandings of Bausch's practice, or perhaps knowledge of the work of José Limón, a former teacher of Bausch, which would enable the identification of Limón's influences in her work. The researcher might analyse this performance semiotically, reading the codes of the bodies within video documentation, or through their appearance in or relation to a cultural or historical moment. Alternately, the researcher might have seen Bausch dance live, and draw upon phenomenology to reflect upon her own body's spectatorial relationship to the work in a specific context. Or the researcher might work with a Bausch-trained dancer or dance notation to reconstruct movement through her or his own body, attempting to understand how the movement functions in three-dimensional space. This fictional researcher potentially may use a wide range of research methods that differently attend to specific bodily concerns.

While we do not attempt to exhaust every possible body-centred research method in this chapter, we present a range of tools and techniques that have emerged in our research as fundamental in addressing questions raised by bodies in and as performance. These, of course, will be uniquely inflected by each researcher's particular concerns with bodily specifics. In Table 9.1 we list some of the main methodological approaches used to analyse, understand or emphasise 'bodies' as subjects of study, as well as key examples of how these

Table 9.1 Some of the main methodological approaches used to analyse, understand or emphasise 'bodies' as subjects of study

Method	Means
Theorising bodies	Cultural positioning of the body; interpretation of corporeal ideas and experiences; investigating researcher's own lived experience; negotiating between bodies absent and present; modelling non-fixed subjectivities
Archival analysis of bodies	Engaging researcher's own bodily knowledge in cultural analysis of historical embodiment; reconstructing and re-enacting historical bodies and movement; identifying evidence of corporeal experience from the past in documented forms
First-person methodologies, including: practical research through bodies, ethnographic fieldwork, phenomenology of lived experience	Practice-led research techniques including performer training and performance-making that centre on bodily discipline and creativity; physical exploration of everyday activities with reflexive bodily awareness; participant observation; application of critical perspective upon lived experiences
Intercorporeal exchanges: sharing research through the body	Autoethnographic storytelling addressing absent bodies; collaboration that facilitates physical sensorial communication

methods might be undertaken, which are outlined in greater depth in the examples below.

Used singly or in combination, these methods provide strategies for negotiating tensions between bodies in theory/practice, or between observing/spectating bodies and performing/participating bodies. Body-based researchers often find themselves – like Augusto Boal's 'spect-actors' – participating dually as spectators and performing participants, drawing upon their own corporeal experiences and engagements in archival, theoretical and practical research. It is ultimately the bodies themselves that intervene in, disrupt or engage productively among these binaries, opening new research pathways.

LOCATING THE BODIES OF RESEARCH: IDENTIFYING THE CATALYST

Two specific questions frequently drive the construction of research methodologies for projects that focus on bodies and performance:

- What and whose body/bodies am I researching?
- How am I locating this/these particular body/bodies in or as a site of performance research?

For many practice-led researchers the bodies at the centre of the enquiry are their own, often in proximal relations to other bodies, media and objects. For others, the bodies researched are drawn from texts or moving images discovered within archives, observed on stages, seen in photographs or read about in the news. Body-centred performance research is certainly not limited to creative practice or traditionally aesthetic 'theatrical' or 'dancing' bodies, and different researchers arrive at their subjects of study from a variety of routes. These might include: a personal interest relating to family, childhood, culture; a perceived familiarity with, or difference from, the researcher's own body; a transformative sensory experience during a specific class taken in school, training or university; or through a wide range of reading, spectating or professional practices in which bodies are confronted. Our personal senses of embodiment, of experiencing our transforming healthy or ill bodies, of grieving the loss of a loved body, can become a stimulus for corporeally driven research. Herbert Blau, who has described theatre as 'a carnal space' of 'blood, bone, tissue, muscle, nerves' as well as the 'ocular site of blooded thought', has suggested that 'in the extremity of performance . . . actor and spectator breathe each other' (2002: 50–1). To some extent, creating the conditions in which the bodies of researchers and their subjects are able to 'breathe each other' is also always the utopian intention of body-centred performance research.

For example, the starting point for Roberta Mock's research into the work of artist Oreet Ashery was her own body, instilled with an acute sense of sexual difference through the mechanisms of her religious education as a child, which included the study of *halacha* (Jewish law). This was later reinforced when living in Israel, as Mock felt physically ill at ease in very religious Jewish neighbourhoods where she knew her self-presentation would be considered gender inappropriate. Her response to watching the video *Dancing with Men* (Ashery 2007) was therefore visceral: the video, made in 2003, documented a 'secret' performance in which Ashery, presenting herself as an orthodox Jewish man, joined thousands of dancing men in an exclusively male environment at an annual two-day celebration in the north of Israel. It was an intervention that Mock, as a Jewish woman, found extraordinarily brave and through which she gained an exhilarating sense of personal liberation as she imagined herself in Ashery's place. This produced a desire to think systematically through Ashery's artistic practice. In an essay that begins by describing how she felt about the video of Ashery's risky cross-dressed participation in the closed ritual dance, she borrows from Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimlett's discussion of the 'corporeal turn' in Jewish studies (2005). In order to erase the distinctions between body/mind and body/text, Kirshenblatt-Gimlett's affective approach focuses, as Ashery's does, on 'habitus, embodiment, experience, practice and feeling'. As Mock's early religious experience taught her,

in Judaism 'Woman' is always associated with materiality and the body while 'Man' is associated with the mind, which is exercised via the lifelong study of written texts. Mock notes that in blurring these distinctions 'neither the direction of Ashery's body of work as an artist, nor the physical patterns of bodies within it, can be described as linear. They whirl, they return, they change direction, they snake – as she does when she holds hands with men and dances in a circle' (2009: 35).

Similarly, the highly charged images of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, exposed to public attention in 2004, became a catalyst for Patrick Duggan's research:

I was drawn to examining the images from Abu Ghraib because I had always seen them as theatrical; they seem to operate in a way that is reminiscent of the staged photographs of theatre productions because they collapse the diegetic event, the moment of staging and the representation of that moment of staging into one image. The catalyst to writing about the photographs was a hunch that it was precisely the performativity of the bodies in the images (soldiers and prisoners, willing and forced, knowing and unknowing) that contained the violence/trauma of them in both reception and initial moment of staging. This research provided an access point to not only consider the theatricality of those images but also to investigate the possibility that the performing body might be put into trauma, so to speak, precisely through the operations of theatre and performance. (Duggan 2010)

Applying Goffman's model of 'faces' and Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus', Duggan develops a framework of reference through which to argue that embodied theatrical 'failures', such as 'corpsing' and stage fright, might legitimately be modelled as specific instances of theatrical trauma (Duggan 2009).

For both Mock and Duggan, their research processes began with images of physical transgression, one violent and one non-violent, and led to understandings of how liminal bodies are able to trigger the perceived transformation of other bodies. In both cases, the performances they analysed were created in the moment of viewing, when the researcher/spectator was simultaneously sensorily engaged and able to contextually and critically frame the bodies in those images. These examples also suggest that the concerns of body-centred performance researchers are not determined by, or dependent upon, any one set of specific aesthetics or artistic codings, theatrical disciplinaries, performance techniques, skills or historical lineages.

RESEARCH METHODS: THEORISING BODIES

In *Theatre and the Body*, Colette Conroy applies a range of theories to theatrical examples in order to identify four approaches to articulating the relationships between bodies and theatre. These are: (1) considering how, through conventions of presenting and viewing, the body produces meaning on stage; (2) exploring the body as a locus of power; (3) using the relationship between mind and body as a vantage point or perspective through which to understand performance; and (4) distinguishing between 'the body' and 'bodies' to differentiate cultural values from specific referents (Conroy 2010: 8). Although she concentrates primarily on plays, textual analysis and spectatorship, her emphasis on dialogic exchange between performance practice and critical theory offers a useful model through which to analyse, illuminate or contextualise the potential relationships between bodies and performances. For instance, Conroy uses Timberlake Wertenbaker's play *Our Country's Good* as a case study, applying Michel Foucault's theories of how bodies are disciplined, Judith Butler's writing about gender as a regulatory abstraction, and Kier Elam's semiotic modelling to demonstrate how bodies might be used to explore the effects of power in the theatre (Conroy 2010: 28–33).

Theorising offers an engagement with other voices, often as an attempt to better understand the bodies that frequently haunt researchers, bodies that are no longer physically present, whether in archives, personal memory or through aging processes. An ongoing desire and objective in body-centred research is arguably to recapture and make sense of these bodies, to negotiate between absence and presence. Performance researchers have engaged with a wide range of theatrical, cultural, social, scientific, anthropological and other theoretical trajectories to address these corporeal concerns. These include: theories of bodily control and disciplinary practices (e.g. Agamben, Deleuze, Foucault, McKenzie); feminist theory (e.g. Cixous, Dolan, Grosz, Phelan); LGBT/queer theory (e.g. Butler, Halberstam, Muñoz, Sedgwick); theories of race, colonialism and ethnicity (e.g. Bhabha, Fanon, Moten, Spivak); theorisations of the body's relationship to media and technology (e.g. Auslander, Broadhurst, Causey, Kozel); cognitive and neuroscientific theories (e.g. Blair, Lakoff, Wilson, Damasio); and notions of 'dis-abled' bodies (e.g. Cooper Albright, Kuppers, Masefield, Sandahl). Early twenty-first-century researchers return to these and other philosophers and theorists to enter into dialogues about their subjects of enquiry, to underpin their findings and to provide frameworks for their research. Art historian Amelia Jones identifies the fluid processes of reciprocity as dialogue:

I stress the notion of engagement and exchange: I engage with what I experience as these works in relation to contemporaneous theories

of subjectivity and aesthetics; I consider my readings to be a dialogue with the bodies/selves articulated in these important practices . . . My readings themselves are offered as 'performances', as suggestive, open-ended engagements rather than definitive answers to the questions of what and how body art means in contemporary culture. (1998: 10)

Like Jones, many performance researchers consider the formal articulation of these dialogues – the exchanges between bodies and theories – a form of performance. Whether they are active performance practitioners or not, most are invested in critical writing as a form of practice within academic and qualifying discourses and this is evidenced by an exponential increase over the past decade in published writing about bodies in performance.

How are bodies produced and encountered between theory and practice? How do body-based researchers use lived experiences, memories and knowledges to inform writing that works in productive gaps, tests the limits of comprehension or provides moments of interpretation which respect the specific bodies of their research? In responding to these questions, body-centred research methods frequently attempt to intervene and disrupt 'traditional' binary distinctions, addressing Diana Taylor's cautions about the perceived authority of the traditional 'archive' and its oppositional positioning in relation to 'the repertoire' (the enactment of embodied memory such as performances, gestures, dance). Body-centred researchers have frequently positioned themselves between these difficult binaries, recognising that, as Taylor argues, the notions of the archive and the repertoire have exceeded the limitations of each other and 'exist in a constant state of interaction' (2003: 21).

Researchers of bodies, embodiment and corporeality increasingly have focused on fluid, non-fixed subjectivities. Their projects include non-human bodies, challenge hegemonic ideas of embodiment, directly address issues of health and mortality, bio- and neuro-science and the mediatization of corporeal materiality and refract them back into performance practices. Whether experimenting in rehearsal studios with motion capture technologies and bodily endurance, or in laboratories cultivating cellular tissue and matching patterns of bodily activity that translate into performance, body-based researchers often 'report' on these topics by investing their own lived experience, their memories and their muscular energies as wholly integral to their research methods. The coupling of that physical commitment with notions of unstable subjectivity seems to have opened up a fascinating inversion of embodiment in body-based theatre and performance research. This holds many implications for the 'nature' of that research and its methods, which we variously explore in the rest of this chapter.

EXAMPLE: THE DISEMBODIED/ABSENT BODY

An increasing awareness of questions of 'disembodiment' – in the form of absent, projected, ghosted, non-human, abject and/or mediated bodies – presents fresh challenges for twenty-first-century performance researchers. A shift toward disembodied presence on contemporary Euro-American stages has generated increasing theoretical and methodological attention, which might be seen as a return to nineteenth-century notions of ghosts and ghosting, as evidenced in examples that range from Marvin Carlson's *The Haunted Stage* (2001) or Alice Rayner's *Ghosts* (2006) in critical theory to the Wooster Group's recycling of Richard Burton's 1964 film of *Hamlet* as a theatrical performance (2007). This shift recognises the relevance of bodies historically erased or unacknowledged on stage, and questions notions of what it means to be 'human' in an increasingly mediated world. The growing prevalence of multimedia performance encourages theatrical explorations into disembodiment, doubling and displaced bodies, and web-based collaborations across distances.

While it is important to maintain flexibility in the application of working research methods, it is especially the case when attempting to interrogate specifically absent or disembodied bodies, since it is often difficult to identify/interpret what is not there. What might begin as a clear engagement with a theoretical discourse around a specific body, for example, may unexpectedly shift to embrace other modes as the project develops. For example, Jen Parker-Starbuck's initial analysis of the 'abject' body of Terri Schiavo – a young woman from the United States who was at the centre of a legal battle to decide whether to remove her feeding tube and let her die – shifted mid-way through its development: from an application of philosopher Alain Badiou's notion of ethics upon this particular body, it began to include non-human animal bodies. The research was begun through 'traditional' methods searching for an intersection of relevant ideas: archival research into Schiavo's life (including Internet research, autobiographies, news reports); medical research to understand Schiavo's 'persistent vegetative state'; interpreting and analysing Badiou's notion of 'the event'. But it was disrupted by the appearance of another set of 'subjects':

Although this seemed like straightforward research about Schiavo's condition and her husband and family's decision to remove her life-support – at every turn, I began to encounter pigs in art practices. An art exhibit in Italy featured a life-sized pig on a butcher's block, made from chewed-up and molded sugar-free chewing gum, another – a larger than life-sized animatronic, breathing pig – found me in a London gallery, a performance was brought to my attention that

contained a dead pig, I read a novel about a boy with a pig-heart. It became clear that I couldn't ignore them and that they were somehow related to this project. (Parker-Starbuck 2009)

As the project evolved, the research method that became most valuable was listening to the bodies of one's subjects. The juxtaposition of the 'wasted' pig bodies with Schiavo's began to present difficult corporeal linkages and questions of ethical relationships to bodies deemed less 'embodied' than others; the 'disembodied' subjects here were either inanimate, represented or being spoken for by others. By taking the time to allow the research to be inflected by and about its various subjects (which also later included the voices of valuable readers), the project began to take on an embodied 'life of its own'.

The final form of this essay (Parker-Starbuck 2008) took into account the encounters with pig bodies in the research process as moments that might make these various bodies/subjects visible:

I resisted my own urges for argument and closure as I wrote. I felt that, like performance, it was important to offer spaces, gaps, and especially, the time to allow the readers to hear and to activate their own lived memories triggered by these subjects. This part of the process became a specifically chosen working method. (Parker-Starbuck 2009)

In this example, the long-term development of the writing – through an emergence of the critical framework, an interpretation of the interdisciplinary practices and an attuned 'listening' to the bodies that prompted a shift in corporeal attention – attempted to solve the problem of writing about bodies that had slipped towards absence, and in turn transformed the research for the researcher. The documentation of bodies and their stories in contemporary critical contexts frequently relies on the researcher's own embodied engagement with material matters, whether by association or, as in the examples that follow, through archival, ethnographic and practical positioning.

RESEARCH METHODS: ARCHIVAL ANALYSIS AND BODIES OF DOCUMENTATION

A parallel problem to that of the 'disembodied' subject arises for the researcher working with archival or historical bodies. These are the bodies that are perhaps most 'fixed' through their historical placement, although their material evasiveness may present difficulties for researchers whose analyses rely on the accounts of others, many of whom might not have been theatre researchers or who would have had their own culturally specific agenda. Currently,

research is made somewhat easier through recorded audio-visual documentation that allows researchers to see and hear the bodies being researched, although it is important to recognise that this distanced perspective may be misleading: the camera, for example, directs the spectator's viewing and the flatness of image produces different bodily responses than the physically present performer. The methods of historical body-based research need to be used imaginatively, and they may often engage the researcher's own bodily knowledge. Methods including close 'readings' and analysis of performance documentation, the choice of critical perspectives through which to locate historical bodies, or the reconstruction or re-enactment from notation of bodily movement are frequently inflected through the researcher's own body or bodily experiences.

Example: addressing historical bodies

Colin Counsell's ongoing research project, an analytical history of performance and the moving body, is indicative of current strategies which work with bodies that are definitively absent and evasive. His close readings and analyses of the writings of body-centred practitioner Jerzy Grotowski, for example, are only the starting points for further research. As he explains: 'I seek to address not a practitioner's own accounts of what they are doing (we settle for that way too often in our discipline) but the forms of movement their work or practices actually generate: I am less interested in what Grotowski says than what he does on a stage, as that is the more widely disseminated cultural object' (Counsell 2007). Counsell's research follows a methodological trajectory that aims to understand not only the significance of modernist bodies from a historical perspective, but the operation of bodily movement itself as signification:

I will ideally trace an explanatory chain leading from 1) a practitioner's ideas/theories, to 2) the practices by which they presume to realize those ideas/theories, then to 3) the actual movement forms resulting from those practices, 4) the kinds of meanings generated by those forms, and finally 5) the socio-historical context from which those forms/meanings arose and in which they were deployed. Sometimes this isn't possible – sometimes a practitioner doesn't have a theory – but my aim always is to get to the movement itself, how it functions semically. (Counsell 2007)

This archival excavation allows him to address how specific bodies might be understood and negotiated through movement in their own historical moment.

Counsell's research methods by necessity vary according to the source

materials available to him. His writings on Rudolph Laban (Counsell 2005, 2006) lead him to explain why he occasionally needs to move into participant observation and practical experimentation:

If there is a good deal of usable documentation of someone's work – i.e. video – I will start with that. However, with someone like Rudolf Laban there is almost nothing of his stage practice recorded, only his theory and training techniques. In that case, I will 1) observe classes teaching Laban technique, noting in detail the outcome of training exercises, and 2) practice it myself and note or record the results. (Counsell 2007)

Counsell's methods here involve his own and other bodies in re-embodiment and resituating specific performance techniques within a wider cultural analysis in order to demonstrate how and why bodies construct, and are constructed through, a specific genre of performance and its training regimes. When observing technique, the question of 'generational' bodily transmission is raised: for instance, whether the person teaching the class has a direct linear connection to Laban (such as Susan Klein, who studied with Irmgard Bartenieff, who studied with Laban) or has understood Laban through more general practice. Counsell, like Parker-Starbuck, expresses the need to attend, listen to and variously re-animate his historical subjects' bodies and this shapes the direction of his research.

Regardless of whether he is observing and documenting his own practice or that of others, live or via a recorded medium, his methods involve an attempt to see anew or make strange:

The most significant conclusions are almost invariably those one first overlooks, largely because as observers we are culturally predisposed to see some aspects as given, obvious or merely practical. In reality, the opposite is usually true. The features of movement/the body that seem less important are typically those that have been culturally construed as such, rendered 'normal' in the onlooker's gaze. Establishing their significance thus entails unearthing what culture, history and ideology have elided. (Counsell 2007)

When body-centred researchers like Counsell undertake archival research, the historiographic research methods used in other areas of theatre and performance are inflected by corporeal concerns: how bodies, that are both absent and present, move and relate to each other; what powers the body's movement might have; what the cultural significance of individual bodies might imply. These and more are re-imagined in order to activate a kinaesthetic sense of, and response to, what is encountered in the archive.

FIRST-PERSON RESEARCH METHODS

1: Applied theory: research through bodies

The rise of practice-as-research in performance in recent decades has meant that many researchers are increasingly deploying their own bodies in their research methods. While some researchers have contested the ways that binaries have been formulated and employed by Diana Taylor, the shift she has proposed 'from written to embodied culture, from the discursive to the performative' (Taylor 2003: 16) has been addressed by body-centred researchers in the UK and elsewhere who have developed new methods to make visible and interrogate the performed limits of embodiment. The researcher's body becomes a conduit through which ideas are discovered and presented, and research is conducted about *and* through bodies. Like practitioner-scholar Phillip Zarrilli (although in very different ways), the researchers that feature in this section turn to creative practice as a means to develop an 'applied theory' of bodies and ways of going beyond the so-called 'Cartesian' mind/body duality. Zarrilli's intercultural approach draws on his experience in *kalaripayattu*, *hatha yoga* and *taiquan* training as well as Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological thinking which, he maintains, 'eloquently (re)claimed the centrality of the body' (2002: 13). Zarrilli's research practice in embodiment starts with the breath because 'it offers a psychophysical pathway to the practical attunement of the body and mind' (2009: 25).

The intertwinement of mind and body is of particular interest to body-centred practice-as-researchers, many of whom explicitly negotiate the theoretical implications of semiotics and phenomenology through their practice. While semiotics focuses on processes of signification and communication, phenomenology includes the theorisation of perception or embodied experience. Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis note that the two approaches are necessarily interconnected: the experience of 'the body that performs and the body that watches' provides 'the conditions for signification; in trying to write about what is ungraspable phenomenology needs signification' (2004: 239). While practice-as-research may be understood as a methodology in its own right, we include creative practice here alongside other methods that researchers might use to examine body-centred practices. How, for example, do theoretical notions emerge through corporeal practices? How do researchers develop research methods through their own bodies? What modes of understanding do physical practices offer that differ from discursive research methodologies? The methods used by body-centred practice-led researchers vary widely, from accessible everyday activities such as standing and walking, through demanding physical training regimes, to interdisciplinary projects involving subjects such as anthropology, auto/biography, psychology and science.

Example: dancing

Simon Ellis's practice-as-research project, *Four Acts of Violence Leading Up to Now*, explored the accumulated physical and theoretical 'microtraumatic' impacts of time (that is, small, seemingly insignificant injuries) on the dancing body of performer and collaborator Paea Leach (Ellis 2008b). It was an inter-medial research enquiry that combined the Internet, video and live performance modes and materials. Ellis explains that in his practice, theory is not merely a discursive exploration:

The work Paea and I were doing 'on the floor' involved 'theorizing the body' – in questioning its capacity for representing ideas, its capacity for generating ideas, and the impact of the long history of dance improvisation on the corporeal ideas present in Paea's moving. Perhaps I relate the term 'theory' with the question, 'What if?' – What if we did this? What are the implications for this? . . . [I]t is perhaps analogous to a biochemist, working within the domain of heat related exhaustion asking, 'what if we place the "subject" into a dry suit and then instigate a series of extreme temperature changes whilst he/she is working on a treadmill?' This question has not come out of nowhere; it has a history in practice/theory, and is asked as a result of the experience and understanding of the researcher. (Ellis 2008a)

Ellis's reference to the biochemist highlights how corporeal research methods might correspond in some ways with scientific procedures. Theory provides a questioning that propels the movement of Ellis's body and that of his collaborator. It is significant to him that those bodies are trained and professionally experienced.

The body is not abstract in this case. I see Paea sweating, falling, failing, finding. We ask questions of meaning in relation to the performing body, and seek possibilities then and there. This PRESENCE is undeniable and invaluable. (Ellis 2008a)

Bodies function as networks exceeding the empirical measurement of data (such as how much sweat? how often does it fall?) by posing 'questions of meaning' while they are materially present. Ellis's research, exploring possibilities for corporeal understanding and nuance, is located at the limits of what can be articulated *about* the phenomenological body: that is, the body that understands and expresses itself experientially through presence. As Kozel argues (against the traditions of dance as a 'silent profession'): 'at stake here is the myth of objectivity. *No one is uninvolved*. All those who experience

a piece – performers, audience members, stage managers, journalists – do so from their own culturally situated positions, their own preferences, histories, bodies, and connections with the art world' (Kozel 2008: 134, emphasis in original).

2: Ethnographic fieldwork and knowledges in the body

Theatre and performance researchers engaged in ethnographic fieldwork in its various forms frequently rely upon methods such as participant observation, thick description, cultural interpretation and analysis. Of particular interest to body-centred researchers is what sociologists call 'performance ethnography', an embodied methodology that has been described by Joni L. Jones as 'most simply, how culture is done in the body'. This is a research practice that aims to 'explore bodily knowing . . . and to puzzle through the ethical and political dilemmas of fieldwork and representation' (Jones 2002: 7). In contrast to the ethnography of performance, which discursively investigates cultural performances, performance ethnography employs enactment and embodiment to perform research about cultural values. Grounded in the belief that we learn through participating and performing, performance ethnography can take many forms, from the creation of participatory cultural performances and rituals, through the staging of 'traditional' theatre pieces, to the making of interactive installations. According to Norman K. Denzin, the 'knowing' facilitated by performance ethnography 'refers to those embodied sensuous experiences that create the conditions for understanding . . . [P]erformed experiences are the sites where felt emotion, memory, desire, and understanding come together' (2003: 13).

Performance ethnography, participant observation and creative practice are all examples of 'first-person' research techniques which Varela and Shear (writing about the study of consciousness) describe as 'the lived *experience* associated with cognitive and mental events' (1999: 1, emphasis in original). 'First-person' methods aim to encourage subjective accounts through the experience, perception and observation of the self that are useful in accessing and constructing knowledges in the body. However, as they caution, first-person description is usually considered most effective (and valuable) when it is open to inter-subjective validation and when it is able to link with 'third-person', empirically based research methods that feature the observations of others (Varela and Shear 1999: 2). While quantitative empirical research (for instance, the comparison of statistical data or use of standardised controls) remains extremely rare in body-based performance research, combined research methods frequently are used by theatre, dance and performance researchers to more thoroughly interrogate bodily perception and experience. In describing the impulse for her own research writing, for example, dance

philosopher and somatic movement practitioner Sondra Fraleigh writes: 'I wanted to weave the intuitive voice of the dancer into a descriptive aesthetics, slipping from first-person voice to analytical third-person theory' (2000: 54).

Example: walking

While Phil Smith describes his methodological practice as 'mythogeographic', it has much in common with the practice of performance ethnography. Working with Simon Persighetti (who, like Smith, is a founding member of the Exeter-based collective Wrights and Sites), he has been engaged in a long-term project entitled *Relics and Processions*, centred on physical engagement in a specific street in South West England. In 2007 Smith explained that 'we are repeatedly walking this one [urban] street as performative explorers. We are both pedestrians and also performers – we are corporeally present in a democratic sharing with the other pedestrians, but we are also present as provocateurs' (Smith 2007). According to Smith, mythogeographical walking is

about a meshing of geographical spaces, and their ghostly bathing in cultural motion pictures, about the geometrical connectivity of a fragmented self, the integrity of which is constantly modulated by neurological research, critical theory, and speculations about consciousness and transmission, and about direct experience of the unplanned route. (Smith 2010a: 120)

Borrowing from geographer Tim Edensor (2007: 242), Smith describes the mythogeographic body as 'coerced and stimulated to perform in unfamiliar ways'. In *Mythogeography: A Guide to Walking Sideways* he suggests how this might be done, including: walking the route to your own burial or incineration; repeating a simple physical pattern such as stubbing your toe; entering your city as if it were a movie; opening a book at random in a library or charity shop, choosing a word in it and then drifting through the nearby streets until you find the word or some association with it (Smith 2010b).

In the *Relics and Processions* project Smith and Persighetti employ specific physical methods designed to 'provoke' the site:

Extreme slowness and close attention to texture and detail, sensual contact with the site (testing the smoothed and greasy mark beneath the 11th century date on a plaque . . .), carrying objects that draw pedestrians to us to 'tell' the street in their own way . . . reciting texts in the street . . . We record accidents . . . our own interactions with motorists and with other pedestrians. We are collecting texts about or cutting across the narratives of the street and sketchily re-enacting

them (giving corporeal reference to the site and to certain actions, but without representational character) . . . During the research we remain open to responding to on-street, spontaneous enquiries and carry materials that explain our work to those who enquire. (Smith 2007)

While some of these research methods result in texts about issues of theatricality, dramaturgy, artefacts and processional practices (Smith 2009a, 2009b), the embodied knowledges gained are disseminated experientially through presentations to and interactions with other people on the street. Hence Smith and Persighetti are 'working to create a walk/procession that will "initiate" its "audience" into the methods of exploration and intervention and into the narratives and patterns that have been found.'

Through these research methods they become ethnographers who 'other' their own culture. As a methodology that privileges embodied knowledge, performance ethnography uses the situated body to generate new understandings and research trajectories. Smith and Persighetti's ethnographic methods investigate the interrelationship between bodies – their own and those in the community – and sites through their processions and pedestrian performances by presenting their fieldwork performatively through everyday encounters on a specific street that reframe quotidian events. Their project embraces ethnographic investigation and performance practice-as-research in a multi-moded approach that always depends on aesthetic and technical expertise as well as critical contextual reflexivity.

3: The phenomenology of lived experience

Writing about research based on creative practice and lived experience often requires a researcher's ingenuity in weaving together the ideas, methods and practices to produce 'outcomes' in academic contexts, as Susan Kozel expresses:

Writing from lived experience often amounts to writing without a clear methodological mandate, or demands the courage to assert that the methods are fluid and subjective. Paradigms are scraped together (defiantly, guilefully, playfully, intuitively) from philosophy, literature, the social sciences, physics. This bricolage or hybridization is done in part to find a voice in the academy, but more important, to help the writer herself understand what it is that she is experiencing and to communicate these experiences. (Kozel 2008: 9)

Kozel's book *Closer* is an example from interdisciplinary practice-led research that methodologically incorporates physical performance and digital

technology, suggesting ways in which one might 'do' a 'phenomenology of lived experience' (2008: 52). Through her close reading and interpretation of writings largely by Merleau-Ponty, Kozel lays out specific methods and outlines useful procedural steps derived from her own practice, such as:

- Take your attention into this very moment.
- Suspend the main flow of thought.
- Call your attention to your body and what it is experiencing . . .
- Witness what you see, hear and touch . . .
- Take a break . . .
- Describe what you experienced . . .

(Kozel 2008: 53)

Like the three examples included in this section, Kozel offers a modelling for a 'first-person' enquiry that includes the close 'reading' of experience, a focused attention to the researcher's own perceptions, bodily experimentation and theoretical interrogation. The examples weave together archival documentation, theory and performance practices in very different ways, but what is key to their methods is an insistence on attending to the specific bodies through which research is produced.

Example: sitting

In *Sitting Practice: Expansion Earth* (2009a), Jane Bacon presents a methodology for embodiment that aims to eradicate binary distinctions between mind and body, signification and perception, archival and enacted transmission. Hence she draws on a range of psychologists and philosophers (such as Jung, Nietzsche, Husserl and William James) to wittily transform the act of sitting into a performative research method:

I have been 'sitting' for some time now, 'consciously' since 2005, sitting as an embodied performative action in order to hold the 'tension of the opposites'. As an Authentic Movement practitioner, I sit. As a Jungian analyst, I sit. As a film and performance maker, I sit. As a writer/academic, I sit. And now, somehow it seems clear to me that as a dancer, I sit . . . In this field where the (my) mindbody can penetrate into the mindbody of others I have developed my 'sitting practice' as a methodology that generates a body of artistic work and an artistic body of work – *poems, video, photographs, movement*.

The conference paper through which we encountered this research wove spoken text with poetic video imagery. One video entitled *Woman and the Sea*, about ten minutes in length, featured a horizontal split screen although both

images were unified through the use of a deep blue colour filter (Bacon 2009b). The top image was of Bacon sitting on the floor in a studio space, her arms moving fluidly, casting hypnotic shadows across a projection screen behind her body. The bottom image was a littoral landscape with foamy waves crashing into a rocky Irish beach, echoing the patterns of Bacon's light-coloured dress as it responds to her Authentic Movement practice. Presenting the paper, Bacon told us that:

I am a witness to my own creative process, others' and the world which I inhabit. So are you. In this role of witness I try to re-imagine my habits of perception and give undivided attention to what comes towards me without moving to impose sense or meaning . . . I surrender to complexity.

Here, a phenomenological practice-as-research methodology merges entirely with a creative methodological approach designed to generate artistic objects, images and symbols.

As she sits, Bacon 'pays attention' to 'fringe sensation' and her 'felt sense' of landscape and of the experience of moving. In this state, she tries to allow her bodymind to move 'into speech through poetics' that 'arise in the depth of the body'. This is a process of translation that seeks to 'allow a movement, a word or an image to emerge that embraces bodily and felt experience' (Bacon 2009a). As in Phillip Zarrilli's research, 'mind' and 'body' do not operate as binary opposites. Bacon's methods, pursued through an intercorporeal exchange that includes both psyche and soma, are grounded in the body and her 'findings' are disseminated through the body. She draws our attention to the fact that this is no simple matter:

Often there is still the danger of falling into bodily cliché as choreographer, movement therapist or performance researcher. Or perhaps the danger is in writing or speaking the 'body' rather than the 'experience'. In language the body quickly becomes gesture, a metaphor, a personification of personhood.

Bacon's research, like that of many who focus on the body and performance, exists in the lacuna between written and creative practice, as well as embracing both. In all of the examples of embodied research methods presented in this section – dancing, walking, sitting and breathing – the body of the research transmits experiences of presence and the present differently from that of the spectatorial or spectated body.

RESEARCH METHODS: INTERCORPOREAL EXCHANGES

1: Storytelling: spectacles of death

When Herbert Blau notes that 'the entire institutional superstructure of the theatre hangs upon a breath, as the deepest sensation of performance seems to occur when an entire audience, for the moment, is not breathing at all' (2002: 50), he draws attention to what so often haunts ontological considerations of theatre and performance; that is, the ultimate material body: a/the corpse. Many of the researchers discussed in this chapter have used the dead or dying body as a metaphor: Patrick Duggan, for instance, has analysed the trauma of 'corpseing', that is laughing involuntarily and inappropriately on stage (2009); in an article on contemporary walking practices, Phil Smith begins with a discussion of the 'lifeless body' of 'the situationist project' in the early 1970s (2010a: 103). Philosopher and playwright Hélène Cixous has described theatre as 'by definition the stage where the living meet and confront the dead, the forgotten and the forgetters, the buried and the ghosts, the present, the passing, the present past and the passed past' (2004: 28–9). Many body-centred performance researchers develop methodologies that address the temporal and spatial confluences to which Cixous and many others allude by considering their own body's proximity to death.

Using a personal story to draw attention to the relationship between a specific occurrence and its context, Lib Taylor's 'The Hanging Man: Death, Indeterminacy and the Event' presents research that addresses both the presence and absence of a particular remembered body.

While driving out Interstate 10 from Los Angeles to Palm Desert, my partner and I came across a traffic jam . . . The cause of the disruption was a body hanging by the neck on a rope from a bridge some 25 or 30 feet above the freeway . . . The feet of the corpse dangled at shoulder height of the policeman directing traffic past the obstacle. (Taylor 2010: 4)

This incident initiated a research project that investigated the cultural and historical moments of what Taylor called a 'spectacle of death'. The fleeting image became a catalyst for questions about that specific body and its relation to her own: 'How are the spectator's identifications with the body affected by whether it was a real or simulated body? How do reactions, bodily and intellectual, to witnessing the event relate to the interpretative frames that defined whose and what kind of body it was?' (Taylor 2007).

Taylor teases out these queries' implications to discover productive instabilities both in her topic and methodology, drawing on theories of trauma, presence and spectacle. Juxtaposing the hanging man memory with mediated

images of death – such as the 'falling man' of 9/11, the self-immolation of Buddhist monk Thích Quảng Đức in 1963, and of the Irish hunger-striker Bobby Sands (died 1981) – Taylor analyses the (in)visibility of these acts for public audiences by locating her own spectating body as witness alongside other roadside witnesses, to present a reflective account of her body's physicality in the moment:

We moved slowly past the body, but not only would it have been indecorous to stare, but my initial physical reflex was to turn away. Like the spectator of almost any horrific or frightening image, desires both to look and look away – to have seen but not to be in the moment of observation – were overwhelming. (Taylor 2010: 9–10)

Taylor's research is indicative of much body-centred performance research in its grappling to meaningfully encounter an always-already absent body through the researcher's own. Her broadly autoethnographic approach includes 'acts of embodiment, witnessing, storying, introspection and self-conscious writing' (Jones 2005: 764), blending personal authorial narratives with socio-cultural exploration to draw attention to the relationships between collective experience and social agency. According to Stacy Holman Jones, autoethnographic 'performance texts' respond to three coinciding crises, those of 'representation, legitimization, and praxis', in a landscape in which stability and coherence are routinely questioned (2005: 766). Using storytelling as a mode of address to engage both her own and her audience's memories and sensations, Taylor demonstrates how a body in such a landscape is able to produce a space of performance. She translates the 'theatrical' to the everyday, exemplifying Blau's phenomenological observation that 'The actor out there, literally dying in front of your eyes, reveals the space that is never seen' (2002: 51).

2: Sharing research through the body

We were among twenty-five performance researchers who sat scattered throughout a cinema-theatre, trying to leave spaces between us to balance out a space that felt too large. Simon Ellis stood in front of us to begin his conference presentation, and suddenly, thoughtfully, began to dance. In the narrow gap between the projection screen and the first row of seats his body lifted and breathed, a leg pushed back, his head dipped. Ellis caught our attention, bodily. This dance was both a method of his research and its dissemination, articulated and shared through the body. As Gail Weiss notes:

Acknowledging and addressing the multiple corporeal exchanges that continually take place in our everyday lives, demands a corresponding

recognition of the ongoing construction and reconstruction of our bodies and body images. These processes of construction and reconstruction in turn alter the very nature of these intercorporeal exchanges, and, in so doing, offer the possibility of expanding our social, political, and ethical horizons. (Weiss 1999: 5–6)

In retransmitting any form of research practice, shared experience can become a method for deeper interrogation, for an exchange of ideas or expression. As Diana Taylor explains, 'The telling is as important as the writing, the doing as central as the recording, the memory passed down through bodies and mnemonic practices' (Taylor 2003: 35–6). In both public performance and conference presentation, intercorporeal exchange provides a process in which the 'written' archive can come into play with the repertoire. Being in the same space at the same time allows the work to be developed through the telling, through bodily interpretations and reception.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this chapter, we have attempted to emphasise the intercorporeality of research processes. These sharings, collaborations and exchanges take place between spectatorial researcher and performer, between performer-researcher and audiences, between researchers who write and the theorists that they read, and among researchers of different disciplines, all of which may be crucial to research methods that enrich understandings of the interrelationships that exist between networked bodies and performance. One final example illustrates an encounter between researchers that might be considered an intercorporeal research method. Select participants of the 2009 Body and Performance Working Group at the TaPRA conference were invited to engage in a series of exchanges. They were encouraged to circulate their work – which could be a paper, weblink, video – in advance and then present it through the perceived shared themes of their research. Alissa Clarke and Paul Hurley, who were paired under the theme of 'Loving/Giving Exchanges', affected us strongly as audience members with their generous interplay (although, having set up the scenario ourselves as working group convenors, we may have equally been affected by what we perceived to be the success of the exercise). Abandoning their original papers they performed a new, jointly written dialogic presentation. Meeting in person for the first time, they presented – through excerpts from their preparatory e-mail messages and discussions – a joint essay about their shifting understandings of exchange, collaborative research and each other. Exploring how the symbolic gesture of the e-mail sign off from 'thanks', to 'all the best', to 'best', to 'warmly', to 'x' evokes and

increases a sense of the physical and familiar, they stood side by side exuding a deep sense of shared intimacy. Although research methods are often thought of as what a researcher does by herself, body-centred theatre and performance researchers rarely work alone for long. Whether encountering other bodies electronically or in a room face to face, they are situated always in a productive range of disciplinary communities and transdisciplinary networks.

Ultimately, the methods we have identified as crucial for body-centred researchers are each inflected uniquely by attending to specific bodies: which bodies, where located, how documented, how moving and engaging with others, where influencing and influenced by spaces and places, how made memorable. These processes always somehow include the researcher's own body, connected to other bodies in the world. The subjects of research, research methods and forms of dissemination that findings take are often intertwined and inflect each other. As a result, body-based research methods in theatre and performance have evolved to incorporate – quite literally – a greater breadth of bodily presences. The performance research methods discussed in this chapter are wholly dependent upon bodies, bodies that are largely physical and material, but sometimes mechanised, animal, absent, remembered, augmented, projected, dead, dying, our own, another. Rather than discovering, observing and explaining, the fundamental methods of body-centred research are locating, sensing and listening to the bodies around us, to our subjects, to each other and to ourselves.

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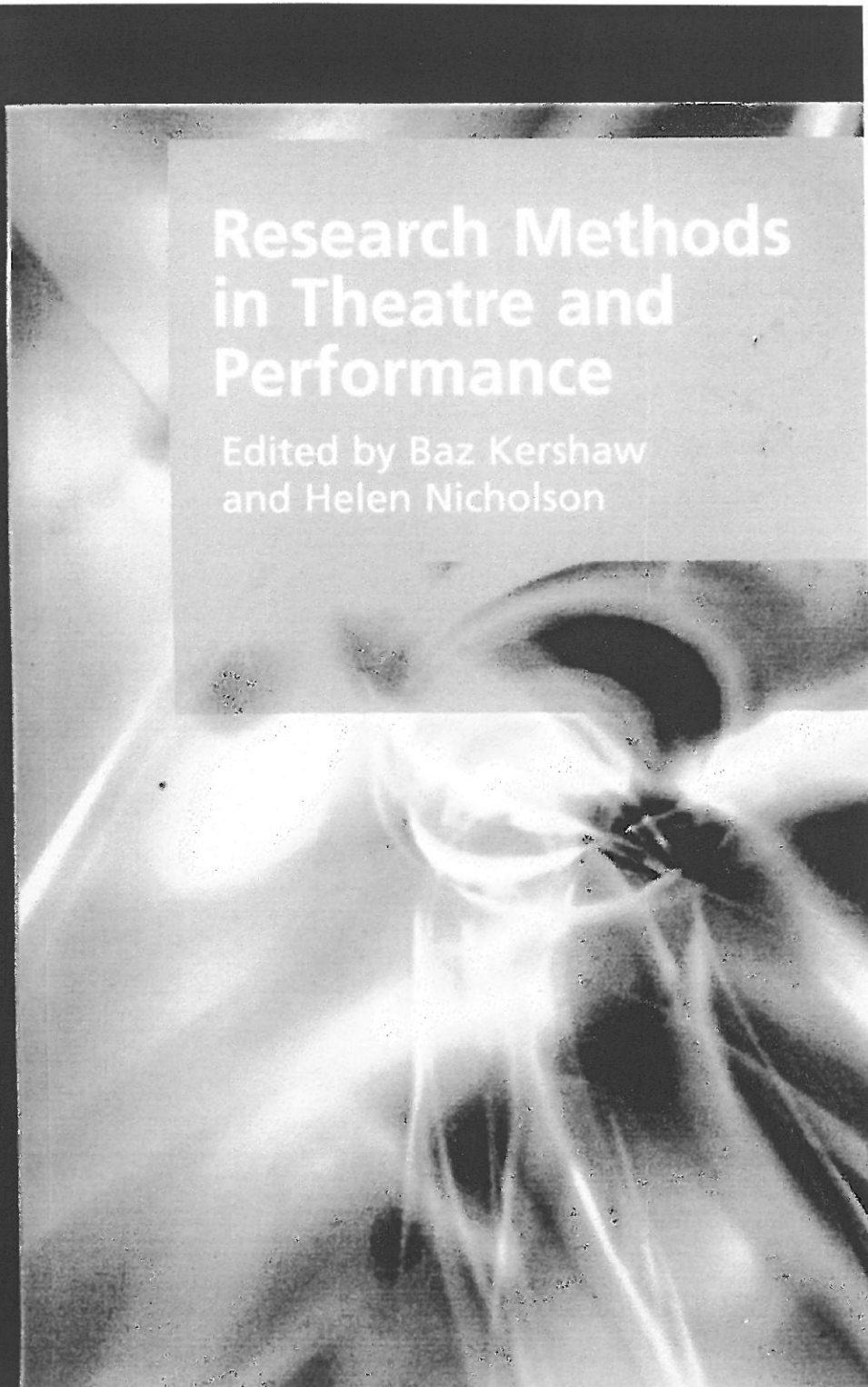
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