Editorial

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Scholar as interloper: whose stories are we telling?

In performance as in research, identities may be deconstructed and reconstructed in a constantly-shifting practice of cultural representation. This fourth issue of the *Scottish Journal of Performance* presents a selection of papers addressing the theme of 'scholar as interloper'. Three researchers provide differing subversions, both of their identities within the academy and of their appropriation of other personae within performance culture. Additionally, they explore issues around the subjective voice of the people they are researching, questioning how to let them speak for themselves whilst remaining conscious of their own subjective biases and experiences.

With the publication of Bronisław Malinowski's personal diaries in 1967, the ethnographic field was thrown into reflexive turmoil with the realisation that the subjective voice of the researcher is as fundamental to research as the object of study itself. The 'problem' of the researcher has remained ever-present since then, with autoethnography and the (re)insertion of the 'I' subject into qualitative research a performative act in itself, the questioning of one's own identity becoming a foundation from which to explore the identities of others.

Stuart Hall has described identity as 'not as transparent or

unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact... we should think, instead, of identity as a "production", which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation'. Thus identity takes on many facets of the performance of a role, constantly developing, evolving or turning in on itself. For Hall, and as evidenced by the variety of papers within this issue, these fragmented, even antagonistic constructions are produced in 'specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies'.

Lucy Amsden reflects on the multiple characters she represents at an evening of clowning in Edinburgh: a performer before an audience; a researcher recording her thoughts in the moment; a scholar-clown persona designed to entertain; a trained artist possessing elite skills. For Paolo Maccagno, a Milanese prison becomes a construction site of identity as fathers and sons run marathons together, blending rehabilitation with reaffirmation of parental responsibility. Ben Fletcher-Watson takes his seat at a performance intended for people with autism and confronts questions around the ethics of autoethnography and the absence of the autistic voice.

For all three authors, status, role and presence become slippery as they reflect on lived experience within an academic register.

In the first article, Lucy Amsden examines a recent scratch performance of clown cabaret from Scotland, both as participant and observer. The diversity of the 11 acts featured is nonetheless enfolded into a mutually understood interpretive praxis where clown identity can be anatomised. For example, the overtly constructivist process of creating a character, an 'adopted persona', provides Amsden with an opportunity to scrutinise her proposed identity as

'Scotland's top clown researcher' (in a field of one). Failure, humility, flexibility and chaos each impact upon the tensions governing the contemporary clown.

Thus, definitions of 'performance' are usefully problematised, highlighting the inherent incompleteness of personal authenticity, and the consequent need for differing modes of inquiry. Just as Amsden's training at École Philippe Gaulier is variously evoked through embodied practice, shared language(s) in rehearsal and even the echo of Gaulier's own voice, so her identity as researcher/performer is multiplied, its evolution re-emphasised.

Paolo Maccagno explores the lived identities of incarcerated men within the Italian prison system. He reflects on his experience training male inmates to run marathons in the *Go Daddy!* father and son marathon-running programme.

Drawing on his experience running and training others to run long distances, he creates a performance project which reconnects male prisoners with their children to run marathons together—one on either side of the prison wall. Through this they explore their own physical limits as a way to question the limits of their agency and identities.

In his exploration of the performance of limits, Maccagno investigates those boundaries of identity as they are experienced, not only questioning the limits of his role as volunteer, researcher and fellow marathon-runner, but also examining how modern disciplinary systems construct and bound identities, revealing the tension between freedom, rehabilitation and punishment.

The new phenomenon of 'relaxed performances' forms the

basis of Ben Fletcher-Watson's investigation into how the additional support needs of autistic audiences are being accommodated within mainstream theatre productions. Combining a synopsis of current practice with a personal case study, he raises pertinent questions for this relatively under-researched phenomenon, exposing not only the need for further research but also the ethical issues surrounding voicing the needs of disabled communities.

As a new approach to inclusive theatre, Fletcher-Watson stimulates discussion on how relaxed performances impact the conventions of theatre as a performative genre, on performers and staff members, and whether his role as a neurotypical researcher contributes to the lack of inclusivity for the autistic community to express their own agency. His presence highlights the potential for 'ethical murkiness' for those involved in the subjective research process.

This issue also presents reviews of a number of recently published texts addressing performance from a variety of standpoints, including composition, conducting, playwriting, acting and dramaturgy. Kathryn Jourdan reviews *El Sistema: orchestrating Venezuela's youth*, by Geoffrey Baker; Sam Haddow reviews *Modernist and avant-garde performance: an introduction*, by Claire Warden; Ben Fletcher-Watson reviews *Contemporary Scottish plays*, edited by Trish Reid; Marc Silberschatz reviews *Acting Shakespeare's language*, by Andy Hinds; Shona Mackay reviews *Dramaturging personal narratives: who am I and where is here?*, by Judith Rudakoff; Bede Williams reviews *Sleeping in temples*, by Susan Tomes; and David Watkin reviews *Charles Mackerras*, edited by Nigel Simeone and John Tyrrell.

We would like to thank the University of St Andrews, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Anglia Ruskin University,

the editorial team, advisory board, our peer reviewers, funders, and especially our authors.

After four issues, Ben Fletcher-Watson is standing down as Co-editor, to be replaced by Bede Williams (University of St Andrews). Another founding member of the SJoP team, Thomas Butler, is also retiring as Journal Manager/Web Editor, with Lucy Hollingworth (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) taking over the reins. We wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

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Co-editors, *Scottish Journal of Performance*