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Hong Kong, Canada: 
Playwriting as Critical Ethnography 

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For the past 4 years, the author has been conducting critical ethnographic fieldwork in a Canadian multilingual high school and thinking about the ways she might write up her findings. In an attempt to represent the experiences of those who participated in her study in a way that does not lead to the reproduction of the policies and practices of colonialism and racism she means to challenge, the author has experimented with the genre of playwriting. The piece contains an edited version of the author’s Hong Kong, Canada, a fictional but ethnographically informed play about some of the linguistic and social dilemmas facing immigrant youth and their Canadian-born classmates. A short explanation of why and how the script came to be written follows the play. A brief discussion of audience responses to the play concludes the article.

HONG KONG, CANADA

Setting 

Pierre Elliot Trudeau (P.E.T.) Secondary School, Toronto, Canada, fall 1996 

Set Description: A High School in Toronto, Canada

The front door to the school is upstage center. On the wall above the front door, there is a hand-painted banner on brown mailing article that says, “Welcome to Pierre Elliot Trudeau, the home of P.E.T. Tales.” The rest of the settings—the principal’s office, the school newspaper office, the cafeteria, and Wendy’s living room—appear and disappear as needed.

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Scene 1

(The house lights come down, a school bell rings, and the audience hears Rita make the following announcement)

Rita: Good morning, Pierre Elliot Trudeau Secondary School. This is Rita, your student council president, and that was your 5-minute warning bell.

(The lights come up on entire stage. Rita is standing in front of the old wooden desk in the principal’s office, stage right. On top of the desk is an intercom system. She is reading a school textbook while she waits for the second bell to ring.

Joshua and Wendy are sitting on the sofa in the newspaper office, center stage, looking at some photographs and laughing together. Joshua has his arm around Wendy’s shoulder.

The newspaper office also has an old wooden table and three wooden chairs. There are a small computer and printer on the wooden table and a large radio on a small coffee table beside the sofa.

Sarah walks through the front door and makes her way to the newspaper office. Hearing the laughter, she stops just outside the office, listens for a few seconds, then walks in.)

Sarah: (Brightly) Hi, Josh! (Coolly) Hello, Wendy. What’s so funny?

Joshua: Hey, Sarah. We’re just looking at the pictures Wendy took on our camping trip Labor Day weekend. They’re great! (Handing the photographs to Wendy) What’s up?

Sarah: (Perching on the sofa arm nearest Joshua) I just came by to give you a message from your Nana Naomi. I saw her the day before yesterday.

Joshua: You were in Montreal?

Sarah: Yeah, I was there for the High Holidays. My grandmother goes to the same synagogue as yours so I saw her at the service Wednesday morning. In fact, I sat right in front of her.

(Wendy gets off the couch, walks over to the table, and puts the photos away in her knapsack.)

Joshua: Cool. How did she look?

Sarah: Fabulous. She said to give you a big hug for her the next time I saw you, so stand up and let me give it you.

(Joshua laughs, stands up and lets Sarah give him a hug. She also gives him a quick kiss on the cheek, which he doesn’t expect.)

Sarah: The kiss is from me. See you later.

(Sarah walks out of the office and across to the English classroom. Wendy glares at her as she leaves.)
Joshua: Later.

(A second school bell rings. Rita turns on the microphone and makes a second announcement.)

Rita: Please stand for our national anthem and our thought for the day.

(A tape recording of “Oh Canada” comes on and everyone on stage stands at attention. Joshua walks over to where Wendy is standing and motions that he wants to see the photos again. Wendy reaches for her knapsack, rummages through, finds the photos, and gives them to Josh. She gives him a big smile, and they look at the photos together. The national anthem comes to an end.)

And here’s your thought for the day: “All we own, at least for the short time we have it, is our life. With it we write what we come to know of the world.” By writer Alice Walker. That’s all for now, Trudeau. Have a great day!

Scene 2

(Wendy sits down on one of the chairs. Joshua goes to sit down on the sofa. Sam walks over to the newspaper office and greets Joshua. After greeting Sam, Joshua turns on the radio and the tape-recorded voice of James Wolfe on CRAB is heard.)

Wolfe: Good morning, Toronto. It’s time for Talk Radio on CRAB AM. Today’s topic: “To Canada, with cash: Hong Kong money likes Toronto.” Over 20 years, almost 150,000 people from Hong Kong have moved here. They are changing the face of our city. What do you think, Toronto? Are they changing the city for the better? Or is our country turning into “Hong Kong, Canada”? Give us call at CRAB: 737-1111.

Sam: (Reaches over and turns off the radio) Hey, Joshua. Can we turn it off? That guy is really bugging me. And it’s going to get worse when the phone calls start coming in.

Joshua: I love this show. I love the phone calls. I love the controversy. Controversy sells ads, Sam. Controversy—

Wendy: (Interrupting) Sorry, Josh, but could we start the meeting? I can’t stay too long. I don’t have a spare like you guys.

Joshua: Sure, Wen, no problem. (Walking over to the table and taking a seat next to Wendy) Now that you’re here, we can start the meeting.

(Sam joins the others at the table)

OK, you guys, here’s the problem. “P.E.T. Tales” is in big trouble. The editorial team last year left us with a deficit, and Ms. Diamond says that the school has very little money to fund student activities because of the provincial budget cuts.

Sam: So if we are going to run any more papers after the first one, we’ve got to find a way to raise enough money to pay for the paper and pay off the deficit from last
year. Because the printer won’t publish our paper if we don’t pay up by the end of October so—

**Joshua:** *(Interrupting)* So we have a month to come up with the money and enough money to run a first paper.

**Sam:** How much do we owe?

**Wendy:** $1,000.

**Sam:** $1,000. That’s not too bad. We can try to increase the advertising we get from the business community. We just have to show advertisers that lots of people at our school read the paper.

**Wendy:** There’s no way we can prove that lots of people at school read our paper because they don’t. Hardly anyone reads the paper—wait a minute, what time is it? *(Looking at her watch)* I gotta go. See you later.

*(Wendy rushes out of the newspaper office)*

**Sam:** Maybe we should ask Ms. Diamond to ask the principal to lend us the money to run the paper until December. That will give us some time to increase our readership.

**Joshua:** I don’t want to wait until December to increase readership. I want to demonstrate increased readership with the very first issue.

**Sam:** Why the big rush?

**Joshua:** Applications for journalism school are due in November. I want to be able to talk about the way we saved the paper in that essay they make you write. You know, the essay about why they should offer you a place in their programs?

**Sam:** Yeah, I know. But Josh, building up readership takes a long time—

**Joshua:** *(Interrupting)* That’s why our first issue has to be controversial. I still think that’s what will get people reading the paper. Do you know how many people listen to James Wolfe on CRAB AM? Lots. Do you know why? Because he deals with controversial issues like—

**Sam:** *(Interrupting, sarcastically)* Like “To Canada, with Cash”? “Are we living in “Hong Kong, Canada”? C’mon, Josh. What kind of question is that? If that’s what it takes to attract readers, I don’t want to be part of it.

**Joshua:** You’re too sensitive. The guy is only asking a question—can’t we even ask questions any more?

**Sam:** Josh, questions like—

**Joshua:** *(Interrupting)* Questions on national policies? Like immigration? Have we become so politically correct that we can’t even ask questions?

**Sam:** You want to hear what kind of answers you get to those kinds of questions? Turn on the radio!

*(Joshua turns on the radio and the tape-recorded voice of James Wolfe is heard)*

**Wolfe:** Thank you very much. Do you have a comment to make about our topic?

**Caller:** I sure do, Jim. I have lived in Toronto all my life, Jim. My father was born here; my grandfather was born here. My grandfather fought in the First World War, and my father fought in the Second World War.

**Wolfe:** Yes, yes, can you get to your point? What’s your point today?
Caller: My point, Jim, is that I grew up speaking English. My father grew up speaking English. My grandfather grew up speaking English. Now when I get on the bus or the subway, all I hear is Chinese. And I can’t understand any of it. If people want to come to Canada, they should speak English. And that’s the trouble with people who come to Canada from Hong Kong. They just don’t learn to speak English. If they don’t want to speak English, then they should go back to where they came from, Jim.

(Sam turns off the radio)

Sam: That’s the kind of talk you get to those kind of questions, Josh. That’s the kind of talk you get. We don’t need that kind of talk in our school. We don’t need that kind of talk.

(Lights fade on newspaper office.)

Scene 3

(The stage is dark. The end of teacher band’s performance is heard. It is followed by the sound of people clapping and whistling. Spotlight up on Rita who is standing downstage center. Rita is wearing a tuxedo jacket and holding a microphone. The clapping fades.)

Rita: Let’s give one more big hand of applause for that last act, the smartest rock band around, P.E.T.’s very own teacher band, “The P.E.T. School Boys.”

(The sound of clapping and whistling is heard.)

Now, P.E.T., I want you to give a big warm welcome to a newcomer to Talent Night. This is her first time on the P.E.T. stage, and I know you are going to be impressed. She’s a terrific singer, and tonight she’s here to sing a song made popular by one of Hong Kong’s biggest pop stars, “the Hong Kong Diva, Faye Wong.”

(Less clapping and a little booing is heard and then fades when Rita, looking angry, puts up her hand for quiet.)

For those of you who haven’t heard of Faye Wong, she has millions of fans around the world. Here, to sing one of her most popular songs, is Trudeau’s own Carol Shen. Give it up for Carol, Trudeau!

(The sound of polite clapping is heard. Carol walks toward Rita from stage left, and Rita hands her the mike. Rita leaves the stage. Music from one of Faye Wong’s songs comes on and the clapping fades. Carol begins singing the song, which is in Cantonese. When Carol has sung eight bars, the music and lights fade.)
Scene 4

(As the lights come up on entire stage, Rita is standing by the intercom in the Principal’s office. Joshua is in the newspaper office standing at attention.)

Rita: And here’s your thought for the day, this fine Monday morning. “All serious daring starts from within.” By writer Eudora Welty. That’s all for now, Trudeau. Have a great day!

(In the newspaper office, Joshua is sitting on the sofa. He turns on the radio. The tape-recorded voice of James Wolfe is heard.)

Wolfe: Good morning, Toronto. It’s time for the James Wolfe Show on CRAB AM. Today’s topic “Living in Hong Kong, Canada: Part 2.”

(Sarah enters, stops at the door of the newspaper office, walks inside, and perches on the armrest beside him.)

Joshua: So whose class are you skipping?
Sarah: I’m not skipping. I’m just taking a little break. (Pauses) Hey… were you at the Talent Night on Friday? I didn’t see you there.
Joshua: No, I couldn’t make it. My cousins from Montreal were in for the weekend, and my mother wanted me home for dinner. How was it? I heard it was pretty good.
Sarah: Yeah. Some of it was good. Like, the teachers’ band, “P.E.T. School Boys,” they were good. And the dance numbers by the Jazz Dance class were great. But there were so many people who sang songs in Chinese and you couldn’t understand a word of them. And all the people who do understand Chinese—most of our school—went crazy. Clapping, whistling. But, like, if you didn’t understand any of the words, it was boring. It made me mad.
Joshua: What made you mad?
Sarah: All those songs in Chinese. This isn’t Hong Kong. This is Canada. In Canada, people should sing in English. You know what I mean? And I’m not the only one who was mad. Some of the girls from Iran were mad too. Nobody performed in Persian. So how come so many people performed in Chinese?
Joshua: (Getting excited) Yeah, Sarah, I know what you mean. It’s like all those Chinese signs in Chinese Shopping Malls. That topic came up on Jim Wolfe’s program on CRAB. Should people be allowed to build Chinese shopping malls? Does it matter that people who don’t speak or read Chinese can’t find what they’re looking for? Should people who are not Chinese be concerned?
Sarah: Exactly. (Looking at her watch) Well, I better get back to class.
Joshua: (Really excited) Sarah, why don’t you write an article for the paper about this? Like, a piece for the “In My Opinion” column.
Sarah: I don’t know Josh. I’m pretty busy. I’m not doing so great in calculus and we have another quiz at the end of the week. I really need to work on my math this week.
Joshua: Sarah, it won’t take long. And it will make you feel better. We need to talk about issues like this in our school. It doesn’t have to be long.
Sarah: Well, OK. I’ll think about it. No promises, but I’ll think about it.
Joshua: Great, Sarah. You love to write. And you write so well. I remember you wrote some great pieces last year. *(A little flirtatiously)* I’ll call you tonight, and we’ll talk about it some more.
Sarah: *(Slightly more interested)* Yeah, call me tonight, and we’ll talk about it some more.

*(Lights fade on the newspaper office.)*

**Scene 5**

*(Lights come up on the newspaper office. Wendy is sitting at the table eating her lunch. Josh is scribbling in a notebook.)*

Wendy: So did you know that Rita and Sam are going out?
Joshua: *(Looking up at Wendy, but not listening)* What?
Wendy: Rita and Sam are going out with each other. They met this summer working at McDonald’s, and now they’re going out.
Joshua: *(Still not listening)* Really? Hey, Wen….I have a great idea for an editorial for our first issue. It’s called, “Multiculturalism: Too Much of a Good Thing?”
Wendy: Too much of a good thing?
Joshua: Yeah. It’s about Talent Night on Friday.
Wendy: Talent Night?

*(Sam walks into the newspaper office and sits down on the couch.)*

Joshua: Yeah. *(Greeting Sam)* Hey, Sam. Listen to this. Both of you.

*(Reading from his notebook)*

“On stage was a good-looking Oriental girl singing a song in Chinese. Now some people might have looked at this and thought, ‘Wow, what a great way to promote multiculturalism. A multilingual event is a great idea.’ However, the problem was that P.E.T’s Talent Night was not multilingual, nor was it multicultural. Songs were available only in English and in Chinese. Is this fair to the rest of P.E.T. students and cultures?”
Wendy: You want to write an editorial about how singing in Chinese is a problem?
Joshua: Yeah. Just listen. I’m not finished. *(Reading)* “If Chinese songs were performed, then songs from all of our diverse cultures should have been performed. And if it was not possible to perform songs in each and every language, then only English songs should have been performed.”
Wendy: Only English songs?
Sam: *(Standing up and walking to the table)* *(With an edge in his voice)* Why only English songs, Joshua?
Joshua: *(A little defensively)* Because this is Canada. In Canada, we speak English. English is the official language of our school.
Sam: *Getting angry* When I walk down the halls, I hear a lot of different languages. I don’t only hear English. The Iranian guys speak Farsi. Some of the East Indian guys speak Urdu. English is not the only language people speak at this school.

Joshua: *Also getting angry* Well, I heard that a lot of people were angry after Talent Night. They thought that Talent Night violated cultural equity.

Sam: I don’t believe this.

Joshua: Believe it, Sam. I’ve found our controversy. The first issue of our paper is going to be hot. Everybody will want to read it!

*(Wendy gets up and paces around the room.)*

Sam: But Joshua, what about—

Joshua: *(Interrupting)* I’ve already talked to Sarah about writing an opinion column about her personal reaction to Talent Night and Wendy—*Realizing that she's not where he thought she was* Wen?

Wendy: *(Quietly)* Yes?

Joshua: What I’d like you to do is write your own opinion column about the language controversy at P.E.T.

Sam: Language controversy at P.E.T.? We don’t have a language controversy at P.E.T.

Joshua: We do now. And it’s going to save our paper. Wendy, do you know what would be really cool? If you wrote about your own decision to only speak English. So you could get better and better at it.

Sam: *(Looking at Wendy in surprise)* You don’t speak in Cantonese? Ever?

Wendy: *(Ignoring Sam, speaking to Joshua)* You want me to write about myself?

Joshua: Yeah. Your column would give a personal, human touch to the controversy. Sam: Joshua, there’s no humanity in starting a controversy about using Cantonese at school. Do you know what’s going to happen?

Joshua: Yeah. I know what’s going to happen. We’re going to sell lots and lots of newspapers. *(Speaking very quickly)* I gotta go now. I need to see if I can find Sarah. I want to talk to her about her column. It’s already Wednesday, and we need her to finish her piece by Friday afternoon, so you and Sam can include it in the layout Friday night.

Sam: *(To Wendy)* Just you and I are working Friday night? *(To Joshua)* Where are you going to be?

Joshua: At a family Bat Mitzvah. I’ve got to be there. I have no choice. But I know you both can manage without me. It’ll give Wendy some experience in making editorial decisions. I’ll call her after the service and see how you made out. I need to go now. See you later, Wendy. Think about that column!

*(Joshua leaves the newspaper office.)*

Sam: *(In Cantonese)* [This is a big mistake.]

Wendy: *(In English)* Maybe it is, maybe it’s not. We won’t know if it’s a mistake until we try.

Sam: *(In Cantonese)* [How can you be so naive. Of course, it’s a mistake. And why don’t you speak to me in Cantonese?]
Wendy: (In English) I’m not naive. I just don’t agree that this is a mistake. And the reason I don’t speak to you in Cantonese is because I always speak to you in English.

Sam: (In English) You always speak to me in English because Joshua is always around, and you don’t want him to feel left out of the conversation. OK, I can understand that. But right now, it’s just us. Speak to me in Cantonese.

Wendy: We’re in school. In school, I speak English.

Sam: Always?

Wendy: Always.

Sam: Why?

Wendy: To practice.

Sam: To practice. So are you going to write this column for Joshua?

Wendy: Yes.

Sam: But Wendy, don’t you see the danger of saying in school everybody should only speak English? You don’t have the right to make it difficult for people to speak their own language in school.

Wendy: I’m not going to say “everybody should only speak English.” I am going to say, “In school (emphasizing), I only speak English.”

Sam: But Wendy, you’re Chinese. If you say, “In school, I only speak English,” people who think that (emphasizing) everybody should only speak English will use what you say to hurt people who want to speak their own language. They’ll say, “Even Chinese people think they should only speak English.”

Wendy: I don’t plan to speak for all people. I plan to speak for myself.

Sam: It’s not possible to speak only for yourself. How many other Chinese students from Hong Kong write for the paper? How many other Chinese students can give another point of view? How many?

Wendy: (Is silent)

Sam: (Getting angry) None. That’s how many. None.

Wendy: (Remains silent)

Sam: (Getting angrier) Do you know what I think? I think that this is more about making Josh happy than it is about you wanting to write about speaking English.

Wendy: (Remains silent)

Sam: (Very angry) Do you know what else I think? I think you want to act White. You only speak English so you can act White. You need to act White to be Joshua’s girlfriend. There’s no room in Joshua’s life for a Chinese girlfriend who speaks Cantonese.

Wendy: (Quietly) That’s enough. I don’t want to talk about this anymore.


Wendy: (Visibly upset) Stop it. Stop it right now. These are awful things you are saying. I won’t listen to this.

(Wendy walks out of the office and off stage. Lights fade on newspaper office.)
Scene 6

(Lights come up on the newspaper office where Wendy and Sam are working on the large table, laying out the newspaper.)

Wendy: OK. So we have Josh’s editorial on page 2 and Sarah’s piece, “I am Canadian and I speak English,” on page 3. I’m thinking of putting my own column on the same page as Sarah’s piece. What do you think?

Sam: What’s the headline on your column? “I am Chinese but I speak English”?

Wendy: Very funny. I’ve decided to call my new weekly column “On My Mind” and this particular piece “Choices.”

Sam: “Choices.” Okay. Put it on the same page as Sarah’s piece.

Wendy: Fine. So how many ads were you able to sell for our first issue?

Sam: Ten.

Wendy: Ten? Wow! That’s pretty good! How did you manage to sell 10 ads?

Sam: I expanded our client base.

Wendy: Yeah? Who are our new clients?

Sam: People who want to advertise their tutoring services to Hong Kong students at P.E.T.

Wendy: Really. Are the ads ready to be printed?

Sam: Yeah. They are all on the computer. Here’s a hard copy for you to look at.

(Sam hands Wendy several pieces of paper with the ads on them.)

Wendy: (Anxiously) Sam. These ads are all in Chinese.

Sam: (Grinning) I know. That’s what our clients wanted. It’s a changing market. Our new clients are willing to pay us $50 for a Chinese ad that’s geared to Chinese students. I’ve never been able to sell 10 ads before. Isn’t it great?

Wendy: (Very anxiously) Sam, if we publish these ads, then we’ll have a Chinese ad on the same page as Sarah’s piece, “I am Canadian and I speak English.”

Sam: Right. It’s all about “Choices” isn’t it? Choosing to speak English, choosing to advertise in Chinese.

Wendy: Sam, publishing those ads is going to create a problem for Josh. Sarah will be angry. Maybe others will be too.

Sam: Wendy, not publishing those ads is going to create a problem. We made $500 on those ads. We can’t afford not to publish them if we want “P.E.T. Tales” to survive.

Wendy: We should speak to Josh about this.

Sam: Wendy, the copy shop closes in an hour. We won’t make our deadline if we wait to ask Joshua what he thinks. You’re the assistant editor. You make the decision.

Wendy: I can’t make such a big decision, Sam. I’m not the editor. This whole issue was Josh’s idea. I’m sure he’ll call soon. We’ll ask him what he thinks and then bring the paper to the copy shop.

(Wendy starts pacing.)
Sam: Wendy, Joshua is out with his family this evening. He’s not going to call before the copy shop closes. If you want to be editor of the paper next year, you have to learn to make tough decisions. We don’t have enough time to wait for Joshua to call. In absence of the editor, the assistant editor makes decisions. Are you going to pull the Chinese ads because Sarah doesn’t like to hear Chinese at school? Or are you going to give our advertisers the right to choose what language they want to advertise in? Make a decision, Wendy. Make a decision.

(There is silence on the stage while Wendy keeps pacing for a few minutes)

Wendy: (Stops pacing and take a deep breath) All right. We’ll print the ads. Let’s finish the layout and bring it over to the copy shop.

(Lights fade.)

Scene 7

(At the Bat Mitzvah. Klezmer music is playing. Joshua and Nana Naomi are sitting side by side at a round table with a white tablecloth located downstage center. Nana Naomi is dressed in a classic suit and is wearing red lipstick. The music comes to an end. Nana begins to speak.)

Nana: (With a slight Yiddish intonation) So Josh, tell me, how are you doing?
Joshua: Not bad, Nana, not bad.
Nana: How’s the newspaper work going? You were telling me something about a language controversy at your school?
Joshua: (Excitedly) Yes. The kids from Hong Kong? They usually speak Cantonese with each other. Not only outside school, Nana, inside school too. Even though lots of them know how to speak English. And lots of people who don’t speak Cantonese feel left out. They don’t understand what’s going on. And they think that since we are living Canada, everyone should speak English.
Nana: (Reminiscent) You know, when I was growing up, Yiddish was Montreal’s third language.
Joshua: (Surprised) Yiddish?
Nana: Yes, Yiddish. You’d hear it everywhere. There was even a daily Yiddish newspaper in Montreal. Yiddish theater, too. I remember we saw a Yiddish play at His Majesty’s Theatre when I was a teenager. But in school, we’d always use English. We were embarrassed to use Yiddish. It was a language from the “old country.” We didn’t want the teachers to think we weren’t real Canadians who couldn’t speak English. (Admiringly) It’s amazing to me that the students in your school are not embarrassed to speak Cantonese.
Joshua: (Confused) Nana, you admire people who speak Cantonese in an English school?
Nana: (With conviction) I think it’s admirable not to be embarrassed about speaking your first language in school. You don’t have to give up your own language
learn English. You know, I remember my mother telling me that in the 1920s, when her older cousins were going to school, the downtown Jews tried to get the government to create a tax-supported public Jewish school system. Do you know who fought them the most?

**Joshua:** The government who didn’t want to spend the money?

**Nana:** No. By 1930, the Quebec government was actually prepared to give the community their separate school system.

**Joshua:** Wow. The non-Jews who didn’t want a Jewish school system?

**Nana:** No. Not the non-Jews.

**Joshua:** Then, who?

**Nana:** The uptown Jews, the more established ones. One uptown rabbi said that the Yiddishists, the people who wanted a separate school system, were “the worst enemies of their country.” The uptown Jews thought that a Jewish school system would bring back old country ignorance and superstition. Yiddish and the old country embarrassed them, and they didn’t want to call attention to themselves. They were afraid of being persecuted for being different as they had been in the past. They wanted to fit in, to be thought of as real Canadians. But, tell me, Joshua, who decided real Canadians speak English? You know, if a separate Jewish school system had been developed, your father would have spoken and read Yiddish. You and your sister would have learned Yiddish. The language wouldn’t have been lost.

(Lights fade.)

**Scene 8**

(Wendy’s living room, downstage right. As the lights come up, Wendy is rereading the paper she and Sam have just published. The television is on low and is tuned to a program that features Jackie Cheung singing in Cantonese. Wendy is pacing while she is reading, her body unconsciously swinging slightly to the music. There is a loud knock at the door. Wendy jumps at the sound, mutes the sound of the television, and goes to answer the door.)

**Wendy:** (Speaking quickly, nervously) Hi, Josh. Come in. How are you? How was the service? How did your cousin do? Was he nervous? Come sit down.

**Joshua:** (Laughing on his way to the sofa) Hey, slow down, Wen. You must be buzzing from the layout session. How did everything go?

**Joshua sits down on the sofa**

**Wendy:** (Pacing, breathing deeply, trying to relax) Fine. Everything went well. The paper is in the copy shop. They'll deliver it first thing Monday morning.

**Joshua:** So how does it look?

**Wendy:** It looks great.

**Joshua:** Well, what about the opinion page? What does that look like?

**Wendy:** The opinion page? (Pauses, continues to pace)

**Joshua:** (Getting a little edgy) Yeah. The opinion page.
Wendy: Well, it has your editorial on Talent Night, Sarah’s piece on speaking English, my new column, and some ads.

Joshua: How many ads?

Wendy: ( Stops pacing) Three on the opinion page. Sam managed to sell 10 ads in all. (Speaking quickly) Isn’t that great? Ten ads, Josh. We made $500 on the first issue. That’s half of our debt paid off. ( Pauses and continues pacing again)

Joshua: (Getting a little more edgy) Ten ads?! Who bought them?

Wendy: ( Stops pacing, takes another deep breath) Sam sold all 10 ads to people who want to tutor students at P.E.T. Chinese students at P.E.T. The (hesitating) interesting thing about the ads is that the clients sent them to us in Chinese.

Joshua: (In disbelief) Chinese? Why did they send them in Chinese? Did you translate them into English?

Wendy: (Quietly) No, Josh, I didn’t translate them. We published them exactly as we received them. In Chinese.

(There is a long pause where neither speaks.)

Joshua: (Speaking slowly, deliberately, trying to contain his anger) So that means that there are three Chinese ads under my article on multiculturalism and Sarah’s article on speaking English. (Voice rising in anger, getting up from the sofa) Do you realize what you’ve done? You’ve contradicted everything that Sarah and I wrote. You’ve made us look stupid. I can’t believe that you published the ads in Chinese without consulting me! What were you thinking?

Wendy: (Voice rising in anger) Well, I’m sorry you’re so upset. And I’m sorry for not discussing this with you. But Joshua, you weren’t around. And we had a deadline. If I had translated the ads, then Sam would have lost the business of his Chinese clients. We made $500 tonight.

Joshua: (Bitterly, walking towards the door) There are some things that are more important than money, Wendy. You made me look stupid tonight. You should have talked to me before printing the ads.

Wendy: (Anxiously) Josh, don’t leave yet. It was not my intention to make you look stupid. But without the money from Sam’s ads, we have no paper. You know that as well as I do. I had no choice. (A little bitterly) Just like you had no choice not to invite me to the Bat Mitzvah.

Joshua: (Unlocking the door, turning to face Wendy) You did have a choice, Wendy. You could have waited to talk to me and have the paper come out a couple of days late. The two situations are completely different.

Wendy: (Voice rising in anger) Are they, Joshua? Are the two situations really so different? You spend most of the weekend here, but you can’t invite me home for dinner. You sleep with me and we make plans to go to university together, but you can’t introduce me to your family. You bring me a sculpture that your grandmother made called “Second Family,” but you tell me she can’t come for tea. You say you have no choice, Josh. But you do have choices. We all have choices. Rebecca Steinberg is going out with Kevin Kim. You could choose to talk to your mother about us. But you choose not because you are afraid. At least I wasn’t afraid to make a difficult choice, Josh. At least I wasn’t afraid.

(There is a pause where Wendy and Joshua look at each other without saying anything.)
Joshua: (Opening the door) I need to go now. It’s late.
Wendy: (Quietly) OK. Will you give me a call tomorrow? We need to talk about this some more.
Joshua: I don’t know. I’ll be pretty busy with my family.
Wendy: (Pauses) Right. Well (turning her back on him), good night.
Joshua: Good night.

(Joshua leaves the apartment. Wendy closes the door, takes the remote control, and presses the mute button so that the sound of the Cantonese variety show is heard once again. Then she presses the button again so the sound is turned off. She turns the sound back on, back off, back on, back off. Lights fade slowly until all the audience can see is the blue light of television lighting up the stage.)

Scene 9

(The stage is dark. Lights up on Wendy and Sam, who is carrying a table with some newspapers on it downstage center, and on the principal’s office, where Rita is making the lunchtime announcements. Sam leaves to get more papers, and Wendy sets up the table with the papers they have already brought in. She sticks up a sign with the name of the paper, P.E.T. Tales, on the front of the table. When Sam returns with more papers, he helps Wendy set up.)

Rita: Good afternoon, Pierre Elliot Trudeau. This is Rita, your student council president, and it’s time for your Monday lunchtime announcements. At the top of the list is a reminder to buy the first issue of P.E.T. Tales. It’s on sale in front of the cafeteria. Your support of the paper is important. Without it, the paper may fold. Buy your copy today.

(Lights fade on Rita and focus solely on Sam and Wendy. Rita leaves the stage.)

Sam: So have you seen Joshua today? Is he angry about the ads?
Wendy: No, not since Friday night. And yes, he’s angry. The ads contradict his editorial, and he thinks we’ve made him look stupid.
Sam: But the whole point of publishing a controversial issue of the paper was to increase readership so we could get more ads. Now we’ve got ads. Isn’t he happy about that?
Wendy: I guess it’s not only about getting more ads anymore. It’s about his editorial being taken seriously. He sees himself as a serious writer.
Sam: Well, if he seriously believes that Carol’s performance at Talent Night is a problem and that the multiculturalism we have at this school is “too much of a good thing,” then I think you have a problem. You are going out with someone who doesn’t like to hear your language.
Wendy: (To audience) Yeah, I have a problem.

(Sarah walks onto the stage and approaches the table. She is holding a copy of the paper in her hands and looks angry.)
Sam: (Seeing Sarah approach) Now, this should be interesting.
Sarah: (Angrily) Have either of you seen Josh?
Wendy: No, not today.
Sam: (Brightly) Is there something we can help you with?
Sarah: Whose idea was it to publish ads in Chinese? Right under my article on speaking English? Were you trying to make me look stupid? Make fun of my argument?
Sam: (Calmly) It had nothing to do with your article. It had to do with selling as many ads as possible so we could clear the debt we inherited from last year. In case you haven’t noticed, there are a lot of Chinese students at this school, and we have advertisers who want to reach them.
Sarah: Well, as someone who doesn’t understand Chinese, I was appalled to see that most of the ads in the paper were in Chinese! What if I am interested in what is being advertised? I’m left out because I can’t read Chinese. Any ad that is put into the paper is meant for everyone in this school. The only language that everyone understands in this school is English.
Wendy: Sarah, the ads are advertising tutorial services by tutors who can work with people in Cantonese.
Sarah: I don’t care what the ads are advertising. When I open any issue of my school’s newspaper, I want to be able to read every single word in it. If the paper were meant to be written in Chinese, we would find it in a school in the Orient.
Sam: (Staring hard at Sarah) The paper wasn’t written in Chinese. It was written in English. Only the ads were written in Chinese. Advertisers pay for the space, and as long as they stay within the limits of the law and the policies of the School Board, they can use the space in whatever way they want to.
Sarah: (Staring back at Sam) Well (Pauses, speaking slowly, emphasizing each phrase), what we need, then, is a school policy that says the only language people can use in this school is English. (Speaking at a normal speed) I’m going to start a petition and lobby the principal for an English-only policy. We’ll see how people in this school really feel about all the Chinese that’s spoken here.

(Sarah walks off the stage. Wendy and Sam are silent for a few seconds.)

Sam: You know, when I read Sarah’s article after you left Friday night, I got very angry. So angry that I wanted to hit someone. I wanted to throw one of the chairs against the wall. I wanted to trash the newspaper office. After I dropped off the paper at the copy shop, I went for a long walk. I walked and walked and walked. After a while I felt better. Despite everything. Now I feel even worse than I did Friday night. It was a mistake to come to Canada. A mistake to come to this school. The people here don’t want us. We don’t belong. We don’t speak English. We aren’t White. People resent our language. They resent us. They make fun of our accents when we speak English and then are annoyed and angry when we speak Cantonese. Sometimes I hate it here and wish we had never come. Sometimes I think I will never feel comfortable here. Sometimes I think the best thing for me and my whole family would to be return to Hong Kong.

(Wendy reaches out to touch Sam’s arm in sympathy. He shakes it off and storms down the hallway passing Dorothy who is on her way to talk to Wendy.)
Wendy: (Upset, but trying to composing herself) Hi Dorothy. How’s it going?
Dorothy: Not good. I am very upset. This article on speaking English. I can read between the lines. Would there have been such a fuss if the advertisements were in Hindi? Korean? (Pause) Hebrew? I thought Canada was a free country, not a dictatorship. I am really mad. I am offended.

(Blackout.)

Scene 10

(As the lights come up on entire stage, Rita is standing by the intercom in the principal’s office. Joshua and Sarah are in the newspaper office. Wendy and Sam are selling papers at their table downstage center.)

Rita: And here’s a special announcement. Ms. Diamond will be conducting a school hearing on the question of whether we need an English-only policy at Trudeau. This school hearing has been assembled in response to a recent petition signed by a number of students.

(In the newspaper office, Sarah has a determined look on her face while Joshua looks uncomfortable. At the table selling newspapers, both Wendy and Sam look grim.)

Students who have an opinion they wish to share with Ms. Diamond and other students and teachers should report to Room 125 after school today. Now here’s your thought for the day. It’s by writer Gloria Anzaldúa: “If you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself.”

(Sarah reacts with anger, Joshua with embarrassment, and Wendy and Sam with grateful surprise.)

That’s all for now, Trudeau. Have a good day.²

NOTES OF A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHER AND TEACHER EDUCATOR³

Thirteen Short Reasons Why I Write Ethnographic Plays

1. Writing up ethnographic data in the form of a play (in which the conflicts are real, verbatim transcription is often used, but the characters and plot are fictional) reminds us that ethnographers invent rather than represent ethnographic truths. We write “true fictions” (Clifford, 1986). Ethnography is an interpretative, subjective, value-laden project.
2. Dialogue in playwriting is not conversation as we know it in our lives—it is the “action of the play” (George, 1994, p. xv). The artificiality of playwriting challenges the “ethnographic authority” of realist writing (Clifford, 1983).

3. The performance of my playwriting challenges fixed, unchanging ethnographic representations of the research subjects. Historically, such representations in realist ethnographic texts have contributed to the construction of our destructive ideas of Other people (e.g., Said, 1978; L. T. Smith, 1997). Performed ethnography allows for changes in lines, acting, intonation, lighting, blocking, and stage design (Kondo, 1995, p. 51). These changes can shape or even transform meaning of the ethnographic text each time it is performed. For example, we have learned that an actor who plays Joshua Greenberg as confused and uncertain rather than confident and cocky resists representing the character as self-serving and inconsiderate of others (a representation that plays into existing stereotypes about White North American Jews). Instead, he becomes a character whose own assimilated, monolingual upbringing has not prepared him to understand the complexities of living a bilingual life as a newcomer to Canada, which is the way I had imagined him.

4. Plays give opportunities to Other actors who, in performing the play, can enact and enlarge the identities of the characters that have been created by me. Asian American anthropologist/playwright Dorinne Kondo (1995) wrote, “The live aspect of theater is critical. Live performance not only constitutes a site where our identities can be enacted, it also opens up entire realms of cultural possibility” (p. 50). When asked why he auditioned for the role of Sam, Korean Canadian John Kim told me that when he read the script for the first time, he realized that it involved “acting with a message.” Such work felt rewarding to him as an actor and a Christian. John also said that he could personally relate to Sam’s experience of being an immigrant who had experienced a lot of discrimination. When asked what issue stood out for him when he first read the play, John said it was the stereotype that all Chinese people speak Chinese instead of English and that they are inconsiderate of people who don’t speak Chinese: “I know that they are not inconsiderate. They speak Cantonese because it’s part of their culture. I go to a school with a lot of Chinese speakers, and I hear some complaining from non-Chinese speakers. They crack jokes. They don’t intend to be hostile, but the jokes are hurtful. They encourage desensitization.” In the play Sam talks back to the complaints, and John said he admired Sam’s confidence: “Sam stands up for what he believes in, and this is important for me as I formulate my own identity.”

5. Plays allow the subjects of my research and Other people to view a performance of my ethnographic work and ratify or critique its analysis. I can keep rewriting and performing in response to Other people’s responses. This provides my work with internal (Lincoln, 1997) or face (Lather, 1986) validity.

One important response I received early on was to make the character of Sarah (the character who begins the petition for an English-only language policy at school) more vulnerable so that she would not be represented as a self-interested, “bitchy” Jew. Luba Danov, cast for Sarah’s role in the premiere production of the play, was chosen precisely for the vulnerability she brought to her reading. As a recent immigrant from Russia and Israel who had learned English as a second language, Luba told me that she had a personal understanding of the language dilemmas students such as Wendy, Carol, and Sam faced. At school, she
mostly hung out with other students from Russia and spoke Russian with them in the same way that Sam and Carol spoke Cantonese with their friends. However, she was also able to personally relate to Sarah’s feelings and point of view because she knew what it was like to feel left out. She thought of herself as a loner at school and said that she found it hard to make friends. Able to identify with Sarah’s feelings of exclusion yet also able to see the world from Wendy, Carol, and Sam’s point of view, Luba was able to play Sarah in a way that could elicit sympathy from the audience.

6. I want my ethnographic writing to engage teachers in critical analysis and practice. I know that meaningful school change requires their participation (Glesne, 1998) and that my ethnographic findings and analyses needed to speak to teachers rather than at them (Ellesworth, 1994).

7. Performed ethnography provides me with a way to present multicultural issues from a variety of student views. My characters/subjects’ voices are able to “mingle in polyphonic conversation” (Finley & Knowles, 1995).

8. Performed ethnography offers opportunities for both comment and speechlessness (Diamond & Mullen, 1999). Finding a way to represent silence in ethnographic writing is difficult. Yet, there were many students in my study whose silence at school needed to be heard.

9. Playwriting allows me to “breathe life into data.” The characters in my play show the “blending of personal and organizational life” that takes place during schooling (Finley, 1998).

10. Writing ethnographic plays allows my students and me to imagine and write what could be as well as what is (Fine, 1994). Hong Kong, Canada deliberately ends with an unresolved conflict. In the last scene of the full script, Ms. Diamond responds to Sarah’s petition for a schoolwide English-only policy by leading a school hearing around the difficult issues of linguistic exclusion, assimilation, and discrimination. The hearing ends with Ms. Diamond telling the students that she will give the principal and vice principals a report on the hearing so that they can make a decision about a school language policy. This open ending provides my students and me with a space to write a final scene and imagine what teachers and administrators might do to resolve the conflict at schools such as Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

11. Art is a part of us (Diamond & Mullen, 1999). I have wanted to write plays for a very long time. In Year 2 of the research study (1997-1998), the graduate students in my Critical Ethnography course and I discussed a variety of academic responses to postmodern and postcolonial critiques of “realist” ethnographic texts. I found myself particularly drawn to ethnographer Kondo’s (1995) work on theater and representation. The following summer, my research team and I conducted a 6-week summer playwriting workshop for 15 students we had been observing and interviewing during the past year. The goal of the workshop was to provide the students, most of whom did not use English as a first language, with an opportunity to develop their English language skills and write their own ethnographies through the genre of playwriting. Eight months after the student playwriting workshop, I enrolled in two 10-week online playwriting classes that were run by a creative writing program in New York City. The results included the first draft of Hong Kong, Canada.

12. Performed ethnography has the power to reach larger audiences outside my classroom and encourage public reflexive insight (Barone, Eisner, & Finley,
2000; Mienczakowski, 1997) into the experiences of schooling in multilingual/multiracial communities.

13. When I am very lucky, the audiences and performers of my performed ethnography leave the room or the auditorium changed in some way (Mienczakowski, 1997). Sometimes students tell me that the work we have done with Hong Kong, Canada has helped them question or rethink their own teaching practices. It is at these moments I know that the play has been persuasive and has facilitated questioning of social reality (Lincoln, 1993). The potential of performed ethnography to support critical teacher education seems particularly rich.

**Audience Responses**

*Hong Kong, Canada* has had several different audiences and has been given a number of different readings and performances. Feedback from all the readings and performances has informed the writing of the latest draft of the play.

The first “rehearsed reading” (similar to the readers theater work described by Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995) was performed by a group of preservice teacher education students enrolled in my “Minority Students and Equity in Education” course at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) (December 8, 1999). Tammy Chan (M.A., drama, University of Toronto), who had been a research assistant on the project, directed this first rehearsed reading. Four scenes from the play were dramatically performed by a group of preservice drama education students on February 19, 2000. Graduate students in my Critical Ethnography course undertook a second readers theatre performance (March 6, 2000).

The three groups of students who worked with *Hong Kong, Canada* took the play up in different ways. The preservice education students in my Equity in Education class were interested in discussing the ways the play reflected their own experiences, both as students and teachers, at school. This talk evolved into a discussion of their work as future teachers in multilingual, multiracial schools.

The preservice drama education students who saw a performance of only four scenes of the play were interested in discussing the ways they thought the play might reproduce stereotypes of Other people. In particular, the discussion centered on my representations of the Jewish characters and, as discussed earlier, the need to make the character of Sarah more sympathetic.

One of the risks associated with writing and performing ethnographic plays about students and teachers in multilingual, multicultural, multiracial schools is the risk of creating caricatures or reproducing stereotypes. In reflecting about this issue in her own work, playwright and actor Anna Deavere Smith (1993, p. xxxvii) writes that whereas some questions about stereotypes are, indeed, judgements about writing and performance, they are also indications of the audience’s uneasiness in seeing difference displayed on stage. Because we are uneasy about hearing and seeing difference and
because there is genuine risk of reproducing stereotypes in performed ethnography, postplay discussions are very important to performances of *Hong Kong, Canada*.

The third group of students to work with the play was a group of graduate students interested in critical ethnographic research. Once again, we worked with the play in a readers theater format. At my request, we focused on the questions of whether my representation of “Other people’s children” (Delpit, 1995) reproduced stereotypes and, if so, if those stereotypes work against the critical intention of the play. Because it is impossible to capture the complexity of the rich talk that took place in this brief piece, I offer, once again, a sample of our discussion. Andrew Allan, a teacher educator at York University in Toronto, said that he saw the play as a form of resistance drama where the oppressed characters named and located their own oppression. Characters were depicted as getting angry at their condition based on injustice and actively sought productive ways of bringing about change. By moving beyond the use of only safe minority heroes and heroines—those who avoid serious conflicts with the majority establishment—the play provided insights into the lifestyles and circumstances of the minority group members. Andrew felt that such representations worked in favor of the critical, catalytic (Lather, 1986) goals of the play. Andrew did have “lingering questions,” however, which had to do with presenting the play to minority audiences in our teacher education classes: “How do we deal with minority participants who find it painful to have to role play or act out roles of subordination or oppression in a school context? Does playing roles that are reflective of their real lives further marginalize them?” These are provocative questions that need to be kept at the forefront of my future work with *Hong Kong, Canada*.

In addition to performing the play with and for students at OISE/UT, a reading and scene performance was organized for OISE/UT’s annual Future Teachers’ Club Conference (April 7, 2000). Additional feedback was also elicited from other students and teachers working in the school in which the research took place. Like the first group of preservice students I worked with, the students and teachers in these last two sessions were interested in discussing the ways the play reflected their own experiences.

*Hong Kong, Canada* premiered on July 20 and July 22, 2000, at the University of Toronto’s Robert Gill Theatre for an audience of educators taking summer courses at OISE/UT and the general public. It was coproduced by Student Services at OISE/UT and a new theater company Tammy Chan and I founded named “Untamed Tongues.”

In the introduction to her book *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, a compilation of some of the material she had collected for her one-woman performance piece about the civil disturbances in Los Angeles in April 1992, A. D. Smith (1994) describes her work as a document of “what an actress heard in Los Angeles” (p. xxiv). Whereas audiences often look for solutions to social problems in
her social drama work, A. D. Smith argues that she is looking at the processes of the problems.

Acting is a constant process of becoming something. It is not a result, it is not an answer. It is not a solution. I am first looking for the humanness inside the problems, or the crises. The spoken work is evidence of the humanness. Perhaps the solutions come somewhere further down the road. (p. xxiv)

A. D. Smith performed *Twilight* in Los Angeles when the community had not yet resolved the problems. She wanted to be part of their examination of the problems. Like Smith’s work, *Hong Kong, Canada* is about examining the processes of linguistic dilemmas and provoking insight into how conflicts in multilingual, multicultural, multiracial schools develop. The solutions to these conflicts come later, in the work that teachers and students undertake in response to the issues that emerge in their own schools.

**But Whose Story Is It?**

I have argued that playwriting allows for the possibility of facilitating rather than appropriating the telling of Other people’s truths in the service of antiracist education. However, there will be readers who will ask whether a White, Canadian-born ethnographer should be telling the story of *Hong Kong, Canada*. What do I personally know about the dilemmas of immigrant students of color? What is it that I can not see and hear during fieldwork as a result of my White, third generation EuroCanadian background? These are important questions and ones that I have been struggling with throughout the research project. As A. D. Smith (1993) wrote, there is a tension in American society around race and identity that revolves, in part, around questions such as who can ask questions of whom, who can speak for whom, and who listens.

In responding to the question of whether the story of *Hong Kong, Canada* is my story to tell, I can begin by discussing the title of my play, which comes from the title of a 1996 newspaper feature on recent immigration to Toronto from Hong Kong. The words of the title, “Hong Kong, Canada,” were typed in enormous bold-faced letters that dominated the page on which the first story of the feature appeared. Underneath the title was the following headline:

It’s not just another wave of immigrants. Over 20 years, 142,000 from Hong Kong have moved here. With ambition, money and a strong identity, they’re changing the city’s face. (Lu, 1996)

*The Toronto Star*’s characterization of Hong Kong immigrants as people who were “changing the city’s face” from one that had historically been mostly European and White to one that was increasingly Chinese shaped what Cana-
dians were to make of this latest wave of immigration. Canada was being invaded by a large number of immigrants from Hong Kong. We were no longer living in Canada. We were living in Hong Kong, Canada.

During my fieldwork, I found that the discourse of invasion exemplified in The Toronto Star had made its way into the everyday school lives of the high school students and teachers participating in my research study (see Goldstein, 2000a). In discussions with my own students after one of their practice teaching sessions, we realized that this discourse of invasion had made its way into many schools in the Greater Toronto Area. One answer, then, to the question of whether the story of Hong Kong, Canada is a story a White, Canadian-born ethnographer should be telling is this: Uncovering, revealing, and challenging the racist discourse of invasion that limits academic, social, and work-related possibilities for immigrant students is every educator’s responsibility. Without White Anglo-Canadian and Eurocanadian investment in antiracist research and schooling, the advancement of social justice agendas in education is constrained.

Moving to the question of what I cannot see and hear during fieldwork as a result of my White, third generation Eurocanadian background, I learned that multiple perspectives emerged when I worked with a multiracial, multicultural, multilingual team of research assistants. Our perspectives were enriched even further when we asked a group of high school students to join the team. In the third summer of the project, 15 students from one of the English classes we had been observing during fieldwork were hired as student researchers to participate in a summer playwriting project. The goal of the summer playwriting project was to provide the students, most of whom did not use English as a first language, with an opportunity to develop their English language skills and write their own ethnographies through the genre of playwriting (Goldstein, 2000b). These student ethnographies will eventually become part of the set of ethnographic texts produced from the study. The question of whether Hong Kong, Canada is my story to tell, however, is a lingering question, a question that needs to be continually pursued as the text is rewritten and performed in the future.

NOTES

1. The edited version of Hong Kong, Canada presented here is a sample of a larger piece of work. I would like to acknowledge and thank Beth McCauley for her assistance in editing the full-length play. Readers interested in reading the latest version of the complete play script should contact Tara Goldstein at tw_goldstein@hotmail.com.

2. In reviewing this article for publication, coeditor Norman Denzin found that that the written script/text presented here could be further developed. For him, the voices of each speaker were not as clearly separate as they might be. Denzin felt that more
work on phrasing, the use of vernacular, and the use of dialogue might help me more sharply define each of my main characters. In response to this important feedback (which I will take up in future rewriting of the script), I think that the performed texts did a better job of character development. The actors brought their own experiences to the script and defined their characters through the intonation and speed they used. Characterization was also accomplished through the use of Cantonese on stage and by what was not said but performed nonverbally. As will be mentioned, the performance of silence is extremely important to the play, which deals with the choice to speak and not speak as well as the choice of what language to speak.


4. The project of turning ethnographic data and texts into scripts and dramas that are read and performed before audiences has been taken up by a number of writers and researchers in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology and in the fields of performance studies, theater studies, and arts-based inquiry in education (see Denzin, 1997). My own playwriting work has been informed by the work of playwrights Anna Deveare Smith (1993, 1994), Eve Ensler (1998), Susan Finley (1998), Dorinne Kondo (1995), and Jim Mienczakowski (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1997).

5. The research team included graduate students Wing-Yee Chow, Gordon Pon, and undergraduate student Victoria Chen, who facilitated the workshop.

6. The Student Service Office at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto provides students with cocurricular professional development opportunities through conferences, workshops, discussion groups, and theatrical performances. The name of the company, Untamed Tongues, was inspired by Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1987) work Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, which celebrates the switching of language codes and the crossing of borderlands, which are present “wherever two or more cultures occupy the same territory” (p. iii). The mandate of Untamed Tongues is to integrate ethnographic research in education with theater and various other art forms. We are committed to producing multicultural and multilingual works that challenge linguistic, racial, gender, and social boundaries encompassing our lives.

7. A. D. Smith’s (1994) work tells the story of how Los Angeles came to experience what some have called the worst riots in American history. In the spring of 1991, Rodney King, a Black man, was severely beaten by four White Los Angeles police officers after being pursued for speeding. A nearby resident videotaped the beating from the balcony of his apartment. The next year, the police officers who beat King were tried and found not guilty. Three days of burning, looting, and killing in Los Angeles followed.

8. I follow Sonia Nieto (1996) and Carol Mullen (1999) in my use of the term Eurocanadian to describe White people in Canada who are not English in origin (Anglo) but, rather, European.

9. The perception that Toronto’s face has been mostly European and White ignores the historical and contemporary presence of Canada’s Aboriginal/First Nations people who have always been part of the city’s face. It also ignores the historical presence of non-European and non-White immigrants who have not only been part of the city’s face since the beginning of what Aboriginal scholars call “the contact period” but who have contributed to the building of the city and the country.
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