

CASE STUDY 7

A Mono-trilogy on a Collaborative Process in the Performing Arts

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Previously visited by our faces, hands and bodies, a table corner at a dimly lit cafeteria is alive again. It is endless; words keep pouring out of our mouths in turns as excitement moves in ebbs and flows from person to person. Our limbs hardly keeping still, we drop names, concepts, images and experiences on the table. A cluttered array of ideas, books, laptops, hands, lattes and ashtrays piles between us. And anticipation keeps figuring who you are, who I am with you and what we are doing together... Perhaps I'll know more next time.

The Frame

In this case study, written with the support of the Academy of Finland, I will discuss a collaborative artistic process that I undertook together with the musician-sound designer Antti Nykyri and the architect-scenographer Toni Kauppila. I myself am a dancer-choreographer, and our explorative project that produced an installation-performance entitled *Passage* (Väylä) took place between the years 2007 and 2008 in Helsinki. Initially, we set out to explore our shared interest in *space*. It involved observing urban sites and their social choreography as well as our personal experience of commuting between our workplaces and homes as well as rest or stillness. The following pages contain my reflections on the initial stage and workshop of our collaboration with some literary or theoretical quotations that stimulated our work.

In describing our process I will implicitly deal with the emergence of that sensual, perceptive, imaginary, intellectual, bodily, material, practical and technological space we enacted and worked in. Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out that our existence is primordially spatial because it is oriented and mobile. We are directed towards different modes of consciousness and different kinds of relations to others and the world through our habits and actions. In its lived nature, space carries the meanings of the manner in which we inhabit the world. According to him, lived space is a situation, the spatiality of a lived event. In this sense he considers the experience of space to be 'interwoven with all the other modes of experience and all the other psychic data'. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:

286-287) He also claims that 'there are as many spaces as there are distinct spatial experiences' and that 'the description of human space could be developed indefinitely'. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 286-287, 291) De Certeau (1988: 117-118) takes Merleau-Ponty to discuss a space that is not a theoretical construction, but a space of practice, operations, mobility and a poetic space of mythical experience.

As I address features of the above-described kind of space, I will look into those experiences, actions and thoughts of mine that were instigated by our collaboration. I will also deal with the realms of research and writing. They began to trouble me as I constructed a view on the in-between space the three of us enacted. These realms, for me, became part of our space. Research also informs the manner in which this paper addresses our process. I found support for my reflections from conceptions of artistic research and narrative methodology as well as phenomenological notions on space.

On Writing as a Part of Artistic Research

As the subsequent sections contain ruminations on an artistic process as well as some notions of the embodied and practical knowledge it relied upon, this paper could be understood to belong to the field of artistic research. Henk Borgdorff (2004) suggests that research *in* the arts in contrast to *on* the arts is a form of practice-based, processual and performative research with a contextualising point of view. While aiming at expanding our knowledge and understanding of artworks and the at least partially tacit artistic processes, such research allows experimentation in practice and interpretation of this practice to be its component parts. (Borgdorff, 2004: 12; 2004: 6) As rehearsals with Antti and Toni began, we needed to explore the practical grounds of our collaboration. How we work together, what we actually do, what we think of what we did and how we continue further, became important concerns. This need to construct a means to share our practice and interact with each other by doing and talking initially swallowed our interest in space. But it was a necessary process to allow for a communal space of interaction as well as a practical approach to emerge between us. This demonstrates the process-orientedness of our approach.

What is more is that written articulation is often considered a part of artistic research. It supports both reflection and dissemination of the diverse knowledges involved in artistic undertakings. Laurel Richardson suggests that writing is a method of inquiry: a way to discover and learn to understand an issue of interest. She claims: 'I write because I want to find something out, I write in order to learn something that I didn't know before I wrote it'. (Richardson, 1994: 517) This is how I felt about my writing. She further argues that writing does not

reflect social reality. As it produces meaning, it simultaneously constructs social reality. (Richardson, 1994: 516, 518) While Antti, Toni and I were working together, and as I made notes during and after each day with them, I noticed that my writing and additional reading became part of our artistic process. I made comments on what I had written and between us they opened conversations about our collaboration. For some reason, different texts attracted my attention during the days we worked, too. They formed a reflective mirror against which I contemplated our process and gave me insights into what we were dealing with and how to continue working. In fact, Hannula, Suoranra and Vaden (2003: 32) argue that artistic research becomes part of what is researched, the object of investigation, and changes the latter.

On the other hand, being aware of the fact that I was planning to write about our collaboration made working on my diary somewhat special. I wrote some anecdotes about my experiences or simply jotted down words, which a few hours or days later I filled out in order to present more complete descriptions and thoughts. I noticed that it was impossible to document much of anything of the freely flowing and lively conversations we had or much of the actual dancing. I was so engaged with them both. They seemed to need my full attention to be enlivened. I was faced with the challenge of being an artist–researcher doing two things simultaneously: exploring our artistic practice in and through art-making itself as well as reflecting upon this creative activity not for the ends of art-making itself but for telling about it to others in writing. I actually dealt with a double construction of reality in my writing: my notes on our daily work and the text produced by my ruminations on writing about our process and the notes. And I noticed that my writing was somehow troubled, which I believed had something to tell me about the nature of artistic practice and reflection upon it.

In general, in the human sciences it is understood that the researcher is part of the research with her interests, background and the skills, traditions, conventions, instruments as well as languages she operates with. (Hannula et al., 2003: 35) In the process related to this paper, I keenly felt that as an artist-researcher I could not clearly distinguish between when I was dealing with art and when with research. They interweaved and informed each other. Co-relatively, Hannula, Suoranra and Vaden write: ‘artistic practice and scientific practice occur in one world, in one person, in one being’. (2003: 34) Juha Varto (2000), in turn, argues that being part of, or in the middle of, what one is researching makes knowing challenging. Because the object of knowledge is not distinguishable from the knower, one cannot see clearly. Knowing turns out to be fragmentary, and a unified understanding or coherent conception of the object is not achievable. (Varto, 2000: 38–39)

Being immersed in the process I was investigating is one aspect of what made writing and reporting about the process challenging. But also, the fact that I was dealing with a new way of collaboration with two people I had not worked with before had a lot to do with it. In writing my notes, there were many moments in which I felt mute, unable to grasp or articulate what had gone on between us – even if at the moment I was quite enthusiastic and felt productively engrossed in whatever we were working on. Some of my notes felt redundant. Those that felt interesting were revelations about new themes that I could work upon or a few crystallised articulations about what we thought we were dealing with and why we felt some things worked and some did not. Also, more poetic descriptions of shared moments evoke something of what I had experienced.

As I struggled with my approach to writing I recalled the dance historian Susan Foster’s words on improvisation:

The improvised is that which eludes history.... History, however, keeps track almost exclusively of the known. It focuses on those human actions reiterated frequently enough to become patterns of behaviour.... Historical inquiry has neglected to question how certain actions slide easily across representational fields into the historical record and others are persistently unnoticed. It has tried to ignore actions resistant to written description.

(Foster, 2003: 4)

When one is retrieving understanding of lived processes and improvisation, it is imperative to allow oneself to be immersed in them and to take sufficient time to gain a sense of their nature. This notion describes an aspect of the phenomenological method in the sense that Merleau-Ponty writes of it. For a philosopher to gain access to the lived character of the world requires an opening towards the world through a state of wonder. The philosopher should leave her preconceptions and personal motives behind and allow the world to speak through her. Gaining sense of the lived nature of what is observed is not attained through conscious effort. Rather, it entails that the philosopher has perceptual faith, can endure the unclear and allows enough time for her or his wondering to bear fruit. (Rouhiainen, 2003: 95; Heinämaa, 2000: 104–105; Merleau-Ponty, 1962: xiii)

The novelty of our practical collaboration challenged my orientation. Probing the ways we worked together, what my dance was about in relation to Antti’s and Toni’s work, thinking of making notes alongside of all the other practical issues we were solving, as well as considering how to manage to write on the process, placed me in a deep sea of questioning. I needed time to allow impetus to grow and to gain perspective on what we were dealing with.

A Story in the Making

Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice.

(De Certeau, 1988: 115)

As I wrestled with writing about our collaboration, I noticed that my thinking was influenced by our earlier encounters. Our meetings and the days we worked together began to determine the structure of my writing. I was trying to tell a story about the time we spent together. The subsequent text follows a sequence of beginning, middle and end and could be understood to follow a narrative logic. Therefore, the account that I constructed on our collaboration could be considered a story, an artistic-scholarly tale. And I found some grounds for constructing it from notions related to narrative research.

Narratives interpret the temporality or processes of life in human terms. The way in which narrative reasoning constructs reality is by being contextually embedded and looking for particular connections between events in a causal manner. (Richardson, 1990) Therefore, the ability to tie different *spatial* and *temporal* elements together through a causal plot is characteristic of narrative research. It does not attempt to determine an event by situating it in only one defining category; rather, it attempts to delineate the manner in which it is related to other spatially and geographically situated happenings. (Saastamoinen, 2005) Stories or tales are usually differentiated from narratives as a subcategory. Stories are more straightforward accounts of actual events and experiences concerning human life.

In following the aim of creating a good story from chosen episodes that enable a logical plot to emerge, narrative research makes it possible for a piece of research to interlink a variety of textual or symbolic material related to a socio-cultural practice. Even different research methods and writing styles can be combined to produce grounds for new and shared understanding of an issue. (Heikkinen, 2001; Richardson, 1994) I am following this advice in combining my notes, some poetic images on our process, with a few more theoretical conceptions. Moreover, in this kind of an approach to research, the origins of the source materials or orthodox methodology are considered less important than the experimental process of creating new understanding. (Heikkinen, 2001; Lincoln and Denzin, 1994)

Stories can also be considered to be spatial practices. They position, mark boundaries, map structures, open vistas, move ideas, interconnect agents etc. De Certeau writes: 'Every day [stories] traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They

are spatial trajectories.' (De Certeau, 1988: 115) So as I am constructing this somewhat scholarly tale on our artistic process, I am actually constructing a space. After all, 'the story does not express a practice. It does not limit itself to telling about a movement. It *makes it*.' (Ibid.: 81) In some respects, my tale might turn a dynamic, interactive, mobile and ambiguous space into a more organised, stable place, as it offers a view from my perspective only. Nonetheless, since 'space is a practiced place' and 'stories... carry out a labour that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places', I hope that this paper involves at least an intermittent dynamism. (Ibid.: 117, 118)

The First Task

Sit, stand, walk but do not talk.

Muffled noises with glassy paths of electronic and human motion.

Step after step a mixture of limbs in locomotion, upright directed elevators, diagonal escalators, TV screens with their mind-protruding commercial clips and a spherically ticking clock.

Here I am sunken into the heaviness of my joints, muscles and other organs – an onlooker on an ergonomically designed seat. I mere meat.

The passivity of observation: a peaceful distance in the proximity of goal and effort consuming busy bodies.

I wrote this poem about the site I took Toni and Antti to see. It was my urban site of rest in between commuting from my workplace to my home – waiting for the bus at the central bus station in Helsinki. For me the poem functioned as an emblem of a lived experience. I take it to preserve the felt-sense I had of this urban space. In fact, it became a map of my emplacement at the bus station. According to Gaston Bachelard, a poetic image offers the opportunity to experience linguistic spaces. Language as this sort of an image is not a means of expression but the surging forth of a living reality. (Bachelard, 2003/1957: 42, 50, 51) Merleau-Ponty argues that, in poetic expression, the object of expression and the expression itself are inseparable. A poem is a string of living meanings that illuminate a situated attitude or approach towards the world. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 151; Heinämaa, 1996: 97) I used my poetic emblem to extract movement themes for our workshop, such as walking and sitting or moving backwards and down as you do when you take a seat.

As our first workshop period approached, we presented our first ideas and drafts on materials to each other. I showed my poem and physically demonstrated

the related movement themes. Toni presented his idea of a spatial construction, a site for our performance. In his drawings, he had visualised a patch of rouged floor on which I would dance and onto which he could project video material. He also presented two video clips he was working on. They were based on material he filmed at the bus station in which people walked as well as a moving map of a route from Helsinki to my home he had retrieved from *Google Earth*.

Antti had created an instrument that could produce static sounds. He made a wooden box and glued three pieces of sandpaper of different roughness on top of it. Under the sandpaper he placed contact microphones. He also built reconstructed loudspeakers in which he separated the middle- and high-frequency elements from each other, placing the first close to the ground and the latter some two metres higher. The sounds that Antti played with this instrument were mixed through a computer program.

I was impressed by the visualisations Toni had made of his ideas. Antti's musical instrument, in turn, affected me even in my dreams. I dreamt that he had constructed a wall-size-poster-kind-of-sandpaper-construction anybody could touch and create music with. However, I was a bit perplexed about the ways in which the three of us worked. Antti and Toni seemed to be able to present quite exact and concrete material already. For a moment I felt inadequate and considered the bodily medium excruciatingly vague and contingent.

Even if I acknowledged that we all began our work from ideas that we found interesting and allowed them to push us into the concrete act of producing something tangible, visible and audible, I began thinking about our mediums and their technological nature. Don Ihde's line of reasoning helped me to gain some insight into my experience and even a slight envy of the tools Antti and Toni worked with. He suggests that:

we can 'read' or 'see' ourselves by means of, or through, or with our artifacts. We can – in technological culture – fantasize ways in which we get beyond our physical limitations... In this mode of technofantasy, our technologies become our idols and overcome our finitude.

(Ihde, 2002: xiii)

I guess I would have enjoyed getting out of my body and being able to construct something altogether new. Now I had to rely on what, through my life, my body and dancing had become, which at moments feels all too familiar. However, what Ihde further argues is that technical devices extend the polymorphism of bodily possibilities and that the ultimate goal of virtual embodiment is to become a multisensory bodily action. So far, monosensory, either visual or audio, media have dominated the scene. (Ihde, 2002: 7–8, 9) Antti's and Toni's expressive

mediums could be viewed as being monosensory ones. Their devices and medium offer restrictions to what they can present, just as my body with its habits restricts my performance. Obviously they do this while they also allow for performative possibilities. Slight deviations from the familiar can offer paths for change and discovery.

In fact, in its habits the human body incorporates different kinds of techniques through which it operates in its daily activities. It likewise contains a virtual dimension. Ihde opines that the image-body is a virtual body through a non-technological projection. In his view, these projections can radically change our situation and our sense of our own bodies. (Ibid.: 5, 7) With a similar line of thinking, Foster argues that dance-related practices utilise two dimensions of the body: dancers perceive their bodies and do this through certain perspectives. The former is about understanding the lived and motional nature of bodily actions, while the latter relates to an imagined ideal. (Foster, 1997: 237–238) Dancers imagine possible movement sequences, and focus upon their body to perceive how their bodies accomplish them, and while the body does so they identify their projections in their bodily performance. However, a bodily act never fully achieves a body ideal, which is affiliated with completeness and leaves nothing to be desired. The body responds in its own way by producing unimagined, even unwanted, results, and the imagined projection remains incompletely realised. (Weiss, 1999a: 1, 21; 1999b: 131; Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 100) Perhaps this relates to the sense of vagueness I felt in front of Antti's and Toni's more technological approach. I imagined that they could achieve something more determinate through their work than I could – an illusion.

Nonetheless, I still felt I could not proceed any further with my work, unless I concretely improvised together with Antti and Toni. I had no preset ideas as to where I would like my dancing to end up. I was eager to explore with the few movement themes I had chosen and to allow more to emerge as I entered into a bodily dialogue with their work.

Let's See What Comes Out of This

I started our first workshop by working with Antti. Toni could join us only later in the week. What we did first was to clean the studio space that had been given for our use at the Theatre Academy. It was a recording studio approximately 50 square metres in size. Then Antti began setting up his sound equipment and I marked a space, which I imagined resembled the size of the platform Toni had planned, on the floor with white tape. Antti placed his equipment on the floor next to the 'dance space' I had outlined. He played some music for me to gain a

picture of how he modified the sounds he produced with his instrument through the computer. Then we improvised together for the first time.

I walked on the border of the dance space. I mimicked walking with different parts of my body, fingers on the floor, lying on my side and moving forward like an undulating amoeba. Antti's music made me move in a rather minimalist and fine-tuned manner, emphasizing each new movement by stopping in between, utilizing secluded body parts in movement. Afterwards, Antti pointed out how the newly fashioned loudspeakers together with the sounds he played created an atmosphere of a large space. I began to think about my rather inward focus. Should I perhaps try to use a mode of projecting, directing my motion more into outer space than I had?

During the week we continued our collaboration in the studio in a somewhat similar fashion: exploring our own practice, improvising together and talking about what we did and experienced. The second day, Antti fine-tuned his instrument and I explored movement material on my own. It felt good to work on our own tasks together in the same studio.

Moving body shapes, statues – stillness in shape, position. Remaining in one place in one stance.

I dance with my arms a lot – there is a lot of movement in my arms, fingers... Could I dance with my legs in a similar way, too?

At the end of the day we wondered about how to make our very concentrated effort accessible to the audience. We questioned whether beginning the performance by arranging things and warming up in an everyday manner would help the audience to settle into a comfortable interaction with us. We also wondered whether talking would offer a relaxed or open atmosphere. But we also acknowledged the difficulty of talking spontaneously while dancing or playing music. So for the next day I took with me George Perec's book *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* in Finnish. While I danced, Antti both played his music and read a section of Perec's text aloud.

Text by George Perec, words by Antti, muffled human sounds including echoed walking and talk emanate from the loudspeakers. Me walking around... more and more awkwardly... jerky movement – means stillness in between, a chance to listen, become aware, searching, uncertain movement, carefulness, bound flow, demonstrating spatial distances and spatial relations – pointing outwards, projection, space between body parts... erasing, pointing, measuring, showing... Perec's words on parking

a car have an effect on my doing, uncannily I demonstrate actions, shutting a door, walking away from the car... Then the words stop leaving a silent mumble intact... intensity amplifies... I find myself on my knees fiercely paddling my arms backwards...

In discussing our experience we both noticed how a new space of perception had opened as one of the performative elements was left behind. When Antti stopped reading Perec's text and only his music and my dance remained, it felt as if a reorientation had occurred, a curious but intriguing questioning. We both noticed this shift. In fact, we wondered if we had hit upon some dramatic principle or convention of the performing arts more generally. For me something else happened, too.

I was interested by a new theme of movement that came about in the improvisation: measuring space with my movements and body parts...

'It is very difficult to conceive of time and space as distinct elements, because measuring space always involves measuring time and vice versa. Time is measured through movement that occurs in space. The ancient Persians measured distance by using the concept of *parsang*, by which was meant the journey a man travelled on foot within an hour.'

(Van Kerkhoven, 1993: 25 – trans. L.R.)

Measuring and walking do connect!

In addition to measuring space, I kept to my basic movement theme, walking, throughout our workshop.

Stopping into stillness, commencing again, how the sole of the foot touches the floor, in what possible ways and angles can it do so? What happens to my spine, rotating shoulders swinging or stiff arms? How do my fingers walk? What other area can I rotate other than my spine and shoulders and to what extent? What catches my eyes when I walk? Where is my focus and head directed to... inward, outward, up down, sideways, forward? Is my gaze open, receiving and communicative, or closed, thoughtful?

'To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper.'

(De Certeau, 1988: 103)

And we were undertaking our quest with some origins in urban space.

'The ordinary practitioners of the city live "down below", below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk – an elementary form

of this experience of the city; they are walkers. *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of urban "text" they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility'.

(De Certeau, 1988: 93)

On the third day, Toni began collaborating with us. He set up his computer and video equipment and built a high tower from unused loudspeaker stands so that the video could be projected from above onto the floor. When he was done, Antti and I improvised with a structure that emanated from utilising Perec's text. Afterwards we had an intense discussion about the manner in which we ought to be working. Antti and I were already trying out some structural ideas. Toni wanted a more experimental and open collaboration. We had originally opted to allow the unfolding process itself to determine the end result. But our eventual performances formed an ever-present background that influenced our exploration. Still, it was important to be reminded of an openness and simultaneously to acknowledge the shared goal we were working for – some kind of performances.

With Toni we covered the floor with white paper for the video images to be visible. In my dancing I became very concerned about how to relate to the projected video images. I had trouble seeing them in our improvisations. After all, they were projected onto me or onto the floor, and I could not continuously look at myself or the floor. I lost a sense of integrity in my dancing, as I tried to dance in dialogue with the images and the music. After talking with Antti and Toni, I decided to quit trying to relate consciously to what they were doing. I began searching for a more somatic orientation to my dancing again. A more spontaneous relation to Antti's and Toni's work seemed to emerge.

I lie on the floor on my back. My left arm hovers towards the ceiling. Fingers palpating the air. Then my fingers gather together and bend to form a loose fist. My wrist bends and my hand starts falling towards the ground as my elbow follows. My forearm drops heavily on the floor. Immediately my arm shoots back into the air again. An intense diagonal reach and tension in my arm pulls me into sitting. My body folds, my knees bend and I find myself sitting on the side of my right leg... How determined my arm was to pull my torso off the ground...

I am on my side and lift my head to look at the rest of my body; a shadow moves across it over my legs, there is a streak of white light on my waist. I turn to look backwards to see if my body makes a shadow on the floor. It does, and pushing with my arms I allow my head to draw me into a back extension...

I walk in a circle sideways, crossing and opening my legs alternately... Invited by the music my arms open to the side... The sounds call me further and I notice that I walk outside the actual performing space and after a few paces I sit down and start watching Antti play.

During the second week Toni decided to add in another video projector and to use two computers. He had filmed and edited a bit more material. Now the white ceiling above the paper floor had moving images running over it, too. Dancing with the ceiling projections made my sense of space fuller, truly three-dimensional or actually multidimensional. There were intensities to react to all around me, the video projections above, below and on me, sound throughout the room, Toni in the front of the room, Antti on the side. I realised that the projections on the white floor and the ceiling created a highlighted performance arena as well as a kind of extended *kinesphere* for me. In our previous improvisations, on occasion, I had roamed all around the studio. Now it felt imperative to do so. I had to surpass the arena, why I am not quite sure.

In his dance or movement theory, Rudolf Laban introduced the term *kinesphere* to denote that human motional space that transcends the surface of the body and is delimited by the extensions of the limbs. The *kinesphere* – or as it is also called, personal space – is defined by the areas we can reach without locomoting in space. (Laban, 1966: 17; Moore and Yamamoto, 2000: 193) For us personally, it could therefore be viewed as having something to do with some kind of familiarity or at least accessibility. (Casey, 1998: 224) In sticking to the projected spatial areas in my dancing, was I sticking to a comfort zone or working with a necessary minimalism? After all, I did explore walking through different body parts, starting from different positions, working on the floor and in upright position, moving in one place and moving all around the studio. Following some of Edmund Husserl's thoughts on kinesthesia, Casey suggests that:

What walking introduces is the fact that I must first of all unify myself before I unify my environs. I cannot walk at all if I am utterly disjointed; to walk is to draw my body together, at least provisionally; and to do so is to constitute myself as one coherent organism.

(Ibid.)

Observations and questions continued, but for now this partial and fragmentary story is ending. Carrying Antti and Toni with me, in it I have tried to convey what our early collaboration generated in me. Much was incubating and not quite relatable. Nonetheless, I think we learned to endure the incompleteness of our process as well as to offer room for, and to listen to, each other. Simultaneously, we continued questioning and re-interpreting what emerged in and between us through our collaboration. This thrust us forward.

I have stopped my motion in order to rest, and I sit on a white paper patched on the floor for projecting video material onto. I make my observations. Toni has climbed to the top of a ladder and is fixing the video apparatus – redirecting its focus. Antti kneels to my right and peers into a computer screen while testing his equipment and playing some soft echoey sounds every now and then. Quiet concentration. Our tiny and soundproof studio is a secluded world all of its own. Satisfied, I turn back to my motional rumination and continue exploring how differently I can walk with my fingers, arms, shoulders, hips, legs and feet and while standing, sitting, lying on my back, on my side...

SECTION 8

Practice as Research as the Dominant Orthodoxy; the Nature of Evidence

Creativity is first of all an act of destruction.

Pablo Picasso

As the objects of performance study have diversified, close examination of the processes and event of performance has emerged as something of an industry in itself. As a late response to the blind-date marriage of phenomenology and postmodernism, scholars and practitioners alike have created a drift towards a state wherein performances can no longer be seen to exist without reference to the spectatorial debates that frame them. This in its own turn has given rise to the establishment of certain types of practical work assuming, and being granted, status as university-sanctioned research activities.

This is not to suggest that the linking of research with performance is anything new. The twentieth century saw numerous practitioners whose work was highly practical in outcome at the same time as the investigative and research qualities were clear to see... and not just in hindsight. These researching practitioners – and we can think immediately of luminaries such as Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Brecht, Grotowski, Barba and Brook – created a legacy of intelligent and often intellectually vital work that did much to shape their own time and ours. What differs now is the sheer scale of practice-based research. That which was once in the sole domain of some of the world's greatest thinkers and makers in their chosen theatrical forms now peppers the pages of countless curriculum vitae; and regarding oneself (or at least *describing* oneself) as a practising researcher is an increasingly commonplace type of catch-all activity.

A consequence of this is a feeling of saturation, with a great many university department staff pages proclaiming the view that any and all practice is practice as research and that every member of staff is a researching practitioner. It is not easy to locate the point at which so many of us began to reinvent previous practical work as research activity, but it is hard to avoid the sense that this is