

Introduction

The popularity of verbatim theatre shows little sign of abating. Practitioners have evolved and adapted verbatim forms with great success. Over the past five years, there has been an intensification of publications and conferences on verbatim theatre. Dominant areas of research have included the ethics of verbatim theatre (Bottoms, 2006; Hughes, 2007; Luckhurst, 2007; Heddon, 2009; Hesford, 2010); studies on particular plays (Soto-Morettini, 2005; Reinelt, 2006; Botham, 2009; Megson, 2009; Upton, 2009); the issues surrounding the definition of verbatim theatre (Bottoms, 2006; Luckhurst, 2007; Reinelt, 2009); the historical origins of verbatim (Paget, 1987, 1990 and 2009; Watt, 2003 and 2009; Chambers, 2009; Harker, 2009); studies analysing international verbatim work (Irmer, 2006; Boenisch, 2008; Forrest, 2008; Lipovetsky and Beumers, 2008; Puga, 2008; Hutchinson, 2009; Martin, 2009); and work on associated forms, such as ‘testimonial theatre’ (Heddon, 2007); ‘documentary video ballads’ (Filewod and Watt, 2001; Filewod, 2009); ‘mockumentary’ (Young, 2009); and documentary solo performance (Kalb, 2001; Bottoms, 2005). The body of literature has tended to focus on questions of authenticity and, particularly, the complex and problematic relationship between the testimony from which these plays were derived and the productions themselves.

Despite these recent interventions, the analysis of acting processes in verbatim theatre has been almost entirely overlooked. The three most notable recent publications on verbatim theatre are remarkable for their lack of focus on performance processes. In an edition of the *The Drama Review* dedicated to

documentary theatre, three articles (by Stephen Bottoms, Janelle Reinelt and Carol Martin) investigated contemporary British verbatim theatre, though none examined acting processes.¹ More baffling was Will Hammond's and Dan Steward's *Verbatim: Verbatim* (2009) which featured seven new interviews with documentary theatre makers. Although the authors claimed that they would 'discuss frankly the unique opportunities and ethical dilemmas that arise when portraying real people on stage', the collection omitted actors and was focused on writers and directors.² Finally, although Alison Forsyth's and Chris Megson's edited collection *Get Real* was ambitious in scope, there were no essays dedicated to questions of performance, and none of the contributors interviewed actors. As we shall see, this scarcity of information from primary sources is part of a larger problem in the theatre academy.

The current lack of focus on acting is curious since Derek Paget's investigation into the first wave of British verbatim productions, "'Verbatim Theatre': Oral History and Documentary Techniques' (1987), featured interviews with performers.³ Indeed, the only researcher to have investigated acting processes in contemporary British verbatim theatre is Bella Merlin. Merlin appeared in Max Stafford-Clark's production of David Hare's play, *The Permanent Way* (2003). She has written about her experiences in an article in *Contemporary Theatre Review* and in a chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to David Hare*.⁴ Her work

¹ *The Drama Review*, Fall 50:3 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

² Will Hammond and Dan Steward, eds., *Verbatim: Verbatim* (London: Oberon, 2009), back cover.

³ Paget's article appeared in *New Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. 3:12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.317-36.

⁴ Bella Merlin, 'The Permanent Way and the Impermanent Muse' in *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Vol. 17:1 (London: Routledge, 2007), pp.41-49; and 'Acting Hare: The Permanent Way' in *The Cambridge Companion to David Hare*, ed. Richard Boon (Cambridge: Cambridge

is an attempt to analyse the ways in which her usual Stanislavskian approach was challenged when playing a real person in Hare's play. To date, these publications constitute the only substantial first-hand analysis of the actor's role in contemporary verbatim theatre.⁵

In response to the lack of material from actors, I have co-edited a book with Mary Luckhurst entitled *Playing for Real* (2010), which is the first study to draw together testimony from actors on portraying real people across theatre, film and television. Although the scope of the interviews was not limited to verbatim forms, in the sixteen interviews that comprise *Playing for Real*, there arose many thematic and procedural commonalities shared with my interviews for this thesis.⁶ The majority of the actors interviewed in *Playing for Real* argued that portraying a real person is qualitatively different from playing a fictional character. Although the actors' experiences were heterogeneous, certain preoccupations arose recurrently, and signalled that specific issues come to the fore when actors portray real people. For example, whilst careful research for a role was unanimously understood to be vital – Henry Goodman stated that it 'liberates the creative instincts' – many actors noted the tensions between their research into the real-life individual and the role as it appears in the play.⁷

University Press, 2007), pp.123-37. I will analyse Merlin's research in detail in the first chapter of this thesis.

⁵ In addition, the University of Reading has been conducting an AHRC research project entitled 'Acting with Facts' for the past three years, which analyses performance in both television docudrama and documentary performance. For an outline of the project, see Derek Paget, 'Acting with Facts: Actors performing the real in British theatre and Television since 1990. A Preliminary Report on a new Research Project', *Studies in Documentary Film*, Vol. 1:2 (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), pp.165-76.

⁶ Two of the interviews for this thesis (those with Diane Fletcher and Chipu Chung) appeared in Tom Cantrell and Mary Luckhurst, eds., *Playing for Real: Actors on Playing Real People* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

⁷ Cantrell and Luckhurst, *Playing for Real*, p.74.

Goodman noted that ‘it’s a fatal mistake to try and act your research’,⁸ whilst Michael Pennington recognised the temptation to ‘become obsessed by historical reality and lose your connection with the fictional world of the drama’.⁹ Playing a real-life figure also incurred a sense of responsibility towards the representation of that figure which is wholly different from playing a fictional character. Ian McKellen found that ‘you want to do the right thing by them’,¹⁰ whilst Siân Phillips observed that ‘When you are playing real people who have died recently, or who are still alive, it is a nightmare. It is a ghastly responsibility for a start, because of families and descendents’.¹¹ Also prevalent were questions of physical similarity, issues which were particularly pronounced when an individual was widely recognised. Whilst the sixteen interviews in *Playing for Real* are not definitive, they strongly indicate that actors’ testimony can contribute significantly to discourses surrounding theatre practice, and that the particular exigencies of playing real people is a fertile new area of research that has been puzzlingly overlooked.¹² As we shall see, the study of acting in verbatim theatre raises different issues again. This thesis will demonstrate that there are additionally specific issues when playing a real person in verbatim theatre.

The lack of actors’ narratives

⁸ Cantrell and Luckhurst, *Playing for Real*, p.79.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.128.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.104.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.136.

¹² Throughout this thesis I will refer to areas of common experience with interviewees in *Playing for Real*.

The lack of actors' narratives or examination of acting processes has led to particular problems in the current body of literature on verbatim theatre. The most prevalent issue is that writers' and directors' narratives have been privileged, and they have ventriloquised for actors in their accounts of verbatim practices, making claims both about the actors' status and about their processes. I offer these claims up for scrutiny throughout my case-studies. In addition, academic commentators have frequently made erroneous and ill-informed statements about the practitioners and acting processes I examine here. These comments appear to be products of their own prejudices which presume that writers and directors are more authoritative than actors. We shall see that non-actors who speak on behalf of actors have considerably misrepresented the issue.

There are also considerable misunderstandings about the lineage of verbatim theatre.¹³ This may be partly attributable to Derek Paget's identification of the 'broken tradition' of verbatim theatre. Locating it firmly as an oppositional theatre movement, he has suggested that 'generation after generation, oppositional modes of theatrical address tend to fade from the collective cultural memory.'¹⁴ Paget thus notes the 'resultant discontinuity' of documentary theatre, suggesting that the lineage is complex, sporadic and lacks a clear linear progression.¹⁵ Chapters such as Paget's (and also those by Chambers and Harker) in *Get Real* have significantly improved our understanding of the varied heritage; indeed, one of the aims of *Get Real* was to 're-evaluate the historical traditions of

¹³ For misunderstandings in critical reviews, see Derek Paget, 'The "Broken Tradition" of Documentary Theatre and Its Continued Powers of Endurance' in Forsyth, Alison., and Megson, Chris., eds. *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present* (London: Palgrave, 2009), p.232.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.225.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.224.

documentary theatre'.¹⁶ As the aim of this thesis is not to chart verbatim theatre's lineage, I refer the reader to this work. However, we shall see in my case-studies that misunderstandings range from misguided claims about the origin of the term 'verbatim', to specious assertions about the working methods of particular practitioners. In order to rectify these confusing comments, each case-study will be contextualised by an investigation into both the lineage of the specific forms analysed here, and a detailed examination of the working processes. A certain amount of 'setting the record straight' is thus required. As we shall see, placing the actors' testimony in these contexts is imperative to our understanding of their processes.

The case-study productions

For each of my three case-study productions I have interviewed the entire cast. The three case-studies are: Robin Soans's *Talking to Terrorists* (Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds, 2005), directed by Max Stafford-Clark for Out of Joint; Richard Norton-Taylor's *Called to Account* (Tricycle Theatre, 2007), directed by Nicolas Kent; and Alecky Blythe's *The Girlfriend Experience* (Royal Court Theatre, 2008), directed by Joe Hill-Gibbins for Recorded Delivery. Using new interview material, this thesis will uncover and analyse processes of acting, and interrogate the particular demands of playing a real person in verbatim theatre.

I have chosen *Talking to Terrorists*, *Called to Account* and *The Girlfriend Experience* because they represent the widest range of working methods in

¹⁶ Forsyth and Megson, *Get Real*, p.1.

contemporary British verbatim theatre. The differences in the actors' involvement in research, rehearsal and performance strongly suggest the breadth of the term 'verbatim'. A further factor in focusing on these three productions is that they were staged by practitioners who are recognised as being at the forefront of the resurgence of British verbatim theatre. For example, Michael Billington has stated that:

...with what came to be known as 'verbatim theatre', it was Nicolas Kent at Kilburn's Tricycle Theatre who led the way with some assistance from Max Stafford-Clark at Out of Joint.¹⁷

Kent deploys verbatim theatre strategically to make interventions on matters of national importance, and Max Stafford-Clark has used verbatim to investigate topical issues. Both Kent and Stafford-Clark are generally acknowledged to be among the most high profile directors working in British verbatim theatre.

Though more recent, Blythe's work has repeatedly been called 'cutting edge' and 'innovative', and she has been credited with bringing a new and unusual performance practice to the stage.¹⁸

There are shared features to note about the three productions I investigate here. They are all new plays, one edited and two directed by the artistic director of the company producing them. We shall see commonalities in the case-studies indicative of the challenges of working on new verbatim plays. One production

¹⁷ Michael Billington, *State of the Nation* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p.385. Similarly, Kritzer has stated, 'Verbatim plays...have evolved primarily through the work of the Out of Joint Company directed by Max Stafford-Clark,' Amelia Howe Kritzer, *Political Theatre in Post-Thatcher Britain: New Writing 1995–2005* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.223.

¹⁸ See *Time Out*, <<http://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/event/146652/main-house-the-girlfriend-experience>> accessed 29 August 2010; and *The Guardian*, <<http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/cultureculture/archives/artarchitecture/fringebenefits>> accessed 29 August 2010.

(Talking to Terrorists) toured, and only one (*Called to Account*) was staged in a theatre owned by the company producing the play. None of the plays were written by individuals famed for their fictional writing.

The chronological order of these case-studies is a happy coincidence, as they are ordered according to a progression of working methods. The verbatim-makers' approaches here are increasingly concerned with minutely recreating how the testimony was originally spoken. In the first case-study, this was not a primary concern, and the interviews were often not recorded; in the second case-study they were filmed and the actors were given both a DVD and audio version of the interview to assist them; and in the final case-study the actors on stage wore headphones through which the interview material was played. These radically different processes will demonstrate the breadth of approaches under the term 'verbatim'.

Methodology

My research into the three plays comprised interviews with twenty-six actors, two directors and two writers.¹⁹ The interviews were mostly conducted over the telephone, but six were conducted in person. The majority of interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. I conducted follow-up interviews when more detail was required.

¹⁹ Only one actor declined to be interviewed, and as two actors in *Called to Account* had very small roles, I did not interview these actors. I was unable to secure interviews with Nicolas Kent and Richard Norton-Taylor.

There are many challenges when conducting interviews, and Steinar Kvale's book *InterViews* (1996), is useful to examine these. I used his 'seven stages of interview research' as a guide in my research. Kvale's first stage, thematizing, (to 'formulate the purpose of an investigation and describe the concept of the topic to be investigated') has been analysed above.²⁰ Here I will explore my decisions with regard to designing, interviewing and transcribing, before the case-studies constitute the final three areas: analysing, verifying and reporting.

Designing the interview

I used a semi-structured interview approach which was structured enough to be able to ask certain questions to all actors so as to compare their responses, but also flexible enough to allow me to follow the actor's experiences and probe further into their individual approaches. The interview design follows Tom Wengraf's definition:

[S]emi-structured interviews...are ones where research and planning produce a session in which most of the informant's responses can't be predicted in advance and where you as the interviewer therefore have to improvise probably half – and maybe 80% or more – of your responses to what they say in response to your initial prepared question or questions.²¹

As Wengraf notes, due to the qualitative nature of the data I was collecting, a certain amount of pragmatism was crucial to the success of the interview. As the productions presented quite different challenges, some questions were consistent across all interviews, whilst others were specific to a particular production.

²⁰ Steinar Kvale, *InterViews* (London: Sage, 1996) p.87.

²¹ Tom Wengraf, *Qualitative Research Interviewing*, (London: Sage, 2001), p.5. Original emphasis.

There is a school of thought that would argue that the same questions should be asked to all actors. However, it was apparent that a question could resonate with one actor, and stimulate them into a detailed and illuminating analysis, and have no meaning at all to another.

As it appeared both most logical and most likely to spark the actors' memories, my interview questions were broadly organised chronologically. They were structured under the following headings: pre-rehearsal work; rehearsal work, and performance experiences. A template of the interview questions can be found in the appendix to this thesis, although it should be noted that this provides only a broad schema of questions and does not adequately record the actual line of questioning in each case.

Interview Protocol

In my research, life tended to imitate art, in that my project of interviewing practitioners about their processes had a notable overlap with the verbatim practices they described. This focussed my attention on the ethical issues of collecting my own testimony. In the light of the verbatim practices I investigate here, the following points summarise my interview method:

- 1) To gain what Kvale has called 'Informed Consent', all the interviewees were informed that the interview would be used for my PhD thesis on acting in contemporary British verbatim theatre.²²

²² Kvale, *InterViews*, p.112.

- 2) The interviewees were sent an email outlining the broad areas that I wanted to cover. In two instances, the interviewee requested a more detailed outline of the questions, which I supplied.
- 3) I conducted all the interviews. All the actors were interviewed on their own.
- 4) All the interviews were recorded on a dictaphone when conducted in-person, and a tape-recorder when conducted over the telephone. The interviewees were reminded that they would be recorded before the interview commenced.
- 5) I prefaced all interviews by outlining my study, and talking the interviewee through a rough schema of questions.
- 6) I concluded each interview by asking whether they were happy for me to use the material, and whether I could contact them again if any other questions arose. In a number of cases I conducted short follow-up interviews to gain more detail on a particular point.
- 7) If an interviewee requested to read their interview, the document was sent in full and permission granted before the testimony was used. This only occurred once.

Timing of Interviews

The timing of the case-study productions presented challenges to my research. I was aware when interviewing the cast of *Called to Account* that I was talking to actors about a production two years after it had closed, and in the interviews for *Talking to Terrorists*, the gap was three years. The actors did not appear to

struggle with recalling their experiences, but I was aware when I spoke to them that they were describing their processes after considerable time for reflection, and thus their memories may have become rehearsed. By contrast, I conducted interviews with the cast of *The Girlfriend Experience* during the play's original run, and shortly after. The cast were therefore still on the journey that they described. The actors' memories and the proximity to the experiences they analysed thus varied across my case-studies.

My line of questioning changed as I became more familiar with the working methods of the productions, which Kvale has called 'getting wiser':

An interviewer may learn throughout an investigation: The conversations with the subjects may extend and alter the researcher's understanding of the phenomena investigated... The dilemma will then be whether to improve the interview guide to include the new dimensions.²³

As Kvale suggests, I did adapt my interview questions as a result of my increased knowledge (indeed it seemed counter-intuitive not to do so). For example, my first interview for the *Talking to Terrorists* case-study was with actor Chris Ryman. Due to the scarcity of material, his descriptions of the play's preparatory processes were new to me. However, in later interviews, I was familiar with the rehearsal schedule, and thus could use the interview to focus on acting processes exclusively.

Transcribing the interviews

²³ Kvale, *InterViews*, p.101.

There were several concerns with regard to transcribing the interviews. Occasionally, the interviewees gave information ‘off the record’. When this occurred, I neither transcribed nor included the testimony. Similarly, in both *Talking to Terrorists* and *The Girlfriend Experience*, individuals remain anonymous in the play-text, appearing under pseudonyms. In my interviews, the actors often referred to the subjects they played by their real names. As anonymity is an important ethical issue in these plays, I preserved the real individuals’ anonymity and refer to them as they appear in the play.²⁴

In the act of transcribing, I decided to delete half-begun sentences, circumlocutions, fillers (such as ‘umm’ and ‘err’), and deviations which were not relevant to my focus. I recognise the controversial nature of ‘cleaning up’ a transcript in this way.²⁵ I was guided in this enterprise by a desire to aid the reader, as I found that a literal transcription was unreadable and the meaning was clouded by the features of spoken rather than written testimony. I was careful not to change the meaning of any statements.

My role as interviewer

I take an actor-centred view throughout this thesis. This work is thus a counter-narrative to the dominance of directors’ and writers’ experiences in verbatim theatre, and champions the actors’ work. Whilst the dearth in published material

²⁴ When I have changed a name within an actor’s quotation, square brackets will be used to replace the real name of the individual with the name in the play (e.g. ‘When I met [Rima]’). When the invented name is not in quotations, they will be placed in single inverted commas (e.g. The role of ‘Rima’).

²⁵ ‘Cleaning up’ or ‘tidying up’ is Tom Wengraf’s phrase. See Wengraf, *Qualitative Research Interviewing*, p.213.

and the repeated misconceptions with regard to the actors' interventions prompted my focus, I also drew on my own knowledge as a professional actor.²⁶ Both my own acting experience and conducting the interviews for *Playing for Real* have made me aware of the amount of work that happens outside the rehearsal room. This has always been the case; actors do a lot of work on their own and in their own time as well as collaboratively in rehearsal. It is also, of course, a political issue about the sensitivities of rehearsal. In *Playing for Real*, it became evident that to negotiate these sensitivities, some actors conducted private work unknown to the director. For example, Henry Goodman stated:

Every actor has to negotiate the politics of rehearsal, the egos... What I've learned over the years is how to operate in the political environment of the rehearsal room, and how to assess the confidence of directors and writers. What you have to understand is that some people become frightened when actors do what they think of as a writer's or a director's job.²⁷

Actors, therefore, do not necessarily share their processes with the director or other actors.²⁸ Thus, I focus in particular on the actors' narratives of their work, rather than analysing the rehearsal process as laid out by the director. Indeed, the discrepancy between the directors' narratives of the rehearsal methods and the actors' narratives of their processes will be a focus of this thesis.

Interviewing actors as a methodological tool

²⁶ I trained at the National Youth Theatre, the University of Cambridge and the University of York. I was a member of Equity and represented by Amber Personal Management. I have worked professionally for companies including York Theatre Royal, The Wrestling School and Paines Plough.

²⁷ Cantrell and Luckhurst, *Playing for Real*, pp.73-4.

²⁸ For example, Timothy West states that 'Actors don't talk to each other very much about their own ways of working. I think many are quite private about it...how you work on your own is your own business'. *Ibid.*, p.158.

At a symposium at the University of Reading entitled ‘Acting with Facts’, researcher Heather Sutherland quoted Frank Kotsonis’s maxim that ‘The plural for anecdote is not data’.²⁹ This witty phrase is relevant here. Sutherland suggests there may be a prejudice against the credibility of oral testimony. It is important that such prejudices are strongly contested. The interviews here were formal and were not concerned with anecdote, but with eliciting information which cannot be gained in any other way. I have identified that actors have been denied access to the dissemination of their experiences enjoyed by writers and directors. My work will demonstrate that their spoken testimony is no less illuminating than written publications, and that to label them as anecdotes belittles and patronises the reflective tenacity of the actors.

There is, however, extraordinarily little research analysing the use of actors’ testimony in scholarship. In a recent article concerning her planned use of the collection of actors’ interviews in the archive of Shakespeare’s Globe, Bridget Escolme has raised questions which suggest that there are still researchers with a profound suspicion of using actors’ testimony. She states:

It is difficult, within the accepted discourses of good scholarship, not to frame one’s own readings as objective in relation to the interpretations of actors, who are being invited to speak subjectively of their personal responses to a role.³⁰

²⁹ Heather Sutherland, “‘The Truth’: Reflections on Interviewing as a Primary Methodological Tool for Research into ‘Acting with Facts’”, ‘Acting with Facts’ Symposium, University of Reading, 8 May 2009. The quote is attributed to nutritionist Frank Kotsonis. See: Christian Tschanz, Harriett H. Butchko, W. Wayne Stargel, Frank N. Kotsonis, *The Clinical Evaluation of a Food Additive: Assessment of Aspartame* (USA: CRC Press, 1996).

³⁰ Bridget Escolme, ‘Being Good: Actors’ Testimonies as Archive and the Cultural Construction of Success in Performance.’ *Shakespeare Bulletin*, Vol.28:1 (Norwood, N.J: New York Shakespeare Society, 2010), p.84.

This appears worryingly naïve. The challenges which Escolme treats as new and usual are familiar territory for most interviewers. I staunchly believe that there is no contradiction between ‘good scholarship’ and my own acceptance of my agenda with regard to the interviews I conducted. My research, like the actors’, is necessarily a personal and subjective pursuit. Escolme mistrusts the actors’ articulation of their experiences, and instead privileges herself, the researcher, above them. Later in her article, she notes ‘the ethical and discursive problems with using the living archive.’³¹ She goes on:

The intentional fallacy is a difficult one to rid ourselves of entirely, when a performer is giving up his or her time to say that *this* is what she meant by this performance of this character. To critique that voice, to use it as the object of one’s study is always a matter of some sensitivity. Making one’s critical position transparent, defining and historicizing one’s terms in order to make it clear what one is positing as Good or Bad is an important and honest discursive methodology.³²

Escolme’s comments are again troubling. Her concerns raise the question as to why she is so suspicious of actors when the same level of distrust is not directed towards writers and directors. It appears that only certain people are given credence. To apply the blunt terms ‘Good or Bad’ to the actors’ testimony reasserts that Escolme casts herself as a privileged judge of their work, rather than as a researcher who is privileged to learn more about these private processes. Much more cogent, on the other hand, is Janelle Reinelt’s comment during an interview with David Edgar:

³¹ Escolme, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, p.90.

³² *Ibid.*, p.90.

I think there is a suspicion now that any claim of ‘just the facts’ is false. We’ve learned from the social sciences, in their critique of ethnographies or data collection that doesn’t acknowledge the intervention of the researcher – basically, it’s the Heisenberg Principle. Even an arrangement of verbatim materials has a dramaturgical shape and is therefore an intervention. People recognise that nothing can be constructed that doesn’t have a perspective.³³

Reinelt recognises that these debates are not new and that it has been long accepted that the interviewer brings an agenda to data collection. As stated above, my aim is to champion the actors, not (as appears to be the case in Escolme’s article) to use their words as weapons against themselves.

Methodological challenges

There are other issues associated with interviewing actors which need to be addressed here. Not all practitioners may want to articulate their creative processes, and some may harbour suspicion towards any project that aims to explore what they do. I was fortunate that none of the actors I interviewed appeared to view my project negatively; indeed, without exception the actors were enthusiastic about my pursuit, and many had also noted the curious lack of academic interest in their performance processes.

The intense challenge of articulating a creative process was repeatedly evident in my interviews. These actors attempted to describe an experience which may have remained a partial mystery to them. The scope of this thesis is thus not to produce hard and fast rules for performance in verbatim theatre; indeed, quite the

³³ Janelle Reinelt ‘‘Politics, Playwriting, Postmodernism’’: An Interview with David Edgar’, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Vol.14:4 (London: Routledge, 2004), p.48.

opposite: I want to demonstrate the fascinating range of processes and the highly personal ingenuity with which these actors confronted what were often new challenges.

In my interviews I avoided references to any particular actor-trainer or theorist so as to enable the actors to find their own way of describing the challenges they faced.³⁴ This was a crucial methodological decision. I thus did not ask leading questions, of which Roger Gomm has stated, ‘the phrasing of the question implies that the questioner will think better of the respondent for answering one way rather than another’.³⁵ The purpose of this thesis is to foreground the actors’ own vocabularies, and allow them, if inclined, to name theorists and practitioners. At present, there is no analytical vocabulary for describing acting approaches in verbatim theatre. This thesis sets out to uncover the actors’ processes and explore whether it is possible to begin to identify useful theoretical territories.

³⁴ In relation to the focus on the actors’ articulation of their processes, I did not ask them how their experiences on these productions compared to their usual way of working. This is because I don’t believe such a thing as ‘a usual way of working’ exists. Occasionally the actors have compared their work in these productions to their other work, but this was not a line of questioning I prompted.

³⁵ Roger Gomm, *Social Research Methodology* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.220.