

Abstract

FACE: Renegotiating Identity through Performance

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This thesis analyses a solo autobiographical bilingual performance first created in 1998 entitled FACE, which was revised and extended in its presentation at the Lumley Studio in September 2006.

The first half chronicles the experience of a British Hong Kong Eurasian. The journey from child to adult and from Hong Kong to England, within the frame of inner and outer identity, forms the main content of this performance in English and Cantonese. In the unscripted, improvised second half, other autobiographical stories from the audience are facilitated to emerge into the public realm through the vehicle of Playback Theatre. The analysis of this work offers perspectives on how performance can be instrumental in enabling renegotiation of identity.

The first chapter looks at this praxis within the framework of autobiographical and intercultural performance, and investigates the development of FACE prior to its revision at Kent: production history; choices made in relation to cultural and linguistic contexts; and insights into intercultural experience and cross-cultural encounters. Hybridity in performance style and subjective experience is considered.

The second chapter analyses the creative process from inception to latest incarnation of FACE. The importance of the dragon and its cultural symbolism is analysed through the theoretical lens of psychodynamic theory, with reference to psychoanalysis & Jungian analytical psychology. The creative process itself is reframed within the theory of child development derived from Moreno's psychodrama.

In the third chapter, the mise en scene is analysed, FACE as Ritual Theatre is reviewed. Playback Theatre is discussed in relation to other forms of participatory and autobiographical theatre. The Kent performances of FACE are then analysed from the perspective of a playback theatre practitioner, revealing the complexity of relations between audience and performer in participatory performance practices, as well as its potential in shifting subjectivities and in generating communitas.