

**PLAYING WITH HISTORY: SETTLEMENT NARRATIVES IN PERFORMANCE
AT THREE HISTORY MUSEUMS OF THE LOWER MAINLAND**

by

Amy Clausen

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study of the settlement narratives that are performed at three Lower Mainland historic sites and museums. Employing costumed interpreters to animate and interpret staged historic environments and texts, museum sites are understood as performance spaces. Using this lens, combined with postmodern sensibilities of narrative and ethics, and a critical eye toward racist and colonial worldviews, I observe and analyze narratives of settlement at Fort Langley National Historic Site, Irving House Museum, and Burnaby Village Museum. With careful attention to the material signifiers of theatre, and the uses of staging environments, I also analyze how narratives at each site open or close themselves to contestation. I advance an argument that certain theatrical devices may hold narratives temporally, spatially, aesthetically captive in performative museum spaces. In resisting these captivating devices, performers and audiences alike can confront and contemplate narratives that complicate the *status quo*, and ultimately come closer to the expression of radical intellectual equality.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Amy Clausen.

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for Lucy

Chapter 1: Introduction and Defining the Field

1.1 Overture: Louisbourg National Historic Site

In late 2010 I visited the National Historic Site at the Fortress of Louisbourg, in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. The site invites visitors into an impressive and immersive historical recreation of a day in 1744, when this fortress was the military and strategic seat of the French empire in the North Atlantic. Hundreds of costumed interpreters speak with visitors in English or French, telling and performing the experiences of the residents in the first person. They perform the labour of the era using carefully re-created methods and props, from navigational tools to kitchen equipment.

On the day I visited, I spoke at length with a costumed guide. He explained various details of the era that I found fascinating, including the basic conditions of the prisons, barracks and French military academies on both sides of the Atlantic. He assured me that the French colonizers in *Ile Royale* (Cape Breton) enjoyed a stable and reciprocal relationship with local First Nations. He pointed out that it was at least more positive than the relationship that either would have with the conquering English, who, in 1744, had not yet destroyed this fortress, expelled the French, and waged war against local Indigenous communities.

I was astounded by the sympathy I felt for this man and his comrades, who would be expelled from this territory, if not killed, a few short years later. I was aware, of course, that I was speaking to a character, but the power of dialogue in the first person brought this story to life with real emotional connections I was not expecting. As a result of my experiences and in light of my own visceral response to the performances I witnessed at Louisbourg and elsewhere, I have become particularly interested in the ways that Indigenous, settler and immigrant stories are

presented to the public by costumed interpreters. Was my response typical of a white Canadian viewer? Was it problematic? Are my thoughts about the past—and particularly about the conflicts of the past—changed as a result of my witnessing? And, more generally, where do we learn the things we claim to know about our nation’s past?

In “Decolonizing Interpretation at the Fortress of Louisbourg”, Erna Macleod (2006) offers an account of the origins of the modern reconstruction, its political, economic and tourism ties to Cape Breton, and its interpretation program. Macleod is particularly critical of the nostalgic approach at Louisbourg; she argues that the presence of friendly, quaint, bilingual white interpreters in professional costume cultivate a sense of *nostalgia* among (white) audiences by invoking an imaginary memory of a time when Louisbourg was a symbol of peace and stability in the region. She warns that “nostalgia means ‘homesickness,’ signifying a sentimental longing to return to an irrecoverable past or an imaginary state of being” (p. 367).

If historical *accuracy* were the greater goal of the recreation at Louisbourg, then it would look and feel entirely different to a visitor like me. Macleod (2006) conjures up some of the more disturbing truths about the site; the unpleasant sights, sounds, and smells alone would be enough to shatter anyone’s nostalgia about such a time period and place. Disease, smallpox, tooth decay and 18th century hygiene practices are not presented accurately at Louisbourg, for example. Moreover, the brutal violence of the era and the practice of keeping and trading slaves are entirely invisible in the Louisbourg reconstruction. In order to have a nostalgic effect on visitors like me, historical narratives must be made attractive, backgrounded, or altogether excluded.

Since 1992, attempts have been made to include narratives of Africans at Louisbourg, but “most staff had difficulty accepting that there had been slaves there, saying there was some shame and embarrassment about interpreting slavery for visitors” (King, 2009, n.p.). In 1997,

Parks Canada staff developed “a program to interpret black history in an accurate, positive and tasteful manner” (n.p.) with consultation from African Nova Scotians. These programs were developed to focus “on slaves who had gained their freedom and led successful lives” (n.p.). Marie Marguerite Rose, the central character in this narrative, is depicted as a free woman running a tavern in 1744. The historical character on which she is based was in fact a slave until 1755, a full 11 years after Louisbourg’s simulated ‘present’. The temporal inaccuracies created by the role of Marie Marguerite Rose and other free Black residents renders the trans-Atlantic slave trade all but invisible at Louisbourg. While these roles may be ‘tasteful and positive’ for visiting audiences, they also miss an opportunity to confront this uncomfortable facet of Canadian history, and to struggle with its implications.

The representation of Indigenous experience at Louisbourg is also problematic. It is separated from the Garrison town, and confined to a “Mi’kmaq Trail” located in the Visitor Centre parking lots, beyond the walls of the Fortress. Macleod (2006) contends that while it represents “the sincere interest and co-operative effort” (p. 370) of the Mi’kmaq community and the historians of Louisbourg, the Trail itself is somewhat isolated and inaccessible to most tourists. It is clear that, despite some efforts on the part of the staff, the narratives presented at Louisbourg National Historic Site favour the dominant colonial history of Canada.

The story of Louisbourg highlights the military and industrial project of colonizing ‘the New World’, including French and English naval might, and trans-Atlantic trade routes. These stories glorify the colonial project without confronting visitors with uncomfortable, alternative versions of events. They give voice – and agency – to the early European settlers in Canada, to the exclusion of almost all others. They exclude important information about the particular racial hierarchies that were present in the newly colonized North America.

The story of early French settlement and nation-building at Louisbourg is presented as a reminder of the dual and distinct identities of Canada's founding colonizers. There are decidedly two players in this story, which is set in an imagined period in which French and English were the dominant binary of (pre-) Canadian identity. The Louisbourg story powerfully "brings to life" an oft-forgotten chapter in the nation's colonial history. Giving voice to the French soldier, the narrative foreshadows the coming English forces and sets the scene for later clashes in Eastern Canada. There are exactly two founding nations – France and England – taking part in this narrative, and one has yet to enter the scene, so to speak. By watching and listening carefully at Louisbourg, I became increasingly interested in what narratives other Canadian history museums were performing.

1.1.1 Central Research Questions

Inspired by my experiences in Louisbourg and elsewhere, I decided to turn my attention to the land and stories of my local community. In this project I have studied three British Columbia (BC) historical recreations in order to better understand the historical "players" and the "scenes" they perform for visiting audiences. Understanding these sites as *performance environments*, I uncover and explore some of the dominant narratives that are employed to entertain and educate the public about BC history.

The central research questions guiding me in this study are: (1) *What historical narratives do living history sites in the BC Lower Mainland—such as the Fort Langley National Historic Site, the Burnaby Village Museum, and the New Westminster Irving House Museum—perform and not perform?* (2) *What factors make some sites better suited than others to perform narratives that invite visitors to problematize dominant colonial narratives of BC settlement*

history? Certain interpretive scenarios seem more likely to generate discussion and questions with interpreters, whereas other scenarios may place audiences more squarely in the role of a passive spectator. What are the *theatrical* elements, then, that help to determine those relationships? How do theatrical choices influence the educational possibilities of museums?

I am guided in my research by postmodern sensibilities of history and narrative, and informed by principles of social justice in education. Most crucially, I believe that educational experiences can be transformative when they engage the learner's intellect, imagination, and ethical sensibilities. With this in mind, and an understanding of the complex relationships between Indigenous communities, European settlers, and other immigrants in the Lower Mainland, I bring a critical perspective to my research questions.

1.2 Description of the Research Project

This project is a qualitative study of the formal and informal pedagogical environments offered by three regional, public, BC history sites that employ costumed interpreters. My primary sites of study are Fort Langley National Historic Site, Burnaby Village Museum, and the Irving House Museum in New Westminster¹. These three sites are different in their historical scope, scale, and budget, and my intention is not to compare their programs. Their approach, mandate and resources are vastly different; I discuss these differences throughout my analysis.

My methodology in this study draws from two disciplines. The first, performance analysis, is borrowed from the disciplines of theatre and performance studies, and involves the detailed

¹ To lend context to my research, I made additional observations at the Gulf of Georgia Cannery, Mackin House, and other secondary sites. These helped me to consider a range of approaches to situated and informal historic education, but do not figure in my primary analysis.

description and analysis of performance notes from each of the sites I visited. In employing this method, I play the role of spectator, and follow the action of each site's performance program as an observant witness. In my analysis of the sites, I also use a second method, critical discourse analysis, to identify patterns and make meaning from dialogue, as well as the text-based marketing and informational materials offered at each site. A full discussion of my methods and their purposes follows in Chapter Two.

1.2.1 Positionality

The child of white American immigrants, my education in the history of BC came primarily from the curriculum in the public schools I attended in Vancouver. Field trips, with their freedom to explore beyond the confines of the classroom and the textbook, provided some embodied encounters with *this place*. Visits to local sites left me with lasting memories of local plant and animal species. Museum and site interpreters demonstrated aspects of the human activities that dominate the social studies curriculum in BC, including the fur trade, the gold rush, fishing, forestry, and commerce. It was not until I was in my thirties that I began to consider critical questions about BC history, and how my earlier ideas might—or might not—have been informed by the pedagogy of those field trips.

It was also in my adult years that I began to consider my responsibilities as a white, first-generation Canadian when encountering lands, stories, and artifacts of *this place* that have been stolen, subsumed or otherwise disrespected by white European settlers for two centuries on the West coast. My desire to learn more about the land I call home, and its First Nations, have lead me to two texts that ground my relationship to this work. Both *Decolonizing Methodologies*

(Smith, 1999) and *Unsettling the Settler Within* (Regan, 2010) have informed my theoretical position and my methodology, and I discuss these in further detail in Chapter Two.

1.2.2 Significance

Despite the growth of living history pedagogy, I believe that its impact is underestimated by both history educators and theatre practitioners. It may be that living history is often overlooked by academics because its practitioners are—for the most part—neither trained teachers nor historians (Magelssen, 2007; McCalman & Pickering, 2010). The field has therefore largely escaped the rigours and contestations that academic historians might apply to it; according to Mark Salber Phillips (2004) “the modern professional historian ... proudly distinguishes his [sic] own critical discipline from the merely celebratory or commemorative purposes belonging to less rigorous ways of thinking about the past” (p. 97).

Professionals in the performing and visual arts may likewise distance themselves from “pop-cultural” reenactment practice, because “living history events and battle reenactments are neither framed ... as art nor do they pretend to be anything artistic” (Schneider, 2011, p. 13). Within theatre and performance studies, living history has been marginalized as a kind of amateur practice, traditionally outside of the concern of “academic” theatre artists, theorists, audiences, and reviewers (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009). While some performance studies texts have provided contemporary understandings of the field of re-enactment writ large (Magelssen, 2007; Schneider 2011), they do not address the stories told in Canada, and more specifically in the West. To my knowledge, no performance analysis with this particular focus has been undertaken.

Although the museum spaces I have selected do not claim to be living history museums, they perform historical narratives. Historic sites may impress ideas about Canada's past and present on newcomers to this country and to this region, on school children, and on adults inquiring into their personal or familial relationship to the past. The encounters at a living history site may provide long-lasting impressions about the past; witnessing a performance sometimes stands in for actual historical knowledge, so audiences may confuse a performance that they are witnessing with the historical facts of the event being represented (McCalman & Pickering, 2010, p. 2). This is the potential power of the historical 'truth' in performance, grounded in the 'authenticity' of a simulation of a particular place and time. This authenticity is embodied by scenographic elements, historic artifacts as props, and costumed guides. Visits to historic sites can therefore offer an embodied encounter with the moral dimensions of the past, and provide opportunities for visitors to engage reflexively with their own lived experiences.

Phillips (2004) suggests that like other museums, living history sites "are designed not so much to give us information about the past as to lend *it* additional presence" (p. 99, emphasis added). But what is *it*? Which version of the past is given presence in the site? Living history sites can offer a highly evocative, embodied experience of populist historical narratives. Without investigating which narratives are represented, and which are absent, we cannot understand the curriculum they present to visitors. Herein lies the social and political significance of my study. Embodying place-based history curriculum, outdoor museums are fertile ground for a discussion of social justice concepts, including colonial violence and oppression, racist policies and legacies, and ecojustice, labour, and gender issues. Without critical interrogation, living history pedagogy may contribute to dominant cultural narratives that are racist and imperialist and that reinforce the values of military and cultural colonialism.

To this end, I offer David Austin's (2010) suggestion, in "Narratives of Power: Historical Mythologies in Contemporary Québec and Canada," that "state and corporate power is facilitated and exercised through the production of truth, that is *contrived narratives designed to maintain power, order, and authority...*" (p. 21, emphasis mine). From this Foucaultian perspective, the popular historical narratives that Canadians tell themselves require immediate attention and interrogation by social justice activists, practitioners and scholars, especially in light of Austin's argument that race discourse in Canada is "silently shaping and animating national debate and state policies on crime, anti-terrorism and immigration" (p. 22).

I hope that my investigations and analysis can serve as a record of some current historical-education performance practices in the BC Lower Mainland. By mapping the local field of practice, and paying careful attention to three different sites within it, readers will recognize its power and its possibilities. It is my hope that this study will advance educational research into living history sites in a Western Canadian context. My research reveals settlement narratives in performance that I believe should be examined alongside the historical narratives presented in Canadian textbooks, for example. Although I do not claim that my audience experiences were universal or wholly representative of current practices, I believe they offer a compelling view of some of the historical narratives being performed in Lower Mainland museums in 2014.

My analysis led me to identify and define three theatrical devices—*spatial, aesthetic and temporal captivity*—which I observed in performance. These concepts illuminate how certain theatrical choices make counter-narrative accessible or inaccessible in history museums. In my concluding chapter, I consider how, given freedom from these modes of captivity, counter-narratives and/or different modes of address might produce a more engaged and more intellectually complex experience for visitors in BC historic sites.

1.3 Review of Relevant Literature

As a transdisciplinary project, my study draws from many traditions and disciplines. My literature review is divided into three major sections: 1) living history context and practices, 2) participatory and immersive history education, and 3) decolonizing education in Canada. The first section will give an overview of historical performance communities of practice in North America and beyond. This section includes literature that traces the origins and development of the practice in various contexts. The second section will consider examples of immersive historical education projects that place audience members in second-person interpretive roles. The third section examines some literature on historic and contemporary representations of First Nations in Canadian curriculum, in tourism sites, and in educative historic sites.

1.3.1 The Emergence of Outdoor Museums and Living History Practices

Performances of history may include commemorative, community-based memory-plays, a kind of engagement with material historical objects, processes and technologies, or military and political theatre intended to rouse patriotism. These are practiced both as a hobby by enthusiasts of all ages, and by paid and volunteer staff at sites around the world. On issues in living history practice, scholars generally divide into two camps: on the one hand are scholars who draw from their active participation in particular sites of living history performance. This is perhaps best illustrated by the work of Anderson (1984) and Gapps (2010). These scholars' personal connection to the communities of practice is expressed as a sense of care and respect for the people involved. In contrast, scholars of living history with no claim to its methods or insider status include Handler & Gable (1997) and Magelssen (2007). Because they are outsiders, these

scholars spend more time and energy understanding the nature of the work and the motives of its member communities; consequently, a less personally invested critique is possible. In this section and the next, I have attempted to include research from both of these perspectives.

Most historians of living history trace its origins to the open-air museum of Skansen, in the heart of Stockholm, Sweden. In *Time Machines: The World of Living History* (1984), Jay Anderson describes the village: a collection of houses, churches, artifacts and structures representing rural Swedish life from about 1600. The village opened in 1891 and features singers, live animals, craftspeople and popular folk customs, performed live for visitors; Anderson describes it as the “first ‘living museum’” (p. 19) and calls all future open-air museums of Europe “the children of Skansen” (p. 21). He traces the influence of that museum’s founder, folklorist Artur Hazelius, on the development of interpretive practices in several entertainment and research-based sites in North America. According to Anderson, reenactment performance and living history research have become increasingly accurate and professional over time. These practices have been developed over more than a century by actors, academic researchers, and enthusiasts, and are currently expressed to great effect in major American sites such as Plimoth Plantation’s Pilgrim Village.

Likewise, in *Ecomuseums* (1999), Peter Davis traces the emergence of the outdoor, land-based museum practices which grew in Europe in the 1970s and the early 1980s, and can now be observed around the world. Davis describes some of the deep connections that visitors may make to place in a living history museum: “although physical surroundings are important (landscapes, habitats, buildings), place is much more: it is a web of understanding between people and the environment, between people and their neighbours, between people and their history” (p. 40). According to both Anderson (1984) and Davis (1999), the land-based museums of Europe

developed alongside the interpretive efforts and sophistication of curators, guides and audiences. Several texts in the field of living history and museum education consider how actor-interpreters have shaped this process, and how – to borrow Davis’ metaphor – an actor weaves this web of understanding between people and the environment in these sites.

The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the past at Colonial Williamsburg (Handler & Gable, 1997), for example, is a foundational ethnography of Colonial Williamsburg, America’s most celebrated and most visited historic reconstruction. In 1990 and 1991, anthropologists Richard Handler and Eric Gable spent months among the historic recreations at Colonial Williamsburg. Their study is an in-depth exploration of the culture and community among the staff at Williamsburg. The data includes detailed descriptions of the artifacts, scripted tours, costumes and staged plays, as well as interviews with costumed interpreters, management and training professionals, visitors and tourists, and labour unions representing the workers. This study gets to the heart of the conflict between education and entertainment values in the museum. A central theme is the question of historic revisionism, and what happens to historic interpretation programs when popular history and social history narratives begin to displace the dominant “dead white men” histories that have shaped the popular narrative of Williamsburg.

Echoing the recent program changes at the Fortress of Louisburg, for example, Handler and Gable (1997) describe the “struggle to incorporate African American history into [Colonial Williamsburg’s] mainstream story” (p. 84). They document the emergence of African American historical counter-narratives that were developed over time by African-American interpreters, and offered surreptitiously to complicate the dominant (white) mythologies of Williamsburg. These counter-narratives were ultimately formalized in the “Other Half Tour” (p. 85). The study

documents how the museum struggled with this and other counter-narratives, and offers significant clues into the workings of the professional living history museum.

Clearly, living history participants and performers hold an important key to understanding how narratives are created and performed. Research and interpretive methods are the focus of many of the essays in *Historical Reenactment: from Realism to the Affective Turn* (McCalman & Pickering, eds. 2010). Historical character creation is most often informed by archival materials and oral histories, and communities of practice set their own standards for rigour in research. It is crucial to investigate the process work of the actors in order to understand the pedagogies at work in historical performance. Because amateur re-enactors are often motivated by personal, emotional or family connections to the events being depicted (McCalman & Pickering, eds., 2010), the characters and stories being represented and being overlooked in a particular site may be the result of insufficiently diverse participation in these events.

“Heritage” projects writ large may well be understood as the expression of a community’s affective attitude to the past. In *Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States*, historian Michael Wallace (1981) proposes that American history museums have served a particular class in producing and legitimizing history narratives. From the mid nineteenth-century, he argues, American history museums were constructed by members of the dominant class, and depended upon the preservation activities of exclusive ancestral societies who appointed themselves the progenitors and custodians of American values. “Convinced that immigrant aliens with subversive ideologies were destroying the republic,” (p. 66) these elites occupied themselves with preserving buildings, erecting monuments and creating memorials to fallen soldiers. The heritage homes established by these societies had among their primary goals the ‘Americanization’ the immigrant working class. This transformation of newcomers and youth

required that they adopt the cultural values of the dominant classes responsible for constructing the narratives of early American history. In particular, “good citizenship meant accepting bourgeois rules of political action and abandoning radicalism” (p. 67). The means of production described by both Wallace (1981) and McCalman & Pickering, eds. (2010) reinforce the need for counter-narratives, like those described by Handler & Gable (1997). These perspectives on museum practice also provide context for the struggles of shifting toward more critical history.

Theatre scholars Scott Magelssen (2007), Diana Taylor (2003) and Rebecca Schneider (2011) have offered important contributions from their field of performance studies. Through this lens, living history environment and events are sites of performance. The focus of these more recent texts shifts from a structural critique to an examination of the embodied experiences and identities of individuals who produce, view and critique these practices. Identity, race and memory in American public cultural displays are central to Taylor’s (2003) project, whereas Magelssen (2007) and Schneider (2011) focus primarily on the experiences of the people whose bodies animate American sites of combat and conflict, particularly Revolutionary and Civil War re-enactments in America.

In *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003), Taylor considers the relationship between the way that the archive (recorded history) and the repertoire (performance and ritual, among others) “work to constitute and transmit social knowledge” (p. 33). It is imperative to understand that both are constructed and mediated, and that ‘the archive’ is as changeable and corruptible as ‘the repertoire’ is (p. 19). Acknowledging that both are tools of political manipulation, she asserts that “embodied performances have often contributed to the maintenance of a repressive social order” (p. 22). This collection of essays explores the nuanced ways in which “the multiplicity of forms of transmission reminds us of the

multiple systems at work” (pp. 31-32). Rather than attempting to translate between ‘the repertoire’ and ‘the archive’, we must recognize their powers and limitation. If “only the archive is valorized and granted permanence” (p. 36), then those cultural things that cannot be contained within it tend to ‘disappear’. Taylor argues that repeatable performance behaviors, including ritual, witnessing and gesture, must be understood as belonging to ‘the repertoire’, which cannot be reduced to a single discursive structure.

In *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (2011), Schneider brings a line of feminist performance inquiry to the ‘front lines’ of Civil War battle reenactment in America. She pays particular attention to the body, the gendered poses and positions of war, and the effects of what she calls “cross-temporal-dressing” on re-enactors and spectators. She remarks upon “supremely conservative notions of authenticity—wanting to control and correct events from beyond the grave to resemble a romantic notion of men as men and women as women” (p. 9). She is fascinated by the desire of some re-enactors to actually *touch history*, cause it to repeat, and thereby alter it by their participation. She describes reenactment activity as a net that traps us all “in a knotty and porous relationship to time” (p. 10). Her attention to temporal affiliations, shifts, and “cross-hatching” are particularly useful.

Living History Museums: Undoing History through Performance (Magelssen, 2007) provides an understanding of colonial re-enactment practices, in particular, from the perspective of postmodern theatre studies. Approaching the heritage industry from the perspective of dramatic theory, Magelssen, a theatre historian, conducts his research in various open-air museums and heritage sites. He traces the development of historical narratives and performances from the perspectives of the actors, directors and writers directly concerned with their staging. In chapters on three colonial American sites—Plimoth Plantation, Colonial Williamsburg, and

Sturbridge Village—Magelssen interviews actors and then describes their methods and challenges in theatrical interpretation.

Magelssen (2007) is concerned with the identity and reflexivity of the performers. He interviews actor-interpreters, curators, and managers at length, and his analysis reveals much about his participants' understandings of historical accuracy, realism, and theatrical practices in several major American sites. Interviewees help the author understand some of the nuances of first-person interpretation, third-person interpretation, and creating and maintaining characters. Magelssen explains, "those who practice third-person interpretation often distinguish between educator and actor in order to *undermine* the effectiveness of the latter" (p. 117, emphasis in original). Many third-person interpreters reason that their ability to move in and out of character and time period allows them to answer questions and engage in more robust dialogue. This flexibility leads interpreters to identify their work more closely with the work of teaching. Magelssen argues that this identity has caused professional interpreters to miss an opportunity. While they are reluctant to identify themselves as performers, they are demonstrating commitment to a modernist, naturalist view of *what theatre can be*. To embrace their work as performance, Magelssen argues, would also allow them to consider broader (both more ancient and more recent) performance contexts, including "symbolism, futurism, Dada, surrealism, absurdism, Epic, and Brechtian practices" (p. 122).

1.3.2 Participatory and Immersive History Education

Situated historic education projects use many tools and methods to muddy the lines between performer/teacher/interpreter and audience/student/visitor. Some invite learners into a participatory role, embodying a historic practice or labour. This may be as simple as having

visitors try their hand at panning for gold, or spinning wool using era-appropriate tools. While these activities may not constitute historic education on their own, many scholars and practitioners of environmental, experiential and informal education have highlighted the importance of situated, land-based or environmental education. Many have argued for the need for more nature-based learning spaces, for example, which can offer both children and adults a chance to develop “a sense of community, environmental stewardship, geographical literacy and environmental competence” (Malone, 2007, p. 525).

Historic Environment Education (HEE) places students in an outdoor environment which is intended to cultivate historical understandings through interaction with material historical objects and methods. For example, students use ‘time travel’ methods while visiting a rural site in southern New Mexico where they “undertake many of the everyday activities of the time and place like making fire with flint and steel, grinding corn by hand, and cooking tortillas made from that corn flour over a cow-dung fire” (Hunner, 2011, p. 34). This practice explores the potential for land-based learning, with a focus on school-aged learners using historic artifacts and environments, in the hopes of ‘bringing history to life’ both inside and outside of the classroom. Using historical technologies and artifacts, students learn by embodying the act of living ‘in the past’. Hunner argues that HEE engages many of the students’ senses at the same time, immersing them in an experience that develops cultural, geographic, historical and personal awareness together. This conception of historical awareness is problematic, however, if it constitutes certain *cultural or regional practices*, like grinding corn by hand, or using cow dung as fuel, as being *historic practices*. When traditional practices, and those less reliant on mechanization and fuel consumption are framed as being *from the past*, HEE-participating students may conclude that Indigenous people and others who use them are also *from the past*.

In *Engaging the Present through the Past* (2011), Hunner & Westergren describe how ‘time travel’ methods have been used in many contexts, including recent projects in schools in South Africa. Describing the method as a tool for healing and post-Apartheid reconciliation, Hunner & Westergren describe how participants were debriefed; “the key questions were: What are our grievances? [...] And where do we go from here?” (p. 127). These questions may be a starting point for transformative conversations about healing, but they also address the very recent history, one which South African adults will have no trouble recalling. Hunner & Westergren claim that time travel

is a transparent way of acting out democracy and social cohesion, as it creates ‘spaces of learning’ and ‘safe spaces’ within a historical setting, places where people discuss and reflect on important issues. This can lead to understanding, respect and hopefully a common way towards the future. (p. 129)

Although the authors do not draw explicit connections to Forum theatre, their interest in and means for producing transformative conversations bear striking similarities to the aims and tools of Forum Theatre.

Forum Theatre is a tool developed by Marxist theatre artist Augusto Boal and others, who believed that theatre must reject the coercive model of tragedy and instead fight for the “liberation of the classes oppressed by capital” (Boal, 1974/1985, p. 106). Participants are constituted not as passive spectators but as actively engaged “spect-actors” who are empowered to intervene in the performance narratives. Because of its power in political, labour and social justice organizing, Forum Theatre has been called a “rehearsal for the revolution”. It requires great sensitivity and training on the part of facilitators, the physical and mental engagement of willing participants, and cooperation within a performative framework. Placing witnesses in the

action of the scene also requires them to remain clear-headed and mentally stable through experiences that can be harrowing, like the simulation of a violent or traumatic event. Where historical research, healing and political organizing is being conducted in community settings, appropriate attention to Boal, his collaborators, and critics is crucial.

Other immersive historical experiences may include those marketed primarily as tourist attractions. Across North America, immersive educational experiences offer visitors the chance to “step into the past” and experience first-hand the lives of characters from history. Perhaps the most dramatic example of such a program is “Follow the North Star” at the Conner Prairie Living History Museum in Indiana, which casts groups of visitors as escaped slaves navigating the Underground Railroad at night.

The visitor experience at Conner Prairie Living History is described by Alix Spiegel in a 1999 episode of National Public Radio’s *This American Life*. After a brief introduction, in which participants are asked to “please refrain from attacking the interpreters,” (National Public Radio, 1999, n.p.) they find themselves in a dark field, running across the prairie from abusive slave-owners towards freedom or re-capture. Simulated gunfire, real and simulated violence, threats of sexual violence, and racist language are all a part of the experience:

The idea is simple. We Midwestern suburbanites will not simply learn history. We will live history. We will become 19th century runaway slaves. And for close to two hours, we will face their enemies. We will feel their fear. We will think their thoughts.

Then, when we drive back to our suburban homes, we will carry a small part of them back with us. And maybe this will teach us to think more kindly about our

neighbors, or more carefully about ourselves, or both. This is the idea. It says so in the promotional material. (National Public Radio, 1999)

Spiegel describes the program in detail; the 90 minutes of abuse and terror are more than some participants can handle. The group is abused, degraded, threatened, and generally humiliated at every turn by very serious improvisers in costume. The attention of the “slave-masters” to the young women in the group, to whom they refer as “breeders”, for example, is particularly disturbing. After the group completes the simulation, each participant is informed of their outcome; either freedom in a northern city or capture and a return to slavery in the American south. In a debriefing, Spiegel interviews participants in order to understand what they have learned, not just about the experiences of African-American slaves, but about themselves. Most insist that they would have fought back, had they lived as Black slaves in this period. “It’s hard for any of us to imagine ourselves on the wrong side of history, in the past or in the present,” Spiegel concludes (National Public Radio, 1999, n.p.).

There are some deeply problematic elements to this particular re-enactment. Historical context is all but obliterated in this immersive experience, and participants are left to grapple with their relationship with this disturbing history. Based on Spiegel’s investigation of the site, participants have ascribed contemporary values to historical events. For example, the impression that “I would have fought back” tells us that participants have oriented themselves in history in a way that does not allow for the complexities of changing power and individual values over time. Worse, these participants may move forward in their lives believing that those slaves who did not fight back were somehow complicit in their captivity, abuse and oppression.

In “What Is to Be Remembered? Tourism to Ghana’s Slave Castle-Dungeons” (2005), Sandra Richards offers a very different frame through which to consider the possibilities and

problems of slavery-as-tourism. Richards explores the experiences of African American and African diaspora tourists in the castle-dungeons of Ghana, where men and women were held captive before being forced onto vessels bound for enslaving territories across the Atlantic. Richards describes uses Mary Louise Pratt's term "contact zones" to describe this space, in which "peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict" (Pratt, 1992, as cited in Richards, p. 86). At a site like this, Richards argues, the tourist becomes both spectator and actor. On one hand, "as spectator, she has paid for the privilege of looking at and photographing everything and everyone within her field of vision" (p. 89); on the other hand, she finds herself (and her emotional response) in the field of another tourist's vision, making her another part of the spectacle. Therefore diasporic visitors "enact conflicting identities—emotionally distraught surrogates for enslaved ancestors, smiling tourists, quarrelsome members of a reunited African family" (p. 103) and more.

Other programs invite visitors into participatory roles for different purposes. In "On Being a Mobile Monument: Historical Reenactments and Commemorations" (2010), Stephen Gapps recounts the first ever re-enactment of the Battle of Vinegar Hill, on its 200th anniversary in 2004. Gapps argues that a community participatory experience was the most suitable way of commemorating this event, and that "it educated, entertained, and it was respectful in commemoration" (p. 59). Gapps' emphasis on respectful *commemoration* here (in lieu of respectful *understanding*, for instance) raises questions about the emotional connection that audience-participants were asked to make with (certain) characters in the reenactment. Once again, there are questions about the 'repertoire' here, to borrow a term from Taylor (2003). This

event might be better understood as a ritual event (akin to ancestor worship perhaps), than as a translation or mediation of an event's presence in 'the archive'.

Many immersive history education environments, including 'time travel', situated trauma tourism, and participatory re-enactment, can be framed as distinctly performative acts. In studying participants' affective responses, their presence within a semantic frame, and their performance of ritualistic behaviours, performance studies illuminate a range of possibilities for understanding these environments.

1.3.3 Representation and Decolonizing Education in Canada

Canadian school curriculum is a rich resource for historical narratives about Aboriginal people in Canada. In "Representations of Aboriginal People in English Canadian History Textbooks: Toward Reconciliation" (2007), Penney Clark offers a thorough analysis of representation in English-language secondary-level Canadian history texts. Clark's aim is to "attempt to uncover just what students at this time would really have learned about Aboriginal people" (p. 82) in Canadian schools. She considers three eras of authorship and influence: a first group of texts was authored between 1911 and 1931, and was in use in some districts through the 1940s; the second group was used in Canadian schools amidst much political change in the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s; and the final group includes texts from the 1980s to the present day, presumably still in use in many Canadian districts.

Clark (2007) considers the scope and depth of representation (and omission) of Aboriginal social and political history in these texts, and in later texts considers also the visual representations of Aboriginal life, both historical and contemporary. In order to contextualize her findings, she provides a very thorough summary of major historical events that have shaped

Canadian Aboriginal/settler relations from the Royal Proclamation of 1763 to the Indian Act of 1876 and its subsequent revisions, the Residential School systems of Canada, and various accords, land claims and legal challenges since the 1970s. With this background and context in mind, Clark sets out to uncover major trends in representation of Aboriginal people in each group of texts.

Clark (2007) identifies two predominant attitudes toward Aboriginal people in the earliest group of texts: paternalism and repugnance. Paternalism is expressed overtly in many of the texts that include passages referring to Aboriginal people as “eager children,” “improvident children,” “child-like in their simplicity” (p. 95). The second attitude of repugnance is conveyed in phrases that include terms like “savage”, “worthless” and “ignorant”, and that endow Aboriginal people with a “blood-thirsty nature” (p. 97). Studies and reviews, mostly in the 1970s, concluded that representations of Aboriginal people in Canadian history texts were “often savage and warlike in the early years of European settlement and mostly absent in later years” (Clark, 2007, p. 100). This view of Canadian history supported the progress narratives of European colonialism, and according to the 1974 study *The Shocking Truth about Indians in Textbooks* “treated the Native as an impediment to be removed” (cited in Clark, p. 100). As a result of this and other studies, many texts were removed from circulation based on incomplete information, problematic or wholly unacceptable representations of Aboriginal people and history.

In the contemporary period, Clark identifies several depictions that have come to dominate in history texts since the mid-1980s. For Aboriginal people of the distant past, she identifies the “spectator” and the “Savage Warrior” types. In depictions of contemporary Aboriginal people, she identifies five types: Exotic, Problem, Uniquely Spiritual, Protestor, and Invisible. The final category refers to the absence of Aboriginal people and issues from most Canadian history texts

between the execution of Louis Riel in 1885 to the beginnings of the protest movements in the mid-1960s. Clark concludes with some recommendations for more inclusive history texts, including the use of more primary sources.

Tourism in BC is another instructive source for historical depictions of Aboriginal Canadians, and Aboriginal/Canadian relations. In *Selling British Columbia: Tourism and Consumer Culture, 1890-1970* (2004), Michael Dawson tracks the rise of many BC historic sites as tools of regional tourism marketing organizations. In attempting to attract newly mobile vacationing families in the post-war period, for example, Aboriginal culture and arts were showcased as part of a holiday in exotic BC: “In differentiating BC from competing tourist destinations, tourism promoters had increasingly emphasized the province’s British and Native heritages; they provided, however, no suggestion that these two cultures had ever been in conflict” (p. 167). This depiction served BC’s reputation as a unique destination, and solidified the souvenir market for miniature totem poles around the province. Reducing the Native culture in BC to this marketable symbol, tourism promoters encouraged visitors to consume rather than contemplate. While preserving totem poles as *rare, historical* artifacts, BC tourism operators cultivated “‘Imperialist Nostalgia’ – a common endeavor in which we absolve our complicity in imperialism by mourning the passing of a society that we helped to transform or subdue” (p. 168). Native imagery dominated BC tourism brochures of the 1950s and 60s.

In “Forts, Curriculum, and Indigenous Metissage: Imagining Decolonization of Aboriginal-Canadian Relations in Educational Contexts,” Dwayne Donald (2009) considers how pedagogical spaces separate Indigenous communities from colonial narratives. Donald describes the spatial and symbolic separation of the Europeans inside the fort and the “Indian village” outside the palisades at Fort Edmonton Park. Macleod (2006) describes the same separation at

Louisbourg Fortress. At Wampanoag Homesite at Plimoth Plantation, Native Americans, in 17th century dress, smoke venison and carve canoes while speaking with spectators about both contemporary and historical issues facing their communities (Schneider, 2011, p. 27). Donald (2009) argues that this choice in interpretation—the separation of Indigenous and Colonial spaces and themes—supports the dominant meta-narrative (or myth) in Canadian colonial historical narratives, which explicitly separates Indigenous people from settlers as if the two did not intersect. At forts in Canada, now used as historic museological sites, it is important to address the cultural and environmental interpretation on both sides of the walls. How does the education program invite the learner to understand the lands *outside* the museum, and how are those spaces represented *inside* the museum?

Of Fort Edmonton, Donald (2009) muses that “the colonial artifact represents a particular four-cornered version of imperial geography that has been transplanted on lands perceived as empty and unused” (p. 3). This “imperial geography” invokes historic narratives of tiny islands of colonists/settlers in hostile environments. This places settler narratives and Indigenous narratives in direct conflict, as if the survival and growth of fort communities required the subjugation and/or destruction of surrounding communities. As Donald argues, separating two or more narratives and representing them in isolation is both inaccurate and damaging to contemporary Indigenous-settler relations. Continuing to use the fort as a historic artifact requires that we meet this challenge in spatial representation.

Situated historic education must acknowledge that lands were inhabited, mapped, defended, and harvested before, during and after European settlement (invasion), and that settlement activities (the fur trade, for example) were deeply influenced, and in most cases entirely facilitated, by the knowledge and participation of Indigenous inhabitants. Donald (2009)

proposes a curriculum and research sensibility in the service of decolonizing Canadian-Aboriginal narratives in education. This sensibility, which Donald calls *Indigenous Métissage*, “imagines curriculum and pedagogy together as a relational, interreferential, and hermeneutic endeavor” (p. 5). Engaging with Donald’s *Indigenous Métissage* methodologies in museums and forts invites educators to consider “the significance of an artifact to a place by showing how Aboriginal and Canadian perspectives of the artifact and place are rooted in colonial histories and logics that are both simultaneously antagonistic and conjoined.” (p. 11) In other words, the complicated and conflicting narratives of colonial and Aboriginal history in Canada are partly constituted by their relationship to each other. Weaving them together in the museum space or historic environment “requires an acknowledgement that such places have changed as a result of colonization and settlement. It means that such places are, paradoxically, simultaneously Aboriginal and Canadian” (p. 20).

1.4 Looking Forward

In Chapter Two, I will discuss my theoretical framework and lay bare the methodology of my study. In Chapter Three, I will reveal my performance findings, describing in detail the performances and narratives I encountered over the course of several visits. In Chapter Four, I will use a performance lens to describe how particular theatrical devices hold narratives captive: spatially, aesthetically, and temporally. This captivity, I will argue, prevents interpreters and audiences from engaging in the kinds of dialogue that might invite audiences into an active, critically-engaged intellectual role in the museum, and into a critical historical consciousness.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I will suggest two alternative pedagogical approaches to the practices of living history. I will consider one local heritage house, Mackin House in Coquitlam,

whose animation program reveals a very different approach to preservation and critical history. I will also share my experience of a staged reading of a historical document in Lytton BC, as a different sort of encounter with history performance. These closing thoughts are intended to offer new conceptions of the possibilities of the field, and to encourage creativity among the professionals, volunteers, and visitors who are engaged in situated historical education.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Perspective and Methodology

2.1 Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical angle from which I approach my study is most closely aligned with postmodernist understandings of both the meaning of history, and the possibilities of theatre (and art more broadly). If my work displays a postmodern attitude, it is the one defined by Jean-François Lyotard (1979/1984) as “incredulity toward metanarratives” (p. xxiv). I believe that living history museums should foster such incredulity, rather than offering polished narratives that “protect the consciousness from doubt” (Lyotard, 1988/1993, p. 5, as cited in Magelssen, 2007, p. 127). Perhaps most useful in my study is Lyotard’s warning against ‘realism’, whose objective, he argues, is to “stabilize the referent, to arrange it according to a point of view which endows it with a recognizable meaning, to reproduce the syntax and vocabulary which enable the addressee to... arrive easily at the consciousness of his own identity as well as the approval which he thereby receives from others.” (1979/1984, p. 74). In other words, artists who pursue a realist aesthetic are meeting the needs of a capitalist, consumer culture that relentlessly pursues legitimacy through narrative, including its particular “syntax” and “vocabulary”. Constructing some cultural and historical narratives as ‘true’ or ‘realistic’ is one way that art supports “approvals” of existing power relations, and the social injustices that result from those power relations. Lyotard (1979/1984) therefore insists that the critical artist must refuse to conform, refuse to “lend themselves to such therapeutic uses” (p. 74). The artist must examine and challenge the ‘correct’ rules of art. In my understanding of power, and in my rejection of notions of temporal-cultural progress throughout history, I am also indebted to the works of Foucault.

To begin this chapter, I will ground my position as a researcher in this place, using my understandings of settler colonialism and addressing the task of reconciliation. Next, I will identify postmodern approaches to historical narrative. Finally, I offer my educational theory, which may be called a ‘pedagogy of deliberate confusion’, by applying Rancière’s concept of ‘stultification’² to living history museums, and demonstrating the ways in which stultifying approaches limit the educational encounter in such sites.

2.1.1 Setting the ‘Post’-Colonial Scene

In this project, I observe performance practices in a hyper-local cultural and geographical domain. By that I mean that I am focused intently on three sites of inquiry, all within the Greater Vancouver area, and all of which purport to tell some aspect of European settlement history in this region. To ground this research, I use concepts of settler colonialism and reconciliation to understand the land *on which* and *about which* the museums are telling stories. The complexity of setting the scene owes to the Western nature of museology, and the impositional nature of academic research. The objects of this inquiry—Canadian history museums—and the methodologies I use are both products of Western tradition, and I am a white Western researcher. For these reasons, I am mindful of the complexities of the ‘data’ that I represent in this study, and how they are the products of my understanding of land, of performance, and of research.

² The term Rancière introduces is *abrutissement*. “Stultification” is translator Kristin Ross’s suggestion.

In order to ground my study in the contemporary landscape of a colonized territory, I turn to Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and her articulation of Western and Indigenous concepts of place. The physical conquest and alteration of landscapes, combined with the renaming of lands and waters, have severed or disconnected indigenous people from their livelihoods, their memories and their ceremonies (pp. 53-54). All over the colonized world, lands have been appropriated, and original inhabitants displaced, oppressed and/or confined to reservations. Indigenous artifacts, stories and images have been seized, classified and displayed for the Western market in museums and on stage to entertain Europeans. These practices have framed Indigenous cultures in a Western conceptual framework, “within a language and a set of spatialized representations” (p. 54). As a result, the museum of artifacts—and the museum of performance—is an intrinsically colonial institution. There are those who may argue that the museum can never be decolonized, by virtue of its dependence on the display and commodification of the ‘other’. Critical museum visitors and scholars must recognize that this uncomfortable history is bound up in their/our project.³

I am troubled by the possibility that museums that tell the stories of settlement may serve a greater ‘development narrative’ about the ‘civilizing’ of colonized lands and peoples. In the introduction to *Exalted Subjects* (2007), Sunera Thobani explores what she calls the “master narrative of the nation” (p. 4) and the ways in which it casts “law-abiding ... enterprising ... responsible citizens” (p. 4) in a constant struggle against “outsiders”: “Indians,” immigrants and refugees. She shows how this struggle—which is both historical and contemporary—underpins

³ An excellent discussion of these issues can be found in the scholarship attached to The Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project at Simon Fraser University.

current discourses in politics, economics, and justice. Popular historical narrative, state policies and popular practices can produce “certain subjects as exalted (nationals), others as marked for physical and cultural extinction or utter marginalization (Indians), and yet others for perpetual estrangement or conditional inclusion as supplicants (immigrants, migrants, and refugees)” (p. 6). The extent to which these representations might go unchallenged in museum spaces is central to my research questions.

The “utter marginalization” of First Nations subjects is also central to Donald’s (2009) discussion of ‘Fortress Pedagogy.’ Donald argues that in animating military artifacts like forts, Canadian historic sites may separate First Nations subjects physically and thematically from the main narrative. Therefore, because First Nations activity and culture are represented outside the walls of the fort, First Nations’ narratives of settlement are explicitly outside the concern of the museum visitor:

If we consider the curricular and pedagogical consequences of adhering to the myth that forts facilitated the civilization of the land and *brought civilization to the Indians*, we can see that the histories and experiences of Aboriginal peoples are necessarily positioned as outside the concern of Canadians. (p. 3)

This myth plays out spatially for audiences at Canadian forts, legitimized and re-inscribed by the colonial frontier logics foregrounded by the presence of the fort itself, and its use as a scenographic device.

Donald (2012) further articulates the complications of colonial frontier logics by positing that “the fort, as a colonial artifact, recapitulates the development myth of the Canadian nation by symbolizing this civilizing process—transplanting a four-cornered version of European development into the heart of the wilderness” (p. 95). In this study, it is my responsibility to

recognize colonial frontier logics at work, and to identify the ways that ‘Fortress Pedagogy’ plays out in the various building and geographic spaces that each museum occupies. If the fort—the museum building itself—is a symbol of European military and economic domination, how do education programs within it or around it address the primacy and immediacy of this ‘colonial artifact’? My attention to the position and role of racialized subjects in representations at museums is informed by Thobani’s and Donald’s arguments. My attention to their absence or relegation to the background, is informed by the concept of “racism in absentia” (Austin, 2010).

Being mindful not to suggest that the colonial era is behind us, nor that its power structures have lost their influence, I align my thoughts with those of Paulette Regan, who explores the project of reconciliation in Canada in *Unsettling the Settler Within* (2010). Drawing from her experiences as a white researcher with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Regan foregrounds the relational nature of imperialism, and the ways that our shared stories bind colonizer and colonized together. Understanding the nature and history of those bonds is important work, and those of us who are the recipients of unearned privilege as a result of colonial structures must not get stuck in the denial stage. Regan asks, “under what circumstances would those who are the beneficiaries of colonialism stop denying and choose to act differently?” (p. 66). This question guides my thinking about privilege in this project. I align myself with these conceptions of colonialism, and recognize that every encounter in Canadian museums and historic sites presents an opportunity for dialogue on this topic.

2.1.2 Problematizing Progress Narratives in Historical Performance

Scott Magelssen, a postmodernist theatre historian, pays careful attention to the patterns of discourse that both theorists and practitioners employ in speaking about their work in

reenactment performance. In *Living History Museums: Undoing History Through Performance* (2007), he identifies key modernist themes that unite the practice. Most crucially, he identifies that practitioners have subscribed to an implicit and unexamined progress narrative that guides their work: that interpretation is ‘evolving’ towards ever more authentic and realistic practices. Adhering to these notions of authenticity and realism in performance, Magelssen shows, contributes to the silencing of other voices.

According to Magelssen (2007), many other historians of living history, notably Anderson (1984), have created and advanced this progress narrative. Its mythical origins are at the open-air museum of Skansen, in Sweden, and its pinnacles of sophistication can be found in practices with a high degree of ‘authenticity’, at major American sites. By monumentalizing both ends of this evolutionary chain, and by exalting the latter, Magelssen argues that Anderson advocates for a ‘best practice’ in interpretation – specifically a first-person present tense interpretive style with an emphasis on accuracy and authenticity. The connection that Anderson makes from Skansen to American historic sites is tenuous at best, Magelssen argues, and at worst, this “Darwinistic model negates, erases, and prevents movements of thought in these discourses that might otherwise be allowed to emerge” (p. 5).

Magelssen (2007) argues that the heritage industry’s insistence on theatre as a mimetic, western, play-text based performance ties it to the modernist trope of “telling only those stories that can be backed up by material, factual, recorded evidence” (p. 124). This dependence on ‘evidence’ clearly privileges the stories that adhere to Western (and specifically British-descended) ideas of text, law, science, time and space. When considering violent, oppressive and colonial histories, “taken as a whole system, these ideas determine the wider rules of practice which ensure that Western interests remain dominant” (Smith, 1999, p. 49). When

Western/colonial interests remain dominant, stories of violence and oppression are backgrounded, and in these sites of trauma, “silences and forgettings enact a second wounding” (Richards, 2005, p. 91).

I believe that museums of performance ought to pursue a *responsible* and *rigorous* interpretation program. In sites that address violent and oppressive histories, we should not expect performance ‘realism’ in a Western, mimetic sense. For one, it is clear that not all stories work well in the first-person, present mode of address. The Native interpretation program at Hobbamock’s Homesite is one example, at the reconstructed Native village alongside the Plimoth Plantation Pilgrim Village. Interpretation programs here have rejected first-person interpretation modes. In this situation, a more ‘authentic’ or ‘realistic’ program would require the revival and interpretation of a Wampanoag language group no longer in use, which is highly unrealistic (Magelssen, 2007, p. 15). First-person interpretation as a measure of ‘authenticity’ therefore privileges communities whose languages are widely spoken and understood by the museum-going public.

More importantly, the interpretation of Native experiences in the first-person, present mode would severely limit interpreters’ abilities to provide a thorough and ethical picture of the Wampanoag experiences with Pilgrims, because it would require interpreters to plead ignorance about ‘future’ events; “every injustice, violence, or social movement that occurred after the moment of time selected to be the simulated present is automatically erased” (Magelssen, 2007, p. 18). When the stories that need to be told involve atrocities, violence and injustice, a *rigorous* interpretation must allow for *flexibility and freedom* in mode of address. This flexibility provides a fuller picture than would be available through a ‘pure’ first-person present tense portrayal, in effect locking performers into specific experiences and knowledges.

To avoid this erasure, creators of the Native interpretation program at Hobbamock's Homesite have adopted a third-person mode. In this context, the third person mode of address may be understood as a more rigorous and responsible way to tell stories. Where four hundred years of colonial history are concerned, "repressing events that have occurred since the time displayed is an act of violence" in itself (Magelssen, 2007, p. 18). To insist on strict first-person interpretation is tantamount to "the silencing of other voices" (p. 20) in these narratives.

2.1.3 Ethics and Postmodern Historical Narrative

My understanding of narrative in education is influenced by the position of Roger Simon (2004), which is that narrative accounts *summon us* to respond. Intellectually and emotionally engaged by narrative, we are made responsible for our part in this exchange. With this view of narrative, Simon argues that some testimony has the "potential to make a transactive claim on Canadian public memory, one with the possibility of shifting the stories that non-Aboriginals tell of themselves" (p. 192), thereby transforming relationships between Aboriginals and Canadians. Of particular weight is that public memory is at stake in the exchange:

Public memory is not something given in advance, it is what is at stake in the transitive address, an address that may not reach its destination. The public is not here evoked as an unproblematic 'we' – a we that could incorporate everyone into a homogenous category of the citizen subject. Rather, it is meant to reflect the idea of a people summoned to the responsibility of responding to the accounts of others. (p. 198)

Simon's conception of ethical responsibility is owed to Emmanuel Levinas, whose position on ethics has been described as "postmodern ethics" (Bauman, 1993, p. 84) because its point of

departure is always the other and the responsibility for the other, rather than the progress of the moral self. Taking up their responsibility with/for others, students and witnesses find themselves summoned to respond both intellectually and ethically to narrative. The museum is an ideal location for this exchange.

The recipient of the moral lesson, however, is also a kind of expert, according to Barbara Norman (1996). Her suggestion is that the “postmodern attitude would be to see the expert as a human being who generates questions out of personal experience” (p. 715). I approach narrative in my sites of inquiry with this ‘postmodern attitude’; I bring the “small story” (*petit récit*, see Lyotard 1979/1984) of my own experiences and questions to the experience and I give them equal intellectual weight in my learning. Following Norman’s view, I see the invitation to (critical) historical consciousness as an existential exercise, and not a pedagogical or epistemological one. In other words, like Norman, “I am interested in the experience that a person has in a relationship with what is ‘other’ and not in the ‘other’ itself as a form of representation” (p. 717).

So, upon entering the museum space, how can I understand my relationship to what is ‘other’ and give shape to my own responses when counter-narratives have been under-represented in historical accounts of settlement? What strategies might ‘round out’ the representations of ‘other’ that I encounter? The instinct may be to ‘repopulate’ historical narratives with fresh new characters; for example, new female voices can be added to established ‘masculine’ narratives of settlement. However, Levisohn (2010) argues that a stronger justification “will argue not that stories about women have gone untold ... but rather that the implicit stories about women – those stories that are embedded in prior narratives – are wrong” (p. 15). It is not simply that narratives of the other have been overlooked or under-represented.

They have been wrongly cast into other narratives, and embedded to serve and advance the dominant colonial stories. The addition of the free Black female character at the Fortress of Louisbourg may be an example of this. Being selected to interpret black history in a “positive and tasteful manner” (King, 2009, n.p.), it must not disrupt the sense of safety of the visitor. It is embedded in the service of the dominant narrative.

For this reason, representation of gendered bodies requires careful attention. In the historical performances I am concerned with, women and girls’ bodies are easily marked with differential clothing, accessories and labour roles. In my thinking about gender and feminisms in this research, I attend briefly to female exclusion and denial in historical narratives of settlement. Insofar as my analysis of gender is informed by notions of dominant male social structures, I will explore the possibility that “women’s bodies—through their use, consumption, and circulation—provide for the condition making social life and culture possible, although they remain an unknown ‘infrastructure’ of the elaboration of that social life and culture” (Irigaray, 1977/1985, p. 60). Women’s bodies perform an unknown ‘infrastructure’ behind the historical narratives that primarily foreground military conflict, conservative notions of masculinity, and physical domination (Schneider 2011). Women’s bodies also make up a majority of (often unpaid) labourforce in heritage museums, and in the performing arts more broadly.

Postmodern perspectives on narrative in history education support a re-imagining of the creative and intellectual exchange that is at stake in the museum of performance. The availability of layered narratives that conflict with or complicate each other, rather than support one dominant meta-narrative of settlement, will enrich this exchange. I believe, like Levisohn (2010), that every student of history is capable of negotiating among those narratives. Being summoned to respond to the call of others, students take an active intellectual role in the reception of and

response to historical narrative. This is the crucial opportunity to exercise and develop one's critical historical consciousness. To deny students that opportunity is to rob them of the intellectual and ethical journey that the museum experience can offer. In that journey, "the lack of precision and even lack of coherence among her ideas need not worry us; with the right kind of education and the right kind of experiences, that will come" (p. 16).

2.1.4 Resisting Prescribed Learning or Stultification in Public Spaces

I believe that meaningful learning experiences require spectators (or students) to encounter alternate and conflicting narratives, and then to have the intellectual and creative space to respond freely. In both education and in art, predetermined and prescribed learning outcomes harm both parties in the exchange, the teacher/artist and the student/spectator, by denying intellectual and creative freedom of each in their role. In addition, the insistence on a prescribed 'right' outcome harms the relationship between these two parties by denying any possibility of equality or genuine collaboration between them.

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987/1991) Rancière develops the idea of radical intellectual equality between the parties in the educational relationship. This equality challenges the overall project of modernity, by changing the nature of power in educational exchanges. By denying a power structure based on intelligence, we can deny the progress narrative of schooling, which may be seen as a progressive transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. Teaching from an assumption of radical intellectual equality means that the teacher can still exercise her or his will, for example, by verifying students' work and instructing them to pay attention to the text, but that the teacher refrains from explaining things in ways that assume students are less intelligent. The teacher as willful guide, and as intellectual equal, opens new spheres of learning

and participation. Committed to understanding the possibilities of educational exchanges in new and non-scholastic spheres, I therefore take up Rancière's challenge of radical equality in my view of learning. This requires that we reject the expectation of consensus in educational and artistic exchanges.

We must recognize and encourage different reactions and interpretations as individuals encounter an art experience, and have the room and intellectual freedom to respond. Participation, dialogue and critiques informed by diligent spectatorship will produce truly democratic engagement with culture. Art critic Claire Bishop (2006) explains that for the "supporters of socially engaged art, the creative energy of participatory practices rehumanizes ... a society rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalism" (p. 180). However, artistic projects with prescribed learning or political outcomes may end up having a stifling effect on audiences by expecting consensus among participants. For example, this might be seen in 'commemoration' projects like the one described by Gapps (2010), wherein the affair was characterized as educational, entertaining, and respectfully executed (p. 59). Expecting audience consensus on what makes a thing *educational*, let alone *respectful*, constitutes the spectator as homogenous, subservient receiver of an intended outcome on the part of the artist.

A different characterization of this exchange is possible when we claim a radical equality between spectator and artist. This view is borrowed from the *Emancipated Spectator* (2009), in which Rancière "disputes the distinction between the assumed activity of the artist and the passivity of the spectator" (as cited in Ruitenberg, 2010 p. 216). Ruitenberg (2010), drawing from Rancière's work, argues that accepting radical equality requires us to remain wary of the interpretive efforts of curators, especially when they seek to interpret the artwork on behalf of

spectators, leaving little room for contemplation and reflection on the part of the spectator. By directing the spectator to pay careful attention to the work at hand, curatorial interpretation can make room for spectators' intellectual equality. In short, "there is great value in the experience of being a spectator who is forced to do her/his own work" (p. 222). The political ambition of relational art – however attractive and social-justice minded – is not enough to shield it from professional and robust critique. The critical analysis and discussion of cultural products is the best defense against the "therapeutic" and conformist purposes of participatory arts practice that Lyotard warns against (1979/1984, p. 74).

2.2 Methodology

My methodology follows two traditions: Performance Analysis, borrowed from performance studies and particularly influenced by Gay MacAuley (1998), and Critical Discourse Analysis, borrowed from the social sciences and following the work of Norman Fairclough (2003). The first method places me in the position of audience member, cataloguing observational data and generating rich field notes. Using the second method, I uncover and make meaning from discourses in both textual documents and visual cues from my findings.

In conducting my performance research, I visited each of the sites at least three times to observe various elements of interpretation as they were offered in written materials or performed for the general public. I made a point of visiting at different points during the year, and therefore was able to observe seasonal changes in programming. I visited alone and with others. I visited on weekdays, on weekends, and during special events. I made notes discreetly into a voice recorder to capture my impressions and to make quick observations. I observed only those interactions in areas open to visitors, and entirely public. I did not identify myself as a researcher

unless asked directly about my interest in a site. I did not conduct private interviews with performers, staff, volunteers or other visitors.

2.2.1 Selection of Sites

I selected three local sites for this study based on the following criteria: (a) they present their staff in historical costumes, (b) those staff handle historical artifacts, and give demonstrations, and (c) they are all concerned with some aspect of colonial or settlement history in the local area of the Lower Mainland of BC. Beyond these three criteria, the sites are very different. One is a heritage home concerned primarily with the preservation and presentation of historic artifacts (Irving House); one is an immersive village environment producing an entertaining simulation of the past (Burnaby Village Museum); one is a National Historic Site of Canada, broadly concerned with the celebration of Canadian historic events and identities (Fort Langley).

Although differences in their size, scope and budget will be highlighted in chapters three and four, it bears mentioning here that Fort Langley is administered by Parks Canada, an agency of the federal government of Canada. By contrast, Irving House is owned by the municipality of New Westminster and managed by the Parks, Culture and Recreation of that city. Similarly, Burnaby Village Museum is owned by the City of Burnaby and administered by Burnaby Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services with additional funding from the BC Arts Council and various community partners. These affiliations are suggestive of some major differences between the respective sites' funding models, access to resources, scale and public reach. While Fort Langley employees may have access to training, to resources and to other colleagues at other Parks Canada sites, the two local sites are not connected to a national network. This may mean that they enjoy considerably more independence in their operations, but it also means that employees

have fewer resources and opportunities for advancement. Finally, Parks Canada creates connections between Forts, battlefields, and other historical sites across Canada. Because each site is placed into context with larger regional and national narratives, employees may be more aware of regional themes and connections in BC history. For example, awareness and acknowledgement of First Nations at Fort Langley are likely a minimum standard of training.

In addition to these differences, each of my sites of inquiry ‘do’ different things that I understand broadly as living history. ‘Living history’ normally implies a glimpse into the day-to-day activities of regular people in the past, beyond the soldiers, brigades and organized troupes typically central to re-enactment scenes (Schneider, 2011). Agricultural and domestic labour are typically highlighted, including cooking, mending, and the building and maintenance of structures. The use of historical artifacts or reasonable facsimiles, and the use of costume in the service of historical authenticity are also hallmarks.

Brigade Days is the only ‘re-enactment’ I studied; these are typically concerned with battles and commemorations of specific temporal events. Brigade Days is a special event that takes place over two days at Fort Langley, in which participants recreate the annual arrival of fur traders from the Interior of BC on the Fraser River. I included Brigade Days in my research at Fort Langley because it is the only re-enactment event in my research sites, and because of the participation of the hobbyist re-enactors who animate this performance.

2.2.2 Performance Analysis

I am using a structured and analytical approach to performance analysis, primarily influenced by Gay MacAuley’s “Schema for the Analysis of Performance” (1998). MacAuley’s “Schema” provides clarity and rigour for both the analyst and the subsequent reader by “laying bare the

steps by which the conclusions were reached” (p. 3). Ultimately, this method invites the researcher to establish the material signifiers, extrapolate dominant and significant recurring paradigms, and ultimately to make claims about the relationship between the performance and the events represented (p. 8). In the following sections I will describe the process I developed for collecting my data.

2.2.2.1 Material Signifiers of the Theatre

The first part of my performance analysis is the description of the material signifiers of the theatre spaces I encountered. By theatre spaces, I mean performative areas where I, as an audience member or witness, made contact with a museum employee or interpreter. In most cases, these guides were in historical costume, but in one or two cases I had interactions with employees in other uniforms, of which I make note in my performance notes. These interactions were often witnessed as part of a group of other audience members. In some cases, I was alone with interpreters. I consider all of these performances, and they all figure in my performance notes.

The material signifiers begin with the physical characteristics of the performance space. In my notes, I describe the dimensions and perceived boundaries of the performance space, and its aesthetic appearance. I note the separation of performance areas and audience or viewing areas. Where possible, I make observations about the artistic choices made by the museum designer or curator. I also note the condition of the space, and the presence of smells, sounds (whether part of a designed soundscape or incidental), and other sensory perceptions. Outdoor and environmental staging arrangements also provide context to the historical or cultural conventions

of diverse theatre practices. Scenographic spatiality is described in my sites using terms defined by Aronson (1981) and Balme (2008).

Material signifiers I observed by the performer's presence include the use of costume, props and artifacts. In my observation, I noted the dress, appearance and demeanour of performers. In some cases, I made note of a particularly strong vocal delivery, or weak, unengaging performance. I did not set out to review performances as an acting critic, but the strength of vocal and physical work became one aspect of analyzing the qualitative features of the performers' interpretive methods. I relied upon my background in professional theatre and attempted to assess whether I was watching a performer with or without formal theatrical training. I am trained in the Western conservatory-style, with particular emphasis on vocal and physical flexibility. My attention to physical and vocal "stage presence" is influenced by this training and experience. I am particularly attentive to the specific theatrical skills of textual nuance and vocal presentation, improvisation and spatial "blocking".

Additional considerations in my performance notes concern the perceived role the performer is portraying, including the perceived gender, age, race and ability of a character. In many cases, role is clearly delineated by historical costumes, nametags, physical position in the museum space, and interaction with museum visitors. In some cases, the role is less clear.

The third major consideration in the performance notes is the physical staging, including entrances and exits, and the separation or entanglement of performing areas. This includes the spaces in which I encountered performers and how and why those performances moved through the space, or ended. For example, did a perceived "script" end abruptly, signaling that my time as an audience member was at an end, urging me to move on? Was a particular scene concluded with an invitation to ask questions of the performers? In my notes I describe different approaches

to the segmentation of narrative episodes. Because the performances do not use stage lights or curtains to indicate these breaks in narrative, I paid attention to the spatial and action cues that indicated that one episode or ‘scene’ was beginning, ending, or overlapping with another.

Finally, I made a brief material analysis of the social event at each visit. This reading of the social function of the event includes the cost of admission, the presence and predominance of on-site gift shops and concessions, site accessibility, number and type of visitors.

2.2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

A second type of analysis complements the performance analysis at my sites of inquiry. This is a critical discourse analysis of performance texts (where available), flyers, brochures, websites and other advertising materials that relate to performance sites. In developing my methods for this analysis, I draw from Norman Fairclough’s *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (2003). Fairclough explains discourses as different perspectives on the world:

... associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people. Discourses not only represent the world as it is (or rather is seen to be), they are also projective, imaginaries, representing possible worlds which are different from the actual world, and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions. (p. 124).

This is the definition of discourse that I employ. In my analysis of texts I pay particular attention to the *imaginary* and *possible worlds* that discourses create, and their relationship with political and social change, or with *status quo*. Discourses may position particular historical narratives, places, eras, or figures in power relations with each other and with contemporary audiences.

In the task of identifying discourses at my sites of inquiry, I am guided by these basic goals of textual analysis:

1. Identify the main parts of the world (including areas of social life) which are represented – the main ‘themes’.
2. Identify the particular perspective or angle or point of view from which they are represented. (Fairclough, 2003, p. 129)

In order to identify discourses that represent the world of the past, I identify a “range of linguistic features” (p. 129) from the promotional and informational materials found on site, and online. As discourses of *representing the past* become apparent, I am naming them, and claiming that they imply “a degree of repetition” (p. 124), a commonality of terms and uses shared across groups of people engaged in promoting historic sites and the practices of living history.

Fairclough (2003) invites us to consider four evaluative components in our analysis of how events are represented and legitimized: Presence, Abstraction, Arrangement, and Additions (p. 139). These categories will also help to make meaning of the data. For example, addressing the question of ‘Presence’ in historical representation requires me to ask, “Which elements of events ... are present/absent, prominent/backgrounded?” (p. 139). Likewise, I may observe a pattern of ‘Abstraction’ or generalization with regards to certain events, or I may observe that representations are ordered a certain way (‘Arrangement’). Finally, I must pay careful attention to the ‘Additions’ to a particular representation, for example, explanations and legitimizations. Furthermore, when considering the representations of social actors (p. 145), Fairclough discusses two types of exclusion: *suppression* (meaning absence), and *backgrounding*, which he describes as “mentioned somewhere in the text, but having to be inferred in one or more places” (p. 145).

Once recorded, I transcribed my performance notes into individual documents. These were edited to separate my observations of performance and space, which appear in Chapter Two, and my references to text, which figure more prominently in Chapter Three. These texts include the websites and brochures for all three sites, and one more substantial text from each: the booklet *Irving House: A Family History* (1988), the transcribed monologue of an interpreter at Fort Langley, and the Burnaby Village Museum overview for staff and volunteers (Turnbull, n.d.).

I read each text carefully, considering Fairclough's four components described above. I searched each text for language to lend evidence that a concept was present, abstract, arranged, or added. I looked for themes, and they emerged organically. Finally, I paid special attention to Fairclough's discussion of social actors. When social actors in a text were different from the social actors I observed in the performance sites, or where social actors were absent entirely, I made a note of this issue.

Performance analysis and critical discourse analysis allow me to identify themes that support or justify the roles of certain performers, or the importance of certain stories over others. Illuminating the perspectives of particular historical characterizations shows how multiple storylines, told together, may build toward a larger worldview or social representation of 'the past'. Ultimately, this analysis will illuminate dominant discourses in Indigenous, settler and immigrant narratives as they are represented at my sites of inquiry.

Chapter 3: The Stories Told

In this chapter, I address my first research question: *What historical narratives do living history sites in the BC Lower Mainland—such as the Fort Langley National Historic Site, the Burnaby Village Museum, and the New Westminster Irving House Museum—perform and not perform?* In answering this question, I focus on the sites themselves, and rely primarily on my field notes. These notes describe my observations of the work of interpreters over the course of several visits to each museum. When possible, I have recorded and transcribed dialogue. I also make use of available web- and paper-based textual materials that lend context to the performances I observed. One example is the booklet *Irving House: A Family History* (Miller & Frances, 1988), to which the onsite interpreters often refer. In addition I make use of brochures, maps, and manuals, which provide visitors and interpreters with historical background and orientation in each of the museum spaces.

In this chapter, the museums are presented in chronological order of their temporal representations: Fort Langley (1830s-1850s), Irving House (1880s), and finally Burnaby Village Museum (1920s). For the sake of organizing my findings cohesively and in context, I present an introduction to each site, and then selections of my observations and experiences. In my description of the sites in this chapter, I deliberately use the present tense to convey the immediacy and multi-sensory nature of these experiences. As a reflexive researcher, many questions and impressions arose when taking and transcribing notes. I share my observations and analytic questions throughout the chapter, and these shape my analysis of the second research question in the following chapter: *What factors make some sites better suited than others to*

perform narratives that invite visitors to problematize dominant colonial narratives of BC settlement history?

3.1 Environmental Scenography in the Three Sites

Differences in spatial arrangement and scenography gave shape and context to how I encountered stories. A brief overview of these differences will be instructive, using terms borrowed from performance history and theory.

All living history performance spaces can be described as *site-specific*, as they provide a “spatially determined semantic frame for the performance” (Balme, 2010, p. 60). In my visits, I focused my attention on performative spaces in which a staff person or volunteer interpreter⁴ was present. I made only minimal observations of spaces unoccupied by performers, but they too contributed to the overall spatiality of the museum.

In the case of both Fort Langley and Burnaby Village Museum, I was free to wander through physically separate interpretive spaces on the (outdoor) museum grounds. There is, however, an important difference between these sites. Fort Langley’s performance space extends as far as the palisades of the fort, putting the audience in an immersive scene so long as they are within these boundaries. According to the codifying system developed by Aronson (1981), this staging convention is the most non-frontal of staging traditions; it surrounds audiences totally in the performance environment (p. 7). Like many environmental performances, the landscape itself

⁴ In this chapter, I use the terms *performer*, *interpreter*, and *guide* to refer to those who work for a museum and don a costume as a requirement of their work. Some are professionals and some are volunteers; I attempt wherever possible to identify whether or not a performer is paid. Some interpreters were forthcoming with this information. It was also sometimes evident from the nametags the interpreters wore (for example, “Volunteer”), but not always.

becomes the unifying frame for the performance; “it places the viewer inside the frame constituting a shared frame of action” (Unt, 2008, p. 321).

This space can also be understood as a multi-space environment with moving audience and moving performance. Once they leave the cooperage, for instance, Fort Langley visitors are still in a performance space, and may encounter another interpreter in costume, and find themselves in a new scene. This processional or perambulatory practice finds historic antecedents in medieval Christian theatre and Indian environmental performance traditions, among others (Aronson, 1981, pp. 11-12).

Burnaby Village Museum, on the other hand, isolates performance spaces within determined stations, which means that audiences in between scenes find themselves in the commons, a neutral, *transitional* theatrical space (Balme, 2008). It is neither the ‘outside world’ nor the ‘auditorium’ or realm of performance. This space allows audiences to read and digest theatrical programs (and site maps, in this case), order food or use the washroom. Audiences and performers may also enjoy a respite from the work of spectating, and of performing. The transitional space allows both interpreters and spectators the chance to prepare mentally and physically for the next scene. Audiences still experience the illusory aesthetic representation of the 1920s, but the transitional space functions more like a theatre lobby. The staging conventions at Burnaby Village museum constitute a *site-specific, simultaneous* staging environment with a *transitional* common area. A series of *scatter stages* (Aronson, 1981) present scenes in various degrees of frontal to non-frontal performance orientations. Amusement environments, including fairs and amusement parks, provide examples of similarly defined spaces “that are broken into smaller individual units devoted to entertainment or performance through which spectators are free to wander” (Aronson, 1981, p. 12).

Irving House is a site-specific performance space, and the threshold of its front door constitutes the entry to the performance space. Under normal circumstances, one would not expect to see an interpreter in costume outside of the home. I followed a guided tour each visit, which ensured that I was never alone in a space without an interpreter. Because I travelled with one interpreter from one frontally staged focal point to another, and no other groups were touring the home concurrently, this arrangement can be seen as *perambulatory* and *sequential* staging (Aronson, 1981, p. 13). And although the performance and its audience move through multiple stages, there is still a clear separation between audience areas and performance areas. A rope stanchion, or a bedroom's doorway that functions like a proscenium arch indicates the spatial pathways intended for viewers, and orients the audience's gaze. This separation creates a *frontal* staging view into performance spaces.

3.2 Overview of Fort Langley

The National Historic Site of Fort Langley, the Lower Mainland's only fort, is heralded as "the birthplace of BC" (Fort Langley, n.d.). Situated on the south shore of the Fraser River, it is in Sto:lo territory, and surrounded by fertile flood plains. An important strategic depot on the supply route between the Hudson's Bay Company forts of the interior and the Pacific trade routes, the fort was a trading post for fur traders, and became an exporter of salmon and other goods to international trading partners. It was also the site of the 1858 proclamation that created the Colony of British Columbia, installing James Douglas as its first Governor. This ensured the Crown's control of BC territories, and made Fort Langley the first political centre of the new colony. A year later, in 1859, the capital of the Colony of British Columbia was moved to New Westminster.

Today, Fort Langley is a small town of antique stores and coffee shops, with the fort itself as a primary attraction. To get here, most visitors travel through the suburban sprawl of the City of Langley, a large suburb of metropolitan Vancouver, increasingly full of developers' strip malls and new condos. The town of Fort Langley, by contrast, cultivates a certain 'small-town charm' with its quiet avenues full of large trees, Victorian homes and shops, and the pastoral scene of the farms and fields that surround the village. Throughout the town, Parks Canada signs point the way to the fort itself. The road ends at a small parking lot, and the entrance to the Fort's Visitors Centre, administrative offices and gift shop. The murals on the exterior of this building begin to tell the story of the fort's global connections. First Nations, European and Hawaiian men are represented in scenes depicting work, commercial trade, and sea travel.

Inside the building is the Sxwimele Boutique and Gift Shop, which displays a wide variety of gifts, including clothing and jewelry, made primarily by First Nations artisans. Straight ahead there is a ticket counter, and visitors pay admission here: \$7.80 for adults, \$6.55 for 'seniors' and \$3.90 for 'youth'. A map of the site is provided, and any special events are highlighted by the staff person behind the counter. Once through this counter, the visitor proceeds through another set of doors to an outdoor path, which leads through some trees, and down a hill to an opening in the fort's tall palisades.

On most of my visits, the staff I encountered at the Visitors Centre were wearing Parks Canada uniforms, and it was not until I passed through the palisades that I saw interpreters roaming in historic costume. In this way, passing through the gate signaled entry into an area in which performance was foregrounded. As a visitor I was free to roam through the site and explore the dozen or so small buildings.

Interpreters can be found engaged at various stations, but are also often seen walking through the site and inviting questions from visitors. In the scenes that follow, I describe my interactions with professional interpreters in different buildings in the Fort. These were both on weekdays, when the site was generally quiet, and also on a Saturday in October when annual pass holders were invited for a Halloween celebration, including pumpkin carving and trick-or-treating throughout the site. Following those, I share my experiences of the site as a whole during Brigade Days (August 4 and 5, 2013), when hobbyist⁵ re-enactors spent the weekend animating the space, to different effect.

The Cooperage is the long wooden building closest to the entrance of the fort. Entering, I spot a middle-aged white man in costume waiting behind the rope for the arrival of visitors. The interpreter wears a headscarf, a tunic and a red belt. This is the character of the Cooper, and today the performer is a knowledgeable and confident retired school principal. He speaks in the third person past tense when describing the activities of the cooperage. He wears a costume of what appear to be light cotton trousers and tunic, a bright red sash belt, and a leather cap and shoes. Although he looks the part, he does not speak as though he is ‘in the past’. His delivery feels unscripted, and he responds casually to visitors’ interests and questions. He drinks from a bright green reusable coffee mug while he speaks, and makes no effort to conceal this anachronism.

A staging area is separated from the spectator area by a thick rope, which is tied around barrels. The rope serves as a stanchion, but also blends well with the aesthetic of the space, and

⁵ In this project, I use the terms *hobbyist*, *amateur* and *enthusiast* interchangeably to refer to the participants in the Brigade Days events. I understand there are lively debates concerning the use of these terms in the field of performance studies, for example, see Prendergast & Saxton (2009).

does not announce itself as a theatrical convention. Stage lights, hung from two of the rafters overhead, are also well hidden, and preserve the sense of ‘authenticity’ in the space. The performance area is bathed in a warm light, but cables and electrical outlets are discreetly out of view of the audience area.

In the performance area, the artifacts are staged to replicate a working cooperage. There are a variety of wooden barrels in different states of construction and repair. The Cooper shows the various stages of work, and explains the importance of shipping to the survival of the fort. The fort would have received barrels full of necessary commodities, including tools, nails and some food staples. Some of these provisions would have been sent, along with cured fish and cranberries, to Hudson’s Bay Company forts in the BC Interior. This labour was crucial to the establishment and survival of the HBC supply route into the Interior. The coopers would have been constantly working to repair barrels and to salvage any material, especially metal, that was available to reuse. The Cooper explains that the workers here would have been strong men with expertise, often recruited from Scotland, and the Orkney Islands especially. He also mentions the presence of a large contingent of Hawaiian workers, who would have travelled to various ports on the Pacific coast for work in trade and shipping.

The building is filled with wood, tools, workbenches, rope, and stacks of empty barrels. It smells of wood and rope. Visitors wander through the space, pointing up to the tools that hang overhead, and explore the stacks of barrels briefly. When the Cooper has no more questions from the public, he returns to his coffee cup, which he had left resting on a barrel behind him, and awaits the next group through the door.

A young woman greets me at the Forge and offers to give the ironworking demonstration. She is bright and cheerful, probably in her mid-twenties. She seems to enjoy her work and

approaches visitors eagerly to answer questions and engage in conversation. She wears a cotton dress and leather boots, and dons a heavy leather apron and gloves as we chat. As we talk she heats, twists and hammers a red-hot metal rod, eventually shaping a wrought-iron hook. She is very physically engaged and seems well-practiced in this labour.

I spot a male interpreter in historic costume sitting on the front porch of the Big House, strumming a ukulele. Curious, I follow him inside as he begins to address the crowd. He speaks easily, confidently and casually, and he sounds as though he has professional vocal training and experience. This Big House monologue is the only time I hear an interpreter address a larger audience. It summarized the roles of the high-ranking officials at the fort, and the factors leading to the signing of the Proclamation of BC in 1859, which occurred, and is commemorated, in this space. It is the closest I came to any “script” at Fort Langley⁶; an analysis of my transcription of this monologue figures later in this chapter.

The three interactions I described, at the Cooperage, the Forge, and the Big House, are just three of the sites I observed in my research. The narratives they tell, when woven together, include references to the labour, sacrifice, and resourcefulness that were necessary for the establishment and survival of the fort in its early years. The common thread, however, is a discourse of cooperation between people.

⁶ Requests for scripts, training manuals and other materials were unanswered by Fort Langley staff, including several emails and phone calls to the Education Programs office.

3.2.1 “The people who you are trading with”: Discourses of Cooperation

Fort Langley is the only one of the three museum sites in my study that mentions First Nations at all. The museum explicitly situates itself on territory shared by pre-existing societies, with multiple references in museum texts and performances to the Kwantlen Nation and other First Nations working and trading along the Fraser River. Cooperation with these Nations, and mutual benefit, is an oft-repeated feature of the narrative at Fort Langley.

Upon arriving, visitors are given a two-sided, full colour map and timeline of the site. On one side, an illustrated map of the site describes 18 separate buildings within the palisades, including those I have noted above, and several features beyond the walls of the fort. These include the Fraser River, which is described as having “important economic, social, and spiritual meanings for Aboriginal peoples” (Parks Canada, n.d.), and the village of the Kwantlen nation, “who were major trading partners at Fort Langley and still live there today” (Parks Canada, n.d.).

In performance, the fort was referred to as a *trading post* several times, and several interpreters made it very clear that this was not a military fort. The implication is that the walls were built to protect the goods inside, and not to defend, exclude, or intimidate people. All interpreters gave the impression that fishing, farming, and other fort activities were undertaken at the fort with the cooperation and goodwill of the Kwantlen people. Many interpreters also highlighted the multicultural nature of the Hudson’s Bay Company members; the Cooper, for example, made much of this international work force.

This cooperation of the many groups at Fort Langley, however, is not an equal partnership. Several clues in performance and in printed material imply that First Nations play a supporting, and perhaps subservient, role at the fort. On the flipside of the visitors’ site map, several paragraphs provide historical information about the fur trade, and the various European powers

on the Pacific coast before the founding Proclamation of BC. Across the bottom of this page, a timeline provides 14 dates on a scale, from “Before Contact” to 1923.

Four of the 14 dates on this timeline mention First Nations, and three cast First Nations in passive roles, supporting the exploration or commercial efforts of European explorers/colonizers. The dates read as follows; “1534: Jacques Cartier traded with the Mi’kmaq; 1778: Captain James Cook traded with Nuu-chah-nulth; 1808: Simon Fraser guided down the Fraser by the Salish” (Parks Canada, n.d.). These three descriptions all follow the same grammatical constructions with regards to categories of the “Activated/Passivated” and “Named/Classified” social agents (Fairclough, 2003, p. 145-146). In each case, named, agentic men take action, aided by “classified” (unnamed, categorized) people in passive roles. Furthermore, the fact that there is no mention of First Nations after 1808 implies that after their much-needed facilitation of European explorer/colonizers, First Nations disappear from the timeline. Their cooperation at the fort is presumably short-lived, and their contribution to its history disappears when it is no longer of value to those in positions of power at Fort Langley, and elsewhere in North America.

Understanding that cooperation was critical at the fort is explicit in the fort’s featured lesson plan. Among its key objectives are the knowledge that positive relations between First Nations and fur traders were “necessary for the success of the fur trade” whose success was, in turn, “necessary in order to make a profit” (*Jimmy Goes Home lesson plan*, Parks Canada, n.d.). There is no proposed counter-narrative to the contributions of First Nations people in the success of the Hudson’s Bay Company, and the achievement of wealth, power and political might for those who profited from the sale of fur to European buyers.

The necessity of cooperation features prominently in performance narratives as well. One of the major features of this discourse of cooperation with the Kwantlen Nation is the reliance on

marriages between local women and company men. This transcribed excerpt from the Big House monologue is typical of the way this is explained by interpreters at the fort:

The Hudson's Bay Company men were always recruited single, they came here and they married First Nations women. A couple reasons for that: one, most European women are not just going to jump and go on an adventure like one of the young guys might; and second, it helps to establish trade ties because you're not just a random group of people inside these walls, you're family with the people who you are trading with. (Performance Notes, 31/10/2013)

In this monologue, the performer characterizes the marriage between a Hudson's Bay Company man and a First Nations woman as two things: (a) necessary and inevitable, because no other women are available for marriage, and (b) a strategic advantage to the company. It does not take up the perspective of the woman who is now legally bound to a foreign husband, nor the community whose female members are now bound to a group with its own political and commercial interests. Grammatically, it makes "First Nations women" the direct object of a verb/action (marriage) performed by subjects/agents (company men), with a political outcome (establishing trade ties). Finally, the grammatical structure of the last sentence, which I borrowed for the title of this section, strikes me as a fascinating revelation of the relationships at play. The interpreter describes the new relationship ("family") that the company men enjoy with the object of the sentence ("the people who you are trading with"). Another way to express this would be to say, "you are trading with your family".

In another part of the monologue, the performer refers to a specific marriage, between James Yale, "the boss" of the fort and its Chief Trader, and an unnamed woman from the Kwantlen Nation. The possibility of an unhappy marriage is raised here:

...[James Yale] was married to the daughter to the chief of the Kwantlen people but it was a political marriage. They had no interpersonal chemistry; they had the reverse. They had two very strong personalities. So she stayed over there (*gesturing to the Kwantlen village on the Fraser River*), he lived here, they had three daughters together who would travel back and forth between the two residences. (Performance Notes, 31/10/2013)

In this example, the woman is ascribed a “very strong personality” but it is unclear whether there may be another reason for her displeasure with this political marriage. The way the interpreter refers to the woman’s home village “over there”, beyond the walls of the fort, places the community of the boss’ wife and the second home of his three daughters outside of our knowledge and, as Donald (2009) might suggest, “outside of our concern” as well.

3.2.2 “Gold Fever does not bring out the best attributes in people”: Agency and Violence

The discourse of peaceful cooperation goes deep at Fort Langley. Interpreters do not characterize the Hudson’s Bay Company policies or employees as violent, nor refer to injustices, invasions or forceful evacuations of First Nations villages in the region either during or after the time it portrays. In the Big House monologue I transcribed, I heard the first and only indication of a violent past in British Columbia in the years leading up to the establishment of the new Colony of British Columbia. I believe this monologue shows how a discourse of peaceful cooperation can erase the province’s violent past, and along with it, the possibilities for a moral and intellectual engagement with histories of violence.

Earlier in the aforementioned Big House monologue, three white men are named, and their occupations at the fort are described in detail. Each man’s responsibilities are described in active

terms: keeping track of inventory, managing a farm, supervising other clerks, growing food and having it shipped to forts elsewhere in the Hudson's Bay Company. When the topic turns to the Gold Rush however, the agency of the American men disappears shortly after their arrival in BC:

In November of 1857, news got out in San Francisco and other areas that there was gold along the Fraser. So, faster than boats could carry them, men started piling up, and clamoring to get on boats, to get here and start getting into the Fraser, getting into the gold, right?

Gold Fever does not bring out the best attributes – morally speaking – of people, and so they were a lawless bunch who, if they encountered First Nations people who were in the way of them getting the gold, *there was some violence that was going to happen*. And so, in order to deal with *that situation*, as well as possible annexation by the United States, Governor James Douglas wrote to Queen Victoria. She wrote back by sending him the Proclamation of British Columbia. She signed it on August 2nd. He read it aloud on November 19th 1858 with a hundred witnesses present, upstairs. So feel free to explore. If you have any questions, I am here. (Performance Notes, emphasis added, 31/10/2013)

Here, First Nations people are simply referenced as impediments to “[Americans] getting the gold”, as opposed to a more fulsome explanation of their lawful possession and inhabitation of a territory in which gold was discovered and quickly exploited by an armed invading force. In the same sentence, the report of violence is veiled behind a passive clause with no actor or receiver: “there was some violence that was going to happen”. This characterization of violence in BC's interior during the Gold Rush does not name its agents, nor its victims, nor its duration, severity,

nature or spread (it is just “some”). The “people” who committed this violence were presumably in the grips of “Gold Fever”, the ultimate cause of the violence. This characterization implies that the violence was necessary and inevitable. Its details are muted to foreground a narrative more focused on the Governor and Queen’s founding of the province. It is an unproblematic catalyst, in fact, in the establishment of the Colony of British Columbia.

Clearly, the narrative of peaceful cooperation is central to the curriculum of Fort Langley. A commitment to this narrative masks the power differences between Hudson’s Bay Company officers and its international workforce, between men and women, and between Europeans and First Nations people. Ultimately, it may also legitimize historical and contemporary acts of violence in the name of imperial progress and capitalist profit. These narratives correlate with historical analysis of First Nations representation in BC tourist sites (Dawson, 2004), and in Canadian text books (Clark, 2007). Above all, their uncontested presence, in a public educative space, demonstrates that the colonial worldview has maintained its deep influence on the stories and spaces of history education (Smith, 1999).

3.2.3 Brigade Days

During the weekend of August 4 and 5, 2013, I attend and observe the activities of the living history hobbyists who gather at Fort Langley each BC Day long weekend for Brigade Days. Brigade Days is a major event for the fort, and throughout the spring and summer I have been told by staff to be sure to visit for this special event. A number of programs will unfold over the long weekend, and one of the main draws is the presence of the hobbyist re-enactors, who camp out inside the walls of the fort for this weekend each year. Making and maintaining their own costumes and tools, erecting their own shelters and cooking their food using historically

appropriate means, the re-enactors provided me with a fascinating look at the history of the fort as told by non-professionals. I offer an account of my experiences here, because they were a part of my performance findings, but in this chapter I refrain from making claims about the narratives I encountered. I will, however, refer back to these scenes in the following chapter.

There is a general buzz through the entrance of the museum, with many more visitors than I have seen here during regular programming. The central lawn area inside the fort is set up with white canvas tents, simple structures of cloth draped over wood beams, which are being erected and adjusted by the hobbyists and re-enactors who will sleep in them for the weekend. I count about a dozen tents and probably two dozen campers. Many now sit outside their tents, resting in the shade of their fabric walls. Several have set up demonstration stations to share their historical hobbies and expertise. A group of women knit, one makes a hooked rug, one spins yarn. A pair of men are packing gunpowder into muskets and speaking to onlookers about historical weapons, and an upcoming arms demonstration. All the women wear long dresses with long sleeves, hats and aprons. Many have additional pouches, belts, tools and other accessories as part of their costume. Some men are dressed in the style of fur-trappers, with rugged long pants and boots meant for hunting in thick underbrush, and brightly coloured sash belts and caps. Others are dressed in military uniform, with several layers of shirts, vests and jackets, stockings and trousers, and hats. One wears a woven cedar bark hat in the Sto:lo style. All appear to be very warm in their costumes.

The visitors are animating the daily life in the fort. Many participants are happy to show visitors the interior of tents, showing off their authentic bedrolls, and antique domestic items like kettles and hooked rugs. Many women keep busy with knitting or crochet, or rug-hooking, but

most are trying to stay cool in their layers of warm clothes in the oppressive heat. There is not much shade save the small overhang from each tent.

Some of the re-enactors are offering to trade items with each other. Each seems to play the role of a different craftsperson; there are leather-workers, spinners and dyers among the group. They seem to rely upon each other's expertise and resources for clothing and accessories: one mends another's apron with needle and thread, and two women help each other with their yarn. I learn from the re-enactors that, for the most part, they create their own clothes and personal items, or trade for them from others in this historic re-enactment community. There is clearly an immaculate attention to detail. Their costumes appear to be more 'authentic' than those worn by museum staff: they appear more lived-in, they become soiled, they tear. The cultural norms of this community require that cleaning and repair are done using only the materials and technologies of the period. Fulfilling this challenge seems to be the central occupation of the women in this community.

I speak at length with a young girl who sits in a small enclosure outside her family's tent. She runs what she calls a 'washer woman's station'. She explains how she got into this culture, and then had to convince the rest of her family to get into it too. Her mother and brother are here for the weekend with her, because, as she explains, she can't do it alone at her age. The girl happily shows off her 100-year-old wash tub, and gives demonstrations for the public on how a wringing drying roller works. She encourages anyone to come play with the machine and see how it works. She knows a lot about washerwomen of the frontier west, and she is happy to share her knowledge. The girl explains that after the public leaves at the end of the day, the other re-enactors actually take their soiled clothes to her, and she washes them for trade. She has acquired some leather garments, cloth and yarn from other participants this way. This is how she has built

her place in this community, and how she has pieced together a historical costume. This afternoon, she is working on some yarn crafts. She has been taught this particular craft by her fellow re-enactors, and provided with the tools to try it out.

Tonight there will be a communal potluck and participants will each produce dishes from historically appropriate recipes. A man has lit a large fire in the stone oven and it has been burning all day. Once the site closes to visitors for the day, the ashes will be swept aside, and various dishes placed inside the oven. The food will be judged in a cooking competition, and the festivities will end in a potluck. The young girl I speak with is planning to make a blackberry baked bannock, using blackberries from the brambles around the fort. She tells me it is almost time to begin collecting the berries. Her mother will assist with the dough.

Meanwhile at the Fort's Black Barrel café, staff members are canning fruit, baking bannock, and have prepared what they claim to be a historical chili recipe. Late in the afternoon, I hear weapons firing. This is part of the historic weapons demonstration, given by the Black Powder Association of BC, whose members I observed earlier with their muskets and military dress. Throughout the day, participants and visitors are invited to tour the impressive Heritage Garden, tasting tomatoes and beans and learning from staff about the foods farmed by early European settlers in the region.

Returning to Fort Langley for the second day of the Brigade Days weekend, I encounter a huge lineup to get in. Many attendees waiting to gain entry to the site are dressed in some element of historical costume. I notice a group standing on the path to the fort entrance. This group is dressed in typical "Steam Punk" style, which incorporates Victorian costume elements, and also fantasy and science fiction elements. The costumes I observe include corsets, goggles, and accessories crafted from machine gears and other mechanical pieces. I wonder if it is typical

of Steam Punk cosplay communities to participate in any opportunity for historic dress-up. Perhaps there is there a particular interest among Steam Punk enthusiasts in the stories and characters at Fort Langley? Does Fort Langley perhaps provide an opportunity for historical cosplay of the Victorian era, which might otherwise be hard to find in this region?

Inside the wall of the Fort, participants' camps are still animated with the tableaux of daily life I observed yesterday, though fewer people are lounging near the entrance to their tents, and many are instead gathered in the shade under large trees. At midday, a bag piper starts playing, and within minutes, hundreds of participants and spectators have joined a procession. We follow the piper out the gates of the fort, and I feel a kind of a thrill in breaking what in theatre is called the 'fourth wall,' walking alongside so many performers in costume as they emerge from the confines of the scene they have set, and into the modern world. As we amble together through the town of Fort Langley and down to Marina Park on the Fraser's banks, there is quite a buzz through the town. By the time we get to the shore of the Fraser, there may well be close to a thousand people lining the beach.

I hear chatter among participants that the brigade of fur trappers will arrive shortly. The paddlers have put their boats in the water at Mission this morning, and will paddle for an hour or two before landing. I wait for close to an hour with a large crowd on the river, watching the first boats arrive. From where I stand, it is hard to see the action. I don't see any parade marshals or production assistants providing information or crowd control. I watch four or five long canoes approach the shore, about 100 meters upstream from the boardwalk where I stand. I am unable to stay and observe the procession of the brigade back to the Fort, and the conclusion of the weekend celebrations.

Re-enactors will meet the brigade at the banks of the Fraser, welcoming them to Fort Langley. The Brigade will then be escorted from the river up to the Fort by the procession. A re-enactor tells me that this will provide new opportunities for trade, but it is not clear whether he is speaking about trade among the historic re-enactors, or trade between groups meeting in the 1800s. This confusion happens more than once, as I lose track of which re-enactors appear to be ‘in character’ and therefore speaking in the present tense about the past, and which are costumed in historical dress but otherwise ‘in the present’. It is a fascinating kind of confusion, and I find myself quite entertained and dazzled by the commitment of some of the participants.

3.3 Overview of Irving House

Irving House is a heritage house on Royal Avenue, a busy street at the top of a hill in New Westminster, overlooking the Fraser River. A year after the Colony of British Columbia was established in 1858, the Queen chose New Westminster as its new capital city. Situated on a steep bank on the north side of the Fraser River, it was thought to be a more secure and defensible location for the new capital. Around this time, industry was shaping the banks of the Fraser, including a fleet of sternwheelers that served ports from Victoria to Yale, which was the beginning of the Cariboo Wagon Road into the gold fields of the BC interior.

One prominent member of this growing trade was Captain William Irving. Irving House was his private residence, finished in 1865. At the time of its completion, the local newspaper called it the “best and most home-like house of which British Columbia can yet boast” (British Columbian, April 25 1865, as cited in *Irving House: A Family History*, 1988, p. 13). It was inhabited by four generations of this family before being sold to the City of New Westminster in

1950, and converted into a museum. I visited Irving House three times, and my performance findings are organized to reflect the major themes that emerged.

The house sits on a busy street that carries fast-moving traffic across New Westminster. From the street, it is not easy to tell that this home is in fact a museum. Many large Victorian homes still stand in this neighbourhood. This one does not announce its presence, and signs advertising the house and its tours are not easily seen from the road. The City of New Westminster Museum and Archives is tucked behind the house, further back and slightly downhill, so as to be virtually invisible from the road. Guided tours of the home are offered on weekends, on the hour, between 1 and 4 pm. A small sign at the front door asks visitors to check in at the New Westminster Museum and Archives, directly behind the home, if a guide does not answer the door.

Both of my visits were guided by young women wearing varying levels of approximated period costumes, sometimes including such anachronistic features as elasticized waists: in one case the guide wears a simple dress in the 1880s style, in brown and tan polyester sateen; in another, the guide wears a similar dress, but in purple. In one case, the guide wears obviously anachronistic shoes, and bright contemporary style make-up. Guides giving tours at Irving House often refer to *Irving House: A Family History* (Miller & Francis, 1988) as a source for supplemental information and anecdotes. During each of my visits, when interpreters were unsure how to answer a question, they asked whether we (the visitors) had a copy of the guide, which is available for sale in the New Westminster Museum office for \$2.50. I purchased a copy after my first visit and read the booklet several times in an attempt to develop a more complete picture of the Irving story. *Irving House: A Family History* is a 32-page booklet published by the

Board of Trustees of the Irving House Historic Centre, whose members are listed as representing the Native Sons of British Columbia and the Native Daughters of British Columbia (p. 2).

Because the booklet is so often invoked by interpreters, and appears to be the only printed resource for visitors, I decided to treat it as the primary curriculum document for the museum. Using my own findings, and critical discourse analysis tools to analyze representations of social actors (Fairclough, 2003, p. 145), I present a brief analysis of the two narratives I encountered at Irving House Museum: one whose focus is the prominence of the exalted Captain, excluding other social actors in his story, and one that represents New Westminster as *Terra Nullius*.

3.3.1 “King of the River”: Captain Irving as Exalted Figure

All the tours of Irving House begin in the front room, with the group standing below the portrait of Captain Irving to hear a summary of his early successes and the overview of his life. He is always referenced with his reverential title (‘Captain Irving’ or ‘The Captain’), unlike his wife, his daughters and his son, who are referenced by first name primarily, and sometimes confused with each other. From this starting place, the interpreter begins to animate the day-to-day life of English, colonial and pioneer/settler society using the objects displayed around her. After the tour of the front rooms, we proceed upstairs, to the bedrooms, then downstairs again to the kitchen, and finally past the sitting rooms. Captain Irving is the dominant central character in the home, although he only lived there for a short few years before he died. After his death, his daughter, and later his granddaughters, lived in the home. However, it is undoubtedly the Captain who provides the anchoring point for the narratives of the home.

I have applied my first analysis to the characterization of the Captain in the tour and in the booklet. In order to understand the way he is realized as a participant in the stories, I pay special

attention to the way he is ascribed agency: how he is ‘activated’ (or ‘passivated’) in the text (Fairclough, 2003), and how (if at all) he is represented as affected by or beneficiary of processes beyond his own agency.

In the pages detailing his early life, Irving is described as making a choice to pursue “a life full of challenges and adventure” (Miller & Francis, 1988, p. 9), and achieving great success in a short period. He rose from cabin boy at age 15 to first mate at age 19 to captain of his own ship at 29. This narrative of his quick and successful progress was offered each time I visited the home; it appears to be the standard introduction to the Captain’s life and career.

Both in the text and in the tours, Irving is represented as having a shrewd business sense; entering the shipping industry, “he was fully cognizant of the potential of steam” (Miller & Francis, 1988, p. 10). He is described as a “master mariner” (p. 10) and he “attracted business with good quality boats and guaranteed safe passage” (p. 17). It is clearly implied that his success in his business was due to his natural talents at sea, his hard work, and his quick adaptations to an emerging industry. Grammatically, there is no reference to the Captain in the passive form throughout the booklet. He is the agent of this success, and nowhere in the booklet is he described as being affected by, or benefitting from luck, privilege, or the hard work of others. In marked contrast, his wife Elizabeth’s journey was described quite differently by my second tour guide. We discussed her journey across America on the treacherous Oregon Trail, while we appreciated a preserved dress from this period in Mrs. Irving’s life, which now hangs in the Museum’s textiles display case in an upstairs bedroom. The guide concluded, “in the end, she did pretty well for herself. She lucked out.”

In my tours, both of the tour guides described the Captain as an upstanding citizen. His loyalty to the Empire was illustrated when the guides both pointed out that there are many

portraits of Queen Victoria in the home. This is the result of generous donations from museum patrons, one of the guides offered, but it also indicates the influence of the Queen over the Irving family. Both guides characterize the family as loyal to the British monarch and to British values. In the booklet, the Captain and his wife are described as “leading citizens,” (p. 14) and their contributions listed include Masonic service, church service, school service, fundraising and local volunteer firefighting (p. 14). The booklet also describes their contributions to the New Westminster Public Library as “further evidence of the Irvings’ generosity and community involvement” (p. 15). Upon his death in 1872, Captain Irving’s obituary in the *Mainland Guardian* reported that “his only purpose in life seemed to be to aid in the prosperity and welfare of those around him,” and that he was “closely associated with the rise and progress of this province” (quoted in Miller and Francis, 1988, p. 19).

Both the content and tone of the booklet suggest that Captain Irving had superior moral restraint. Relinquishing the high seas in favour of profiting from the California gold rush in the late 1840s, Irving’s success is attributed in part to the fact that he “never succumbed to ‘gold fever’” (p. 9). Once established in the shipping business, he rejected the dangerous and illegal temptations of his chosen trade: unlike some of his competitors he “would have no part in racing or other dangerous activities” (p. 17). Captain Irving is also described as having a “gentlemanly manner” (p. 17).

The representation of Captain Irving’s character is equally reverential in his 1872 obituary, in the 1988 Irving House booklet, and in the narratives performed by the tour guides at Irving House in 2013 and 2014. He is described as a powerful man with great agency in his life’s adventures. He is master of his own fate and founder of a legacy in New Westminster. His prominence as a social actor highlights the exclusion of other social actors in the booklet,

including the roles his wife and daughter would have played in the maintenance and upkeep of the home after his death. Moreover, outside the walls of the Irving House, there is absolute exclusion of the Indigenous social, political, and economic world in which the family established itself.

3.3.2 “Silent Witness”: New Westminster as Terra Nullius

When I ask the guides about the lands outside the house, one tells me explicitly that there was “nothing around here” when this house was built in 1865. Looking out from the upstairs windows, the second guide indicates the original position of the outbuildings, including stables, on the property where the archives buildings are now. When I ask what was on this land *before* these buildings were here, the guide reminds me that New Westminster was called ‘stump city’ in the years before the house was built. She reports that the area looked “awful from what I saw; Someone came in and just cut down all the trees, and it just didn’t look very nice at all. Of course [Captain Irving] thought it was going to be the Parliament buildings up here so, you know, this would have been [a desirable address].”

There is only one room in Irving House with material references to Indigeneity. It is the smoking room, which is the very last room on the guided tour. High on a cupboard is displayed a collection of Sto:lo and/or Salish⁷ woven baskets. When we come upon this collection, the guides mention that Mary, Captain Irving’s eldest daughter, was a collector of First Nations artifacts. An archival photo hangs on the wall, showing Mary’s collection. The second guide says

⁷ I suspect the baskets are a combination of antique and contemporary seagrass and cedar bark baskets, but no information was available to verify this.

that “they [First Nations] came here, they knew the family, too. In the early days, I guess, coffee and tea were so valuable then, and clothes, men’s clothes especially. It might have been money in the later years, you know what I mean, with things changing. But she just loved the baskets. She really appreciated them. She put flowers in them, supposedly she would [display them in the entryway].”

Each time I encounter the woven baskets, I ask about their provenance, trying to prompt a conversation about the local communities that had been overlooked in our tour. My guides both characterize them as local, but do not name the band or nation that might have produced them. The second guide suggests that although some might have been originally Mary’s, others might have been added to the museum’s collection later. She tells me that she would like to know more, but the booklet (Miller & Francis, 1988) “doesn’t say much about it”. There are no information panels to interpret these artifacts, nor any mention of the baskets in the booklet. The guide and I are both eager for more information. I am particularly interested in what the presence of these baskets might tell us about the experiences of local First Nations during the period that Captain Irving was establishing his business on the Fraser River. Neither of my guides is able to speak to this point.

Irving House erases First Nations’ presence in this area, and the Qayqayt (New Westminster) First Nation in particular. Based on the total absence of narratives of Indigeneity in the tours I took at Irving House, I looked for any mention of local First Nations in the booklet (Miller & Francis, 1988), hoping to find some answers. I hoped that perhaps the information was there, but was overlooked or forgotten by the tour guides I encountered. Unfortunately, I was wrong; there is not a single mention of First Nations people in the entire 32-page booklet.

Most importantly, there is no mention of the Qayqayt First Nation.⁸ According to *Irving House: A Family History* (Miller & Francis, 1988), the City of New Westminster was founded “directly across the river from marshy ground” (p. 6); this ‘marshy ground’ is in fact the site of Qiqayt, the former village site directly across the Fraser River from downtown New Westminster. This was a seasonal fishing village shared by Musqueam, Sto:lo, Kwantlen and Tsawwassen communities (Geo BC, n.d.). In fact, this spot is directly downhill from the museum and across the river at the closest point, under the Patullo Bridge, and visible from the upstairs windows of Irving House.

There is also no mention in the booklet of other, more populous First Nations, or their villages and settlements both upstream and downstream along the Fraser River. This is particularly surprising in light of the fact that Captain Irving made his career on the river, and that this career is the focus of the booklet. Understanding that there were communities living, playing and working on the river long before Captain Irving arrived might change the way visitors understand the region. It might also lead visitors to ask about the Captain’s relationship with local communities, beyond the collection of baskets in the downstairs hallway. How, for instance, were local First Nations touched by the Irving family’s “generosity and community involvement”? What impact did the newly established churches, schools and industries have on the Qayqayt and other local First Nations?

I read through the booklet numerous times to determine how the authors characterized the area of New Westminster before the arrival of the first white settlers, who are referred to as

⁸ Qayqayt First Nation members now number about 50, and it is the only First Nation recognized in Canada without claim to its territory. In the context of British Columbia’s first capital, the “Royal City”, the erasure of First Nations is especially relevant.

“pioneers” throughout the booklet. I searched for all references to dates before the construction of Irving House. The earliest description of BC in the booklet is the discovery of gold in the BC interior in 1857. No earlier dates are mentioned, except the years of Captain Irving’s birth and early life in Scotland.

In BC, “Irving House dates back to the first few years of New Westminster’s existence and therefore has been a silent witness to the many events which have transpired over the years” (Miller & Francis, 1988, p. 7). The Royal Engineers, building roads and maintaining (colonial) law and order, are credited with “bringing civilization to this frontier area” (p. 5). Captain Irving’s fleet is described as having provided “the main link to civilization for many” (p. 8). The house has borne witness to development, civilization and the growth of the Colony, according to the booklet, but it has no stories to tell about established coastal cultures, territories, or knowledge, of invasion and evacuation of villages, the Indian Act or Residential Schools. In short, there is nothing in Irving House’s guidebook to confront the visitor with the injustices, discomforts, or crises of our colonial past.

The decision to elide the long and rich First Nations history which also shaped the site to favour instead a laudatory pioneer, heritage narrative is in line with the broader mandate promoted by the booklet’s publisher, The Native Sons and Daughters of BC. The non-sectarian, non-partisan Native Sons of BC was founded in Victoria in 1899, and its companion society, the Sisterhood of the Native Daughters, was established in 1919. Together, the mandate of these societies included the specific objectives to “perpetuate and cherish the memory of those pioneers who took part in the early development of the Province of British Columbia... [and] to take an active part in the preservation of historical relics and records of the province” (cited in Ellis, 2002, p. 20). Given this group’s shared claim to white pioneer heritage, “there is no

question that there was a racial dimension to the activities and ideology of the Native Sons” (Pass, 2006, p. 4). Wallace (1981), pointing to the history of the heritage home in the American South, showed that commemorative heritage projects are often funded by exclusive ancestral societies. These societies’ valorization of particular ‘heritage’ narratives may tell us much about the political and immigration climate in the years of their activity.

Perhaps Irving House can be seen as an expression of the mandate of the Native Sons and Daughters, a testament to the ‘glory’ of white settlement in BC. In its guidebook, the exclusion of First Nations cannot be considered an accident of oversight. In this light, Irving House is part of the wider efforts of this group to exclude substantial material aspects of BC’s history that question or threaten the glory of the white ‘founding fathers’ of the Colony of British Columbia.

No matter our views on the intentions of the Native Sons and Daughters of BC, the document used as a primary curriculum guide (Miller & Francis, 1988) shows no evidence of change since its first publication. It provides its interpreters with no examples of counter-narratives with which to challenge the dominant narrative. Interpreters appear to select anecdotes from the research compiled in this booklet, which re-inscribe the “master narrative of the nation” (Thobani, 2007), and it casts a prominent “law-abiding ... enterprising ... responsible citizen” (p. 4) in the leading role. Just as Thobani describes, this popular historical narrative produces “certain subjects as exalted (nationals), [and] others as marked for physical and cultural extinction or utter marginalization (Indians)” (p. 6). This utter extinction and marginalization is expressed in the total exclusion of First Nations from the curriculum document, and exclusion in the interpretation performances at Irving House. It is a textual and performative example of “racism in absentia” (Austin, 2010). The inclusion of First Nations narratives both inside the house (made possible by baskets and other artifacts) and outside (with reference to the lands and

territories of many groups), would challenge the “colonial frontier logics” (Donald, 2012) that seem to be at work in this site.

3.4 Overview of Burnaby Village Museum

Burnaby Village Museum is a ten-acre outdoor museum in Deer Lake Park in Burnaby, BC. It represents a tram-stop community along the B. C. Electric interurban railway. It is not an actual (historical) village site; that is, no community was ever centred at this site, nor did the interurban railway ever stop here at the museum site in Deer Lake Park. The village is a reconstruction: the scene is set with homes, cabins and machines that were moved here when the museum was established. Together with a large staff and volunteer force in historic costume, they create a simulation of a 1920s community in Burnaby, one whose culture and economy are affected by the arrival of the electric railway, which connects it to the larger metropolises of Vancouver and New Westminster. The site is administered by the City of Burnaby, and it offers a number of public programs throughout the year. It is open throughout the summer and during the holiday break and spring break for families, and admission is free. A major attraction is a 100-year old working C. W. Parker Carousel, and rides are offered for a small fee. The museum also offers a number of school programs, for field trips from local elementary schools.

The parking lot of the Burnaby Village Museum is just off Canada Way in Burnaby, near busy exit 33 on the Trans-Canada Highway. Approaching the museum from the highway, the effect is quite dramatic. One quickly moves from a busy interchange and frequently heavy traffic onto a small drive that winds its way through the trees and gardens of Deer Lake Park. The parking lot to the museum is free, and has several spots for school busses. Entering the site this

way, one passes through a small gate and past the reception desk, where maps and brochures are available.

Once through the entrance gate, the visitor passes a series of information placards in a small courtyard area. These describe the historical highlights and significance of major developments and events in the region. The earliest date on this record describes the arrival of the Royal Engineers in 1859. Other events on the placard titled “Burnaby’s Early History” include early logging and sawmills, the development of transportation, World War I, the Great Depression, and population growth in the post-war years. Past the placards, the path diverges: the bulk of the village is to the right, over a small bridge that crosses Deer Lake Creek. On the left are the administrative offices, and one historical home, the Love Farmhouse.

Burnaby Village Museum: An Overview of Museum Exhibit (Turnbull, n.d.), a guide for museum staff and volunteer interpreters, provides anecdotes for animating the domestic and commercial spaces in the museum. The guide is organized by site, providing historical context for each small building, the objects within it, and some social commentary. It does not provide interpreters with a script, but seems to offer historical speaking points. The *School Programs Brochure* (Burnaby Village Museum, 2013) provides a menu of field trip options for local school districts planning a visit to the museum. This material highlights how various school tours will meet the curricular needs of visiting classes. For example, one teacher’s evaluation is quoted in large text: “It tied in perfectly with our unit on Early Pioneers [sic]” (n.p.) This indicates a level of agreement between the Provincial curriculum on “early pioneers” and the narratives on offer at the museum. This agreement is a desirable, if not necessary, feature of education programs at a site that depends on school field trip visitors, as this one does. According to its most recent

Annual Report (City of Burnaby, 2012), School Program attendance accounted for more than two-thirds of its total site visits for the year (p. 2).

Performance at Burnaby Village Museum is contained within several indoor sites on the museum grounds. Performers are confined to particular stations, and audiences enter into each space to receive an interpretation, and then exit that space and move to the next. Maps around the village indicate the sites of interest for visitors; each home and business is marked and named on the map. Using the maps, audiences direct themselves around the site, and are also invited to sit for a lunch or an ice-cream cone at the “Home Bakery” shop.

Because audiences navigate their own path through the museum grounds, there is a certain theme-park element in the streets of the village. There are no cars or bicycles to create danger or noise for pedestrians, so visitors are free to examine the attractions around them, then peer back down at their maps, deciding which way to go next. On dark afternoons and evenings, it recalls the Hallowe’en tradition of trick-or-treating, wherein youngsters rush from one home to the next, entering unknown realms for a peek into another life. In this metaphor, the ‘treat’ is a short performance, which normally lasts under ten minutes and follows a predictable schedule.

Costumed interpreters are stationed in many of the shops and homes. Almost all of the interpreters I encounter are women, and a vast majority appear to be over the age of 50. All of the female interpreters I observe wear era-appropriate black footwear, closed-toed shoes or short boots with short heels, black tights, long skirts, a sweater and a coat, and a brimmed hat. The mid-1920s era conservative dress requires a shapeless female form, and bodies are well concealed. The men wear suits and overcoats, hats and gloves. The overall look is consistent and conservative; no interpreters sport anachronistic hair colour or style, jewelry, piercing, nail polish, or use mobile phones or other accessories. All costumes belong to a proper, Anglo-

European middle-class world; none indicate that their wearer is living in poverty, has a different ethnic origin, is a person with a disability, or belongs to a counter-cultural group of the era.

The obvious narratives are of commerce, industrialization and development. Technology is highlighted in several of the exhibits, including the 1223 Interurban Tram, the C. W. Parker Carousel, two of the major attractions. A school tour, “Business as Usual,” highlights how “technological changes affected certain trades and the people involved in them” (Burnaby Village Museum, 2013, n.p.); this tour includes visits to the blacksmith, the barbershop, the general store, the print shop and the bank (n.p.). Each of these stops showcases a trade that has been transformed by technology or computerization since the 1920s, and these curious tasks add to the sense of distance that the museum cultivates in its aesthetic. This distance begins with the marketing material, and can also be seen in choices around the isolation of interpreters, and the use of frozen tableaux to create illusory, indexical scenes set in the past. Finally, a narrative of distance is observed in the maintenance of a “fourth wall” in one interpreter’s work.

3.4.1 Visual Distance: Marketing “the past” as a tourist destination

Burnaby Village Museum’s marketing materials feature black-and-white photos of costumed interpreters in the village, overlaid with contemporary colour photos of school children and families visiting. The brochures proclaim that this is where “History Comes to Life!” (City of Burnaby, n.d.). According to this slogan, history is literally ‘revived’ at the museum, and the photos and imagery in the marketing materials support this notion. The brochures for Burnaby Village Museum feature full-colour images of children and adults in active poses (laughing, jumping, examining with a magnifying glass), superimposed on black-and-white images of the village and its interpreters in historical dress. The impression is one of time travel, or the

wondrous transition from a world in black-and-white (the past) to one in full-colour (the present). The use of two colour-schemes throughout the marketing material brings to mind popular films like *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and *Pleasantville* (1998), wherein characters travel between two worlds, one black-and-white, and one colour-saturated. These images may not be intended to invoke these films, but they do support the assertion that this is an immersive and entertaining world of difference.

Like stepping into a filmstrip, the audience at Burnaby Village will be entertained by their immersion in a world different from their own. Action verbs used in the marketing texts urge visitors to “stroll down the streets of our 1920s community” and invoke time travel: “kids travel back in time to experience life as it was in the 1920s...” (Burnaby Village Museum, n.d., n.p.). Visitors will be entertained, and the texts focus on the active, physical and sensory experiences that await the visitor: “feel the heat of the fire” and “stop to smell the flowers” (n.p.), for example.

3.4.2 Isolation and Domesticity

The Elworth House was built in 1922 and it is the only historical building on this site that is in its original location. The Love Farmhouse, which was originally owned by Jesse and Martha Love, was moved to the museum site in the 1980s from its original location. Both of these homes feature artifacts from the domestic world of the 1920s, and are included in the “Home Sweet Home” school tour (Burnaby Village Museum, 2013). The Elworth House focuses on a middle-class life, and Love Farmhouse shows the world of a working farm family in a more rural setting. The interpretation in both homes focuses on the technologies, including indoor plumbing and heating, which would have transformed life for many in BC over the last century. It is the way

the interpretation unfolded, or more specifically, the path I took through the home, which led me to see how these narratives are almost entirely contained in the kitchens of the homes.

At the entryway of each home, I encountered costumed teenaged volunteers. At Elworth, a young woman in historical costume and a “volunteer” label on her lapel opens the door, invites me in without introducing herself, and turns the group’s attention to the front two rooms. The attention of the audience is drawn to the tableau of costumed, posed mannequins in the parlour and dining room on either side of the entry hallway. The volunteer seems unsure in answering the questions posed by visitors, and is visibly nervous. She defers to an open photo album in the entry hallway with photos of the original inhabitants of the house.

Past the front hallway, another costumed interpreter, a middle-aged woman with a nametag, welcomes us into the kitchen. We enter this secondary performance area, and the interpreter takes over. She is very knowledgeable about all of the kitchen technologies on display and answers questions about the artifacts. She pulls a butter churn off the counter and gives a demonstration of the mechanism inside. She also explains the baking cabinet, a “state-of-the-art” cabinet with pullout tin counters for rolling dough, and built-in rodent-proof canisters and drawers for baking ingredients and finished goods. The wood stove and the baking cabinet each have a small paper sign saying “do not touch”; the interpreter dons a pair of white cotton gloves before handling these artifacts.

Similarly, at Love Farmhouse, I am greeted in the entry hallway by a pair of teenage volunteers. One has a basic knowledge of the house, including the year of construction, its original location, and some of the major features of the farm lifestyle in the Lower Mainland. Two or three times, the first volunteer gently directs my questions to the second volunteer who repeatedly falters and defers back to the first. I realize at this point that some of the teenaged

interpreters I am meeting may be engaged as volunteers while high school is not in session over the holiday break. Like many teen volunteers I have worked with in extracurricular arts programs, they may be doing this primarily to earn volunteer hours for school credit. I wonder whether the second volunteer is enjoying the work of performing, or might perhaps prefer a task with less pressure to perform for strangers.

I move into the kitchen, and encounter a professional interpreter with a nametag seated at the table engaged in some knitting. It appears to be her own hobby and not a prop, and she puts it down when I enter. Her part of the interpretation includes a tour of the kitchen and its artifacts. She points out the washbasin, the hot water heater and electric washing machine, the wood stove, and the knob-and-tube wiring. Very knowledgeable about the kitchen and its appliances, this interpreter appears very comfortable showing off its artifacts. Although she speaks in a contemporary voice, I notice once again how perfectly put together all the interpreters appear; all costume elements, including shoes and handbags, are part of the illusion. Even the knitting the interpreter leaves on the table while animating the space feels like part of this world. The isolation of these scenes from the rest of the village creates a distance between the middle-aged women I encountered in the kitchens, and the social, economic and political life outside their homes.

3.4.3 Frozen in time: Seaforth School and other Tableaux

The use of frozen tableaux creates distance between spectators and performers. Many of the interpretive spaces at Burnaby Village Museum are scenes set like a diorama for spectators; artifacts and objects arranged to create indexical references to absent characters. In Tom Irving's cabin, an early 20th century log cabin for a single working man, for example, the audience peers

in at the personal effects of a character who appears to have just stepped away from the scene. His tools, his dishes, his books and his radio provide clues about the resident, and serve as a showcase for the personal belongings that might be typical for a man of his age, class and profession. Several other examples at Burnaby Village Museum provide audiences with a decorated set and no actor. The schoolhouse at the village, the only space that might speak specifically to the experiences of children, provides a particularly good example of a tableau.

Seaforth School is an original one-room schoolhouse built in 1922 and moved to this site when the museum was opened. I climb the steps, open the door to the building and pass through the cloakroom and its rows of coat hooks. Once through the second door, I enter the classroom and spot a middle-aged male costumed interpreter who sits behind the teacher's desk, keeping warm. When I enter, he stands and approaches the incoming audience. We must stand behind rope stanchions that separate us from the classroom. The room is full of schooling artifacts of the 1920s, including reading and writing lessons printed on the blackboard, the words to 'God Save the King', and various books and games of the era. The audience surveys the room from a long narrow viewing area at one edge of the room. We can see the teacher's desk at the front of the room, and the wood stove at the back, but we cannot approach either. Instead the interpreter comes to us and offers to explain the space or answer questions. Only the interpreter can walk between the rows of desks, or examine the assignments on the board. While standing at the side of the room, I wish I could wander freely. I wish I could flip through the books on a child's desk, or feel the hardness of a wooden chair. The embodied experiences of schooling are beyond my reach, quite literally.

The interpreter answers questions about the typical school day, the expectations and demeanour of a typical school teacher, and the kinds of activities the children might enjoy before

and after classes. The experiences of non-white and non-Christian children in Burnaby are not discussed. The existence of residential schools, or the other policies governing First Nations children in BC is never raised. The experiences of children with disabilities, children of single parents, or children raised in poverty are never raised. When the conversations taper off, audience members wander back to the door and exit the space, and eventually the interpreter returns to his spot at the teacher's desk and puts on his overcoat to keep warm until the next group of spectators arrives.

3.4.4 The Fourth Wall: "I did not become a museum docent to be interrupted"

I observed two interpreters explicitly resist the attempts of some audience members to engage with them. The Tram Barn is a large building which houses the Interurban 1223, a trolley of the BC light electric railway, and a major attraction of the site. I climb aboard the wide steps at the rear of the car and walk through the narrow aisle towards the front. A costumed interpreter stands at the front of the car, close to the driver's seat. Her costume comprises a long skirt, blouse, sweater and long winter coat typical of the time and appropriate for the season. At least a dozen visitors are sitting, facing her, on the narrow bench seats in front of me. As I find a seat and try to slide in quietly, she continues to speak about what we might expect to see on the route, and what some of the local businesses would have looked like. She mentions the origins of the red and white stripes on a pole that indicate a barber shop, among other historic trivia.

Her monologue offers these disconnected tidbits in what feels like an oddly paced delivery. She comes off as almost aggressive at times. For example, when interrupted by a young child's question, she says "No sir, I did not become a museum docent to be interrupted" and continues with her speech. In this and her other dealings with visitors' questions and interests, she does not

solicit questions or interaction from the audience. After listening for a few minutes, I wonder whether the monologue will have a beginning or an end. There seems to be no shape to this scene, and nothing to signal to the audience when they should exit the tram. I realize that new visitors are climbing aboard behind me, and the aisle of the tram is a narrow. It is, in fact, a one-way passage, meaning that audience members must exit this scene by passing the interpreter and exiting at the front of the tram. One by one, small groups of visitors take their leave through the front doors, and new visitors approach timidly from the rear. It feels very odd to have to pass the performer, shoulder-to-shoulder, to exit the scene, especially given her intimidating presence. As I observe the interpretation program aboard the tram, quiet conversations between visitors ebb and flow, and the interpreter offers different anecdotes about the tram. Beyond these, there is almost no interaction between the interpreter and the visitors.

On a subsequent visit, I make another trip to the Tram Barn to see the Interurban 1223. I board the tram, and make my way up the aisle. I take a seat and wait, looking forward at an interpreter wearing a nametag, in costume, but he doesn't begin an address. There are others also entering from the rear of the tram and taking seats; there seems to be an expectation that the interpreter will begin speaking any minute. Minutes pass, but he doesn't introduce himself, or invite questions. As people begin to exit the scene, once again they must leave through the front of the tram, past the interpreter. Three times I hear him ask visitors not to honk the horn as they pass him in the conductor's cabin, on their way to the exit staircase at the front of the tram. This interpreter, then, was behaving more like a security guard than an interpretive performer.

Both guides refused to engage with the audiences, who were sitting, captive, facing them directly, and, I think, expecting a more formal, interactive performance that would allow for an opportunity to ask questions. Interpretation in this particular artifact created a physical

discomfort for me, and presented no intellectual opportunities to engage with the interpreter. It is noteworthy that this was probably the busiest performative environment in the museum when I visited, and had the fewest physical markers of control. Audiences seemed to arrive and depart at will, and I can imagine this created a challenging environment for interpretation. Without clear signals to start or stop a particular scene, interpreters in this site may have resorted to their own particular styles as a way of coping with these challenges.

In this chapter I have focused on descriptive accounts of my audience experiences in order to answer my first research question. The stories of settlement in the Lower Mainland that I heard gave me pause, surprised me, and sometimes disturbed me. Very few invited me to consider alternate or conflicting historical narratives. Most sites placed audiences in a spectator role, as passive witness to the characters, objects and stories of history. This constructs history as distant, foreign, uncontested, progressive, and linear. In the next chapter I will address my second research question by exploring the performative conventions and devices I observed.

Chapter 4: Captive and Free Interpretation

Having shared the narratives I encountered at each of my sites of inquiry in Chapter Three, I now turn to my second research question: *What factors make some sites better suited than others to perform narratives that invite visitors to problematize dominant colonial narratives of BC settlement history?*

To formulate an answer, I must consider how audience members enter into narratives, and how they play a part in this exchange. What signals do they send? What gestures and cues do audiences perform in museum environments, signalling to an interpreter that they are ready for a particular scene, or ready to confront a particular narrative? Of course, since this is not a study of audiences, I cannot begin to answer this question on a larger scale. I can however, offer examples from my own audience experiences, which may help to illuminate the moment of encounter, and reveal its possibilities.

Starting out in this research, perhaps I did not realize how complicit I would be in my journey through each museum. I knew that my role was to listen, observe and record, of course. But all the while, interpreters were taking their cues from me (and other audience members), and were shaping their performances based on our presence and interlocutions. This might be as simple as our entering or exiting a particular space, or asking a direct question. But we must also consider the non-verbal cues we send, which may contribute to a performer's perceptions of our interest. These cues will unquestionably include our age, race, gender, ability, class and use of language, but also the way our eyes linger on certain objects, or examine aspects of a performance space. I cannot separate my research from my own body, from my position in the world, or from the way performers perceived my role in the space.

Every performance will be different for every audience member. The interpreter, like any good actor, is listening for cues from the audience: excitement, humour, boredom, a particular shift in the body or the voice. In other words, the interpreter's role is to activate a display or animate an object, but an audience member's role, in many cases, is to *activate the interpreter*. Because performers in the museum sites I selected do not follow formal scripts, audience members have the power to prompt or "unlock" certain narratives. To resist this power is to protect or withhold narratives from audiences, and therefore to place audiences in passive intellectual roles. Museums that do this are practicing what I call *captive interpretation*. This can be characterized as a one-way transaction of knowledge, from performers to audiences, which prevents audiences from encountering, or offering, counter-narratives within a performance space.

In this chapter, I explore three major devices that serve to *captive* the interpreters, the audiences, and the narratives at living history sites. I argue that *spatial*, *temporal* and *aesthetic captivity* can turn museums into sites for the mere consumption of status quo narratives. The captivities that I observe and define in this chapter may serve to illuminate and expand upon some of the perceptions that interpreters interviewed by Magelssen (2007) felt differentiated the rigid work of *acting* from the superior flexibility of *teaching* (p. 117). I will show examples of captivity at work in my three sites of inquiry, and also highlight the ways that individual performances resisted these devices of captivity, or revealed them to me. I will begin by briefly offering context into my perceptions of the working conditions at each site.

4.1 Interpreters, Employment Conditions, and Means of Production

Overall, the interpreters at Fort Langley appeared to have the most “professional” status of the sites I visited. In general, the performers demonstrated a more complete knowledge of their site and its historical record. They enjoy the greatest resources for training and professional development, and opportunities for advancement within Parks Canada. With a higher number of paid employees and less reliance on volunteers, the interpretive staff at Fort Langley were undoubtedly recruited for their talents in performance and interpretation. Because of their training and experience, interpreters are equipped to answer a wider variety of questions. They seemed practiced in their labour, and comfortable interacting with each other and with visitors. Their facility with improvisation served interpreters well, as they often engaged visitors by approaching them, instead of waiting for audiences to enter a performance space. Interpreters at Fort Langley never referred me to another source for information, or seemed unsure of themselves.

At Irving House, tours are only offered on weekends, and this makes employment in this particular role a very part-time engagement. One of the staff members I encountered here was engaged in clerical work in the New Westminster Museum and Archives before and after her tours, meaning that she had work duties beyond the tours she performed each day. This may or may not be typical employment for the interpretive staff. Because only one interpreter works at a time, there appear to be few if any opportunities for guides to work together, and learn from each other. It is unclear what professional development opportunities are available to staff, and what other work and training might be available to them through this job. Although no statistics were available to indicate the number of person-hours used to keep the museum open, or the number of visitors in a typical period, the museum’s programs are the smallest by far in my study. The

Irving House, as I have indicated, is only open for two afternoons per week, and employs one interpreter at a time to conduct tours.

At Burnaby Village Museum, programs change seasonally, and a mix of volunteers and paid staff perform each day when the museum is open. According to the 2012 Annual Report (City of Burnaby, 2013), volunteers participate in annual training and celebration events, including barbecues and anniversaries. As previously noted, Burnaby Village has twice as many school program attendees (16,284) than public program attendees (7,992); this means that roughly two-thirds of the annual visitors come during the course of a normal school day. This may make volunteering at Burnaby Village Museum particularly accessible for people with leisure hours on weekdays, retired people for example. The contributions of volunteers are prominently highlighted throughout the annual report.

Burnaby Village Museum has by far the greatest reliance on volunteer labour of the three sites. In 2012, a year with roughly 20,000 visitors, the total number of volunteer hours worked at the museum was 10,670 (City of Burnaby, 2013, p. 2). Compare this to the 5,200 volunteer hours worked in 2009-10 at Fort Langley (Parks Canada, 2013, p. 8), when 84,566 visitors attended. In short, Fort Langley uses half the volunteer hours and served four times more visitors than Burnaby Village Museum. This is an eight-fold difference in the ratio of volunteer hours per visitor.

Finally, I observed no visitors or interpreters using wheelchairs or other mobility devices in any of the sites. Although the central grounds of Fort Langley may be wheelchair accessible, the audience and performance spaces at Burnaby Village Museum and Irving House include staircases and other physical barriers that likely make them inaccessible for some patrons and

potential interpreters. I did not observe sign language interpretation, audio description devices or other adaptive technologies being used to reduce barriers in any of the museum spaces.

I offer these economic and cultural differences in context to foreground the analysis which follows. My intention is to appreciate the complexities of each museum's staff and volunteer programs, and to consider how each site's resources inform their programs.

4.2 Spatial Captivity: Isolating Interpreters and Narratives

At Burnaby Village Museum, interpretation is limited to what is inside each individual performance space. Shops and homes purport to represent the village's traditional and/or typical working lives of residents of Burnaby in the 1920s, but they also divide the life of the village into specific episodes. The village takes on the character of a working town full of "stations" which we may enter in order to fill up on knowledge. The thematic tours offered by the museum's school programs divides the "history" at Burnaby Village Museum into episodes that serve a particular theme. At least eight separate tours appear on the menu of available school programs, including tours that highlight commercial pursuits in the 1920s, domestic life, and one that highlights childhood and schooling at the one-room Seaforth School (Burnaby Village Museum, 2013, n.p.).

In my site visits, I never encountered an interpreter free from her post, who could provide a larger picture or context for the entire village. In this way the interpreters end up playing "shopkeeper" or "homemaker" in isolation, bound to their stations and their stories. Above all, I observed, the discrete locations acted as *containers*, and provided no opportunities for collaboration between interpreters, or the unfolding of one or more narratives along the lines of audience interest. The performance program at Burnaby Village Museum creates a separation

between the scenes. The Village is thematically committed to a narrative of progress, growth and development in BC, but domestic life—animated by middle-aged women from their stations in kitchens—is separated from the stations that showcase the commercial and working world, and from those that showcase the world of transportation and technology. This performance arrangement creates a *spatial captivity*, and sometimes it extends into the performance spaces themselves.

The interpretation scenario at Love Farmhouse and Elworth illustrate this deeper sense of captivity. These two homes are both included on the “Home Sweet Home” Tour, and are purported to showcase the domestic life typical of a farm and a middle-class family in the 1920s. When I visited, young volunteers were stationed inside near the entrances of the homes, while the trained and more experienced interpreters were found in the back of the houses. These young volunteers and professionals alike were activated by the arrival and movement of audiences. Upon entering the home, audiences first encountered a young volunteer or two, who provided the welcome and introduction to varying effects. These exchanges were most often limited to reciting the facts and dates deemed relevant to the interpretation of the home. This made good use of the young volunteers’ skills for memorization, but provided them with little else to do in this role. Once this encounter was concluded, the audience gained access to the rest of the house, and to the professional interpreter.

These professional interpreters, whom I encountered in the kitchens of both the Love Farm House and the Elworth House, inspired more of a sense of wonder, engaging the imagination with their interpretation. For example, in Elworth house, one interpreter gave an emphatic performance in the kitchen. Taking her cues from the objects around her, like the baking cupboard, she was not just describing the chores that would have been performed in this era but

also evoking a sensory experience of homemaking. She was skilled in performance; she created an environment that made our audience group feel like this was an exciting place to be. Using kitchen artifacts, she made baking and household management feel like an exciting thing to think about. She appeared to take great pleasure in her performance, and particularly the hands-on demonstrations of some of the artifacts of the era. She handled the glass butter churn and the curious baking cabinet with great tenderness, and made sure spectators got a good look at the processes she was demonstrating.

I observed a very similar structure in the interpretation experience at the Love Farmhouse. Moving past inexperienced teenaged volunteers with only a basic knowledge of the space, I gained access to the more experienced interpreter, and the more multi-sensory narratives of homemaking. This performance space was also in the kitchen at the back of the home, and therefore occupied the second, deeper, scene in this episode.

Because these professional interpreters are hidden in the back of the house, these narratives are held captive by the house itself. The interpreters (always, during my visits, women) await the arrival of audiences from their station in these kitchens. In both cases, I saw interpreters engaged in their knitting, or reading, awaiting the next audience group. When their presentation concluded, they returned to their private affairs, and awaited the next audience. In the homes at Burnaby Village Museum, knowledgeable and experienced interpretation seems limited to the kitchen, which is the domain of the female professional interpreter.

The separation of public/commercial (male) and private/domestic (female) spaces in the village re-inscribes a traditional separation of these realms and exclusion of women from (paid) working life. The spatial isolation I observed at Burnaby Village Museum prevents interpreters from making observations or claims about the world beyond their kitchens. This means that these

interpreters are not necessarily compelled to address or reflect upon the historical injustices of this era toward women, or toward First Nations, people of colour, people with disabilities, children, and others. By keeping domestic narratives ‘private’, in other words, they are unlikely to complicate the other narratives in the Village.

Interpreters at Fort Langley are not isolated in one interpretation space. Although I did observe interpreters “stationed” in particular spaces, such as the Cooperage, I also saw interpreters wander freely through the site, speak with each other, collaborate, and come and go from other interpreters’ performances. One example is the delivery of the monologue at the Big House. The interpreter appeared to begin the monologue when the assembled crowd was ready for him to start, and not based on a schedule imposed by the museum’s programs. The interpreter walked from one room to the next while the crowd followed. He continued his stories, unfazed, as some people came and went throughout. He concluded his address, and then walked into an adjacent room with a piano, sat down, and began to play from the sheet music. Another interpreter, hearing him from outside, rushed into the Big House and joined in on the chorus. In this seemingly improvisatory moment, an interpreter outside overheard the beginnings of a song she loved, rushed into a room mid-scene (as an audience was already gathered to hear the tune the first interpreter was playing) and inserted herself into the action.

In another example from Fort Langley, I had a conversation with two white female interpreters, about their role as women at the fort. This was prompted by a discussion of the historical absence of white women, and the presence of local First Nations women at the fort. My field notes indicate what took place when a second interpreter joined in to a conversation I was having with a first:

Another woman in costume, an interpreter who is circulating among stations, has dropped by to join our conversation. I press them for more details about women at the Fort, and in what ways their roles may be historically fact or fiction. In the earliest days at Fort Langley, they explain, there were no white women here. The employees of the Hudson's Bay Company were all men, and many of them would have travelled from Fort to Fort around North America in search of work and new adventure. None had wives or families travelling with them. This would seem to preclude the presence of female characters at the Fort. However, by the year 1858, the historical record indicates the presence of women of mixed race. These would be the daughters of company men and local Sto:lo women. The two white women interpreters concede that they could "pass for mixed race" based on their costumes, which feature leather boots that are similar to those of the local First Nations style. One of the interpreters points out that they do not speak Halkomelem, the Sto:lo language, and that would most probably have been the mother tongue of the women of mixed race at the Fort, who would not have lived within the palisades but in the Kwantlen village adjacent to the Fort. The interpreters conclude that, to account for their presence at the Fort, we must assume the representation is in the year 1858 or later, and allow that the mixed race Sto:lo women speak English. (Field notes)

These notes reveal the generative conversations that can happen when interpreters are free to speak with each other in a performance space, and to speak "off script" about their own roles. Both interpreters were open to this discussion, and were present and engaged. This gave me the sense that the interpreters were supporting each other's statements and listening to each other,

instead of playing out individual, isolated stories, unaffected by others on the site. It also indicates that they have knowledge of local First Nations. Their willingness to discuss the confusion or tension underlying their performance was significant, as it shows that the museum is engaged with these issues, and interpreters feel free to discuss them with visitors.

Where the free roaming opportunities for interpreters at Fort Langley enabled productive exchanges and questioning, the more segregated and regimented uses of domestic space at Irving House seemed to inhibit interpreters' wandering and opportunity for shared questioning. Normally, interpreters do not appear outside the confines of the home. If it were not for my pursuing her in the office, I would not likely have encountered the interpreter in the archives building. The interpreters use their own entrance at the back of the house to come and go, and this prevents them crossing paths with an audience member under normal circumstances. They appear very much to belong to the home. At the appointed time, the front door opens and the tour begins. During my visits, the interpreters did not introduce themselves at the door or explain their presence, costume or character. The home holds them spatially captive from the world outside.

The missed opportunity to acknowledge Indigeneity in and around New Westminster reveals how this spatial captivity replicates the "colonial frontier logics" described by Donald (2012). The Irving home was represented as both physically and thematically distant from the lands surrounding the site. The interpretation could be transformed and this captivity resisted by the inclusion of First Nations narratives alongside the Irving story: the inclusion of maps of historical First Nation villages, Fraser River settlements and contemporary territories, for example, would be an obvious start. The acknowledgement of landscape features, visible from the upstairs window, might help visitors to place this home in a greater geographical, colonial

and social context. Finally, the baskets on display in the smoking room present an opportunity for meaningful material connections to the lands and people outside the museum. Rigorous and respectful research and interpretation could offer visitors and interpreters information about the provenance of the baskets, and indicate the names and affiliations of the artists. Furthermore, indicating their use in the local communities from whence they came, and the manner in which the Irving family acquired them, would draw deeper connections between these narratives. Both interpreters and audiences could thereby resist the spatial and thematic separation of settler from Indigenous stories, and begin the task of decolonizing the museum experience.

4.3 Temporal Captivity: Scenes ‘Frozen in Time’

None of the professional interpreters I observed immersed themselves wholly in a temporal shift, for example using the present tense to describe historical events.⁹ However, all of the museum sites I studied created some kind of an immersive historical environment. Each of them offers a series of historical environments for public viewing, and invite more or less participation from audiences at the moment of this encounter with the simulated past. In each museum I encountered several scenographic dioramas, three-dimensional private spaces, indexical of a recent inhabitant. When audiences are presented with a room ‘frozen in time,’ I argue that that space is held captive in time and not allowed to speak to audiences in a more engaged way.

Temporal captivity is one of the ways that an audience can become a passive spectator, standing

⁹ Some of the participants in Brigade Days appeared to be speaking from across a temporal divide. I will take up this issue, and the opportunities and limitations of Brigade Days in the following section on aesthetic captivity.

on the edge of a frozen landscape without the ability to explore it or consider the lives of its inhabitants in an active way.

At Irving House, as at many other heritage homes, rooms are preserved in such a way as to retain the character and style of a particular year or decade. Here, history is framed as an old acquaintance, made available to “us” once again through the preservation of artifacts. According to the official New Westminster Visitors Guide, visitors to Irving House have the “opportunity to revisit the splendour and grace of those early pioneer days” (Tourism New Westminster, 2012, p. 33). There is no indication in any of the marketing materials that I came across that perhaps “those early pioneer days” were experienced differently by different groups. It is difficult to tell whether the “splendour and grace” one is expected to experience at Irving House is due to its furnishings, clothing and household goods, or more generally to this era of development and commercialization in the Fraser River. In either sense, the viewer is invited to “revisit” these days, implying that Irving House shows us a past we ought to be able to recall or recognize. This language suggests that the intended audience has a preferred reading of *this past*, and that is one of nostalgia, of complicit belonging, and of identification with the “styles and tastes of the 19th Century pioneer middle class” (Miller & Frances, 1988, p. 29) for which Irving House stands as a living example.

The rooms divide Irving House into episodes based on each room and its artifacts. In most of the rooms, the visitor is invited to stand at the threshold with the interpreter and look beyond the ropes into the domestic spaces. The interpreter uses the objects we encounter to tell short family anecdotes about their owners. Many of the artifacts setting the scene in the rooms are approximations or reasonable guesses of personal items; the house has been curated and re-arranged many times over the years since it became a museum. In this way, each room becomes

a composite of rooms of this type from this era. The “set” that each room offers helps us to understand the life of a middle-class family at this time, without knowing for certain the exact contents of each room when any particular member of the Irving family lived here. This type of scenography creates a three-dimensional viewing scene, and also makes visual references to absent characters.

There are period toys and games in the children’s room, and a small table, set with a lacy tablecloth and tea set, in another bedroom. These objects are indexical of the imagined occupants, providing a sense that there is a scene about to begin, a character just out of frame whose belongings are laid out just as they left them. While an interpreter may offer an anecdote about a particular object—the gentleman’s hat box, for example—the room may not really speak for itself. It depends upon the curatorial and design staff to set the scene, and, in the name of preservation, viewers are prevented from physically exploring the space.

Although it is a far more “theatrical” space, the scene in the Cooperage at Fort Langley is similarly indexical of absent bodies. Curls of wood of the floor and tools resting on workbenches suggest that workers were mid-task when abruptly called away. In Tom Irving’s Cabin at Burnaby Village Museum, the same effect is achieved by the set dinner table and replica food, and books open for reading. Each of these scenes creates an illusion that a family, a work crew or a single man were inhabiting these scenes moments before an audience arrived.

The more I encountered this scenographic choice, the more I questioned its purposes. It plainly implies the invisible presence of a historical body. It is another way of claiming the performance space in the service of the established narrative. Not only does it add invisible and silent bodies to the narrative, but it may also render these spaces symbolically ‘private’. The illusion of private space in a museum may elicit disciplined behaviors in viewers, who may, in

the midst of their willing suspension of disbelief, feel as though they are trespassing. If ghosts of the past inhabit rooms of the museum, the act of gazing at it may feel disrespectful, voyeuristic, or even ‘naughty’. This temporal captivity may be doubled when it is layered with illusions of privacy and trespassing.

Moreover, preserving spaces this way does not let the artifacts or the space respond to the presence of viewers. Frontal staging, often through the proscenium arch of a doorway, creates a fairly rigid frame that forces audiences to use one sense only – their eyes – to explore the room. Without the invitation to walk around, turn over objects, or peer through windows, audiences are missing a crucial opportunity to inhabit the space, and glean clues about the past by using their whole bodies. Walking through a bedroom at Irving House, for example, might help one experience the scale difference between a room’s furniture then and now. A narrative about changing consumption patterns, and about changing body sizes, might ensue. Handling an object, an audience member might imagine its purpose before being told by the interpreter. And peering through windows, one might ask questions about the geography, the community, or the changing skyline, for example. All of these opportunities for engagement are lost when a room is held captive in time, and off-limits to curious visitors. The presence of anachronism, either purposeful or accidental, is one way to challenge this temporal captivity.

At Irving House, there is confusion that comes from simultaneously representing multiple overlaying time periods in the home. Although the home was finished in 1865, the home does not appear to reflect this or any other particular year. Some rooms are positively swimming in confusion from multiple layers of original and non-original artifacts, restoration, and interpretation. Both of my guides conceded that there are too many pianos in the home, for example, as the cost of having more than one in 1865 would have been prohibitive. One says that

the number of musical instruments in the house is a bit “overkill”, but that the museum has been unable to turn down donations from older families in New Westminster and beyond, who would like to contribute family heirlooms to the displays. The guides explain that the museum has had a policy of accepting furniture and donations from the local community for many years.

This policy has led to a cramped house with some challenges in storing and displaying era-appropriate objects. The upkeep and restoration of original and donated artifacts appears to overwhelm the museum at times. The prized original wallpaper is in the process of restoration, and the guide points out spots in various states of cleaning and repair. Several pieces of furniture are ripped and in need of repair. These details bring decay to mind, and not the “glory and splendour” that the home purports to preserve.

One particularly confusing room is the upstairs washroom, which features a tin washtub. This is believed to have been used by Captain Irving’s wife Elizabeth as a girl on the Oregon Trail. It is unlikely that the tin washtub was ever used in this room, and yet it is the featured artifact. The porcelain sink next to it has working faucets. Indoor plumbing came to Irving House in 1906; a hot water tank and additional faucets were added later. In the 1950s, several rooms, including this one, were painted and wallpapered in the mid-century style by its last inhabitants and/or the City of New Westminster, when the home was acquired and updated as a Museum. In the 1960s, this room was used as a public washroom for museum visitors. Before the plumbing was installed, this room was likely a storage space. All of this information I glean from my interpreter while standing on the threshold of a washroom that—although it contains some historical artifacts—was used as a public washroom until relatively recently. Why is it being treated like a historical environment? What are we supposed to learn from the preservation and

display of this space? I never got a clear sense of why this room is included on the tour of the home.

I can tell that the interpreters also had a hard time deciding how to tell the story of this room. Both jumped back and forth between historic eras as they pointed out various features of the washroom. It was not until I heard the story of Naomi and Manuella that the washroom started to take on a new meaning. These unmarried sisters were the last descendants of Captain Irving to live in the home. My second guide at the Irving House mentioned that these two were known to be slightly “eccentric”, and may have had physical disabilities or mobility challenges as they aged. Because they could not manage the stairs, they were forced to use the facilities at the church in the next block when the plumbing at Irving House failed, or when they needed assistance. Both were over 60 years old by the time the house was sold to the City of New Westminster in 1950.

This was the first time I had heard about these sisters, and I asked more about how the house would have felt to these two, the last of the Irving family to occupy it, and the only unmarried women to run it. Seeing my interest in this emerging counter-narrative, the guide pointed out that it would have been difficult for these women to manage the home as they aged. The two sets of stairs may have prevented them from using the second floor of the home, and the preservation of family heirlooms would have been an enormous task. As I began thinking of the home from the perspective of these women, Irving House begins to feel like a burden to the Captain’s descendants, and not a great legacy of success and reputation.

The upstairs washroom prompted my guide to share information about the generation of women *this home simply doesn’t tell stories about*. Naomi and Manuella are described in one sentence in the 32-page booklet (Miller & Francis, 1988). The booklet is so focused on the

temporal period when Captain Irving was alive that it all but erases the fascinating and provocative stories about its later inhabitants, even though the home itself contains artifacts from later periods. This alternative narrative of the home arose *because the upstairs washroom explicitly resisted temporal captivity*. The guide went “off script” to tell me about these women, and rejecting the temporal affiliations of the booklet. Looking ‘ahead’ to these events, she refused to “claim ignorance about future events” (Magelssen, 2007, p. 18). She resisted the temporal captivity that was suggested by her costume, and her unexplained presence in the 1865 home.

Another example of resistance to temporal captivity was the appearance of a young woman at the forge in Fort Langley. She gave an ironworking demonstration, and while she did so, she also provided an illustration of what can happen when interpreters step outside their temporal role and break the illusion of historical accuracy. The interpreter broke this illusion gleefully, while embodying the difficult labour of heating and striking the hot metal. Although technically historically inaccurate, her action created an opportunity for a discussion of gender and race at the fort. In this sense, the performer displayed a freedom to play with role and inhabit her work without the limiting concerns of authenticity or accuracy. In my notes, I describe the scene that afternoon:

I ask her about her role as a woman working in the forge, and whether this is supported by historical record. She is clearly happy I have asked this question, tells me that she gets it a lot, and that she enjoys the opportunity to answer, especially with school groups. She says she often begins a demonstration by asking young students whether they think a woman would have worked in the forge. She reports that they often answer ‘yes’. The interpreter admits that this

may be because they are answering while watching a young woman, historically costumed, giving the demonstration. Although this answer is incorrect, she says she thinks it is a “good sign” that girls and boys feel confident that a woman could engage in this work. She hopes that perhaps her enactment of the demonstration is sufficiently convincing to make them question why girls were not permitted this task in the period. She concedes that perhaps the wife or daughter of a blacksmith would assist, but otherwise we would not expect to see a woman at the forge. She describes her presence at the forge this way: “It’s not just an ironwork demonstration, it’s also a girlpower demonstration.” (field notes)

She delights in asking the children about gender roles, and especially delights when they give the ‘wrong’ answer. By resisting the limitation of temporal captivity, and placing her female body in what might otherwise be interpreted as a male space, she explicitly opens up a conversation about gender roles then and now. Her conclusion, that this work is a “girlpower demonstration” continues to resonate with me as I consider all the possibilities and pedagogic opportunities in creating an environment of deliberate confusion. The use of historical inaccuracy or anachronism, by no means a novel idea in the world of theatre and performance, can be seen even more clearly in the aesthetic realms of costume and prop.

4.4 Aesthetic Captivity: Bodies, Costumes and Props

Aesthetic captivity can be expressed as a rigid commitment to historical accuracy in the appearance of the body in the performance space, including dress, adornment, and relationship to other historic artifacts. These aesthetic choices serve different purposes in each site, but the

primary feature of the use of historical costumes in museums is that they separate performers from audiences. Costumes mark interpreters as being part of the “entertainment” and separate from the visitors gathered as audience. This sense of belonging to the scenography they inhabit ties them to a site’s historical curriculum, and enlists them as its voice. Costumes therefore provide interpreters with legitimacy and authority in the museum space, and signal to audiences that they have entered into the bargain of spectatorship. Sometimes, the aesthetic choices that determine costuming and overall “look and feel” of the museum space can trap performers. The performer becomes an artifact herself—another curiosity inside the cabinet, so to speak—and this can undermine her potential role as an educator and facilitator.

In this section, I will show how costume can captivate the interpreter in the confines of her role. Examples from all three of my sites will explore the relationship between costume and role. I will also show how the appearance of certain anachronisms, or aesthetic historic inaccuracies, can serve to resist this captivity, and free the interpreter. Finally, I will explore how the use of costume at Brigade Days at Fort Langley presents a notable exception to this captivity. In this scenario, costumes in fact created an entirely different kind of embodied engagement between participants and audiences.

Although they do not purport to represent characters in the past, the interpreters at Irving House have refined, polite, and soft-spoken vocal delivery. Their mannerisms were always ‘proper’; they were never boisterous, loud, or outspoken, and they never expressed criticism or questioning of the narratives in the museum. Curious to know how the guides felt about their costume dresses, I asked both whether they saw it as a costume or a uniform. “It’s a bit of both,” one said, “it does remind me to set the scene but of course it’s not authentic, because there is no corset.” When asked if she is playing a character, either imagined or historical, she said she does

not consider this performance. The costume is something she does not appear to take pleasure in or connect with personally. It is something more like a work uniform. Further discussion about the costume might have prompted reflections about some material aspects of history, and how dress and style affected the body and the social world of women. These issues do not come up at all, although the interpreter indicates that the costume helps her to “set the scene.” That the interpreter does not experience this work as performance suggests that her sense of performance involves more than costume and scene-setting.

When I asked another guide to describe her costume, she suggested it was somewhat random and related to whatever in the available collection might fit the interpreter best. When I ask about the style of the costume and what era or class it represents, she tells me I should ask the woman who is responsible for the costumes. From this exchange, I conclude that the costume was not prepared specifically for her body and her particular interpretive goals. Comfort and a general sense of historical period took precedence over a more grounded and detailed sense of the year, style, fabrics, costs or class signs it might represent. In this way, the costume is impersonal to her, and the one she wears was chosen primarily for its fit.

Although the use of costumes at Irving House may indeed help to “set the scene”, it is clear that the scene is broadly determined as historical, specific to the home and narrative of Irving. Neither has a specific character in mind. The costume does not provide either guide with a moment in which to relate her embodied experience in costume to the world of the 1880s. There is no ‘teachable moment’ that depends upon the use of costume. The costumes indicate that the interpreters belong to the world of Irving House, but this belonging does not appear to be internalized by the interpreters.

Neither guide appears particularly committed to completing the illusion with additional costume, adornment or appropriate props. Although they are only inexpensive replicas, the dress styles they wear would, in the typical theatrical sense, indicate a particular body shape, hairstyle and mannerism. Both women therefore appear to be half-dressed. Their costumes, and therefore the illusion that they might be historical characters, are incomplete. The illusion is further resisted by the addition of anachronistic details.

For example, both guides wear very casual, contemporary hairstyles and, as I noted earlier I see some contemporary-looking make-up and accessories. One carries with her a small pouch with a drawstring, in which she places her smartphone for the duration of the tour. She checks it once or twice, to see the time. I also notice that she keeps a small box of tic tacs inside the pouch. Although these anachronistic clues might break the illusion that I am in the company of a woman in the 1880s, I was never under that spell in the first place. The guide's capability in her work is not undermined by these issues.

The anachronisms make me realize how a commitment to 'accuracy' would create all kinds of discomforts for these interpreters. For one thing, a corset or other highly restrictive undergarments would be part of an 'authentic' costume of this era. Not only are they highly uncomfortable and restrict normal breathing (and therefore vocal delivery), they are also, historically, made for much smaller bodies. The insistence on historically accurate footwear would also be limiting to the interpreters, who must be on their feet for several hours on a typical workday, and climb stairs. The pinching, narrow, heeled ladies shoe favoured by European and English women in the 1880s would be a cruel (and unnecessary) choice for employees doing this type of work. Finally, the objects that the interpreter carried in her purse—tic tacs and an

iPhone—are practical. Having access to these tools in her work, and not having to conceal them, allows her to work in comfort, and to focus on the experience of her tour group.

Likewise, the Cooper character that I observed at Fort Langley seemed unfazed that he was seen sipping from a bright green travel coffee mug. He was not, after all, playing a role that required him to speak in the first person, or to convince anyone that he was an actual cooper. He was a confident orator, and he had command of his performance space the same way a good teacher has command of a classroom. In this role, he is one and the same. The anachronism is simply not relevant; it takes nothing away from his performance.

Burnaby Village Museum displays the most obvious commitment to historic accuracy in costuming and aesthetics. All of the female interpreters I observe wear era-appropriate black footwear, closed-toed shoes or short boots with short heels, black tights, long skirts, a sweater and a coat, and a brimmed hat. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, the mid-1920s era conservative dress requires a shapeless female form, and bodies are well concealed. The men wear suits and overcoats, hats and gloves. The overall look is consistent and conservative. Clearly the museum's costume team has developed a large collection of appropriate clothing, shoes, stockings, hats, handbags, and accessories. I never once saw a costume item out-of-place, or an anachronistic hair or makeup style. This serves the entertainment purposes of the village: Visitors are invited to time travel into a world of difference, and the audience experiences an immersive and complete illusion.

This aesthetic choice traps interpreters in the curators' vision of the past, a past without conflict, class difference, or the material evidence of injustice. All costumes belong to a proper, Anglo-European middle-class world; many of the men's costumes are connected to the particular labours performed in their sites. None indicates that its wearer is living in poverty, has a different

ethnic origin, is a person with a disability, or belongs to a counter-cultural group of the era. Furthermore, interpreters do not highlight their contemporary identities in role; no interpreters sport anachronistic hair colour or style, jewelry, piercing, tattoos, make-up, or nail polish that would “out” them as real people living in 2014. Moreover, I did not note performers using mobile phones or other modern-day accessories. These kinds of costume choices foreground their place in the nostalgic, historical illusion but render their contemporary identities more muted.

Brigade Days at Fort Langley provided a very different view of commitment to historical accuracy in dress. Over the course of the weekend, I observed dozens of interpreters of all ages dressed in costumes they had made themselves, purchased from another participant, or bartered for. All participants appeared to significantly invested in their costumes’ design and maintenance. The costumes took on a kind of currency, and a participant’s role and status within the community of living history enthusiasts seemed highly dependent upon their costume. Although the illusion of a historical community is dependent on the aesthetic commitment of its members, at least three factors differentiate this commitment from the aesthetic captivity that I observed at Burnaby Village Museum.

Firstly, Brigade Days participants’ displayed a very embodied knowledge of their costumes, and were empowered to dress themselves appropriately. Costumes appeared more ‘authentic’ than those worn by museum staff at the other sites because they were more lived-in and, as a result, had become soiled and torn. The cultural norms of this community require that cleaning and repair are done using only the materials and technologies of the period. Fulfilling this challenge seemed to be the central occupation of several of the women I observed at Brigade Days. Many women spent several hours each day sewing, spinning, washing, weaving or

mending. The economic and leisure time resources available for these aspects of performance separate the participants of Brigade Days from all my other sites of inquiry.

Participants therefore had a very intimate knowledge of the materials, styles and details of the costumes they wore. Because they wore them for an entire event (a long weekend, in this case) without using contemporary showers or washing machines, the participants had to adjust the costumes for their daily activities: sleeping, work, cooking, and resting each required participants to dress suitably. This is a marked difference from donning a costume uniform, chosen from a pre-existing work collection for a set work role, pulling it from a rack at the beginning of a shift and depositing it in a laundry receptacle at the end of the day.

Secondly, the participants used their costumes as teaching materials. Participants were invested in their clothing and accessories, eager to show how something worked, or how it was made. Some of the participants offered to trade items with each other. Each took on the role of a different craftsperson; there were leather-workers, spinners and dyers among the group. They appeared to rely upon each other's expertise and resources for clothing and accessories: one mended another's apron with needle and thread, and two women helped each other with their yarn. I learned from the participants that, for the most part, they create their own clothes and personal items, or trade for them from others in this community. This engenders a strong attention to detail, and a pride in workmanship. Brigade Days is also evidence of a community of devotion, where participants' value is based on their creative contributions and innovation, rather than upon paid work experience or seniority.

At Brigade Days, this community of devotion created plentiful, embodied and affective opportunities for teaching and learning about material history. Unlike at the other sites of my inquiry, participants at Brigade Days very much express themselves through their aesthetic

choices. As far as I can tell, no one was “curating” this event, or preventing one participant from creating the historical character that they desired to portray. The young girl as the camp’s washer woman, the men in the Black Powder demonstrations, the women spinning yarn in the shade, and the appearance of Steam Punk enthusiasts in quasi-Victorian fantasy garb were all participating in the weekend’s events according to their particular interests. They were presenting themselves for the event in exactly the costume they wanted, and participating in a way that was meaningful and pleasurable for them. The semantic frame that normally divides audience from performer was all but obliterated, and the opportunities for learning, imagination and play were limitless.

4.5 Towards ‘Free Range’ Interpretation

I have described three devices—*spatial*, *temporal* and *aesthetic captivity*—that help to keep interpreters, audiences and historic environments captive in museums. What would an alternative to captive interpretation look like? Do any of the sites I explored emerge as particularly prime opportunities to challenge colonial meta-narratives and assumptions about settlement history in BC?

The performance program at Fort Langley was the most integrated of the three I studied. By this I mean that the interpreters appeared to play multiple roles in a typical day, move around the site freely, and provide information easily when asked about almost anything in the museum. Unlike the interpreters at Burnaby Village Museum, Fort Langley interpreters seem to be free to roam between ‘stations’, and are therefore able to provide a sense of the site as whole. Like members of a shared contemporary working environment, they can mingle with each other and share what they know about what it would have been like to live here at this time. Further, because the interpreters appear to be unconfined by strict insistence on fulsome historical

authenticity in dress or discourse or rigorously followed time limits, like what I saw at Burnaby Village, they displayed a kind of comfort in their performance space. They inhabited their roles in a way that made me comfortable asking all kinds of questions about the site's broader context, and not narrowly focused on the details of the performance space in which we first stood. I never had the feeling that they were "locked in the past," attempting to portray a historical figure captive in time.

The costumes at Fort Langley marked the interpreters as belonging to a time and place. They appeared 'authentic', and had the added feature of durability and weather-appropriateness. Unlike at the Burnaby Village Museum, the interpreters at Fort Langley were frequently seen outdoors in all weather. Their clothing and footwear appeared to protect them from inclement weather when necessary. The interpreters were frequently engaged in manual labour at the forge, at the fire pit, or elsewhere on site, performing physical roles that required them to get dirty. In contrast, the costumes at Burnaby Village Museum were modest and clean without exception, and therefore gave the impression of an exclusively middle class suburban community.

Like at Burnaby Village, audiences at Fort Langley had the freedom to roam the grounds of the museum and select their own path. Unlike at Burnaby Village, here the performers roamed as well, and often stopped to ask if you had any questions about what you were experiencing or looking at. In this sense, the performers at Fort Langley were not limited to one object or room, not held captive in one thematic space or performance station. This difference changed the interaction immensely. Audiences can ask anybody anything. Costumed interpreters take on the role of a roving teacher, equally capable of engaging audiences in any narrative.

This difference also erased the imposed episodic nature of the performances. For example, at Fort Langley, I could move through the space in whatever way I saw fit, taking the time to

read, reflect, meander and revisit exhibits more than once. There was no prescribed order and the scenes were not timed. There was no exit path that required audiences to move through a site in one direction only, making room for the next group of viewers. This freedom allowed me to ask an interpreter to “take me through” any part of a story or an object at my request. More than once, I changed my originally intended pathway through the site in order to follow an interpreter I found particularly engaging. The relative freedom in interpretation that I experienced at Fort Langley was a freedom from contrived and timed episodes confined to small spaces (*spatial captivity*) and a strict adherence to costume (*aesthetic captivity*) that I experienced at Burnaby Village. It was also a reprieve from the passive role of spectator, invited to consume scenes frozen in time, which is how I often experienced *temporal captivity* at both Irving House and at Burnaby Village Museum.

4.6 Conclusion: “I Don’t Know if this is a Good Story to Tell”

In a visit in the Irving House kitchen, almost in a whisper, one guide reveals that the sisters used the kitchen to prepare and sell baked goods to make ends meet. She also mentions that they took in music students for additional income. The guide’s hushed tone and timidity in offering this story give me the sense that there is shame in this story. Is it perhaps shameful that the Irving family’s reputation, often related in the site’s narratives to the Captain’s economic success, had shifted in this particular regard over time ? Or that the women had been left with this great home as their burden? Perhaps the guide felt shameful for straying from the official curriculum of the Irving House narrative? The possibilities of this moment resonate deeply for me, and I get closer to the guide, sharing this secret with her. She continues to muse, quietly, that this story is an interesting contrast to the stories that revolve around the earlier generations of the family; the

story of the self-made man, his immigration to New Westminster and the aristocratic Irving family culture. In offering the story of the poverty and eccentricity of the Captain's granddaughters, the guide says, almost as an aside, "I don't know if this is a good story to tell." Her willingness to go off-script, to share a counter-narrative that has been left out of the official history of Irving House, is exactly the kind of encounter I was looking for.

Not knowing then how I might open up these counter-narratives, it took me several site visits, and many weeks of reflection, before I began to formulate a set of observations about the theatrical devices at work in each space that either limited or expanded my relationship with an interpreter. My own presence in the space, of course, was a huge factor. My approach to the research, the manner in which I observed, formulated questions and lingered on certain narratives were all a part of my experience and are all factors in my findings. But the sites I explored also revealed patterns in the way they invited me into dialogue, presented their illusions, or transmitted their messages.

So, to return to my second research question: *why are some sites better suited to perform narratives that invite visitors to problematize dominant colonial narratives of BC settlement history?* Certain museum environments are not well suited to perform conflict, or to offer subtlety, nuance, or challenge in their narratives. They represent the past as a strange land, an exotic world of difference beyond the reach and questioning of those in the present, and they place costumed actors in the service of that past. Audiences in these environments are sometimes treated like passive spectators, as in the InterUrban tram, where dozens of us sat captive, unable to engage in the narrative or to ask questions. In this example, we were quite literally *stupefied*; rendered unable to respond to the scene around us. This stupefaction constructed the audience as intellectually inferior to the performer. Although this is not a study of audience perceptions or

behaviours, I am confident that the stupefaction I experienced was shared by others. It did not create an environment of critical discourse, of listening, or of learning.

In this chapter I have shown how my three sites of inquiry use various conventions to either captivate or to set free the historical narratives of settlement that they tell. *Spatial*, *temporal* and *aesthetic captivity* create distance between audiences and historical narrative, and fragment historical representation. All of us have a part to play in freeing the captive narrative, performer, and audience. A museum site may promote dialogue, review its historical curriculum, and take steps to correct racist narratives. With adequate support and training, interpreters may begin to invite sensory exploration, creative questions, and new challenges to the assumptions and meta-narratives. Similarly, audiences may arrive at museums prepared and empowered to select their own intellectual paths. This attitude shift on all sides would undoubtedly change the experiences of audiences and interpreters alike, and this should be the goal in living history museums. In my next and final chapter, I offer two alternative approaches to historical museum education that I believe can add to current museum practice, and to future research questions in this and related fields.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

5.1 Summary of Findings

In the course of my research, I visited three historic sites in the Lower Mainland to answer two main research questions: (1) *What historical narratives do living history sites in the BC Lower Mainland—such as the Fort Langley National Historic Site, the Burnaby Village Museum, and the New Westminster Irving House Museum—perform and not perform?* (2) *What factors make some sites better suited than others to perform narratives that invite visitors to problematize dominant colonial narratives of BC settlement history?*

Historic sites make various claims of authenticity, accuracy, and real or factual history in their programs. These claims may appeal to visitors hoping to get “closer” to historical record, to “touch” or “play with” history. These claims serve a singular version of history, and lend authority to “official” histories. Magelssen (2007) argues that performance in museums is limited by the modernist trope of “telling only those stories that can be backed up by material, factual, recorded evidence” (p. 124). Those stories, as I encountered them in my sites of inquiry, reinforced the *status quo* narratives of European settlement in BC.

The utter exclusion of First Nations at Irving House Museum and at Burnaby Village Museum, for example, is consistent with Austin’s (2010) findings that “racial categories, and, by extension, racism exist in absentia” (p. 22) in Canada, where settlement stories typically glorify white men in positions of military or industrial power. The “exalted subject” (Thobani, 2007) at Irving House is the Captain, who is described as one of the “law-abiding ... enterprising ... responsible citizens” (p. 4) central to the founding of the city and the economic and social development of the region.

And although Fort Langley's programs repeatedly highlight the presence and cooperation of local First Nations people, their narratives cast those men and women in supporting roles, facilitating the colonial project for the men of the Hudson's Bay Company. A narrative of political and economic progress describes the growth of the fort, and the founding of the Colony of British Columbia. In the service of this story, First Nations are represented first and foremost as crucial allies. The violence committed against them goes unexamined, and this representation may replicate what *The Shocking Truth about Indians in Textbooks* (1974) described as "[treating] the Native as an impediment to be removed" (cited in Clark, 2007, p. 100). The historic timeline provided at Fort Langley erases First Nations from the historic record after 1808. This is consistent with the dominant narrative in Canadian history textbooks that represent First Nations as "mostly absent in later years" of European settlement (Clark, 2007, p. 100). This view of Canadian history supports the progress narratives of European colonialism.

The dominant narratives I uncovered at each site should not be surprising to critical readers. These narratives of Canada either exclude or fail to contextualize the experiences of First Nations, immigrant labourers, working classes, women, children and people with disabilities. They offer an uncontested historical narrative. Examining the guide books, marketing materials, online lesson plans and didactic panels in these sites further supports this analysis.

Because these sites all employ costumed interpreters in their programs, I have argued that theatrical presentation must also be a consideration. Careful attention to staging conventions, the use of costume, prop and spatial representations, offers the attentive visitor a different lens through which to view the museum's narratives, its temporal affiliations and its silences.

In my research, I observed several variants of environmental scenography: site-specific simultaneous stages, transitional space between them, and the frontal staging created by the doorways that separate viewers from the rooms beyond the frame. These are all long-standing conventions within western theatre, dating from the ancient world and shaped by traditions of medieval Europe through to contemporary explorations of landscape as stage. An understanding of the history of these traditions all expand conceptions of what is happening in these spaces. Understanding that they are all performance spaces has challenged our notion of what theatre can be. These traditions are far beyond the static frame of the proscenium stage, that tool which creates theatrical space by concealing and revealing, but still well within the broad understandings of theatre and performance that the discipline recognizes.

So the theatre environments have all made use of props and costumes, which tie performers, aesthetically and temporally, to scenographic environments. These are the conventions of illusion: the ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ of the cooperative spectator is their necessary contribution to this spectacle. This bargain is to be expected in environments that claim to ‘bring history to life’, or that feature costumed characters prominently in their marketing materials. However, in my research, there were certain glitches with these conventions. Particular rooms presented temporally confusing tableaux, for example, and some performers incorporated anachronistic elements in their performance. These glitches provided small cracks in the illusion of historical accuracy, and these cracks can be the starting points for counter-narratives.

For example, a confusing scene at Irving House led to a conversation about the home’s later inhabitants, two women who did not otherwise figure in the home’s narratives. This led me to consider a different reading of the home and its history than the one contained in the primary

curriculum document employed by staff at the site. In another example, a young woman engaged in an ironworking demonstration shared how her presence in that space was itself anachronistic, and that this was often the topic of questions from curious school children. Her ability to respond from outside of that temporal affiliation allowed her to use those moments to engage students in their curiosity, and provide an opportunity to reflect on how gender roles of the past might relate to gender attitudes of the present: ‘girlpower’ indeed!

5.1.1 Limitations of this Study

Although the narratives performed at my sites of inquiry are problematic and worth analyzing, I do not wish to convey that the interpreters I observed are the object of this critique. Most were women who appeared to be engaged in part-time or casual positions, performing what might be understood as a relatively low-paying job. Many appeared to be over the age of 50, and may have few opportunities for professional engagement. Without understanding more about their labour conditions, the economic and social worlds of the museums, and particularly their reliance on volunteer labour, it is difficult to say more about this. Interpreters’ work may be unsupported by meaningful professional development, their training minimal, and their pay low. In order to continue this work in a future research project, I would pursue a similar line of questioning to the one that shaped Magelssen’s (2007) study: Do the interpreters consider their own work to be teaching? Are they researchers, historians? Are they acting, improvising? Do they make personal connections to characters they embody? What opportunities are afforded and limitations are imposed by their perceived temporality? Their costumes? Their working conditions? Using this line of inquiry, I would seek a fuller understanding for the identities of interpreters, their view of the work, and their extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for pursuing it. Interviewing participants

would add a rich layer to this study, and provide a much more robust view of the inner workings of the museums I studied.

In addition to lacking information about performers, I also do not know much about the curators and directors who have created and staged the scenes I observed, nor have I interviewed audiences. I have made claims about the performances I observed, but it is very likely that others would describe those performances differently. Interviewing audiences would illuminate a range of possible receptions to the performances on offer at the three museums. A broader analysis of audience reception could help to identify the particular narratives that are understood and made meaningful through performance. As these public sites serve a wide range of visitors, it would be useful to explore how different narratives are perceived as particularly interesting, arresting, or problematic for different audience groups. The reactions and reflections of school-aged children, adults from the local area as well as visitors and new Canadians, for example, would be generative in future research. Finally, the perceptions of school teachers would be an important consideration. Teachers who visit historic sites with groups of students may see these sites in any number of ways, for example, as opportunities to get students excited and physically engaged in lessons from textbooks. Insofar as they may be useful in stimulating curiosity in historic events and materials, are teachers engaged in following up in the classroom, perhaps exploring or disrupting the narratives experienced in the site? Are those narratives understood as complementary, as conflicting the lessons of the classroom? Are they thought to be relevant to a student's learning?

My attention to detail was sometimes sharp, and sometimes my focus was drawn abruptly from one moment to another. I was, of course, unable to observe more than one encounter at a time. I am implicitly a participant in my own research. My body, my mind, and my theoretical

perspective have shaped my analysis by providing the lens through which I see and analyze theatrical performance.

Finally, I have not addressed sites that claim to tell the Aboriginal stories of BC. Research conducted at Klahowya Village at Stanley Park, produced by Aboriginal Tourism of BC, for example, would yield very different view of our region's history. So too would a visit to Xa:ytem Longhouse Interpretive Centre, a Sto:lo transformer site with evidence of 9000-year old dwellings. This site is "closed until further notice" (District of Mission website, n.d.). The sites I chose for my research are very different, but they each claim to present an aspect of European settlement in the Lower Mainland of BC. This fact, and their use of interpreters in costume, are perhaps the only elements that they all have in common.

5.2 Pedagogical Conclusions: Toward Intellectual Equality in Museums

From a position of "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1979/1984), I have sought to understand the purpose and politics of living history sites, heritage homes and preservation movements. Ought we to understand these sites as "contrived narratives designed to maintain power, order and authority" (Austin, 2010, p. 21)? The answer is not so simple. Evaluating the political and the pedagogical function of the museum site requires a careful attention to many layers of meaning-making.

Museums are highly mediated spaces. Firstly, artifacts and objects must be acquired, identified, and ascribed value sufficient to be included in a collection. Next, the story of the collection must be researched, edited, and given narrative shape. This narrative might become part of didactic panels, or a guidebook. In the sites that employ costumed interpreters, like the ones I investigated, interpreters must be recruited, hired, trained, costumed and evaluated.

Finally, audiences enter these sites with their own stories, their own knowledge, and their own expectations of the museum experience.

In many living history sites, didactic panels and text-heavy displays are minimal, leaving human interpreters to become the main transmission devices for the narratives in the collection. This transmission requires rituals of encounter between audience and performer: it requires gesture, embodiment, vocalization and the sensory engagement of at least two interlocutors. In other words, “repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by ‘being there,’ being part of the transmission” (Taylor, 2003, p. 20). This is the way that museums “bring history to life,” by placing audiences in multi-sensory environments and lift ‘history’ from archival obscurity through many layers of mediation towards a meaningful shared encounter.

Given the highly mediated processes that lead to museum narratives, how might we understand the history museum environment’s potential for intellectual equality? Let us consider what Rancière (1987/1991) characterizes as *enforced stultification*: an assumed superior intelligence on the part of the pedagogue, which “allows the master to transmit his knowledge by adapting it to the intellectual capacities of the student and allows him to verify that the students has satisfactorily understood what he has learned” (p. 7). Should a visitor’s ability to repeat the narratives of a museum constitute good learning? For example, the use of worksheets in museums is one expression of enforced stultification. Students follow a prescribed learning activity through a museum space, marking down answers to ensure they have visited a number of specific displays in the museum or asked a specific question of the right person.

This one-way transmission of knowledge, and role of interpreter-as-master was in evidence in the tram car at Burnaby Village Museum, for example, with the pronouncement “I did not

become a docent to be interrupted.” Placing rigorous rules of conduct on the audience in this way, the interpreter is displaying the attitude of explicator, and simultaneously constituting her captive audience as incapable. Perhaps the interpreter feels that it is necessary to display this attitude in order to maintain a specific type of order and power in the tram car while she speaks. After all, according to Rancière, “it is the master who needs the incapable and not the other way around” (p. 6). Because I do not know much about the labour conditions and specific backgrounds of the interpreters, I do not claim that the interpreter was consciously adopting an attitude of superiority. What this exchange illuminated is a particular demonstration of power. By considering the theatrical space the interpreter inhabits, we may see her firm boundaries.

Rather than asking students to “understand” the narratives of a museum, I believe we must send them to explore its offerings while becoming aware of the many layers of mediation (and therefore of exclusion) that are inherent in museum environments. Audiences must have access to a number of different interpretive narratives. Interpreters should be able to share what they know about lived experiences, but also allow that parts of the story remain untold in this particular interpretation. Crucially, interpreters should have the freedom to enter each other’s scenes. As I saw at Fort Langley, this opened up the possibilities of contradiction, collaboration, and triangulation of narratives. Furthermore, inviting audiences to move through the museum space at any pace and in any order, taking the time to read, reflect, meander and revisit exhibits more than once supports the position of intellectual equality. Visitors are free to explore narratives using multiple senses, imagination, spatial faculties, and above all, their intellectual will. Of course, this freedom might not be appreciated by all museum visitors. Just as students are disciplined to perform certain roles in the classroom, and audiences certain roles in a theatre space, so too are museum visitors disciplined in their participation in museums. ‘Appropriate’

visitor behavior may include the search for interpretive panels, for example, and the expectation of a determined or cohesive lesson, or other educative outcome.

Freedom from this discipline requires that we adopt an attitude of radical equality in museum spaces. This would allow interpreters to inhabit the role of the *ignorant master*, as well as of roles of coopers, smiths, bakers, homemakers, machinists, etc. Interpreters could thus ‘instruct’ the visitor in a different way:

...by verifying that he is always searching. Whoever looks always finds. He doesn’t necessarily find what he was looking for, and even less what he was supposed to find. But he finds something new to relate to the *thing* that he already knows. (Rancière, 1987/1991, p. 33)

Given appropriate resources and support, all of the interpreters I observed and engaged with in my study have the capacity for critical historical education. Taking up the attitude of intellectual equality, and encountering audiences with temporal flexibility and freedom, I believe that critical historical consciousness is possible in any environment, so long as we allow that searching will not necessarily lead us to find what it was we were looking for.

To that end, I would like to return to the questions I posed at the outset of my fourth chapter: Can audiences themselves activate the narratives that challenge colonial assumptions, that address race, class and gender privilege? Can they signal their readiness to an observant interpreter, and thereby initiate a particular type of narrative exchange? Can an audience member, by indicating her interest in a particular kind of narrative interpretation, change the experience of those in the museum, and alter the course of the narrative? Of course we can. I believe I have done exactly this, dozens of times in this study, for example.

In a field-trip scenario, the education that takes place in a given site is often an interplay between the interpreter, the visiting teacher, and the visiting student. Teachers typically prepare for site visits with their students, and such preparation influences what students expect and how they approach the narratives they are told and not told. Therefore, in order to increase the likelihood that students hear counter-narratives, or see the “cracks” that make them wonder about counter-narratives, there may also be work that school-based teachers can do when they prepare these visits.

Museum visitors can change the shape of museum education by adopting a ‘postmodern attitude’, engaging interpreters in conversation that takes them outside their ‘normal’ narratives, and challenging ourselves and those around us to carefully consider which voices are absent. Until living history sites in the Lower Mainland adjust their programs to address—if not rectify—the racist and modernist undercurrents in their curricula, audiences, including teachers and students, have a role to play in helping make these issues prominent and problematic for museum interpreters and curators. Heritage sites that refuse to engage with critiques, or speak to their role in the world of the present, will fall into obscurity, prisoners of their own captivity.

5.3 Alternate Perspectives and Suggestions for Further Research

In the remainder of this chapter, I present two additional considerations in this study. Magelssen (2007) has argued that living history practitioners have missed an opportunity to consider broader (both more ancient and more recent) performance contexts, and this has severely limited the scope of imaginable theatrical production in historic/museum spaces:

Until living history interpreters and curators see what they do as theatre and performance as well as education, and embrace the possibilities allowed for by

this admission, living museums will continue to follow the path they set for themselves, grounded in conservative, naturalistic practices that prohibit alternative narratives. (Magelssen, 2007, p. 124)

Following this suggestion, the two examples I present below represent alternative approaches to performative history education. The first is an alternative approach to presenting the ‘preserved’ past at Mackin House, a heritage home in Coquitlam. In the second example, I will share a historical educational experience of another kind altogether; my experience witnessing of a historic document in performance. This performance, part of the *Songs of the Land* project, is really quite different from the living history sites I have discussed. With little or no emphasis on the material aspects of historic education, this performance concerned itself with bringing a historic text to life. Free from the concerns of ‘authenticity’ or ‘realism’, the text was brought to life by professional actors in contemporary dress, its audience truly ‘touched’ by the past. These final thoughts are intended to inspire different ways of thinking through the issues I have raised in this project. Instead of avoiding the uncomfortable realities of the colonial story, or positioning themselves as apolitical, these are also examples of how situated history education is political.

5.3.1 Critical Historical Consciousness in a Heritage Home: Mackin House

Irving House is a good example of a historic artifact left fallow. Outdated curriculum documents and insufficient staff training opportunities mean that opportunities are missed for engagement with alternative and counter-narratives. Guides were unable or unwilling to contextualize the colonial narrative in the Lower Mainland. First Nations artifacts were not clearly identified or connected to the narrative of settlement. The interpreters I encountered there are capable of

presenting an engaging and multi-layered story of Irving House, but without appropriate resources and supports, this is not likely to happen.

As it is, Irving House appears neglected; it has managed to avoid contextualizing its symbolic place in contemporary New Westminster, and it does not explain to the visitor why we should be concerned with its preservation. Is this the fate of all heritage houses to represent the past physically separated from audiences, and place guides in a mediating role between audiences and artifact? What might a heritage house with fewer layers of mediation look like? What might a critical heritage home have to tell us about the past and its relevance today?

I offer Mackin House in Coquitlam as an example of an alternative approach. It is a heritage house and local history museum with a critical approach to settlement history, and it leaves audiences the freedom to explore the artifacts and the house, independently. The home, built in 1909, was the original residence of H. J. Mackin, the General Sales Manager for the Fraser Mill site. South of the home was housing for mill workers. The neighbourhood is now known as Maillardville, and is the centre of the French-Canadian community in Coquitlam. It was acquired by the City of Coquitlam in 1970, and it is operated by the Coquitlam Heritage Society. Mackin House is open to visitors five days a week by donation.

The rooms upstairs and downstairs are decorated in a combination of original and replica furnishings that would characterize a working-class home in the area. Visitors may ask staff for information, but are unsupervised in their visit. Visitors may pick up artifacts, turn them over, and try to imagine their purpose. In the upstairs bedrooms, for example, a curling iron is on display. Each artifact is placed alongside a paper card, with a picture of the object on the exposed side and the words “what am I?” On the flip side of the card, there is a short explanation about the object and its uses, and the provenance of the particular object when available. When I

visited, I took my time handling each object before pursuing the answer for myself. I observed groups of children and adults playing a sort of game with the cards, giving each member of their group a chance to guess before flipping the card to see who was closest to the right answer. This device produced a playful and challenging environment for those interested in particular objects.

Guests in the home enter rooms, sit on beds, open closets, read books off the shelf and handle personal items. A very striking difference in the ambiance was that the window shades were open, allowing in natural light, and allowing visitors a view of the surrounding neighbourhood, which has been built up and greatly changed since the close of the mill. Considering this home as part of an economic, labour, and natural resource story in the Lower Mainland, I was able to situate myself in the surrounding neighbourhood, and make a continuous line to the present by recognizing the geographic and cultural space that are bound up in the history of Maillardville. This experience “brought to life” the home in a way I never experienced at Irving House. Not only was I free from the supervision and mediation of the interpreter, I was also taking care in handling historic artifacts. Using my senses and imagination in this sense, the scenes at Mackin House are not locked up in the past, but vibrant, alive, and fascinating educational environments.

Downstairs at Mackin House, a series of First Nations baskets are on display. Small interpretive signs displayed alongside them give historical and regional context to the artifacts, explain the materials and methods used in their construction, and give thoughtful details that differentiate the basket styles of various groups in the region (Mackin House panel, City of Coquitlam, n.d.).

Mackin House provides additional critical historical context on the wall panels in the upstairs hallway. A series of text and photographic panels tell the story of the mill workers and

the way that the industries of the Fraser River were shaped by various waves of immigration and settlement. One prominent panel features a black-and-white photograph of a multicultural workforce standing beneath a Fraser Mills warehouse, and the text tells part of the story of recruitment:

Multicultural Workforce at Fraser Mills

Not a well-publicised aspect of Coquitlam's history, racism played a key role in the decision to recruit a French Canadian workforce to live and work at Fraser Mills. The Mill, determined to have a mainly white workforce, sought hundred of workers from Quebec. On September 23rd, 1909, the *Columbian* reported that the French Canadian workers headed for Fraser Mills would "replace the Hindus." Upon their arrival on the 28th, the paper stated that "the Japs, Chinese and Hindus are working along in a stolid fashion though they know that this means that in a short time they will have to look for work elsewhere." At Fraser Mills, as in many parts of North America at that time, non-white workers were generally paid less and lived further away from work while facing discrimination at work and in the community. (Mackin House panel, n.d.)

This text confronts audiences with the racist history of the French-Canadian neighbourhood. It reminds visitors of one of the kinds of displacement that led to French Canadians finding work and success in this region.

By acknowledging First Nations history and representing artifacts respectfully, Mackin House avoids the outright racist exclusion I saw at Irving House. Highlighting the presence of non-white immigrants who were displaced and discriminated against before the arrival of Quebecois workers, the museum avoids presenting H. J. Mackin, or any other influential men

employed at Fraser Mills, as “exalted subject” (Thobani, 2007). It also avoids presenting local settlement history as if everyone had equal access to gainful employment and freedom from racist discrimination. Recognizing how unearned privilege separates the lived experiences of some immigrant groups from others, Mackin House may offer visitors an opportunity to reflect upon how these experiences are relevant and present today. By making BC’s racist history present in the home, Mackin House provides narratives that complicate the French-Canadian settlement story. It is an excellent antidote to heritage homes that perform an uncritical history, and hold its narratives captive in both time and space.

5.3.2 Historic Documents in Performance: *Memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier*

Chinnery (2010) suggests that educators reconsider using historic texts, including policy and law documents, in classrooms. Connecting with the imaginations of students in what she calls the “Oprah generation” (to which I arguably belong), requires a recognition of the over-saturation of narrative in education. The generation to which she refers has come of age in a popular culture explosion of narrative. We are, perhaps, overly familiar with the victim stories, often featured on “entertainment news” programs like *Oprah* and *Dr. Phil*. These are characterized by personal suffering and adversity, followed by triumph, and neatly contained in digestible episodes. Setting aside narratives, we might see the potential of historic documents, plainly presented, as a more powerful way to connect this generation to the injustices of the past, she argues.

I experienced this connection firsthand in the summer of 2013, when I visited the town of Lytton to witness the final day a week-long workshop produced by Savage Arts, a First Nations arts organization is helmed by writer/actor Kevin Loring. The “Songs of the Land” project undertook the digitization and repatriation of recordings made in the early 1900s. In these

recordings, the people of the Thompson Band sang sacred songs, many of which have not been heard by surviving Elders. Re-introducing these songs of the people of Lytton, Loring and his colleagues hope to continue a dialogue about how cultural performance can be a part of language and cultural revitalization in this community.

After introducing the “Songs of the Land” project and the creative team that had come with him to Lytton, Loring introduced four actors who began a partially staged reading of the *Memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier* (1910). This is a document co-signed by many Chiefs in the Thompson-Nicola region, and addressed to the Premier of the Dominion of Canada, Sir Wilfrid Laurier. As I listened, I realized that I was witnessing a historical document I did not previously know existed. I was overcome with the feeling that I should have known about this, that this part of the settlement story is an important missing piece of my historical education.

We take this opportunity of your visiting Kamloops to speak a few words to you.

We welcome you here, and we are glad we have met you in our country. We want you to be interested in us, and to understand more fully the conditions under which we live. (Chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan and Couteau or

Thompson tribes & Teit, J. A., 2010, n.p.)

Written more than 100 years ago, the letter appeals for justice in the nations’ dealings with white settlers in BC’s Fraser Canyon and Interior regions. The calm and diplomatic tone of the piece struck me, and I realized that this was perhaps the only historic document I have ever encountered with First Nations as authors, as agents, and as politicians.

I was among the only white people at the feast where it was presented in a very informal reading. The simple act of listening to this letter, read by actors in the Lytton Memorial Hall, was as close as I have come to a crisis of conscience in an educational experience. My identity and

my responsibility as a white settler in BC have never been more sharply in focus. This crisis is precisely the opportunity that students have when they encounter an unmediated troubling historic document. Read aloud by skilled First Nations actors, it needed no additional dramatization. It contextualized the arrival of white ranchers, and placed these men in the social world of First Nations customs and expectations:

Thus they commenced to enter our “houses,” or live on our “ranches”. With us when a person enters our house he becomes our guest and we must treat him hospitably as long as he shows no hostile intentions. At the same time we expect him to return to us equal treatment for what he receives.

...

We had never known white chiefs to break their word so we trusted. In the meanwhile white settlement progressed. Our chiefs held us in check. They said, “Do nothing against the whites. Something we did not understand retards them from keeping their promise. They will do the square thing by us in the end.”

(n.p.)

Its powerful words resonate 100 years later, and give voice to the perspective of the politicians and leaders of the First Nations. This perspective was sorely lacking in all the sites I encountered in my research, which backgrounded First Nations narratives, or excluded them entirely.

I offer these experiences as final thoughts on how historic education can speak through theatre. Neither my witnessing of the “Songs of the Land” project, nor my experience at Mackin House, were comparable to what I experienced in the three sites I chose for this study. They did not use costumed interpreters in the service of performative historic environments, which is what each of my other three sites did. What these two final examples did was create an environment—

with space and with actors—for thoughtful engagement with the past. I merely place these reflections alongside my others. Together, they represent a range of strategies that can offer multi-sensory engagement with history and inform and develop a critical historical consciousness grounded in historic places.

What these two final examples also show is how historic education sites and events can be transparent in their politics. Emphasis on illusion and historical ‘accuracy’ suggest that history’s primary concern is with “what really happened.” This approach requires history educators, performers and others involved in production to rely on modernist, conservative notions of historical record. In addition to silencing other voices, this approach stultifies; rendering audiences passive and constituting them as receivers of sanctioned messages and official stories.

Living history sites – as I have imagined them in this project – are always imbricated with power relations, both in the past and in the present. Acknowledging the powerful positions that museums, interpreters and narratives occupy in the educative landscape is one way to begin to lift the veil of mediation, and show these power relations more clearly. By acknowledging this power relation, and the *political* role that museums can take on more broadly, museum educators, programmers and interpreters can begin to consider how power is being expressed in the stories that we are telling and being told – stories of colonial history of indigenous/settler relations, gender inequality, race relations, and class stratification.

In pursuit of critical historical consciousness, museums have an important role to play. Museums that perform narrative – as opposed to offering it in other ways – may wish to consider more carefully the ways in which staging and costuming conventions, for example, are shaping their programs. Although these issues may not, at first glance, seem like the domain of the history educator, I have shown how three sites’ adoption of performative devices lend shape to

their voice. Attention to theatricality in museums may help museum educators to understand where there is room for the inclusion of counter-narratives, and, of course, provide vehicles for their presentation.

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