

moment in the play, Jenny performs the role of the Grandmaster of Theatre surrounded by seven other student actors dressed as puppets. Behind them are the remaining 64 actors in role as audience members watching a play. They sit side by side in three rows at the back—they mirror the real audience. Inspired by the theories and practices of Jerzy Grotowski (1968), this original play explores the relationship between performers and audience.

The stage is dimly lit, except a bright spot on the Grandmaster of Theatre. With her back to the audience she extends both hands into the air; a violin player plays a sharp note and the puppets drop to the ground. She slowly turns around and reveals her crazed eyes to the audience. There is not a sound in the theatre. All eyes are on her. At last she speaks the lines she co-created with her peers:

*Grandmaster:* This body, that body, which body, whose body can they hold? We are the actors, simply puppets, mere balls of clay to be shaped and formed as theater pleases. Our bodies are vessels for characters to possess . . . (Beare and Handsworth Writing Team 2007)

She looks around and the next scene begins. The role of the Grandmaster of Theatre is complete. Jenny returns to her seat at the back of the stage, and like all the actors in the play, she transforms into the role of an audience member. After the festival, I became increasingly aware how this pivotal moment helped to foster my development as an a/r/tographer.

## A/r/tography

A/r/tography is an arts research methodology emphasizing living inquiry and reflective practice through examination of the in-between spaces of art-making/researching/teaching. Rita Irwin (2004) explains that a/r/tography is based on Aristotle's three realms of knowledge: *theoria* (knowing), *praxis* (doing), and *poesis* (making). A/r/tographers, in multiple roles as researchers, artists, and teachers, give

attention to the *in-between* where meanings reside in the simultaneous use of language, images, materials, situations, space and time . . . [and create] the circumstances that produce knowledge and understanding through artistic and educational inquiry laden processes. (Irwin and Springgay 2008, xix-xxvi)

In addition, Rita Irwin and Stephanie Springgay (2008) explain that a/r/tography cannot be limited to the study of the mechanics of doing art, nor can it be defined simply as multiple identities. A/r/tographers are connected to, not separate from, the researching, the teaching, and the art-making processes.

Derived from the works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), a/r/tography is metaphorically described as rhizomatic, which allows for multiple, nonhierarchical entry and exit points. Rhizomes are horizontal stems of a plant that grow long roots under the ground and send out root stems for new plants to grow above the ground. The roots grow in all directions, with one point connecting to any other point. Like a mesh of lines on a road map, there are no beginnings or middles, merely in-between connections between points. Kari-Lynn Winters, George Belliveau, and Lori Sherritt (2009) suggest that "In a/r/tography, process matters. This is because meaning is alive—always moving, always growing. A/r/tographers view constructions of knowledge as infinite and in-process" (8).

A/r/tographers investigate in-between and unfamiliar spaces as a way to examine complexities and unpredictable connections.

A relatively new arts research methodology, a/r/tography is growing in recognition. For example, Stephanie Springaay, Rita Irwin, and Sylvia Kind published a chapter, “A/R/Tographers and Living Inquiry,” in the 2007 *Handbooks of the Arts in Qualitative Research*. In this paper, I build additional knowledge by linking secondary theatre education with the a/r/tography process, primarily through an exploration of contiguity. Drama in education has been researched through different qualitative methodologies such as reflective practice (Neelands 2006; Taylor 1996), ethnodrama (Saldana 2005), narrative inquiry (Zatzman 2003), and ethnography (Gallagher 2000, 2007). To date, only a few published papers link a/r/tography with theatre/drama in education (Beare and Belliveau 2008; Winters, Belliveau, and Sherritt 2009). Even though a/r/tography embraces all of the arts, most of the a/r/tographic publications relate to the visual arts, with only a few reporting on theatre/drama.

## Renderings

In addition to a/r/tographers questioning the interrelationships and intersubjectivity of arts education practices, a/r/tographers also conceptualize how to inquire about their practice. Although there is overlap between a/r/tography and other arts-based or inquiry-based research models, a/r/tography is distinct, as the method frames its methodology around *renderings*. Renderings are conceptual organizers of ideas used by a/r/tographers to interpret qualities deemed significant during an artistic or creative process. Rita Irwin and Stephanie Springaay described six renderings of a/r/tography:

1. Contiguity: giving attention to the spaces in-between art, education, and research, in between ‘art’ and ‘graphy’, and in-between art and a/r/t;
2. Living Inquiry: giving attention to the complexity and contradictions of relations between people, things, and understandings of life experiences;
3. Openings: giving attention to dialogue and discourse;
4. Metaphor and Metonymy: giving attention to new connections and intertwined relationships;
5. Reverberations: giving attention to shifts in new meaning, new awareness, and new discoveries; and
6. Excess: giving attention to what lies outside the acceptable. (2008, xxvii-xxxi)

The above list of renderings is not exhaustive. Because a/r/tography is a never-ending and incomplete inquiry process, a/r/tography remains open to the re-interpretation of renderings and the discovery of new ones. Renderings are not to be confused with methods. While methods are procedural organizers for data collection, renderings conceptually organize ideas. In short, renderings are not about gathering data (or reproducing/copying a piece of art) but rather coming closer to an idea through the process of art-making. Due to the limited scope of this paper, I primarily focus on the rendering of contiguity—in-between spaces.

The a/r/tographic rendering of contiguity examines the in-between spaces of one idea touching another (or laying adjacent or in presence with another). The inquiry of in-between spaces disrupts dualistic thinking and encourages the interconnectivity of social and cultural differences, opposites, and unknowns. Therefore, in-between spaces are “not merely physical location or object but a process, a movement and displacement of meaning” (Irwin and Springaay 2008, xx). As an a/r/tographer, I have come to incorporate the

- Irwin, Rita L. 2004. A/r/tography as metonymic, metonymic, metissage. In *A/r/tography: Rendering self through arts based living inquiry*, ed. Rita L. Irwin and Alex de Cosson, 27–38. Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.
- , Ruth Beer, Stephanie Springgay, Kit Grauer, Gu Xiong, and Barbara Bickel. 2008. The rhizomatic relations of a/r/tography. In *Being with a/r/tography*, ed. Stephanie Springgay, Rita L. Irwin, Carl Leggo, and Peter Gouzouasis, 205–220. Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- and Stephanie Springgay. 2008. A/r/tography as practice based research. In *Being with a/r/tography*, ed. Stephanie Springgay, Rita L. Irwin, Carl Leggo, and Peter Gouzouasis, xiii–xvii. Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Knowles, Richard. 1999. *The theatre of form and the production of meaning*. Toronto, ON: ECW Press.
- Larson, Reed W. and Jane R. Brown. 2007. Emotional development in adolescence: What can be learned from a high school theatre program? *Child Development* 78 (4): 1083–1099.
- Lazarus, Joan. 2004. *Signs of change: New direction in secondary theatre education*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Neelands, Jonothan. 2006. Re-imagining the reflective practitioner: Towards a philosophy of critical praxis. In *Research methodologies for drama education*, ed. Judith Ackroyd, 15–40. Stoke on Trent, UK: Trentham Books Limited.
- Oddey, Alison. 1994. *Devising theatre: A practical and theoretical handbook*. London: Routledge.
- Sainer, Authur. 1975. *The radical theatre notebook*. New York: Avon Books.
- Saldana, Johnny, ed. 2005. *Ethnodrama: An anthology of reality theatre*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Springgay Stephanie, Rita L. Irwin, and Sylvia Kind. 2007. A/R/Tographers and living inquiry. In *Handbooks of the arts in qualitative research*, ed. J. Gary Knowles and Ardra L. Cole, 83–92. Toronto, ON: SAGE.
- Tarlington, Carole and Wendy Michaels. 1995. *Building plays: Simple playbuilding techniques at work*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers.
- Waldrop, M. Mitchell. 1992. *Complexity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Way, Brian. 1981. *Audience participation: Theatre for young people*. Boston: Walter H. Barker Company.
- Weinberg, Mark S. 1992. *Challenging the hierarchy: Collective theatre in the United States*. London: Greenwood Press.
- Westley, Frances, Brenda Zimmerman, and Michael Quinn Patton. 2007. *Getting to maybe: How the world is changed*. Toronto, ON: Vintage Canada.
- Winters, Kari-Lynn, George Belliveau, and Lori Sherritt. 2009. Shifting identities, literacy, and a/r/tography: Exploring an educational theatre company. *Language and Literacy* 11, no. 1, <http://www.langandlit.ualberta.ca/> (accessed July 28, 2008).
- Zatzman, Bellarie. 2003. The Monologue Project: Drama as a form of witnessing. In *How theatre educates*, ed. David Booth and Kathleen Gallagher, 35–55. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.