

Collage: A Paradigm for Performance Studies

Amy K. Kilgard

3.3.1

If this were a high tech production, there would be a big screen behind me.

0.5

There are six stories here. Or maybe twenty-five. Or maybe only one. They are, of course, deliberately incomplete, “in crisis” to borrow Brockelman’s concept (35). That is, they exist in multiple worlds simultaneously. They carry something of their previous histories with them, but these histories are differently available to different readers, writers, performers, and scholars. They combine to form a new work, here, but that new work is also incomplete. Perhaps you see a flash of a performer wearing black clothing with red, white, and blue streamers hanging down from her outstretched arms. Perhaps you remember snippets from a conference presentation some years ago. Perhaps you see in your mind’s eye a dissertation collecting dust in a certain Midwestern university library. Or perhaps you feel the soreness left in your shoulders after shifting books in that library or hear the echoes of a lecture from a professor in your first performance studies class or remember the moment of insight from a solo performance you witnessed last week or remember the startling juxtapositions of textures and dimensions in the Joseph Cornell collage exhibit at a museum near you. Those stories are here and not here. But it is not the original stories themselves that are most important for this essay. It is their collision—or more appropriately their constant acts of colliding but never quite crushing each other or subsuming each other or erasing each other or perhaps even meeting each other—that is at issue. These moments of almost violent colliding make up the “crisis” that collage highlights.

The crisis, however, “produce[s] a kind of ethos,” as Brockelman explains further:

In collage, sense is something to be *made* rather than secured: in the final analysis, the experience of collage both insists that we learn to live without guarantees of

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meaning (the reality of “knowing our place”) and opens the possibility for a kind of meaningfulness that we ourselves produce through a process of judgment. And in doing this, it fights precisely the obsessive and paralyzing tendencies of modern culture. This skill, this ability to negotiate richly within a universe no longer answering to medieval demands for metaphysical security, is the ethical bequest of the collage tradition. (37)

I acknowledge and appreciate the work that the collage structure of this essay demands of you, the reader. There are no “guarantees of meaning” (37), at least not in the sense of many traditional essays that have one clear and specific thesis statement that you can walk away articulating. The thesis is in the gaps, in the juxtapositions, and in the (perhaps miraculous) possibilities of the meaning-making process. It is in the crisis of collage.

3.3.2

On September 11, 2003, I was sitting on the couch watching the local news. The teaser had promised a heartwarming, “miraculous” story and I wanted my heart warmed. Or I wasn’t doing anything better.

To be a patriot, at least according to the news, is to consume the “miraculous events” uncovered and replayed for us again and again. I became captivated with the idea.

1.1

If a piece of newspaper can become a bottle, that gives us something to think about in connection with both newspapers and bottles, too. This displaced object has entered a universe for which it was not made and where it retains, in a measure, its strangeness. And this strangeness was what we wanted to make people think about because we were quite aware that our world was becoming very strange and not exactly reassuring. (Picasso, qtd. in Perloff 5)

In Picasso’s discussion of the purpose of collage, he points to the double life of elements in collage work. Something, “a piece of newspaper,” becomes something else, “a bottle” through its movement from one plane, the world of mundane objects, to another, the world of the image in an art work. Perloff explains, “For each element in the collage has a dual function: it refers to an external reality even as its compositional thrust is to undercut the very referentiality it seems to assert” (10). On a very basic level, in the construction of collage, each constitutive element belongs to at least two worlds. As audience members/viewers, we may read these elements using our understanding of their characteristics in both worlds, as well as others, depending on our own histories, backgrounds, and knowledges.

The relationship between constitutive components and new works is significant and contested among performance scholars and traditions. When Kleinau and

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McHughes talk about collage in the oral interpretation tradition, they claim that the new creation “incorporates and overrides the identities of the components” (139). In contrast, some contemporary performance practices conceptualize constitutive components and new works in more complex terms. For example, Goulish describes his understanding of a collage work: “What is a work? A work is an object overflowing its frame converging into a series of other objects each overflowing their frames, not becoming one another, but becoming events, each moving in the direction of their own infinite singularity and difference” (100). This vision of elements or works or signs overflowing hints at the multiplicity proffered by collage as a paradigm.

Brockelman articulates the doubleness/multiplicity of possible readings of collage elements as an exponential progression, and connects this quality to postmodernism: “Collage practices—the gathering of materials from *different* worlds into a single composition demanding a geometrically multiplying double reading of each element—call attention to the irreducible *heterogeneity* of the ‘postmodern condition’” (10-11). Collage requires that readers attend to multiple worlds. And these worlds are not always easy to trace or identify discretely. We may be able to identify some discrete components, but once these components are used in a collage, they resonate with each other element and with the new whole. Each new element contributes another magnitude of resonances, producing more and more possible readings.

3.3.3

“Let me say something about that word: miracle. For too long it’s been used to characterize things or events that, though pleasant, are entirely normal” (Enger 3).

“In [Edmund Burke’s] classification of the sublime he outlines the following qualities: obscurity, power, privations, vastness, infinity, difficulty (requiring vast expenditures of labor and effort), and magnificence. What distinguishes the sublime from the beautiful is that the former is individual and painful, while the second is social and pleasant, resting upon love and its attendant emotions” (Stewart 75).

Click. \$50,000 cloned kitten.

4.1

Collage is founded on a paradox—it presents “a ‘world’ composed of competing and interlocking worlds” (Brockelman 37). Collage navigates this contested space, an unsettled practice, thus creating the possibilities for critical intervention in (or at least dialogue about) the social world. For example, in Max Ernst’s collage “Murdering Airplane,” the central figure in the composition is an airplane made of an image of an airplane with cut out pictures of two large human arms overlaid to make the wings of the plane. In the bottom corner of the collage is a picture of three World War I era

soldiers. Most of the collage is in shades of grey, but the arms of the airplane are in a sepia color. The human hands on the arms are open, suggesting that they have recently dropped bombs on the soldiers in the corner (although there are no physical images in the collage that suggest the bombs). The combination of the mechanized airplane and the human arms is unsettling. The collage medium forces a physical (and not just a conceptual) juxtaposition that highlights the disparity of human flesh and metal fuselage, for example. These images do not belong to the same world. However, in their juxtaposition in this image, we might acknowledge the ways humans and machines are always mutually involved in war. In his book *Aircraft*, Pascoe extends this reading of Ernst's collage: "But then we notice that each of the three figures walking out of the frame has one arm either missing or maimed, and the ghastly possibility emerges: this is not a representation of ordinance at all, but rather of spoil, for instead of being dropped as bombs, the limbs are now propelled away by the rapacious, silver-beaked machine" (22). By utilizing disparate elements, Ernst creates a tension between realistic, pictorial representations of war and evocative and imaginative depictions based in his own experience as a soldier during WWI.

Theorists have described this unsettled quality of collage in several ways. Picasso himself identified a shift in art from *trompe l'oeil* (trick of the eye)—common in Cubist painting—to *trompe l'esprit* (trick of the spirit or "a kind of ontological strangeness" as Vaughan describes it) in collage work (5). This shift suggests a more profound level of engagement between audience members and works of collage.

Perloff describes the unsettled quality of collage as "mise en question"—being constantly open to question (10). This suggests a reflexivity and openness on the part of collage makers and audience members. Collage also has the power to put everything into question by removing texts from one (perhaps familiar) context and putting them in another. This calls on the audience to participate in the act of questioning, asking them to examine their own associations and experiences with the constitutive elements of the collage as well as the themes, ideas, and texts themselves presented in the collage work.

Kuspit conceptualizes the unsettled nature of collage as an art in the process of becoming. He states:

Collage is a demonstration of this process of the many becoming the one, with the one never fully resolved because of the many that continue to impinge upon it. [. . .] Concrecence is, in effect, never finished, however much there may be the illusion of completeness. This is the poetry of becoming—the poetry of relativity—and it is what collage is about: the tentativeness of every unity of being because of the persistence of becoming, even when absolute entity-ness seems achieved. (42)

This seems particularly relevant to performance studies, a discipline that is always in the process of becoming. Vaughan takes this one step further to posit collage as a site for critical investigation and practice. It is precisely because of its unsettled nature, its "ontological strangeness" that collage may be viewed as "framed within an attitude of critique that proposes a provisional, postcolonial view of our worlds and the representations we offer of them" (Vaughan 6). While not all collage artists practice

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their craft with a deliberate critical agenda, the unsettled nature of the form itself opens a space for critical reflection and action.

3.3.4

I got electrocuted, well almost electrocuted, in the summer of 2001, a month and a half before the twin towers fell. I did a lot of things that at first didn't seem particularly connected to my successful progress as a graduate student. I worked at the library and read a lot of books about subjects that I'd forgotten were important to me.

And on the screen there would be a projection of blue sky with wispy clouds appearing and disappearing as if you, the audience, were a giant bird flying through the bluest sky.

4.3

The space was cramped. It was always cramped with books and papers spread around me as I looked at the small screen in between the partitions. The partitions and walls were that color in between tan and yellow that only exists in institutions. Sometimes I would have to look away from the screen when I couldn't take any more of the violent mediated images of the war in Vietnam, and the only thing to turn to was that sickly color.

I went almost every day for a semester to this cubicle in the undergraduate library to do research for my honor's directing thesis: a production of *A Piece of My Heart*, by Shirley Lauro, about the American women who served in Vietnam. I think I watched every movie and video about Vietnam while in that cubicle. At night I would dream horrific and violent nightmares, only to come back to the cubicle the next day to see more horrific and violent images. I read and watched films about war, and women in war, and American and Vietnamese people during war.

And every day I felt more cramped, as if everything was pushing in on me from all sides. I felt like I was going to explode, that I had to explode or be crushed. The partitions and the walls and the images and the nightmares and the words and the people were closing in. And I'm sure the war imagery here is not incidental. And that moment, before exploding or being crushed—wedged, perched, balanced, poised between creation and destruction—that moment, I seek that moment again and again.

3.3.5

The story began, "Last year a local firefighter," I think the reporter said fireman, "lost a precious belonging."

“Peeping chicks at Easter time, spring generally, a clear sunrise after an overcast week—a *miracle*, people say, as if they’ve been educated from greeting cards” (Enger 3).

There’s an enormous chasm that exists for me between the events of September 11, and a news story about a returning flag.

0.2

In our quest to better understand performance studies, it is useful to look to other artistic practices for explanations and inspiration. Ulmer, in his essay “The Object of Post-Criticism,” famously claims, “By most accounts, collage is the single most revolutionary formal innovation in artistic representation to occur in our [twentieth] century” (384). As such, collage is a logical artistic practice to explore for its heuristic potential for performance studies practice. In fact, many performance and theatre scholars and practitioners use collage and related terms and concepts to describe their work. Copeland offers the following examples: “Collage is a principle organizing strategy in the work of Elizabeth LaCompte and the Wooster Group, the plays of Heiner Müller, the theatre pieces of Robert Wilson, the choreography of Pina Bausch, the music of John Zorn, and the films of Jean-Luc Godard, Stanley Kubrick, and Dusan Makavejev” (11). In traditional oral interpretation practice, scholars have used the concepts of collage and assemblage to explain strategies for creating compiled scripts (Kleinau and McHughes; Yordon). Theatre creators Donnellan and Ormerod suggest the collage-like nature of theatre in general: “[T]he whole of what we do is greater than the sum of our parts. That’s what’s so potentially moving and transcendental about theatre: that when people gather in a room, something extraordinary can happen which isn’t entirely to do with them” (87–88). In an interview with collaborators McLucas and Pearson, Pearson, the artistic director of the Welsh performance group Brith Gof, calls his work bricolage: “As a *bricoleur* I ask: ‘What have I got lying around to build a performance with?’” (82). Strehler talks about his directing work as “religious”: “But what is religious, if it is not the act (to go back to the etymological meaning of the word) of putting together, and binding together (*religere*) things, words and people, into theatre?” (268). In these artists’ statements, the words “collage,” “assemblage,” “bricolage,” and “religion” all share certain traits. Larbalestier, speaking about visual art collage rather than theatre, adds the word “montage” to this list, and suggests some commonalities in the processes: “The words ‘collage’, [sic] ‘montage,’ and ‘assemblage’ all describe an image that has been created from a combination of sources—be it found images, printed ephemera, three-dimensional objects, or painted media” (7).

3.3.6

Click. Fellow passenger helps woman give birth at bus stop

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“I’m sorry, but nope. Such things are worth our notice every day of the week, but to call them miracles evaporates the strength of the word” (Enger 3).

“Joe Smith,” I don’t remember the firefighter’s name, “reported his antique flag missing—stolen from the porch of his suburban home—last year on September 11.”

I don’t mean I searched out these books about all these subjects and I read them all from cover to cover. No. I grazed. As books appeared on my shelving carts or on the tables of the library’s second floor, or on the shelves I was shifting, I would furtively read a few paragraphs here and several sentences there. Little Baudelaire. Little Alice Fulton, Little Gomez-Peña. Little Foucault. Little Bakhtin. Little hooks. Little Bogosian. Little Nevada Barr. Mmmmmmm.

1.2

Doubleness functions in several distinct ways in thinking about performances as collage. For example, components of performances often have distinct lives outside of the performances. When we use these elements as props, costumes, movement sequences, or texts, they each bear traces of their previous worlds in the performance. Each performance choice we make for a staged work carries with it its history in a world or worlds outside the performance. And we, as critics and audience members, carry our histories with these choices/fragments into the performance, too.

Doubleness is also an important component of many performance reviews and criticisms. The “Performance Space” and “Performance in Review” sections in *Text and Performance Quarterly* and the collections of critical reviews and performances in *Liminalities* demonstrate an ongoing interest in the field in sharing and exploring multiple readings of performances, including their constitutive parts. Multiplicity of readings is important even within one review in one such section, for example in Logan’s response to Jenkins’s performance of *Menopause and Desire*. Logan immediately positions herself as having seen “this performance at three different locales, in three different contexts, for three different audiences. [. . .] Not surprisingly, the various performances were distinct, in ways subtle and incidental, visible and formative” (282). It is not surprising, in part, because of our disciplinary understanding of the collage principle of doubleness.

Another kind of focus on doubleness surfaces in discussions of live and mediated bodies in performance. Questions of liveness and presence (perhaps most notably raised and discussed in our discipline by Auslander and Phelan) have at their core an interest in the signifying potential of performers’ bodies. Bodies are constitutive elements in performances that may be read in multiple ways. In her essay exploring digital performance, Chvasta claims, “Physical presence in performance, or ‘the body,’ is not—or should not be—an unqualifiable term” (159). She cites Graver’s essay “The Actor’s Bodies,” saying, “Graver argues that the actor’s body on stage is multifaceted,

if not multitudinous” (159). This echoes Brockelman’s notion of the “geometrically multiplying double reading” of collage practices (10). When we consider live people as constitutive elements of performances, we must acknowledge the complexity of the resonances evoked (including interpersonal relationships, identity categories, and life experiences).

3.3.7

But I’m the one flying through the bluest sky, searching the distant ground for grits and gravy, apple pie, sustenance, comfort.

Click. Molester’s trail leads to San Jose: Suspect’s notebooks list 36,000 names.

The camera cuts among several angles showing a wooden porch railing, conspicuously bare.

Click. 6.4 and 4.9 temblors rock state.

3.2

Within performance research juxtaposition is an important compositional and methodological strategy. Especially in the various traditions of intertextual performance and recent qualitative inquiry, juxtaposition plays a vital role. Shields and Kepke detail a particular kind of intertextual group performance they call “Gallery Theatre” as based in a college practice. Such a practice “would present multiple texts juxtaposed within a prepared environment as a context to prompt multiple mediations, multiple readings and meanings” (73-74). The space of the performance would “operate paradoxically as both empty and filled: empty of a singular, closed meaning; filled with unreconciled, multiple voices and perspectives” (74). Juxtaposition in Gallery Theatre is a deliberate strategy for exploring multivocality.

Some solo performers use juxtaposition in a similar way. In *Just the Funny Bits*, Galloway creates “radical juxtaposition[s]” (Copeland 14) of characters that together investigate performances of disability. In this video performance work, Galloway performs as four distinct characters, each a humorous persona who negotiates disability in society. Instead of performing this (at least semi-) autobiographical performance as one character or persona (or marked as “herself”), Galloway chooses to perform a series of hyperbolic characters that embody negotiations with suicide, paranoia, and schizophrenia. The juxtapositions of the characters provide context for us to understand the ways society disciplines non-normative performances of ability and disability. Whitney uses juxtaposition of iconic/familiar and queered/non-normative characteristics to create a sex-positive, queer Barbie character in her performance *Pop Culture Princess* as a way to explore queer femme performances in popular culture texts. By combining normative images of the Barbie doll, such as

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whiteness, hyper-femininity, and submissiveness, with non-normative images, such as assertiveness and activeness in her sex life, Whitney is able to highlight a contested space that would not exist without the juxtaposition.

In “Love, Longing, Language, Lust: An Erotic Daydream Post September 11th,” Winton juxtaposes diary entries from walking around New York on September 11, 2001 with entries she wrote during the development of a new romantic relationship. These juxtapositions help to capture the complexity of many U.S. Americans’ experiences with their feelings about the events of September 11, 2001.

Among qualitative researchers, juxtaposition is becoming more common as a compositional strategy for research reports. Markham makes direct use of juxtaposition in her essay, “Go Ugly Early: Fragmented Narrative and Bricolage as Interpretive Method.” She includes sections from her research journal, short scenes of dialogue from the field, and moments of exposition. She relies on the juxtaposition of these texts to help her make her argument about multivocality in ethnographic research. In my own solo performance work, I often rely on the juxtaposition of multiple texts and images to create resonances with audience members as I did with the text for my performance “9/11 Miracles”; that text is interwoven (or juxtaposed) with the other sections of this essay.

3.3.8

And I’m flying through the bluest sky when I begin to see in the distance—on the screen behind me—a steel and glass tower appear.

“But this story has a happy ending. Joe woke up this morning to find the flag suddenly back in its rightful place.” Cut to Joe in his front yard. “It was as if it had never been gone.”

“Real miracles bother people, like strange sudden pains unknown in medical literature. It’s true: They rebut every rule all we good citizens take comfort in” (Enger 3).

A chasm that cannot be traversed with “United We Stand” or “Dissent is Patriotic” bumper stickers.

0.1

Copeland begins his essay “Merce Cunningham and the Aesthetic of Collage” with a statement by noted postmodern writer Donald Barthelme, “The principle of collage is the central principle of all art in the 20th century in all media” (11). Copeland takes up this bold claim as he explores the choreographic work of Cunningham as an exemplar of an aesthetic of collage. Copeland’s assertion that collage’s “modus operandi is readily observable in the time-based and performing arts as well [as the visual arts]” (11) serves as a springboard for this essay. If collage is, as Barthelme and Copeland

suggest, the central principle of all contemporary art (including/especially performance), how might collage serve as a paradigm for our field of performance studies? What elements of collage illuminate contemporary performance studies practice?

3.3.9

And in the midst of this cyclone of information, this whirlwind of ideas, this barrage of intertextuality, I accidentally tapped myself into a cyclone of a different sort.

“The sublime exists where the subject cannot find a form, cannot find that ‘natural’ unity of beauty. The result is a paradoxical, ‘painful’ pleasure. What happens, more or less, is that the subject, in its experience, say of the raging ocean or of the majesty of the pyramids, is first frustrated in its search for a comprehensible form. The object proves too big or too powerful for aesthetic comprehension. [. . .] The peculiar ‘pleasure’ of the sublime is simply the registration of this ability of the subject to think what it cannot represent” (Brockelman 96-97).

Click. Activists claim King Tut looks too white.

2.2

Attention to embodied artistic practice is something many performance studies scholars do well. Autoethnography, performance/performative writing, and personal narrative are genres of writing in which the body matters. There are so many exquisite examples in our journals of this evocative, sensuous writing that I dare not make a list of them because I would inevitably leave out so many important texts/scholars. I offer one example here that inspires me with the hope that it may remind you of performances that inspire you.

I do not think of the embodied experiences of motherhood, grieving, or nursing without thinking of Pineau’s performance *Nursing Mother*. In her essay documenting this performance, Pineau struggles with capturing in writing something of the kinesthetic feeling of the performance. She asks, “How on the page can I transcribe my body when the simultaneity of performance must be sacrificed for the linearity of print? [. . .] How shall I collude with the conventions of print to which I have willingly, knowingly, hooked this performance?” (4). Pineau’s questions point to the difficulty of such transcription while simultaneously affirming the need for this work.

As I read the script again, my body responds to the story of giving birth to a performance:

It is time. My time is upon me. I can feel it quickening, this performance of mine that has grown inside me long these many months. First quiet and still, scarce present in its slow inhabitation of my body, then up-roaring and rolling and flinging

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itself against the walls of me, till it would rest again lodged tight against the root of my breath in that space beneath my heart. (5)

What artist can't remember (or at least imagine) such a feeling?

3.3.10

Close up on what looks to be a fairly ordinary American flag hanging on the porch railing. "One year to the day, on September 11." The camera goes back to the newscasters sitting in the studio. "What do you think of that?"

And the tower grows bigger and I'm flying toward it and it looms behind me or maybe it's two.

My friend turned to me and exclaimed, "It's a 9/11 Miracle!"

I grabbed the metal ventilation hose to attach it to the metal back of our new/used dryer and, unfortunately, because of some faulty instructions on the package of a dryer plug from Lowe's, instead of being safely grounded, the dryer, specifically the metal back of the dryer, was carrying a hefty charge. And when the hose touched the dryer, my body created a circuit through which the electricity could travel.

That chasm demarcates the sublime possibilities of patriotism beyond what is capturable in language.

0.3

For this essay, I use "collage" as an umbrella term to mean the practice of creating work from some combination of sources/texts/movements/bits. As a paradigm for performance studies, collage begins with the idea that all performance is intertextual. This is consonant with contemporary literary and performance theories growing from the work of Barthes and Bakhtin, among many others. Beyond intertextuality, however, collage offers additional insights into performance studies practices. I posit four facets of collage as paradigmatic for performance studies: 1) Collage involves examining the (at least) double life of constitutive components; 2) Collage is a sensual/sensory/embodied practice; 3) Collage involves juxtapositions and relationships of elements in time and space; 4) Collage is unsettled. These elements of collage are not mutually exclusive. Nor are they exhaustive. In other words, a collage aesthetic may involve more elements than these and these elements may be described in other words or other combinations (Brockelman; Shields and Kepke; Vaughan). However, I propose these elements as productive in exploring collage as a paradigm for performance studies.

3.3.11

“Lazarus obeying orders and climbing up out of the grave—now there’s a miracle, and you can bet it upset a lot of folks who were standing around at the time” (Enger 3).

Click. I flip through the evening news stories.

And I’m a bird, or a plane, or a superpower government and the tower is right in front of me now and my nose, or beak, is almost touching the glass and I stop.

You know a lot of things in that moment—in that infinity of ten seconds or so. You know that this is the most frightening thing that has ever happened to you. You know that if it doesn’t stop it will kill you. You know that it is a really weird feeling—I mean really weird—there is nothing else like it. And you know that you wouldn’t wish it on anyone else.

At first I laughed. What a lovely way to capture the irony of this event. How utterly ridiculous this news story is. And yet, how perfectly synchronous.

The distance between my bird face and the reflection of a huge plane frozen in the glass and steel of a giant tower.

“When a person dies, the earth is generally unwilling to cough him back up. A miracle contradicts the will of earth” (Enger 3).

4.2

Madison and Hamera open the *SAGE Handbook of Performance Studies* by discussing the ways performance is a contested concept. Conquergood boldly affirms this claim in his article “Of Caravans and Carnivals: Performance Studies in Motion,” further suggesting that “performance flourishes within a zone of contest and struggle” (137). Like collage, performance itself is an unsettled concept. What are the ways performance studies is an art/discipline in crisis? What would viewing the field of performance as a *mise en question* serve? How might practitioners of performance embrace *trompe l’esprit* as an organizing principle? Of course, to answer any of these questions with a definitive proclamation would miss the point. However, by considering the possibility of collage as a paradigm for performance studies we reassert the importance of the unsettled attempt.

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3.3.12

And afterwards your friends tell you that there were blue sparks shooting off your body. And you look at the blood from where the metal wire in the hose sliced into your skin. And you know you've changed somehow. You don't know how to describe it. But you know it has something to do with all that energy coursing through you. It has something to do with being caught in that moment.

The distance between my outstretched hand and the blank faces of the television news anchors.

2.1

The embodied activity of making collage is undertheorized. It is, nonetheless, an important component of the collage experience. It is, perhaps, one contribution that performance scholars are particularly well suited to make with respect to collage theory. My own experience of making paper collage is intensely physical.

I love flipping through magazines and newspapers, flyers, and brochures, looking for items, for "bits" (to use Brummett's term) (70). I love the feel of the glossy pages, thick and hard to turn. I love the sound of the scissors slicing through the flesh of the source. Sometimes I just hold the scissors next to my ear and work them opened and closed. The sound reminds me of barbers and hair stylists snipping off little parts of a person, stealing them away. I, too, am stealing something away when I flip and clip, something like a soul. Sometimes I cut very closely, carving every intimate detail of butterfly or hobbyhorse. Sometimes I rip and tear in jagged unspecificity.

Next comes the stickiness of arranging what I've stolen. As Brockelman reminds me, "[Collage] is, in some sense, an art of crisis—an art in perpetual crisis" (35). With glue brush trembling in my right hand, I look longingly at my first little bit. I almost can't fix it to the page. It's too beautiful fluttering in midair, so filled with possibility, not one image, but the beginnings of hundreds of images. Not one fixed identity, but many possible identities. Once I fix it to the page. . . .

But then I do it. I stroke its back with the brush and gently lower it onto the page. It comes more easily now—more and more layers gathering on the page. The juxtapositions are beautiful. They say things, these meetings of jagged and smooth edges, of top of face and intricate butterfly. This chore, this obligation, this love, creates complicated and heartbreaking possibilities.

3.3.13

I cannot bear the news, the news I know is happening, the news that is and is not reported, that is and is not witnessed.

“My sister, Swede, who often sees to the nub, offered this: People fear miracles because they fear being changed—though ignoring them will change you also” (Enger 3)

Freeze.

1.3

One of my favorite exercises of theatre director Anne Bogart’s Viewpoints involves shape.¹ I like it because it teaches me about how we make sense of our lives. It teaches me that we will make sense—even out of the nonsensical, the inexplicable, or the bizarre. I ask one person to begin by making a shape on the stage or in the middle of the classroom with her or his body. I ask another to join by adding a shape. Then two others add shapes. I instruct participants to pay attention to the lines and curves of their bodies. I ask if they think all parts of their bodies are contributing to the shapes they are making. “Is your hand contributing to your shape? Are each of your fingers contributing?” Another person adds a shape to the growing embodied sculpture, and the first person steps away. As people continue to add shapes one by one, others exit one by one in the order that they joined. I ask people to join as the spirit moves them, rather than in a predetermined order. Some people add shapes more often than others. Some people prefer to watch. I ask that each person contribute at least one shape.

I instruct people to begin paying attention to horizontal and vertical layers in the playing space as they continue adding shapes. We speed up—changing the configuration quickly. As we watch, I ask the participants to try to pay attention to the shapes that are created by the juxtapositions of the individual bodily shapes. Inevitably, though, we begin to see narratives emerge from the intersections of multiple shapes. One person describes the image before us: “It looks like she’s praying while they are turning away from her. It seems like he’s trying to reach her but is being held back by something. Maybe he’s ashamed about something he said to her.” “But how do we get there?” I prod gently. “What led to this position?” Someone else observes, “Well, the last person who left was pulling him back.” I nod, “Isn’t it interesting that we notice the absence, but we project it into the future by attributing intention to the person who remains in the image? You said it looked like *something* was holding him back, when we all saw that it was *someone* in the image before this that accounted for his position.”

¹ I learned this and other Viewpoints exercises during workshops I attended with Anne Bogart and her company members, including a two week summer program that was part of California State University’s Summer Arts program in June-July 2004. Bogart also details many of these exercises in her book (co-authored with Tina Landau), *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition*.

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Again and again when I do this exercise in classes and rehearsals, I find that the people I ask to describe what they see in these images tell stories. No matter how many times I stress the shapes—the lines and curves—participants describe events and relationships unfolding in time. This isn't a critique of the participants' descriptions. Instead, it is an observation of the power of the audience to create meaning from embodied activity. It is a reminder that we, as audience members, are always making meaning—with or without the intentions of performers and directors. This exercise is also instructive to me in understanding the complexity of people's critical perception of performance. It helps me to recognize the ways in which we already know and feel things about shapes. It draws my attention to absence and presence in important ways. Each stage of the evolving image contains the history of all the other images, that remain, like ghosts, in the final composition. This final group shape would not be possible—would not exist in its present/presence form—without the ghostly imprint/absence of all the other shapes, individual and collective. And while I can't hold all of those images in my mind simultaneously, the final image somehow reminds me of them. It does and does not contain them, in much the same way as a collage does and does not contain its source materials.

3.3.14

The distance between the desire to make 9/11 miracles easy, to call us witnesses to events that we only see on TV, and the realities of people suffering and celebrating around the world, the little acts that we may be fortunate enough to bear witness to.

3.1

As a compositional strategy of collaging, juxtaposition involves deliberately putting disparate things/texts next to each other without direct connective material with the belief that they will resonate with each other in some way. Theorists have explained juxtaposition in several ways. Vaughan offers this relatively straightforward definition of juxtaposition as one element of her proposed collage methodology: "A collage practice is built on juxtaposition, on the interplay of fragments from multiple sources, whose piecing together creates resonances and connections that form the basis of discussion and learning" (12). What is most productive in this definition is its grounding in the belief that juxtapositions are pedagogical: they call for active learning. Lydenberg discusses another layer of meaning of juxtaposition in surrealist collage: "juxtapositions are experienced as part of an aesthetic of adventure, risk, and desire, qualities often overlooked in critical analyses of collage [. . .]" (274). This additional component of risk is something I often find in performative juxtapositions, in, for example, a leap across the stage edge.

Dillon points to a continuum for juxtaposition in his analysis of Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*:

We say two things are juxtaposed when they are placed side by side or one after the other with no connecting matter or continuing thread or common topic. Some inexplicit connection is nonetheless implied, or else one would simply have a pile of spare parts—*disjecta membra*—which may not even be parts of the same thing or similar things. Juxtaposition can thus be a matter of degree. (par. 6)

I agree with Dillon’s assertion that there must be at least an implicit connection among items in a collage composition. However, I believe the connection may be more than merely implied. In other words, intentional repetitions of form, color, texture, or theme may serve to assert a connection that is more than implied. In such a collage, items might resonate with one another along those particular lines. It is interesting to note Dillon’s use of the phrase *disjecta membra*, which colloquially means “scattered fragments,” but which in the Latin means the scattered remains of a body after a battle or other catastrophe.² This etymology suggests a deeper connection of the fragments of a collage, as parts of a body, that while perhaps unrecognizable in the current form (post catastrophe), continue to share a history or a life in the collage.

Some resonance, however, relies on physical or thematic distance. The disparity between items provides a space where the readers’ consideration of the items creates the resonance. Copeland claims, “The gaps or spaces—sometimes merely perceptual and psychological—between the disparate fragments are essential to this resonating effect” (15). According to Copeland, resonance is caused by collage’s integration of “only one-half of the surrealists’ agenda—their interest in radical juxtaposition” (14).

While Copeland does not make this point, the concept of “radical juxtaposition” is particularly interesting given the double meaning of the word “radical” as both “going to the root” and “extreme.” I had often thought of juxtaposition as extreme, putting two very different items together in a stark way. However juxtapositions that go to the root propose finding commonalities among elements in their histories, among the various worlds to which they have belonged. This provides an exciting space for resonance.

3.3.15

And it all converges there. This vibration, violation, screaming, desire, burning, power, tension, muscles so tense you couldn’t make them clench that hard, falling, falling away, falling behind, simultaneously seduced and repelled, and slicing, and searching, and bleeding, and sobbing, and what am I describing?

² I am grateful to Craig Gingrich-Philbrook for reminding me of this connection to the etymology of *disjecta membra*.

0.4

How To Make a Collage Out of this Essay

- Print the entire essay.
- Take scissors and cut the whole thing up into little pieces.
 - You could cut each page into the same size pieces.
 - Or you could cut each small section apart.
 - Or you could cut shapes into the pages.
- Or cut up this whole issue of *Liminalities* if you want.
 - Make sure you use recycled paper for your project if you decide to do this.
- Make sure that there is some logic to your cutting.
 - Be able to articulate what that logic is.
 - You may cut with abandon if you can narrate your abandon and explain your motivations.
 - You could choose to tear instead of cutting.
 - Or you could burn the edges.
 - Perhaps you experience cutting up text as destructive rather than creative. If so, you could use the uncut text as a foundation for layering other texts.
- Next, gather additional texts that are relevant to your experience of collage and performance studies. These might include:
 - books and articles about performance studies;
 - artifacts from productions you have helped develop;
 - programs from the seven most recent performances you have witnessed;
 - the latest issues of *Text and Performance Quarterly* and *TDR*;
 - the novel you read last week;
 - a clip from one of the beautiful performances documented in *Liminalities*;
 - or anything else that connects to this research in some way.
- You can make this collage with a friend.
- Try automatic writing.
- After you gather some texts, begin to arrange them in some meaningful way.
- Don't discount happy accidents or serendipity.
- Don't be afraid to make deliberate juxtapositions.
 - Attend to the places where texts collide—to the borders.
- Try to articulate your strategy of layering and arranging.
- Make deliberate choices.
- Acknowledge the theories guiding your practice.
- Recognize your struggle to understand and fully articulate this aesthetic/scholarly activity.
- Seek guidance from your mentors.

- Write about your experience.
- Recognize that many people will acknowledge only the writing and not the collage as scholarship.

3.3.16

“Swede said another thing, too, and it rang in me like a bell: No miracle happens without a witness. Someone to declare,” (Enger 3)

Stare at the window in the steel and glass tower at

“Here’s what I saw. Here’s how it went. Make of it what you will.” (Enger 3)

My 9/11 miracle.

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