

# Centering art-making in Research-based Theatre: A language and a/r/tographical inquiry

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## **Abstract**

This article explores the intersection of the artist-researcher and French-English language(s) in a Research-based Theatre (RbT) project through an a/r/tographical lens. To do so, I share parts of the development of *Mon Histoire* a play that examines moments within my ancestral story. The play moves from past to present, weaving stories that span 400 years around French Acadian identity, culture, and language. The play is anchored by various historical accounts and documentation around the Acadians. It also brings in contemporary and relational perspectives through personal journals. Although the Acadian content is critical to the project, this article focuses more on the artistic unfolding used during the devising and performing of the piece, along with language choices selected in the process.

## **Keywords**

Arts-based research, a/r/tography, French Acadian identity, culture and language, storytelling & narrative inquiry.

## **Teatre School**

*I have kept a journal since the age of 18 when I started university*

*I keep them all in an old suitcase at home that is now overflowing*

*This was my first journal*

*Each entry holds memories, stories*

*Some have been shared*

*Others remain safe between these covers*

*I won't hold you hostage by going through each entry  
Though I'd like to share a few that spark vivid memories  
Here's one to begin, a fun one!*

*It's 1986 – Madonna is at the top of the charts with “Papa Don't Preach”  
Along with Lionel Ritchie's “Say you, say me”  
Top Gun is a blockbuster hit  
And Phantom of the Opera opens on the West End  
... and I, fresh from high school graduation at École Mathieu-Martin  
Am heading to Université ... en Anglais  
Leaving my French village*

*Sure, I can do dat monologue again.  
To be or not to be dat is the question.  
Wedder tis nobbler in da mind to souffer  
Or take da slings against da arrows.*

*Ice hockey was my life until da age of 18  
I started université tinking I'd play hockey et j'étudierais engineering  
But during da first week of le semestre  
De teatre department was still auditioning for da acting program  
Dey were short (and seems desperate) for more men in da program*

*I had done some teatre in my French high school,  
So I figured I take my chance*

*Completely unprepared, I race from hockey rink to audition  
Where with great confidence, I butchered Shakespeare  
Da saving grace was dat I could take la direction*

*Ah, OK, do it like Jésus on da cross*

*I try*

*To be or pas to be ... dat is the question.*

*Enough?*

*I was in!*

*For da class' first term project we are doing Roméo et Juliette*

*Ya! Shakespeare again! And I am cast as Servant #2!*

*Do you bit your tumb at us seer?*

*Tree months later, with lots of voice coaching*

*My English diction and rhythm began to change... rapidly*

*Do you bite your Thumb at us Sir?*

*I need to lose my French accent, master the English language*

*That will give me bigger roles, better roles maybe even 'lead' roles*

*I've revisited several of my journals over the last few years*

*Wondering what else I left behind in my desperate quest to lose my French accent<sup>1</sup>*

Research-based Theatre (RbT) exists on a continuum of exploring research phenomena through the art of theatre, and has the dual commitment to art-making and research (Belliveau & Lea, 2016). Generating RbT work that honors and is truthful to a research context remains critical, though this article focuses on how the art-making process of developing an RbT piece plays a pivotal role in discovering further 'truths'. Specifically, how the workshop and rehearsal exploration space warrants further attention within RbT methodology, thus highlighting the artist-researcher.

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<sup>1</sup> In both monologues within this article I modify words to represent a version of a French Acadian accent.

## Context

The above monologue from the RbT play-in-development *Mon Histoire* emerged from a 1986 personal journal entry and explores my artistic beginnings, as well as my shifting language identity. A journey where I longed for legitimacy and empowerment by mastering English, the dominant language within my Eastern Canadian context (Bourdieu, 1991). However, the final line of the monologue juxtaposes my 'desperate quest' to perfect the English language with a current desire (over three decades later) to reclaim my French Acadian identity - an identity and language that I left behind, masked, hid largely for socio-economic advancement. The language tension within the monologue is paralleled with my artist and researcher identities that have also experienced shifts and re-orientations. I entered academia as a trained theatre artist, though given my eventual tenure-track professoriate position in a large research-intensive university, I have spent the better part of two decades engaging in more traditional forms of scholarly research and writing, sprinkled with artistic endeavors. The currency of traditional research approaches and forms of writing to foster advancement in the academy (within a Faculty of Education in my case), placed my artistic endeavors largely in service of more known/valued/accepted forms of qualitative scholarship, thus adopting a researcher-artist stance.

The monologue ends by inquiring into 'my desperate quest to lose my French accent', questioning this decision I made at the age of 18. This questioning of masking my French identity is developed in further monologues within *Mon Histoire*, as particular moments present themselves where a strong command of the English language seems to provide 'better' opportunities. My desire to re-visit and re-claim my French identity echoes an ongoing quest to re-centre my approach to scholarship, one where artistry leads and (in)forms my research. Living within the artist-researcher hyphen, slash or spectrum has been a constant thread within my scholarly work, though a determined desire to re-position myself as artist-researcher sits firmly, unapologetically within this project and article.

### **A/r/tography and Sharings**

This article invites you inside *Mon Histoire*, using a/r/tographical approaches of inquiry. The development and content of this play illuminates on one level a commitment to uncovering my Acadian language and identity, and on another it brings forward my complex engagement as artist and researcher. I explore both journeys, as I trouble and inquire into my Acadian and artistic identities, paying attention to how they co-exist in a continual state of being and becoming (LeBlanc et al., 2015). By exploring historical scholarship and literature about French Acadians, along with over 30 years of my personal journals, I have developed a series of monologues that will eventually become a 75-minute one-act solo play. The first layer of the playscript is informed by a close reading of the personal journals, scholarship, interviews with Acadian experts and relatives, *then* further layered by embodied explorations during development sessions and rehearsals of the RbT piece. The playscript (as of the writing of this article) resists being set, and lives in a vibrant space of emergence (Irwin, 2013), purposefully using artistic inquiry and approaches that invite ways to connect, re-imagine, flow, mutate, and multiply (LeBlanc & Irwin, 2019).

The two monologues included in this article have been performed in English and/or French over a dozen times, in a variety of pedagogical, workshop and conference settings. For instance, the monologues have been used within graduate courses and Masterclasses to stimulate participants to generate narratives around their own ancestral stories. The monologues have also been performed within scholarly presentations in Canada and in international settings (i.e., Paris, Aix-en-Provence, Melbourne, Bergen, New York) to show ways of engagement and knowledge transfer within arts-based research, and in particular Research-based Theatre. Each sharing and contexts has allowed for a re-writing, re-thinking of the stories and characters within the pieces.<sup>2</sup> Through a social constructionist lens of narrative, McLeod (1997) shares how the telling of “a story is a performance, shaped by the response of the audience” (p. 15). The witnesses at each sharing of the work locally (in Canada) and internationally have helped shape the next performance, which is vital to the ongoing evolution and rhizomatic

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<sup>2</sup> I use characters deliberately as even though they are based on individuals and my lived experiences, the play is not verbatim. The characters remain ‘true’ to the essence of their context and time.

growth of the project. McLeod goes on to share how the performing of self continues to evolve in multiple ways through the (re)telling of stories – we never remain “static,” we are constantly in a “process of becoming” (p. 44). Shifts and new understandings emerge with each rehearsal and performance, creating opportunities for further inquiry through conversations and dialogue with colleagues and audiences (Fels, 2019).

Most performances of *Mon Histoire* have only included three or four of the eight monologues developed to date, given that the excerpts have been embedded within academic talks, classes or workshops. The order of monologues in these events often changes to suit the context, purpose and audience; in addition, the physical setting (i.e., studio, classroom, theatre) is rarely the same. The new environments generate discoveries each time I perform, and allow different entry points for each audience, to reflect the context or event where the performance is nested. The slight variations further my commitment to keeping the playscript buoyant, resonating with a/r/tography’s rhizomatic nature where there is not necessarily a prescribed way to perform a piece, nor a clear beginning or end (Lea et al., 2011). Rather, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest the work rests in the “middle (milieu) from which it grows” (p. 21).

In the ongoing development of the RbT piece, research information / documentation is not privileged over the artistic unfolding (Belliveau, 2015). The physical playing space, props, minimal set pieces, movement in rehearsal and performances, as well as the exploration of different languages inform a new performance text each time, one that lies between past and present, French and English, research and artistic. In what scholars refer to as a performative paradigm (Haseman, 2006; Ostern et al., 2023), one of the foundational purposes and goals of this project involves a deliberate shift from attempting to capture insights solely from pre-existing experiences to a commitment of engaging in meaning-making as it unfolds in the act of ‘doing’.

### **Developing Teatre School**

In the next few paragraphs, I discuss how parts of the documented research, along with artistic unfoldings during rehearsals of ‘Teatre School’, intermingle and inform (and keeps informing) further steps and versions of the performative piece. In the creation of the monologue that is shared in full at the beginning of this article, I worked with Laen

Hershler, an artist-researcher and PhD candidate. A solo work is never a solo endeavor, and as Triggs, Irwin and O'Donoghue (2014) suggest, collaborators are critical in offering further spaces for potential inquiry and new understandings. Laen and I have both explored various forms of theatre in our careers, including training in Lecoq approaches, therefore we look to the body as a central form of expression. During development sessions Laen would encourage me to make physical choices, and consider the use of objects and props to help 'show' the story non-verbally, be guided by the art-making. In rehearsals we shifted the focus away from relying solely on written text, and physically explored yet-to-be-known layers and understandings of the characters and environments within the monologues. During early sessions, Laen suggested I use three chairs that would help to define and imagine particular spaces, and these could be manipulated and re-arranged as needed in further monologues. The simple, yet specific, movement and placement of chairs in the playing space guides the character(s) and audience to various settings and time periods within the play.

In the 'Teatre School' monologue, after carefully placing the chairs (see photo below), one of them is used to stand on as I recite a less than eloquent version of Hamlet's *To be or not to be* speech for the audition. Standing on the chair creates a performative moment, though it also boldly shows my desire to enter a language I am still learning, and for which I will bravely, confidently commit to despite my foibles. The two other chairs become temporary resting places for central props, such as my journal and a small hockey stick. The specific positioning of the chairs and props facilitate an entry to the stories with anchors that signal to the audience selected moments of *Mon Histoire*. The journal (literally) opens up opportunities for many stories to emerge as the play continues, and the hockey stick is symbolic of my Canadian identity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout my life in Canada I have been asked if I am related to the great Jean Béliveau, an ice hockey icon, who played with the infamous Montreal Canadiens. The answer is yes, he is a relative, going back several generations.



Figure 1. Performing Hamlet. Photo by Tetsuro Shigematsu.

Another key feature the chairs offer is how they allow me to play in-between them. Metaphorically, they represent end points to push against, and much of the monologues within *Mon Histoire* are played in the spaces in-between the chairs, as I journey between French-English and artist-researcher. What could feel as anchorless, the ‘in-between space’ emerges as a dynamic space of possibilities and discoveries, where the stories breathe and continuously grow.

‘Teatre School’ was initially written in English, as my principal audience would best understand this language. However, invitations to share the work to French audiences prompted me to translate the work, which is ironic as the stories largely emerged from my French Acadian upbringing. The translation from English to French was an opportunity to uncover further insights from the research material and memories. Some of the poetic aspects shifted when translated to French, influencing the beats, rhythm, and breath in the performing. Nonetheless, the physical engagement, the chairs,

and props remained the same, making the rehearsing of the monologue *en français* relatively efficient and unlike starting over.

‘Teatre School’ is about four minutes in duration, and once written, it took approximately 20 hours over a period of two weeks to memorize and rehearse the English version to feel ready for an audience. In contrast, once the French text was written, it only took 5 hours within one week to memorize and rehearse *la version française* to a place of readiness. No doubt, having worked on the English version made for easier memorization with the French translation; however, the language is quite unique and precise and I argue that it is a commitment to specific physical choices, along with manipulating selected props and set pieces that facilitated learning the French version more rapidly.

### **Belle-Ile, France**

**Jean:** *Pardon? Ah, oui! Je suis bien Jean LeBlanc!*

*4 Septembre, 1722 à Port Royal. Oui, je suis certain.*

*J’ai tourné 44 ans ct’année!*

**Narrator:** *(to audience) I gather that your Français is comme-çi, comme-ça? Let’s see!*

**Jean:** *Yes, I am indeed Jean LeBlanc!*

*Born 4th of September, 1722 in Port Royal. Yes, I’m sure.*

*Turned 44 just dis year!*

*No longer a spring rabbit!*

**Narrator:** *The translation you see euh is never perfect!*

*The interviews were held in a former stable, now the Town Hall, in the parish called Le Palais. With but one window, candles were used even in day light hours, creating shadowy figures as Jean tried answering their questions.*

**Jean:** *What? Oh, yes. Fadder’s name was Joseph LeBlanc.*

*Yes, I’m sure. Joseph à Pierre.*

*Can’t remember when he was born. Before me dough!*

*Died in 1755, a montt before da expulsion – glad he didn't see any of it.*

*Modder was Marie, born Belliveau, from la Grand-Pré.*

*You trying to trick me? My modder was Marie Belliveau, Marie à Mélina.*

*Died. Only a few montts ago, Fall 1766.*

*12 kids, 6 before me and 5 after.*

*Deir names? Cheech!*

*Let me tink now, dere was Henri, den Marguerite, Joseph le p'tit, Jeanne, Simon, den me!*

*After, dere was da twins Marie-Louise & Jean-Baptiste, Louis, p'tit Claude and Angélique, da youngest.*

*Birtt years, oh, I don't know.*

**Narrator:** *The questions went on for over an hour with at least 10 of them sitting across the large wood table. Jean was understandably nervous as this felt like a tribunal testimony, as if he committed a crime. Echoes of being locked up in the Grand-Pré church prior to the expulsion of 1755 came in and out of his mind.*

*Father Le Loutre and the notaire Jean-Marie from Paris were asking most of the questions, along with officials from nearby parishes. The others were mainly friendly Acadian faces from their village, there as witnesses. The officials were scribbling with quill pens everything Jean said. At times, he felt quite important, and eventually eased into the role.*

**Jean:** *I was married August 3, 1742 in Beaubassin.*

*Marie-Jeanne Melanson, most beautiful person in toute l'Acadie!*

*I remember when I was first saw her au long de la baie, her red hair ... Ah, OK! Two years younger than me, so 14, 1724.*

*Our kids, well ...*

**Narrator:** *At this point it became emotional for Jean.*

*His kids are mostly ... scattered un peu partout, cause of the tumultuous back and forths.*

**Jean:** *Our oldest son, Pierre, never left Acadia.*

*He was only 13. He managed to hide, escape da déportation with a group of odders from our village. We are told he is safe. Married, in Miramichi now, wit children of his own.*

*Haven't seen him in over ... 10 years.*

*Oh, born da same year Marie and I were married in 1742.*

**Narrator:** *Imagine those 10 scribes listening to story after story of parents, grand-parents sharing both beautiful and difficult moments.*

*This recollection, reminiscing brought the Acadian community on Belle-Ile a little closer together. It allowed them to remember Acadie –their paradise for a century and a half. And also to let it go.*

*The painful memories of being expelled from their homes ... are recorded now, written down, released from their bodies.*

*The questions went on regarding Jean's other children.*

*He shared as many details as he could remember, fighting tears at times. His oldest daughter died in the crossing from Virginia to Bristol. And with the smallpox ravaging in the English port town, two more died a month after arriving. Recalling the youngest two, ti-Jean and Sophie, who live with him on Belle-Ile, brought him warmth as the interview was concluding.*

**Jean:** *My little Sophie and ti-Jean singing our traditional songs with deir mom, means da world to me.*

*Ah oui, I'll let Marie-Jeanne know she can come in.<sup>4</sup>*

*She might tell you a different story!*

*Memories, dey can shift witt time.*

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<sup>4</sup> I make a deliberate decision to have Marie-Jeanne, the name I give to Jean's wife, be interviewed after Jean. I know this to be historically inaccurate, though in my fictional reimagining I wanted to provide the possibility of hearing from the maternal lineage.

## French Historical Context

This second monologue is set in 1767 on Belle-Ile, France.<sup>5</sup> Between 1755-1763, between 8,000-10,000 French Acadians were expelled from their homes (in the area today called Atlantic Canada) during what is known as *Le Grand Dérangement* (Griffith, 1992; Landry & Lang, 2001). An ongoing conflict between the French and English in Europe resulted in thousands of Acadians being forcibly removed from lands they had inhabited for a century and a half, while in amicable relationship with the local Indigenous people (Farragher, 2005). The Acadians were displaced on overcrowded boats in various directions across the Atlantic, including the east coast American colonies, Caribbean Islands, England and France. Some families and individuals were initially sent to cities such as Richmond, Virginia where they were unwelcome, and consequently shipped to England within months. After a few years in English ports and living in poverty, many were subsequently dispersed to communities in the Brittany region of France (Laxer, 2006).

In 1765, 78 Acadian families, who had been living as refugees in Brittany for several years, were provided with an opportunity by the French monarchy to settle and acquire land on Belle-Ile, an island 15 kms off the northwest coast of France (Fontenau, 1996). However, before being able to officially register their plots of land on the island, individuals were ordered in early 1767 to undergo declarations, where they would need to swear under oath their origins to France, their relationship to Acadie, as well as respond to a series of genealogical questions. These recorded depositions, which have become critical archival documents for Acadian history, took place in four parishes on Belle-Ile in front of officials and bureaucrats. Scholarship from historians describing these declarations (Fonteneau, 2004), along with copies of the archival documents, allowed me to reimagine these events. As I traced the names of people interviewed on Belle-Ile from the archives, particularly those in the parish of Le Palais, I discovered the name of one of my ancestors from my mother's LeBlanc lineage. Jean LeBlanc, depicted in the monologue above, is based on this ancestor.

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<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the full name Belle-Ile-en-Mer is used in particular contexts.

## Developing Belle-Ile Monologue

In the development of the 'Belle-Ile' monologue Laen prompted me once again to explore the chairs to establish the inside setting where the declarations occurred and to bring to life the interviewers and witnesses in the scene. Imagining the atmosphere and physical elements within the 18<sup>th</sup> century Town Hall was critical. For instance, the lack of windows and natural light blurred faces in the room, and the fact that the Town Hall was a former stable meant to house horses, cows, and pigs shed further possibilities while exploring the playing space. Another consideration during rehearsals was how Jean's posture and gaze would shift while sitting on his chair during different parts of the interrogation. The questions he was asked prompted an emotional journey, as he recalled the tumultuous displacements his family experienced before settling on Belle-Ile. Through these physical explorations I discovered his voice, speech pattern, resiliency, and a sense of the trauma that he and many other Acadians experienced. The embodied and non-verbal informed the re-writing, inviting a more present and character-driven performance, and as a result enabling me to cut some of the (no longer required) descriptive narration. The commitment to imaginative and physical explorations opened a generative space that allowed the monologue to reach beyond a mere replaying of documented historical facts. Finding the heartbeat that lay between historical research and art-making allowed Jean's story to be in the moment, present. The context, history, and facts are still honored, yet his pulse, breath, and presence in the 'hotseat' of the interview are at the fore. The vast background information I discovered through my readings on the Acadians over numerous months are performatively integrated, written through slight frowns, glances, shoulder and hand movements, and tone of voice.

My interviews with researchers who closely studied the Belle-Ile declaration documents provided me with a broader understanding of the stakes and underlying circumstances from 1767. For example, a researcher who leads tours on Belle-Ile for individuals wanting to learn about Acadian history shared how the two or three designated Acadian witnesses, present during each declaration, more than likely assisted the interviewee (such as Jean) by affirming or providing help with certain facts (Interview with C. Boudreau, August 18, 2023). This imagined insight was key to showing the camaraderie and collective rebuilding of the Acadians that took place during the

declarations on Belle-Ile. It opened a new way to see the unfolding of the declarations, one that was more dynamic, friendly, and three-dimensional.

In October 2023 I visited Belle-Ile, and moments after stepping off the ferry I walked to the Town Hall in the parish of Le Palais where the declarations took place. The narrow streets, humid stench, with limited opportunity for light were in stark contrast to the fresh salt water air and the openness of the island landscape and seascape nearby. Walking on Belle-Ile and traveling the likely paths of my Acadian ancestors offered an intergenerational understanding of the conditions surrounding the 1767 declarations that goes beyond text and embodiment. My connection to place and land on the island allowed for a deeper ‘knowing’ of Jean and other ancestors. Only months before, in August, 2023 I also walked the land in Port Royal, Grand-Pré, and Beaubassin in Atlantic Canada (known today as parts of *Acadie*) where Jean spent most of his earlier life before being deported. The softer, fertile landscape in those parts of *Acadie* was in contrast to the rockier environment on Belle-Ile, yet the feel of the fresh Atlantic Ocean breeze, sounds of the waves hitting the shore, and seagulls singing were not so far apart. Uncovering multi-sensory insights through walking has been explored by a/r/tographers (Lee et al., 2019) who suggest that “walking opens up a range of possibilities and potentials for embracing sound, smell, emotion, movement and memory” (p. 688), feeding into an art-making process.

### **Performing *en Français***

The English version of the ‘Belle-Ile’ monologue shared above begins in French to remind the audience of the original language where the story emerged. I then deliberately (and playfully) switch to English as I am aware that I would lose many audience members were it to be fully *en français*. The notion of memories ‘shifting’ (final line of the monologue) resonated profoundly when I performed the piece in French. Early in the monologue Jean’s relaying of information about his father and mother were performed more or less as factual in the English version, spoken primarily as dates and places. As I rehearsed the piece in French, an unanticipated kinetic relationship emerged. When I talk about *mon père* and *ma mère*<sup>6</sup> in the French translation of the monologue a deeper connection

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<sup>6</sup> In the Acadian dialect we use the ‘é’ sound in these words rather than the ‘è’ in more traditional French.

emerged, one that is rooted in my identity and culture. Consequently, in performing the French version my breath changed, and there was an authenticity and rhythm that was different. Jean became closer to *ses parents*. Even though for the past three decades I have spoken and lived my life largely in English, in my mind father and mother are terms anglophones typically use, terms I read in books, someone else's story. Jean's language, like mine, is rooted in French culture, and it is part of our ancestral story and way of expressing ourselves.

In June 2024 while performing the monologue *en français* at an International Colloquium in Aix-en-Provence *Les espaces sensibles* to a French audience, a pivotal realization took place. I recognized that until then Jean, in the English version of the monologue, spoke his most intimate moments, his 'truths' in the language of his (British) oppressor. I became aware that deferring to English to recreate Jean echoes my story of language denial (or betrayal) from the 'Teatre School' monologue – perfect and use English. This awakening crystalized in the playing of the French version, as I became fully conscious of the complexity and intricacy of the story I am trying to share, and how language can be closely associated to narratives of dominance. The power of language to silence and empower is a phenomenon played out in many cultures and contexts around the world (Boudreau, 2024), and one that resonates well beyond my Acadian experience.

### **Further Considerations**

The constraints of language accessibility will continue to prompt English performances of *Mon Histoire* to reach a broader audience, which I am committed to do. Nevertheless, since the experience in Aix-en-Provence I have become more attuned to the complexity of language choices, making me pause on how best to navigate this reality. The poetry of *Mon Histoire* in English comes from my years of studying and creatively exploring the language, whereas the Acadian French version stems from my intergenerational, lived experience within Acadian culture. Each version sings and breathes differently, and the language of the telling offers its own nuances of a continuously emerging story. My artistic development and training have been largely in English, *and* my core identity and cultural connections are French Acadian. I wish to pay attention to the 'and' to explore the in-between, to celebrate the tensions, rather than seeing them in opposition.

The choice of language to reach particular audiences has resonances with how RbT-related scholarship is typically shared, what kind of language gets privileged in presentations and writings. Most often RbT scholarship that explores the development and performing of a theatre-script based on research highlights how traditional academic approaches were applied: use of qualitative methods and methodologies, how data was generated, analyzed, and subsequently disseminated performatively. As such, attention to discoveries on the workshop floor and during performances (Belliveau & Sinclair, 2018) and a resulting artistic text, often become secondary to more traditional forms of qualitative analysis. However, there is a growing body of artist-researchers with a playwrighting background, such as Cook (2024), Harris & Sinclair (2014), Shigematsu (2018), Summers (2023), Wales (2016), Wilkinson (2014), among others, who have contributed important strides in exemplifying how RbT offers compelling artistic *and* scholarly insights. The nuanced and performative scripts by these authors show ways that artistic research can live within academic scholarship without compromises. These artist-researchers have demonstrated how their (researched) artistic contributions (plays) can rest at the centre (not as an appendix) of PhD theses, books and chapters, forefronting their art-making within scholarly endeavors. Their contributions bolster the power of embedding artistic offerings within the research narrative, eliciting creative and compelling forms of analysis and understandings (or findings).

### **Ethical Dilemmas**

Research in RbT (as well as A/r/tography) has provided valuable insights around the complexity of the dual roles of artist and researcher that practitioners in this field navigate, resulting at times with ethical dilemmas. In the development and evolution of *Mon Histoire* I share (above) dilemmas around performing in French or English, though equally complex are quandaries I negotiate around loyalty to specific facts discovered from the research and artistic interpretations of them. For instance, I often combine moments or compress time that show the essence of an event, rather than dramatizing a verbatim, step-by-step unfolding. There are also moments discovered while rehearsing the monologues that generate a 'new' text, a version that feels closer and more authentic (and possibly more compelling theatrically). These artistic choices during the RbT

process open important (ongoing) conversations around ethical dilemmas practitioners experience while working in the dual roles of artist and researcher.

The topic of ethical dilemmas within RbT has been thoroughly addressed in a special issue for *Qualitative Inquiry* (Cox et al., 2023) that gathers leading international scholars in the field. The authors in this issue provide valuable perspectives and insights (beyond the scope of this article), as well as offer guidance to navigate ethical challenges faced when working in the dual capacity of artist and researcher. A key example from this collection is 'Research-based Theater in Schools: Ethical Challenges, Conundrums and Choices' by Richard J. Sallis (2023) where he depicts ethical dilemmas he encountered in three RbT projects. He shares how these conundrums result largely from his overlapping and interweaving roles of artist and researcher, which sheds light on the discussions above around *Mon Histoire*. More precisely, Sallis shares how the dual roles (artist and researcher) tugs and pulls RbT practitioners in different directions, generating moments of ethical uncertainty, often at unexpected times. To navigate these complex, often blurry encounters that frequently surface within RbT projects, Sallis offers a set of principles to help address these potential ethical challenges (and humbly recognizes how best intentions can still go awry).

Engaging with ethical considerations and lifting artistry in RbT scholarship broaden and strengthen existing pathways within the field. Furthermore, a concerted effort to bring further focus and attention to discoveries from rehearsals and performance development (Snyder-Young et al., 2024) will enrich the methodological potential of RbT, showing how art-making can live alongside/within research. This deliberate attention to art-making and its unfolding echoes the work of a/r/tographers who have written extensively on this commitment, highlighting how it is central and imperative to its practice and scholarship (Irwin et al., 2024). It is also an apt reminder of RbT's dual commitment to artistry and research, with the 'R' and 'T' holding equal importance, balanced, pendulum-like by the lower case 'b'.

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