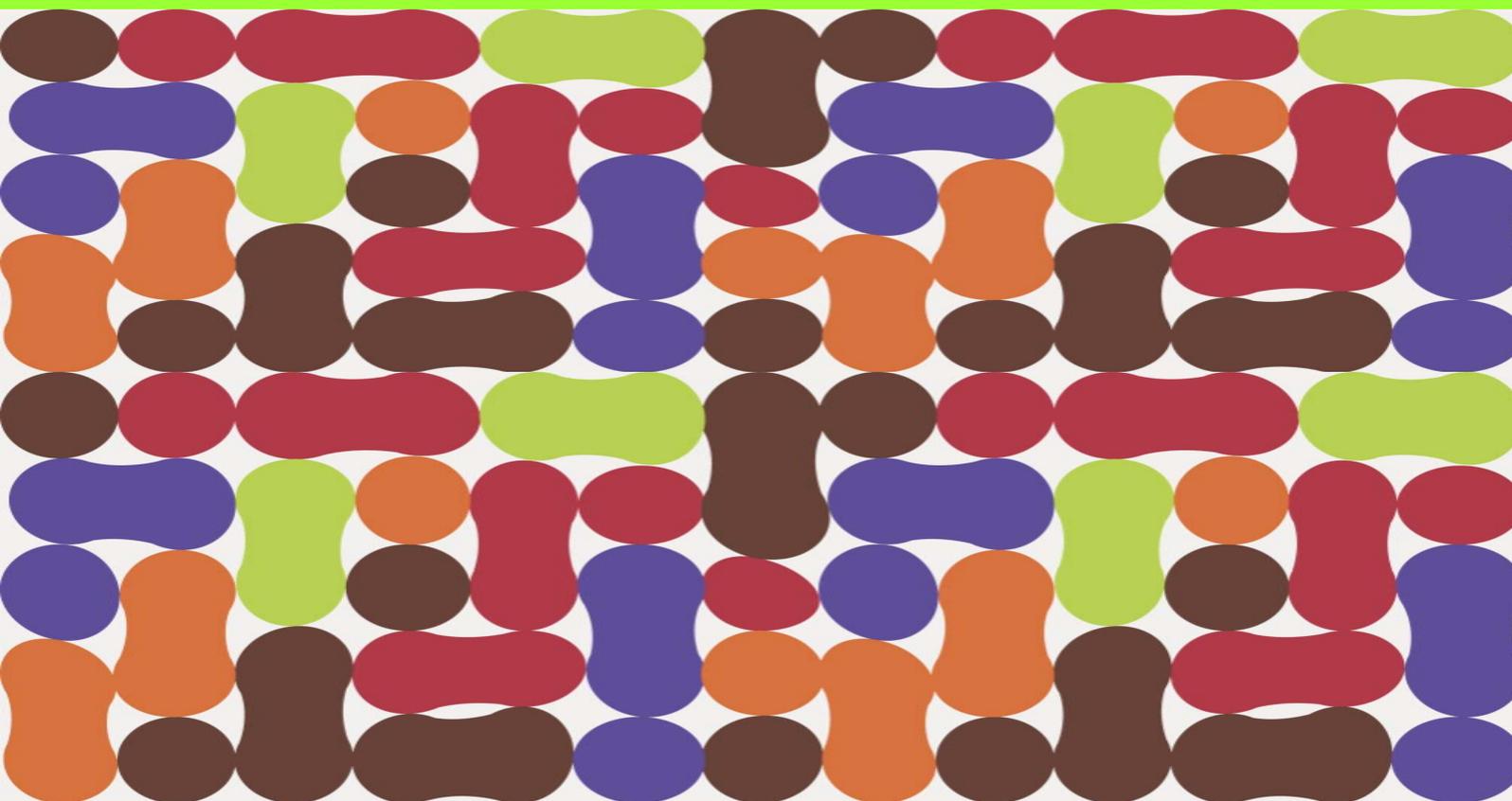


The Future Histories Research Toolkit

for African, Caribbean & Asian Performing Arts Archives

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Theatrical and dramatic forms of expression have been a constant feature of human activity throughout history. They have found expression in a multitude of ways according to different cultural and geographical settings, and to the social and cultural purposes they served. With reference to the notion of theatre historiography, an important distinction needs to be made between ‘theatrical manifestations’ that spontaneously occur in the course of human activities, and those that are specifically aimed at creating cultural events recognised as theatre within a given culture. The latter are recognised as the object of theatre studies, therefore it is to these events that this toolkit will refer as the basis of research in theatre history and criticism in Europe and the UK.

Notwithstanding my attempts to circumscribe the field of investigation, creating a toolkit for researchers of black theatre and performance in the UK is a daunting task. There is a vast academic bibliography, which has been produced to assist researchers in the practice of ‘making research’ within social sciences and history. This toolkit is not intended to add anything substantial to the methodological approaches extensively analysed by other academics and educationalists in social sciences (see the selected bibliography for references). Neither, could it take the place of individual course leaders of study programmes in universities and other higher education institutions whose approaches and methodologies of research will vary according to areas of studies, academic interests and preferences. Therefore a different strategic approach needs to be identified to make this piece of work useful for both students and the general public alike.

It soon became apparent to me that the main object of writing a research toolkit on the methodology of research in black theatre in the UK was to create an easy instrument for readers and possibly new researchers who want to enter this area of study and research. This idea arose from a conversation with a friend and colleague who works in the arts and heritage industry. While discussing issues around documentations of the artistic achievements of people of African and Asian heritage in the UK, she told me about a professional writer who had recently embarked in the writing of a fictional book based on the story of a young man who is tracing back his father’s life and career as dancer and leader of a black dance company operating in London in the 1960s. In order to do this the writer had to engage with the unfamiliar process of researching archives and other historical documents to reveal and write about such a past. Apparently, had the writer been trained in historical research or in possession of some tools to facilitate the process, the work would have been straightforward and far less laborious, which would have in turn facilitated the research process and benefited her work.

In offering some signposts for direction and posing questions for reflection, I hope to support young and new researchers in their investigations in the field, while at the same time trigger their interest in the investigation of an area of British theatre history which still awaits to be fully uncovered not only by academics, but by the wider world of students, artists and theatre professionals. To facilitate the process, the first section of the toolkit will explore some theoretical questions related to methodological approaches used for setting up and conducting a research project, reflecting on some philosophical issues ingrained within the said process. The section will close with some tips aimed at facilitating the application of these theories in the practice of research. The second part will explore the nature of archives in order to acquaint researchers with the terminologies and systems of organisation of primary sources (that is, direct traces of the past) and to facilitate access to them. The third part will use the Trading Faces online exhibition (www.tradingfaceonline.com) as a case study to show researchers possible ways of using online resources as part of their research project, with particular reference to two productions showcased in the exhibition. A list of useful websites and other resources is included in the appendix while the selected bibliography aims to stimulate further reading.

1.1 General issues of theatre research

The first issue to consider in approaching the subject is that engaging with theatre research invariably means learning how to come to grips with absence or, as Peggy Phelan would say, ‘disappearance’¹.

Theatre is hinged on the moment, a transient event which only leaves multiple and incomplete traces of its passage. Distinct from other object-based art forms, theatre belongs to the specific time and space of its production and consumption. Our effort, as historians and analysts, is to look back at such traces in the attempt to recompose, re-construct the event in our present time and space, referencing both the past and the present.

This intrinsic nature of theatre historiography manifests itself fully in the challenges encountered by historians in the study of the origins of theatre, as they come to terms with the scarcity of testimonies and material evidence of early performances compared to those researching contemporary performance. There are many hypotheses concerning the origins of theatre, which were mostly developed within the field of anthropological studies and put forward by academics and researchers from the end of the 19th century. Whilst the remit of the present work does not allow for detailed examination of the various theories and schools of thought over the last two centuries, it is interesting to note that most of these theories converge on the idea of an intrinsic interrelation between ritual and the origins of theatre². This is particularly important in the study of theatre of African and Asian origins in the UK, as its multifarious manifestations often retain a connection with the world of ancestral rituals. Moreover, both theatre and ritual share a significant function in society, as they offer interpretative tools that support human beings in their attempts to achieve order through form, while representing ideas and relational models, which are reflective of a certain time and place in history. This is an element to consider when approaching British African and Asian theatre.

¹ See *The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction*, in Phelan P, *Unmarked, The Politics of Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993)

² Frazer J, *The Golden Bough* (New York: Dover Publications, 2002); Kirby E T, *Ur Drama: The Origins of the Theatre* (New York: New York University Press, 1975); Lévy-Strauss C, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966)

In this respect, theatre is at the same time the product and the mirror of its time and social milieu. It represents an arena in which events that are relevant to the life of a community, both from its centre and margins, are either 'institutionalized' through specific aesthetic conventions or, when they sit uncomfortably within the recognised social framework as being unconventional, inappropriate or simply 'different' from the norm, are relegated to a space for expression which is often seen as problematic. The process of negotiation of such space of expression is a factor of particular relevance in the study of the history of British African and Asian theatre.

Another intrinsic element that characterizes theatre is that it is made up of a variety of artistic languages, including literature, music, dance, three dimensional arts, and painting, to mention just a few. This makes theatre a unique space of negotiation amongst different social, political and aesthetic realities and certainly one of the most fascinating and complex areas of research in human cultural production. It also explains why, in researching and analyzing theatre, it is necessary to use a variety of interpretative tools which belong to the social sciences as well as art theory and history.

Whilst the above consideration refers to theatre in general, a crucial point to consider when studying and researching British African and Asian theatre is that, in academic terms, this is a relatively recent area of interest. While the 1990s witnessed an increased interest in the study of this area of British arts and culture with some publications finally hitting the bookshelves of shops and libraries, from an archival point of view, efforts to make primary resources more widely available and easily accessible to researchers, especially those who are young and inexperienced, have been rather slow and fragmented. This delay in tackling issues around preservation and access to archives of African and Asian theatre companies and individual artists negatively impacts on the age and cross-cultural composition of these teams of researchers. Therefore research is often conducted by experienced academics already in possession of extensive knowledge of institutional archive repositories, who are better equipped to orient themselves within the mass of mixed archive files and folders that contain documents and other pieces of evidence illustrating the history of British theatre in the last three or four hundred years. As a result, the field of research tends to lack contributions from younger generations of researchers with different points of view and approaches. While this will form the subject of the second part of this toolkit, this section aims to offer readers some indications of the methodological approaches often used in research practice to support the development of new researchers in the field.

The three main areas of activity common to any research process in social sciences and history are:

1. investigation of the subject
2. fieldwork, analysis and synthesis of the material
3. communication of the results

While the above classification identifies the main cluster of activities involved in the research process, theatre historians and social scientists tend to disagree with any rigid schematization of areas of work during the course of the research. Overlaps, returns and leaps forward often occur, making the practice of academic research a far more fluid activity than any theorization would suggest. At the same time, it is important to recognize that the world of speculative ideas, opinions and beliefs represented by theorists and philosophers, has molded and re-molded the practice of research in Europe and Britain, impacting on the way we pose questions, engage with fieldwork and communicate our findings. Such theories represent part of the intellectual resources available to us during the research process, as they can be used to guide our steps and define our methodological approaches to our subject area.

In consideration of the various 'isms' that have characterized the western academy during the last century, this section will include references to writers, psychoanalysts and philosophers whose views have significantly impacted on the way anthropological research and theatre historiography are practiced today, with the view of helping researchers in the process of thinking about generating questions. These intellectuals have been responsible for detaching research from the 'objective' stance which was the feature of enlightenment and positivist approaches, reflecting on the subjectivity of the researcher (i.e. the agent of production and dissemination of knowledge), making direct references to his/her own time and space³. This is particularly relevant to our field of research, as studies on black theatre and performance emerged in Europe and the UK as a result of the wider attempt of opening up academic institutions to a range of voices previously excluded from them and other centers of power - the voices of women, people of African and Asian descent amongst other communities, and marginalised social groups.

³ Positivism is a philosophy which has consistently run through the history of western thought. Positivism sees as authentic only that system of knowledge based on 'objective' truths, which can be perceived through the senses and are therefore objective, neutral and uninfluenced by individual interpretations. The term was coined by the anthropologist Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857) who suggested that a scientific rational method should replace metaphysical approaches to history and social sciences, influencing the subsequent development of western historiography and anthropology.

1.2 Generating research questions

The first concession to make in tackling the issue of ‘investigating the subject’ and ‘generating research questions’ is that, as already mentioned in the introduction, research is never a linear process. It rather resembles the way the human mind works, jumping forward and coming backwards, sometimes posing questions that anticipate answers, while at other times maintaining a questioning stance throughout the research process without any real aim of reaching a definite answer. In this respect the processes of elaborating questions, doing fieldwork, and writing up research overlap each other in a variety of ways. It is often the case that in trying to ‘make order’ amongst the information already published within our chosen field of research, questions will emerge from the material as a result of our active critical engagement with this body of work. Then, during the process of doing fieldwork, it might well be that we need to go back to some of these initial questions to redefine and attune them to the material gathered during the fieldwork. This reflective approach will often continue during the process of writing our research outcomes and is not only a result of our engagement with the world of speculative ideas, opinion and belief, but also of the dialogue which we establish with archival or unpublished material as and when we encounter it.

Another issue to consider in working towards our research questions is the impact of philosophical thinking and the uses it can be put to reflect not only on our individual beliefs and leanings, but also to find interpretative tools for the material we are about to analyse. We might decide to privilege certain theorists and/or philosophers in relation to the material we are focusing on, be it text, visual elements of the *mise-en-scène*, acting techniques, and so on. More generally, philosophical thinking can be very useful to explore the complex subject of language and its implications in the research process. Whilst this toolkit cannot explore in detail this specific issue, it is important to mention some of the philosophers who have concerned themselves with analyzing the ways in which existing vocabularies and ways of thinking are entrenched in language therefore conditioning our research practice from within. Their theories can be an invaluable tool for reflection and help us to reconsider our position towards our chosen subject of analysis. The brief excursus which follows is aimed at providing summary indications which might help researchers to find the most appropriate approach for individual needs.

In order to disentangle the researcher from preconceived ideas when developing research questions and liberating new meanings from the material analysed, the North American philosopher Richard Rorty suggests the use of re-descriptions and metaphors. This would help to construct new descriptions of something that has already been the object of historical analysis and pose questions in a different way (Rorty, 1989). On the other hand, the French philosopher Michel Foucault offers an extremely useful

analysis of the interconnectedness between knowledge and power, and more specifically the way in which hegemonic “discursive practices” within a given field of research can limit the way we might approach the subject, as they represent models for the elaboration of concepts and ideas to which we are obliged to abide ‘to make sense’. Foucault warns us of the complexity of issues that need to be faced in the attempt to elaborate research questions that open up new possibilities of meaning, while resisting parameters that would make our questions relevant and meaningful within the given academic context, but at the expenses of creativity and innovation⁴.

This is particularly important in the context of our field of research considering that language has historically represented one of the most effective tools in the construction of so called “racialised boundaries”, articulating “processes of exclusion and subordination” based on race and class within British society⁵. Language is the field where such practices have been variously activated, impacting on the way a reviewer would describe a performance, a programmer articulate his/her reasons for programming or, more often, not programming a play by a black author, or a historian describe a theatre piece or the work of a theatre company.

Another issue to consider in relation to language is the fact that many of the cultures represented by black theatre were traditionally based on oral systems of knowledge transmission. This practice defies methodological approaches originally devised for the analysis of written texts and other material documents. Therefore in defining our research questions, not only do we need to reflect on philosophical issues related to the production of discourse and the use of language in secondary material (that is interpretative texts and secondary resources), but the ways in which language has been used by black practitioners during the process of making theatre - for example the ways in which traditional stories and legends were orally transmitted in African cultures and later incorporated in play texts and other written material by playwrights, or the ways in which a dialogue based on a ‘call and response’ practice is established by the actors with their black audiences during a performance, and so on.

⁴ Foucault M, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002)

⁵ This term is borrowed by the study on ethnicity and racism by Anthias F and Yuval-Davis N, *Racialized Boundaries – Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-Racist Struggle* (London: Routledge, 1996).

In this respect it might be useful for researchers to explore the ideas of philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze and their “ontology of becoming”, which objects to any form of essentialism in the analysis of cultural phenomena, a subject extensively explored by the seminal writings of black theorists and sociologists such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. While the writings of these philosophers and theorists are invaluable in offering us critical perspectives on the interplay of different elements within our field of research and the multitude of views we need to consider when elaborating our research questions, another significant tool to use for generating our research questions is feminist criticism and analysis. In particular, the writings of feminist philosophers such as Luce Irigaray and Elisabeth Grosz, the black feminist activist and writer bell hooks and the literary critic and theorist Gayatri Spivak, amongst others, explore notions of the body as being socially constructed and ordered, a concept which can be of significant use in the analysis of our field of research. In light of the fact that theatre is not a ‘solid’ art form which can be identified with an object, its complex construction requires interpretative approaches that take into account concepts such ‘permeability’ and bodily morphology. This takes us back to the issue of the subjectivity of the producer and consumer of the cultural event, and to the philosophical implications connected to the idea of the body being ‘written’ by discourse, more specifically dominant discourse, which often reflects a set of values extraneous to such body.

Considering that feminist philosophers have been re-thinking such categories, they can offer interesting insights on the subject and help us generate research questions that can support and stimulate our fieldwork and writing practice. The feminist perspective can help researchers to focus on a number of critical and historical matters, such as the representation of the black actor’s body through discursive hegemonic practices adopted by theatre critics and other professionals, or the ‘physicality’ of the cultural decoder and its impact on the way theatre is experienced (i.e. the physicality of the critic, members of the audience, etc).

From the above it appears that the creative interaction between different philosophical and cultural references and the material gathered during preliminary work, together with our own personal intuitions, will eventually facilitate the questions to arise from our field and, thanks to a process of re-molding and re-shaping of such questions, and direct the research process through its various moments.

TIPS ON GENERATING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Philosophical texts and cultural theories can help to frame the aesthetic and social culture references of our field of investigation to formulate questions.
2. Theatre practice is a complex negotiation between different art forms and its analysis might require a variety of textual references relating to each of these elements.
3. Reconsideration of the ‘object’ of analysis – is it written, spoken, sung, physically or virtually performed? How and why has it become to be identified as an ‘object’ of analysis – is it really that distinct from audience reception and relations?
4. How do the trajectories of performance impact upon our reception of it?
5. How have African and Asian traditions been channelled and transformed in the British context?
6. What part does language play in the recording of theatre?
 - Explore language as a political and cultural arena
 - Consider how has racism and colonialism altered relations between the ‘subject’ and object’
 - Consider how this has affected the archival evidence available to us today
 - Pose questions that can help resisting essentialist views of culture and reflect its nature of “becoming”
 - Consider the body (of an actor, a dancer, a member of the public, a reviewer, etc) not only as an agent of action, but as a space marked by external discursive practices
7. Never be afraid of returning to initial research questions to redefine them in light of the material gathered during the research process.

1.3 Practicing ethics through fieldwork

A common understanding of fieldwork can be paraphrased as a ‘voyage into the unknown’⁶. In a way, such romanticized description evokes the colonial mindset of 18th and 19th century ethnographic voyages of exploration and discovery, suggesting the idea of something previously unknown, which is discovered and is now in need of being translated into a language acceptable to our audiences. In light of the scarcity of secondary resources on this subject area, there is a risk of approaching research in this field with a similar mindset. This represents a serious danger in practicing fieldwork, as many artists of African and Asian descent living and working in Britain are descendants of people who had been subjugated by European imperialism and colonialism and then subjected to hegemonic discursive practices that undermined the value on non-western artistic practices and actively prevented non-Europeans from occupying a position in societies that would recognize them fully as human subjects⁷. Gathering data through fieldwork therefore needs a clear, distinctive mode of addressing the subject of research from the moment we start putting information together and ask ourselves: “How much data do I need?”, “What counts as data?”, “How should I access the cultural intelligence of the communities I am working with?”

Similar to other fields of research, especially in science and anthropology, an issue to consider when establishing the procedures of our fieldwork is the so-called ‘geography of knowledge’, that is to say the way in which we position ourselves with regards to our subject of research and the distance we put between the subject and us. While the 19th century witnessed a fierce debate between those who advocated the importance of a gap between the observer and the observed, and those who believed in the necessity of a full immersion with the subject (this is an approach generally preferred by feminists), it is clear that in either cases objectivity cannot be attained. The issue here is to become aware of the implications that our position within the field will have on our research, how it will influence the knowledge that is produced through the process and the ways in which research will be likely to be received by our audiences. While it has been argued that being in and among the subjects of our research reflects a more ethical stance on the part of the researcher and generally a political engagement with the field (this is, for example, Michel de Certeau’s position on the subject⁸), the interesting element that arises within the black British theatre context is that the field itself subverts the parameters established in the early 20th century by many anthropologists who explored Africa or the South-Asian sub-continent, as

⁶ See Pryke M, Rose G & Whatmore S (ed.) *Using Social Theory. Thinking Through Research* (London: Sage Publications in association with Open University, 2003).

⁷ See Spivak G, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1999)

⁸ See de Certeau M, *Heterologies: Discourses on the Other* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986)

they left Europe to encounter the ‘other’ in foreign countries and far away lands. Since the Windrush and other significant moments in the history of the post Second World War immigration, the ‘other’ has now permanently settled in the British Mother Country, changing the coordinates of ethnographic practice and approaches to fieldwork and data gathering in the UK, although such interest has often been confined to the lower classes of the British social system and very slowly manifested for the arts.

Therefore, whatever the distance from the subject of research, in order to avoid the risks of an unethical stance in the research process, fieldwork will need to be considered as an active engagement, a co-fabrication of meaning with those we are researching, as pointed out by Sarah Whatmore and practiced, amongst others, by the UCL project team “Community Archives and Identities: Documenting and Sustaining Community Heritage”⁹. While participant observation can be an approach which specifically addresses the issue we are dealing with and is a practice which is closer to a notion of data generation rather than data collection, a very interesting contribution to a debate on this question is provided by Latours’s analysis and his reflections on the process of knowledge production, which looks at data not so much as information about the real world, but rather as the result of a mediation between the researcher and the researched.¹⁰

If we were to take on board such a stance, than an interview with an actor, a writer or a theatre director within our field of research would be an outcome of research questions, which were developed by the researcher in a previous moment to that of the interview. At the same time the interview could also be an agent of possible change of these same questions, which could be modified by the outcome of the interview and the wider process of generating data through fieldwork. Such a porous approach would similarly need to be reflected in the writing practice, as the moment of writing up the research findings would need to accommodate a multiplicity of voices and ‘truths’ beyond the voice of the researcher.

This line of thought has led a number of theorists and academics to think about the use of emotions and imagination as important tools in ‘practicing ethics’¹¹. Where biomedical and social science research have established ethical standards as set out by the Research Ethics Committee (which applies the Nuremburg code on ethical research on human beings on more formulaic ethnographic research and work with children, following the Nuremburg trials after the Second World War), such standards have not yet been

⁹ See Pryke M, Rose G & Whatmore S (ed.) *op.cit.* p.67. For information on the UCL project, see report by Flynn A, Stevens M, Shepherd E, *Activists in the Archives: Making History in a Diverse Society* (London: UCL, 2009).

¹⁰ Latour B, *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹¹ Pryke M, Rose G & Whatmore S (ed.) *op.cit.* p. 105.

developed for theatre research and the researcher is often inclined to make best use of ‘good judgment’. This could be seen as the result of a personal disposition developed by the researcher in a number of ways, including performance and other ‘artistic’ practices. Indeed, such practices could not only be seen as the object of research, but directly experienced by the researcher to heighten his/her sensibility and skills when engaging with fieldwork. This is one of the positions which can be assumed in the process of practising ethics. As described by Nigel Thrift: “This is not some grandiose reformulation of the whole basis of western moral thinking. Rather, it is an attempt, often for a very short span of time, to produce a different sense of how things might be, using the resources to hand”¹². How these ‘spaces’ and ‘dispositions’ impact on the formulation of an ethical stance, and create a feeling of trust, therefore facilitating the encounter between the researcher and the subjects within a field of research, remains a subjective matter, which each researcher will need to experience and practice according to his/her own sensibility.

TIPS ON PRACTISING ETHICS THROUGH FIELDWORK

1. How did hegemonic discursive practices impact on fieldwork within African and Asian cultures in the past and what strategies do we need to resist re-enacting them?
2. Consider the implications of fieldwork procedures (establishing a gap between the observer and the observed or a full immersion with the subject) on research outcomes and audiences’ reception.
3. Consider fieldwork as an active engagement, a co-fabrication of meaning with the subjects researched.
4. Is the data gathered through fieldwork carrying information about the real world, or is it the result of mediation between the researcher and the researched?
5. What is the relation between research question and fieldwork, how do they impact on each other?
6. How can emotions and imagination be used as tools in ‘practicing ethics’?
7. How can one engage with artistic practices not only as objects of research, but as tools facilitating the encounter between the researcher and the subjects within a chosen fieldwork?

¹² *Ibidem*, p 119.

1.4 Communicating research outcomes

This final phase of organizing and analyzing data, reviewing bibliographical references, and writing up our research outcomes, or else decide on other convenient mediums to communicate it, can sometimes represent the most daunting task in a research project. This is often the case when the researcher is motivated by the idea of achieving the status of ‘expert’ (as Edward Said put it¹³), or is paralyzed by the prospect of encountering his/her audiences for fear of not rising to their expectations. In both cases, it might be useful to consider that any act of analysis is a process of translation and transformation, which aims to re-contextualize the various elements gathered during the process with the aim of progressing thinking within the given field, rather than providing answers. As discussed in previous parts of this toolkit, it is inevitable that our research outcomes will bear the marks of our subjectivity. In this respect, following de Certeau’s distinction between monologic and heterologic accounts and Bakhtin’s reflections on heteroglossia, a way to circumvent our anxieties about communicating research outcomes, could be to adopt a strategy that better suits our own personality and that of our chosen field of research¹⁴. Do we want to present our findings from a ‘singular’ perspective, or shall we strive towards a style that allows a multiplicity of voices to come through our writing? Already making a conscious decision about this point of view at the beginning of the writing process (whenever that might start to take place during the research) might ease the tension and facilitate the process of communicating findings.

With regards to the ambition for completeness of our research, it is often the case that this expectation will be frustrated. Although we might strive towards completeness, our writings are the result of what preceded us and will serve to prepare the ground for what needs to follow us. It is an open process which cannot be closed without risking a short-circuit, especially when we look at the context in which our research is going to take place, that of black British theatre for which so little research has been published so far and so much still needs to be done with regards to archive cataloguing, data gathering and critical analysis. Rather than worrying about completeness it might be useful to think about our research findings as tools to propel future research in the field and therefore adopting a collective, ‘heterologic’ approach in the re-construction of black theatre events.

With regards to writing style techniques for the presentation of our research findings, space limitations do not allow to explore this vast subject area in depth here. It might suffice to say that the researcher will be presented with multiple choices. The spectrum goes from a more reflexive style to a ‘realist’ one - which was in vogue until the 1970s and, in its effort towards objectivity and transparency, often betrayed an

¹³ See Said E, *Beginnings: Intentions and Method*, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978)

¹⁴ See de Certeau M, *op. cit.*

attempt to mimic the scientific methods of analysis reporting and procedures. While Bakhtin and many other cultural theorists opposed in various ways this mode of presentation, the prospect of finding one's own personal voice to disseminate research can be quite a challenging task for a young researcher¹⁵. In this respect, it might be useful to remember that the act of reading is in itself a powerful tool to increase our abilities in writing, matched by the use of other strategies which can support us in the process. These could include an effort to start writing from the beginning of the research process, in the form of notes, brief daily reports, personal commentaries of events and personal encounters, and so on. In this way, by the time we are about to embark on the task of communicating our findings, we will have already a body of work to draw inspiration from to find alternative ways of presenting our research. The aim here is to learn how to enjoy the process of writing and make this an opportunity for growth and self-discovery apart from completing our research task.

TIPS ON COMMUNICATING RESEARCH OUTCOMES

1. How does the idea of wanting to achieve the status of 'expert' impact on the communication of research outcomes?
2. Is the aim of the research project to progress thinking within a given field, or provide answers?
3. What is heteroglossia? What are the implications of presenting research findings from a 'singular' perspective rather than a 'multiple' one?
4. How can research findings propel future research in the field?
5. To support your personal voice to emerge in the communication of your findings, throughout the research process write notes, brief daily reports, commentaries of events and accounts of personal encounters.

¹⁵ For a close examination of the ways in which a 'dialogical principle' can be used in setting up our research practice see Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981)

1.5 Postelwait's twelve research cruxes

While the paragraphs above aimed at providing a general overview on the main issues at stake in the process of engaging with research in theatre studies as part of other social history disciplines, it is now useful to look at other methodological approaches which are more specifically related to theatre. A particularly useful essay on this subject is Thomas Postlewait's *Historiography and the Theatrical Event. A Primer with Twelve Cruxes*. Used as reference point by a number of theatre studies courses including those at Kingston University, Postlewait's essay is a useful tool for anybody who enters this field of work for the first time, as it leads the reader through the twelve main cruxes that s/he is likely to encounter during the process of researching theatre history. As Postelwait put it:

At the risk of presenting an overly schematic (and perhaps too rudimentary) analysis, I will describe twelve "cruxes" that the historian faces in the interrelated processes of investigating, analyzing, and reporting. These dozen cruxes, though lacking the status of axioms for historical scholarship, are fundamental conditions of the historical perspective¹⁶.

While the present toolkit does not allow scope for an in-depth exploration of these twelve moments in a research project (this is an exercise which might be better practiced individually by readers with the support of Postlewait's original essay), it is useful to look at them in order to have a general understanding of the specific tasks ahead, with reference to terminologies and issues raised in the previous paragraphs.

1. The causes, motivations, aims, and purposes of the initiating agent or agents of a historical event

This point mainly refers to motivations and aims of the director, actors and other members of the creative team. Although these motivations can never be recovered in full, various documents should be consulted to determine why and how that event occurred as an expression of the agent's purposes. Such documents may include personal correspondence, notes and personal diaries, to mention but a few.

2. The encompassing conditions that directly and indirectly contributed to the event's manifest identity and intelligibility

As Postlewait suggests "theatre is not a self-contained, aesthetic enterprise", hence this point refers to the social, cultural, political and aesthetic context in which the theatre event took place. It also suggests

¹⁶ See Thomas Postlewait, "Historiography and the Theatrical Event. A Primer with Twelve Cruxes," *Theatre Journal* 43 (1991). Available online at <http://links.jstor.org/journals/jhup.html>

looking at issues related to theatre production and consumption of the time. Considering that each historian will have a different knowledge and perspective of local, national and international signifying factors, interpretations of the same theatre event will vary accordingly.

3. The signifying codes, values, and systems that constituted the event as a comprehensible occurrence in its own time

This point refers to the semiotics of performance and the position held by a particular theatre event in relation to the theatrical conventions, artistic trends and other cultural signifiers at the time of the theatre production. It connects semiotics and theatre history in an attempt to recognize the impact that ‘discourse’ (and the way it articulates meaning at a given time) has on the event both for its production and as an element of reflection.

4. The partial documentation of the event by a limited number of the participants, witnesses and social organizations

This point refers to documents produced by the participants to the live event and those who had attended the performance. Presence or absence of these documents will have a significant influence on the way a performance is studied and on the interpretative angles that will be taken by the theatre historian, as documents and original testimonies will inevitably reflect the point of view of the individuals who produced them. These could include letters by audience members to members of the creative team or the theatre venue, and for more recent productions emails, notes posted on blogs, etc.

5. The extraneous or extrinsic causes that modify, limit, or distort a document’s reliability

This point refers to those external factors that might limit the reliability of a document, as the historical fact might have been distorted by the person who produced the document or might be tainted by bias of some kind (for example, in the case of black theatre studies, racial stereotypes could play a significant role in the way some theatre reviewers would assess a play). It is therefore necessary that evidence of a certain kind is checked against other evidence to ascertain the facts as they might have more likely happened for example: to check various reviews against each others.

6. *The conditions affecting the preservation and subsequent survival, however piecemeal and random, of the documents of records*

The point here refers to the fact that live events go mostly unrecorded and that when information and documents are retained these are inevitably incomplete and stored in an unsystematic way. The second part of this toolkit will offer a more in-depth analysis of issues related to documentation. Here it might suffice to say, that issues regarding documentation not only refer to the quality and quantity of material retained, but also the way in which such material was collected, preserved and transmitted to us, as this might reflect values and perspectives which are different from those of the people originally involved in the performance. For example, for a play based on storytelling and active audience' involvement, the director might have privileged records related to audience' spontaneous responses, while the administrator of the theatre venue in charge of collecting documents of the performances might have only retained papers such as the script or a publicity flyer.

7. *The process that identifies the event as noteworthy and significant, thus giving it historical status, often to the exclusion of other events*

As described by Postelwait, this process of identification and valuation of a theatre performance follows two stages: firstly, that of attributing value according to the specific parameters operating at the time of the production; secondly, that of the common practice of historians who normally follow in the footsteps of those who came before, especially as interest will arise in consideration of the availability of material documenting the event. This complex process of attributing value to a theatre performance is particularly problematic in the case of black theatre pre 1970s, considering that the "initiating process", as Postelwait describes it, occurred at a time when the British theatre industry was mostly in the hands of white British men who did not always have sufficient knowledge or interest in traditions and techniques originated outside Europe and therefore did not attribute value to certain performances taking place in Britain which would make use of those traditions and techniques. This domino effect lasted for a long period of time and might explain why research on black theatre has developed at a slow pace.

8. *The commentary that builds up, person by person, age by age, around the testimony, describing and circumscribing it*

This point is of particular relevance to black theatre history and research because "once a specific event attains historical significance, through documentation and commentary, subsequent historians are drawn to it"¹⁷. Therefore the absence of information on black theatre in British theatre history books can only

¹⁷ Ibidem, p.17.

be counteracted if the system of values is changed and what is defined as valuable by one generation of historians and academics is not necessarily what is defined as valuable by the next ones. The process might also imply a revision of the critique produced so far, establishing new aesthetic parameters for British theatre history in more general terms, including black theatre not as a niche aspect of the past, but an integral element of it.

9. The codes, discourses, values and cultural systems of the historian's own time that shape understanding

This point takes us back to the consideration that, as human beings, we are bound to our life time and therefore the meaning we give to historical events will inevitably reflect the ideas, values and discourses of the time in which we live and that we bring with us. The point has already been explored in previous paragraphs of this section, in particular the one related to generating questions, and represents the testing ground for any theatre researcher who decides to set up a dynamic dialogue between the past and the present through his/her research. As suggested by Postelwait: “The historian’s task, then, is the reenactment of past thought in his or her own mind – with the understanding that the past is a different, if not undiscovered, country. (...) In these terms we are always writing two histories simultaneously”.¹⁸

10. The ideas of change that historians use to describe sequences and interpret causes of events

The critical issue of change, the way we think about it and the impact it has on the way we, and the people who took part or observed the sequence of events arrange them in a meaningful order, are just some of the questions raised by Postelwait on this point. In addition to this, it might be useful to consider that, with regards to black theatre in the UK a diachronic approach – which explores change as a sequence of events – needs to be matched by an awareness of the synchronic intersection of different histories in the same time and space, that is the interrelation between different cultural settings articulated by black artists living and working in Britain. To give an example of how this consideration might affect our interpretative act, I would like to refer to the way in which the concept of circularity has been used in the Trading Faces online exhibition to articulate both conceptually and visually the experience of the African diaspora in the UK as emblem of a process which has no defined start and end. For example, an art form represented in the 19th century could have originated in Africa, developed in the Caribbean and then produced in Europe/UK. In more recent times, there could be a production originally devised in Africa, which then toured to the UK and was eventually imported in the Caribbean. The interpretation and impact of the concept of change will therefore need to be analysed within synchronic co-ordinates

¹⁸ Postelwait, *op.cit.*

that take into account the specificity of the black experience, to be embraced and reflected upon through the researcher's interpretative act.

11. *The rhetorical tropes and narrative structures that historians use to construct the past*

Here Postelwait deals with the unavoidable gap existing between the historical facts as they happened and the historian's narration of such events. In particular, he makes reference to the historian's use of rhetorical tropes such as metaphor, metonymy, and irony, together with narrative structures including description, plot, theme, and character to "impose coherence, continuity and closure on past events", although, as he points out, the effort will be always "insufficient because we can never comprehend the fullness and heterogeneity of human existence"¹⁹. It is important to note that these strategies are adopted not to distort reality, but rather to reflect the intrinsic narrative quality of the documents that form part of our research and facilitate our communication of the outcomes, as discussed in the previous paragraph that specifically focused on the issue of communication in order to stimulate readers' engagement with our work.

12. *The reading formations, assumptions, values, and expectations of each person who, as audience for the historical report, attempts to understand what is written about the event*

The point raised here refers to the crucial role played by readership in the creation, rather than simply the consumption, of any historical research. While Postelwait makes explicit that the reader always "adds to, subtracts from, modifies, and even nullifies what the historian writes", it is important to note that the 1960s and 1970s witnessed an increased interest in "reader-response" theories, re-writing the way readership has been seen not only in the context of historical and literary texts, but also in theatre²⁰. While the crucial role played by audiences in the production of a theatre event has been widely explored by academics, it might be interesting to consider that the way we communicate our research findings will inevitably create different affiliations with our audiences, as the relationship with audiences needs to be seen in the context of a shared responsibility towards the outcomes of our research²¹. Gayatri Spivak description of audiences as "co-investigators" brings back into focus the idea that a writing strategy might need to adopt a multiplication of modes of writing if we want our text to be open to a multiplicity of voices both in its production and reception²². The ways in which this might take place, will inevitably

¹⁹ Postelwait, *op. cit.*

²⁰ *Ibidem*

²¹ For an account of theories of spectatorship see Bennet S, *Theatre Audiences. A Theory of Production and Reception* (London: Routledge, 1997)

²² Spivak G, 'In a Word. Interview' with Ellen Rooney, in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2 (Summer, 1989), pp 124 - 56

reflect the researcher's inclinations, personal beliefs and, again, philosophical positions. This is a creative and ethical act which brings along with it self-reflexivity and active engagement.

2.1 Issues around archiving black theatre

The following section aims to help students and researchers to become familiar with issues around archives, documentation and recording of historical material and documents related to theatre, with the aim of facilitating access, research and possible creative uses and interpretation. Before we enter this area of analysis, it is important to note that until the twentieth century those challenges in theatre historiography which have been explored in the previous section and are mostly due to the ephemeral nature of live performance, also impacted on the perception of this area of study within the academic world, as scholarly research on theatre and performance was not deemed as important as in other areas and consequently the practice of collecting and preserving historical theatrical documents related to it.

While this is true for theatre in general, over the past few years it has been generally recognised that many of the communities from the African and Asian diaspora have limited and incomplete records of their historical presence, contributions and journeys to the UK. In particular, the need for archiving the cultural heritage of people of African, Asian and Caribbean descent in the UK has been highlighted in a number of studies and reports (see selected bibliography) as a lack of documents resulted in limited research and publications in this area. The case is even more widespread in the performing arts sector. During his research for the ADAD Exhibition *Moments in Black Dance in Britain 1930-1990*, Assistant Curator, Dick Machet, found that archives within Black Dance companies *'were not extensive enough and companies rarely kept archives in date order.'*²³ A similar situation existed for theatre, although a number of companies archives have been more recently catalogued and made accessible through the work of independent organizations such as Future Histories, SALIDAA (South Asian Literature and Arts), LIFT Living Archives, the George Padmore Institute and institutions such as V&A and London Metropolitan archives to mention a few.

This critical recognition is in part due to the acknowledgement of the negative effects that the lack of documentation has on the representation of the diversity of British culture. At the same time it is important to note that historical accounts, customs and traditions originating in non-Western cultures are often bound to an oral history tradition. This presents a challenge in western societies, which mainly transmit culture through written documents and texts. It also poses questions about the most appropriate ways of documenting histories known to members of the older generations which, if unrecorded, will be inevitably lost. From this perspective it is clear that this is a two-way system that requires the active

²³ Cited in 'Meeting with Funmi Adewole, Project Consultant' Minutes of meeting with Funmi Adewole and Alda Terracciano, 24 January 2008, Blythe House, London.

involvement of the communities of African and Asian descent, but also a shift in the practice of collecting and archiving. The last point has been progressively embraced by the heritage sector and involves a reassessment of:

- The types of material collected (to include for example audio/cultural material)
- The terminology associated with collections – broadening the keywords that help to find an image or text, even if this includes historically negative terms.
- Contextual research – making wider links with archives held in mainstream institutions which have not been previously catalogued with specific attention to showing content referring to black theatre, including the contributions of collectors from diverse communities.

Ultimately the lack of documentation and inaccessibility of archive records can result in the limited circulation of information on the artistic achievements of people of African and Asian descent in the UK; further disadvantage for future generations from gaining a full appraisal of the different cultural elements making up their identities; and the removal of crucial links with non-European cultures and traditions within the UK with the effect of cultural dislocation and identity fragmentation.

While this toolkit is not designed to offer solutions to the issues raised above, it is important to consider the impact that such issues have on academic research and, in particular, on the scarcity of secondary resources on the subject of black theatre in the UK. They also offer a wider perspective to researchers entering this field of studies to reflect upon some of the crucial issues of preservation and access to primary sources which have affected this area. Notwithstanding such issues, one of the aims of this toolkit is to familiarize researchers with the use of archival resources. Therefore, rather than entering a field of cultural analysis, the following paragraphs will explore in more detail the nature of performing arts archives, the way in which they are organised and the kind of material they normally contain to help researchers who wish to visit archive repositories making the best use of the available resources.

2.2 What are archives?

Archives are records and documents created in the normal course of the life of an institution, family or individual, regardless of medium, which have been selected for permanent preservation due to the attribution of value as primary source material. Thus, an archive is a cohesive body of original documents emanating from one source. Strictly speaking, archives are a by-product of activities and functions, not deliberately and consciously created for their own sake. However, the term is now used much more

loosely to cover any primary source material whatever its origin including “artificial” collections, so-called because they have been consciously put together, usually around a subject area e.g. a collection of London theatre programmes. Also the term “archive” can be used to describe the physical place where records are held, otherwise known as a repository. Resource centres are sometimes referred to as archives when they are, in fact, collections of information resources. However, they often contain primary resource materials which should be treated as archives.

The way archival records are described is through details of their provenance, date, content, relationship to other records and a reference number. The aim is to give the person consulting such a list enough information to decide whether it is worth viewing the document or not. Such descriptions are generally produced according to an accepted international standard for creating archival descriptions: the International Standard on Archival Description (General) - ISAD(G) for short - published by the International Council on Archives. The essential ISAD(G) elements for the exchange of descriptive information are:

- Reference code
- Title
- Creator
- Dates
- Level of description
- Extent and medium of the unit of description

This information is then supported by ‘finding aids’, or ways of presenting information about the contents of an archive. Such finding aids help researchers to find what they want to look at and are used to locate the archive material and information required. Various types of finding aids fulfill different purposes. They include:

- Catalogues – detailed, structured descriptions of individual archives or collections
- Box lists – initial list of contents of each container
- Indexes – alphabetical details of personal, place and corporate names, and subjects
- Introductory leaflet – giving background and brief details of the collection
- Location lists – details of where the records are stored (for archivist/custodian use only)

Such finding aids can be made available in hard copy or automated format in the repository; mounted on websites on the Internet (e.g. Future Histories websites at www.futurehistories.org.uk) or through archive portals in the National Archival Network (e.g. A2A: Access to Archives network accessible on www.a2a.org.uk). Resources can also be made available in digitised format – i.e. ‘electronic photographs’ or digital images of the original records. These are often supported by captions, indexes or other finding aids as in the case of the Trading Faces online exhibition. The advantage of accessing digital resources is that they can offer an insight into the kind of material available in a given repository and therefore facilitate the research *in situ* of the original documents. Moreover, digital information can often be found through search engines on websites facilitating initial steps in the research process.

It is difficult to compile an exhaustive list of material which is held in theatre archives. However the following might provide a guideline to the types of documents which will usually be identified as the archives of a performance company, catalogued by archivists and used by researchers. They may be created by the company as a whole, by administrative or production staff or by individuals (director, performers, etc). The aim is to provide a record of the running of the company and of the creative process of each production. An archive might therefore include:

- Documents recording the establishment of the company (these may be formal declarations, informal notes or a compilation from various sources)
- Mission statement or any other statement of the ethos and aims of the company
- Minutes of the governing body and any other committees with agendas and supporting papers
- Business plans
- One copy of each programme, poster, leaflet, flier or any other publicity material
- Legal documents e.g. leases, contracts
- Project/production proposals (whether pursued or not) and reports
- Official copies of annual accounts
- Summary records of funding applications
- Summary records of staff and performers
- Pre-production records e.g. brainstorming session notes, costume sketches, and artwork
- Production records e.g. scripts, rehearsal notes, set designs, show reports, touring schedules
- Production and other administration files which document the practicalities and logistics of coordinating and staging the projects liaising with other organisations and/or individuals, fund-raising events

- Press cuttings, reviews and publications where these are specific to the company, its productions and principal individuals
- Photographs, films, videos, DVDs, sound recordings where these are a by-product of the organisation's activities e.g. production photos, recordings of performances, etc.
- Costume components, props and set models where these are needed to understand the staging of the performance

These documents are generally preserved in appropriate conditions when stored in public repositories, which cannot be assured in private repositories and collections.

2.3 Documenting and recording theatre

Retaining information produced during the course of a theatre production and preserving it for future reference is what is required to facilitate any future research based activity. With regards to black theatre, this is particularly important as preservation and access to information could widen the range of choice for young generations of researchers and artists accessing contemporary forms of arts and culture originating in Africa and Asia and produced in the UK of which very little is known. At the risk of repetition, it is useful to remember that leaflets and programmes of shows can lead to an understanding of the choice of language used by artists to represent their work and the ways of communicating with their targeted audiences; photographic records can shed a light on the theatre techniques used in performance; prompt books can be used to assess staging techniques and choreographies; directors/choreographers' notes can help to retrace the artists' creative process; audience surveys and stage manager reports can help identify audience' response and trends in cultural consumption. Only on the basis of access to these documents and others can we attempt to re-construct performance.

Indeed, a number of projects aimed at documenting and recording black theatre have taken place in the UK over the last few years. Amongst them is the V&A Theatre Collection project 'Watching, Making, Shaping' (WMS) training course which run for two years between 2006 and 2008 and focused on issues surrounding the video recording of so called 'culturally diverse theatre', examining different methods of recording performing arts, reasons as to why relatively little material is in the public archive, and possibilities for future developments²⁴. Through such a programme, several black theatre performances

²⁴ Here I need to note that the presence of black practitioners on the British stage dates back a few centuries and has therefore widely contributed to the transformations of what is known as theatre in the UK. In the same way as black British people are integral components of British society, art forms originated outside the UK, which were assimilated in the cultural fabric of the country through them, can no longer be considered 'exotic' deviations from

were recorded and are now available for consultation through the V&A National Video Archive of Performance (NVAP) (see Appendix 1 for references).

When discussing issues of recording, it is important to consider that while the photographs and video recordings now available to researchers unquestionably offer new enhanced tools for the interpretation of past events (so much richer and more detailed than any other paper-based documents), such media cannot overcome the ontological impossibility of any live event being authentically and fully represented through any one record. Neither the photo nor the video recording of a theatre performance can ever substitute for the event. They can only provide a reliable and rich document to be used for critical and historical analysis in conjunction with others.

More specifically, there are crucial issues to consider when analyzing video audio material. Video recordings can often alter the lighting design of a show, as a video camera requires a certain level of light to capture moving images from the one designed for the live performance. Video recordings are also inevitably incapable of transmitting any information about the ambience in which the show takes place and only rarely can offer some clues about the audience's reaction and its relationship with the actors on stage. When close-ups are used for editing, this change of perspective ineluctably changes the original flow of the show differing from what happened at the time of the performance as it 'cuts out' to specific frames which might have not been intended by the theatre director. More generally, the ability of the human eye to retain a global sense of the scene, while focusing on one specific element of it is lost in a video recording even if the camera shot is wide enough to retain the whole picture of the stage. In extreme cases, shows are changed to make them more suitable to video recording, therefore making the document an even less authentic document to analyse and use to re-construct what actually happened on stage when the piece was not recorded with the camera.

While critical issues around the reconstruction of past events are common to other historical disciplines, what makes the history of theatre a more complex matter is that not only do we have factual information to analyse, but we also need to evaluate the aesthetic qualities of a performance. These can only be fully appreciated through physical presence in the event, which makes the study of any primary resource an intrinsically limited interpretative act. With such limitations in mind it is in this area that video recordings and other visual resources conveying the aesthetic elements of a performance can help towards a more informed reconstruction of the past event, however partial such a reconstruction might be.

the norm. In this respect, to talk of such theatre forms as the product of 'culturally diverse communities' seems redundant and incorrect.

3.1 Finding information on the World Wide Web

The Internet has entered many people's lives and is widely used in the UK for a number of different purposes, including academic research and other kind of research work. In the context of black theatre useful information can be accessed through museums and libraries catalogues, bibliographic databases, government sites, theatre companies' sites and online newspapers.

In light of such variety of information available online, it might be useful to offer some basic techniques for accessing resources on the Internet to help more inexperienced users. I will use references to two productions included in the Trading Faces online exhibition to summarize the series of actions to undertake in searching the WWW.

Step one

Open your web browser. In the address bar at the top of the browser's page type in the website address <http://www.tradingfacesonline.com>

Step 2

Close the Copyright statement page, view the Trading Faces home page and look at the graphics, text and links it contains. Click on the link '**Performing Arts**' on the bottom left of the web page.

Step 3

View the page and click on Start Here. Read through the text on the page and click on '**Narrative of Slavery**' on the right bottom side of the page. First adjust the sound volume on your computer or click on the loudspeaker sign on the top right of the screen if you want to silence the original music score. Click on the arrows at bottom right and left of the screen or click on the 25 years periods to scroll the page right or left. Take the cursor on the white dots appearing on the timeline to view titles and years of the theatre productions. Click on the dot to choose '**In Dahomey**'.

- Click on '**View details of the production**' and look at the text, graphics and digitised item.
- Click on '**More information**' under the image thumbnail to see details of the digitised item appearing on the page.

- Click on **'Show pages'** to see the original digitised article with photos of the music composers and other pages of the item. Use the scroll bar on the right side of the image to go up and down.
- Click **'Back'** to go back to the previous page.
- Click on **'Related archive items'** to see more digitised items on this production.
- Click on the thumbnail of "Review" to open the page with the digitised review.

Right click with your mouse on the image to save the image in a folder on your computer or print this page. *Note: It is a good idea to select the 'Printer friendly version' to avoid losing any text in the printed document.*

- Click on **'Related archive items'** again to make sure you have saved all the reviews available on this production.

Step 4

Click on **'Further resources'** on the right side of the page.

Scroll down the page to find another review or article. Click on the hyperlink to the article made available online by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture through their website.

Save the page from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in your folder or print this page.

Step 5

Now compare the information contained in the two sites.

Read the information you have accessed through the review and the article and make some notes on the contrasting views of the show. You might find it interesting to refer back to these in the light of the issues discussed in the historical essays published in various sections on the website.

Note: Website addresses often change and the links to external sites included in the Further Resources page of the online exhibition were current at the time the activity was put together. However, if you experience difficulties with accessing these pages, the advice is to access the third parties websites directly for an update on where their digitized resources might have been newly located or put it through the internet search engine (e.g. google).

If you wish to explore the other section of the website, go back to on the link **'Performing Arts'** on the bottom left of the web page.

Step 1

View the page and click on Start Here. Read through the text on the page and click on **'Aesthetic Legacy'** on the right bottom side of the page. Take the cursor across the seven symbols to decide which thematic room you want to enter. First adjust the sound volume on your computer or click on the loudspeaker sign on the top right of the screen if you want to silence the original music score. Once the icons of the various productions included in that section appear in the circle, take the cursor on the icons to identify the archive items on display. To see the full item click on it. For example, in the Ritual room click on **"Black and white photograph of dancers on stage in Les Ballet Nègres"** to look at the text and graphics of the digitized item.

- Click on **'Production details'** to have more information about the production. Read text and see images and move your cursor to the title Les Ballet Negre to read information about the dance group.
- Click on **'Related Archive Items'** on the right side of the screen to see more digitised items of that production. Click on the programme of the show in 1948 at the Wimbledon Theatre in London. Click on show pages to see the digitised internal pages of the programme. Use the scroll bar on the right side of the image to go up and down. Click on the image to zoom in. Right click with your mouse on the image to save the image in a folder on your computer or print this page.

Step 2

Click on **'Further resources'** on the right side of the page to see available resources in other repositories.

Scroll down the page to find other information. Click on the hyperlink to the playbill on the Connecting Histories website to see another programme of a Ballet Nègres performance at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in the same year, 1948.

Save the page from the Connecting Histories website in your folder or print this page.

Scroll down the page and click on the Related Links to see the digitized interview to the director Richey Riley. Scroll down the pages and read the text to have more information about the artist.

Step 3

Now compare the information contained in the two sites.

Analyse the information you have accessed through the programmes and the photo to ascertain if it was the same production that toured in England. Contextualize this information with what you have learned about the company from reading the interview with Richey Riley. Now compare this information with the essay published in the dance section of the Trading Faces website to start forming your own critical view on the company.

The above are just examples of how to use digital resources in the context of black theatre and black dance history and research, making reference to freely accessible digital portals which are available for researchers and the general public. They are an invaluable support in the early stages of research, as they can provide useful evidence and an indication of where to research original documents and material for research work.

Appendix - List of some available physical and digital repositories in the UK

Access to Archives (National Archives)

For information and Online resources <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/>

Archives in London and the M25 area

For information and Online resources <http://www.aim25.ac.uk/>

Archives Hub for access to the archives of UK universities and colleges

For information and Online resources <http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk/>

Backstage

<http://www.backstage.ac.uk/>

Birmingham Reference Library

For information and Online resources

Black Cultural Archives

<http://www.bcaheritage.org.uk/>

Bristol University Theatre Collection Dept of Drama

For information and Online resources <http://www.bris.ac.uk/theatreollection/>

British Library

For information and Online resources <http://www.bl.uk/theatrearchive>

Other relevant departments:

British Library – Department of Manuscripts

British Library - National Sound Archive Drama and Literature Collection

British Library - Newspaper Library (Colindale)

Connecting Histories Project

For information and Online resources <http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/>

Future Histories

For information and Online resources <http://www.futurehistories.org.uk>

George Padmore Institute

For information and Online resources <http://www.georgepadmoreinstitute.org/archive>

Laban Centre for Movement and Dance

For information and Online resources http://www.laban.org/building/library_archive.phtml

London Metropolitan Archives

For information and Online resources

http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/LGNL_Services/Leisure_and_culture/Records_and_archives/

Moving Here Project

For information and Online resources <http://www.movinghere.org.uk/>

The Future Histories Research Toolkit
for African, Caribbean and Asian Performing Arts Archive

Museum of London

For information and Online resources <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/>

National Portrait Gallery

For information and Online resources <http://www.npg.org.uk/>

National Resource Centre for Dance University of Surrey

For information and Online resources <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/NRCD/>

National Theatre

For information on Black Theatre archive resources <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk>

Royal Opera House Archive

For information and Online resources <http://www.rohcollections.org.uk/>

SALIDAA (South Asian Diaspora Literature and Arts Archives)

<http://www.salidaa.org.uk/salidaa/site/Collections/Theatre>

V&A Theatre Collections

For information and Online resources

http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/theatre_performance/index.html

For **Video Collection** information and online resources

http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/theatre_performance/videos/index.html

Westminster Archives Centre

For information and Online resources

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/libraries/archives/indexes/guide/guide09/>

Westminster Reference Library

For information and Online resources

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/libraries/special/perform/>

Theatre Voice audio archive

For information and Online resources http://www.theatrevoice.com/the_archive/

Trading Faces Recollecting Slavery Project

For information and Online resources <http://www.tradingfacesonline.com>

Unfinished Histories Project

<http://www.unfinishedhistories.com/>

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