

# E-TWISTERMOLOGY: EMBODIED AND COLLABORATIVE WRITING

Rob Conkie

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

I propose in this essay a simple, straightforward and not entirely original methodological strategy: the bringing together of embodied and collaborative modes of writing. *eTwistermology*, my title's punning neologism – an annoying device I promised myself (and others) never to repeat – attempts to convey this amalgamation and gesture towards its hermeneutic potential. As a metaphor for this kind of writing, the game of Twister – in which two or three players are directed to place either their hands or feet on coloured circles according to the vagaries of a spinning dial, and to do so without falling over – is not absolutely ideal. For a start, the catchphrase of Twister, since its inception in 1966, is 'The game that ties you up in knots', an unwelcome notion for the aspiring writer or thinker. And the aim of the game is to be the last player standing, which might characterise certain scholarly cultures, but the not the one espoused here. For my purposes, Twister represents a game in which the body in relation to other bodies is central and which is specifically designed to entangle those bodies in an enjoyable and surprising way: these are the features of eTwistermological writing that I will seek to explore. The structure of the essay, as I have already alluded, is straightforward, even mathematical. First, I will survey several exponents of embodied, sometimes called bodily, writing; indeed, I will offer the beginnings of a taxonomy of bodily writing. Second, I will offer a similar consideration of collaborative writing across a very broad spectrum of disciplines. Then I will turn to questions of form, and to forms of writing that might facilitate the integration of embodied and collaborative enquiry. Finally, I will model what this kind of writing might look like and forecast the emerging types of knowledge it might generate and expound.

## Towards a Taxonomy of Bodily Writing

Several of the authors I have consulted for this essay have created taxonomies of collaborative writing, but more of that below. In part, my desire to offer a taxonomy of embodied or bodily writing – the terms are regularly synonymous – stems from my incapacity to arrive at a unifying definition and therefore deciding instead upon multiple iterations and classifications. Thus, here follows an attempt at taxonomising bodily writing via nine separate but frequently overlapping categories.

### 1. *Theoretical writings on the body*

Leaving aside (for the moment) performance practitioners and theorists, a rollcall of mid-to-late twentieth and early twenty-first century thinkers have theorised the body, often as a preoccupation, from a wide range of perspectives. Perhaps what links theorists of the body as diverse as, for example, Mikhail Bakhtin, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Helene Cixous, Homi K. Bhabha, Ania Loomba and Colette Conroy is the desire to understand the processes by which bodies are differentiated and individuated – sexed, gendered, disciplined, punished, racialised, hybridised, abjected, dis/abled, celebrated. Though I confess an affinity with practitioner-scholars Evija Trofimova and Sophie Nicholls, who decide, for one particular walking and thinking project, on 'side-stepping dense theoretical arguments and comprehensive literature reviews for a creative-

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<sup>1</sup> This article derives from a keynote speech given. There are neither an abstract nor keywords.

critical exploration' (2018, p. 1), Jennifer Parker-Starbuck and Roberta Mock sagely observe that 'Theorising offers an engagement with other voices, often as an attempt [an attempt, mind you] to better understand the bodies that frequently haunt researchers' (2011, p. 217). This theoretical dialogue with which Parker-Starbuck and Mock engage helps to authorise the more emergent (and often much more hopeful) 'First-person methodologies' of 'Practice-led research' (p. 214), such as deployed by Trofimova and Nicholls, that will feature in several of the categories below.

## 2. *Bodily encounters with material contexts*

One specific origin of the phrase 'bodily writing' is in the Introduction to Susan Leigh Foster's edited collection, *Choreographing History*. I was alerted to this essay by another edited collection, Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson's *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*. Kershaw and Nicholson's volume is the inspiration for this essay: of its ten essays, only one is single-authored and all ten engage with the performing body, some as the central focus. Foster first describes (in italics) and then reflects (in bold type) on her own bodily writing practice (see category 3, below), before outlining the way a body writes:

A body, whether sitting writing or standing thinking or walking talking or running screaming, is a bodily writing. Its habits and stances, gestures and demonstrations, every action of its various regions, areas and parts – all these emerge out of cultural practices, verbal or not, that construct corporeal meaning (p. 3).

She then applies this quite radical notion to the excavation and explication of historical bodies by wondering 'What markers of bodily movement might a bodily writing have left behind? (p. 4) and locates its (often faint or scrawled) legibility 'rubbed up against or moved alongside geological and architectural constructions, music, clothing, interior decorations (p. 5)'. She is perhaps able to trace these figures because of the interdisciplinary approach she models, that of blending dance and historiographical studies.

## 3. *Writing which is attentive to the embodied process and practice of writing itself*

Foster models an awareness of her own bodily writing. She describes herself thus: '*Sitting in this chair, squirming away from glitches, aches, low-grade tensions reverberating in neck and hip*' and then '*listening to my stomach growl, to the clock ticking... I am a body writing, I am a bodily writing.*' Part of the reason for attending to this embodied awareness is to develop a somatically empathic relationship to the bodies that are the subject of one's writing. Likewise, long-term collaborative writers, Ken Gale and Jonathan Wyatt, announce their intention of 'Foregrounding materiality' and 'paying explicit attention to the materiality of the technologies we use to write' (2017, p. 362); theirs is a similarly empathic strategy in the service of a commitment to posthuman politics.

## 4. *Systems of bodily notation*

I came to this realisation, and to the overall notion of a taxonomy of bodily writing, during my weekly Sunday morning yoga class. My yoga teacher is young and at the beginning of her teaching journey (I am a perennial beginner). She writes out each week's class and it struck me, possibly during a painful downface dog, that her notes were a form of bodily writing. The notes are a mixture of: traditional terms, such as *malasana* or *shavasana*; metaphoric terms, like 'pigeon pose' or 'twisted roots'; and anatomical instructions, such as 'extend foot 45 degrees +

triceps' and 'isolating pelvis & chest'. Probably the most well known system of bodily notation is Rudolf Laban's Labanotation. Karen K. Bradley writes that this form of notation affords training dancers 'a way of developing the eye to see and commit to specificities of quality.' Moreover, and further demonstrating the inextricability of the written notation and the bodily movement, Bradley explains that 'The actor/dancer/performer can "read" movement and recapitulate the ephemeral aspects (2019, p. 52).' Like theatre promptbooks, which Barbara Hodgdon has labelled 'embodied books' (2016, p 42), Labanotation and my yoga teacher's weekly notes both *describe* the way bodies moved (or wrote) in the past and *prescribe* how they might, with the assistance of an expert in the particular system of bodily notation, move (or write) again in the future.

#### 5. *Descriptions of exercises and games*

From Grotowski's Physical exercises, such as 'Flight', or Plastic exercises, such as 'The Flower' (1969, pp. 105, 111), to Jonathan Pitches' reviving of Vsevolod Meyerhold's biomechanical training with sticks and balls (2003, pp. 122-126), to Augusto Boal's 'Millipede' (2002, p. 80), games and exercises deployed by creative and somatic artists similarly *describe* the body into various shapes, poses and actions.

#### 6. *Physical creative practice*

Here belong those several terms including practice as research, practice-led research, practice-based research, arts-based research, for which multiple explicatory and methodological volumes exist, mostly produced within the last decade. It is difficult to forestall discussion of collaboration and of collaborative writing when examining creative practice: I have already mentioned that 90% of Kershaw and Nicholson's *Research Methods* text is collaboratively written. That volume includes discussion of one particular practice as research project that aimed at reviving nineteenth century theatrical melodrama, and which characterises creative practice 'as a dynamic mode of interrogation' (Davis, Normington, Bush-Bailey, Bratton, 2011, p 97). The project is orchestrated and written up by two lead investigators, Gilli Bush-Bailey and Jacky Bratton, but the collaborations, both artistic and critical, are multiple. Later in the volume, Helen Poynor and Libby Worth describe the collaborative writing that emerged from their creative practice. They note the use of what they term 'embodied conversation', the 'hand gestures... used to describe the intensity of the collaborative relationship' and which provided them 'with an understanding that [they] were not able to reach through language alone'; moreover, taking special note of this embodiment enabled them to 'envisage a way of allowing [their] approach to writing together to become more fluid and layered rather than segmented' (Pitches, Murray, Poynor, Worth, Richmond, D., Richmond, J. D., 2011, p. 151).

Alexia Buono and Charles H. Gonzalez's creative collaboration provides an especially potent example of this kind of practice. They describe a project in which Buono dances, over a period of several weeks, and with a number of iterative stages, an interpretation of one of Gonzalez's struggling teacher training students. The work is described thus:

Alexia customized Foster's (1995) concept of bodily writing into a term to describe her studio-based research practice of interpreting Tiffany's data in an embodied, artistic fashion, utilizing her somatic background in dance and choreography. Bodily writing was a four-stage process that took place in a dance studio. The four stages of bodily

writing are: kinaesthetic empathy, embodied explorations, embodied reflections, and work-in-progress showcases... (2017, p. 11)

'Dancing the data' of the struggling student teacher strikes me as an example of what Stacy Holman Jones has labelled a 'critical ekphrasis' (cited in Gale and Pineau, 2011, p. 328). Moreover, the ekphrasis, one bodily exploration of a discrete embodied practice, is afforded more weight because it is described, in turn, by Buono's collaborator and therefore receives an added layer of reflection and validation.

### 7. *Representational writing*

The body in action can be observed and described: think, for instance, of sports journalism or theatre reviewing. Randy Martin, also in Foster's volume, offers an important qualification for such writing: 'while ethnography results in representation, with sufficient methodological reflection, it points to what is lost to representation' (1995, p. 111). The methodological reflection of which Martin speaks might mean sampling from the taxonomical range of bodily writing presented here, and perhaps especially these last two categories.

### 8. *Experiential or phenomenological writing*

Alexia Buono: '*With a grounding into the floor behind the back with the flat palm came the beginnings of a recursive movement theme. Fingers of the left hand bound in a protective claw at the belly, elbow engaged in a lift...*' (2018, p. 8)

Susan Leigh Foster: '*The head tilts at an angle; the rib cage shifts to the side; the writing body listens and waits as fragments of past bodies shimmer and then vanish.*' (1995, p. 7)

Along with Saumya Liyanage's doctoral studies and related subsequent publications (2011), Susan Kozel provides perhaps the most comprehensive exploration, both theoretically and practically, of phenomenological writing (see also Van Manen, 2014). Kozel's specific focus is dance in relation to emergent digital media technologies and she advances the case for both first- and second-person phenomenologies of performance. What I find especially valuable about Kozel's text is the demythologising method she provides for conducting a phenomenological enquiry. A selection of her instructions for this particular type of bodily writing include:

Take your attention to this very moment.

Suspend the main flow of thought.

Call your attention to your body and what it is experiencing...

Witness what you see, hear, and touch, how space feels, and temperature, and how the inside of your body feels in relation to the outside.

Spend some time getting in touch with your senses.

Describe what you experienced. Take notes, record sounds or images...

Reexamine your notes with an eye for what seems significant... Identify where there may be deeper conceptual relevance.

Begin to write or compose your document.

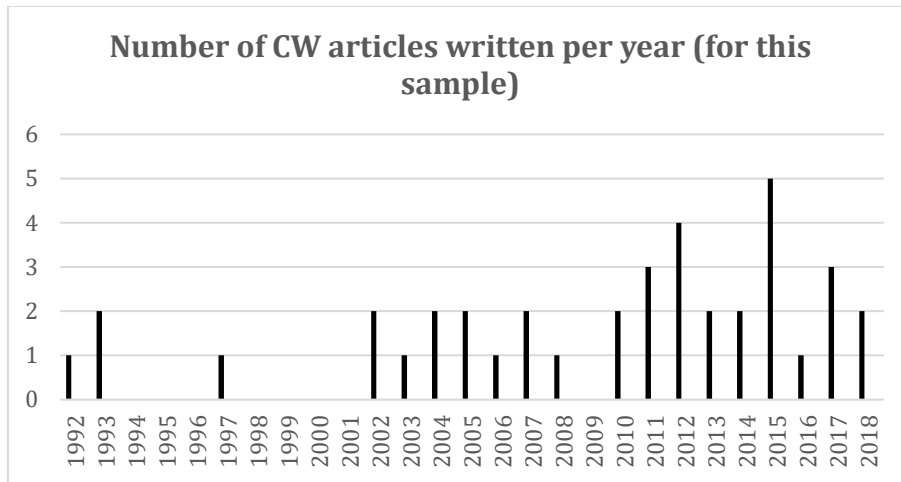
Share your text with a colleague and ask them to honestly evaluate their intellectual and visceral response to your writing (2007, pp. 53-54).

## 9. Collaborative writing

Collaborative writing, and studies of collaborative writing, need not, and often do not, focus on embodiment. But often they do and I will discuss these at more length in the next section.

### The 39 Steps of Collaborative Writing

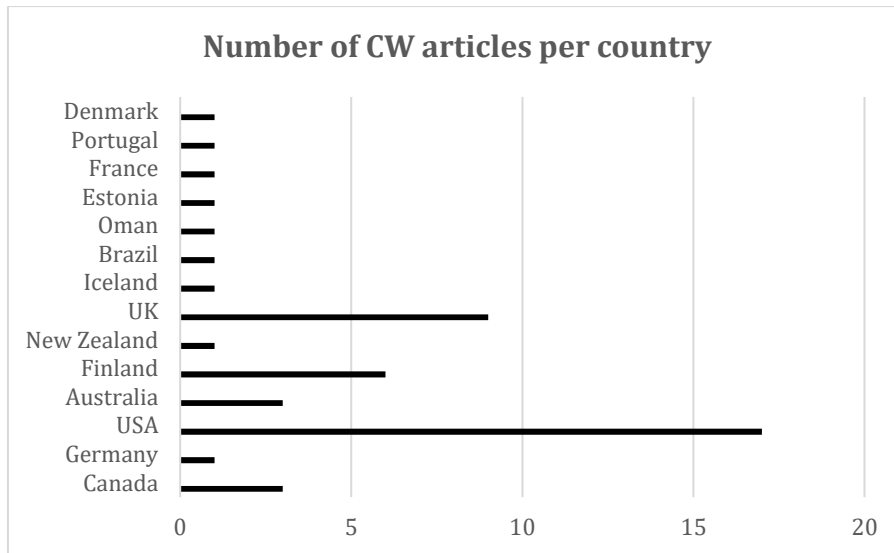
In preparation for this essay I read thirty-nine journal articles on the subject of collaborative writing (CW), almost all of which were sourced from academia.com: here follows, from this limited, but not inconsequential sample, some brief statistical observations and further tentative extrapolations. First, here is a table showing the years in which the selected articles were published.



**Figure 1: Number of collaboratively written articles per year from academia.edu, 1992-2018.**

Two spikes of publication activity might be explained by the appearance of monographs on the subject of collaborative writing. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford's seminal study, *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives of Collaborative Writing*, was first published in 1992 and is cited in many of the articles I have read. A number of journal articles on CW follow this publication, but it is also less likely that articles from the early 1990s would be uploaded to academia.com. The concentration of CW articles post 2010 perhaps follows the 2010 publication of Ken Gale and Jonathan Wyatt's *Between the Two: A Nomadic Enquiry into Collaborative Writing and Subjectivity*: indeed, many of these articles are by Gale and Wyatt, either writing just with each other or including other collaborators.

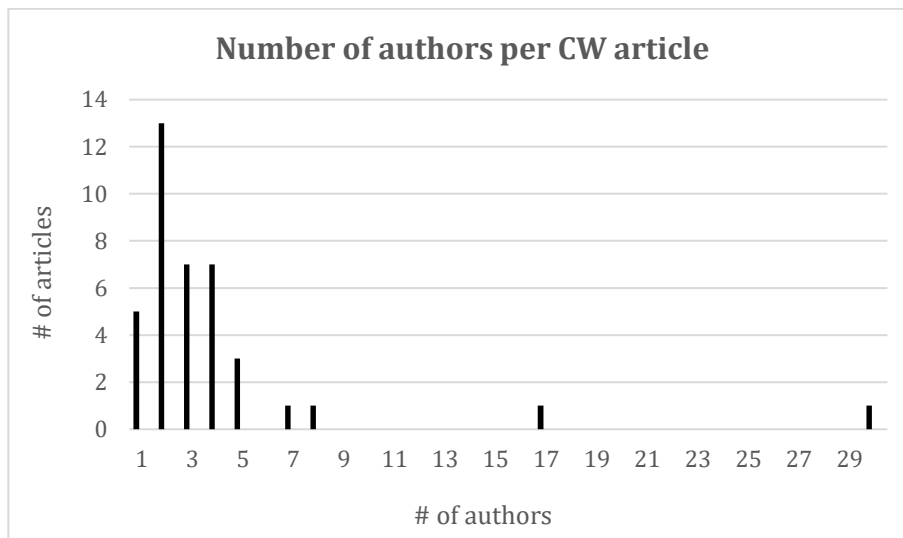
This next visual shows, without of absolute certainty, the countries in which the authors of these articles work.



**Figure 2: Number of collaboratively written articles per country from academia.com, 1992-2018.**

The highest number is, perhaps unsurprisingly, in the United States, with the second highest, almost exclusively those by Gale and Wyatt, in the United Kingdom. Other significant results show six studies emerging from Finland, which represents both a general and specific interest in CW, and to which I will return. And, that there are no published articles on CW, at least from the 39 I selected from the approximately 250 uploaded to academia.com, from anywhere in Asia. This might infer that Asian scholars are not yet researching CW or that they are not uploading to academia.com. I note this without being able to offer any firm conclusions about it.

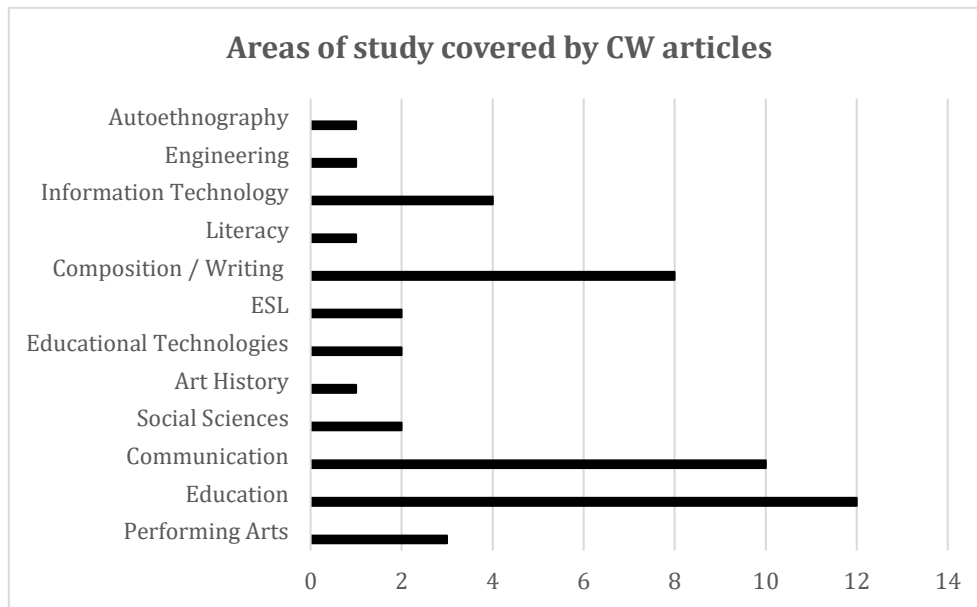
This graph records the number of authors on the respective papers.



**Figure 3: Number of articles with the number of authors per collaboratively written article.**

You can see that two was the most frequent number of collaborating authors, followed by 3 and 4, and that five essays were single-authored. The two essays with the most number of authors were an article that appropriately discusses ‘Massively Distributed Authorship of Academic Papers’ (Tomlinson et al., 2012) and which lists, but does not specify the individual contributions of 30 co-authors, and a further study of ‘Collective Writing’, which lists 17 co-authors and identifies by speech prefix their individual contributions (Jandrić et al., 2017). The

last table shows, again somewhat imprecisely, and inevitably imbalanced by the types of articles I was most likely to select, the academic fields represented by the articles concerned with CW.



**Figure 4: Areas of study covered by collaboratively written articles.**

Scholars of education and pedagogy are most represented (12 articles), followed by Communication Studies (10), and studies of composition and writing (8): most of these studies are from the United States. Other diverse fields interested in CW include the performing arts (3), Information Technology (4), learning English as a second language (2) and social science enquiries (2). Some last observations of this data. I gave each article a score out of 10 in terms of how concerned it was with questions of embodiment; in 11 out of the 39 articles (28%) that score was 7 or above. And I can report that in the time period surveyed here, and my intention was not to provide a survey, the following online, digital or software applications were designed in order to better facilitate CW across a range of industry, government and educational contexts: wooki; Collaboratus; EdiTex; Woven Stories; Timeliner; Sepia; ShrEdit; SASSE; Group Writer; Etherpad; Scriblex; Assembla; Zotero; and Google Docs.

The studies I have consulted seek to understand how CW works, how it might work better and what affordances it might offer; therefore, several articles contribute definitions, taxonomies, and lists of benefits of CW. In the context of scientific writing CW is defined as ‘the process of two or more people working together to create a complex document, irrespectively of locus or synchronicity’ (Lamas et al., 2012: 152). From a business communication perspective, CW is defined ‘as an iterative and social process that involves a team focused on a common objective that negotiates, coordinates, and communicates during the creation of a common document’ (Lowry et al., 2004: 72). As far back as 1992 and 1993 Ronald Baecker and Ilona Posner (and others) published taxonomical studies of CW, featuring four categories ‘for examining the writing process’:

*Roles* looks at process from the individual’s point of view, at the part played by each individual on the writing team. *Activities* categorizes the actions performed while working on the project. *Document control methods* describes how the writing process is managed and coordinated. Finally, *writing strategies* focuses on the text creation process (Baecker et al., 1993, p. 400).

Paul Lowry et al further taxonomises roles to include: writer; consultant; editor; reviewer; team leader; and facilitator (2004, p. 88). More recently, Hanna Kuusela, ‘mapping the terrain of contemporary collaborative writing’, identifies three overarching categories: conscious participation; contributory participation; and unwitting participation (2015, p. 108).

Here, at the end of this survey, is a list of CW benefits identified in my 39-step survey. Lowry et al, conducting a similar survey to mine, writes that:

CW is a useful form of group work because of its many potential benefits, such as learning (Trimbur, 1985); socialization and new ideas (LeFevre, 1987); maximum input, varying viewpoints, checks and balances, experience, joint knowledge, writing expertise, accuracy, and more understandable documents (Ede & Lunsford, 1990); higher document quality (Beck, 1993); and enhanced personal relationships (Rice and Huguley, 1994) (2004, p. 67).

Jandrić et al list CW benefits of productivity, emotional investment, political commitment, and originality (2017, p. 105). Lastly, individual benefits identified by the authors of my 39-step survey include:

- CW enriches creativity (Gale, 2017: 360; Jandrić et al, 2017: 105); ‘Deleuze sees in this collaborative relationship the wellspring of creativity; the *other* mediates our capacity to express ourselves’ (Wyatt, 2010, p. 735);
- CW extends ‘the circle of researchers [broadening] perspectives and add[ing] voices to the field’ (Hafernik et al, 1997, p. 31);
- CW ‘intensifies and increases the potency of the reflection’ (McAuliffe and Chenoweth, 2006, p 13);
- CW un-privileges ‘knowledge creation to a single author/researcher’ (Löytönen, 2015, p. 40).

### **‘That’s not a play; that’s a play...’**

The most prominent collaborative authors from my selection of 39 articles are Ken Gale and Jonathan Wyatt, both from the UK. Their 2010 article, ‘Deleuzian Thought and Collaborative Writing’, which features two other co-authors, Susanne Gannon and Bronwyn Davies, both from Australia, but writing from different places throughout the world, is subtitled, ‘A Play in Four Acts.’ The article ‘stages’ a conversation between the four authors, with quotations from Gilles Deleuze making up a fifth character. I say stages, but the title of the article is incorrect: a succession of speech prefixes with philosophical meditations, even dialogue, does not a play make. The article does not stage, unless very obliquely, dramaturgical fundamentals: characters at odds with the world they find themselves within; conflict; journeys; reversals; change. But, across the seven articles (from my selection) to which Wyatt and/or Gale contribute, and to three others which they might be said to inspire, a series of ten articles published between 2006-2018, a play, at the very least a theatricality, does emerge: and it is quite compelling. Here, and I depend on some creative (and irreverent, but also respectful) license, is that play.

#### Act 1, Scene 1: ‘Inquiring into Writing: An Interactive Interview’ (2006)

The first scene, peopled only by Ken Gale and Jonathan Wyatt, introduces motifs that will be returned to throughout the next decade. The form is experimental, with anecdotes interspersed with theoretical reflections, and then twin columns juxtaposing individual (bodily) encounters



– accidentally killing a snail, being hit by a car – and meditations. The intention of the collaboration is expressed: ‘A joint inquiry into writing and the self, through the eyes of self and other’ (p. 1120). The conclusion announces: ‘Writing together had political energy’ (p. 1132).

#### Act 2, Scene 1: ‘Deleuzian Thought and Collaborative Writing: A Play in Four Acts’ (2010)

Two new characters enter, younger, but very assured female scholars. Having discovered that their ‘words and affects formed tangled lines across the globe’ they ‘fashioned a play in four acts’ – here’s a play-within-a-play – that was performed at the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry in Illinois, 2009 (p. 730). Ken says, ‘I have been carrying our emerging collaborative work with me, both in my body and in my shoulder bag, feeling its presence’ (p. 731). Perhaps the new characters’ location in the Antipodes shapes their dialogue. Later, Bronwyn speaks to the group, Deleuze included, of the ‘multiple interconnected expressions of our mutual humanity’ (p. 738) and Susanne affirms that

Writing, more than anything, for us has been about writing in place, writing place, writing ourselves in place both materially, where our flesh is in time and space and relationality as we write, and imaginatively... (p. 738)

The play builds its momentum towards a collaborative and bodily written mutuality and relationality.

#### Act 2, Scene 2: ‘Flows, Tides, and Transatlantic Drifts: An Emergent Methodology of Collaborative Performative Writing’ (2011)

A hiccup? Jonathan is offstage and Ken is carrying on very inappropriately with a new woman. She, Elyse, begins most coquettishly: ‘I hope you don’t mind that I asked Tami for your email address’ (p. 318). Oh, come on. And the whole thing is suffused with water imagery; Elyse is talking about being ‘word-wet’ (p. 319), it’s not right. Now she’s saying ‘Reading you is like skinny dipping in a thunderstorm’ (p. 320): get a room! And he goes for it. At the end of a section on Courtship and just prior to a section on Old Lovers, Ken, succumbing to a sex-death drive, purrs: ‘I take off my clothes and walk slowly, quietly, peacefully and sink into the water’ (p. 325). They try to shrug all this off, concluding with the notion ‘of friendship as research methodology’ (p. 327), but this is a very steamy scene.

#### Act 2, Scene 3: ‘Encountering Deleuze: Collaborative Writing and the Politics of Stuttering in Emergent Language’ (2012)

Jonathan is back and this time there are five younger women ‘collaborating’ with he and Ken, most of them Nordic, it seems. I’m starting to think that collaborative writing, at least as Ken and Jonathan are practicing it, is a great way to meet women. I’m not quite captured by this scene. There’s some nice poetry, always embodied, but it’s too inward and too warm and fuzzy, lots of back-patting in the jacuzzi. Is it a set-up for the next scene?

#### Act 3, Scene 1: ‘Darkness and Silence: The Dis/connection of Writing Intimacy’ (2013)

Bang. Crash. Things fall apart. Exit the joyful exuberances of the collaborations with more emergent female scholars. Here is a more mature and melancholic scene. Ron, whose energies on performative writing I have so admired elsewhere, is mired. ‘I did not like myself’, he says. ‘I do not know how safe our space felt’, he confesses, ‘I know I wrote with caution.’ He wonders whether the writing group can continue: ‘Perhaps, but at what cost?’ (pp. 408-10). Tami, whose work on performative autoethnography I have also encountered, seems similarly distressed: ‘It’s messy. A lock of hair here. A bit of bone there. Pieces strewn about the page. Writing in the dark with a blood red methodology, collisions were inevitable.’ I thought collisions were the point, with snails and cars, et cetera, but Tami continues: ‘Why write in a group? Why do

it? Oh, sure if you are moving towards a goal... (p. 411).’ Ken keeps saying ‘grounded’ (p. 416). Jonathan is more desperate: ‘Maybe it’s sex therapy we need, not divorce’. He suggests ‘trying different positions’, but concedes ‘we are stale and tired’ (p. 422). As the curtain draws on this scene he has returned to desperation: ‘Let’s write only on Mondays... Let’s write quick and dirty... Let’s keep writing, as if – because – our lives depend upon it’ (pp. 423-24). But are the others listening? They drift away. Exeunt.

Act 4, Scene 1: ‘Playing with Patterns: Fumbling Towards Collaborative and Embodied Writing’ (2014)

Ken and Jonathan do not re-enter. But four of the five Finns do and they dance all over the page/stage in strange directions and structures.

Act 4, Scene 2: ‘A Pink Writing Experiment’ (2015)

Teija, one of the Finns, is joined by four others for a messy and entangled choreography. Theirs, like Ken and Jonathan’s earlier scenes, are a joyful collaborative and embodied exploration. They do not appear to have yet experienced the ‘darkness and silence’. They explore ‘embodied practices through sensing, experimenting, questioning and working with differentiated perspectives’ and they argue that this ‘type of collaborative writing may enable a deeper and [more] engaged investigation of different modes of life that are affected by local histories and socio-material conditions’ (p. 40). Ken and Jonathan are still offstage, like Lear or Hamlet.

Act 4, Scene 3: ‘Mo(ve)ments, Encounters, Receptions: Writing With (Embodied and Textual Encounters’ (2016)

Re-enter the four Finns exploring an ‘entanglement with the human and nonhuman world’ (p. 419). Exit

Act 5, Scene 1: ‘Working at the Wonder: Collaborative Writing as Method of Inquiry’ (2017)

Enter Ken and Jonathan, solus. It’s just them but I can write solus because they are between the two. It’s four years since the ‘darkness’. Like Hamlet learning that ‘the readiness is all’, they are working at the wonder, writing the world still entangled, embodied, collaborative. I take working at the wonder to mean approaching the world as a clown might, as if for the very first time and with curiosity, mischief and reverence.

Act 5, Scene 2: ‘Writing to it: creative engagements with writing practice in and with the not yet known in today’s academy’ (2018)

Just Ken and Jonathan. And an understanding of writing ‘not as something we “do” but as something that “does” us’ and as ‘an affective condition of selves in relationality’ (pp. 121, 126). Curtain call. A gentle, humble, hand-held bow from Ken and Jonathan, then joined by all of the other characters for a long and exuberant final bow.

I produce this play in order to draw attention to the politics, erotics, and poetics of collaborative writing, which I will now further illustrate with examples, generated via a range of strategies, from my own recent and future CW projects.

In 2014 I accepted an invitation to write about Australian and New Zealand theatrical productions of Shakespeare. I had not, at that stage, ever been to New Zealand. With the deadline approaching, and with several other projects also demanding my attention, I reached out, somewhat desperately, to an emerging scholar from New Zealand with the offer of collaborating on the essay. She accepted. I invited her to write her material and that I would attempt to ‘write around’ her and to integrate our material. The finished essay was infinitely better than I could have produced by myself: as Asa Simon Mittman disarmingly announces in his account of CW, ‘This Would Be Better If I Had a Co-Author’ (2015). The essay was

specifically bettered by my collaborator's fascinating and nuanced account of a Maori adaptation of *Troilus and Cressida* that I had planned to write about, neither having seen the production live, nor understanding the language it was spoken in, nor the cultural codes that informed it. Now I wonder, planning a book about productions of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, whether it is ethically sensitive and responsible to represent productions of that play from China, Zimbabwe and Brazil without local collaboration: CW potentially affords an intercultural (and other types of dialogic exchange) that resists authorial totalisation.

My 2014-2016 collaborations with Bernard Caleo – an analysis of Toneelgroep Amsterdam's *Roman Tragedies* in comic book form – and Scott Maisano – an edited collection of Creative Critical Shakespeare – were very much *bromance* projects. Both of these collaborations began with initial meetings of 'wow, we really get each other!', and of ongoing work that afforded considerable pleasure and fun. This is the erotics of CW: personal entanglements; pleasure; and, sometimes (though not in these cases), as the play above aptly demonstrates, pain. These kinds of endeavor sustain and further enliven scholarly labour. Later in this year (2019) I have a CW project planned with approximately ten scholars of early modern performance. I invited them via a tweet: 'does anyone fancy a collaborative writing game on Bartholomew Fair at the Globe?' This invitation has set off considerable scholarly play and mischief and I hope that will be reflected in the planned end result, an article pulling together quite short contributions into a collaborative whole.

### **eTwister Poetics**

An oft-repeated (and ironic) refrain in the embodied, collaborative writings I have sampled is the desire to discover new forms with which to express the entangled thoughts. In Act 5, Scene 1 of the play I have just created, Jonathan asks and then answers: 'How might writing change into some form already otherwise? And in this we might look to visual, literary, and poetic forms rather than the tired old forms of academic discourse' (2017: 362). The Pink Writing Experiment of Act 4, Scene 2 similarly asks, 'How can researchers make visible their complex processes and multilayered events?' (2015, p. 36; see also p. 23). Almost identically, the collaborators on 'Writing the Unreadable Utext: a Collaborative Autoethnography of #rhizo14' ask: 'How do we describe the experience in a way that is both legible to readers and yet remains true to the chaotic, nonlinear, lived experiences of participants? And how do we represent it?' (2015: 1). The irony (I remarked upon at the beginning of this paragraph) of these repeated questions is that each of these essays already experiments with form, often quite radically. The formal experiments featured in these essays just cited include: creative writing; reported conversations; juxtapositions of text and image; and innovations with textual, typographic, and typesetting form. I gather this poetics under a tenth category of bodily (and regularly collaborative) writing: performative writing. Key texts of performative writing include the respective essays by Della Pollock and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in the edited collection, *The Ends of Performance* (1998), the former of which lists performative writing as evocative, metonymic, subjective, nervous, citational and consequential (pp. 80-96), and the latter of which includes an exercise entitled 'Collaborative Archaeology' (p. 114). Ron Pelias also provides a (long) list in his 2014 *Performance: An Alphabet of Performative Writing*. And the sub-headings in D. S. Madison's explication of performative writing announce that 'Performative Writing is to Embrace... to Enact... to Embody... [and] to Effect' (pp. 220-232). It is Peggy Phelan, however, who offers (for me) the most powerful articulation of performative writing, a power perhaps generated through simplicity and compactness: she aims, via performative writing, to 'enact the affective force of the performance event again' (1997, p. 12). Here resides my answer to the repeated questions above, refrained one last time by the Finns of Act 4, Scene 3: 'But how to do this, how to do something new, how to leave the

researching/thinking/writing space open and emerging, and is it research (or just a silly game)?' (2016, p. 420).

What if, I ask, research was a silly game or at least treated as one? In the past, I have published work in the form of a Sudoku puzzle (2016), and one idea I have for the future collaboration on the performance analysis of the 2019 Sam Wanamaker Theatre *Bartholomew Fair* is to weave the various contributions together in Tetris-like blocks. What is crucial, I think, with silly game research like this, is to ensure that the form – Sudoku, Tetris, I've also experimented with pinboards, scrapbooks, interactive sports coverage – inextricable expresses the content. Thus, the Sudoku form was intended to reinforce the specific argument of that essay, that meaning is constructed via a seemingly endless series of interconnections between various elements. Can I find a way to justify Tetris as a visual form for a collaborative argument? Time will tell. And what about Twister? How might the form of this silly game facilitate an embodied and collaborative writing?

The subject I turn to in closing, and in order to attempt an answer to this latest question, is the performance event – the series of quite miraculous entertainments of traditional and contemporary performance – at the University of Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 5 December 2018. eTwistermological writing, I suggest, offers a way to, recalling Peggy Phelan, 'enact the affective force of the performance event again.' A large collection of scholars write individual embodied accounts of what happened from their particular perspective. These accounts might include:

- an evocation of loss or envy at missing the performance because of an ailing back and having to remain at one's hotel;
- a focus on hands, or eyes, or feet;
- an amateur naïve account of the dance forms juxtaposed with...
- expert accounts of the same forms
- exploration of the emotions associated with the heavy rain that fell in the afternoon and the possibility of cancelling or re-situating the event;
- discussion of the physical risks, perhaps by one of the performers, created by the still wet stage flooring;
- 'mistakes' during the performance, perhaps on account of the wet floor, of missed steps or jumps, of costumes coming off, of unintentional breaches of the performance-audience space that drew the spectators even closer to the performance;
- a description, perhaps once again by performers, of injuries sustained during the event, of muscles pulls, or bumps and bruises;
- descriptions of audience behavior, in particular the wildly raucous upper gallery of supporting students;
- interpretations of the visual signs of the contemporary forms, of balloons and paper-covered objects.

These accounts, and more, might be linked (hypertextually, for instance) to the separate circles of the Twister board. The experience of reading could be further gamified by obtaining a Twister spinning device in order to determine the order in which the separate accounts are accessed.



**Figure 5: Twister board with various aspects of the production event.**

Such writing need not be focused on performance events: the problems of traffic congestion, or the career of a cricketer-turned-politician might prove equally fruitful ground for embodied and collaborative projects. Collaborations might take place between those in the same discipline or sub-discipline, as in my projects with other scholars of early modern performance, or, perhaps even more excitingly, across disciplines, such as in projects between academics and practicing artists, or across the humanities and social sciences, or even transcending the arts / science divide. Now, who's with me?

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