

Storying / Affecting

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- recognise how telling stories develops the affective relation between audience and presenter
- describe how storytellers draw on experiences of time, place, character, action and emotion in presenting stories
- distinguish between showing/telling, enacting/narrating, recounting/relating, inspiring/motivating



Trevor Noah: Afraid of the Dark – 0:42:10–0:53:04

<https://www.netflix.com/watch/80134969>

Telling stories...

truth – authenticity, experience and tradition

fiction – originality, imagination and
invention



John Berger and Susan Sontag To Tell A Story 1983 – 0:04:40 to 0:08:53

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoHCR8nshe8>

- **Story-telling** – Truth and fiction – Sontag describes it as an activity that 'faces in two directions' – translating truth into fiction – and experiencing fiction as a truthfulness
- **Model storytellers** – The voyager (coming back from the adventure, recounting what happened elsewhere) and the local (living in the village, relating what happened here)
- **Place and time** – Where a story is located = experience and truth. And when story is displaced = fiction and imagination.

Stories from home
– time and place



The Block, Amanda

<http://www.sbs.com.au/theblock/#/amanda>



Story	Amanda
Time	then (when Amanda was a kid) and now (that she has moved)
Place	Redfern, the Block
Character	Amanda, mum, Nan – celebrities
Action	kid's playing, celebrities visiting, houses deteriorating, moving house, waiting
Emotion	sadness, frustration, anger, resignation..



Bankstown Poetry Slam, Asma Yusra
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=csQ7SEUE6Nk>

Story	Asma
Time	eyes open: now, present – eyes closed: memory, past
Place	eyes open: tattered haunted shed I call home in suburban Bankstown - eyes close: ancestral village in West Sumatra, palace, legend
Character	me (muslim, Asian, chameleon), grandmother (link to home) - disadvantaged, welfare, immigrants, mothers, incarcerated men
Action	seeing, showing, hearing - then: remembering (better days - ran, cool, love), relating, smelling (legend says...)
Emotion	alert, interest, longing, nostalgia...

Authenticity in storytelling...

- **Experience** – actions and events, experienced by the storyteller, shared with the audience
- **Time and place** – from then to now, from there to here...
- **Audience** – what motivates our interest, connection, belief?

**Moment of truth –
memory and experience**



Moment of Truth: The Refugee and the Sea

<http://iview.abc.net.au/programs/moment-of-truth/DO1512H003S00>

Illustrations

- Illustrations – showing evidence and artefacts...
- Elevates the credibility of a story – makes the story more convincing
- Objects and souvenirs – photos as illustrations – diagrams, charts, drawings

Quotations

- Quotations – the testimony of witnesses...
- Someone else who speaks with the authority of experience – builds the credibility of a story
- From my story (just one voice) to our story (many voices)
 - more convincing, shared with others, more significant

**From storytelling to performing
– acting and emotion**

Caroline Wake draws a distinction between the ‘accident’ and the ‘performance’...

“The accident cannot be created or rehearsed, it cannot be planned, it cannot be predicted, and it cannot be repeated – that is what makes it an accident. Yet performance can be created and rehearsed, it can be planned, it can be predicted and it can (at least to some extent) be repeated – this is what makes it a performance.”

(Wake 2009, p. 15)

In a book on *Storytelling and Theatre*, Michael Wilson explains:

“Brecht wanted his actors to be visible at all times, not ‘completely swallowed up by the character’, rejecting the idea that the actor should be wholly absorbed in his part. He wanted both his actors and his audiences to know that the people on stage were not the characters in the play, but rather actors playing those roles. [...] Brecht's actors were not to be their characters but to ‘show’, ‘present’ or ‘demonstrate’ them and this was to be achieved after ‘the actor masters his character by first mastering the story’.”

(Wilson, 2006, pp. 50-51, quoting Brecht)

In *Makers of Modern Theatre*, Robert Leach explains that, for Stanislavsky...

“‘All action in the theatre must have an inner justification’, he said. It was, he believed, at the heart of the fundamental theatrical negotiation between actor and spectator. So what one watches as a spectator in the theatre, the actor doing something , is inextricably linked to the emotion he feels, and thus to the ‘inner truth’ which is at the core of his art.”

(Leach, 2004 pp. 27-28, quoting Stanislavsky)

- The storyteller and the story – the experience (event, accident) and its performance (Wake)
- Narrating the story and enacting a character within it (Brecht)
- Physical actions and the expression of emotions (Stanislavsky)

How the authenticity of a storyteller's experience translates into feelings that an audience tunes into, connects with and shares...

Fake it till you make it



How to sound smart in your TEDx Talk | Will Stephen | TEDxNewYork
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8S0FDjFBj8o>

Communication and experience

Walter **Benjamin** on storytelling...

“The storyteller takes what he tells from experience - his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale.” And those listeners will, in turn, become storytellers themselves. For Benjamin, stories are useful not for the information they contain, but for the advice they convey. According to Benjamin, "every real story" – that is, every story told from experience – "contains, openly or covertly, something useful" – a moral, a proverb, a maxim, something we take away and make use of in living our lives. (c. 1938)

Communication – Langelier and Peterson...

“The simple act of saying ‘let me tell you a story’ establishes a communication relationship that constitutes the speaker as a storyteller and the listeners as audience. The utterance ‘let me tell you a story’ is, in other words, a performative in that it does what it says it is doing. It performs the storytelling that it announces. ‘Let me tell you a story’ also establishes a story, the ‘something that happened’ that the storyteller reenacts, recites, or represents. The telling of the story is a performance. As a human communication practice, performing narrative combines the performative ‘doing’ of storytelling with what is ‘done’ in the performance of a story.” (2004: 2)

Experience – Gratch & Crick...

“[T]he storyteller is able to create a performance that invokes, for the audience, the experience he/she tells. It is through the invocation of experience that the storyteller, like a shaman, engages in an active and conscious restoration of behavior (Schechner 37) that makes a past come alive in a unique and productive way in the present. Mastering the gesture of embodied practice and using it to invoke experience for his/her audience, the storyteller is able to provide counsel.” As Gratch & Crick see it, this counsel emerges from the storyteller's use of experience. (2015)

Interpretation – Joan W. Scott, historian...

“For Walter Benjamin, the transmission of information has nothing to do with the art of storytelling, even if its presentation takes narrative form.” Rather, for Benjamin, the art of storytelling is concerned with the translation of experience. Scott explains that “The best storytellers interpret, but they don't offer easy explanations for what they recount. The interpretation is not didactic, but more like what a ‘interprets’ a musical composition. Through the subtlety of the deftness of their interpretation, storytellers open their readers imaginations; in this way the ‘story's richness and germinative powers endures.’ (2011)

Meaning – R.G. Davis...

Benjamin drew a distinction between information and stories: “The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only at the moment; it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself to it without losing any time. A story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time.” Davis observes that “Data and facts by themselves are difficult to remember, whereas a well-told story may contain some data while offering a methodological device for understanding the conditions of life. Storytelling and story is most useful in that it provides a means by which the audience can take something home to reflect on. The delayed response to a story provides a deeper social purpose.” (1979)

Storying / Affecting – Summary

Telling stories – truth and fiction (authenticity-experience-tradition and originality-imagination-invention) – time and place (from there and then to here and now)

Authenticity – actions and events (experienced by the storyteller, shared with the audience) – illustrations (showing evidence, objects and artefacts) – quotations (the testimony of witnesses, other voices, building credibility)

Performing storytelling – the storyteller and the story – the experienced event and its re-performance – narrating the story, enacting a character – physical actions and emotional expression

How the authenticity of a storyteller's experience translates into feelings that an audience tunes into, connects with and shares...

Assessment – Coming Up

Assessment 1.2 – presentation – 2-3 minutes – in-class or recorded – due today, Fri 8 Dec, in tutorial

Assessment 2.2 – analytical report – video example from lectures 3 & 4 – 500 words – due Sat 9 Dec by 5pm

Assessment 3 – 6 minutes – presentation (live in-class or recorded video) – presented Tue 11 Dec – either in lecture or tutorial – bookings open at 12 noon on Monday

Assessment 2.3 – analytical report – student presentation from Tuesday – 500 words – due Wed 13 Dec by 5pm

References and Further Reading

Benjamin, Walter. "The Storyteller," in *Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935-1938* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 143-166.

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Garde, Ulrike & Meg Mumford, *The Theatre of Real People: Diverse Encounters at Berlin's Hebbel Am Ufer and Beyond* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen, 2016)

Gratch, Ariel & Nathan Crick (2015) The Storyteller, Novelist, and Charlatan: Forms of Performance in the Age of Digital Reproduction, *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 35:4, 305-322, DOI: 10.1080/10462937.2015.1075584

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Scott, Joan. Storytelling, *History and Theory*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2011, pp. 203-209

Trezise, Bryoni and Caroline Wake, eds. *Visions and revisions : performance, memory, trauma* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, c2013)

Wake, Caroline, 'The Accident and the Account: Towards a Taxonomy of Spectatorial Witness in Theatre and Performance Studies', *Performance Paradigm* 5.1 (May 2009)

Wilson, Michael. *Storytelling and theatre: contemporary storytellers and their art* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)