

Authenticity and the 'Documentive' in *Nanay: A Testimonial Play*

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Abstract

In this article, Lazaridis Ferguson explores the notion of documentary authenticity in the advocacy play *Nanay: A Testimonial Play* through his theory of the *documentive*. The documentive is a productive tension that is produced through the combination of present material factors (actors, set, architecture, etc.) and the absence of material documents such as transcripts. It is a recalibration of the traditional *actual-fictive* binary as *actual-documentive*, and is further produced by the pressure of *emergency time*—the knowledge that what is performed on stage represents a crisis that is currently occurring elsewhere. The authenticity of the document predominantly relies on what philosopher Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht calls *presence effects*—the spatial and affective relationships of tangible and materially present performative elements such as actors and scenography; but is also in dialogue with *meaning effects*—how the presence effects are interpreted. Ferguson uses these frameworks to look at the aesthetic choices made by the creators of *Nanay*, especially how certain theatrical genres were chosen to convey documentive affect, and how these choices succeeded or failed depending on the degree to which an attendant equated a given genre with 'truth.'

Between 2008 and 2013 I directed *Nanay: A Testimonial Play*,¹ a sited documentary play developed in collaboration with Dr Caleb Johnston (Artistic Director of Urban Crawl Theatre), The Philippine Women Centre of BC, and Dr Geraldine Pratt of the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia.² *Nanay: A Testimonial Play* was performed at the Chapel

¹ The word 'nanay' is Tagalog for mother. However, in English it also has the resonance of 'nanny', the common term used in Canada for domestic worker.

² I use 'sited' rather than site-specific because the production was not deeply engaged with the site's socio-political history. *Nanay* was rehearsed and performed on-site and was a 'collaboration' with the architectural features of the space. It should therefore be seen as a sited or site-conditioned performance.

Arts Center in Vancouver during the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival (2009), at the Hebbel am Ufer in Berlin as part of the Your Nanny Hates You! Festival (2009), and at the PETA Theater Center in Manila (2013). *Nanay* is about Canada's Live-in Caregiver Program, a migrant labour program that brings Filipino domestic workers to Canada to provide live-in care for children and elderly parents of Canadian families. It's a temporary work visa program, one that also offers those who successfully meet its challenging conditions 'Landed Immigrant' status, which can lead to full citizenship. It is an advocacy play that attempts to raise public awareness of the program's injustices, and to give voice to workers exploited by the program and to employers who feel existing conditions force them to employ and exploit the workers.

I began the project in a zealous mood regarding what I considered the documentary potency of verbatim text, a text transcribed from interviews with stakeholder-subjects, rather than text invented by a writer. Eventually I came to regard truth claims associated with verbatim text with skepticism as well as the preferred performance styles that tend to go with it, such as psychological realism. What we call document or verbatim testimony goes through many transformations between an initial interview and a final performance in front of an audience. While the final spoken text has a valid connection to the original interview, it seemed to me that we were trading on the *idea* of document rather than the actual documents. I began to ask myself where authenticity lay, if anywhere, in a documentary play that uses written testimony as the basis of its truth claims but doesn't present documents for inspection. While my skepticism regarding the concept of authentic document grew, my faith in documentary theatre persisted. I could see in performance and

during post-show discussions that there was a rhetorical power in the idea of verbatim in testimonial performance. However, I had shifted from insisting on the veracity of the spoken text to focusing on more traditional theatre concerns. These had to do with the affective power of the performer, the scenography, and the attendant co-creating the performance.³ The usual tension in theatre between *actual* and *fictive* by which the materially present (an actor, for example) and that which is imagined (a character such as Hamlet) combine to create an unstable yet powerful affect remains in play in a documentary performance. It is the *idea* of the document that adjusts the attendant's relationship to the performance dialectic.

In this essay, I discuss the affective power of the *document-as-idea-in-performance* by examining two different scenes from *Nanay*. The examples trouble notions of authenticity and documentary veracity in ways that are specific to the staging of each scene. In my analysis, I recalibrate the *actual-fictive* dialectic as *actual-documentive*, where the *documentive* represents the *idea* of the document. The document is *documentive* because it references something that is not materially present—a transcription on paper or in digital form. Therefore, it inhabits what is usually the *fictive* side of the binary, that which is imagined. The attendant must construct the document based on the evidence before her: an actor speaking words within a scenographic composition. The power of the performance lies in the affective proximity to the attendant of actor and scenography, combined with the notion that the words being spoken are 'true' and the actor is representing a subject who is a 'real' person. While the documentary source has referential power to the extent that it is imagined by

³ Following theatre and performance theorists such as Stephen Di Benedetto, I often use this term in place of 'spectator'. Where the term spectator privileges seeing, 'attendant' tries to address the whole-body, multi-sensory attention an individual brings to a performance (Di Benedetto 126-27).

the attendant, it is ultimately only as convincing as its embodiment through performance.

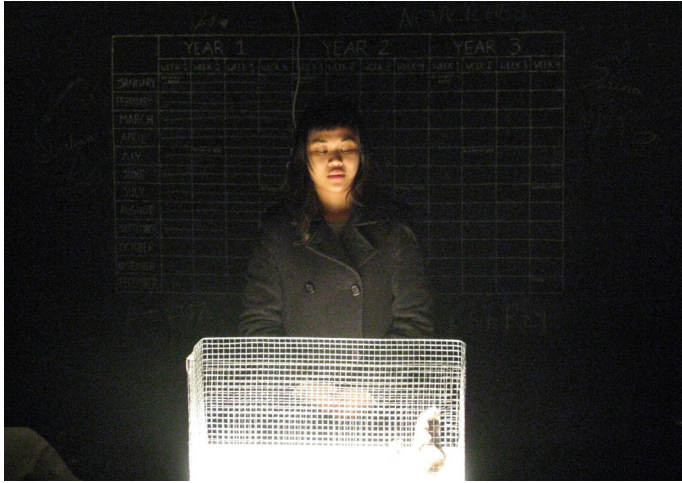


Fig. 1: Actor Lisa Neptuno uses a small chicken-wire cage to represent the family of her employer. Photo by Caleb Johnston.

With these considerations in mind, and in order to fully articulate the affective power of a documentary play, I turn to philosopher Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's elucidation of the actual-fictive binary, which he expresses as *presence effects* and *meaning effects*. Presence effects arise from the affective power of our proximity to tangible things (including performers) and their spatial relationships to one another. In the context of theatre this would mean the tangible proximity of performers and sets to the attendants. Together these can produce aesthetic insights that cannot immediately be conveyed as meaning in the sense of being explainable or categorizable. On the other hand, 'meaning effects' arise when we try to interpret, explain, or categorize presence effects (Gumbrecht 1-3,17). The attendant always oscillates

between presence and meaning effects as she tries to resolve the tension between the one and the other. As I will argue when discussing the scenes, it is this tension that can give the performance the feel of authenticity and documentary power, if handled well by the artists.

The balance is tricky. In a testimonial play the aesthetic dimension of performance struggles with the ethical dimension. As Gumbrecht argues, the latter can overwhelm the former, undermining the power that lies in aesthetic affect (103). The aesthetic dimension lies with the affective intensity of the presence effects, while the ethical dimension lies in the attendant's assessment of truth claims and personal decisions as to whether to take political action. Without what might be called the persuasiveness of the presence effects, the social justice issue that a play like *Nanay* advocates may be better served by other means, such as conventional journalism or other types of political activism.⁴ That is, political points can be stated explicitly in, for example, a news media article or on an advocacy website (for example The Philippine Women Centre of BC website). Such journalism or advocacy platforms can be extremely potent ways of getting a message across. A documentary play in which a written story is embodied by actors and scenography offers a different kind of insight, one in which the body of the attendant is in immediate spatial proximity to the body of the actor and scenographic composition. It presents a kind of immediacy that does not occur in journalism or NGO advocacy. However, this embodiment of document can prove problematic for the attendant if the theatrical genre employed is at odds with her expectation of how truth

⁴ Gumbrecht makes this point when he writes, 'whenever conveying or exemplifying an ethical message is supposed to be the main function of a work of art, we need to ask—and indeed the question cannot be eliminated—whether it would not be more efficient to articulate the same ethical message in rather straightforward and explicit concepts and forms' (103).

should be represented on stage. For example, parody might seem an inappropriate container for a documentary play about worker exploitation. In *Nanay*, some attendants were offended by the use of parody in one scene, and felt it was demeaning to the subjects portrayed (see the Yaletown scene below), while others had no trouble seeing this scene as a truthful representation of the given situation. Through the scenes discussed below, I will explain how these have worked successfully for some attendants but not for others, based on the theatrical genre employed in each case.

There is one further concept I introduce to explain the way that *fictive* becomes *documentive* in a testimonial play. What I call *emergency time* is to do with the fact that a documentary play like *Nanay* references an ongoing socio-political crisis that is concurrent with the performance. What is represented on stage is currently occurring elsewhere in the world—the exploitation of the domestic worker character onstage has an immediate correlate to many domestic workers who are currently being exploited somewhere in the country. In such a play, emergency time expresses itself as an intensification of material affects. The embodied document—the documentive (i.e. the actor, objects, or setting)—creates intensities of affect in the moment of performance.⁵ These are generative in that they create sensory perceptions that give rise to *felt* truths, truths felt by the attendant (they can also give rise to felt *untruths*, as when genre doesn't match expectation). Emergency time is evoked through both presence effects—moments when affective intensities are felt viscerally or emotionally—and meaning effects, moments that encourage distanced critical thinking. Through oscillation

⁵ Gumbrecht argues that these intensities are also produced by 'a disposition of composed openness [that] anticipates the energizing presence of an object to come'; one has the feeling of being lost in the affective moment (104).

between the two the attendant is pressured to consider taking action to correct the social injustice. If the advocacy verbatim play is effective, the attendant may feel that any delay in taking action will prolong human suffering.

In the following sections, the affective oscillation described above is examined in two scenes from *Nanay: A Testimonial Play*. I examine how particular theatre genres are used to represent real-life subjects and situations, and how these genres might complicate the attendant's notions of authentic representation. The two scenes explored below include: (1) the Nadine scene, performed in the style of psychological realism; (2) the Yaletown scene, performed as parody.

The Documents

Authenticity in *Nanay* is tied to the idea of a verifiable document, out of sight but, in theory, available for scrutiny. As I wrote above, during the years of developing the play I became increasingly mistrustful of the authoritative value we, the collaborators, had placed on our testimonial transcripts. For the most part, these documents were transcribed from the verbal testimony of Filipino domestic workers and Canadians who employ them. In *Nanay*, ten different installations/scenes are performed in ten different rooms. Eight of the ten rooms feature actors portraying either a domestic worker from the Philippines or a Canadian who has employed them. Each personal testimony has gone through the following transformations: (1) a subject recollects certain events, (2) the spoken recollection is audio recorded, (3) the recording is transcribed, (4) if the original testimony has not been given in English it is translated and further transcribed, (5) the transcript is edited by the writers (Caleb Johnston and Geraldine Pratt), (6) a dramaturg (Martin Kinch) works with

the writers to give the monologues or dialogues something of a dramatic arc and appropriate length, (7) workshops are undertaken with actors and designers; various genres are attempted in order to find a resonating style that is considered performable and communicable, (8) rehearsals are conducted along the same lines, (9) the show is performed for paying audiences.

A contentious issue that arose among the creative team during rehearsals was whether psychological-realism was the only acceptable performance genre in a testimonial play.⁶ During the run of the show, scenes featuring actors playing Filipino domestic workers in a psychological realist style were for the most part deemed credible, truthful representations by attendants who offered feedback at nightly post-show discussions. This was so even though the scenes were performed in somewhat abstract and surrealist scenographic environments. For example, in one installation an actor playing a nanny uses ceramic bunnies in a cage as stand-ins for her employer's family (**Figure 1**). The scene takes place in a part of the Chapel Arts Center (a former chapel, formerly equipped with an embalming room) that was once used as a car port for hearses delivering coffins and had formerly been equipped for raising coffins to a room above. Despite the surrealist scenography, the scene was received as unproblematic by attendants due to the psychological realist performance of the actor. All of *Nanay's* scenes performed in this style were deemed credible and unproblematic by attendants and professional col-

⁶ The term 'psychological realism' has several roots including: (1) 19th century stage realism - the presentation of scrupulously observed material realities; (2) the work of the Russian director Konstantin Stanislavsky, pioneer of psychological realist acting, in which the performers try to present *accurate* renditions of everyday human behaviour; (3) 'the incorporation of filmic reality effects, psychologically attuned directing, fluid scenography, and variations on method acting'; trying to genuinely feel the emotional state one is portraying on stage (Zarilli et al 602-3). The idea is that the actor and scenography are to be believed as credible renditions of human behaviour and situation. The attendant is usually expected to buy into the stage illusion of reality, at least for a while.

leagues. The parodic 'Yaletown' scene, by contrast, was deemed by some to be an inappropriate distortion of the subjects represented.

Real Realism in the 'Nadine' Scene

The first major point of disagreement among the creators concerned how to truthfully represent Nadine, one of the Canadian employer characters. Played by Karen Rae, Nadine is an artist and university professor struggling to find appropriate in-home care for her aged mother who suffers from Parkinson's disease.⁷ The artists composed the setting of the scene with the intent of having it accepted by the attendant as realistic. That is, it resembled closely enough a real kitchen in its various details (wallpaper, windows, etc.) to be considered a credible facsimile of someone's life out in the *real* world. The kitchen was Nadine's mother's, where Nadine prepares her mother's pills, rolls cigarettes, and blows smoke out the window. Nadine is in a purple thigh-length sweater, knee-length wool skirt, knee-high leather boots, wooden bead necklace, and with her hair tied back in a ponytail. These costume details are also meant to be accepted as a genuine and credible representation of a *real* person.

The acting style is psychological realism. That is, the performer works through the text in such a way that she seems to be having the kinds of thoughts and emotions that a real person might have, speaking in an unexaggerated manner, and not overly amplifying her voice or speaking in a way that might be interpreted as 'stagey'. Additionally, there is the use of a convention of direct address. Even in psychological realist theatre, sometimes the actors speak directly to the audience.

Although set, costume, and performance details are intended to convey authenticity, they were arrived at through ex-

⁷Nadine is a pseudonym.

perimentation in rehearsal. Through improvisation, Rae's Nadine became a burdened, edgy woman, aware of the ethical dilemma of exploiting foreign workers but unable to find an affordable alternative. Rolling cigarettes was something we arrived at as a way to help Rae give Nadine a little more edge and the scene a little more drive. The actual Nadine did not smoke, nor did she dress as described above, nor did the scene take place in her mother's kitchen. These choices were made as a way for Rae to give energy and dramatic truth to the character. Dr Pratt, who had conducted most of the research for *Nanay* and was co-writer of the script, strongly objected to these choices. She felt we were compromising the factual integrity of the subject and that we needed to be 'alert to misrepresentation—of what they said, and to some extent the conditions in which they said it' (Pratt Email). Accuracy of representation had indeed been violated in several ways. For one, the original interview took place during a walk in the forest. Clothing style, tone of voice, and the physical gestures of the actor did not arise from study of the subject, whom Karen Rae had never met. Pratt also felt that rolling cigarettes was beneath the dignity of a university professor. It seems that in order to avoid misrepresentation, some level of photographic likeness would have had to be employed to ethically represent Nadine.

The challenge of recreating the walk in the forest notwithstanding, if testimonial truth is more than just textual data that could be edited for clarity and dramatic sequence, then the conditions of the spoken testimony had already been seriously altered in the writing of the play. Changing the order of a speech changes its meaning, as does creating a dramatic arc where there isn't one. Meaning as content is not independent of syntax or ordering of sentences. The materiality of the spoken words, and the tone in which they are delivered *is* the meaning. The *factual-*

ity of gesture, intonation, and rhythm of speech and text are all powerful presence effects. In the Nadine scene, such effects were connected to the performance style of psychological realism, which has a complex relationship to photorealism. As Ernst Van Alphen remarks, 'documentary realism has become the mode of representation that novelists and artists must adopt if they are to persuade their audience of their moral integrity' (cited in Salverson 20). This, I think, is what Dr Pratt was fighting for in the representation of Nadine. For her, the costume details were important signifiers of documentary truth. For me, anything other than using the actual Nadine and her actual clothes was already a significant departure from testimonial veracity. I agree with Stephen Bottoms when he points out that 'realism and reality are not the same thing', and that 'unmediated access to 'the real' is not something the theatre can ever honestly provide' (57). In theatre, and in anything called documentary, verbatim, or testimonial theatre that I have seen, the aesthetic inevitably diverges from the documentary. Indeed, it must do if theatre is to have any value as an art form, including an art form of advocacy. Gumbrecht argues that the aesthetic cannot sustain its special intensity if it is made subservient to the ethical: 'the projection of ethical norms on the potential objects of aesthetic experience, will inevitably lead to the erosion of the potential intensity of the latter' (102). Aesthetic intensity is how theatre serves the ethical.

This is not to say that Dr Pratt was wrong. The scene could have been constructed in a photorealist manner. Doing so would have created an aesthetic different from the one we had arrived at through experimentation in rehearsal. It would have resulted in different felt truths. Different, because the embodied subject and scenography would have produced other material affects. Perhaps the resulting scene would have been less am-

biguous than the one we produced. That is, perhaps there would have been a more unified, less complicated response to the scene by the attendants who witnessed it. Talk-back audiences sometimes had complicated opinions of Nadine, sympathizing with the compromises she felt she had to make, and sometimes had uncomplicated opinions in which she was seen as an exploitive villain. My own tendency as an artist is to relish examining and representing ambiguity. This is because I feel real life situations are usually not reducible to one point of view and one interpretation. This disposes me to avoiding the photorealist approach for the reason Van Alphen and Bottoms imply above: aesthetic realism is too easily equated with *truth*.

This is apparently true of the social sciences as well. In one of their essays on the same production, Dr Pratt and Dr Caleb Johnston discuss the social scientist's discomfort with the type of theatrical representation that was at play in *Nanay*. The discomfort arises from the production's departure, in certain scenes, from realism. In fact, from a type of performance that might insist on photorealism: 'staging that departs from its original context compromises its honesty,' write Pratt and Johnston (Pratt and Johnston 126). Describing 'the conflict[s] over interpretation' as 'irresolvable but fascinating tensions between academic and theatre work,' they go on to say that 'social science is typically written in a realist mode in which comedy and parody are unacceptable, or at least suspect, genres' (126). I am not a social scientist, but I am both an academic and an artist. I see the strict delineation between *realist* social science and the representational strategies of theatre as an academic convention, one that seems to arise from a notion of realism as foundational to serious study. In my opinion, accepting the methodologies and writing styles of social science as realist, and therefore truthful,

lacks critical self-examination of the social scientists' (in this case two geographers) personal biases, and perhaps the biases of the entire field. Neither psychological realism nor any other style or genre can claim the moral high ground. Each is a convention (theatrical or academic) that can produce particular aesthetic affects. Circumstances, unforeseen directions taken in rehearsal, and the aesthetic disposition of some of the collaborators led to the particular Nadine scene that was staged. It could have gone many other ways. In *Nanay*, ambiguity of representation due to the choice of performance genre was a contested issue, not only in the Nadine scene, but also in the Yaletown scene. And not only for the collaborators, but for the attendants as well.

Authentic Parody in the 'Yaletown' Scene

The installation/scene that caused the most controversy for the audience in *Nanay* was one in which we pushed into parody.⁸ What we call the 'Yaletown' scene took place (in the Vancouver production) on the second floor of the Chapel Arts Center, an art gallery/performance space. The architecture is such that there is a kind of a proscenium arch between one gallery and the next. Unlike most of the other installations in which the audience mingles with the performers, in the Yaletown scene we put a projection scrim across the arch, reinforcing the separation between spectator and performer.⁹ However, the distance is slight:

⁸ I am using parody as in the following definition: 'the comic imitation of another's socially typical speech, behavior, thinking, or deepest principles' (Zarilli et al. 601). Additionally, I cross over into satire, defined as one artwork used to mock another artwork. Here the source I am mocking are the lifestyle coffee advertisements that were common through the 1980s and 90s in Canada and that still appear in new iterations from time to time.

⁹ To accommodate demand, attendants were separated into two audience groups. Each group took a different route through the ten installations/scenes. One group would start with the Yaletown scene described above. The other group would start with an actor representing a domestic worker in a kitchen in another part of the building.

the attendants sit in chairs in three rows, two to four meters from the performers. A still image projected onto the scrim depicts a couple in matching white, terry-towel bathrobes, holding coffee mugs, looking straight at the camera—and therefore at the audience (**Figure 2**).



Fig.2: Actors Alexa Devine and Patrick Keating as Stephanie and Richard. Photo by Caleb Johnston.

The image is accompanied by text introducing the couple as ‘Richard and Stephanie’ who have two children and reside in the chic downtown neighborhood of Yaletown. The image is underscored with a version of the early 1970s bossa nova classic *Waters of March* (*Agua de Marco*) by Antonio Carlos Jobim (Jobim). The image alludes to and has the feel of the kind of TV commercials for coffee products that suggest drinking the right brew brings about sexual and domestic contentment. The couple look happy and refreshed, though ridiculous in their matching robes. The image dissolves to reveal the very same two actors,

live, standing behind the scrim, wearing the same costumes and adopting the same positions in the exact same bedroom. As the music fades Richard and Stephanie speak to the audience. (The following stage directions were not scripted; they reflect discoveries made in rehearsal):

RICHARD: When Stephen was six months old, we chose a Filipino nanny because we heard that they were very caring for the very young ones. So we basically *only* interviewed Filipino nannies.

STEPHANIE: We found out about Marlena from a friend of ours. How we worked it out was like this: we had 2 bedrooms upstairs and one room that we used as an office. So we sacrificed that. (*She produces a booklet*). In the information booklet it told what a live-in caregiver is entitled to have. And it was a room with sleeping arrangements, and a lock on the door. Although no one's ever locked the door.

The couple smiles at the absurdity of having to lock the door, as the previous musical track fades up. They sip from their coffee mugs in unison, taking a long draught, sighing together, smiling contentedly. They are touched by a warm glow, as if from the rays of dawn light filtering through balcony windows.

RICHARD: And then we *also* gave her separate bathroom facilities. And she didn't need a separate phone, but we gave her one. We gave her a TV, a desk, an answering machine.

A dirty 'polluted' light arises from stage right. They turn to view it. They look troubled.

It's different than working in Singapore or Hong Kong. Marlena told us stories of where the nannies were sleeping. It wasn't a pretty scene.

STEPHANIE: They're treated like second-class citizens in other countries!

RICHARD: At first she wanted to call us 'Madam' and 'Sir'! But we said, 'Wooahhh, wait a minute.' I think she was kind of taken aback by that! And we said to her:

RICHARD AND STEPHANIE: 'That's not the Canadian way!'

*Lights fade on the couple. A slide of Richard and Stephanie in the exact pose they will be seen in next is projected onto the scrim. Bossa track underneath. (Pratt and Johnston, *Nanay*, 13-14).*

This scene raises a number of issues regarding its status as documentary play. Documentary theatre has often positioned itself as a moral corrective to the entrenched privilege represented by corporate media (Martin 12). It attempts to reframe the way corporations shape public opinion (Paget 59). It either re-interprets evidence provided in the mainstream or draws attention to what was omitted. *Nanay*, in keeping with Carol

Martin's and Derek Paget's descriptions, attempts to reframe the way a department of the Canadian government has shaped the discourse on migrant labour, and to bring to light what it has omitted.¹⁰ However, its documents provide an archive that is unstable and contestable. This contrasts with director Erwin Piscator's claims, at the advent of German documentary theatre in the 1920s, of providing 'conclusive proof', based on 'scientific analysis of the material' (92). There are powerful stories to be told, but conclusive proof may be beyond reach. Rather than that the data presented regarding the numbers of women involved in the Live-in-caregiver program are false, or that the wage scale and living conditions are unverifiable, the way documented evidence is used in a testimonial play is a combination of imagined data and material affect. In other words, it amounts to a struggle over public discourse. 'Governments 'spin' the facts in order to tell stories,' writes Martin, 'theatre spins them right back in order to tell different stories' (14). A documentary play asks the attendant to be judge and jury and to examine evidence both as presence effect and as imagined document (the original transcription, recording, oral testimony, or memory). The attendant tries to determine whether the playwrights' intent and methodology is trustworthy (to the extent that it is transparent or implied). In documentary theatre, the 'archive' (the document) and the 'repertoire' (performance) are blurred (10). As Martin puts it, 'the hidden seams of documentary theatre raise questions about the continuum between documentation and simulation' (11).

¹⁰ I am suggesting here that the Canadian government is behaving like a business corporation in the sense of using news media outlets, as well as its own websites, to influence public discourse. It is, in effect, taking part in an advertising and public dissemination campaign intended to promote what it considers a need for exploitation of foreign workers—the need being that there is a demand for 'affordable' live-in-care that is not being supplied by the national work force; therefore a supply of 'affordable' foreign labour must be imported to meet this demand.

These are the seams that the attendant tries to unravel at the *documentive* end of the binary. While wrestling with the imagined document and the artists' methodology, she also becomes a co-creator of the representation by engaging with the material factors before her. To be sure, in the Yaletown scene both digital projection and living actor are materially present; each has a distinct presence effect. But the still image, composed as it is with accompanying text and having a lineage to both archival and advertising photography, has the quality of a document in a way that the live actors don't. Between this imagined document and the living actors there is a tremendous push-and-pull on the attendant. The projected textual information is meant to be understood as factual. The words spoken are verbatim testimony. And yet the genre is parody.

The use of parody violates one's sense of truth if psychological realism is the marker of moral integrity. Some non-Filipino attendants were offended by the parodic representation employed in the Yaletown scene. They let their displeasure be known in talkbacks and on survey forms. They complained that the couple was unfairly ridiculed. For them parody had no connection to truthful or ethical representation. On the other hand, many non-Filipinos, and all the Filipinos I heard from (general audience members, but also activists; many of whom were part of the creation process), saw it as an accurate reflection of the situation. Depending on the attendant's comfort with a given theatrical style, conventions associated with parody diminished the authenticity of the embodied document or conversely gave it greater authority.

Emergency Time

As the Yaletown scene progresses, two other subjects are intro-

duced. The comedic feel that has governed the live actor segments is interspersed with slide projections not only of Richard and Stephanie, but also of one of their children and of their domestic worker. The child, ostensibly the couple's son, first appears in a still image jumping on the couple's bed. The intent is to present pseudo-documentary evidence that will remind the audience of the couple's legitimate child care needs and that they are trying to find the best solution they can. The images of the child counter the satire: yes, the couple is unaware of their privilege but are they ultimately dismissible? The next image projected complicates things further: a domestic worker, Marlene, appears in the bedroom.¹¹ She is seen shooing the child off the bed and then standing alone staring out at the audience. A room presented as the couple's boudoir/playground, now becomes a workplace. For the couple, it represents family togetherness: the song *Waters of March* ends with the lyrics, 'It's the promise of Spring/ It's the joy in your heart' (Jobim). For the nanny, it represents loss.

The recurring image of Marlene reminds the attendants that what is unfolding before them in immediate time-space also represents another time-space, in which Marlene or another nanny is suffering the conditions of the Live-in Caregiver program. In fictional theatre that other time-space may have been selected for its allegorical or metaphorical value: that which is represented on stage is not currently occurring elsewhere (Hamlet is not currently contemplating suicide in Elsinore). When documentary theatre represents an issue that is current, and is a 'true' story, it claims an injustice is occurring somewhere else *right now*. Performance time is pressured by *emergency*-time. While watching the performance and oscillating between actual and documentive, assessing evidence as valid or invalid, ascrib-

¹¹ In the photo shoot for this scene Jocelyn, a domestic worker, stood in for Marlene.

ing or not ascribing authenticity to the embodied-document, the spectator must also begin to consider whether to act and how soon.

During the ten installations of *Nanay* the attendants learn that a third of the women who come to Canada as domestic workers through the Live-in Caregiver program have left their own children in the Philippines (Pratt *Circulating* 4). Many of the women, although well educated, get caught in a long-term cycle of low paying jobs (Pratt *Families* xix, 15). Marriages break up. Some of the women suffer abuse, including sexual abuse, at the hands of their employers. Filipino youth in the Canadian province of British Columbia, often the children of domestic workers, have a very high secondary school drop-out rate (Pratt *Families* 24). Emergency-time means these consequences are occurring elsewhere as the performance unfolds.

Conclusion

Documentary theatre, in whatever form, is never genre-free. Each performance trades on accepted performance conventions, either re-enforcing or destabilizing them. Psychological realism, surrealism, parody, and satire are all legitimate strategies of representing subjects and situations. The truth value of each depends on the attendant's familiarity with a given genre and whether she equates or does not equate the genre with truth or authenticity. Text may be verbatim but it is nevertheless subject to alterations of human embodiment in performance and whatever style of embodiment that goes with the performance of the text, including psychological realism as a genre. This logic can be extended to academic writing, in which each field has its own conventions, genres and sub-genres. During the creation of *Nanay* conflicts arose between social scientists and theatre art-

ists and scholars, as to how to represent the subjects and situations truthfully. The status of the transcription as authentic vs. the status of the embodied performance was debated. During a performance in which a verbatim transcript is only referenced, is at best an imagined document—is in other words *documentive*—the embodied performance, the *actual*, becomes the foregrounded 'meaning-maker' through material affect. Authenticity in a testimonial play depends on the extent to which the presence effects of a performance (i.e., the affects of human and nonhuman performative elements and their spatial relationships to one another, as well as their proximity and tangibility for the attendant) combine with meaning effects (i.e., how the attendant interprets the presence effects under pressure of emergency time to create, not the veracity of a document, but the affective tension of the documentive).

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