

Practice-Based Pedagogies for Counter-Memorial Performance: Teaching to Address and Shift “Plantation Energy”

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Introduction

Gathered in a circle on the grass at Davidson College, I discuss with a small group of white and Black students what we do and don't know about the histories of the college. We occupy the ancestral homeland of the Catawba Indian Nation, surrounded by buildings constructed in the 1830s by “volunteer’ laborers” with bricks made by enslaved peoples,¹ shaded by towering trees imported to populate the grounds as an arboreal display of worldly specimens. To my surprise, those who showed up to my Moving Campus Histories workshop at the end of Spring semester 2021 were familiar with the Davidson Disorientation alternative campus tour that highlights the white supremacy, colonialism, and racism embedded in the college’s past and present. The last student to speak was a Black senior Africana studies major, active in campus equity and antiracism initiatives, who had taken my Dancing Diasporas course the previous fall. Since arriving to Davidson, she explained, even though not immediately knowing specific histories, she had felt “plantation energy” in buildings and locations on campus.² It was from this different-yet-shared sense of historical haunting that I developed History, Memory, Performance, Place: Activating Davidson’s Submerged Histories, a class I taught in the spring semesters of 2020 and 2021 at the college, for which this outdoor, site-specific workshop was a public-facing extension. In this article, I discuss the ways I utilized practice-based pedagogy in the course to address as well as shift what this student identified as “plantation energy” on campus.

Located nineteen miles north of Charlotte, North Carolina, Davidson College was established as a Presbyterian vocational school for males by white slave owners in 1837. Many original bricks crafted and laid by enslaved peoples still vibrate unacknowledged, calling for “a something to be done” (Gordon 1997, 139, 205). It was not until the 1960s that first a Congolese male student and then African American males were admitted, and not until the 1970s that first white women and then African American women were admitted. African American student-led campus activism in the 1980s forwarded a platform for racial equity and institutional transformation called Project ’87, which made demands the college is still trying to meet (Padalecki and Norman 2021). Since the mid-2010s, Davidson has invested in multiple campus-wide initiatives aimed toward reckoning with its racial past and the ongoing continuities of erasure, oppression, and inequity in the present. I devised History, Memory, Performance, Place (HMPP) in response to these initiatives launched before and during my three years as visiting assistant professor (2019–2022).³

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Davidson's highly praised institutional identity focuses on ideas of truth, trust, "humane instincts," "disciplined and creative minds," and "leadership and service" (Davidson College n.d.d). BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and/or non-Christian students, faculty, and staff, however, often experience a campus environment that lays bare the ways such purported ideals effectively perpetuate exclusion, discrimination, and white supremacist values coded as universals ("discipline," "integrity," and "truth"). In the "Goals and Scope" section of the website *Disorienting & Reorienting: Recovering and Analyzing Legacies of Colonialism, Slavery, and White Supremacy at Davidson College*, Sarah HD Mellin and Tian Yi (2019) write about "the disconnect felt by underrepresented students of color who are 'sold' one particular version of the institution and find themselves experiencing a very different reality after arrival." Such a reality sparked the research and development of their alternative campus tour, *Davidson Disorientation*, which powerfully unearthed the colonial dispossession, enslavement, and racism that underpinned the college's history and growth.⁴ Mellin and Yi also share their hopes for the project's futures: "This knowledge should not and cannot remain unused, but must inform deliberate community-led action." My teaching of HMPP responded to their call. As an interdisciplinary performance studies scholar, dance artist, and educator invested in undoing racism through body-based methods, I was curious how a multimodal pedagogy intent on "activating Davidson's submerged histories" could contribute to campus reckoning efforts. How might practice-based research support this work of addressing violent histories and their pervasive continuities as "plantation energy" felt by members of the Davidson community in the present?

This article offers considerations on the relationships between practice-based research, body-based methods, and antiracist pedagogies as they came together in HMPP. In broad scope, my work as an educator draws from multiple realms of experience and interdisciplinary practice. I am a white American child of Jewish South Africans who has for over seventeen years moved in African diasporic dance communities and with Haitian artist-activists as a dancer, ethnographer, collaborative performance maker, and educator. My collaborative performance projects, coauthored articles, and multidisciplinary initiatives insist on the generative capacities of thinking and doing together, and I am invested in the ways artistry and embodied practice can make place, transmit hx/stories, and potentialize change.⁵ As a white educator who works to implement queer feminist antiracist pedagogies, I regularly convene with both white and multiracial collectives to practice identifying and addressing white supremacy within our personal embodiments, interpersonal and institutional contexts, and pedagogies.⁶ At Davidson, I was contingent faculty on the relative margins of the institution, called to activate my positionality to bolster students' capacities for confronting (and healing from) race, racism, and white supremacy on campus and in their everyday lives. To do so, my pedagogy integrated body-based learning with interdisciplinary methodologies, critical theory, and ongoing self-reflection. Reflecting on and detailing my teaching here, I discuss some ways practice-based research can undergird antiracist critical performance pedagogy.

HMPP introduced students to foundational dance, performance studies, and Black studies theory and methods. With a dance course number, HMPP was cross-listed with Africana studies, anthropology, and Davidson's newly implemented Justice, Equality, Community (JEC) curriculum. As a new transdisciplinary course with an unfamiliar faculty member, my classes were small, and students arrived from varied locations. Across difference, I facilitated student excavations of Davidson's past and continued legacies of white supremacy through archival, historiographic, place-based, theoretical, and embodied creative modalities. Coursework was divided between reading, discussions, embodied practices, creative workshops, performance viewings, reflective and analytical writing, guest artist visits, and practice-based research. Here I share some of the strategies I

employed in the course, integrate student reflections as well as excerpts from their final projects, and dwell in the “counter-memorial” potential of approaches I incorporated in HMPP as well as in my on-campus teaching the following fall. I discuss the possibilities my intersectional performance studies pedagogies offered for “activating Davidson’s submerged histories” and potentially shifting the “plantation energy” minoritized students experienced on campus, and ultimately consider such methods vis-à-vis more spectacular performances of public apologies, staged theatrical production, and commemorative art. This writing integrates practical discussions with philosophical considerations, my own voice alongside that of my students, and concrete as well as theoretical potentials, demonstrating my multimodal interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to both pedagogy and scholarship.

“Plantation Energy” and Racial Performance at Davidson College

Davidson’s efforts to address and rectify its embeddedness in structural oppression and dispossession is part of a larger trend of universities reckoning with their debts to enslavement and the expropriated labour of African Americans.⁷ For well over a decade, Davidson faculty, students, staff, and alumni have been excavating formerly suppressed college histories. A main goal for HMPP was to connect to these prior efforts. Early assignments introduced students to these projects, and we met with campus librarians Jessica Cottle, DebbieLee Landi, and Cara Evanson, as well as Dr. Hilary Green, a leading scholar of African American history who was in residence on campus 2020–2021. Green’s Hallowed Grounds Project (n.d.) richly charts the University of Alabama’s relationship to slavery and the African American lives and labour that sustained the University; Green was at Davidson to conduct similar research in alignment with the College’s Commission on Race and Slavery.⁸

Mellin, cocreator of *Disorienting & Reorienting* (Mellin and Yi 2019) and author of the senior thesis “Beneath the Bricks: Reckoning with Legacies of Colonialism, Slavery, and White Supremacy at Davidson College” (2020), also served as a crucial interlocutor. Students read portions of Mellin’s thesis, did the alternative campus tour,⁹ and met with Mellin. In conversation, Mellin highlighted known instances of racialized performance on campus—including nineteenth- and twentieth-century performances of blackface, confederate nostalgia, and racial violence—examining how they “remain” in the present through racist stereotypes and value systems, structural inequities, interpersonal microaggressions, and historical erasure (Schneider 2001; Mellin 2020, 85–114). Mellin carried forward an ethos of collaboration and recognition, honouring the many who have long pursued racial justice on campus, and emphasizing the role white folks can and must play in furthering such work.

A prominent theme that emerged in early conversations and research was the “mental [and emotional] strain” Black staff, faculty, and students experienced, trackable in archival documents to as early as the 1870s (Davidson College Archives and Special Collections 2015; see also Davidson College Archives and Special Collections 2011). Labouring at the college also meant enduring the psychosomatic wear of existing in a southern PWI (predominately white institution). Like Black people’s labour, Blackness as aesthetic or costume has been expropriated as well—another American tradition (Dixon-Gottschild 1996). College archives document that in the school’s early years, young male students causing trouble donned blackface to mediate white Presbyterian ethics and rigidity; as Mellin assesses, these acts provided a “fetishistic escape,” disguising the self to commit transgressive acts and avoid accountability (Mellin 2020, 89). Blackness—associated with deviance and criminal

behaviour—becomes objectified, abstracted, and made into a costume. The 1920 college yearbook holds a photograph of a mock lynching on the lawn in front of a main campus building in which an African American staff person wears a noose while two dozen white students point rifles at him (Mellin 2020, 153–54). Additionally, the “Wildcat Minstrels” are documented performing blackface from 1920 to 1925. Football halftime shows in the 1930s staged racist stereotypes locally and nationally, and the 1937 Centennial Celebration for the college promoted settler nostalgia through redface costumes and scenes of Native American encounter (Mellin 2020, 85–114). Civil War reenactments fuelled nostalgia for the Confederacy through the 1970s.

This glimpse of Davidson’s past makes clear how performance has historically been a site of racial power and domination at the college. Encountering this history impacts everyday experience of campus space. A white American student reflected:

As a community that functions in these spaces, we should know and be aware of the land’s history. It changes how you feel walking through a space and how you might want to use it. Chambers Lawn is a notorious spot on campus to hang out with friends and just enjoy its openness and beauty. Knowing now that a mock lynching took place on the land does not make me want to go bask in the sun the next warm day we have. I think if these spaces on campus were recognized for their histories it would certainly change the way they are used. I also gather a sense that there is a large part of the student body that would be interested in this project and would want to disorient themselves from the “Davidson narrative” to understand more of the institution’s past.

These impacts land in and on bodies differently, depending on people’s situated experiences. In conversations with students, a clear disconnect emerged between the ways white cisgender students encountered Davidson’s histories, like the student quoted above, and the ways Black and Indigenous students, other students of colour, and queer students, who might not have known the details of such events, could feel in their bodies the stickiness of history’s residues carried on in everyday enactments of power, privilege, and un/belonging on campus. In group conversations, white students were disturbed and upset at not previously being taught about their beloved school’s histories. The one Black student in HMPP would often relate experiences that confirmed the ongoingness of racist histories—citing instances of exclusion, microaggressions, and compiling violences registered psychosomatically, resulting in a form of exhaustion that critical race theorist William A. Smith (2008) termed “racial battle fatigue.”

Steeped in thinking with these pasts, I also often brought up Davidson’s submerged histories in other courses I taught when relevant. Discussing the histories of blackface on campus with my *Dancing Diaspora* class, the Black student cited at the opening of this essay who referred to Davidson’s “plantation energy” explained that even though she hadn’t been aware of specific performances of blackface at the college, she was “absolutely unsurprised.” We discussed the ways an incident during Halloween 2019, when a group of white students dressed up as “‘thugged’ out inmates” (Thompson 2019), in fact reinstated blackface performances in the present. Several students considered how other campus events might additionally feed into the perpetuation of racist stereotypes. This conversation also made space for a white student involved in the Halloween incident to stay after class, interested in clarifying further how such an act was not just culturally insensitive or appropriative—how the group’s post-event mediated discussions were framed—but was indeed a performance following the lineage of blackface.

Body-Based Intersectional Performance Studies Pedagogies for Counter-Memorial Practices

We in performance studies value how “performance” functions capaciously. In HMPP we examined performances on, but primarily “off,” the stage, and delved into the ways performance studies examines social phenomena “as” performance. The class took the “repertoire” (Taylor 2003) as it converges with “embodied knowledge” (Daniel 2005), and more generally coalesced African and Indigenous understandings of embodied transmission to demonstrate the continuity of ancestral legacy and community hx/stories as living relations. The class considered how historical silences in the archive are undergirded by racial ideologies (Trouillot 1995) and are then reiterated in contemporary performances and enslavement’s “afterlives” (Hartman 2008). Teaching students these multiple convergent perspectives on performance as not “that which disappears” but “that which persists” (Taylor 2003, xvii) makes space to recognize the ongoingness of both colonial arrangements of power and knowledge, as well as resistances to them. So, how does the past move through our bodies and how might our bodies put these hx/stories into motion in new ways? How does the frame of performance help us learn about and grapple with silenced legacies of the past through attuning to the ways they continue to function in the present? And why might bringing together dance, performance studies, and Black studies support attention to these concerns?

This set of inquiries, in conjunction with a process-oriented conception of performance in HMPP, was inspired by Ralph Lemon’s “counter-memorial” practice, implemented in his practice-based research for the 2004 project *Come Home Charley Patton* (Birns 2005; Profeta 2005). Through a set of iterative, situational, and nonspectacular practices, Lemon traced iconic as well as noniconic sites of racial violence in the US South—bus stations important to the Freedom Rides, the Edmond Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, “unmarked” sites of lynching. Creating ephemeral-yet-ritualized enactments through improvised movement, object-altars, and place-based encounters, Lemon marked the hauntings of particular space-times with intention, curiosity, mourning, and a sense of incompleteness. Katherine Profeta characterizes Lemon’s “desire to present history as open-ended, incomplete, unresolved—instead of known, finished and thus not worth consideration” (Profeta 2005, 26). Lemon’s reckoning with a “traumatic and incomplete” (26) past required that he bring his body into an encounter with such emplaced, ongoing legacies, marking places with his presence and leaving ambiguous, ephemeral traces. Lemon’s ritualized practice instantiated the felt effects of historical erasure as it resonated ghostly emergence; the body served to imperfectly register unresolved absent-presences of such southern locales. This is a *counter*-memorial practice because, as Nicholas Birns (2005) puts it, “the ultra-historicism of official memorials makes us think the past is finished, when we still have the power to construct it” (22). Through noncodified, antidocumentary, solo-collective practice, Lemon inverted conventional—monumental—renderings of history, memory, performance, and place toward an intentional *doing* that commemorated not the past but its unfinished ongoingness in the present.

A counter-memorial approach to performance and/as pedagogy charges practice-based research with intentions to unfurl personal habits and make space for experiences of place, hx/story, and self that potentially destabilize conventional colonial forms of understanding and knowledge production. Such approaches must work with and through the body. My conviction that addressing white supremacy and dismantling oppression must centre embodiment is informed by a broad range of antiracist activists, theorists, and body-based practitioners.¹⁰ As a scholar trained in performance studies and a student-practitioner of African diasporic performance forms, I bring attention to the

embodied aspects of racism and activism into relationship with practice-based research and critical theory. Inspired by performance studies' capacities for attending to the body in/as performance, as well as the field's commitment to transgressing disciplinary silos and conventions, I also recognize that our field does not always meet its potential for tilting work toward intersectional antiracist praxis. Thus, my HMPP pedagogy brought together methods and theories from performance studies, dance studies, and Black studies through body-based research, reflection, and analysis as foundation for transformative learning experiences.

Reckoning with white supremacy and dismantling oppression must centre embodiment, because these phenomena are realities perpetuated, contested, and lived through the body. Indeed, performance and embodiment might be the most resonant route to get at the stuff of transformation. Tuning into one's own felt sense of embodiment in relation to History (and hx/stories) in the present can serve as necessary starting point for antiracist work, practice, and change. But such work also requires critical reflection and analysis to connect the psychosomatic to the structural and social. Thus, movement in my classrooms functioned as process-based pedagogy rather than performance-oriented activity. Guiding students in movement activities and learning from and through their bodies, "the body" becomes not an abstracted vessel but rather a multiply valanced sociohistorical entity marked by—and experienced vis-à-vis—difference. For example, when instructing students in Haitian dance techniques as a lesson to accompany study of Yvonne Daniel's notion of "embodied knowledge," physical practice served as body-based learning, rather than consumption or emptied-out movement to repeat. What do we learn, from our own situated selves, in the physical embodiment of this integrated embodied philosophy?

Emphasizing the constructive nature of difference speaks back to the ways diversity had been regarded at Davidson. Mellin notes how the 2018 Davidson College Tour Guide Manual couches diversity as a *problem* to be addressed, including "diversity" in the last section of the manual titled "Difficult Questions" (Mellin 2020, 27). Learning this, one student reflected: "Including diversity in the 'Difficult Questions' is something that takes me aback, it should be celebrated and promoted, not relegated to topics not discussed often." Such discussions heighten student awareness of the disjunct between prominent representations of people of colour in Davidson's outward-facing image, like the college website, and the actual reality of their minoritized status on campus. Countering habits of tokenization, we read essays by Audre Lorde ([1984] 2007) and Joy James (2013). These Black feminists instruct in a practice of embracing difference, a perspective they have long advocated: intentional recognition of each person's fullness-in-difference is foundational to the cultivation of change-making community (Lorde [1984] 2007; Crenshaw 1989; hooks 1996).

Body, Place, Map, Land

The intimate teaching environment my small classes afforded, in combination with the newness of my approach, challenged students to move, think, and create outside of their comfort zones, yet in close, but sometimes cautious, community. The pandemic punctuated my first semester teaching HMPP. As we reorganized ourselves in lockdown, I provided students prompts to take stock of where we were and reflect on the semester so far. Responding to my question about what they were understanding of performance studies as a field, a method, and a theoretical frame, a white student from West Virginia interested in activism and education began her post with considerations of our classroom environment. She described it as one that was radically accepting, inclusive, and open to "messy"-ness:

I want to reflect a bit on the process that this class has gone through, and more so how this process has challenged and changed me forever. . . . As a lifelong dancer, I've always been nervous to walk into new studios, knowing my training hasn't been as rigorous as most of my peers. But as I walked into our class, I felt a sense of calm. I felt challenged, but not in the typical Davidson way that I had to hide who I was and always be intellectually on, but rather I could be myself, still intellectual, but also simultaneously messy and unsure.

Inviting students into improvisational practices with open scores for them to explore provided opportunities for embodiment and movement investigation they were not used to in conventional dance or theatre settings, and certainly not in their academic seminars. Constant open dialogues and reflective practices accompanied these embodied activities, creating a feedback loop for critical engagement with body-based learning.

This student also grappled with the open-endedness and multifaceted potential of performance studies—a field that privileges multiple questions rather than a singular answer and, as she wrote, “[accepts] that tension.” The unknowing that performance studies might offer, and the recognition that it's okay to not know but you must be willing to show up, felt prescient in those first weeks of lockdown. That performance can hone our attention to power differentials, historical legacies, and potent transformation, also became resource in uncertain times.

Relatedly, after reading Rebecca Schneider's “Performance Remains” (2001), a different student recognized the ways performance studies is “ground[ed] in the body.” He continued, “The body, its rituals, idiosyncrasies, traumas, imitations are both the instrument and the canvas for the field.” Performance studies encourages movement from the body in dis/comfort: a potent site of knowledge and un/knowning. This echoes Dwight Conquergood's formative assessment of the field's capacity to contest hegemonic formations of power and knowledge, which requires multimodal approaches. Conquergood asserts: “This epistemological connection between creativity, critique, and civic engagement is mutually replenishing, and pedagogically powerful. . . . The ongoing challenge of performance studies is to refuse and supercede [*sic*] this deeply entrenched division of labor, apartheid of knowledges, that plays out inside the academy as the difference between thinking and doing, interpreting and making, conceptualizing and creating” (Conquergood 2002, 153).

To distinguish between abstracted colonial epistemes “from above” and the living transmission of embodied knowledge “from below,” Conquergood cites Michel de Certeau: “what the map cuts up, the story cuts across” (2002, 145). Problematizing top-down conceptualizations of space, place, and history, I asked the students: What does a map communicate about a place, and how does this compare to the ways you—or others—might “know” this place? In 2020, while still on campus, I devised an activity for the students to explore this in the studio. Each student had a handful of Post-It notes to “map” a place they call home. They were invited to write on or manipulate the paper, placing it anywhere they want. Once placed, I asked students to move through their “map” while storytelling verbally and/or through movement. A white queer student from Tennessee stuck the Post-Its to his leg, chest, foot and back, narrating intimate stories of love, loss, injury, desire, and land as carried in and on specific locations of his body. The white student from West Virginia cited above, awakening into her activist self, ripped up the Post-Its and clumped them together representing institutions of socialization: family, church, high school, college; she then danced through each location with strong affect, level changes, and memories in relation to the ways each corporeally instilled in her particular hegemonies of discipline and value.

The practice of mapping place through our bodies also influenced the first exercise I offered once students left campus and were Zooming into class from their family homes. As an asynchronous activity, the simple practice invited them to orient, reorient, and then disorient themselves to their surroundings, recognizing where they were at that new and uncertain moment.

You're now in a home space that is both familiar and unfamiliar—you are changed and/or maybe the space has changed.

Start with 10 minutes sitting in the space, breathing and feeling/noting your breath, body, emotions, states. No need to judge or change or label anything. Just notice.

Spend 2 minutes facing in 5 different directions, or sitting/standing in different spots of the room, house, or surrounding outdoor space.

Now, find some new ways to move in and with your space. Reorient your body, your gaze, your senses, your attention. Free yourself to act in unconventional or 'silly' ways. Tune into your intuition. Do what feels good. Or maybe stay with what feels awkward. Spend at least 10 minutes exploring.

What was revealed in this practice? Reflect. 5–10 minute free write.

Many memories and connections between past, present, future emerged in their movements through and with old-new spaces. Discussions in class also offered students an opportunity to share whatever they were comfortable sharing about themselves, their emotional-physical states, and their home-places. Providing students connections not only to their own bodies—for each the first time they had done so since quarantine began—but to their spaces and living/dormant memories, the activity also allowed us to reconnect as a group navigating new and uncertain circumstances. The exercise revealed the power inherent in a simple practice of focus and reorientation—which I hoped would stick with them in the coming months.

I shifted the mapping/story/place activity when teaching online in 2021. Discussing mapping and stories at a point in the semester when we had also been thinking with Indigenous perspectives, we looked at Native studies scholar Ashley Elizabeth Smith's generative online resource about Indigenous approaches to place that assert *the land is history*. Her work disorients the colonizing gaze, shifting away from dominating projects of fixing, containment, and erasure (Smith 2021). Smith's work launched class discussion of our own experiences at Davidson and the ways the college "maps" its stories through architecture, landscaping, narrative, visuals, and campus tours. In later sessions, this line of thinking re/disoriented us toward the land and relation that became layered through interactions with three guest artists, the first of which was DeLesslin "Roo" George-Warren, member of the Catawba Indian Nation—the peoples whose land Davidson College occupies.¹¹

Across George-Warren's work as a queer artist, cultural organizer, and advocate for language revitalization and food sovereignty, George-Warren brings together relational creativity, experimentation, and Catawba perspectives. In meetings with HMPP students, George-Warren prompted new forms of thought and world-making through provocations such as: What in your house moves? What is your water? What do you think of when you hear the world "wild"? What is prompted when you consider the word "family"? George-Warren instructed us in the animacy of all living beings and elements, colonial imperatives to separate "Man" from "environment," Indigenous perspectives on kin-relation, and the ways our home waterways might teach us something about inter-connectivity and change. The queerly playful manner in which George-Warren introduced Catawba lifeworlds threw into relief the Eurocentric and colonially entrenched perspectives students

had taken for granted as false universals. These encounters instigated student questioning of language and frame, as they began attending to their own relationships to land and Indigenous peoples in the contemporary.

Positions to the Past

At the end of two-and-a-half years living in Durham, North Carolina, I codeveloped with artist-activator Aya Shabu “Hayti | Haiti | History,” a research-based community-oriented performance project about real and imagined connections between the nation of Haiti and Hayti, a historic Black neighborhood in Durham. The multimodal approaches we devised in collaboration influenced my methods in HMPP, as did Shabu’s vibrant repertoire of performance-based walking tours of African American neighborhoods. Shabu visited HMPP in both iterations, sharing her approaches to enlivening the past, activating place, and channelling memory through the body. In 2021, Shabu prompted: “How do we reenter the past? How does the past see us?” Her walking tour experiences are “opportunities to create new memories about this place, where Black histories and residents are visible. This counters their invisibilization due to ‘urban renewal’ in the past and gentrification in the present.” Conceiving of herself as a “conductor,” Shabu extends the metaphor related to her company’s name, Whistle Stop Tours, as well as to the electricity of performance to evoke the role of guides along the underground railroad, and the metaphysical possibilities of the performing body.

This perspective on the capacity of Black embodiment practices to conjure ancestral, metaphysical, historical connection was also emphasized by Charlotte-based dancer, educator, and researcher Tamara Williams. Sharing her performance research that “reimagines” the history and practice of the African American dance tradition Ring Shout (Williams 2018), Williams’s workshops offered deeply contextualized ways of encountering this practice that had profound effects. In 2020, Williams facilitated a workshop on campus just two days before campus closed for pandemic lockdown. Afterward, the student from Tennessee spent time reflecting on what it meant for him as a white person to participate in learning Ring Shout. His reflections at two different points in the semester illuminate the impact this learning experience had on his embodied understandings of his own positionality and his access to knowledge of the past. I cite his writing at length here because it evidences the import of coupling embodied practice, academic study, self-reflection, and dialogic engagement. Following the workshop, he wrote:

I felt initially apprehensive to dancing the Ring Shout. I feared that performing the Ring Shout as a white person would diminish its political potency and tarnish its cultural significance. Derived from resistance and spirituality, how could I respectfully perform these movements that weren’t and will never be mine to perform? That were derived from experiences I will never know?

. . . As I struggled to pick up the advanced movements of Ring Shout, my whiteness physically confronted me. I became aware of my positionality in a literal, spatial way. Tamara [Williams] claimed that every form of Africana dance traces its roots to Ring Shout. My ear picked up the beats’ similarities to hip hop and reggaeton music, and my eyes picked up on echoes of movements I’ve seen before. However, as we continued to dance, my body felt more and more distanced from the pathos of the practice. . . .

This experience reminded me of Trouillot’s writings about the position of the past in his book *Silencing the Past*. He writes: “The past does not exist independently from the present. . . . The past—or more accurately pastness—is a position. Thus in no way can we identify the past as *past*” (Trouillot 15).

I felt that my position as a white person dancing the Ring Shout was turned away from the position of the past that the dance itself is connected to. I think that the setting of the dance in a classroom space gave me the ability to step back and ethically understand how the position of the past manifests in embodied experiences and practices (that are not my own).

Such experiences of bodily-psychic discomfort—produced first by one’s own awareness of whiteness in relation to rhythm, then by whiteness in relation to history—register the feeling of a learning-growing edge. In the context of the classroom and through course assignments, this student had space to move with and carefully consider this discomfort, which facilitated insights into larger social issues. Having to ask himself, What is my relationship to this movement practice I am doing, and what do I learn by physically doing it?, provided a channel for significant reflection on appropriation, complicity, and historical knowledge production.

In early May 2020, this same student’s post-course reflection, written in the wake of the continued murder of Black civilians, extended his pedagogical reverberations:

I’ve been thinking a lot about white allyship since Ahmaud Arbery’s murder. I went on a run the same day I learned about his death. It felt weird. I felt my whiteness in my strides. This experience reminded me of Tamara [Williams]’ visit to our class. . . . Again, I became aware of my positionality in a literal, spatial way. Reflecting on both of these experiences, I realize the privilege of making a movement that feels disconnected and distant from the past and inconsequential to the future.

Considering the “Run for Ahmaud” social media campaign in relationship to our class discussions about the continued influence and appropriation of Black aesthetics in popular culture, he continued:

I think it’s good to make white people confront their privilege to do normal things without the threat of racial violence. However, I don’t think we should confront our privilege and complicity in white supremacy only concerning black deaths and blatant racism. Tamara’s lesson on the Ring Shout was productive for me as a white person to acknowledge the roots of American pop culture and movement. It helped me interrogate my complicity in white supremacy. I benefit from cultural productions of black folx. I must cite where American culture comes from. I have to recognize and celebrate black folx when they’re alive, not just when they’re killed by cops or racists.

This student’s continued processing, emergent from his corporeal experience, indicates the potency of practice-based research when integrated into coursework, coupled with critical reflection, and implemented in antiracist efforts. Additionally, his understanding of the individual/body’s role in understanding the past also produced a counter-memorial sense of justice, attentive to ongoing legacies and our individual positions to the past.

Conceptions of the counter-memorial resist the white supremacist framing of history as monumental or “past.” In my teaching, I hoped to steep students in ways of approaching history, ancestors, land, and body as entwined entities all inherent to ongoing processes of remembering and/or forgetting. Through movement practices that interrelated mind-body-spirit, emplacement, and hx/story in conjunction with critical reflection, I aimed to kindle possibilities for place-based memory-making that would recognize—and even reckon with—the force of unresolved pasts in and on each of us in the present. Ultimately, the students’ final practice-based research projects attended to remembrance in anti-institutional modes that centred healing and community-building for minoritized communities, and the challenge of disorientation and education for white students.

Student Projects for Remembering, Disorienting, Healing

How does performance transmit knowledge about the past in ways that allow us to understand and use it?

—Diana Taylor (2006, 68)

Queer Archive of Feelings

In 2020, the white queer student from Tennessee cited above created “An Archive of Feelings: Davidson Queer Letters,” which, as he described it, staged “a response to the frustration I feel sitting in the Davidson College archive sifting through the thin ‘Homosexuality at Davidson’ folder.” Through imaginative epistolary exchange that put fragments of the archive into conversation with his lived experiences as a queer student at Davidson, the student wrote back against the insufficient ways “homosexuality” is registered in Davidson’s archive yet vibrantly lived among people on campus. This project activated the memory and hx/stories of queer ancestor Zac Lacy, an influential LGBTQ student leader at Davidson in the 1990s who, upon returning after graduation in the capacity of an alumni fellow, died by suicide on campus. Initially, this student planned to establish a commemorative annual party in Lacy’s name, held in the campus queer space the Lavender Lounge, which he hoped to have renamed for Lacy. Decorating the space “with annotated clippings from the archive,” Davidson’s queer community would “have a space to come together and look at the archive as inspiration and [as prompt to] consider how we can imagine our past beyond the archive.” Pivoting due to the pandemic, this student crafted an exchange of letters that riffed on Ann Cvetkovich’s *An Archive of Feelings* (2003), desiring to spark a more active relationship to the community’s own past, present, and futures.

I started thinking about how I sustain community with my queer friends in the time of COVID-19. I realized how much I’m in constant communication with my queer friends throughout the days. . . . I thought about what staying connected looked like historically for queer people (or anyone) to resist bouts of isolation. I thought about letters’ hallowed place in archives. For queer history, letter correspondences provide a glimpse into the private stories and relationships not displayed in public. They give insight to more intimate queer feelings lost in institutionalized forms of memory. . . .

I decided to shift my project to an archive of letters written to my queer friends about Davidson College’s queer history. I started this version of the project by going through the archive again and noting pieces of queer history that remind me of my relationships with my queer friends. Thus, this project not only intervenes in the

archive but also contributes to it. The shared experiences I talk about in these letters mirror my ruminations on queer documentation in the archive.

This project is my small attempt at creating queer history. It's dedicated to the queer folk who made history at Davidson before me, my friends making history right now, and the queer community that will exist at Davidson after I graduate.

Cultivating Spaces for Black Women's Wellness at a PWI

At the end of her senior year, a Black anthropology major/dance minor from Texas focused her project on attending to the experiences of Black women students at Davidson through a combined attention to tracing legacies, surfacing difficult experiences, and creating healing spaces. This project arose through the student's preoccupation with the fact that almost all her Black women peers had taken a leave of absence from campus, combined with her encounter with related stories emerging from the archive—including the “mental strain” of workers in the 1870s, and the exhaustion of Black campus leaders in the 1980s. She wrote:

In an interview with two Davidson Alums, Janet Stovall '85 and her daughter, Maia Harrell '20, Stovall describes how she came up with the idea for Project '87, a plan to get more black students and faculty on campus equal to that of the United States racial demographics. She explains that it was born because she was exhausted from “fighting the fight for fairness,” and she “withdrew from a term and considered transferring” (Stovall, “Project '87 to Project 2027”). Stovall also explained how she supported her daughter Maia Harrell's pie business by allowing her to bake and sell out of her kitchen. This testimony about needing to leave Davidson and about supporting black women businesses, prompted me to think about safe, supportive spaces for black women. Spaces for black women are so important because it can help black women navigate and find refuge in a world that is so against us.

Connecting this historic pattern to the experiences of her peers, this student interviewed fellow Black women about their time at Davidson. Testifying to the psychosomatic and very real experiences of trauma experienced by Black women at the college, her project was committed to reparative healing. Echoing Audre Lorde's call for Black women's “rest” ([1984] 2007), this student devised a wellness session called “Trap Stretching: an Experience and Class for the Health and Soul of my Sistas.” Structured as part conversation/testimonies and part movement/stretching, the class served as a space “to come together and talk about a wide range of issues surrounding being a black woman on Davidson's campus and in the world, as well as solutions and positive topics to give hope to the women.” Integrating dialogue and movement aimed “to connect the mind and body, two entities that are often separated from each other.” Her session “gave black women the space to speak about experiences on Davidson's campus as well as served as another testimony to how black women's experience and feeling of isolation and exhaustion on Davidson's campus is recurring and ongoing and it obviously needs to be addressed.” These conversations surfaced the isolation and culture shock Black students face, explored tensions within different factions of the Black student population, and evidenced experiences of colourism and sexism experienced by darker-skinned Black women.

Observing continuities between Janet Stovall's support of her daughter Maia Harrell's dreams and the networks that kept Black women going, as they contrasted to the stark absence of spaces and

resources for Black women on campus, this student also compiled a resource guide for local Black-owned spaces focused on Black women's wellness in Charlotte, as well as in Houston, her current place of residence. She concluded:

All in all, I enjoyed conducting this project because I feel like I have added to an archive of black women speaking on their experiences in all white spaces. I also feel like the project does not just offer negative experiences, but serves as and offers solutions to black women to engage with and build upon. I learned that Davidson needs to offer more supportive spaces for black women on campus to prevent the cycle of black women taking semesters off from campus. I also learned that I should have more faith in myself and my ability to create my own wellness spaces for myself and other black women. I hope this project stays in my repertoire of work and can be used as a source of history in the future.

This work clarifies the need for members of the ubiquitously articulated but ill-defined “Davidson College community” to learn more about the strain Black women experience on campus in order to transform an often-hostile climate. We could all take inspiration from this student's methodology for cultivating spaces not only focused on wellness but also that facilitate grounding and connection across somatic, social, and historical levels. While one goal of sharing her project might be for other Black women students to take on such an approach as a model to craft their own spaces for healing connections to themselves and each other, the burden of change should be placed upon non-Black community members who must recognize the impacts the status quo imparts on those who have historically experienced exclusion and harm (Lorde [1984] 2007). It is up to those in positions of privilege to build a more supportive and nurturing environment for all.

Cultivating Presence through Acknowledgement

A white sophomore art history major/dance minor from the Northeast developed a self-guided embodied tour that moves the participant alongside sites on the college's original campus grounds, places excavated for history and documented in the *Disorienting Davidson* tour. This student crafted experiences for the participant to witness, process, and dis/orient these campus histories through intentional embodied practices. In order to “explore the dichotomy between the natural and the imposed, what is told and what is neglected,” the tour moves participants through Davidson's “luscious greenery and tree landscape”—colonially cultivated as an arboretum with tree specimens from all over the world—which “brings to question what or who was displaced to enable the college's landscaping as well as a curiosity in how the ecosystem was influenced by planted imports.” As she explains, “I am drawn to the land, to the peaceful tranquility that is felt underneath the shaded greenery. However, the colonial undertone of crafting a landscape with imported trees infringes upon the ability to appreciate the land as land. This conflation rests at the foundation of my tour; I offer a mix of practices, walking, and histories to get at the unsettling, distracting feeling.” Embodied prompts guided participants through campus. “The tour is designed to be an individual process, so the option of dialogue is removed, and the single body is what has been made ready to digest the histories.” The tour was made to “alter the experience of a given location, so that the next time the viewer passes through the specific landmark, they don't simply walk by. They are rather reminded of the history it holds. I want to shift the way people view the landmarks of our campus, to bring meaning to the historic spaces we pass through every day, and to remind the community how embedded we are in the lasting effects of displacement, colonization, and enslavement.”

Each “stop” engaged the tourer in a different embodied practice. Informed by Emily Johnson’s (2018) multimodal communally engaged approach to performance and Faye Driscoll’s recent audio choreographies, she “crafted an audio choreography to reground the viewer in the landscape after learning a history,” a choice devised to “[engage] with the sanctuary the landscape offers and to provide the viewer with a meditative moment to feel where the new knowledge is landing in their body.” Considering how she might create a “memorable” embodied encounter with the past—something Aya Shabu emphasized in her visit with us—the student pondered:

How can I bring forward new memory, while engaging with the viewer’s body memory and previous knowledge? How does this help get at the unfinished nature of history? An emphasis on the complexity of history is needed; the single narrative that has been consolidated through time simplifies the past and pushes all else to the periphery. There is presence in what is absent; what is missing can be acknowledged but not reversed. My tour engages with knowledge and histories in a variety of forms, in hopes that at least one form will serve as memorable. My tour provides historical context for Davidson’s ties to slavery, racial injustices, and to indigenous displacement to complicate the Eurocentric white narrative that [the College] has streamlined.

Thinking with our conceptual framework for the semester, the student considers how her tour activates HMPP approaches:

Performance serves as an activation in its own manner and places the body in the narrative, not just the mind. Diana Taylor’s notion of performance and/as history allows for my tour to serve as a documentation and an activation of various histories present on campus. The duality allows for history to become alive, the past being existent in the present: “The bearers of performance, those who engage in it, are also the bearers of history who link the layers past-present-future through practice” (Taylor 2006, 83). I wanted my performance to serve and/as history, bringing forward an activation of the past to the present both in the physical body and the physical land. I wanted to emphasize the ‘unfinished’ nature of history. Furthermore, Ralph Lemon’s counter-memorial practices explore the power of the body in sharing history: “The body serves as a distilled history, a vehicle to communicate historical information” (Birns 2005, 19). Each body holds its own histories, which then brings forward the individual into the collective. In offering performance and a guided movement practice, I hope to enable the viewer to recognize the histories their bodies hold and to ponder how their own body might express those stories.

Finally, this student noted how her research, embodied exploration, and creative development uncovered the “unfinished” nature of this work:

In the making of this project, and throughout the semester, I have realized there is much of Davidson’s history that I have yet to uncover. Furthermore, there is much of the school’s history that the community has yet to uncover and reckon with. Much of what I have learned of campus history has never been discussed in either an academic or social setting, and I feel as though that needs to change. I hope that my tour offers an entrance into Davidson’s history that leaves the viewer wanting to uncover more.

Counter-Memorial Performativity: Emergence and Ongoingness

The old definitions have not served us, nor the earth that supports us.

—Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference”

The three student projects shared above exhibit how “performance” took on a broad decentralized frame in HMPP. Their work elucidates how practice-based research was utilized to tilt embodied, archival, and place-based investigations toward the ongoing excavation of historical legacies and embedded white supremacy, while also catalyzing change. Conducting class online during the pandemic primarily kept our course work amongst ourselves and our immediate circles, though students did often report the impact of their learnings and related discussions with friends and associates on campus. Their projects evidence a desire to share their research and connect to their peers in practice-based ways. I, too, worked to expand these efforts in my teaching the year following, and was spurred to write this essay to disseminate their meaningful work.

In my small ongoing labours of shifting oppressive campus choreographies toward more historically informed inclusive, holistic, and body-based practices that could support students’ awareness of the histories in which they are steeped, I continued to implement strategies and knowledge gained from HMPP into other Davidson courses: instructing students in key elements of Davidson’s racialized performance histories, bringing students outside to the old part of campus for different types of attunement activities, encouraging research about Indigenous presence and Africana legacies. How can we develop more connected relationships to this place, that can hold and acknowledge the complexity of its history, the beauty and the horror; relationships that motivate us to build a different relationship to the past, to the present, to each other, and to a future we have yet to build?

On campus at the end of spring 2021 semester, after teaching remotely all year, I led two outdoor dance workshops in the original quad. As described at the start of this essay, these Moving Campus Histories workshops took place amongst buildings and trees that materialized the colonial histories we’d been reading about, discussing, and imagining against all semester. The first workshop was during class time with HMPP students, the second was open to all. Some of my former students as well as dancers involved in the student-run dance company joined. We began with conversation about events documented on the Davidson Disorientation tour as well as some findings we had been digesting over the semester. Familiar with the tour, students shared their experiences learning—and not learning—about Davidson’s past. With bare feet in the grass, I then led a grounding practice for homing in on the palimpsest of the land where we stood, and aligning with the four elements of nature. We practised a “slow walk” to attune to each other and soften our frequency, recalibrating amidst the grass, buildings, trees, manicured walkways and quizzical passersby. I then had students choose a location to “study” details, textures, shapes, architecture and circulation through somatic forms of attention, then devise gestures and a movement sequence responding to a specific place and their renewed attention of it. They then developed this into a movement “tour” of this spot, that ultimately each student performed and we witnessed, then discussed.¹² We learned both about these specific chosen places and people’s newly devised relationships them, registering how one’s movement can serve as a form of imaginative research, revealing and reaching toward hx/story, while also resonating new possibilities through intentional practice. After a closing circle, the students reflected on their renewed perspective of their campus, and themselves as doers, makers, and learners in its land/scape.

This work on and about campus served as a beginning to more sustained in-person practices I was able to facilitate with students the following academic year. Knowing there was much more to be done, in fall 2021 I assigned the above-described student's embodied tour to the thirty-two students in my Introduction to Dance Studies course. In conjunction with their development of embodied land acknowledgements (which I must note, as Indigenous peoples teach us, are no solution to the dispossession of the Catawba peoples from the land [Cole and Poll 2021]), the embodied tour sparked a different *felt* relationship to place, informed continuous reflection, and planted seeds for several final projects.

That fall, I also often held my Haitian Dance Technique and Theory course—which integrates physical practice with in-depth study of Haitian culture and history—on the grass surrounded by the original campus buildings. Practising outside among the bricks created by the hands of enslaved peoples, imposing architectural columns, and street markers commemorating white segregationists, while discussing the history and continuity of dispossession of Indigenous peoples and the exploitation of Black peoples and their labour, pertinent to our study of Haiti, brought trans-temporal and trans-spatial intentions to those grounds each time we gathered. Singing, dancing, and playing Afro-Haitian rhythms—performance practices wholly about connection to land, nature, lifecycles, and ancestry—brought not only healing and much needed collectivity to the multiracial group of students navigating grief, isolation, and mental health struggles, but in my estimation offered a kind of ephemeral yet iterative energetic effort toward repair.

This work brought our efforts out from the dance studios on the far side of campus to a highly visible area. Elevating the vibration of that space through practices that connected us to nature, history, ancestors, freedom struggles, and communality, I sensed our practice providing a form of reparative labour not only for my students in such a difficult time of isolation and loss, but for the space itself, the land, its ancestors and inheritors. Celebrating the vibrancy of Black creativity and freedom, which we study via Haiti and recognize as labours from which we all benefit and which can inspire us in myriad ways, perhaps contributes to an effort in renewed relation.

After our end-of-semester public performance showing in that space, as I placed my drum and dance skirts in the trunk of my parked car, I realized a remarkable resonance. On the sidewalk alongside the lawn where we regularly practised stands a marker that commemorates Woodrow Wilson's attendance at the college between 1873 and 1874. I had parked and walked by this marker countless times before the gravity of Wilson's naming struck me this day. Wilson, who while president emphatically advanced segregationist policies in the US, also oversaw the completely destructive nineteen-year occupation of Haiti (1915–1934). I like to think the energy we collectively generated in that space throughout fall 2021 and which I continued in classes during spring 2022, vibrations that praise African diasporic epistemologies and honour Haitian creative survivals, cultivated ephemeral yet impactful counter-memorials to the occupation's devastating neocolonial effects on Haitian political and cultural sovereignty, which absolutely continue today. As “minimal acts of commemoration” that functioned more like ritual than spectacle (Profeta 2005, 24), perhaps our efforts addressed those who haunt Davidson's campus, ancestors calling for proper acknowledgement and recognition, as well as living descendants of these histories and those who sustain the ongoing trauma they inflict.

Such iterative performance practices, co-constitutive of practice-based research, like the projects my HMPP students developed, occurred adjacent to—but not fully of—both performing arts and

history/memory work as conventionally conceived at the college. Our iterative efforts surfaced silenced pasts, created alternatives for a fuller-bodied present, and in minor though important ways offered restorative-yet-critical practices. The ethos of counter-memorial pedagogies positioned HMPP and my other on-campus teachings differently than critical efforts within Theater, focused on devised staged production, or history and Africana studies, contributing to filling silences of the formal archive. A counter-memorial approach also set into relief the public apology that Davidson College president Carol McQuillen made in August 2020, before the academic semester began, of which none of my HMPP students were aware. When discussing the apology in spring 2021, students wondered at the efficacy of such an action considering it had not been widely publicized across campus constituents—particularly pertinent in the post-2020 era of so-called “performative activism.”¹³ Davidson maintains committees for Acknowledgement and Naming and Commemoration (Davidson College, n.d.a, n.d.b) and has commissioned a multimillion-dollar commemorative art project on campus (Davidson College 2021a, n.d.e) while advocating that “Honoring and Remembering Begins with Stories rather than Stone” (Davidson College 2021b). In this process of uncovering hard truths through storytelling and listening sessions, it would behoove constituents to develop companion practices that can support community members in processing and metabolizing these efforts, as well as instilling a necessary humility and courage in the ongoing efforts needed to dismantle white supremacy and rectify ongoing harms. Practice-based research integrated into classes and large-scale initiatives can shift focus away from an encapsulating product and toward the solo-collective process of grappling with the enduring effects of occluded hx/stories. It will also be critical to find joy, creativity, and connection in this work—something my students taught me is urgent for our moment and will fuel our collective counter-imaginaries toward other futures.

Notes

1. As the report authored by Davidson College, Commission on Race and Slavery (2020) states, in 1835–36, “Historical documents report ‘volunteer’ laborers constructed the first seven buildings using 250,000 bricks made by enslaved people on a nearby plantation. These historical documents commonly obscure information we would like to know, such as whether these ‘volunteer’ laborers were in fact enslaved. These laborers could have included skilled masons and carpenters” (2).
2. Considering a PWI in the South as a “plantation” is not uncommon, and quite apt. This was something I often heard about Duke University when I was there as a postdoc in African and African American studies.
3. These initiatives include, but are not limited to Davidson’s Commission on Race and Slavery (Davidson College, n.d.c; Davidson College, Commission on Race and Slavery 2020); Sarah HD Mellin and Tian Yi’s Davidson Disorientation tour, resources related to that tour (Mellin and Yi 2019), and Mellin’s senior thesis (2020); the Justice, Equality, Community curriculum requirement; antiracist public history work carried forward by students in collaboration with faculty and staff; and the Mellon-funded Stories (Yet) to Be Told: Race, Racism, and Accountability on Campus (Davidson College, n.d.f.).
4. Mellin and Yi’s approach to “Disorienting” was inspired by Sara Ahmed’s theorization of the concept (2006).
5. Throughout this article, when I use hx/story and hx/stories instead of “history,” “histories,” or even “History,” I aim to textually communicate the importance of pasts informed by storied memory, imagination, and queer feminist experiences.
6. This practice began with attendance at Urban Bush Women’s Summer Leadership Institute and integrated undoing racism training by the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond in 2016. Since 2019, I have co-convened Un/Communing Pedagogies Collective, a multiracial group of educators who centre movement in

our social justice education work. In 2020–2021 I also participated in and co-facilitated white working group sessions with Practice Progress, Sarah Ashkin and kai hazelwood’s organization that uses body-based learning to address white supremacy.

7. For example, Wilder (2013), reparation initiatives by Georgetown University, and the University of Virginia’s consortium of Universities Studying Slavery.

8. In fall 2022, Green returned to Davidson in a tenured position as the James B. Duke Professor of Africana Studies.

9. You can view the tour at PocketSights, “Davidson Disorientation Tour Parts 1, 2, 3,” <https://pocketsights.com/tours/location/United-States/North-Carolina/Davidson>.

10. These practitioner-scholar-activists include Audre Lorde, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar/Urban Bush Women and the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, Resmaa Menakhem, adrienne maree brown, Jean-Sebastien Duvalaire, Nyama McCarthy Brown, Crystal Davis, Jesse Phillips-Fein, Sarah Ashkin and Kai Hazelwood, Michelle Johnson, and Bo Forbes.

11. Artist-scholar visits were supported by a Center for Civic Engagement Course Development Grant in 2020 and a Stories (Yet) to be Told grant in 2021.

12. My opening grounding and elements practice is inspired by studies with Peniel Guerrier and Rosangela Silvestre, as well as work with the Un/Commoning Pedagogies Collective. “Slow Walks” in my teaching are informed by Japanese Butoh, Euro-American postmodern practices, and Jeannine Murray-Roman. The “movement tours” activity draws from approaches shared by AB Brown and Nikki Yeboah, J Dellecave and Lailye Weidman.

13. As Michelle Liu Carriger notes in her introduction to the 2021 special issue of the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* concerned with the concept of performativity, “The transformation of performative into an anti-theatrical slur indexes a very reasonable exhaustion and a very correct recognition that representations and statements are unstably attached to action; but to suggest that the verdict of performative is the end of an inquiry, instead of its beginning, would be to cede a vast territory wherein although we can’t understand clearly what is happening, things are clearly happening” (Carriger 2021, 10).

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