

“WEAVING A BODY OUT OF WORDS”: PLAYWRITING STRATEGIES FOR TRANS- INFORMED RESEARCH-BASED THEATRE

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ABSTRACT. This article addresses the question: What are the expansive possibilities offered by a trans-informed Research-based Theatre (RbT) creation framework? Drawing on excerpts from an autoethnographic playscript which centres on my experiences as a graduate student while coming out as a nonbinary trans woman, I explore specific and adaptable strategies for trans-informed RbT playwriting. Playwriting is an essential component of the RbT creation process, and the strategies explored in this article may inform RbT practitioners’ approach in the classroom and beyond.

**“WEAVING A BODY OUT OF WORDS”: STRATÉGIES D’ÉCRITURE
DRAMATIQUE POUR UN THÉÂTRE FONDÉ SUR LA RECHERCHE ET
INFORMÉ PAR LES EXPÉRIENCES TRANS**

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article se demande quelles opportunités supplémentaires offre un cadre de création théâtrale axé sur la recherche (RbT en anglais) et informé par les expériences trans. En m’appuyant sur des extraits d’une pièce autoethnographique centrée sur mon expérience en tant qu’étudiante aux cycles supérieurs lors de mon coming out en tant que femme trans non binaire, j’explore des stratégies spécifiques et adaptables pour l’écriture dramatique RbT informée par les expériences trans. L’écriture dramatique est un élément central du processus de création en RbT. Les stratégies présentées ici peuvent éclairer la démarche des praticien·ne·s du RbT, que ce soit dans une salle de classe ou ailleurs.

These years, weaving a body out of words,
 Unravelling it again, as if my life
 were just material, as if I'd get
 it right sometime.

– Cat Fitzpatrick (“Six Women I’m Not,” *Glamourpuss*, 2016)

The story has not one ending
 Smudged into a solitary future
 Nor one formal statement or admission

In principle

It is a seed

– Duriel E. Harris (“Decorus,” 2015)

Research-based Theatre (RbT; Belliveau & Lea, 2016) is an arts-based methodology that has amassed considerable literature across social science, health disciplines, and education in the past 2 decades. RbT has come to be regarded as an innovative and accessible strategy for knowledge translation and exchange (Nichols et al., 2022) and a collaborative research approach for working with diverse populations, including healthcare professionals with disabilities (Jarvis et al., 2022), military veterans (Balfour & Hassall, 2022; Belliveau et al., 2020; Spring, 2022), adult learners accessing drop-in education programs (Cook & Borgen, 2020), and patients with traumatic brain injury (Kontos et al., 2012). As a method of inquiry and knowledge exchange that supports the centring of communities underrepresented in research, RbT offers flexible, adaptable parameters to meet the needs of those whose narratives are being shared. For example, while RbT projects are often published in scholarly journals and presented at academic conferences, many are also intended for knowledge sharing in community spaces or for performance on local stages (Beck et al., 2011).

The following article explores playwriting strategies for creating trans¹-informed RbT work. RbT unites various theatrical art forms to support a research-artistic offering. These art forms may include acting, direction, set design, costume design, lighting design, music and sound design, dance and choreographed movement, puppetry, playwriting, and more. RbT scholars draw on various strategies from these art forms. This article

contributes to developing RbT as a research methodology in education by considering a trans-informed approach to one aspect of RbT creation: playwriting.

The RbT playscript excerpts I share in this article are autoethnographic (Adams et al., 2022), exploring my experience beginning to publicly express my transness while completing a PhD in counselling psychology. My identities as a therapist and trans woman have informed my RbT-related practices and the strategies I explore. I strove to create this article with a humility (Mosher et al., 2017) that allowed me to centre the understanding that "there is no universal definition or experience of transness, and any activity that does not actively resist the creation of false universality runs the risk of building a new script" (Keenan, 2017, p. 551) and reinforcing a single, dominant narrative of trans experience. I offer work-in-progress playscript excerpts and suggestions for a trans-informed approach to RbT creation as one possibility among many. My work is a single contribution to a vast landscape of art and scholarship created by trans, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming individuals in support of trans communities (Keyes et al., 2021; Stryker, 2006), a contribution that I intend to invite continued dialogue and expansive conversations about trans lives and ways of knowing. There are countless ways to cross, live between, or move beyond the gender binary.

A TRANS-INFORMED RBT PROCESS

What might a trans-informed approach to RbT creation look like? What practices specifically belong to such an approach? Artists and educators who are queering performance (Dolan, 2005) or queering theatre pedagogies (Campbell, 2020) draw on queer theory scholarship and, in their work on stage and in the drama classroom, converse with "the public sphere from outside its enforced norms, and through the critical stories they tell, help to dislodge its assumptions" (Dolan, 2005, pp. 60–61). Similarly, I follow in the footsteps of trans scholars who have proposed "trans*" in and of itself as a methodology (Raun, 2014; Stryker et al., 2008; Weil, 2017). Weil (2017) writes:

The critical *potential* of trans* theorizing exceeds the milieu in which [it] is often articulated. ... Within trans* studies, this discussion has come to revolve around the use of the asterisk to visually indicate the potential for prefixing trans to any number of suffixes, including but not limited to gender, and to signal the possibility of expansive capacities harbored within existing assemblages of terms and concepts. (p. 12)

Trans as a methodology connects to an axiology of activism for trans communities, emphasizing two previously erased knowledges in the

generation, analysis, and representation of data: (a) a contemporary “knowledge that transgender people ... have of their own embodied experience, and of their relationships to the discourses and institutions that act upon and through them”; and (b) “a historical knowledge of particular structurings of power” that allows separation from previous scholarly works that authors positioned as ahistorical or neutral while pathologizing any and all forms of gender nonconformance (Stryker, 2006, p. 13). Methodologically, trans invites a looking back and a looking again, made possible by unburying alternative ways of knowing and living from a cisnormative centre that assumes journeys beyond the gender binary are contemporary phenomena. Both knowledges and the bridge between them are essential to trans as a methodology and crucial to how we generate data and narratives related to trans lives.

UNTANGLED DEFINITIONS

I embarked on my doctoral studies in 2019. I began publicly expressing my transness during my studies. *Trans woman*, *nonbinary*, and *queer* are words I currently identify with and use to describe aspects of my experience.

I do not want to become tangled in bounded definitions of these terms. I use *trans* expansively, following Susan Stryker’s (2017) definition: “movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place” (p. 1). This expansive definition encourages us to consider the possibilities of trans across boundaries of oppression towards well-being.

In the title of my autoethnographic play, I include the word “transsexual.” In *Transgender History*, Susan Stryker (2017) traces the origin of the word to medical literature from the first half of the 20th century, including the work of Magnus Hirschfeld, a German physician credited with creating the term “transsexualismus,” and Harry Benjamin, a doctor who popularized the term in North American medical literature. Stryker writes that “transsexual” is “sometimes considered an old-fashioned word” (p. 38). In the past, “transsexual” referred to individuals seeking gender-affirming surgeries, but trans community members reclaimed the term, and its definition became less perspective and less agreed upon (Stryker, 2017). Psychologists and other health professionals no longer use the term, favouring “transgender” or “trans” (American Psychological Association, 2020). I use the term *transsexual* to emphasize that (a) languages (medical, community-based, or cultural) related to trans lives are fluid and changing; and (b) carrying forward words or concepts from trans history is a reminder

that trans history exists, and our relationship with auto-histories and community histories is a living one.

Finally, in verb form, *queering* is used to suggest the influence of queer theory on theatre practices or pedagogy. For example, in their Academic Liner Notes to the research-creation *Queer Sonic Cultures* (2018), Sarah E. Truman and David Ben Shannon write of activating "queer as both a noun and a verb in [their] scholarship" (p. 60). However, Andrea Long Chu and Emmet Harsin Drager (2019) argue against using "transing" in verb form. According to Chu and Harsin Drager, "transing" dilutes and fails to differentiate between trans and queer ways of knowing (Halberstam, 2018). As such, in this article, I write of "trans as an RbT creation practice" or a "trans-informed approach to RbT." Queer ways of knowing and trans ways of knowing may overlap and inform one another but are also distinctive and can lead to complementary and divergent creation practices.

AN ANNOTATED RBT SCRIPT

In this section, I offer monologues from my work-in-progress autoethnographic RbT script *Postcards to My Younger Transsexual Self, Ages 0–119* to provide examples of three playwriting strategies that I propose to support trans-informed RbT:

- trans time travel
- slow performance
- seeking trans joy

Before I expand on these strategies, I suggest the reader consider the following questions as they read through the excerpts: What are the rules of this narrative universe? When are these rules broken?

[Postcards to My Younger Transexual Self, Ages 0–119]

PLAYWRIGHT NOTES

the actor playing SPILING is a trans woman & can be any age

as a prologue

the actor playing SPILING introduces herself to the audience while handing out blank postcards & pens

*the actor encourages the audience to write postcards to their younger selves
the postcard can be to themselves at any age & is just for them – they will not have to share it*

the monologues below can be performed with breaks in them for conversations with the audience

consider breaking for conversations after the 2nd [More Postcards to My Younger Transexual Self, Age 6], [Postcard to My Younger Transexual Self, Age 15] & the last monologue

the actor facilitates the discussions and allows the audience members to reflect on the monologues they are hearing with the audience members beside them (in pairs or small groups)

"Weaving a Body out of Words"

*SPILING (she/they) with her hands full
they carry a stack of 150 postcards tied up with ribbon*

SPILING sets down her load

*she undoes the ribbon &
reads a postcard:*

[Postcard to My Younger Transsexual Self, Age 6]

O SPILING.

your outfit for kindergarten:

 a beautiful white dress

but no beautiful white dresses

are in your dresser—

only pants

Tshirts—

you find your longest white Tshirt

you put it on

you decide this IS a dress

with that decision

all the anxiety

in your little 6yoldmind

disappears—at 6

 y o u d e c i d e

& your dress is beautiful

* * *

The bracketed play and monologue titles are meant to be spoken aloud by the actor as part of their lines, suggesting a theatrical performance style for the text, one beyond realism.

Lines 1–16, the first monologue in the play, reflect postcard prose writing in numerous ways — for example, informal, short, clipped phrases and minimal use of end punctuation. Audience members may have nostalgic memories of writing or receiving a postcard. Personal postcards are private / public documents: a message for a specific person written on a card that anyone can read. Hearing postcard prose is meant to engage an audience and cause them to lean in as if they are being let in on a secret.

The first line is written in all capitals. The third line is indented. The second to last line is indented, and the letters are spaced out. These formatting decisions suggest possibilities to the actor, emphasizing images or thoughts that are particularly important to Spiling.

*SPILING picks another postcard
but knows it from memory*

[Postcard to My Younger Transsexual Self, Age 39]

SPILING into the street

the Body boils roils & is read as
human & someone asks about possible medical coverage
for the lack of breast growth

Grandma Rose-Marie said:

'crying & whistling are
like mushroom soup &
cherrycola—
they don't go together—'
whistling
was my Gran's
cherrycola—

—wait did she say that?

the Body fills out
requisite paperwork:

'i SPILING solemnly declare that
i intend to maintain
the gender identity
that corresponds
with the requested change
CHECK THIS BOX'

* * *

The second monologue suggests to the audience this will not be a linear narrative — we jumped from age 6 in the first monologue to age 39 here.

Grandma Rose-Marie is mentioned by name. The grandma is a character who will re-appear in the monologues and naming her suggests to the audience that she is an important person to SPILING.

Some of the quoted text in this monologue is taken from forms required for a change of gender on government-issued identification in the province of British Columbia.

[Postcard to My Younger Transsexual Self, Age 12]

Channel 12

5pm

monday-to-friday commitment

startrek: thenextgeneration—T-N-G

your favourite character

Deanna Troi

ship's counsellor

you are going to grow up

to BE

D. Troi

therapist to a starship

your Grandma

Rose-Marie

sends a postcard

'the galaxy—

since you want to be an astronaut!'

*SPILING flips the card
& looks at the picture on the front*

at the centre a sun
with eyes &
fairies flying

Gran says
'it's bright Apollo'
an old god...
fairies are 'muses'

youwish:
—Gran sent a D. Troi
actionfigure
—youwish—
you were flying
with hair long as the sun

—youwishthat—

outer
space
was
closer

* * *

There are numerous elements of fiction in this autoethnographic narrative (Leavy, 2023; Chilton & Leavy, 2020). My name is not Spiling. My grandmother's name was not Rose-Marie. Fiction has a place in autoethnographic and RbT work to support the telling of narratives which might be too vulnerable or unethical to share without certain personal details changed (Ellis, 2007; Leavy, 2023; Rossiter et al., 2008). Fiction also allows the use of imagery to capture the essence of a feeling or experience and convey it to an audience. I never received a postcard like the one described from my grandma, but the image of the sun is one that will reoccur throughout the text and speaks to Spiling's relationship with her grandmother.

*SPILING searches for a particular postcard—
her body is spread out on the floor
almost swimming in them
looking
finds it! & another! two!*

[More Postcards to My Younger Transsexual Self, Age 6]

YOU
in a beautiful white dress—heavenly
your Baby-Sitter asks
'can you get ready for school?'
you sing: 'i AM READY!'
you're wearing your dress—let's go!—
you'll remember clearly
a look of concern cross
Baby-Sitter's face
for at least 33yrs (& counting)—
her understanding
you're thinking
it's okay to wear a dress
in-that-bodythat-bodyyour-body:
'YOUTHINKYOU CANWEAR THAT OUTSIDE
MISTER?'

* * *

This postcard introduces another person in Spiling's world: a babysitter. The babysitter remains unnamed, a specific choice which keeps her at a distance from the audience compared to the grandma or to Nellie, an electrologist who appears later in the script.

A long t-shirt turned into a beautiful white dress by way of a 6-year-old's imagination is a concrete image and one of the few images offered in these age 6 monologues. We don't know anything about Spiling's childhood home or the babysitter's appearance. These details are unnecessary for the narrative, and just as postcard writing encourages concise writing, these monologues are distilled, dramatized narrative fragments.

[More Postcards to My Younger Transsexual Self, Age 6]

A Baby-Sitter Ultimatum:
'CHANGECLOTHES!'—
run back to your room
refuse to leave
wear your dress
whistlewhistlewhistlewis—
Mom comes home
you hear whispering
Baby-Sitter &
Mom
you might be
d i s a p o i n t i n g h e r
in your 6yearoldmind
you whisper:
'put on pants don't turn
Tshirts into dresses againnever'

* * *

SPILING creates a circle of postcards
SPILING turns the circle of postcards
into a
pathway
stepping from card to card
adding new cards to extend the path
reading cards along the way

[Postcard to My Younger Transsexual Self, Age 24]

Fears' aging at the same rate
i am—
no no that's not right—
Fears' younger than me
but i act like she's my elder—
Fears'—a little sister who
acts like a parent
a parent who knows best &
who i attempt to strike deals with
in the bathroom or after midnight
but negotiations stall
we end up repeating 'maybe one day' in chorus:
'maybe one day'—'maybe one day'—
i'll speak out
'she'

* * *

[Postcard to My Younger Transsexual Self, Age 7]

i don't think
you
believe
in gender
do
you?

or don't believe it applies to you
like Santa Claus
some kids believe some didn't
can't tell who
better keep it to yourself

go underground
 make a hideout
 peek out when it's safe:
 'Mom
 am i allowed to like
 Tina Turner?'
 'um—Sure'
 backseat of a red honda
 driving home from school
 radioplaying dancing—

i'm gonna be strong i'm gonna do fine/don't worry about this heart of mine

* * *

*SPILING sees the postcards she wants
 but can't reach them from
 her postcard path
 she slides her whole body
 across the floor
 postcard to postcard
 to reach them*

[Postcard to My Younger Transsexual Self, Age 36]

your 2nd year of a phd
 in counselling psychology
 in private spaces
 like the bathroom or after midnight
 you form words to express—

your growing understanding of
 why you flinch at 'misters' & 'sirs'
 makes flinching worse—
 a pain grown numb
 returns with an ache

but alongside this ache—
 ... suddenly
 learning to float—
 you thought treading water was—
 you thought NOT drowning was—

"Weaving a Body out of Words"

but
to float
on your back
& feel
the sun
on your face
water beneath you—
to float O to float!

* * *

*SPILING has a stack of postcards &
the cards are attached
the stack extends out
like an accordion*

[Postcard to My Younger Transsexual Self, Age 37]

i'm in a long-distance relationship
with my Endocrinologist

Tom
Tommy
Tomist

i imagine

i'm meeting him
at the back of a dive bar
on Denman St. with a 7-million-dollar oceanview
Tomist-My-Endo & me
drinking house red
at the Bayside Lounge
me squinting into the sunset
trying to see fathoms
as Tomist mansplains—

[continued next postcard]

These postcards represent more autoethnographic fiction and another possibility that fiction offers RbT playwrights: the description of dreams and fantasies. Spiling eventually admits that this whole monologue is a fantasy, but her wish to connect in this way shares more of who she is and what she is experiencing with the audience.

O Tomist & his mansplaining
 —think Tom Hiddleston
 got the accent & everything
 so i don't hate listening to him
 tell me what i am—
 he's waxing on about
 being a trans woman
 on hormones
 side effects
 desired effects
 'your-dreaming-if-you-think-
 they-'ll-give-you-bigger-hips' effects
 then he bats his eyes &
 i think he might put his hand on
 mine—

[continued next postcard]

instead
 he slides over
 a giant white matchbox
 of clear hormone patches for my ass
 to be switched twice weekly
 child-proof pill bottles with some very potent anti-testosterone effects
 plus a regular bloodwork order

Dr. Tomist is the type of man
 who worries about my kidney
 & liver function...

we only have phone appointments

i've never seen his face
 he's never seen mine

he's never slid anything across a bar
 or even brushed against
 me

but Tomist is ethically obligated to mansplain
 estrogen—

he's read all about it—
plus he watched a few episodes of *Transparent* when it came out

Tomist is no Gatekeeper &
he says so
doesn't want to be 'a Gatekeeper'

i have said this too
as a phd-student-
psychologist-to-be:
'i don't want to be
Gatekeeper'

* * *

*SPILING lets
the postcard accordion
fall to the floor*

[Postcard to My Younger Transsexual Self, Age 39]

i'm trying to get an A+ in electrolysis

i carefully follow my electrologist
Nellie's instructions to
lather on emla cream &
cover it with plastic wrap
to keep it airtight
the bottom half of my face
looks like leftovers
pushed to the back
of the fridge

i lie down on the hospital
bed tissue &
i know
i'm crinkling
it

there's a photo hung so
i look at it every time
i swing my legs over the bed

Céline Dion's
embracing Nellie
smiles bigger
than the photo
they'll burst the frame

'whenever Céline's
in town
i get free tickets
for me & girlfriends—
i worked on Céline
like i'm working on you'
Nellie's already on my chin
electrocuting hair follicle
by hair follicle

emla cream
feels like spreading
Greek yogurt
on my face &
might be as effective
in terms of pain relief —
SO not very

my chin's swollen
like a radish
when we finish the 1sthr
& Nellie tells me
to avoid sunexposure
after electrocution:
'Mr. Solar's NOT
your friend
pumpkin—
neither are his
UV pathways of light'

Nellie only takes cash
gives you a deal
if you buy
bulk-10hr-bundles

i should be studying
psych history
or for my
personality/pathology
exam

but Céline
watches over me
for over 80hrs
that summer &
in September
when Nellie asks me
if i notice
hair on my face is thinner?
if it's working?
i lie & say
'yes'

because
i'm trying to get an A+
in electrolysis

* * *

PLAYWRITING STRATEGIES FOR TRANS-INFORMED RBT

In *Females* (2019), trans author and critic Andrea Long Chu writes, “Gender exists, if it exists at all, only in the structural generosity of strangers” (p. 38). Transgender artists Rae Spoon and Ivan Coyote write in their 2014 book *Gender Failure*, “More and more, I have thought of my gender as a story I tell myself” (p. 239). These authors point to playwriting strategies I have chosen to highlight from the above monologues.

Several narrative rules, or patterns, are established in the first monologues. To start with, after these first monologues, the audience might begin to assume that all monologues will be written like a postcard, in the second person, directly addressing a “you.” Secondly, the audience might start to assume that monologues will be short, between 60–75 words, also like a postcard. These rules are broken by monologues later in the excerpts; for example, the electrolysis monologue is written in the first person and reaches 234 words. Patterns are only established in playwriting so the playwright can break them to emphasize meaning and create emotionally evocative and surprising theatrical moments. These monologues suggest the three playwriting strategies that I propose to support trans-informed RbT:

- trans time travel
- slow performance
- seeking trans joy / rage

Next, I consider each strategy in turn.

TRANS TIME TRAVEL

The first trans-informed playwriting strategy to highlight from the excerpted monologues relates to time. Moving beyond binary classifications of a playscript’s narrative time as linear or nonlinear, trans-informed RbT must consider unique experiences of time as related to trans and nonbinary identities (Keyes et al., 2021).

The excerpted monologues place different autobiographical periods in relation to one another: Postcards to a 6-year-old self are mixed in with postcards to a 30-something self. The fluidness of time travel explored in the monologues reflects a differing sense of time, which is circular rather than based on forward progression.

In a study of trans graduate students (Goldberg et al., 2022), responses indicated that transitioning impacted participants’ graduate school experiences and career development by creating additional burdens,

including ongoing misgendering, unsafe learning and housing contexts, and a lack of access to trans-affirming medical and mental health care on campus. This suggests that life transitions, such as finishing a graduate degree, might be protracted for trans students, who may, in turn, achieve career goals in a different timeframe than their cisgender peers. Linear narratives of finite change may mask "the complex temporalities of [gender] transition" (p. 646), as Hil Malatino (2019) writes, and fail to contextualize a transition within an individual's broader life. Trans experiences of time offer an invitation to consider how assumptions of linearity and stability fail to represent the messiness of numerous transitions and identities in our contemporary personal (Malatino, 2019) and professional lives (Butterfield et al., 2010) over time. By messiness, I mean an authentic fluidity that allows adaptation in the face of shifting and developing identities rather than stuckness. Now that I am publicly expressing my transness, my relationships with my memories of my younger self have changed. Mixing stories from different periods of my life allows the exploration of these shifting relationships.

Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman (2018) describe activation devices for *walking* as a methodology, such as bringing a unique object, as ways to "rupture and queer the walk, they *slow* us down and change our gait, they problematize what it means to walk, they agitate and provoke" (p. 136). In some ways, placing postcards from different ages next to each other is an activation device that asks the audience to slow down and pay attention differently. It also asks: To what time will Spiling travel next?

SLOW PERFORMANCE

Hil Malatino (2020) offers insights into a trans ethics of care, which is "only ever manifested through practice – action, labor, work" (p. 41). This ethics decentres languages of care with hetero- and cis-normative metaphors to move concretely "into the intricately interconnected spaces and places where trans and queer care labor occurs: the street, the club, the bar, the clinic, the community center, the classroom, the nonprofit, and sometimes, yes, the home" (Malatino, 2020, p. 42). A trans ethics of care "is integral to our ways of doing" (Malatino, 2020, p. 41) and necessarily and actively informs "auto-ing" trans stories in RbT, or dramatizing narratives that focus on trans selves and stories of trans embodiment (Steinbock, 2021). I propose slow performance as a specific example of a trans ethic of care in RbT. Owis et al. (2023) suggest a specific framework for 2SLGBTQIA+-informed RbT includes a slow ethic of care, defined as "an intentional process in which we sit with moments of

discomfort and re/act slowly to dilemmas to make ethical decisions in our work by centring care work” (p. 3).

In trans-informed RbT, I suggest that slow performance reflects a trans ethic of care for performers and audience members. Slow performance can be written into a script, as in the excerpts from *Postcards to My Younger Transsexual Self, Ages 0–119*. The postcard format introduces natural breaks into the script, and the stage directions encourage audience discussions in some of these breaks, slowing down the performance experience and allowing the audience to reflect. This break taking overturns some of our typical assumptions about performance: that audience members are to sit passively for the duration of the performance, that any breaks in performance (other than a scheduled intermission) are unwelcome interruptions that interfere with the audience receiving the play’s stories, and that actors should stay in character during a performance, not speaking to the audience as themselves, outside of their role.

SEEKING TRANS JOY / RAGE

Historically, the perspectives of trans, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming individuals are missing from the research literature in many health and education disciplines (Hyde et al., 2019; Riggs et al., 2019). This absence has not gone unnoticed by trans scholars. Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah (2014) define the discipline of trans studies in opposition “to the medico-juridical and psychotherapeutic frameworks ... [and] previously existing research agendas that facilitate the framing of transgender phenomena as appropriate targets of medical, legal, and psychotherapeutic intervention” (p. 4). In other words, it is in opposition – at least in part – to research literature that focuses solely on the symptom-based description of trans lives or the vulnerabilities faced by trans community members. Rather than focusing on symptoms or vulnerabilities, a trans-informed approach to RbT seeks trans joy / rage.

Working on this playscript has been one of the most significant experiences of my life, a leap of joy. Playwriting towards trans joy can look and feel and sound an awful lot like trans rage (Stone, 1992), and maybe it is this joyful rage that I have found so liberating. Introductory playwriting texts teach playwrights that their scripts must include conflict (Cattaneo, 2021; Smiley, 2005). Importantly, in the case of narratives that include trans expression and embodiment, conflict does not equal trauma or a focus on symptoms or vulnerabilities. The excerpted monologues include moments of conflict – the babysitter’s ultimatum, a personified version of fear – but these moments are surrounded by moments of trans

joy / rage: a beautiful white dress, floating, flirting in a dive bar, Céline Dion as a guarding angel. A trans-informed approach to RbT intentionally moves beyond trauma-saturated stories and also does not assume that experiences of joy or euphoria are diminished by, or indeed different from, a generative and protective rage.

CONCLUSION

RbT practitioners can find numerous ways to explore trans experiences of time, slow performance, and seeking trans joy / rage. I offer the excerpts as inspiration or jumping-off points to further explore these and other trans-informed RbT playwriting strategies.

RbT, as an arts-based research methodology, offers possibilities for a transdisciplinary exploration that creates new space and movement for inquiry and knowledge exchange with and among trans scholars, artists, and community members. In RbT projects, trans artist-scholars can centre trans knowledge, answering back to the centuries of sexualization, fetishization, criminalization, and othering in media, medical / therapeutic, and educational spaces. Furthermore, research-based plays allow "openings through which audience members [can] co-construct understandings" (Lea et al., 2011, p. 11), creating dialogic spaces among trans researchers, clinicians, artists, and trans community members.

The monologues are from a script that is still in development. In my writing practice, I develop a full-length playscript over 10–12 different drafts and 3 to 4 years of writing. In sharing these monologues from an early draft written over 9 months, from April 2021 to January 2022, I hope to normalize the process of sharing work-in-progress scripts in RbT. By documenting an RbT script's development overtime, I hope to make the RbT playwriting process more transparent and accessible.

Trans-informed RbT cannot be reduced to a single recipe or set of strategies. The strategies and work-in-progress script excerpts I shared here are meant to propose possibilities for other RbT artist-scholars to contribute additional avenues towards trans ways of knowing and RbT, constructing a fluid and evolving dialogue on trans-informed RbT practices.

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NOTES

1. In this article, I employ *trans*, *nonbinary*, and *gender nonconforming* as umbrella terms to refer to individuals whose gender identity differs from a gender designation assigned to them at birth or those whose gender identities or expressions defy binary classifications or cisnormative understandings. I use *trans* throughout the article as a shorthand for the above.

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