

**MARGO KANE'S CREATIVE AND COMMUNITY WORK:  
MOVING TOWARDS SOCIAL CHANGE**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This is a study of Margo Kane's creative work – *Memories Springing/Waters Singing, Moonlodge* and *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* – as well as her Vancouver-based community work – Full Circle First Nations Performance Company and their annual Talking Stick Festival. I examine how Kane's creative and community work can be understood in terms of postcolonial theory of performance while also further illuminating that theory. I apply Emmanuel Levinas' philosophical concepts of Totality and Infinity and the Saying and the Said to the content of her creative work as well as its publication. I use Édouard Glissant's poetics of relation to explain her administrative style and creative choices, particularly in *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy*. Postcolonial theatrical concepts including Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert's model for interculturalism and Christopher Balme's syncretic theatre lead to an investigation of the numerous forms of movement that Kane's work demonstrates. Through analysis of the multiple published texts of her performances as well as of an interview I conducted with Kane on the founding and continuing administration of her company and the festival, I determine how the importance of movement in her work can help the shift from a colonial to a postcolonial society.

## **PREFACE**

The UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board – Human Ethics has approved this research. Certificate of Approval number: H10-01468.

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First, I would like to state my appreciation to Margo Kane, both for her inspirational work as well as her willingness to take time to engage in conversation with me. I would like to thank the faculty of the UBC Department of Theatre and Film for their encouragement and support, specifically the wisdom and guidance of Dr. Jerry Wasserman and the ready attention of Dr. Kirsty Johnston. I would also like to thank Dr. Sherrill Grace of the UBC English Department; although she did not work with me directly on this thesis she has been very supportive of my academic work.

## **DEDICATION**

*To my families...*

*...my parents, Janet and Daniel Couture for a solid foundation on which to grow.*

*...my Island family for their acceptance and unwavering support.*

*...my chosen family of friends in Vancouver, particularly Verity Rolfe who talked me through seeing myself as a student again.*

*...and to my dear partner, Matt, and daughters, Sadie and Daisy, always a steady source of love, curiosity and fun to bring me back to shore after swimming in a sea of ideas.*

## INTRODUCTION: Why/How Margo Kane and Postcolonial/Theatre?

In 2006, when I returned to academic work after almost twenty years of teaching, I had not been following scholarly debates after the culture wars of the 1980s and '90s. I finished my undergraduate degree and had been busy working to create alternative learning environments for students within the public school system. The first course I took was Women in Theatre and Film at UBC, taught by Michelle La Flamme. She introduced me to the academic work that had been done to move past the political impasse that had arisen in the culture wars era: theorists like Trinh Minh-Ha who wrote of "Speaking Nearby"<sup>1</sup> and Homi Bhabha's conception of the third space of hybridity. As part of her course, we read *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* by Margo Kane [Cree/Saulteaux]<sup>2</sup>. I investigated more of Kane's work and found that she had been running a festival of contemporary aboriginal performing arts in Vancouver for a few years. I found the work to be compelling and a welcome remedy for the awkwardness I felt at being the recipient of displays of 'traditional' art for the touristic gaze. I felt that the importance of a festival of aboriginal art responded so well to Minh-Ha's statement that "only in poetic language can one deal with meaning in a revolutionary way...as the stereotyped is not a false representation, but rather an arrested representation of a changing reality" (Chen 86). This understanding has led me to volunteer for the festival, research Kane's career and eventually interview her. Among the things I have discovered, and the primary argument I want to make in this thesis, is that the

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<sup>1</sup> "[S]peaking that does not objectify, does not point to an object as if it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place. A speaking that reflects on itself and can come very close to a subject without, however, seizing or claiming it. A speaking in brief, whose closures are only moments of transition opening up to other possible moments of transition" (Chen 87).

<sup>2</sup> When an aboriginal person is mentioned for the first time, I will note his or her tribal affiliation in square brackets.

connecting thread through all of Kane's work is movement: her creative process through physical movement of the body, movement between audience and performer, movement of meaning through textual instability and movement through social change. This thesis demonstrates how the importance of movement in her work can help develop the shift from a colonial to a postcolonial society.

Before I discuss Kane's work, however, I will explain what I mean by "postcolonial." Canada's place in the postcolonial discourse is not always assumed, nor is it clear why Kane's work would be particularly linked with any notion of postcolonialism or theory developed by theatrical scholars. The postcolonial theoretical base I will be using is comprised of ethical philosophy by Emmanuel Levinas, the poetics of relation by Édouard Glissant, as well as Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo's charting of cross-cultural theatrical encounters, and observations about syncretic theatre by Christopher Balme. The aim of my approach is, in the end, to illuminate both postcolonial theatre theory and the work of Margo Kane.

In Postcolonial Studies, Canada is considered, along with Australia and New Zealand, a settler nation. Helen Gilbert, in her introduction to *Postcolonial Plays*, explains her inclusion of both settler and indigenous plays from Canada by saying that the indigenous plays "might be examined as products of dispossessed minorities in various stages of struggle to attain agency within 'Western' settler cultures," that settler works that engage with imperialism are valuable for understanding the field, and "to exclude these texts would be to suggest that colonial relations impact only on the dispossessed" (2-3). Christopher Balme in his influential work *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama* also assumes the inclusion of North American and "Fourth World" indigenous cultures in the study of postcolonial theatre (2).

First, I will examine the larger field of postcolonial philosophy, then move to literary theory and finally address theory regarding postcolonial theatre. Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) was a Lithuanian-born French Jewish philosopher who endured the Nazi regime of World War II and much of his philosophy is about making sense of ethics in the post-holocaust world. In *Totality and Infinity* (1961) he argues that the belief in mastery or totality of understanding is the cause of violence. The acknowledgement of the infinite unknowability of the Other (or, as Levinas terms it, Infinity) and respect for it regardless of that unknown is the basis for ethical behaviour (Levinas 213). Jane Hiddleston asserts in *Understanding Postcolonialism* that Levinasian ethics are the basis for postcolonial ethics: “An awareness or acceptance of this overflow or excess at the moment of encounter is, for Levinas, the definition of ethics: it does not tell us how to be or act, but describes the fundamentally ethical nature of human encounter” (17). In *Otherwise than Being* (1974) Levinas discusses language, examining concepts that he calls the Said and the Saying. Hiddleston explains:

The Saying is the excess of language, its openness and resistance to a single and restricted set of meaning. The Said, on the other hand, is the expression of an essence, a theme or content...Levinas argues that Western philosophy has traditionally been preoccupied with the Said...In privileging the Said, however, philosophy has chosen to ignore the omnipresent excess of the Saying...[which] constantly expands the potentially reductive and oppressive boundaries of the Said: “the Saying is both an affirmation and a retraction of the Said” (Levinas 1981: 44 in Hiddleston 19).

Levinasian concepts of Totality and Infinity as well as the Said and the Saying are not in opposition to each other. Instead, “the ethical insistence on Infinity, or the Saying, is conceived alongside the apparent security of Totality or the Said. In both formulations, openness to excess is

the start of an ethical relation” (Hiddleston 19). This ethical philosophical stance can be used to support postcolonial thought about how to move forward in relation to others who are so different than oneself, particularly after a rupture or trauma brought on by the violence of the colonial project.

Édouard Glissant’s poetry, fiction and essays have recently begun to be influential in postcolonial discourse. His work is acknowledged to be deeply about place and also, more recently, concerned with a “poetics of relating” that responds to the chaos of the modern world. Important concepts from Glissant’s works, as translated by J. Michael Dash, include the “root identity” that corresponds with Levinas’s Totality and the “rhizome identity” that can be considered similar to Infinity and the understanding of a constant work-in-progress (179). Glissant acknowledges that Deleuze and Guattari’s “rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation,” noting that they “extol nomadism, which supposedly liberates Being” (Poetics of Relation 11). He goes on to argue that there are different types of nomadism, one which he calls “arrowlike,” which is not open to Otherness and is “a devastating desire for settlement” (12). In Celia Britton’s *Édouard Glissant and postcolonial theory: strategies of language and resistance*, she notes that in his work *Le discours antillais* Glissant criticizes Deleuze’s concept of the rhizome for ignoring the importance of otherness (Britton 187). In considering Glissant’s development of the rhizome concept, it is important to place his work in the Caribbean where the brutality of colonialism led to the genocide of the indigenous people and the importing of African slaves for labour. This trauma, while not replicated exactly in the Canadian aboriginal context, resonates nevertheless and makes Glissant’s formation of the poetics of relation with its emphasis on the Other and Opacity a better fit for my work with Kane than Deleuze and Guattari’s original work. Dash interprets “*opacité/alterité*” as “the give and

take of self-denial and self-affirmation and recognition of the other” (180). In *Understanding Postcolonialism*, Hiddleston comments on his particular addition to the postcolonial discourse: “Where Glissant can be seen to be unrivalled, however, is in the dynamism and expansiveness of his poetics and his conception of the value of that poetics independent of the political requirements of the (post)colony” (136). His focus on poetics as a freeing of the imagination as a precursor to political change can be useful in understanding Margo Kane’s work in the arts: her performances as well as her community work focusing on the creation of space for aboriginal people to work aesthetically. The form of cultural production recommended in Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation* is one that includes opacity and a straining against boundaries. It is also rhizomatic in form, privileging relationality, questioning the possession of territory and is open-ended in exploration. Glissant has written poetry and essays about theatre and he also acknowledges in his poetics of relation the importance of orality. He proposes, “the written is the universalizing influence of Sameness, whereas the oral would be the organized manifestation of Diversity” (Glissant 1989: 100). His conception of orality allows for a spontaneity in relation with the listener, a response. This makes his work valuable in the consideration of live theatre. There are many connections to be explored between Glissant’s thought and Kane’s work. His concern with grounding in a specific place, his conception of an intercultural experience, the understanding of creative work as always in process, the importance of orality and his recognition of the political in his poetics of relation all make his theoretical work relevant to my study of Kane.

I now turn to considerations of postcolonial studies in theatre. My focus on Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo’s essay, “Toward a Topography of Cross-Cultural Theatre Praxis” (2002), will help to explain how Margo Kane’s work can be considered postcolonial intercultural syncretic

theatre. I will also outline the theory of postcolonial syncretic theatre production discussed by Christopher Balme in *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama* (1999).

Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert's essay maps out a framework for consideration of cross-cultural theatre. They begin by dividing the category of cross-cultural theatre into three sub-categories: *multicultural* can be a state-sponsored or grassroots effort to respond to the plurality of culture; it also often fetishizes the authentic and is used to gain cultural capital and recognition by disenfranchised groups (33); *postcolonial* includes particular textual or performative features and questions "cultural hegemony that underlies imperial systems of governance, education, social and economic organization, and representation" (35); *intercultural* concerns itself mainly with the aesthetics of cultural transfer (44). Where does Margot Kane's work fit into the framework that Lo and Gilbert have structured in their essay? Their description of multicultural theatre which is not cross-cultural does in some ways seem to fit with Kane's work and audience: "[it] tends to be monocultural; it is staged for and by a specific ethnic community... [and] tend[s] to focus on narratives about origin and loss" (34). They also define *community theatre* as engaged with social concerns of specific communities resistant to the dominant culture.

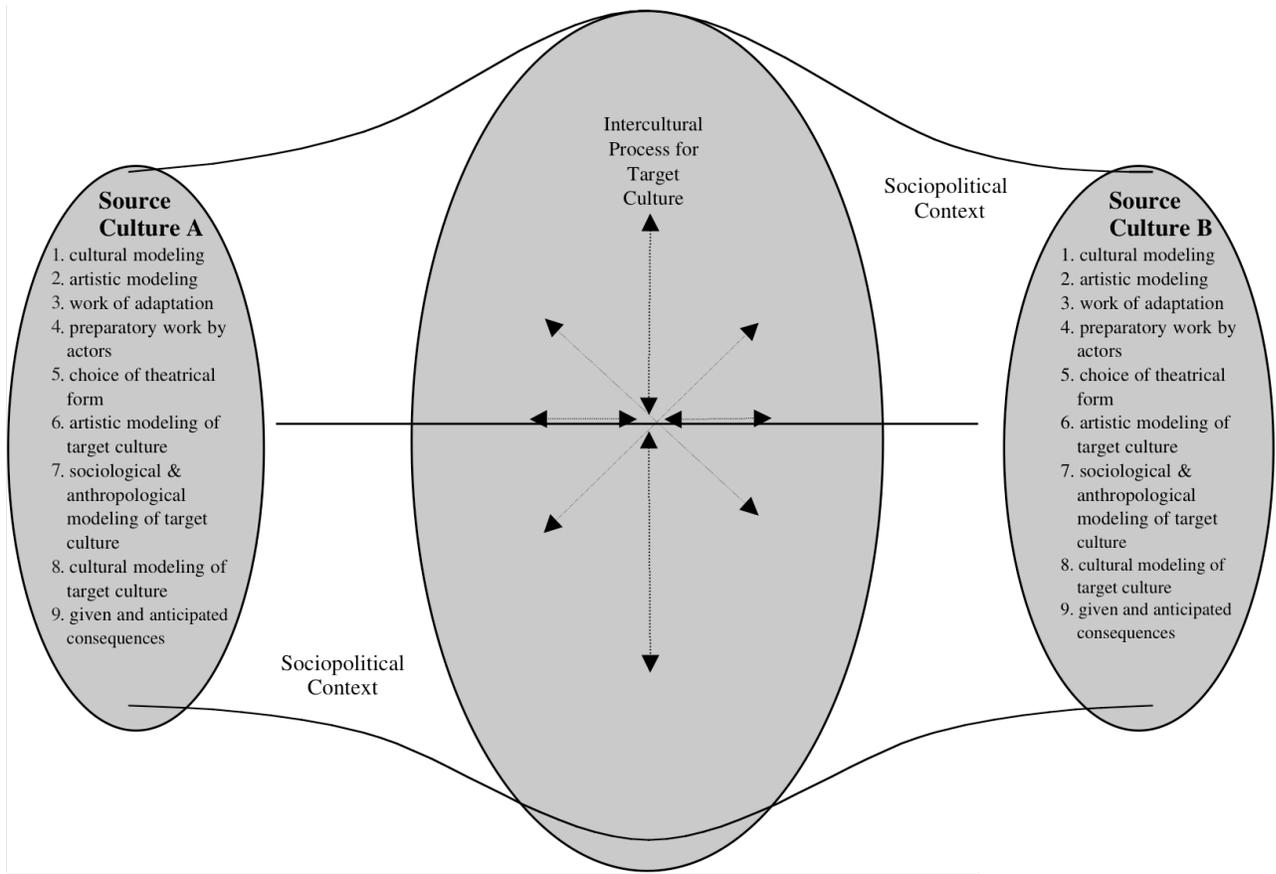
The constitution of the performance group and the subject matter may be organized around common interests (such as gender, ethnicity, or shared social experiences) or defined in terms of geographical location. Multicultural community theatre generally incorporates a range of languages and cultural resources, including performing traditions, drawn from the community. Community arts workers are often employed to facilitate the work and the performances are typically presented back to the community as well as to "outsiders."

Cross-cultural negotiations therefore occur at a number of levels in this type of theatre.

(34-5)

Both of these descriptions could be seen as applicable to Kane's performances as well as her community work. But I think that her work fits better with Lo and Gilbert's description of *postcolonial syncretic theatre* that "aims to retain the cultural integrity of the specific materials used while forging new texts and theatre practices...[and] tends to highlight rather than disguise shifts in the meaning, function, and value of cultural fragments as they are moved from their traditional contexts" (35-6). Lo and Gilbert assert that this is a common strategy of aboriginal theatre artists in their "larger agenda of cultural recuperation" (36).

Lo and Gilbert also offer a critique of Patrice Pavis' hourglass model of intercultural theatre from *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* as too unidirectional. The downward flow from source culture to target culture does not adequately take into account the back and forth of a cross-cultural exchange (43). They propose instead a model that is horizontal and includes two source cultures on either side of a disc called the "Process for Target Culture" which spins both centrifugally and centripetally on the sociopolitical strings attaching it to the source cultures (45) (see Fig. 1). This model is a better representation (than Pavis') of a collaborative exchange that happens between cultures rather than an imperialistic exchange that results in cultural appropriation and further domination.



**Figure 1: Lo and Gilbert's Proposed Model for Interculturalism**

Source: Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert, "Toward a Topography of Cross-Cultural Theatre Praxis", (*The Drama Review* 46:3, 2002) 45.

Lo and Gilbert also emphasize the importance of a postcolonial stance in intercultural work, such that questions about individual and collective power can be addressed. They propose asking questions such as, "Whose economic and/or political interests are being served? How is the working process represented to the target audience, and why? Who is the target audience and how can differences be addressed within this constituency? How does a specific intercultural event impact on the wider sociopolitical environment?" (44). The most relevant question for this study is regarding the intercultural event and its impact on the sociopolitical environment.

In their discussion of postcolonial theatre, Lo and Gilbert cite Christopher Balme as a key theorist on syncretic theatre (36, 50). Balme defines the term “syncretic theatre” as an aesthetic phenomenon that takes place during a time of cultural interaction and change. It is different from theatre that appropriates from a source culture because of its respect for the cultural text and its maintenance of a precisely defined cultural meaning (3-5). Balme uses the term ‘dominant code’ -- the assumed code by which a spectator generates meaning. He asserts that in syncretic theatre one should watch for shifting of the dominant code, e.g., dialogic (or spoken words) in a drama becoming kinesic (or movement-based), and then examine why and when the shift took place and how it affects meaning-making (6). He also explains the importance of didascalia – everything in the written text that is not spoken by the performer. Balme notes this is present in much post-colonial writing as the author/playwright attempts to make the cultural text less strange. In a dramatic text or performance this includes much more than the stage directions: it can also be the glossaries, footnotes, forewords or culturally specific explanations (7). Balme contextualizes his use of the concept of syncretism by explaining that it was once considered the creation of impure, less valuable work (or spirituality when applied to religious thinking) that needed to be guarded against. Now it is considered a creative process of global cultural exchange, akin to Mikhail Bakhtin’s ‘heteroglossia’. In the postcolonial world, there is no longer a clear separation of cultures with an original, authentic culture to be reified. Syncretization can be considered similar to Glissant’s ‘creolization’ or Bhabha’s ‘hybridity’ which “recogniz[es] the fundamentally hybrid constitution of self and culture” (Balme 12).

Balme identifies syncretic theatre's specific recurring elements: ritualization – the use of ritual, the interruption of it and/or the use of the liminal space around a ritual<sup>3</sup>; strategies of language use – the use of multiple languages translated and un-translated, relexification by the playwright (writing/thinking in one language and then changing to another for the script or performance), creolization; the use of the actor's body – through dance, movement, masking; music; and experiments with performance space. His interest in analysing syncretic theatre is both to document what he considers an important movement in twentieth century theatre and to examine the ways in which syncretic theatre “questions some fundamental principles of Western theatre aesthetics” (23-4).

In consideration of Kane's performance and community work, I will be using concepts from Levinas – Totality and Infinity, the Saying and the Said – as well as Glissant's poetics of relation that are rhizomatic in form and privilege relationality. Balme's observations about the dominant shift, didascalía, ritual, use of language, and body in postcolonial theatre will also be useful in examining Kane's performance work. I will also consider Lo and Gilbert's questions of power relations and their model for interculturalism. My study includes her work both on and off stage; therefore it is important that I look at more than just postcolonial theories of performance, I must also consider her work in the larger sociopolitical context of late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century Canada.

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<sup>3</sup> Activities or dialogue that occur at the same time as a ritual, which can then create a new context for it.

## CHAPTER ONE: Introducing Margo Kane

In 1982, Prairie Theatre Exchange in Winnipeg mounted the first staging of the Canadian play *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* that utilized an all-aboriginal cast; Margo Kane played Rita Joe (Charlesbois np). Twenty-six years later, in 2008, Margo Kane won a Jessie Richardson Award for best supporting actress (“Dynamic and Diverse”) for her performance as June in *Where the Blood Mixes* by Kevin Loring [Nlakapmux]<sup>4</sup>. The play went on to win multiple awards in 2009–in Vancouver, a Jessie Richardson Award for Outstanding Original Script and the Sydney J. Risk Prize for Outstanding Original Script by an Emerging Playwright, and nationally, the Governor General’s Literary Award for Drama (“Where the Blood Mixes”). In the years between these two significant events in Canadian aboriginal theatre history, Kane has created and performed acclaimed solo shows *Moonlodge* (1990) and *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* (1998). She has also been instrumental in the production of aboriginal contemporary arts through her company Full Circle First Nations Performance (FCFNP), established in Vancouver in 1992, and its annual Talking Stick Festival (TSF), established in 2001 (“Talking Stick Festival – History”).

Kane was born in Edmonton, Alberta in 1951, adopted into a white family and raised without connection to her aboriginal heritage. She studied at Edmonton’s Grant MacEwan College for Performing Arts, Banff School of Fine Arts and Circle in the Square Theater in New York City. Her career has spanned over forty years and she continues to be respected as an important figure in Canadian aboriginal theatre: she has long-term connections with Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto, which staged *Moonlodge* in 1990, and was one of a number of aboriginal theatre artists who established the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance in 2004

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<sup>4</sup> The play opened in Vancouver on the same night as the historic apology from the government of Canada to aboriginal people for residential schools.

(“IPPA – History”). She is also influential in Vancouver: *The Georgia Straight*, a local alternative weekly, consulted her in a 2008 interview on the state of the arts in Vancouver, along with only two others: Robert Kerr (program director for the Cultural Olympiad, former director of Coastal Jazz and Blues society) and Kathleen Bartel (director of the Vancouver Art Gallery) (Lynch and Werb). In his 2009 essay in *Canadian Theatre Review*, “Poetry, Remnants and Ruins: Aboriginal Theatre in Canada,” Floyd Favel<sup>5</sup>, a well-established Cree/Saulteaux theatre artist and writer, describes his despair regarding the ongoing work of creating an aboriginal theatre within the middle class Canadian theatre scene (32-3). He opens the essay, however, by describing his experience watching a performance at the 2009 Talking Stick Festival, where he was “brought back to one of the reasons I went into theatre, to express our culture and the beauty of our people.” This experience inspires him to write about theatre again (31). Kane’s work on stage had an important influence on the beginnings of American aboriginal theatre in the late 1980’s: Marcie Rendon [White Earth/Anishnabe], a theatre artist working in Minneapolis-Saint Paul, in an essay published in *Performing Worlds into Being: Native American Women’s Theater* (2009), describes seeing Margo Kane perform: this was the first time she saw a Native woman on stage and it compelled her to pursue theatre-making in communities. Rendon then explains the importance of members of the Native community viewing performers like themselves in order to find their own voices (138-40). These are a few of the most recent references to Kane’s work on stage and in the aboriginal theatre community by colleagues and media. They help reinforce the influence of her work nationally, internationally and locally.

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<sup>5</sup> Over his career, Floyd Favel is sometimes referred to as Floyd Favel-Starr. His most recent publication uses the surname Favel, which I will as well to avoid confusion.

To begin this study of Kane's work and to begin to contextualize it within the broader analysis of postcolonial aesthetics, I will first focus on a performance art piece that she created in Banff in August 1992, *Memories Springing/Waters Singing*. The piece is recorded through Joane Cardinal-Schubert's reflections on the performance (as requested by Kane) which was part of a series in Banff called *As Public as Race*. Cardinal-Schubert had worked with Kane on a forum in Vancouver about the appropriation of aboriginal art and voice. She starts with a biography of Kane and explains Kane's practice of inviting First Nations people from the area where she is performing to participate in the work as well. The performance at Banff included a videotaped search for a source of water up a mountain to a glacier in Banff National Park, which she then developed and edited to be displayed on four video monitors placed on the floor of a lodge with lodgepole pines overhead. Viewers interact with the space and view the videos and then Kane enters as an old woman carrying sticks, puts them down and then returns with a stick and a pail of elk dung. She empties the pail and stirs it with the stick, focuses on it. She then leaves, coming back a few minutes later with a pail of water that she empties. She enters again later, pulling a travois, and sits among the audience members. Duane Mark, a member of the Stoney tribe located in the Banff area, enters with a drum and eagle whistle. He speaks in English and Stoney and eventually says that the camp needs to be moved. The audience members then dismantle the lodge, each picking up a piece of it and carrying it outside to a clearing where it is reassembled. Cardinal-Schubert comments on the humour of the work and the lack of laughter from the audience: "out of fear of seeming disrespectful. They have forgotten, perhaps, that this is a performance piece and not a ceremonial cultural ritual" (Kane and Cardinal-Schubert 16).

Once the lodge is reassembled, Mark sings and Kane, crowned with roots and wearing a buffalo robe, enters the area, responding in song. She removes the robe and begins to drum and

sing. All audience members are asked to drink water from a pail passed clockwise, acknowledging the water. Kane then tells stories of her childhood, her aunt buying her an Indian doll, driving a station wagon like her father's. She explains her connections with the Stoney people and her creative process at Banff, during which she reconnected with the land and brought pieces of it inside to her studio. She drums, sings and then pulls items out of her bag and gives them to people who have contributed to her work. The audience members then also give and receive items while Kane sings. The performance ends with a feast of smoked salmon, fruit and bread.

It is essential to note that this text is an account by an audience member, albeit one who is in a privileged position as a colleague of Kane's, but nevertheless a viewer of the performance. Therefore this cannot be considered a fixed text of the script of the performance but instead a response to the experience. Cardinal-Schubert explains the methods of Kane's work:

Margo Kane's relentless search for the beginning of the glacier might serve as a metaphor for her search for self – a metaphor she transfers to each viewer. They then singularly participate in the struggle to understand from their position as viewer, fellow performer and partner, the shared ritualistic ceremonialism of deconstruction and reconstruction represented in the symbolic tearing down and rebuilding of both perceived reality and imposed reality of the experience. (6)

Kane's performance art piece is a little known work, preserved through the museum's publication of Cardinal-Schubert's reflections. I am intrigued by the way this piece exemplifies Balme's observations about the use of ritual in syncretic theatre, particularly the interruption of it and the use of the liminal space beside the ritual. I also find an interesting resonance with lines in

Glissant's poem, "Movement, Far From Shores: Theater": "The rain/Having scolded just as at the moment of the curtain/Begins its dialogue with earth, of water" (*Collected Poems* 49); both pieces focus on the use of water as enabling dialogue between distinct elements. This dialogue starts at the moment when Mark announces that the camp needs to be moved and the audience must work together to dismantle and reassemble the lodge structure, surprising and possibly even disturbing the audience in its suddenness. This is a performance art piece, and so less constrained by the conventions of theatre but this part of the performance not only breaks the fourth wall but also expects the audience to pick up the theatrical staging and move it. This is a clear example of Kane's aesthetic use of movement to change audience expectations and perceptions.

In introducing Margo Kane, I have established her current status as a senior artist in aboriginal performance in Canada and considered her work in Banff for its connection to the larger theme of movement I will trace throughout this thesis. Although Kane's work has generated significant academic discussion, this overarching theme has yet to be fully considered. This is in part, I believe, due to a focus thus far on her performances over her off-stage work. In the next two chapters I will be examining some significant academic discussion concerning her work, which frames it as either postcolonial "writing back", discusses it in semiotic terms as a discursive shifting of the gaze or considers the importance of her "*soma* text" in terms of hybridity theory. Missing from the academic discussion is a documentation and analysis of the infrastructure creation, community support and aboriginal ensemble theatre training that Kane has done since establishing Full Circle First Nations Performance in 1992. Chapters two and three will discuss the reverberations of Levinasian ethics, Glissant's poetics of relation and Balme's syncretic theatre while tracing the concept of movement in her creative work. Connections between Lo and Gilbert's theory of intercultural theatre and Kane's community

work that can be considered an artistic movement for social change will be the topic of chapter four.

## CHAPTER TWO: Journeying to the *Moonlodge*

In Kane's published plays, *Moonlodge* and *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy*, as well as in her performance art piece, *Memories Springing, Waters Singing*, she performs alone, embodying multiple characters, incorporating song, dance and movement. Solo works are not unusual in Canadian theatre – the small size of the production makes it easier and less expensive to stage and therefore makes sense in a country of such vast size and limited cultural spending. Yet the solo nature of her shows cannot be simply understood as expedient. She is a woman performing alone, physically shifting between characters and giving voice to their perspectives. This is an example of Levinas' concept of infinity – the multiple and unending perspectives that exist in the world. In her plays, she also makes great use of humour, not just to share the pleasure of laughter with her audience but to invite them into the stories she is presenting. This is one of the ways the works can also be considered in terms of Glissant's relational identity. *Moonlodge*, in particular, is a description of a search for identity, which in the end is created through the connections between women.

*Moonlodge* premiered at the Women in View festival in Vancouver in 1990 and then opened Toronto's Native Earth Performing Arts 1990-91 season (Kane "From the Centre" 27, 29). It has subsequently been performed across the US, Canada, Europe and Australia ("Full Circle - Performances"). The play opens with the sounds of women talking and laughing in Cree and English. Agnes, the main character, speaks about first being invited into the lodge by a woman named Millie. She then flashes back to her childhood and remembers trying to get a bird out of the house with her mother. She embodies her mother, father and herself as a child, helping to make frybread for a family party. Her father speaks about resistance to the state and is taken away. Agnes is then also removed from the family in a scene depicting a frightening struggle:

there is a horrible image of Agnes beating against the car window as she is taken away – with movement to mimic the trapped bird earlier in the scene. The dominant code shifts from spoken drama or dialogue to silent movement, indicating the lack of words to express the pain. Sometimes, if something is not spoken or cannot be spoken, then it cannot be communicated to others and therefore people can pretend it did not happen. Agnes' silent movement at this moment gives more power to the horror and trauma of the incident and heightens the communication.

Agnes moves from foster home to foster home until a woman named Aunt Sophie takes her in. Aunt Sophie is a no-nonsense, outspoken woman who embarrasses Agnes as she talks to people in the town yet also cares for her until she graduates high school. With Aunt Sophie Kane introduces humour, as Sophie compares Agnes joining Brownies to her learning about her tribal heritage. The Brownies and the “Indian” songs sung are the introduction to cultural stereotypes of aboriginal people. Agnes sings, in quick succession, Girl Guide songs “My Paddle” and “Land of the Silver Birch,” Hank Williams’ “Kaw-Liga” and Johnny Preston’s 1960 hit “Running Bear.” She brings attention and a critique couched in humour to the stereotypes of aboriginal women as savage, tragic, subservient and sexy. She says she prefers sexy. She talks about not knowing any Indian people growing up, having a crush on a boy from a reserve who drops out of school. Once she graduates from high school, she decides to go to California – it is the 60s and that is where all the action is. She tells Aunt Sophie that she loves her and leaves.

Agnes gets into trouble on the road hitchhiking. She manages to get out of the first creepy ride without harm. The second encounter shows her romantic youth and naivety by having her get involved with a guy because of his shiny expensive motorbike. She is expecting love but gets raped. The rape scene is performed while the Agnes character sings “in a high soprano” the

romantic song from *My Fair Lady*, “On the Street Where You Live”. The juxtaposition of the young woman enamored of the muscular biker thinking they will have some loving physical contact and the brutal rape as she sings verses of this song is a powerful and poignant illustration of the loss of innocence. It can be seen as an indictment of the concept of romantic love as promoted by cultural norms that do not prepare women for reality. The song also makes the violent act being committed seem even more horrible. After the rape scene she simply says, “Somehow I made it to Santa Fe,” as she crawls away (Kane 1994 97).

In Santa Fe she meets Indians selling their artwork. She follows a man in blue cowboy boots who turns out to be an Indian activist named Lance. In discussing his political views, Lance echoes her father’s words right before he was taken away. Lance is on his way to a powwow and takes Agnes along. She is welcomed and dances. She meets a woman named Millie who gives her an eagle plume and helps her understand the importance of finding her family. The play ends with Agnes telling of a dream that she has had of driving in a car with a bird trapped in it. She stops the car and then wraps the bird up and cradles it like a baby. The bird could be considered a metaphor for her sense of self – delicate, easily broken, frightened when caged but able to fly if free. The final image is of her comforting herself, holding herself close.

An examination of the publications of the text of *Moonlodge* highlights the ongoing nature of Kane’s work. The first published version of the play is in the 1992 *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*, edited by Daniel David Moses [Delaware] and Terry Goldie. Published by Oxford University Press, the anthology is a scholarly text and includes forty-three writers dating from 1742 to 1992 as well as some undated traditional songs and orature. There is no introduction to *Moonlodge* in this edition but there is a short biography of Kane in the “Notes on Authors” section. In it she is described as an “actor, singer,

choreographer, director and teacher” and it lists some of her work, including playing the title role in *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* (378). The next edition of the anthology, published in 1998, includes fifty-nine writers. The text of the play is unchanged but her biography is expanded to include a short introduction to her work as a multidisciplinary artist, and quotes her explaining her creative process:

I wanted to perform scripts that spoke to my humanity both as a Native contemporary woman and as an artist. I began experimenting with style and technique using storytelling methods learned from formal Western theatre and drawing on my experiences of story telling in the Native community, formal and informal events. (Kane 1998 507)

The biography ends by emphasizing that she performs in rural and urban Native communities and that her work is “socially relevant” and “empowering” (507). In the third edition of the anthology, published in 2005 and slightly expanded to include sixty writers, the text still remains unchanged but the biography of Kane which was at the end of the anthology, in the “Notes on Authors” section, is now included as an introduction to the play, making much more of a presence of her voice in explaining the context of her work. That there has been no change in the text of the play over the thirteen years since the first edition of the anthology makes it seem a fixed, static text, although, as an examination of another version shows, this is not so.

*Moonlodge* was also published in a collection called *Singular Voices: Plays in Monologue Form*, edited by Tony Hamill (1994). The introduction to the play includes a biography of Margo Kane, which describes her work traveling to rural and urban Native communities in Canada. It also mentions her initiation of a forum in Vancouver, “Telling Our Own Story: Appropriation and Indigenous Writers/Artists,” as well as her work on the Racial Equality and First People’s Advisory Committees for Canada Council. It highlights the recent

formation of her company, Full Circle: First Nations Performance, and *The River-Home* video/performance installation. It notes that her work is to be included in the Smithsonian Institute's inaugural exhibition for the new National Museum of the American Indian. This version includes a playwright's preface to the play explaining the Children's Aid practice of "scooping" children and the importance to many Native people of finding their "way home" (79). "It is hoped that *Moonlodge* will be a part of the healing of our people. We have survived tremendous losses with a sense of humour, dignity and honour. We are capable of determining our own future and that of our children" (80). The biographical introduction also includes a description of the creative process that led to the development of the script: mainly, that it was an oral story performed many times with input from multiple directors before it was finally scripted in 1990 for the Native Earth Performing Arts Festival in Toronto. Kane describes it as

a joyful and traumatic experience. I never considered myself a writer before this experience. I was a storyteller, animator, actor, cultural worker; so the challenge of writing and clarifying the intention of the work evolved through the years of performing it...asking 'how many stories can you possibly tell at once?' (81)

She then describes *Moonlodge* as a "living, breathing piece of work" (81).

The script in the 1994 version is longer – the opening moment includes more women in the moonlodge and explains that it is a place where only women come for their moontime (menstrual period). This script moves into the bird incident with her mother through references to a 'eating like a bird' and a branch fluttering against the teepee. It is changed from the earlier version's more humorous entrance where Agnes awkwardly enters, excusing herself, looking for Millie, and where Millie's hands are described as busy like a fluttering bird.

In the scene where Agnes leaves home, Aunt Sophie catches her before she can go and Agnes must speak directly to her. In the first version she leaves a note and calls from the road. This makes some sense because if Aunt Sophie is being portrayed as a powerful pushy woman, it is unlikely that she would let Agnes go easily. Changing the scene to have Agnes say her goodbye in person significantly changes the dynamic between the two women and the characterization of Agnes. The leave-taking in person is more respectful to Aunt Sophie, giving her a chance to try to influence Agnes' decision and also accept it. In the end this strengthens the bond between them, making it possible for Agnes to return to Sophie's home someday. The scene also strengthens Agnes' character, showing her standing up to a powerful woman to get what she wants.

There are also a few changes in the songs being sung in different places – “Kaw-Liga” now follows the “Running Bear” song. Kane has also added John Denver's “Leaving on a Jet Plane” right after Agnes leaves Aunt Sophie, giving a bit more of a sense that she is somewhat sad to go. The stage directions now say, “*AGNES gets her suitcase and begins to sing, trying to decide what to do*” (Kane 1994 93).

When she gets picked up by Lance and asks him about the eagle feather on his rearview mirror, the line in the first published text was: “Then Lance tells me it was given to him. You can't buy eagle feathers. They have to be given to you. The eagle is a very sacred bird, a messenger. You can't go out and shoot an eagle for its feathers. The eagle will leave them for you” (Kane 1992 345). In the second version, she notes the eagle feather and says, “I thought I'd sure like to have an eagle feather like that someday” (Kane 1994 99). This cut makes the eagle feather a subtler dramatic symbol and then when Millie gives her the plume at the end, it is more about a personal connection rather than a traditional ritual. This change is interesting. It perhaps

indicates Kane's stepping away from explaining traditional symbols and assuming that the audience that already knows about such things will understand the significance of the eagle feather gift and the audience that does not know will have a different experience.

When she goes to sleep in the back of Lance's truck after dancing at the powwow, in the second version she is afraid of him: "*She lays down facing DS, afraid of him*" and "*She lays with eyes open listening for his every move*" (101). She falls asleep only after he has left the truck. In the first version Lance leaves her alone in the truck. I noticed when reading the first version that Agnes did not seem to be afraid of Lance, even though the biker had just raped her. It seemed strange to me, but I decided it was meant to show that either Lance was a good man or that she felt safe at the powwow. Leaving out the fear does make the rape seem like it is not resonating with the character – or that she is in denial about it. In this second version, having the character feel afraid even while enjoying herself at the powwow is a more subtle portrayal of the gender dynamics within aboriginal communities. It also shows Agnes learning from her experiences when Lance invites her to another powwow but she declines (Kane 1994 105).

The final scene in the moonlodge in the second version is more like the opening in the first version, with her awkwardly entering the lodge and looking for Millie. She does still share her dream about the trapped bird but the last lines are changed. There is an addition of some description of the moonlodge and Millie's welcoming line happens at the end instead of before her dream. In the first version, having the dream speech at the end keeps the focus on Agnes' reconnection with her fragile self. In the second version, Agnes recounts her dream with much more description and awareness of the women surrounding her in the lodge. The play then ends with Millie saying, "Welcome my girl. Welcome to the circle" (Kane 1994 107), cutting the line "We are grateful and thank the Higher Power that you are here" (Kane 1992 291). This change

brings focus on Agnes' development of self as a part of a community of women and allows for a non-religious reading of the circle.

In Birgit Däwes' book *Native North American Theater in a Global Age: Sites of Identity Construction and Transdifference* (2007), she proposes in her discussion of Kane's *Moonlodge* that the lack of specific time and place in the moonlodge "transcend[s] various borderlines of ethnic, national, tribal, and pan-tribal communities...extending the temporal dimension into present, past and timelessness" (229). She acknowledges that it is possible to read the moonlodge as a place of gender construction and the sharing of gender-related knowledge (234-35), yet she also proposes that

while at first glance *Moonlodge* seems to replace the boundaries of tribal affiliation with a gender-oriented circle coded as traditionally indigenous, its structural and semiotic inclusiveness and the multiplicity of its meanings simultaneously subvert such exceptionalism. Instead Agnes' identity is presented as an ongoing process of negotiation and dialogue...However the boundaries of this community are drawn much less by social and political labels, entities and institutions than by the performative choices of its members. It is the sharing of one's stories rather than ethnic or tribal ties that widens the circle. (Däwes 239)

I disagree with her assertion that the membership in the circle is open to anyone who is willing to share stories. I do agree with her that Kane's lack of specificity in time and space makes the moonlodge into a metaphor, but I think that, particularly in light of the revisions to the script in 1994, Kane's focus is on women supporting each other in forming community.

The second version is more focused on the women's community and also portrays the male characters as more dangerous. The first version is more clearly about Agnes' development

as a person. The second has her developing within the context of the important women in her life, specifically: making the leave-taking with Aunt Sophie more tender, changing the way she tells Millie about being taken away from her family when she first meets her, and then having her joining an existing circle of women at the end.

Kane's changes to her script reflect an important theme in postcolonial philosophy. Many works developed for the stage go through multiple versions usually indicating that the work is still in process. Kane's changes to *Moonlodge* show the development of the work. I also believe that these differences between the published texts can be linked with Levinas' concepts of the Saying and the Said. A published script is an example of the Said in that it has the stability of text – particularly the scholarly Oxford University Press anthology. Once the works are compiled, if the editors do not re-engage with the playwright, they may not be changed in a subsequent edition. The text gains status as original, unchanging and in some ways as a piece of history. A live performance is more ephemeral and much more responsive in the present. This trace of the responsive, enabling readers to see the changes in the text, is an indication of the present and 'sayingness' of Kane's *Moonlodge*, and its status, as she says in the preface to the 1994 edition, as "a living breathing piece of work" (81).

Not only does Kane respond to her audience by revising her creative work, but she also has engaged in a dialogue with the critical community writing about her work. In Monique Mojica's introduction to the 1991 special issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* dedicated to Native Theatre in the Americas, she explains that the articles have been commissioned from within the Native theatre community, "in the firm belief that we are articulate enough to talk about our own work, analyze our own trends, and interpret our own symbols" (3). Kane contributed to this special issue and was also active at this time in advocating for the re-centering of aboriginal

people in their own work as described in Terrie Hamazaki's article for *Kinesis*, "Women in View: Who's telling whose story?" in March 1990. The article covers a panel on cultural appropriation that is part of the 1990 Women in View festival. It discusses "orientalizing", "othering", and quotes qualitative studies about visible and audible minorities on Canadian television and the Vancouver Arts Club stage. Hamazaki then quotes Kane directly:

Native actor Margo Kane asked, 'who's telling whose story?' She described how her life experiences had given her 'fuel-for-fire' to risk making changes and related an instance when a non-native woman who had been more successful at getting the role of a Native character asked Kane, as her understudy, to teach her to play this role. "I'm angry...I can't articulate my anger...we have to do our own representation...and tell our own stories in our own ways," said Kane. She added that Native communities wanted solidarity rather than help from others in their struggles to achieve self-determination.

(16)

Clearly Kane is working both creatively and politically to engage with discussions of how to make changes so that intercultural work can happen without further damage to aboriginal people.

Kane's contribution to Mojica's *Canadian Theatre Review* issue was "From the Centre of the Circle the Story Emerges," a description of the process she used to create and perform *Moonlodge*. In it she explains the importance of her relationships with women:

It was the women at the centre of the Native community, strong and enduring women, who provided me with answers to questions not yet formulated and ones that plagued my senses. They showed me it was possible to survive genocidal attempts on their lives with dignity and sensitivity and humour. (27)

She explains that *Moonlodge* was created from improvisation workshops with Floyd Favel and then re-worked and directed numerous times before being written down as a script. She also explains the importance of oral storytelling: “Without a written script, I told the story over and over... It was a method not without its trauma. I loved to improvise, yet I didn’t have the trust in myself as yet to think I could really hold an audience for an hour all by myself” (27). She defines the play clearly as a provocative performance rather than a polemic: “*Moonlodge* is not about providing answers. It reveals no secrets of ancient rites of passage. It doesn’t tell all! It is performance, a demonstration of survival” (29). She also identifies the spirit in which she offers the work and how she believes it should be accepted:

Sitting around a fire in the high desert mountains, watching for shooting stars, is a perfect time for storytelling. It can be a sober time when people release those stories they have held close to their chest for a long time. It is not a time for prying for more juicy details, for questions that bore deep into another’s personal vulnerability at their expense. It is a time to listen with awe and respect to mysteries of ancestors and dreams that challenge one’s intellect. It is a time to listen with your entire being, especially your heart. It is a time to feel privileged that they want to share with you... *You may not understand but you respect the effort it has taken the storytellers to reveal themselves to you.* (29 italics mine)

What strikes me most about this article is how Kane is willing to be vulnerable in describing the process. She mentions her fears, explains that the creation of the play was an oral process and that she had anxiety about her writing. She credits the people who helped her process the work to the point that she could write it. She wants the story to be recognized as an offering of a

vulnerable self – given in reciprocation for other stories offered and with the hope of inspiring confidence in others to speak.

Kane’s “From the Centre the Story Emerges” has since been republished and quoted in works about her and *Moonlodge*, most recently in the 2006 books *Feminist Theatre and Performance* and *Theatre in British Columbia*, both part of the *Critical Perspectives in Canadian Theatre* series published by Playwrights Canada Press. Susan Bennett in her essay “Diversity and Voice: A Celebration of Canadian Women Writing for Performance” includes a description of Margo Kane’s *Moonlodge* in the section of the essay on “Performing Women.” She notes that the piece has been performed in theatres in Toronto, Banff and Vancouver but also in Native and Inuit communities across Canada. She also includes the lengthy quote from Kane describing the experience of sitting with people in a circle, each person offering something of themselves. Bennett describes Kane’s work as an “invitation to listen – a contract from which we might learn much” (89). There is a difference in her handling of Kane’s work in this article compared to the analysis she offers of other women writers. She limits her analysis and mainly quotes Kane’s article – clearly indicating that she wishes to allow Kane to speak for herself. The largest quote in the article is the one I have just cited from Kane’s description of her work and Bennett’s only comment is: “Notions of land and place are so crucial to Native beliefs and practice, and Kane’s *Moonlodge* marks those connections as a powerful performative, one that is offered as a gift to her nation” (87).

Kane’s article and the quotes from her used to introduce *Moonlodge* in the different anthologies and in the critical works are examples of her efforts to place her work in a specific sociopolitical environment – that of a postcolonial indigenous woman who is both a creative artist and a critic. She is clearly concerned with “cultural hegemony that underlies imperial

systems of governance, education, social and economic organization, and representation” (Lo and Gilbert 35). In some ways her work is targeted at an audience with shared concerns of gender, ethnicity and resistance to the dominant culture. *Moonlodge* does, however, highlight rather than disguise shifts in traditional meaning, function and the value of cultural fragments – as in the moments of cultural appropriation at the powwow by what Lance calls the “Wannabee” tribe or when Agnes represents the various stereotypes of Indians based on misunderstood cultural fragments.

The reclaiming of cultural fragments is also noticed by Renate Eigenbrod in her discussion of *Moonlodge* in “Evangeline, Hiawatha and a Jewish Cemetery: Hi/stories of Interconnected and Multiple Displacements,” published in 2002 in the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. She seeks to understand “the complex relationship between the material reality of displacements in the hi/story of ...Acadians, Aboriginal people of North America and Jewish people – and their discursive significance in the work of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow” by identifying a “sentimental racism” and an “extinction discourse” in Longfellow’s work (101). She uses Kane’s *Moonlodge* as an example of “writing back” to Longfellow’s *The Song of Hiawatha*. Eigenbrod contextualizes Kane’s play about the search for identity, explaining that colonization led to a “double displacement,” meaning the loss of land as well as the removal of children from families (110). She recognizes the importance of a single actor performing all the characters as emphasizing the complex identity construction of Agnes, the main character (110). Kane, she says,

[e]xposes the phoniness of depictions of “Indians” in imaginary constructs by writers like Longfellow and, at the same time, she *accepts* all of these as part of her story and history...[This] all-inclusive identity construction in [her] narrative may be considered

another strategy of 'writing back', re-framing disempowering and fragmenting experiences of colonization in a world view of interrelatedness. (111)

In this critical analysis of Longfellow, it is not enough to identify the racism of his work, but also the effects of his well circulated writing which promoted an "extinction discourse" (101) as well as the colonialist fantasy of "auto-genocide" (Brantlinger in Eigenbrod 107). Eigenbrod explains, using the contemporary artistic voices of colonized people, that although the scholar can identify this problem, these artists have already responded in their own ways. I find her focus on Kane's accepting of history and the inclusive nature of her identity-construction to be useful in understanding the nuances of the play, with its one actor playing several characters in order to explore and appropriate, using humour and sarcasm, pervasive stereotypes of First Nations people. I consider Eigenbrod's article an example of a literary analysis of Kane's text, which through a close reading finds a complexity to respect while considering her work in a postcolonial context. Eigenbrod's analysis of the acceptance of all the types of identity also fits in with Levinas' theory of Totality and Infinity – they are not opposed and exclusive of each other but co-exist.

In "Making Relations Visible in Native Canadian Performance," an essay published in *Siting the Other: Re-visions of Marginality in Australian and English-Canadian Drama* (2001), Rob Appleford is much more focused on the theatricality of dramatic works. He argues, "by making the relations between performer, story and audience visible, Native playwrights and performance artists articulate a sense of self that is at once multivalent and grounded, both destabilizing passive definitions of identity and championing active subjectivity" (235). He considers the "sites of reception" to be crucial to the understanding of Native performance and wants to examine the "desires and ideologies that influence how non-Natives perceive Native

theatre” (235). To discuss these ideas, Appleford uses Kane’s *Moonlodge*, Daniel David Moses’ *Almighty Voice and His Wife* and Floyd Favel’s *Lady of Silence*. His analysis of Kane’s play focuses on the sections where she embodies Agnes’ efforts to find identity – the Hollywood Indians and Brownie songs. He also points out how the miming of a scream “the audience is not permitted to hear” when the character Agnes is taken away from her parents denies the audience inclusion in the character’s pain/self (236-7). This connects with Glissant’s proposal of the importance of opacity in postcolonial relations. Some things are private and not to be shared. Appleford uses a modern form of semiotics that is informed by reception theory and a feminist use of Lacan’s concept of the gaze to understand the changing representation of identity that can occur in aboriginal theatre. This reading/viewing of aboriginal performance and the purposeful evasion of a fixed gaze definitely makes sense when considering Kane’s plays.

By examining the various published versions of the text of *Moonlodge*, Kane’s comments on her creative process and her sociopolitical intentions as well as critical response to it, we can begin to see how Kane’s work can be considered postcolonial and why it is important to understand it in this way. Because of her sharp focus on the importance of women in community as well as the inclusion of the theme that Lo and Gilbert have identified as the narrative of origin and loss in this play, her work could be ghettoized as women’s or ethnic theatre. Instead, it is clear that Kane has an intention of ‘writing back’. She is aware of the power of the cultural fragments that have been appropriated and re-writes them. She is also aware of what she is willing to share in an intercultural setting while she creates new texts and theatre practices. Most importantly though, it is clear that in the orality and constantly developing responsive nature of her work she is resistant to the dominant cultural impulse to claim total understanding and authority.

### **CHAPTER THREE:** Being on the Edge of a New Frontier: *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy*

As discussed in the previous section focusing on Kane's *Moonlodge*, her published creative work evades a fixed form by using multiple characterizations performed by the single actor avoiding rigid meanings. In this section I will move on to Kane's next published work, *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy*, which is again available in two differing print versions. This play shifts away from the focus on identity creation and aboriginal women in community displayed in *Moonlodge*, yet still features the work-in-process, open-ended style. It further explores the results of intercultural relations. After examining the two published versions, I will explore the elements of music, humour and movement in the work as they elucidate Glissant's concepts of relational identity and rhizomatic form.

*Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* is a family story. All the main characters represented are related by birth or marriage – we have Kokum and Old Man as the grandparents of Ruby who is the result of an intercultural relationship between Rodeo Princess Mom and Cowboy Dad. There is also a character called Indian Cowboy who is identified as an Uncle in the first version but, as I will explain, is a more malleable character in the second version. Each character tells fragments of the story and their versions of how Ruby's parents got together, and what happens after her mother dies. The emphasis in the play is on Ruby's life and status as a mixture of Cowboy and Indian. She is at times portrayed as a wild pony that eventually gets tamed by a cowboy. Having two different versions of the script to work with -- one published much more recently than the other – I am tempted to validate the latest version. However, I will examine and comment on the differences between the two versions considering both as valid texts that offer remnants of performance.

The first version, in *Dramétis: Three Métis Plays*, edited by Greg Young-Ing [Cree] and Leanne Flett Kruger [Cree/ Métis], was published by Theytus Books in Penticton BC in 2001.<sup>6</sup> The introduction calls the play a work in progress, and describes its production history – first produced in 2000 at Main Dance in Vancouver and the En-owkin Centre in Penticton and then in Whistler in 2001. Significantly, the text is preceded by three pages of production photos, unlike the other two plays in the anthology. I think this may be the editor’s indication that the text of the performance is not enough to explain the work. Extensive editorial notes precede the script:

The evolution of this script is still on going. This version will undergo more drafts. It is the nature of Margo’s works to begin in an experimental state first ... Her work is rooted in Oral Storytelling traditions and therefore improvisation is at the heart of her work. The story remains the same but the way it is told varies slightly with every telling... She likes to use audience response as part of the show as a stand-up comedian might... The style of this piece was developed from Margo’s way of script development that begins in the body as improvisation, with and without voice, with and without text. The extended movement is often non-literal and subsequently the movement for Ruby is her text; just as the other characters use a hybrid of Aboriginal storytelling and *commedia ‘del Arte clown* characters to share their perspectives. (Kane 2001 278)

This introductory note touches on many important aspects of Kane’s work. First, the idea that, although this is a published text, the work will still change; second, the nature of the development of her work, which is through movement of the body and third, the importance of movement for a central character in the play.

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<sup>6</sup> Theytus Books is Canada’s oldest publisher of indigenous books and is First Nations owned and operated.

The first version of the play opens with the Kokum/Old Man, who is “one and the same character,” entering through the audience and visiting with them (2001 281). The character then sings and chants a song about walking the long Red Road. Kane then changes costume to become Ruby who is “moving throughout” as she takes a drink and then explains that she does not know which path to take. She then starts running back and forth becoming a wild pony (2001 283-84). The pony runs through forests and hills, through fields to the edge of town and then the edge of a dark canyon where she stands. The canyon is a dark place of internal judgment and criticism, externally symbolized by a battle between “Cowboys and Indians”. The music shifts and there is the sound of a telephone ringing, while Kane becomes the Indian Cowboy who speaks about land as a place for production and “moving from job to job until I got a hankerin’ for settlin’ down” (2001 286). Old Man/Kokum then returns and talks about being pushed out; some people agreed to take pieces of land allotted in treaties while others kept moving, eventually squatting in road allowances (2001 287). Kokum then speaks about her husband’s work to support the family and tells a joke about two cowboys seeing an Indian from far away. The older one tells the younger one not to shoot at first, when he is far away and only visible as a small figure. Once he gets close enough, and the older cowboy gives the younger one permission to shoot, he cannot do it, because he has known the Indian since he was small (2001 288-89). Ruby then returns, remembering childhood times playing in the mud and dressing up in her mother’s fancy clothes, which leads to a brief cameo of the Rodeo Princess/Mom character winning her crown. She makes a speech to her fans – undercutting the fluffy tone with a political view: “I see how large our communities have grown and how we can take over this fair land that was always ours anyways. Oops” (2001 290). Kokum and Ruby then introduce Cowboy Dad, who describes working, and dancing with the Rodeo Princess at the bar.

The play then moves into Kokum/Old Man disapproving of the match and Ruby wondering about her family tree. Kokum says, “We don’t have a family tree. We got family bushes” (2001 293), and proceeds to describe the various mixing that has happened in their family between Cree, Saulteaux, Chinese, French, and English. Ruby is distressed by her apparent lack of belonging and Old Man offers to fight. Ruby then starts feeling like she is sinking in mud. The first act ends with the Indian Cowboy capturing a wild pony.

Act two opens again with a comic scene: Old Man/Kokum hosts a community radio show, giving lessons on how to be an Indian. The scene ends with Old Man dancing a jig and then moves into a somber scene discussing the death of the Rodeo Princess. Ruby talks about her mother’s death and then tries to outrun it, turning into a pony and describing how she wanted to be a cowboy. She then changes into her father who talks about moving to where the work is, and reads a passage from a Louis L’Amour novel while the musicians play Ennio Morricone’s score from “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly”. Cowboy Dad gives Ruby a ride on a carousel and then he is gone. Kokum says he is off in search of another frontier and sings Hank Williams’ song, “Mama Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys”. Ruby feels lost, stumbling around, tired of being in the middle of a battle. The stage directions then call for Kokum/Rodeo Princess/Ruby to sing John Prine’s “Angel From Montgomery” (2001 306). After the song Kokum/Old Man grieves the losses of people, buffalo and land and wonders who will be left to remember once everything is gone. Ruby then describes the mix of music her ancestors have given her. Kokum reinforces the mixing that has happened for so many years and the Indian Cowboy decides to move on – wondering what to bring and what to leave behind. In Ruby’s final speech she describes being in a field: first she is running (like a wild pony), then she changes the verb to riding (as a human on a horse). The change in verb indicates an acceptance

of humanity (both her own and others) (2001 309). The play then ends with a reel and Ruby singing Cher's song "Halfbreed" with the band.

The first version of the play is split up into two acts comprised of thirty-six sections. Fifteen of the sections are Ruby speaking, fourteen Kokum/Old Man and the remainder split up between the other characters. Kane has one woman play her ancestors, changing costumes and characters onstage in full view of the audience. They are all in her, parts of her to be revealed. The combination of the wild pony/girl character works well to represent youth and vitality. The portrayal of this mixed character running and exploring and then being caught is both beautiful and sad. The comedy invites the audience in and gives the play a warmth. As she moves between characters, Kane draws attention to the theatricality and performativity of both race and gender. It is interesting to consider the frontier, which is constantly being renewed by economically motivated movement, as Homi Bhabha's third space where cultures come together. Ruby expresses both the pain and the promise of the hybrid in the third space. A hybrid person must manage the battles within family, friends and self, yet mutual acceptance can lead to action and creativity.

The second version of the text was published in 2009 in volume two of *Staging Coyote's Dream: An Anthology of First Nations Drama in English*, edited by Ric Knowles and Monique Mojica. Kane's introductory note is left out, as are the photos, and instead Knowles and Mojica describe Kane's career and the production history of the play, and include a short analysis of some of the themes: "a history of encounter, of loss, of pleasure and of pain" (2009 207). This script skips the first three pages of the Kokum/Old Man introduction and instead gives a quick introduction of each of the characters, starting with the Indian Cowboy, then Kokum/Old Man, Ruby, and finally the Rodeo Princess.

Music is still integrated into the show; it now opens and closes with the folk song “Red River Valley” (2009 209). Also included is the Eagles’ “Witchy Woman” (2009 210), the spiritual “Golden Slippers” (2009 211) and Cher’s “Halfbreed” sung by Kokum midway through the play, after her speech about cultural purity (2009 215). “Angel from Montgomery” (2009 220) is still sung, but after the death of Rodeo Princess and by Kokum alone. The Rodeo Princess’ death comes shortly after the Pony Capture sequence and Ruby’s pony riding. Ruby changes her riding rope into a noose, possibly indicating that the death is a suicide. Kokum/Old Man then talks of loss. From this scene of mourning, the play then moves into the humour of the radio show.

The play now opens and closes with the Indian Cowboy character talking about “Movin’ Camp”. He says, “It’s like being on the edge of a new frontier. Havin’ to move out into new territory. Movin’ camp. Whadda ya take with you? Whadda ya leave behind? It’s never easy” (2009 209). At the conclusion he adds “But you know there’ll be new stories to share around the campfire. Learnin’ new songs. Makin’ new songs together. It’s the sharin’ of the journey together that’s gonna make the journey easier” (2009 222).

Half of the thirty sections of the second version are titled for Ruby and the Indian Cowboy, twelve are now Kokum/Old Man and the other three are the Cowboy Dad and the Rodeo Princess. At the end of the play, Ruby and the Indian Cowboy merge into one character – before she speaks, the stage directions say: “*Picks up INDIAN COWBOY’s hat*” (2009 222). She then talks about a world that wants to categorize her and she identifies herself: “I am an Indian Cowboy. A living treaty” (2009 222). There are no stage directions for movement or a change in costume. Then the Indian Cowboy speaks about leaving, and learning new stories and making new songs.

The 2009 version is much more concise and has a more clear plot line involving the coming together of cultures and the capturing of the pony. There is loss with the death of the Rodeo Princess, then resilience and carrying on. It ends with hope of making new songs and sharing a journey. The difference between the two versions is significant. Much of the same material is included, but cut down by about fifteen per cent. The order of the scenes is different, and now there are two characters made up of male and female: Kokum/Old Man and Ruby/Indian Cowboy. In Knowles and Mojica's introduction, they list four more productions since 2001, including a 2006 tour in Australia for the Dreaming International Indigenous Performing Arts Festival (2009 207). Kane continues to develop the performance as she engages with new artists and audiences. She responds to her audiences' reactions as a performer in the midst of a production, and then further responds as she changes the text of the play that represents the performance. It is clear that she is continually open to dialogue and is still Saying her piece in a Levinasian formulation.

At this point, a more thorough examination of Glissant's poetics of relation will be of help in understanding the role of music, humour and movement in the play. J. Michael Dash translates and interprets Glissant's poetics of relation to mean an "emphasis on proliferation, excess, exuberance, becom[ing] naturalized in a world of uncertainty and indeterminacy. The ideal text then becomes a kind of hyper-text which is not unidirectional or fixed but a web of segments that are interactive and polyvocal" (178). This is a very good description of Kane's *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy*. Further, he explains that identity needs to be re-imagined: "The old mechanisms of identity, the traditional process of recognition and delineation, can no longer be maintained in a situation of cultural chaos. Identity is no longer stable and becomes threatened by otherness" (179). Instead, Glissant explains a new way of considering

identity: “ ‘Root identity’ is typified by a central, predatory downward-growing shaft. ‘Rhizome identity’ is characterised by horizontal encounter, not depth” (179). At the beginning of this play, Ruby is bewildered by her choices. She has many paths that she can take, her connections to multiple characters are staged and, as noted above, when she asks her Kokum “Where do family trees grow? Do we have one?” the response is: “No, we don’t have a family tree. We got family bushes, bramble bushes, tangled overgrown bramble bushes” (2001 293). Birgit Däwes also quotes this section of the play when she is commenting on genealogy and family in Native North American Theatre: “These differentiations of family are particularly relevant for the context of Native North American identity during a long history of intercultural encounters... This non-linear, heterogeneous notion of kinship is also phrased metaphorically by Margo Kane in her play *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* (2001)” (176). The rhizomatic form is clearly identified in this play, and recognized by Däwes, as an element of Native North American theatre.

Music in the play is a representation of this kind of growing network of connections. Kane is in one way performing solo but at the same time she is on stage with three musicians: a fiddler dressed as a Métis voyageur, a guitarist dressed as a cowboy and a percussionist dressed as an Indian (2001 281:2009 209). These musicians provide original music composed for the dance/movement segments as well as to underscore some of the monologues. As the first version of the play ends, the music becomes more of a focus: Kokum sings Ed and Patsy Bruce’s song (popularized by Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson) “Mama Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys” (2001 303), then Kokum/Rodeo Princess/Ruby – three generations singing in one body -- sing “Angel from Montgomery” (2001 306). The show ends with two songs, first a reel, “Smash the Window,” and then “Halfbreed”, which the Ruby character sings (2001 309). The progression of the music is an indication of the increase in harmony between the characters,

a heightening of pleasure and the confidence shown when a character belts out a song. The second version of the play also has a focus on the songs, sometimes given to a different character to sing, but in this version they match the mood more closely: e.g., Kokum sings “Halfbreed” after she talks about cultural purity (2009 215) “Angel From Montgomery” is sung after the death of the Rodeo Princess (2009 220); and, as stated above, the play opens and closes with the music of “Red River Valley,” a melancholy song about leave-taking (2009 209, 222).

The connection between music and intercultural mixing is most clear in Ruby’s final speech in the first version. She is talking of the confusion and tension of being expected to declare an allegiance to one side or another but not being able to choose because of the cultural mixing in her blood, which she compares to a river flowing over stones:

(MUSIC: *drumbeat*) smooth round stones bouncing along with currents as old as the canyons along which they speed, currents that carve pathways through soft sedentary rock, rock that is varied in its mineral content, as varied as the kinds of life it supports, the blood is as varied as...the music (MUSIC: add *fiddle and guitar*) which my father’s father carried with him from his Irish Scot’s homelands, that mingled with the drum and chant from my mother’s people, the Cree and Saulteaux. The dance which was shared around cold winter nights, the camps alive with their frolicking, camps alive with camaraderie despite their differences. This is what I want to remember. (2001 307-08)

In the second version, this speech is shortened but the sense of cultural mixing through the sharing of music is still present (2009 222). The importance of the music is clear at this climax of the play. Ruby declares her decision not to choose an allegiance while the matching of the

meaning of the words to the sounds of the music emphasizes the connection of the musical code along with the dialogic.

Another, perhaps less evident, use of Glissant's concept of rhizomatic identity and horizontal growth is Kane's use of humour throughout the play. One way that humour works is by identifying something that the audience also recognizes and then shifting it. This could be considered as looking at something from the perspective of one node of the rhizome and then shifting to another, still connected but separate space and re-looking from that perspective. The first version of the play has more humour. It opens with humour right away as Kokum/Old Man work the audience. One of the lines is: "that forest you call Stanley Park. We call it woejdojfkjfolk;lskpfapoelfmsm! Why do you have to rename everything?" (2001 282). Public discourse about the renaming of indigenous lands is a political issue and by mentioning it she connects with the audience and then makes the joke about the unpronounceable names. She shifts the tone; her humour is about altering perspective and surprise. Kane is self-deprecating at a time when there is great awareness about not being disrespectful to aboriginal culture, using her position as an insider to make the jokes. In the first version she also has Old Man chant in his opening song: "All creation and all its creatures know me/I run with the buffalo/I dance with the deer/I play with the antelope/I burrow with the groundhog" (2001 282). A few scenes later she makes the Buffalo Bill Joke about killing an Indian (2001 288-89). These lighter moments are cut from the second version, definitely changing the tone from a bit of a stand-up comedy act to more of a cohesive play. There are some funny moments included in both versions: Rodeo Princess speaking to her admirers about "taking back the land that was always ours anyway" (2001 290-91; 2009 211); the "How to be an Indian" lessons and Radio Show (2001 297-99; 2009 220-21); and, although the order has been changed, the irresistible singing of Cher's

“Halfbreed” (2001 309: 2009 215). Kane appropriates this bizarre 70s pop culture iconography, and then by changing the perspective heightens its ridiculous nature. I contend that the humour in the play, along with the music, can be considered the connections between the developing nodes of the rhizome. The perspectives are different, but through music and humour, audiences are encouraged to move back and forth between them.

As music and humour allow movement between perspectives that Kane offers in the play, it is also essential to examine the role of physical movement of the body. As Kane explains in her opening notes to the first version, her creative process first comes from movement and “the movement for Ruby is her text” (2001 278). We can find traces of the movement by reading the didascalia, exemplified in this description of the Ruby character first appearing on stage:

*Ruby removes Kokum’s skirt and shawl, scarf slides around neck. Places them reverently over fence, memories of her family and their stories rise to the surface of her mind. She crosses to campfire, crosses to water pail, drinks from the dipper, then lets the rest of water dribble into the pail. Looks around. (2001 283)*

Descriptions of movement are also found in the details of costume/character shifting, as from Old Man to Kokum: “*Costume – Old Man removes coat revealing Kokum who takes scarf from around neck and covers her head, tying it under her chin. Kokum moves cross stage to sit on stump at campfire. She drinks from tin cup and stares off for a while before speaking (2001 287).*”

These movements are key to understanding the co-existence of the characters.

Movement defines Ruby’s character. She is unsure of which way to turn at the beginning of the play and then later becomes a wild pony, running to the edge of a canyon. The physical movement of Ruby’s character in particular and the moving between characters through Kane’s shifting of her body, voice and costume help to create meaning in the play. In Michelle La

Flamme's PhD dissertation, "Living, Writing and Staging Racial Hybridity" (UBC 2006), she uses both Kane's *Moonlodge* and *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* to analyze the performance of a hybrid *soma* text body as one which signifies hybridity. La Flamme developed the term *soma* text

to draw attention to the range of visual clues that are based on the whole body of the mixed race person...Together these two words signify the ways in which the ambiguous signifiers of a racially hybrid body are "read," like a text, given specific ideological value and acquire different meaning in diverse sites. (11)

Her research is focused on determining the centrality of embodiment in hybrid narratives in Canadian literature as well as drama. La Flamme both cites and agrees with Appleford's argument that avoiding a fixed gaze and making visible the looking relations in an intercultural performance are essential to understanding these types of plays. Although Kane's *Moonlodge* is about the search for identity rather than a biracial experience, La Flamme uses it in her thesis because Appleford's theorizing about Kane's reversal of the gaze supports her theories regarding the discursive power available in the embodied *soma* text on stage (224-5). In her analysis of *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy*, La Flamme explains that "Kane is literally placing her biracial *soma* text on stage and inviting the audience's racialized gaze to witness her transformation as her persona comes to embrace a third space paradigm that is both 'Cowboy' and 'Indian' " (250). Kane performs multiple characters in this play as she does in *Moonlodge*; in contrast however, the topic of this play is the hybrid identity and all of the characters played are related to each other. Part of the brilliance of the play is this physical representation of all of the people who make up one person.

Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins in *Post Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*,

also note the significance of one actor playing multiple roles, and how the fluid movement and role changes “emphasize the performativity of the body and thus frustrate viewers’ desire for a fixed and unitary subject” (234). They further explain how this type of performance makes the body more malleable and

stretching of the borders of corporeality not only claims theatrical and, by implication, cultural space for the post-colonial subject, but also expresses his/her expansive and flexible identities. The strategic use of form emphasizes the manipulations of the body on stage, as simultaneously split and multiple subjectivities develop into sites that disrupt the colonizer/colonized binary. (235)

As these writers point out, the physical body of the performer enacting the multiple characters is a structural use of movement that complicates the audience members’ viewing and understanding of the experience.

In the first version of the play, Ruby’s last speech has her describing being in a field. First she says she is running (like a wild pony), and then the verb changes to riding (as a human on a horse). The change in verb indicates an acceptance of humanity (both her own and others): “I imagine running, no riding across...Riding like the wind. These lands. Full of all us creatures breathing and feeding and growing...crawling and walking...sailing...jigging and reeling!” (2001 309). This listing of verbs, signifying movement, further strengthens the focus on change and process. At the end of her speech the fiddler plays a reel – which is music that almost involuntarily causes movement.

The movement in the play is also a physical manifestation of the importance of travel, or moving on in frontier-style cowboy culture or nomadic aboriginal culture. Old Man, who talks about moving because the settlers kept coming, refers to this in the play: “Mostly they just

moved west to continue their way of life. Travel where the game was. It was west and more west. The country was being developed and finally many people ended up livin' in the road allowances" (2001 287: 2009 216). Cowboy Dad, who moves on after the Rodeo Princess dies, also demonstrates the essential nature of movement in cowboy culture.

If we return to Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*, we can see that he defines "the experience of *relation*... expressed as *créolisation*... in terms of the accidental, the unpredictable... 'an unprecedented dimension which allows each one to be here and elsewhere, rooted and open'" (Dash 181). This is a concept essential to *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy*. Ruby is a hybrid character, eventually in the second version even merging with the Indian Cowboy. Her identity is unpredictable and needs to be created through connections both here and elsewhere, rooted and open. In the final speech in the second version, when Ruby/Indian Cowboy talks of moving on, asking, "Whadda you take with you? Whadda you leave behind?" he/she is talking about rootedness. Then, when she/he says "there will be new stories to share around the campfire. Learnin' new songs, makin' new songs together," the emphasis is on the openness (2009 222).

My analysis of the two versions of *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* presents another example of Kane's method of continual response and revision, which I argue is evidence of the open nature of her creative process. This second one-woman multi-character performance is also an excellent example of a form that utilizes multiple perspectives that are linked and communicating, through music, humour and movement. Celia Britton, in *Édouard Glissant and postcolonial theory: strategies of language and resistance*, explains the concept of relation in this way: "relation is, among other things, a principle of narration: what is 'related' is what is *told*. And it is also what is *relayed* from one person to another, forming a chain or network of narrative 'relations' " (164). In thinking of this, one can consider *Confessions of an Indian*

*Cowboy* as a play that is related orally by a number of relations, and just like traditional orature, can change with each telling.

In my next chapter, I continue to explore the importance of movement in Kane's work, but in the context of her efforts to establish a horizontally organized aboriginal performing arts infrastructure in Vancouver. She continues to move audiences but now she is also working to move performers, institutions and even government bureaucracies.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Speaking of Full Circle First Nations Performance and the Talking Stick Festival**

In February 2009, I began volunteering for Full Circle First Nation's annual Talking Stick Festival. The experience started very easily, by my filling out a volunteer application online. Next I was invited to attend an "orientation/cultural gathering" at the Roundhouse. We sat in a circle as Kane spoke of the origins of the festival and the company. A man then welcomed us, drumming and singing a song. From the quick comings and goings of the staff, it was clear that they were very busy with preparations. Nevertheless, I felt acknowledged and in a space that had been created purposefully for welcoming newcomers. For the rest of the meeting, the volunteer coordinator explained the jobs to be done and what to expect as a volunteer. There were approximately twenty-five volunteers present. My first shift was the "AbOriginal Writers" storytelling series with tea and bannock at the First Nations House of Learning (FNHL) at UBC. It was a pay-what-you-can event and I worked the door, greeting people and making sure the donation can was visible. This was my introduction to both the FNHL and a Talking Stick Festival event; I felt welcome and like I could be of use. Having never been to a Talking Stick event before and also knowing very few people, I was glad to have a clear purpose. I did not feel like an out of place observer, but instead like a (very minor) support. I particularly loved the combination of storytelling and sharing of food. Despite the large space and the gathering of two hundred or so it felt friendly. Part of the performance experience was sharing tea brewed from local plants and served by ethnobotanist/media artist/educator and artist Cease Wyss [Skwx'u7mesh].

I volunteered for a few more events that year and in reflecting on that first festival, I realize that I felt welcome, but also, at times, uncomfortable. I was outside of my usual sphere.

There were many times when I was not sure what I was supposed to be doing. There were many occasions when I was experiencing something totally new and I had to be present and attentive at all times. As I come to the end of my thesis research on Kane and her community work, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's statement, from *Decolonizing Methodologies*, that "indigenous research is a humble and humbling activity," resonates with me (5). After volunteering in 2009, I felt like I had lots to learn, and was grateful for the inviting space. The Talking Stick Festival is not a bureaucratically manufactured educational or cross-cultural opportunity – the purpose is to create a social movement which will provide a space for contemporary aboriginal performing arts, healing the aboriginal community and helping to shift from an existence defined by colonial hierarchies to a self-defined postcolonial one. There is a need for support to make this happen. This need, as well as my interest in the larger project of postcolonial theatre, has led me to continue to volunteer.

Thus far in this thesis, after outlining my purpose and the postcolonial theatrical context I am working within, I have given an overview of Kane's career. I discussed the Sayingness or Infinity in the resistance to totality as exemplified in *Moonlodge* as a play, both through its publication in different editions and through Kane's engagement in ongoing critical discussion around her work and cultural appropriation. I have outlined the ways in which Glissant's rhizomatic/relational identity concept is useful in considering *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy*. Here I will continue considering the importance of the rhizomatic structure – but within the arts infrastructure organizing that Kane has been doing. This concept has proven valuable in my attempts to survey and understand Kane's broader arts organizing and context. I will also further address the intercultural nature of her work, examining how it fits Lo and Gilbert's proposed model and how that model fits with Deleuze's concept of milieu (or middle) as articulated in his

work on Bene's theatre. I will demonstrate how Kane's method of organizing runs counter to the dominant cultural vision of a performing arts company or institution. She is organizing a network of performers and audiences to heal the aboriginal community, acknowledging the actuality of intercultural sharing and working to create a safer and more equal space that privileges the aboriginal performer and audience but welcomes the non-aboriginal ally. This leads to an understanding of contemporary aboriginal performance that is not mediated by the mainstream media but recognizes the creative originality of aboriginal artists while they work with their traditions and at the same time respond to the contemporary world. This is all complicated by the availability to the general public of a mix of interactive social media and web-based information, through the company's Facebook page, Twitter account and website. However, before I go much further with my analysis of Full Circle and the Talking Stick Festival, based on my research through reading as well as through personal experience and interview, I need to establish my position.

I came to this research topic after studying Kane's play in an academic setting and volunteering at the Talking Stick Festival in 2009. My relationship with the company has been developing over three years, but in a very limited capacity. I have volunteered for approximately thirty hours over the three years, corresponded by email with various company members, known the TSF volunteer coordinator for over ten years, and spent about two hours with Margo Kane in an interview. In order to interview Kane for my thesis I had to pass a UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Review Board process and Kane signed an informed consent form. But as Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains, "Consent is not so much given for a project or specific set of questions, but for a person, for their credibility. Consent indicates trust and the assumption is that the trust will not only be reciprocated but constantly negotiated – a dynamic relationship rather than a static

decision” (136). I am a bit of a shy person, but not overly, yet I still feel unsure of my position when interacting with the company. The times when I was most comfortable were definitely when I’ve been a volunteer, clearly appreciated by the staff. I have felt very awkward in requesting time for my research specifically. I think this would be the case for me regardless of whose time I was asking for, but it is definitely heightened in this research situation where I am an outsider in various ways – not a theatre artist but an academic researcher, not aboriginal but of settler descent. I feel that I have built some relationships over the years – when I see some members of the company on the street, we stop and chat, but I am still very much getting to know the company and Kane. This is a process, still being negotiated and ongoing. What I present in this chapter is a reflection on my experiences thus far, with the acknowledgment that my perspective is limited.

In order to acknowledge the multiple ways that Full Circle is working to build a social movement through its performance company, I would like to explain some of the main ways, beyond attending events, that the company invites community or audience interaction. First I will review some of the information that is available through the Full Circle First Nations website and then I will follow up with the results of the interview I did with Kane in January 2011. Kane established the performance company in 1992 after having worked in theatre, film, television and performance art for many years. “Full Circle speaks of many images: full gathering of people – all races, cultures, communities, perspectives; completeness, inclusiveness, wholeness; the completeness of a journey; unceasing movement – no beginning or ending” (“About Us” n.p.). It is not surprising to me that the company’s mission statement reflects the Levinasian concepts of Totality/Said (“completeness”) and Infinity/Sayingness (“unceasing movement”). The company documents also explain the importance of working with First Nations

traditions in the context of contemporary interdisciplinary techniques. The website is a useful site of information about the Full Circle company, its history and the Talking Stick Festival, offering opportunities for reading about and viewing their work. The website also includes some interactive elements: offering people opportunities to become a member of Full Circle (free), sign up for the newsletter, donate money or buy a ticket to a performance, as well as providing links to their Facebook page, Twitter feed and Youtube channel. The interactive parts are mainly to enable donations. The social media are used to offer more current (even daily or hourly) accounts of the company's activities. While these things could be termed interactive in that they allow the user to choose images to view, posts to read and (on Facebook) a chance to post comments, they do not really foster interpersonal relationship building. They seem mainly like a more immediate way of presenting ongoing activities that are not filtered through another media source. I can imagine that if one already felt connected to members of the company, this would be a way of interacting (or perhaps if I had grown up in the online world, I would understand the more interactive possibilities of this sphere). The social media could also be considered a manifestation of the constant work in progress and Saying.

After volunteering for various Talking Stick Festival events, reading Kane's plays, briefly meeting with her when she was Artist-in-Residence at UBC in 2009-2010 as well as seeing her perform in *Where the Blood Mixes*, I requested an interview with her. I sent her the interview script that BREB had approved (see Appendix One) in advance, but when we spoke, we didn't cover all of the topics that I originally outlined. This was a purposeful strategy – I wanted to introduce topics relevant to my research, but also let her speak without leading her to

only answer my questions<sup>7</sup>. We spoke for over an hour and she explained the work she has done over the last eighteen years to keep the company going, the reasons for the various projects and the future direction of the Talking Stick Festival as well as her own creative work. Of particular interest to my study were her thoughts on the structural form of the company necessary for working within a community and the challenges that has created for funding; on the shift towards embedding the Talking Stick Festival in a physical neighbourhood; on her experiences with intercultural performance; and on the necessity of creative work in the aboriginal community while acknowledging the sacrifice she has made in her own creative work to build this infrastructure. All of these points lead to a further understanding of her community work with which she intends to help move aboriginal culture towards a more dynamic relationship with contemporary postcolonial Canadian society.

Kane began by speaking about the formation of the company. She explained that she thought she formed it rather late in her career – she was in her early forties -- and that she has wondered if she would ever see all of her work come to fruition. Initially, she focused her comments on the funding for the company and her frustrations with not being recognized for the work she was doing. “We’re just not a traditional theatre company per se and we’re much more...we’ve got a lot of different kinds of perspectives around creating work and creating audience and working with the community to inspire them to want to become part of what we’re doing.” She then went on to describe specifically the challenge that she faced with Canada Council theatre funding:

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<sup>7</sup> I directed the conversation to four topics: the founding of FCFNP; the invitation to participate that seems to be a theme running through her work; the necessary nature of creative work; and her experiences of cross-cultural performance.

We weren't being seen for the work we were doing. They expected us to do a season of work...in a certain fashion. And it didn't matter what I explained. There's a built-in bias, an automatic bias. ... So we kind of had to get grants from all over the place. It was really exhausting actually...writing that many grants for your small programming.

This statement is supported by the information available on federal government websites about grants allocated to Full Circle (see Figure 2). They received the largest amount of money (\$370,000) in 2008 (which is also the year the company received the least number of separate grants). The types and number of grants that the administrators of the company have applied for and received over the years are extensive. According to the Canada Council reports, besides grants for Aboriginal Arts and for Theatre Organizations, Full Circle has received grants for Writing and Publishing (2006/2007); Music (2004/2005/2006); Audience and Market Development (2005); Director of the Arts (2003/2004) and Outreach (2001). In 2001 they began receiving small grants from Inter-Arts: \$12,000 in 2001, increasing to \$25,000 in 2006. Inter-Arts is a section of Canada Council that funds “integrated and contemporary circus arts professionals and arts organizations” (“Canada Council: Inter-Arts”). Canada Council defines integrated arts as “artistic activities with a singular artistic vision that combine art forms, or integrate existing art forms into its own distinct form” (“Inter-Arts Office: Guidelines and Application Form”). *Integrated* is a key word for the work that Full Circle does. It can be defined as the opposite of segregated and also as uniting or reuniting disparate entities. Integration also involves movement, change and the “forging [of] new texts and theatre practices” as described by Lo and Gilbert when they discuss postcolonial syncretic theatre.

Fiscal Year	Canada Council Funding (Number of Grants)	Canadian Heritage: Canada Arts Training Funds (Number of Grants)	Total Federal Funding (Total Number of Grants)	Average Worth of Grant
2009	\$126,500 (4)	\$155,000 (3)	\$281,500 (7)	\$40, 214
2008	\$120,000 (2)	\$250,000 (2)	\$370,000 (4)	\$92,500
2007	\$82,950 (7)	\$110,000 (1)	\$190,950 (8)	\$23,868
2006	\$146,000 (8)	\$140,000 (2)	\$160,000 (10)	\$16,000
2005	\$133,500 (10)	n/a	\$133,500 (10)	\$13,350
2004	\$84,400 (7)	n/a	\$84,400 (7)	\$12,000

**Table 1: Full Circle Federal Funding 2004-2009**

Sources: “Searchable Grants Listing,” *Canada Council for the Arts*, 23 March 2004, Web, 11 March 2011 and “Disclosure of Grant and Contribution Awards Over \$25,000,” *Canadian Heritage*, 1 March 2011, Web, 16 March 2011.

Kane explained that Full Circle moved the company over to Inter-Arts completely in 2009:

We moved out of the theatre section, they weren't supporting us because they couldn't see...they couldn't understand...they were just too traditional...I do different kind of work, process-related work. I worked in a lot of the performance art centres...And it was immediate, whereas to actually plan a theatrical show and all the funding and all the people that you need to make that happen it was just such a long journey. When you have no money and you're trying to sustain a company...So I found that the company eventually, was better served in Inter-Arts and that was only in the last maybe three years or so that we've moved over, totally...And before that it was challenging because we could only get a certain amount of funding. Politically, I think, it's partly because it's

just an old model. I don't know what the new model would look like but it's a very closed system.

Part of the challenge of being seen as a theatre company is the expectation that you will mount a season of work and tour. Kane's goal of engagement with community runs counter to this.

I did *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* a couple of times and at one point I did it at the Roundhouse and we had decent crowds and decent revenue. I can't do that all the time...I toured a lot, you know, I like to tour. Toured with that show as well. That was a little bit bigger show; there were five of us as opposed to two of us. It's hard to sustain all of that activity and still build some kind of community base.

This helps to explain the tension between a traditional theatre company that is expected to mount shows and tour and the community engagement and development that Kane values.

Part of this tension comes from what Kane sees as the necessary structural rhizomatic form of the company working with a community. At the beginning she envisioned the company as a way to create an ensemble of aboriginal performing artists. As time has gone on though, this has become too difficult. The last show she developed was "The River Home", which she started creating with the ensemble in 1994. The show has had five performances over eleven years, in Vancouver, Banff, Alberta and Harrison, BC ("About Us: Touring History"). She discussed her reasons for creating the ensemble and "The River Home":

I developed it...from being in the workroom with people for a month. But they still never had the full skills that they needed to have. I always stood out. I couldn't have a full ensemble because I was way too experienced and everybody else had no experience. So that's... not really a true ensemble, it's really if you want to have people that work the

way you work, training them isn't necessarily the way you're going to find them. That was very disheartening for me, it was very disheartening. Because I really wanted to work with other people in the way that I wanted to work. So, I didn't give up.

While the ensemble training does continue, it is more projects-based and Kane has focused the company's efforts on the Talking Stick Festival. "So we build a lot of partnerships with people and we try to develop a rapport with them so that they know they can come to the festival and be part of the festival." This is one of the methods that I would consider a kind of rhizomatic growth. Kane talked about the need to build a very broad foundational base in order to reach everybody and how this takes the form of relationships with individuals:

It comes down to the individual, really quite frankly...an individual within an organization that's working on a great idea and is working with youth, and ...we'll give them space to be part of our festival. And over time, if they want to come again, we're happy to...we take people's ideas right up to almost the last minute, it's a bit nutty actually, quite frankly. But it is what it is, and if we can accommodate you we're happy to do so. So that's the major way that we've been building those relationships is by engaging with people or inviting them to be part of the festival if they have an idea.

It is clear from this statement that even though a more efficient organizing method would be to have deadlines and perhaps even commissioned work, the company puts greater value on their supportive relationship with individual artists and organizers. Kane sees the festival as a way to give hope and focus:

Give the community of artists across disciplines, give them some hope, give them a little bit of audience. Give them a chance to share what they were doing with an audience. But

over a long term of course you need to build audience, you need to have things that the audience wants to come and see, you need to be able to have paying tickets, you need to have, you know, a structure that is going to support all of that, so that's what the company has been basically trying to do for the last eighteen years.

This is the struggle she has with the company: how to be flexible enough to support artists and at the same have a sound structure supported by a group of people who can plan and follow through, who have worked together long enough that they develop a common vocabulary.

But with having a couple of interns here this year, we were able to do a bunch of outreach this summer, so that we send them out and they let people know about the festival, and just say hello and be at different events...and be seen. It's pretty traditional kind of outreach you know, its getting to know people and being at their events. If they need stuff for fundraising, give them stuff for fundraising or... it's just kind of being around, being part of the community.

The interns that she is speaking about are paid with the training funds from Canadian Heritage (see Figure 2). Training interns to learn the skills of arts administration has helped spread out the responsibilities for running the company. The multiple people working administratively can also be considered, using the rhizome metaphor, as the links between the various nodes of the structure. The administrative team is very conscious of creating relationships with people and then staying connected: "it's really hard to find those ones... that might be keen to join us. When we do find them, we just keep them engaged, we make sure we know where they are, we make sure we call them in." This building of connections will eventually become part of the larger

structure that lasts. The company also uses the funds as seed money to support artists who work independently. Kane spoke of an example from this year:

So we said OK, let's give some money to them... And the other thing is [the artist] needs to learn too, she needs to put some effort into this too. We can't just give away stuff to people. They need to actually want it and have to do the work, some of the work, some of the heavy lifting. So we gave her some money so she could do the heavy lifting.

In this way, the company uses its structure to mentor other artists to produce their own work.

During the Olympics, the festival had to find new venues because there was so much going on in the city. One result was that Talking Stick had events at the Britannia Community Centre site in the Grandview Woodlands neighbourhood. Kane spoke of this as a turning point in the festival's history. Since they began, they have had venues all over the city, ranging from the UBC campus in West Point Grey, to downtown Vancouver at the Roundhouse, to the east side at the WISE Hall, to the city of West Vancouver at the Kay Meek Centre. After 2010, even though the events at Britannia were not necessarily well attended, the administrative team realized the potential in being more grounded in a particular area. The 2011 Talking Stick Festival had many more events in the neighbourhood; they still made use of the community centre and the hall, but there were also events at cafes and restaurants along Commercial Drive. Kane said,

The concentration in the Britannia area is to make sure we get people in the neighbourhood coming out to things and it's pay what you can...we'll have to do a lot of outreach, but just...it's exciting; you just feel it can fly in a very short period of time.

Kane is identifying here the creation of a site for the festival that can interact with an existing community of both urban aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. She hopes that the use of small businesses this year will inspire owners of other establishments to get involved as well. Two of the events this year, the spoken word night at Café Deux Soleils and the Salish Seas Writers Collective at The Pond Tapas Bar and Grill, were sold out. Street level storefront venues such as these make it more possible to have a milieu, as defined by Deleuze in “One Less Manifesto: Theater and its Critique”<sup>8</sup>, with which it is possible to interact. Kane recognizes that people are only going to come to an event if they are engaged in a way that serves them, excites them. She is looking for ways to make the sharing mutual. She imagines a post-festival community meeting: “a gathering at the WISE hall and invite everybody in and say, let’s talk about the festival, let’s talk about next year, who’s doing what, who’s wants to do what.” In locating the festival in a particular urban space Kane sees an opportunity for more community engagement:

it means that as more people then get engaged, then the whole community is excited by the possibility and it also means then you can plan for other events throughout the year, and people will come... We want our people, our families, and all ages to be able to see creative work by aboriginal artists and we want it to be affordable, we them to be able to come, so if they don’t have to take a bus, they just have to walk, that would be great.

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<sup>8</sup> “The milieu assumes a third figure here: it is no longer an interior or exterior milieu, even a relative one, not an intermediate milieu, but instead an *annexed or associated milieu*” (257). In this sense Deleuze is describing both a time and a place that draw upon existing elements.

It is interesting, given the importance of different forms of movement in her work, that she is attentive to how her audience is moving to an event. The creation of a human scaled<sup>9</sup> physical site for the Talking Stick Festival also echoes the importance of physical movement in Kane's creative process.

The importance of the aboriginal community's seeing aboriginal performers cannot be overstated in Kane's vision. She has established her work within aboriginal communities very purposefully, based on her experiences as a performer in mainstream theatre and film.

I wanted the work to actually influence society. And I can't influence the dominant culture. I can't by myself, I can't do that. I need to influence and I need to inspire the people that I love and that I've grown up with and that I'm wanting to encourage the development of our own communities... repair our communities, inspire them and educate them, use our creativity for balancing out our communities. For the well being of our communities...the artistic and the creative voice needs to be part of that circle.

This is a key concept for Kane, and it makes her seem uninterested in intercultural work. This is similarly the case when she explains: "it's got to be my people that have seen that work because it's great to have allies in the non-native community but really quite frankly...we have to do it for ourselves. We can certainly use help to do it but we ultimately...we need to see our children performing and creating, drawing or designing or writing."

As we were speaking, I described Lo and Gilbert's model for intercultural work and asked her to respond. She said:

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<sup>9</sup> A site that can be accessed by people using their own energy, biking or walking rather than the mechanized energy of cars and transit.

I mean for a long time, in cultural conversations, political conversations, it's been a really tough road... because you're always in relation to a dominant culture, that has...that thinks their way of seeing and viewing and doing things is the world, is the way it is. And it is for them. It's like...you don't want to be the one who is always fighting to be understood, or you know whatever else. So I just gave up. I just...I walked away. It was...I don't like to give up. I'm a fighter. I fight in other ways.

When she says that she gave up and decided to fight in other ways, she is explaining that she has given up trying to share within a dominant culture setting. Instead, she has worked to create a more equal and safe setting for intercultural work. Her work has been intended to strengthen artistic interpretation of aboriginal culture, so that when, in Lo and Gilbert's model, the disc is spun one way by the dominant culture, there can be some resistance and response, to send the disc spinning back the other way with force. She also considered her experiences as a performer in an intercultural setting, as an aboriginal performer, sometimes dealing with very agonizing issues in front of a non-aboriginal audience:

So cross-culturally I don't have the same problem on stage anymore. I still have a little bit of reticence, because I don't want to [pause] ... you know, I have my vulnerability too...I can overcome my insecurity a bit, cross-culturally...I have a certain amount of resentment for having been held back, in my life, by forces of the world. And I don't want to take them out on people individually. I do sometimes, I'm not proud of it. But I know that I'm also, kind of, that our community is suffering, and suffered...has suffered and is suffering. And we have to get ourselves through it, but we need allies to do it... So culture plays a role, but it also needs at sometime to be kind of, um, permeable. Not

something that separates us, something the art can move back and forth across, you know.

Kane's reflective honesty and vulnerability as she wrestled with these thoughts is an indication of her willingness to move across the divide between the two of us as artist and researcher. It is also clear again that she is focused on culture as "permeable" and sees art as moving back and forth across cultures. She articulates her use of humour as a way across this divide.

I don't want to beat people over the head with stuff either; so I have a certain amount of humour in my own world, in my own self. So with a certain amount of compassion for people that they didn't know, they don't understand, or they're or...and you know a certain amount of anger. All those feelings have a place in the right balance of things.

People came to hear, they came to hear. And they were listening.

It is clear from her comments that performing and organizing are not without ambivalence for her, on a personal as well as an organizational level. The frustrations of running an organization lead her to think that she would like to give up, and also make her think of the irony of trying to create a lasting entity in this way:

This is the dominant culture way of thinking. And I say to myself, you know what, my peoples come from nomadic peoples, they travelled with what they could carry on their travois, on their horse, on their dog, on their back. That's it! They knew the impermanence of those things and...there's a wisdom there. Why do I have to build and build and build...and why does it have to be? And I got stuck in this kind of thing of having to build a system, a foundation and all this stuff because I wanted something that could withstand...that could serve many of us through the years. But buried into that,

entwined in that is a way of thinking that it's gotta be this way and it's gotta be bigger and it's gotta have more funding, its gotta have more revenue, it's gotta have more bums in seats.

This is one of the contradictions with which she lives. Her way of organizing runs counter to that of the dominant culture, yet she has to find funding to support it through existing structures. She is critical of the existing expectations that are based on an ideal of permanence and unlimited growth. Her reflection on the wisdom of nomadic people whose lives are defined by movement is also a key to understanding her work.

Another dilemma that she lives with, and that she proposes is true for many aboriginal people, is the personal drive to get up on stage. She talks of feeling reticent to perform in the Talking Stick Festival herself. "And I feel kind of apologetic...why don't I just throw off this whatever...this reticence to be who I am on the stage? Partly...some of that maybe traditionally [what] we are struggling against. We're struggling, you know our whole community is struggling that we don't see each other on the stage." Kane recognizes that the absence of visible creative artists from the aboriginal community is a serious problem. "Some of us didn't make it and some of us still have the chance to make it. To make a full expression of ourselves. Some of our people, that are my age and younger than me, have gone, they're dead. They didn't get to be fully creative, they didn't get to fully engage." In her work with the company and with the festival she is trying to ensure that this doesn't happen any longer.

The sad irony, though, is that by dedicating herself to this work over the last eighteen years, she feels that she has limited her own creative productivity. She has carried the administrative weight – she repeatedly referred to her work as an administrator as “doing the heavy lifting” – for too long. She expressed hope that the administrative team that has been

growing has finally become experienced enough to do more of the work. She described being in the last third of her life and wanting to cut down the extraneous work she is doing and focus on creative work again.

And I find that when I perform...it [is] a real natural place for me to just unburden myself and be who I am...it may take me a while to actually want to tell the truth or say what I mean or lay it on the line...and I find that I can do it. I can do that on stage... And there's so much pleasure in being able to talk to people... and have them listen. There's something about that, I think, that's really important.

Kane's use of the metaphor of "heavy lifting" for administrative work and her description of performing as a place to "unburden herself" also fit with her thinking about change and impermanence among nomadic people. It is very hard to move or move far when you are carrying a heavy load. Yet at the same time, if you have the assistance either of a group of people or a structure to carry the load, then you can move and bring the important things with you.

Kane hopes that she is now at the point where she has done enough of the structural organizing and fundraising for the company that she can find time to return to her creative work in earnest. Full Circle First Nations' funding support from Inter-Arts as well as from Canadian Heritage for training arts administrators has helped to create a stable structure. They have been able to create a network of engagement between performers and community through the Talking Stick Festival. The plans to base the festival at the Britannia site are opening up new possibilities of community and physical engagement. All together these efforts have begun to show results in strengthening aboriginal culture and contemporary art. Kane summed up her work, saying, "the hope has been, that we would be able to create work and have an audience of

our own people and inspire them. It's such a simple dream. But oh, my Lord, it's huge. It feels like I've been at sea. In the middle of a sea." I hope, for her sake, that landfall is in sight.

## CONCLUSION: Spinning Back

This study of Margo Kane's work from 1990 to the present day has examined her performance art and plays as well as the administration of her company and performance festival. The connecting thread through all of Kane's work is movement: of the body; between audience and performer; of meaning through textual instability; and of contemporary culture through social change. Her work is illuminated by and itself illuminates the larger considerations of postcolonial performance. The Levinasian concepts of Totality and Infinity as well as the Said and the Saying are particularly valuable in that Kane's work both reflects the concepts and demonstrates how they are not in opposition to each other. Instead, as Hiddleston asserts, "the ethical insistence on Infinity, or the Saying, is conceived alongside the apparent security of Totality or the Said" (19). Glissant's focus on poetics as a freeing of the imagination which serves as a precursor to inspire political change has been useful in understanding Kane's conception of her performance company; his concern with both grounding in a specific place and openness in his poetics of relation also makes his theoretical work relevant to understanding Kane's *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* as well as the administrative structure of her company. Lo and Gilbert's model for Interculturalism is key in identifying the constant movement of Kane's work. Kane's work also links to Balme's theory of syncretic theatre. Her performance work evinces many of the elements he names -- particularly the interruption of ritual and the use of the liminal space around a ritual; creolization and the use of the actor's body through dance, movement and music -- are clearly apparent.

*Memories Springing/Waters Singing* exemplifies Balme's observations about the use of ritual in syncretic theatre. It also uses water as a metaphor for enabling dialogue between distinct elements. In this work, Kane breaks the fourth wall and has her audience physically

disassemble, move and then reassemble the performing space, changing their expectations and perceptions. In *Moonlodge*, as a woman performing multiple characters alone, Kane enacts a physical demonstration of Levinas' concept of infinity – the multiple and unending perspectives that exist in the world. She uses humour to build relations with an audience. Additionally, the different editions of the text function in terms of the concepts of Saying and Said. Kane is concerned, in this piece, specifically with the experience of aboriginal women. Kane's critical writing about her creative work and the theatre in general is an example of her efforts to place her work in a specific sociopolitical environment – one that is actively working to decolonize the aboriginal community. The inclusive nature of Kane's identity construction through Agnes in the play fits in with Levinas' theory of Totality and Infinity – they are not opposed to and exclusive of each other but co-exist. Agnes' miming of a scream as she is removed from her family is a purposeful evasion of a fixed gaze, akin to Glissant's concept of opacity in postcolonial relations. It is through the orality and constantly developing responsive nature of *Moonlodge* that Kane resists the dominant cultural impulse to claim total understanding and authority.

Kane continues with her work-in-process and openness of style in *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* while further exploring the results of intercultural relations. In her discussion of this work, Kane identifies even more clearly the importance of movement in its development as well as in the expression of the character of Ruby. Again, one woman plays multiple characters, changing costumes and characters onstage in full view of the audience. As she moves among them, Kane draws attention to the theatricality and performativity of both race and gender. The concept of a constantly moving frontier is central to the play. Dual editions of the published play are evidence that Kane responds to her audiences' reactions as a performer in the midst of a production, and then further responds as she changes the text of the play that represents the

performance. This is more evidence that she is continually open to dialogue and is still Saying her piece in a Levinasian formulation. The humour in the play and the music can be considered as connections between the developing nodes of the rhizome. The physical movement of Ruby's character in the context of La Flamme's concept of the *soma* text as she changes into other characters through Kane's shifting of her body, voice and costume helps to demonstrate *créolisation*. *Créolisation* is used in the play as an essential concept to establish Ruby as a hybrid character, who eventually, in the second version, merges with the Indian Cowboy. This also resonates with Gilbert and Tompkins' point that the physical body of the performer enacting the multiple characters is a structural use of movement that complicates the audience members' viewing and understanding of the experience. Her identity is unpredictable and needs to be created through connections both "here and elsewhere", "rooted and open". The two versions of *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* present another example of Kane's method of continual response and revision, which is evidence of the open nature of her creative process. *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* is a play that is related orally by a number of relations, and just like traditional orature, changes with each telling in order to honour the presence of the audience.

The administration of Full Circle First Nations Performance and the Talking Stick Festival provides further examples of the importance of movement in Kane's work. The social media connections presented by the Full Circle Company are an immediate way of presenting ongoing activities not filtered through another media source and also an interesting and new manifestation of the constant work in progress and 'saying'. The company's recent funding opportunities through Canada Council's Inter-Arts program are related to integration involving movement, change and Lo and Gilbert's identification of the "forging [of] new texts and theatre practices" (35-6). Rhizomatic growth is used in organizing the company: multiple administrative

assistants building relationships with individual artists and organizers and then supporting them in their work. The company's move to the use of one main physical site for their Talking Stick Festival is a way to engage with a milieu on a human scale while privileging self-propelled movement. Kane's description of the importance of creative work in the aboriginal community has given a new understanding to Lo and Gilbert's model for intercultural performance as one where the work strengthens artistic interpretation of aboriginal culture in order to send the disc spinning back with strength. Kane reveals her ambivalence to the development of a permanent, always-growing theatre company as expected by the dominant culture, placing herself in the context of her nomadic ancestors who understood the importance of movement.

My focus on Levinas' philosophy and Glissant's poetics illustrates how the concept of movement, which runs throughout Kane's work, suggests its postcolonial nature. The theatre-specific postcolonial observations by Lo and Gilbert as well as Gilbert and Tompkins also suggest ways of understanding Kane's work in a postcolonial context. Although some of Balme's elements of syncretic theatre have been visible in my analysis of Kane's work, I believe that I have demonstrated how movement should be considered as an element on its own – not just as a sub-category to the importance of the physical body. Kane's work also illuminates these postcolonial theories. Levinas does not specifically mention movement but the constant dialogue between Totality and Infinity as well as the Said and the Saying in the textual instability of Kane's work exemplifies how the openness to excess that he calls for engenders movement. Glissant's poetics of relation are more specific in their structuring narration as moving through a chain. Kane's characters, in *Moonlodge* and especially *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy*, embody this notion in ways that demonstrate this kind of relay or movement very clearly. Kane's work also helps to focus attention on the spinning of the disc in Lo and Gilbert's model. Their

construction involves almost constant movement, the moment of stasis only happening as the energy builds up to spin back. I also would like to assert, given the thematic connection I have traced through Kane's performance and community work, that her work in creating an infrastructure for aboriginal performing arts has also been a creative act and should be considered equally important in the assessment of the legacy of her career as an artist.

There are a number of limitations of this research. I have not been able to respond personally to Kane's creative work in performance. My research is based entirely on the textual evidence of her performances and some video footage. Considering that I am discussing orality and sayingness, this has limited my ability to respond to her as a performer. This is partly due to the nature of her work in recent years; although I was able to see her perform in Kevin Loring's play *Where the Blood Mixes*, she has not performed any of her own creative works since 2006. She has been busy with the administration of the company and the Talking Stick Festival. I have attempted to remedy this heavy reliance on the texts of her work by interviewing her. As explained above, the interview, while very helpful in beginning to gain an understanding of her work with the company, occurred under the conditions of a newly negotiated understanding of consent and trust.

The strength of my research begins with the filling in of a gap in aboriginal performance literature by integrating the critical academic work that has thus far been using Kane's work in discussion of other issues in postcolonial and aboriginal performance. My research goes further in the incorporation of her creative, critical and administrative work as one continual body of work. My proximity to her company, my personal experiences as a volunteer at the Talking Stick Festival as well as my time spent with Kane one on one have enhanced my ability to Speak

Nearby. Although my experiences are limited, they are also unique to this time and place, and can stand as a witness to the particular history of some of her work.

My work to highlight Kane's articulation of her difficulties with traditional funding structures could be of use in making policy at various levels of arts funding institutions. It could help with re-conceiving the expectations of an aboriginal arts organization's infrastructure. This could apply not just to the federal level as discussed in this thesis but also perhaps to provincial, municipal and private foundations. I have also identified a significant oversight in Daniel David Moses and Terry Goldie's second and third editions of *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*. They have not included any commentary on the fact that they have reproduced the first edition of Kane's *Moonlodge* nor have they directed readers to the other version of it. I would recommend that in any subsequent edition, they either add such comments or communicate with Kane to publish a more recent version of the play – perhaps even one that has been revised since the 1994 edition in *Singular Voices*.

As my final words at this time on Kane's work, I would like to acknowledge that this has been the study of the movement of a creative artist over more than twenty years. As I have identified that a continual theme in her work is movement, and a constancy of change, I acknowledge that my academic research is a Said to her Saying, not functioning in opposition to each other, but as counterparts. This work is a scholarly interpretation of her efforts to decolonize aboriginal people's lives and imaginations. I hope that it can be cross-culturally spun back out of the academic setting, and that the energy accumulated through my research be shared out into the culture of aboriginal performance in Canada. Echoing Kane's description of the Full Circle Performance Company, I end my thesis as the completing of a journey while knowing that there is an unceasing movement to which there is no beginning or ending.

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## APPENDIX ONE: Kane Interview Script

The UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board approved this interview script. I emailed it to Kane before we met for our interview.

### Margo Kane Interview Script

Possible topics for discussion:

1. Could you describe the process that led to the formation of Full Circle First Nations Performance Company? Who was involved in the creation of the company? How has the company changed over the years since it has been established?
2. Could you describe the process that led to the formation of the Aboriginal Training Ensemble? Who was involved in the creation of the ensemble? How has it changed over the years since it has been established? What does the 2-year training currently entail?
3. Could you describe the process that led to the formation of the Talking Stick Festival? Who was involved in the creation of the festival? How has the festival changed over the years since it has been established?
4. Could you describe the process that led to the formation of the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance? Who was involved in the creation of the organization? How has it changed over the years since it has been established?
5. Could you explain “The River Home” project and how it is connected to these other projects?
6. Could you consider how themes from your plays/performances of *Moonlodge*, *Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* and *Memories Springing/Waters Singing* may be connected to your organizational/community work?