

Editorial

ELAINE ASTON

The academic conference is an important feature of our professional lives. It constitutes a meeting ground, a forum, in which key topics in a field can begin to emerge; where cognate ideas and approaches get debated, affirmed or contested; where, in short, ideas can *move* (on) through academics being in contact with each other's ideas. Any journal editor is drawn inevitably to the conference 'season' as fertile, 'hunting' ground; trawls for papers that will yield article publications (if others do not get there first!). And so it is that my second issue of *TRI* since becoming editor is sourced from the 2008 Actions of Transfer: Women's Performance in the Americas conference, hosted by the University of California, Los Angeles and co-sponsored by the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics. As this event is expertly introduced and the issue framed by co-organizers Sue-Ellen Case and Diana Taylor, this editorial note needs only to be brief. Indeed, I hesitated long at the computer keyboard thinking that perhaps no note at all was necessary. Except that two observations or headlines felt editorially important to me to express: the significance of Actions of Transfer for thinking generally about the nature of the conference event in relation to *TRI*'s international, theatre research remit, and the mix of articles and the performance dossier brought together in the issue.

First, instructive about the event was the way in which the conference was conceived as 'an action of transfer': as a practice that, as Case and Taylor explain, 'relies on collaboration and exchange, on engaging "cultural agents" to think and work together across a broad spectrum of topics'. Understood in this particular (conference) instance as a hemispheric practice concerned with women's performance in the 'Americas', more broadly this gestures to how exactly we are to 'meet' each other's work across the divides of different theatre cultures, nations and languages. This is an ongoing issue for *TRI*, where the stumbling blocks Case and Taylor cite in their conference endeavours, such as the limitations imposed by the English-language barrier, are also ones which the journal faces. Moreover, it is not just a question of how we 'meet' but 'who' we are able to encounter. The mapping of the 'Americas' in this issue 'visits' theatre 'destinations' that may well be less familiar or accessible to *TRI*'s readership; it opens up an international theatre terrain of practitioners, performances or theatre that variously locate in Cuba, Peru, Mexico, Argentina or Alaska. And en route, cartographies, principally those of gender, sexuality and indigeneity, are visited as sites of major, rather than marginal, interest.

Second, there is the matter of the performance dossier. This is only the second compilation of this kind to be published in *TRI* since announcing this new style of submission. In this instance, the dossier, detailing six performances from the conference event, is presented as a further mirroring of the Action of Transfer practice where knowledge exchange crossed the divide of activist theatre scholarship and performance practice. To read across and (in) between the dossier contributions and the articles might itself suggest an 'action of transfer': an exchange between the critically inflected dossier readings of interventionist embodied practice(s) and the activist scholarship of the articles.

Overall, as editor, I hope that the self-reflexivity that characterized the conference event – the questioning of how to labour in the interests of a dialogic transfer of knowledge between different theatre cultures, languages, modes of critical and creative activism, so central to the concerns of *TRI* – is captured here through the collective endeavours of all those contributing to this special issue.