

**BACK-IN-THE-LAND:
SPACE AND ANGOLPHONE CANADA'S PROFESSIONAL FARM THEATRES**

by

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Abstract

At Anglophone Canada's four professional farm theatres, performance often foregrounds relations between beings and landscapes in unusually rich and striking ways. In this thesis I argue that the success of these theatres lies largely in their ability to connect audiences affectively to the specific natural environments of their performance sites or regions, and to embody the stories held within these respective rural spaces. More particularly, they share the stories of two land-hungry eras: the settling of what is now Canadian soil by European colonizers, and the transformation of farming culture since 1950, including the back-to-the-land movement of the nineteen sixties and seventies. Four questions guide the analysis. What do the histories, geographies, mandates, programming and other artistic choices of these farm theatres reveal about each theatre's relationship with the land on which they perform? Do the theatres share any common impulses? What distinguishes their efforts and aesthetics? How does the land itself perform? Research presented in this study builds from spatial thought in theatre studies, archival research on the four theatres and their histories, inquiry into the material history of the theatres' sites, and performance analyses of select productions. More particularly, I provide close readings of a single night's offering in each theatre's 2013 season. This includes, Peter Anderson's *Head Over Heels* at the Caravan Farm Theatre near Armstrong, B.C.; the collective creation *Beyond The Farm Show* at the Blyth Festival Theatre in the village of Blyth, Ontario; Andrew Moodie's *The Real McCoy* at 4th Line Theatre in Millbrook, Ontario; and both Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and the *Iliad by Fire* by Ken Schwartz (from Homer) at Two Planks and Passion in Canning, Nova Scotia. The thesis brings together research that demonstrates how the material evolution of Canada is deeply tied to farming. It charts how the

theatres considered here are similarly connected, and posits a new field of agro-poetics, to which these four companies' respective aesthetic innovations and animations of sites are contributing.

Preface

This thesis is an original, unpublished, independent work by the author Katrina Dunn.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Harry Vander Schee (1948-2008), a wild man who lived in the upside down world, who scared me when I was young. Ride on Harry.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The car hugs the curves of a paved rural road that divides the expanse of farmland into bucolic plots. Regular sloping deviations from the horizontal plane express the gentleness of this road's addition to the landscape; the lay of the land's figure can still be felt, even from behind the wheel of a car. Up ahead, jutting out from a small grove, is a handcrafted wooden sign announcing the destination with modest artisanal charm. A tight right turn takes the car abruptly onto gravel, with its attendant spray of dust and the jerk of the occasional pothole. To either side of the fenced in lane, haphazard collages of rural life abound, replete with low tangled brush, relics of farm implements, and the occasional impassive horse. The long gate at the end of the lane is propped open to allow the car's passage into a field of matted grass which functions as a disorderly pastoral parking lot. Once out of the vehicle, the sensation of foot on earth wakes the car-weary body into new attention to both itself and its vast surroundings. The breath decelerates and penetrates deeper. The high-speed motion of highway driving slows to a cow's pace. The only buildings in the field of vision are a few scattered rough-hewn farm structures of indeterminate age that seem to grow out of the countryside like mushrooms on a moist bank. A short walk across uneven ground ends at a tiny shack where two bohemian women are framed, puppet-like, in an open glassless window ready to sell you a ticket. This place is a theatre.

In August of 2013 I visited all four of Canada's professional farm theatres in the space of five days. Given that they are stretched full-wide across the immensity of the country's terrain, this was no mean feat. I began at the Caravan Farm Theatre in the Armstrong/Spallumcheen region of BC's interior. Regular patrons of the Caravan may recognize the final approach to the farm as narrated above. I went next to the Blyth Festival Theatre in the village of Blyth in southwestern

Ontario, and then continued on to 4th Line Theatre in Millbrook, Ontario, just outside of Peterborough. My trek ended at Two Planks and a Passion's home at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts in Canning, Nova Scotia, just inland from the Bay of Fundy on Canada's East Coast. I flew in four planes. I drove with a purpose in three rented cars, flying up the Coquihalla, darting between semi-trailer trucks on the 401, and bisecting an island on Highway 101. I went very fast to go slow. Though I had limited time to engage with the sites as part of the 2013 research process, I knew that I could not undertake a consideration of the farm theatre phenomenon without actually being present to the unfolding of these theatres in space in a conscious, focused and comparative way. During my visits I was in search of more of the distinct and unusual experiences I had had at a couple of the farm theatres prior to 2013, and some way of mapping those perceptions using the land as my guide. As philosopher Edward Casey says, I was looking to "get back into place" (11).

One function of performance is that it releases stories and energies contained in place. At Canada's farm theatres, performance often foregrounds relations between beings and landscapes in unusually rich and striking ways. In this thesis I argue that the success of these theatres lies largely in their ability to connect audiences affectively to the specific natural environments of their performance sites or regions, and to embody the stories held within these respective rural spaces. More particularly, the stories of two land-hungry eras animate the sites: the settling of what is now Canadian soil by European colonizers, and the transformation of farming culture since 1950, including the back-to-the-land movement of the nineteen sixties and seventies. I also suggest that, beneath the level of cognition, these sites shed light on painful truths about the production of Canadian space stemming from its colonial history, and give subversive guidance

to the senses that encourages a more radical emplacement. A number of questions accompanied me at the outset of this journey and continued to fuel me through the process. Foremost among them are the following. What do the histories, geographies, mandates, programming and other artistic choices of Anglophone Canada's four professional farm theatres reveal about each theatre's relationship with the land on which they perform? Do the theatres share any common impulses? What distinguishes their efforts and aesthetics? How does the land itself perform? I am limiting my focus to Canadian farm theatres that perform in English and produce professionally. Though there can be many ways to define “professional”, for the purposes of this study I am designating as professional companies that receive operating funds from the Canada Council for the Arts, Canada’s federal Arts funding body. Full production histories of the four theatres are attached to this study as Appendices.

1.1 Theorizing “here”: stopping time, filling up space, knowing your place

Many other thinkers have grappled with the rich spatial and platial puzzle that theatre provides. As Gay MacAuley notes, “theatre is perhaps the only art form in which the name given to the place where the artistic event occurs . . . is the same as that of the art form itself” (*Space* 1). Physical space is primary in theatre and performance, and theorists have borrowed concepts and methodologies from a wide range of thinkers and disciplines to explain and expand on this truth. In what follows, I chart streams of thought from philosophers of space and place through to their manifestations in theatre and performance studies in order to give an overview of the theory that inspired and aided my research. I follow that with concepts from the field of geography that are having significant impact on the study of performance and seem most relevant to my research. This theoretical map is by no means comprehensive. As well, it contains terminology used in

contrasting and sometimes contradictory ways by different scholars (space, place, site, and landscape in particular). Rather than define these contested terms in advance of this exposition I prefer to present the ideas as they were formed by their authors. As philosopher Dylan Trigg says, “we must begin to work through the knots that concepts create” (3). To this end, I have arranged thinkers in imperfect threads based on their primary methodologies. I will define my own use of terms once we have followed the map some distance and untied a few knots.

1.1.1 Producing space

In 1967 French philosopher Michel Foucault mused prophetically that “The present epoch will perhaps above all be the epoch of space” (*Other* 22). He was reacting against a nineteenth century obsession with history and a privileging of time over space which Michal Kobialka traces all the way back to Isaac Newton's *Principia* in 1687 (559). In the interview *Questions on Geography* Foucault asked for a critique of “this devaluation of space that has prevailed for decades”, and answers to why space was seen as “dead, fixed, the undialectical, the immobile”, while time was “richness, fecundity, life, dialectic” (70). His lecture *Of Other Spaces* contains thoughts towards a new schematic of space, and introduces the notion of heterotopias, or counter-sites, that comment on other spaces and societal myths. He classifies theatre as a heterotopia with a subversive role to play in creating interactions in non-heterotopic sites. This was a beginning. As he suggested in the interview *The Eye of Power*, “A whole history remains to be written of spaces” (149).

Most spatial thinkers acknowledge some debt to Henri Lefebvre and the ideas he laid out in *The Production of Space* (1974). Lefebvre argued that space is both physical and mental, and is never

a given but a social product. Each society creates its own unique version of this social product based on complex social practices and constructions: "Space is social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism" (94). Answering Foucault's challenge, Lefebvre's insight provides the groundwork for analyses of space in many disciplines. Theatre scholar David Wiles captures how these ideas were taken up in performance studies: "Since space, as Lefebvre insists, is always socially produced, aesthetic practices are at every point bound up with socio-political and philosophical assumptions" (19).

Spatial discourse has its own socio-political bias, which is decidedly urban. A notable exception is Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City* (1973), in which he contrasts representations of country and city in English literature since the 16th century, using the cultural materialist approach that he was seminal in introducing. In this work, Williams notes the persistent figuring of the rural as a peaceful and innocent ideal, only recently lost by each generation of writers. He visualizes this nostalgia as a backward moving escalator (11) leading to "a crisis of perspective. . . . When we moved back in time, consistently directed to an earlier and happier rural England, we could find no place, no period in which we could seriously rest (35)." This recurrent mythology of the lost "natural" society, a major trope in modern social thought and promulgated long after Britain had become an overwhelmingly urban society, relies on "the suppression of work in the countryside" (46), and serves to "promote superficial comparisons to prevent real ones" (54). This "protecting illusion" (96), Williams saw as a major contributor to the crisis of his time, and is of particular interest in relation to farm theatres and how they construct and promote their identities. The maintenance of the illusion relies on the "separation of Nature from the facts of the labour that is creating it, and then the breaking of Nature, in altered and now

intolerable relations between men” (141), as well as on the ongoing exploitation of the country for the benefit of the city.

Using a form of William's materialist approach, Canadian scholar Michael McKinnie brought the "spatial turn" (*City* 14) in theatre studies to bear on Canadian urban case studies in *City Stages: Theatre and Urban Space in a Global City* (2007). McKinnie roots his analysis in Marx's statement, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it . . . under circumstances chosen by themselves (Marx 595, McKinnie, *City* 12)." Highlighting the political economy of several Toronto theatre spaces, McKinnie shows how these spaces and their histories are constantly being made and remade by human subjects in an untidy process heavily influenced by social forces and shaped by unanticipated results (*City* 12). He also joins the ranks of theatre scholars welcoming the influence of materialist geography into their critical practice, and works from this interdisciplinarity in both *City Stages* and in editing *Space and the Geographies of Theatre*. This melding of approaches has allowed him to draw new links between some formerly disparate fields of inquiry: "political economy and programming, real estate and performance ideology . . . urban development and theatrical legitimacy, to name a few" (*City* 16), and has allowed me to look broadly at many such facets of each farm theatre I consider here.

1.1.1 Reading space

One route semiotic theory takes into performance studies is via Roland Barthes *Elements of Semiology* (1977), in which he points out the impossibility of existing or created non-signifying objects. Building on the work of Ferdinand Saussure, Barthes places the science of signs within the realm of linguistics in order to feed it with elements of linguistic theory. He finds that every

element of the perceived world is layered with meaning. His works also stresses the quotational nature of signification; that all meaning is assemblage drawn from different areas of culture, and not singular, original utterance.

Marvin Carlson's *Places of Performance* (1989) builds on Barthes, and on Umberto Eco's suggestion in *La struttura assente* (1968) that an architectural object may be considered a sign, tied by cultural codes to its function. Beyond this functional meaning, a piece of architecture will also take on "semantic overtones" (*Places* 7) based on its unique history and its relationship to objects around it. All of this signification will contribute to the cultural processing of any artwork housed within the object. In the book, Carlson suggests that theatre spaces are especially susceptible to semiotization, making theatre "the art most closely related to memory and the theatre building itself a kind of memory machine" (*Haunted* 142). Most notably for this study, he discusses the semiotic potential of nontraditional spaces, and the tension in found space between the semiotics it already possesses in its previous role, and those that might be brought to it by performance (*Places* 207). In *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (2001), Carlson calls this layering of meaning, "haunting". He also describes how the previous identity of a space can be seen "bleeding through the process of reception", and how this creates "extratheatrical associations" (*Haunted* 133-4). As the four theatres I investigate here offer both traditional and non-traditional theatres and performance spaces, I will look for ways in which these spaces are haunted or marked by the bleeding through of previous identities.

Scholar of theatre and space, Una Chaudhuri, shifts the focus from memory to the relationship of humans to their natural environment. In *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama*

(1995), she focuses her spatial semiotics on the fictional space of realist drama. She asserts that, “dramatic structure reflects deeply ingrained convictions about the mutually constructive relations between people and place” (*Staging* xii). Noting that “the varieties of platial experience allowed by the medium of theatre – and recorded in dramatic texts – far surpass that of any other artform” (*Staging* 21), her analysis of the platial mapping of modern realist texts reveals a fundamental dislocation between humankind and nature that she labels “geopathology” (*Staging* 55). Further invigorating the discourse on fictional space, in *Land/Scape/Theatre* (2002), Chaudhuri and co-editor Elinor Fuchs welcome into the spatial reading of theatre the vast field of landscape aesthetics. Proposing that “landscapes are communicative devices that encode and transmit information” (Chaudhuri, *Land* 14), Chaudhuri proposes that the land itself becomes a character within the structure of modern plays, and Fuchs articulates a methodology of “landscape dramaturgy” (Fuchs 37): an analysis of the human adaptation to land in any given dramatic text. I will utilize this approach in Chapters 3 through 6, which investigate the playscripts produced at the farm theatres.

In theatre scholar Joanne Tompkins’ *Unsettling Space* (2007), she takes up Chaudhuri’s geopathology and Carlson’s haunting, using contemporary theatre examples to contest history and culture in the “spatially unstable nation” of Australia (5). She uses the term “unsettlement” to acknowledge the violently disruptive process of unseating Australia’s indigenous peoples, and to name the resulting spatial anxiety that still lurks beneath the surface of Australian culture. She argues that place has a heightened presence in Australian theatre, a presence pregnant with collective memory that is unleashed by theatrical meaning making.

Tompkins' observations provide an interesting corollary with English Canadian theatre and its historical fixation with representing land and landscape, a fixation that has been taken up by a variety of Canadian scholars. For example, Alexander Leggatt's "Playwrights in a Landscape: The Changing Image of Rural Ontario" (1980) looks at early Canadian playwrights Merrill Dennison and Robertson Davies and their "drama of frustration" set in culturally stunting rural landscapes (26). Robert Wallace's "Writing the Land Alive: the Playwrights' Vision in English Canada" (1985) discusses the essential regionalism of Canadian drama as a way of giving shape to Canadian cultural identity and as a defense against American cultural hegemony. Anne F. Nothof's "Gendered Landscapes: Synergism of Place and Person in Canadian Prairie Drama" (1998) highlights the attempt at transcendental reconciliation with forgotten landscape in the work of female prairie playwrights Gwen Pharis Ringwood, Sharon Pollock and Connie Gault. Jerry Wasserman's "Joan MacLeod and the Geography of the Imagination" (2003) charts the geographical manifestations of MacLeod's characters' imaginative life and their use of land-based imagery to reach beyond delimiting boundaries. This sampling of the analysis of Canadian geography onstage, together with the country's own violent unseating of Aboriginal peoples, suggests that Canada is also a spatially unstable in our nationhood in a way that performance works to reveal.

In the latter sections of Leggatt's "Playwrights in a Landscape", he highlights the moment when Canadian theatre artists such as James Reaney and *The Farm Show* collective could successfully leverage a rural setting for poetic value. He suggests that they could do this because Canada was now predominantly urban and the populace was no longer actually bound to the land through labour and production. With the rural no longer a marker for stunting and struggle, Leggatt

proposes that “the gap between culture and farming has been sealed up” (24). Farm theatres may be the material manifestation of the suturing of this rift, as the farm underwent a transformation from an image in a theatrical setting to an actual performance venue.

1.1.2 Feeling space

In *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (1993/2009) philosopher Edward S. Casey attacks modernity’s “*gigantomachia* between Time and Space” (10), by proposing that place is prior to both. Place, “by virtue of its unencompassability by anything other than itself, it is at once the limit and the condition of all that exists, . . . to be is to be in place” (15-16). He proposed that all material and mental objects and all events are “implaced”, and that for humans, place is “the environing subsoil of our embodiment” (xvii) as we interact with the landscape that enfolds us. Like Williams, he sees nostalgia as symptomatic of the loss of human connection with place itself and the sickness of “time’s patho-logic”, which results in the “*atrophy of the body-in-place*” (260). For him, culture and its artifacts play a vital role in the “thickening” of the experience of place (254); the creation of the sense that a place has a rich and lasting quality. Culture binds and constrains place through this thickening process, allowing it multidimensional temporal resonances.

Casey’s phenomenological perspective finds its way into theatrical discourse through Bert O. States and his influential *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* (1985). For States, art exists to “recover the sensation of life” (21), and the process of perceiving it, rather than the art object itself, is the aesthetic goal and end point. States emphasizes theatre’s “complex appeal to the senses” (54) and deeply satisfying corporeality. Erin Hurley, in *Theatre & Feeling* (2010),

rearticulates this as theatre's "super-stimuli" (23), concentrating and amplifying the world's natural sensory impacts and toying with our perceptual abilities. This focus on perception leads into the "affective turn" in performance studies, though only a portion of the resulting discourse highlights the role of place. In this thesis I use phenomenological inquiry to detail the heightened affective functioning I have felt and witnessed at the four farm sites.

1.1.3 Radicalizing space

From the rebellion against traditional stage space that characterized much experimental theatre of the 1960's and 1970's came an articulation of the radical potential of space and place, which in turn gave rise to the traditions of environmental and site-specific theatre. Of the theoreticians of environmental theatre, E.T. Kirby gives the most exacting definition in his essay "Environmental Theatre" (1969). For a work of theatre to be environmental, the spectator must be "spherically involved" (270), meaning that the stage space must surround the viewer, and make use of the real spaces and raw materials of everyday life. In *The History and Theory of Environmental Scenography* (1981), Arnold Aronson also privileges the surrounded viewer, but allows room in his schema for frontally perceived environments in which natural outdoor backgrounds are experienced as part of the setting, because they wrap around and enfold the audience (4). This is the definition that describes most of the farm theatre stages in this study, with the exception of the *Iliad by Fire* at Two Planks and Passion, which plays in a circle, and Blyth's indoor space, which is a proscenium stage.

All of the productions I witnessed, however, can best be defined as environmental by their attitude. This position is put forward by Richard Schechner in *Environmental Theatre* (first

published 1994), in which he defines environmental theatre practice as “an attitude” (25), through which all parts of the performance “are recognized as alive” (x). This means the artist (and the scholar) must consider every aspect of performance space, including lobbies, backstage and business aspects like box office. Like the phenomenologists, Schechner proposes a new human faculty: a “visceral space-sense” (18) through which the spaces of the body communicate with the spaces of place.

In Mike Pearson’s spatial analysis, this visceral communication between humans and sites creates change. His *Site-Specific Performance* (2010) asserts that performance recontextualizes place: “it is the latest occupation of a location at which other occupations – their architectures, material traces and histories – are still apparent and cognitively active. Conversely, site relocates the dramatic material” (*Site* 35). Though there are different ways that performance and place relate in site specific work - the event may complement, confront or ignore the site (*Site* 36) - Pearson believes that truly powerful work in this genre engages the narratives of the site in some way. In his book *In Comes I: Performance, Memory and Landscape* (2006) Pearson maintains that a landscape is a “matrix of related stories as much as topographic details” (*In* 17). Historical narrative is actually embedded in landscape and can be activated by performance process. In order to explicate this process, in *Theatre/Archaeology: Disciplinary Dialogues* (2005), he and co-author Michael Shanks introduce the idea of “deep mapping”. These are “attempts to record and represent the grain and patina of a location – juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the factual and the fictional, the discursive and the sensual . . . everything you might want to say about a place” (Pearson, Shanks

64-66). This deep mapping of the narratives of sites is a major focus of this thesis and provides an overarching framework for its descriptive and analytical labours.

Canadian performance theorist Andrew Houston has studied with Pearson and marshals some of his ideas to broaden the spatial imagination in theatre from a Canadian perspective. In his introduction to *Environmental and Site-Specific Theatre: Critical Perspectives on Canadian Theatre in English* (2007) he gives a more focused definition of the terminology discussed in this section: “environmental theatre concerns the placement of a text in site, and site-specific theatre concerns the generation of a performance from a site” (xv). Performance theorist Ric Knowles, one of the book’s contributors, notes in his article “Environmental Theatre” (1999) that one of the practice’s chief political contributions is the “democratization of focus, its insistence on the engagement or implication of audiences” (69). He also contends that Canada’s tradition of environmental theatre “treats the politics of theatrical space in ways that are analogous . . . to the ways in which collective and collaborative work treats the politics of process” (69). These thoughts are of special relevance to the ways that counter culture ideology and the back-to-the-land movement influenced the emergence of, and artistic practice at, some of the farm theatre sites.

1.2 Geographies of space

As Michael McKinnie states in the introduction to *Space and the Geographies of Theatre*, “the purchase of geographical research within theatre has never been greater” (viii). He describes the flowering of the geographical discipline from an original focus on the physical forms of the earth, into a wide-ranging field encompassing critical practice and characterized by “its diversity

and its potential utility across academic disciplines” (viii). The scholars from contemporary geography who have influenced this thesis are divergent thinkers who share an interest in performance and in considering the human body in relation to its surroundings.

Of significant influence on the field of human geography has been Nigel Thrift's non-representational theory, or more-than-representational theory as some critics have dubbed it. Thrift's theory asserts that spaces and our experiences of them cannot be reduced to representation, either by cognition or external symbology. Thrift stresses embodied knowledge and challenges the idea that “the body is a fixed component of humanity” (Thrift, “Understanding” 88), and somehow ontologically independent from the world in which we work. In “Understanding the Affective Spaces of Political Performance” (2012) Thrift proposes that the transmission of affect “is a property of particular spaces soaked with one or a combination of affects to the point where space and affect are often coincident” (81). He imagines space as “a series of conditioning environments that both prime and 'cook' affect” (88). The human body is materially altered by this cooked affect, a process that is largely semiconscious. I have found this concept especially useful in theorizing how the farm sites manage deeper affective responses in audience members, and I explore it more fully in Chapter 3.

Also emphasizing embodied knowledge, Anthropologist Tim Ingold's ideas have impacted numerous disciplines in the Arts and Sciences. In *The Perception of the Environment* (2000), Ingold replaces “the dichotomy of nature and culture with the synergy of organism and environment” (9). Rejecting traditional models of genetic and cultural transmission, Ingold

foregrounds skilled practice, which forms a kind of “sensory education” (9) and gives shape to our perception of the world. The interaction between organism and landscape (which can never truly be separated) through embodied skill he calls “sentient ecology” (24-26), and it shapes both the organism and the landscape within a dynamic relational field. He uses anthropologist Alfred Hallowell’s designation “other-than-human” to describe the forms that humans constantly relate to, whether they be plant, animal, or geologic (Ingold, *Perception* 72, Hallowell 19-52), and I have also found this descriptive useful in my analysis. His interest in art lies in the bodily perception of it and in how it educates the senses, rather than what art objects or performances represent. He describes feeling as an active mode of perceptual engagement, and surmizes, “*art gives form to human feeling*” (23). Works of art show things to us by causing our senses to experience them, thereby unfolding truths about the world.

Contemporary cartographic discourse continues this rejection of traditional modes of geographical practice, instead submitting the construct of the map to a deeply critical analysis of its material and signifying functions. Australian geographer Paul Carter, in *The Lie of the Land* (1996), works to reveal the absented aspects of the land’s history, still visible in traces even in state generated maps that work to control the spatial flow of a society. Maps, in their official function, could even be said to speed up and manipulate the construction of space that Lefebvre theorizes. Carter, however, uses the term “mapping” in a freeform way as does Pearson, and as Fuchs suggests, engaging a “poiesis of cartography” (43) loosened from its disciplinary and mimetic moorings, and its systems of control. In his later work *Dark Writing: Geography, Performance, Design* (2009), he introduces “dark writing” as a process that works to bring traces

of history and alternate futures to the foreground through performance, commemoration, and the built environment. Performances I cite ahead contain examples of this kind of “dark writing”.

1.3 Histories of place

Preparing this thesis, I have pursued the historiographical questions in a similar spirit to the interrogation of a map. I use them to look beyond what a site might reveal on the surface, and to trace some of the history of specific pieces of land. As historian Paige Raibmon has noted, “Tracing the history of land practices is not nearly as simple as tracing the history of land policies” (75). Indeed it has been a daunting puzzle to fill in, even in broad brush strokes, the land use histories of the sites I explore. Studies such as Cole Harris’ *The Reluctant Land*, Olivia Dickason’s *A Concise History of Canada’s First Nations*, John Clarke’s *Land, Power and Economics on the Frontier of Upper Canada* (2001), J. R. Miller’s *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty Making in Canada* (2009), Norman Macdonald’s *Canada, Immigration and Colonization 1841-1903*, and *The Illustrated History of Canada*, edited by Craig Brown, all helped ground the investigation of the early history of colonial Canada. Websites of First Nations close to the sites and the website of the Government of Canada provided contrasting accounts, and the *Historical Atlas of Canada* assisted with spatial visualization.

The back-to-the-land movement is rich with ideological support from thinkers such as Jacques Ellul, Herbert Marcuse, Ray Mungo and E.F. Schumacher, whose works I consulted. The other sources for this section are analysts of the movement, and first hand accounts from those who experimented with the lifestyle. From the abundance of American writings on the topic I chose

Eleanor Agnew's *Back from the Land: How young Americans went to nature in the 1970s and why they came back*, Dona Brown's *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America*, and Jeffrey Jacob's cross-border *New Pioneers: The Back-to-the-Land Movement and the Search for a Sustainable Future*. Canadian sources are much sparser, but a growing discourse blends research with first-hand experience. Five theses, spread over thirty-five years, map out the range of the Canadian rural return. These are Terry Simmons' "But We Must Cultivate our Garden: Twentieth Century Pioneering in Rural British Columbia" (1979), John Gower's "The Impact of Alternative Ideology on Landscape: The Back-to-the-Land Movement in the Slocan Valley" (1990), Heather Holm's "Intentional Community: Alternative Community in the Annapolis Valley" (1998), Amish Morrell's "Imagining the Real: Theorizing Cultural Production and Social Difference in the Cape Breton Back-to-the-Land Community" (1999), and Sharon Weaver's "Making Place on the Canadian Periphery: Back-to-the-Land on the Gulf Islands and Cape Breton" (2013). Two books round out the discussion: Justine Brown's *Utopian Experience in British Columbia*, and *Canadian Countercultures and the Environment*, edited by Colin M. Coates. Though most of these books provide compelling overviews of the movement, the detailed analysis is mainly focused on events in B.C. and the Maritimes.

The farm theatres do not have an abundance of historical documentation, but three theses provide some chronicling and analysis upon which to build. Karla Nadine Kings' "The Blyth Festival Theatre: Making and Maintaining the Mandate" (1993) provides a rich narrative of the early years of the Festival. "The Gift Horse: Creating and Directing a Winter Show for Caravan Farm Theatre" (2013), by current Artistic Director Courtenay Dobbie, chronicles in detail the rehearsal process and production period of the 2011 winter show. Stacy Douglas' "Settling Pasts and

Settling Futures: Negotiating Narratives of Nation at the 4th Line Theatre Production Company” (2008) takes a critical look at narratives of settlement as promulgated by selected 4th Line productions. Further, two films serve as windows into the very early days of two companies. The National Film Board’s *Horse Drawn Magic* (1979) follows the Caravan Theatre when it was still a touring company. Michael Ondaatje’s film *The Clinton Special: A Film About The Farm Show* (1974) weaves together interviews and performance footage in a lasting document of many important figures in the early days of the Blyth Festival. It is important to note, however, that while both films capture the ethos of unique moments in Canadian theatre, neither focuses on the farm sites I consider here. The rest of the source material for the farm theatres comes from print media articles and reviews, a few articles in *Canadian Theatre Review*, company histories on websites, brochures and programs, and the scripts used for production.

In the chapters focused on the individual farm theatres (Chapters 3 through 6) I draw on a broad range of materials in order to shed some light on how programming springs from, and animates, site. More conventional theatre and drama texts are engaged here than in the other chapters and are selected to complement the aesthetic and thematic ideas raised by the plays being produced. These sources are used too idiosyncratically to warrant generalization in this introduction, but as a matter of example I offer the following list. In Chapter 3, I used Helene P. Foley’s *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* to understand the tradition of live animals onstage at the Blyth Festival Theatre. In Chapter 4, I mine Robin Winks’ *The Blacks in Canada* to trace the connections between Andrew Moodie’s *The Real McCoy* and the 4th Line site. In Chapter 5, I invoke Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World* to theorize the carnival ethos of the Caravan farm. In Chapter 6, Jeffrey S. Theis’ *Writing the Forest in Early Modern England: A Sylvan*

Pastoral Nation inspires me to introduce the idea of the “material pastoral” as an audience draw for *Two Planks and a Passion*, as well as for other farm theatres. Many other contrasting and complementary sources animate these chapters.

1.4 Methodology

As evidenced by the broad range of influencing thinkers and concepts laid out above, my consideration of Canada’s farm theatres will be a multi-method approach. Like many theatre studies scholars, I have found that grappling with the complexity of performance requires more than one methodological perspective, and that layering, blending and contrasting strategies yields the most intriguing results. As well, I cannot separate the work of these theatres from the land that defines them, thus demanding an interdisciplinary approach and an inclusion of geographical perspectives.

I gathered material for this study through both traditional research techniques and embodied, experiential approaches. Traditional research included immersion in the discourse of space in several disciplines, archival research on the theatres and their histories, inquiry into the material history of the land itself, and textual analysis of the scripts presented. Embodied research took the form of fieldwork conducted at each of the farm theatre sites, with two distinct focuses. The first focus was performance reception and analysis, with special attention paid to how the land – the farm itself – might perform or influence the experience. The second more-than-representational mode was aided by what Deirdre Heddon and Cathy Turner call “peripatetic methodologies” (15), and was executed by literally *walking the land*, absorbing its sensations, suggestions and textures through my senses. In philosopher Michel de Certeau’s formulation

this walking practice borders on the linguistic in its capacity to articulate the relations between the walker and their environment (*Practice* 103). A version of this mobile critique was also employed by the Situationists in their engagements with the urban landscape of Paris. For me, the desire was to experiment, however briefly, with some of this phenomenological and embodied theorizing, and to use my own body as a kind of search tool to access the knowledge of the land.

The cumulative effect of my multi-method aims at a version of Pearson's deep map, allowing the reader to view layers underneath and above the site, as well as the site itself. The hope is that this form of analysis allows the reader many vantage points from which to see the subject, and a few that aid in *feeling* it as well. Chapter 2, Land Hunger, is primarily a cultural materialist analysis of the farm sites through the lens of settlement and the social forces that came to define their current form. It attempts to fill in some of the long-erased history of the land, and point to the political, economic and societal engines that left their traces along the way. It surrenders to the necessity of historical narrative as a way of literally laying the groundwork of the sites, in preparation for more challenging analysis later. The chapter is not, however, temporally comprehensive. It has two narrative foci; the first investigates the space of time when the farm sites were settled by Europeans, and the second chronicles when they transitioned from working farms to farm theatres. I have chosen to profile the histories of the theatres only through their founding stories as a way of limiting the scale of this thesis, but also because the foundings proved the most revealing of how the theatres came to articulate space in such unique ways.

In Chapters 3 through 6, I focus on each farm theatre in isolation, using a single night of performance in their 2013 season as a springboard from which to explore the intersections of performance texts and rural space. I have chosen a single night's offering, in part, because of the different scales of the companies' summer seasons (Caravan does one show, Two Planks and 4th Line do two shows, and Blyth has four). By not addressing the full seasons it allows me to look at the productions in depth and give each theatre equal weight. In these chapters I mesh disparate concepts from theatre and performance studies, contemporary geography, and the discourse of space with my experiential fieldwork, in wide-ranging discussions that attempt to tease out the unique functioning of each site. In my performance analysis I am particularly influenced by Raymond Williams' *Drama in Performance* (1968) and Gay MacAuley's *Performance Analysis: Theory and Practice* (1998), both of which emphasize the coterminous consideration of performance text and its embodied realization within a single framework.

The central spatial terms of this study are contested, and used in varied ways in the critical literature cited above. Now that some theoretical knots have been loosened in the summaries presented, I will define these central terms as I use them in this study. In what follows, I use the word 'space' to describe an experience of place that lacks defining characteristics, or (like Lefebvre) many platial experiences from which I wish to theorize unifying principles. This definition attempts to hold place's primacy, while still allowing me the luxury of abstraction. I use 'place' as Casey does, to refer to a specific embodied experience of a distinct human environment, replete with rich layers of memory and other cultural inscriptions. Building on Pearson's investigations, I use 'site' as an in-between term between space and place. For me, site implies expectancy; it is a slightly abstracted emplacement awaiting the animation of cultural

interaction, which will bring it fully into place. I use ‘landscape’ in the manner of Ingold, to refer to both the aesthetic and embodied experience of an expanse of land within a given field of human perception, which has been shaped by both human and other-than-human activity. While these terms are slippery and always threaten to slide into each other, the definitions I propose here have helped me marshal them to better understand and theorize performance in rural space.

In the title of this work I have intentionally replaced the word “to” in the expression “back-to-the land” with the word “in”. “To” implies a journey *to* somewhere or something separate from the self. Instead, we are back “*in*” the land, enfolded in a relational experience from which we never departed, but which has become difficult to perceive amidst the deadening sensory onslaught that is contemporary urban life. Theatre and performance possess powerful means for turning “to” into “in”. We go “to” the theatre, but once there, we are “in” the show, “in” performance, “in” character, “in” the moment. The imbrication identified by being “in” in this way, I suggest is also applicable to our experience of land. Exploring the word “culture” in a similar way, Casey finds fresh evidence of the embeddedness of culture in farming through the cousin-word “agriculture”, and the French root “colère”. Though now commonly translated as anger, “colère” has also meant to inhabit, cultivate and guard (231). Casey also finds ties to the Latin word “colonia” – settled land - and “colony” and “colonist”, notions deeply attached to farming, which take me to the first stage of my exploration of farm theatres.

Chapter 2: Land Hunger

Canadian theatre scholar Alan Filewod has interrogated notions of colony and culture and found a strange dislocation at the place where they merge: “The deep paradox of colonial nationalism is that while nations posit themselves as immemorial principles, colonial nations begin with historically identifiable events that are usually incompatible with transhistorical mythmaking” (*Performing* 7). The historically identifiable event that signaled Canada’s material beginning was the settlement of First Nations’ land by European farmers - a disturbing foundation for a country and a history, yet one that has been normalized by the rhetoric of the country’s nationhood. Canada’s farm theatres perform notions of Canada’s past in their artistic output and material manifestation, both consciously and through unconscious inscription. These historical markers constitute a portion of their currency as cultural organizations. Mike Pearson has theorized this phenomenon using the metaphor of stratigraphy: “our present actually constitutes a single, multi-temporal stratum with which fragments of the material and intangible past . . . are co-present, though differentially apparent” (*Faults* 13). The farm sites I look at, with their heightened inscription of the past, provide a rich sample of strata through which to perceive and analyze this co-presence.

In this chapter I propose that Canada’s farm theatres are the material conflation of two massive migratory phenomena: the resettlement of English Canada by Europeans from the late 17th century to the early 20th century, and the transformation of rural farming culture from the mid-twentieth century onward. Of special significance for the farm theatres studied here, is the back-to-the-land movement of the 1960’s and 70’s, and its ripples in the years that follow. The colonial resettlement used violence and mercantilist trade policy to unseat Canada’s First Peoples

and replace them with a series of land-hungry European subaltern groups. The twentieth century upheaval brought industry and technology to rural work. Conversely, it also saw a substantial group of urban dwellers radically reject industrial and technological society in favour of the idealized simplicity of subsistence farming. The colonial migration created the farms, and the technological and radical upheaval created the theatres. In the final section of the chapter I show how each farm theatre performs characteristics of these two eras, in varying measures and combinations, in their material presence and their artistic product.

2.1 Resettlement

Farming created the political and economic construct that is Canada. It was the tool that the British Crown (and other colonizing forces) used to assert and maintain their claim to territory, and to transform the topography of the New World into both a mirror of the mother country and a powerful wealth-producing asset of massive scope. In analyzing this process, Australian geographer Paul Carter observes that, “To found the colony, to inaugurate linear history and its puppet theatre of marching soldiers and treadmills, was to embrace an environmental amnesia; it was actively to forget what wisdom the ground and its people might possess” (*Lie* 6). Here, Pierre Nora’s distinction between memory and history is helpful in understanding the mechanisms by which the organization of the past through the material and intellectual discipline of history works to unseat the embodied and collective experience of memory. Nora observes that, “History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it” (9). The tenacity of memory and its ability occasionally to reassert itself with force may lie in its platial qualities: “Memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to

events” (22). Canadian farm sites, with their complex social and economic inscriptions, generate potent tugs of war between memory and history.

Driven by mercantilism, the resettlement of what is now English Canada was a feverish and disturbing spectacle of unbridled acquisitiveness. Dominating Western European economic policy and discourse from the 16th to the late 18th centuries, mercantilism promoted governmental regulation of a nation’s economy for the purpose of growing state power at the expense of rival nations. Spawning protectionist policies that fueled the goal of running ever-increasing trade surpluses, the ideology drove rival nations into financially based wars and motivated colonial expansion (Kammen 4-8). One of the main components of an effective mercantilist national economy was the utilization of every little bit of a country’s soil for agriculture, mining or manufacturing, and colonies were seen as the primary way to expand a nation’s footprint for production. The drama of dispossession, migration and resettlement that animates much of Canadian history uses the farm as a tool of conquest, pushing the original inhabitants farther and farther away from valuable resources. Blyth Festival Theatre and 4th Line Theatre, the two farm theatre sites in Ontario, lie on the treaty land of the early Upper Canada Land Surrenders, and are a function of that system’s many injustices. The Caravan Farm Theatre narrative in B.C. begins almost a century later when the motivations for the British Crown maintaining the appearance of good relations with Indigenous people had largely disappeared. That site is still currently unceded and without a treaty. Two Planks and a Passion’s Nova Scotia site is also uncanceled and without a treaty, and is the focus of one of the earliest resettlement histories in the country.

2.1.1 Two Planks and a Passion / Mi'kmaq ancestral territory

The Annapolis Valley on Nova Scotia's western shore is sheltered by two mountainous ridges creating a micro-climate with mild temperatures. On the north of these two mountains is where Two Planks and a Passion are resident at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts. The ancestral home of the Mi'kmaq, hunting, fishing and gathering animated the pre-contact landscape of this place as the Nation alternated between interior winter camps and coastal summer fishing camps. As early as the sixteenth century Europeans began imposing on Mi'kmaq resources with seasonal fisheries and then fur trading. In the 1680's, the area was settled by French colonial "Acadians" who converted the salty marshes created by the great tidal ranges of the Bay of Fundy into fertile farmland (Moore 114). With dykes and *aboiteaux* the settlers allowed fresh water to drain while excluding the sea. Their aboriginal neighbours were the first of the First Nations to see their populations perish in large numbers due to the diseases that contact with the settlers brought. Even in their diminished numbers the Mi'kmaq remained deeply embroiled in the struggles between colonizing nations on their land, and fought alongside the Acadians to resist British incursions (Dunn 121-26). The British were victorious, however, and cleared the Valley with the Acadian Expulsion of 1755, which forcibly deported 11,500 Acadians from the Maritimes, one third of whom perished in transit.

The expulsion also weakened the Mi'kmaq, who signed peace treaties with the British to try to protect their diminishing hold on their lands and focused on building trade relationships. With no reference to land title, either for Mi'kmaq or the Acadian farms, the British moved quickly to fill the land vacancy left by their successful Bay of Fundy Campaign and the Expulsion. By the mid-eighteenth century land was already scarce in New England and agents of the British Crown

enticed eight thousand New Englanders to come to Nova Scotia between 1759 and 1764 to take up the cleared fertile land the Acadians had vacated (Harris, *Reluctant* 164). The first major group of English speaking immigrants in Canada who did not come from Great Britain, these “New England Planters” revived and expanded the Acadians dykeland agriculture, with their main produce being potatoes, oats and cattle (*Historical Plate 12*). The Planters were accompanied by slaves and freed Blacks, who nonetheless faced discrimination and unequal opportunity. They were joined in the Annapolis Valley by Loyalists from the 1780’s on, Irish in the mid nineteenth century, and later the Dutch.

2.1.2 4th Line Theatre / Huron and Mississauga ancestral territory

The French and English were not the first farmers of Upper and Lower Canada. The French learned New World farming techniques from the Huron, who practiced shifting cultivation, abandoning their land every five to fifteen years. They were successful farmers, growing maize, squash and kidney beans on low mounds spaced a meter apart, with a crop at one time estimated to be able to feed 20,000 people (D. Brown 23-24, Ladell & Ladell 11). After the Huron were dispersed by the Iroquois, the Mississauga moved into their territory in Southern Ontario, including the location that 4th Line Theatre now inhabits. The British Crown, however, had other agendas for this land. Loyalists were streaming across the border in the mid 1780s as the American Revolutionary War was ending, and the British Crown needed to reward them for their role in the fight against the American rebels.

The British Royal Proclamation of 1763 forbade private land deals with Canada’s First Peoples, giving the agents of the Crown a monopoly in negotiating rights for land, and heralding the

beginnings of the future country's treaty system (Harris, *Reluctant* 123-24). Early land transactions in Ontario were executed with a lump sum of money and/or gifts to resident Nations, sometimes accompanied by the creation of reserve lands. Treaties were often rushed to accommodate settlement opportunities, and sometimes Nations were persuaded to sign blank treaties, with the territory and the terms filled in later. Speculation over how these clearly unjust land purchases could have transpired point to difficulties in language and translation, differences in practices between written and oral cultures, unfamiliarity with the concept of private land ownership for Nations that shared land collectively, and flat out deceit on the part of the purchasers. As historian Paige Raibmon has stressed, "Breaches of the spirit and letter of colonial laws were not so much colonial anomalies as they were constituent elements of colonialism" (67). Some of the explanation surely lies in the mercantilist trade policy that underpinned the Crown agents' actions. Based in a zero sum concept, mutually beneficial transactions were deemed impossible, ruthless competition was the norm, and every trade transaction had a goal of supplementing the economy of the mother state (Kammer 18).

Once acquired, the favoured technique of the British Crown for settling Upper Canada was to give land away for free, and as quickly as possible. Though seemingly at odds with their other economic policies, alternatives to the free land grants were hard to find, "when land was so cheap, money scarce, immigrants poor and colonies were competing for settlers" (Macdonald 11). This competition between rival imperial nations was the real driving force behind resettlement practices, as Britain fought France and then the United States for land title in the New World. Free grants were made on personal grounds, for military service or sacrifices on

behalf of Empire, or to hold ground threatened by a rival settling force. In exchange for their land, new settlers had to take an oath of loyalty to the British Crown (Ladell & Ladell 68).

To the immigrants who accepted the grants, landed wealth was the key to economic and political power impossible to attain in the Old World. Many of them were agriculturalists or people who had only recently moved to urban centres (Macdonald 3). Though they had worked the land, the idea of possessing it with the independence and social status of a landowner fueled a land hunger that swallowed the free terrain as quickly as it could be surveyed. Sweetening the deal even further, under the 1791 Constitution Act, any settler from Britain taking up land was also given the vote – a privilege enjoyed by only a small minority in the British Isles (Russell 12).

Canadian historian J.R. Miller, in *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty Making in Canada*, chronicles the incorporation of Aboriginal protocol into negotiations for peace, commerce and land as a means of building intercultural trust. He also details the many legal shortcomings of the early treaties, calling the authenticity of such goodwill into question. He points particularly to the transactions of 1787 and 1788 that supposedly secured the land on the north shore of Lake Ontario (including present day Toronto and Millbrook). Lacking any kind of territorial description, especially the “Toronto Purchase” No. 13 that was basically left blank to be filled in later (“Treaty”), these documents were redone as the Williams Treaties in 1923 (Miller 84). Despite their questionable status as legal documents these treaties succeeded in preventing the local Mississauga Nations from accessing their hunting and fishing sites and contained their decreasing numbers on shrinking reserves.

The Millbrook area was surveyed in 1817, first resettled by the Loyalists, and eventually named Cavan-Monaghan township after County Cavan and County Monaghan in Ireland from which many of its eventual settlers emigrated. In 1822, the British Parliament had approved an experimental emigration plan to transport poor Irish families to Upper Canada. The scheme was managed by Peter Robinson, at the time a politician in York (present-day Toronto), after whom nearby Peterborough is named. Between 1846 and 1854, “fleeing their famine-haunted country” (Ladell & Ladell 95), nearly half a million Irish immigrated to Canada.

4th Line Theatre takes its name from the survey method that carved the landscape of Ontario into a gridiron pattern, which the province retains to this day, a design that Paul Carter calls the “visual and spatial rhetoric of colonization” (*Lie* 6). Surveyors created townships by laying the baseline, and then using chain lengths and stakes to add on concessions (or lines), which were divided into lots. Standard inland townships were ten miles square with farm lots of one hundred to two hundred acres. One in every seven lots was to be given to the Protestant clergy and another one in seven kept for the Crown. (Harris, *Reluctant* 316-18) The mechanical efficiency of this survey method aided the speed and logistics of resettlement, with the new farmers quickly assessing the quality of the land on offer (the depth and type of soil, as well as the ease of drainage) by the type of trees growing on it. The main crop was wheat, inaugurating a cash wheat economy that would drive the region for many years (*Historical* Plate 14). By the time the Irish had populated Cavan-Monaghan township, the English agricultural revolution had made its way to Canada with fertilizers, crop rotation and new machinery beginning to enhance the productivity of farming (Ladell & Ladell 84).

2.1.3 Blyth Theatre Festival / Huron and Chippewa (Ojibwa) ancestral territory

In the early days of resettlement the land seemed inexhaustible. An undated immigration poster circulated in the British Isles boldly offers “Free Farms for the Million”, promising 160 acres to settlers for crossing the ocean (McCuaig 2). By the 1820’s a staggering eight million acres had been given away in Ontario alone; one quarter of the available land (Ladell & Ladell 78). The feverish pace of the give-away opened the process up to corruption and “widespread trafficking in land” (Clarke 457). Land speculation was endemic in every province, with speculators grabbing huge tracts of land that then sat idle until it could be sold for profit. Often the speculators were not settlers but men of wealth or the land agents themselves, “otherwise respectable citizens” (Macdonald 14) running amok in a New World in which “acquisitiveness on a grand scale was possible” (Clarke 456).

One mercantilist method that allowed imperialist nations to move quickly in developing colonies was to form partnerships with merchants that offered government-guaranteed monopolies in new territories. The Hudson Bay Company was one such entity, and another, the Canada Company, was hastily chartered in England in 1824 (Wynn 220) to facilitate the Huron Tract Purchase of 1827. The Canada Company, on behalf of the British Crown, used a treaty (No. 29) to buy one million acres of land west of the then London district, bordering on the eastern shore of Lake Huron (“Treaty”). The land was purchased from the Chippewa, who had used it as communal hunting and fishing land. J.R. Miller documents the shift in treaty practice after the War of 1812, as First Nations were becoming quickly outnumbered and less vital as military allies. The British Crown sought to avoid large lump sum payments for land, and instead moved to annuities paid to First Nations, subsidized by settlers who purchased, rather than receiving free land grants

(Miller 93-108). The Canada Company surveyed and subdivided this immense Huron Tract, named townships after members of its Provisional Committee, built infrastructure, advertised it to settlers in Europe, sold it to them and assisted with their migration to the area. The company's corruption and land speculation are credited with contributing to the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837.¹

In *The Reluctant Land*, historical geographer Cole Harris traces the rush of English immigration to Upper Canada in the early nineteenth century to factors that made Britons “increasingly detached from land” (312). Land enclosures, industrialization, and increasingly aggressive market economies in the British Isles made subsistence farming untenable and created a new landless poor looking for solutions. Harris estimates that one million British immigrants came to Upper Canada between 1815 and 1855 (309), swelling the population by almost six times, and by mid-century almost all of the usable farmland was claimed (329). Transforming the forest of Huron County into an agrarian countryside was daunting work and some pioneer families “were defeated by the forest” (336). Some turned to other commercial ventures to survive, and a “service network of mills, merchants and artisans, centered in small towns was set in place” (*Historical Plate 14*).

¹ The Canada Company had strong ties to what was derisively known as the Family Compact: a group of elite that exercised most of the political, economic and judicial power in Upper Canada in the early part of the nineteenth century. Seeking to avoid an American-style rebellion, the Family Compact was wary of representative government, and the group's exclusionary policies and nepotism soon met with resistance, which eventually led to the Upper Canada Rebellion. Some credit the Rebellion with weakening The Canada Company's monopoly. For a full discussion see Robert C. Lee's *The Canada Company and the Huron Tract 1826-1853: Personalities, Profits and Politics*.

The village of Blyth, founded in 1876, sits at the junction of County Road 4 and County Road 25, in the heart of the Huron Tract, and has long served as a social and commercial service point for the surrounding farm network. With a consistent population of around 900 throughout its existence, the settler community in and around the village is now primarily of English, Irish, Scottish and Dutch extraction (King 2). Huron County is an ecozone of mixed wood plains and sandy loam earth that, once cleared, became a hotbed of agricultural productivity. The farmland around Blyth supported an abundance of wheat in its early farming history, but after wheat markets shifted mid nineteenth century, farming has diversified to include corn, soybeans, cattle (beef and dairy), and poultry.

2.1.4 Caravan Farm Theatre / Secwepemc (Interior Salish) ancestral territory

Peter A. Russell suggests that it is “the nature of agricultural frontiers to drive forward until they reach their limits” (4). As Ontario began to burst its seams, land hunger stretched into the prairie provinces and, aided by the construction of the railway, resettlement, and an agricultural boom, drove west to what would become British Columbia. The ancestral hunting, fishing and trading territory of the Secwepemc, or Interior Salish Nations, comprised a vast range in the southern interior of the province, including present-day Armstrong/Spallumcheen where the Caravan Farm Theatre operates.

Stó:lō scholar Dylan Robinson, in his talk “xwlálámatlha: Listening Protocol in Indigenous Sound Territories” points to the land hunger that some coastal people saw in the new trespassers:

“Xwelitem” is the Halq’emeylem word Stó:lō people use for non-Indigenous person (or “Xwenitem” in Squamish, Muqeuam, Tsleil-Waututh and other Coast Salish

communities). But these words also mean ‘starving person’. As I understand it, these words came into use because, when settlers first arrived in our territories, they were starving. They were starving literally, for food; but starving also for gold. (1)

In the summer of 1858 the Caribou gold rush began and thirty thousand miners, mostly from California, descended on the province. The hunger of this huge population of miners brought herds of cattle from Oregon and California, led by a class of professional drovers looking to make a profit. Cole Harris notes that this was a “northward extension of a western North American cattle culture that was originally Hispanic” (*Resettlement* 236). The drovers noticed the abundant bunchgrass and accessible water of Armstrong/Spamulcheen, which convinced them to stay and ranch as gold fever waned.

The latest in a series of smallpox epidemics hit the interior in 1862, likely brought by the miners. The Interior Salish suffered tremendous losses, making it easy for the homesteading drovers to move into their territories. Harris estimates that between 1770 and 1870, the First Nations population in the province declined by a shocking 90% (*Reluctant* 416). British Columbia was still largely a lawless place, but the Land Ordinance of 1861 tried to establish civilization by allowing settlers to preempt any Crown-claimed land that was not reserve land or had not “Indian improvements” (Raibmon 63). Huge tracts of unsurveyed land were purchased for nominal fees, some of it previous reserve land which the Crown had diminished. At this juncture of Canada’s colonial history, Government agents discounted the idea that Indigenous land title

was a burden on the sovereignty of the Crown. The new policy was to grant tiny reserves and ignore land title (Harris, *Reluctant* 437).²

In 1887 the wet lowlands of the areas surrounding Okanagan Lake were drained, exposing fertile black soil ideal for vegetable production. The region became noted for celery (Armstrong was once called “Celery City”) and asparagus crops, as well as dairy farming and cheese. A railway station opened at Armstrong in 1891, establishing the town as a commercial centre and solidifying its presence as a settler community.

2.2 The in between years

In between the two migrations highlighted in this thesis the new country of Canada experienced a complete reversal in how its territories were occupied, and the economic and methodological foundation of farming was turned on its head. Ladell and Ladell report that by the first decade of the twentieth century “the watershed was passed – there were more people living in the towns than in the country” (122). Though the population divide continued to grow in favour of the urban, J.D. McCuaig reports that the amount of land being farmed continued to increase until the

² In most of British Columbia, treaties were not negotiated. The legacy of this has been that the province has been a hotbed of land issues, with Aboriginal leaders and organizations arguing for decades that their land title has not been officially extinguished in the province. A B.C. Treaty Process (BCTP) was inaugurated by the B.C. Government in the 1990s, when uncertainty around title was dampening resource development in contested areas. The BCTP has been controversial and many Nations have refused to participate. Various court decisions have sought to navigate the distance between the Indigenous concept of Original Title and the Canadian legal notion of Aboriginal Title. Two excellent chronologies document this complex process. See: Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. *Stolen Lands Broken Promises: Researching the Indian Land Questions in British Columbia*, and “Land & Rights” page indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca website (author Jeanette Armstrong).

1950's, "reaching its historical peak in 1951 occupying more than 70 million hectares with about 600,000 farm operators" (5). After that, both the area under cultivation and the number of farmers went into decline.

Canadian rural historian James Murton has brought to light a failed but intriguing back-to-the-land phenomenon administered by the Canadian government as a response to the Great Depression. In *Creating a Modern Countryside: Liberalism and Land Resettlement in British Columbia* he documents the efforts to manufacture a modern countryside by settling soldiers returning from The Great War in rural B.C. With the "Dominion Relief Land Settlement Program" the Government would save money otherwise spent on relief payments and soldiers would be rewarded for their service. Instead, as Murton reports, crop failure and desperate poverty beset the enterprise, dashing the ideal of subsistence farming as a workable response to economic downturn (169-189). In Canadian theatre, this is the era of Merrill Dennison, Herman Voaden and later Robertson Davies, all of whom figured the rural landscape as bleak and futile, crushing the spirits of their plays' characters. As Alexander Leggatt has argued, it was a "rural life that seemed for so many years to deny the possibility of drama" (26).

A new economic model for farming emerged from this transitional time. Along with many countries in the so-called Developed World, Canada invested in agricultural intensification and industrialization (Rosin, Campbell and Stock 6). The land grant lots of the first migration were consolidated into larger and larger farms, worked by systems that were increasingly mechanized. Larger acreages created more profit and new farm technologies meant it took less human effort to work the land. Corporations consolidated control over many aspects of farm production and

increased government regulation sped up the natural process of this social change. A casualty of this agrarian transformation, the economic unit of the family farm was increasingly untenable in the face of transnational market forces and industrial profit ratios.

Nearing the end of the twentieth century, in two hundred short years, Canada had shifted from a place where most of the settler population farmed to one where farmers constituted a tiny percentage of the population (Ladell and Ladell 122). The national identity shifted uncomfortably from a rural one to an urban one, creating anxiety and generating what Jeffrey Jacob calls “agrarian sentimentality” (7); a wish to inhabit an idealized rural past, an idea reminiscent of the nostalgia so commented on by Williams and Casey. Less productive farms that did not thrive in the new economic equation were abandoned, used for urban development, or repurposed for industry or recreation. Rarely, but significantly, some of this land was repurposed for theatres.

2.3 Upheaval

Into this massive reconfiguration of farming culture came a movement that would reframe agrarian sentimentality within a radical discourse with ties to new forms of theatre. Canadian back-to-the-land chronicler Amish Morrell notes that by 1964 the population of North America contained more 17 year-olds than people of any other age, and that they were raised with huge material advantages. These “Baby Boomers” were also, though, “the first generation to grow up with the possibility of total annihilation” (51). Running underneath the ideologies of liberation that characterized 1960s counterculture was a deep sense of dread about the effects of a world created by capitalism, industry and materialism. Early in the decade Jacques Ellul’s highly

influential *The Technological Society* (1964) predicted that escalating technology would overthrow man and all life. The trauma of the Vietnam War, unchecked pollution, political assassinations, the shooting of students on campuses, wildly unpredictable economic fluctuations, and the ever-constant, and entirely possible, threat of nuclear annihilation, seemed to signal doomsday for a world out of control. American historian Dona Brown ascribes the birth of the back-to-the-land movement in the US to the *end* of the era that produced the civil rights, student, peace, black power, militant feminist and American Indian movements; that it emerged “not in a moment of apparent triumph for the counterculture but in political disillusionment” (206). The revolution of the 1960s had failed to overthrow technological, materialist and hierarchical power systems, and in fact a full-scale commercial co-option of the revolution was underway by those same forces. At this juncture, Herbert Marcuse’s call for total retreat from the methods of control of advanced industrial society in *One Dimensional Man* (1964) found practical application with thinkers prepared to get their hands dirty. Writer/activist Ray Mungo implored his readers to “till the soil to atone for our father’s destruction of it” (215).

If society could not be changed, then perhaps a new society could be created, one that embodied counterculture ideologies in a protest of livelihood that revolutionized humanity’s relationship to the earth. Returning to life on the land would save the planet from the rape of industry, and the humans that made the return from a soul-destroying culture of conformity. Country living developed a new mystique glorified in song, poetry, literature, and popular imagery, giving rise to a new kind of land hunger, one which sought escape from the endgame set in motion by the land hunger of the original European settlement of the US and Canada. Stanford Layton called the new drive to the land a “collective passion” and an “emotional contagion” (58). It was fed by

a slew of *how to do it* literature, the most notorious of which was the American periodical *Mother Earth News*, which educated readers about such topics as weeds, manure, how to breed goats, and curing ailments with herbs. In a bizarre echo of the first wave of European resettlement, Sharon Weaver documents how *Mother Earth News* promoted Canada as a prime back-to-the-land destination, even promising free land and farms for those who made the trek (9). Ontario's *Harrowsmith* and Quebec's *Le Répertoire québécois des outils planétaires* were similar Canadian publications disseminating the skill set of self-sufficiency, and the then-radical Georgia Straight newspaper in Vancouver ran a column called "Tribes" that offered weekly advice for those heading into the country (J. Brown 63).

Manuals in hand, waves of youths descended on rural settings. B.C. Geographer John Gower mused, "the social became the spatial: people on the social margins of society moved literally, to its spatial margins" (31). It is estimated that as many as one million people across the continent were involved in the migration (Gower 37, Agnew 5), and for most of them it was their first experience of rural life. The "back-to" part of the movement's name was largely false, at least on an individual basis. As farm manual writer Robert Langer notes, "Not since the fall of Babylon have so many city dwellers wanted to 'return' to the country without ever having been there in the first place" (xi). Of Canadian back-to-the-landers, a significant number were American. Weaver cites evidence showing that a significant minority of the 50,000 war resisters in Canada sought out rural living (6), but many Americans were not dodging the draft; they simply wanted to escape a consumer society that they found repulsive and terrifying. This cross-border mix of migrants sought out isolated areas where land could be bought cheaply. As rural depopulation was endemic in Canada at this time, there were lots of options, and for a time the

population drain on the countryside “was briefly countered with a significant reverse move” (Weaver 31). They took up small farms that had been abandoned or were ceasing to thrive in the new era of consolidation. Popular areas for back-to-the-land activity in Canada were the Gulf Islands, the Sunshine Coast and the Slocan Valley in BC, and Cape Breton Island and the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia in the Maritimes, but every province had sites of rural return.

Once on the land, the two interconnecting core values of the movement were self-reliance and voluntary simplicity. Self-reliance was a manifestation of an anarchist-decentralist ideology that valued small local networks over corporate and government control, and protected the back-to-the-lander against the approaching economic and ecological collapse. The dictum of voluntary simplicity meant living without many of the comforts of capitalist society, often including electricity and running water. In *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, E. F. Schumacher preached “enoughness” and “appropriate technology”: an alternative economic model describing a life that was basically subsistence farming, sentiments echoed in the work of back-to-the-land heroes Henry David Thoreau and Grey Owl. As American back-to-the-land chronicler Eleanor Agnew remembers, “we leapt enthusiastically into a primitive environment that poor people had worked all their lives to escape”(29).

In Canada as in the US, these core values often found their expression in communal living and farming experiments with utopian overtones. Justine Brown records the names of some of the more than one hundred members of the British Columbia Coalition of Intentional Cooperative Communities (CICC): Kosmunity, Centre of the World Beautiful, Bar None Farm, the Space Feather Family, Workshare Farm, Earth Seed, and Pepperland (63). B.C. Geographer Matt

Cavers, in “Dollars for ‘Deadbeats’” documents how some of these communes and collections of back-to-the-landers were able to access funds from a new federal government youth employment program launched in 1971, Opportunities for Youth (OFY). Conceived as a way to quell youth social unrest in the wake of the October Crisis, OFY provided small start-up funds for diverse activities that included organic farming and bee keeping.³ Another governmental incentive that augmented this material support was an immigration amnesty that ran from 15 August to 15 October 1973 and allowed people (mostly Americans) who entered the country prior to 1 Dec 1972 to apply for landed immigrant status (Weaver 48).

Cheap land, government grants and legal status may have sweetened the pot for some counterculture youth during this period, but First Nations suffering did not abate. Despite the reverence afforded the imagined life of Indigenous people evidenced in the title of the column “Tribes”, the back-to-the-landers rarely engaged with rural First Nations. A notable exception, chronicled by Justine Brown, was the Marxists-Leninist commune CEEDS, located outside Hundred Mile House, that radically engaged the Indigenous street people of Williams Lake known as the Troopers much to the outrage of local residents (68-69). Generally though, missing from the ideological substrate of the movement, as Morrell cites Raymond Williams to point out, is the understanding that nature and landscape are not simply nostalgic visions, but

³ A sister program of OFY was the Local Initiatives Program (LIP), which funded numerous important projects and companies in the emerging Canadian alternative theatre movement. Cavers’ assessment of the impact of OFY on the back-to-the-land community charts a similar course to Michael McKinnie’s “Bees, Horseshoes and Puppets for the Elderly: The Local Initiatives Program and the political economy of Canadian theatre.” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 15:4, 427-439.

“premised on particular social inequalities and that resources cannot be exploited without people also being exploited” (Morrell 110).

In his introduction *Canadian Countercultures and the Environment*, Colin Coates refuses to label the back-to-the-land movement a failure, even though most communes disbanded and many young homesteaders moved back to the city. Instead he focuses on its substantial legacy for mainstream culture: organic farming, controls of harmful chemicals, the revival of midwifery, and environmental sustainability. For farming, the back-to-the-landers “revitalized concepts of land stewardship that remain fixed in agrarian practices” (20). Though they often generated outrage in the rural communities they infiltrated, those that stayed eventually blended with older generations, often becoming community leaders and working to bring local practices in line with their value systems. In the struggle to survive the demands of a their new lifestyle, which boycotted almost every aspect of consumer society, veneration and hero worship emerged for the original pioneers, settlers, and frontiersmen who lived purely off the land, linking these new settlers to the European migrants who first ‘broke’ the land in the service of imperial colonizers. That some of those original Canadian farm sites began to support theatrical activities rather than farming, suggests that theatre had a place in this utopic vision.

2.3.1 Revolutionary theatres

David Wiles cites historian Arthur Marwick’s analysis of the 1960’s, which describes experimental theatre as “a ‘mighty atom’ effecting political and artistic change in a manner quite disproportionate to the number of persons involved” (Wiles 249, Marwick 304, 733). Director and theorist Richard Schechner explains this explosive potency in terms of a shift in the efficacy-

entertainment braid which represents the separate but complementary drives to entertain and to make change, alternating in importance in different theatrical eras: “in the 1960s and 1970s efficacy ascended to a dominant position over entertainment” (*Performance* 122). Canadian critic Urjo Kareda captured the magnitude of the shift: “creatively all hell broke loose. A common unconscious barrier had somehow been lifted, releasing forces which transformed our theatrical character” (qtd. in Kennedy 187). The potent new energy of efficacy meant that theatre was used to activate protest, rehearse and perform new freedoms, and radically question social conditioning. As with the counterculture movement in general, all establishment forms were rejected, including the methods and infrastructure of the mainstream, traditional theatre.

In spatial terms the ‘mighty atom’ expressed itself as the practice of environmental theatre. I present E.T. Kirby’s definition of the practice in more depth in Chapter 1.1.2, but he summed up the movement as “theatre that rejects theatre buildings as ‘artificial’ and that uses the real places and ‘theatrical equipment’ of everyday life” (277). These “real places” meant everything from new kinds of performing spaces such as black boxes and converted warehouses and factories, to found spaces such as churches, houses and the street. In a manifestation of Schumacher’s “enough-ness”, Richard Schechner implored practitioners to work with whatever they had, starting “with all the space there is and then decide what to use, what not to use and how to use what you use” (*Environmental* 28), and to think about all elements of audience experience, including pre and post show, seating, food, and participation. A spectrum of theatre artists, from small grassroots groups to international stars like director Peter Brook, walked out of (or never walked into) theatre buildings in an effort to revolutionize the art form and impact society.

In Canada the core values of 1960s experimental theatre combined with a new need for post-colonial cultural independence to produce what Alan Filewod has described as “the populist nationalism of the alternative theatre movement” (*Collective* 5). The new generation of theatre artists defined themselves in opposition to the system of publicly funded subsidized regional theatres with their “received colonial traditions” (184), which manifested as stages brimming with British and American plays, programmed, in their minds, as an expression of an ongoing cultural inferiority complex. Inspired by the counterculture, American experimental artists, and European innovators, the new generation challenged traditional methodologies and production hierarchies. They experimented with new forms such as collective creation, a Canadian manifestation of the community play practiced in several countries during the period (Filewod, *Collective* 35). Since the task was to define a new communal cultural identity, in defiance of, and to fill the gap left by, the receding parent culture, going back to community seemed imperative. Where the regional theatres worked to attract large urban audiences and discussed the merits of a national theatre, alternative theatre artists invested in the local, inspired in part by the anarchic-decentralism of the back-to-the-land movement. For some this meant relocating their work to rural settings, a move that blended aesthetic, political, and ecological agendas into some fascinating experiments with far reaching implications for Canadian theatre.

2.3.2 The Blyth Festival Theatre’s founding

One feature shared by Canadian farm theatres is a tendency to develop and propagate, in their promotional materials, founding narratives that keep them connected to their emergence as producing entities. Linking the difficulties of creating a thriving theatre outside an urban setting to pioneering stories from settler migrations, these stories took on mythical qualities,

emphasizing ruggedness, battling adversity, success against all odds, and the ability of theatre to remove barriers between people. The Blyth Festival Theatre's story is the most detailed and dramatic of these farm theatre founding narratives, and continues to animate the company to this day.

It is rare that a theatre company uses another company's production as its founding moment, but such is the case with the Blyth Festival Theatre and *The Farm Show*. Festival founder Keith Roulsten has said that before the Festival "Metro only came to Huron County . . . when there was a murder or a book burning" (qtd. in King 48). In 1972, a group of young artists from Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille (TPM) led by director Paul Thompson, spent six weeks living in Clinton Ontario, 14 km south of Blyth, where they did farm work, examined ways of life, listened to local stories, and collectively created a theatre work based on what they experienced. *The Farm Show* was a literal engagement of the back-to-the-land movement in theatrical terms and one of the first and strongest expressions of Canadian populist nationalism noted by Filewod above. It was first performed in a barn for the local community in nearby Homesville Ontario. Its huge popular and critical success kept the show alive for seven years, touring Canada, and eventually England and Wales. Karla King, in her thesis *The Blyth Festival Theatre: Making and Unmaking the Mandate*, suggests that *The Farm Show* was the first time many Blyth residents had seen a professional theatre production (79). Severn Thompson, director of the 2013 production *Beyond The Farm Show* discussed in Chapter 3, says in her program notes that the show "had opened a dialogue between actors and farmers and given a voice to rural communities that inspired the beginnings of the Blyth Festival Theatre" (Blyth Festival, *Stories* 7).

Blyth playwright Ted Johns links the founding of the Festival to assertions of village pride and the desire to fix things up as the village centennial approached in 1977 (qtd. in King 76). The Blyth Memorial Hall was built in 1920 and 21 by Blyth and surrounding townships to commemorate the local casualties of the First World War. The visual and emotional centre of the town, the hall was active with performing arts in its early days, but by the 1960s the ascendance of television as the primary entertainment form had left the building empty and in a state of dangerous disrepair, especially the second floor theatre. In the early 70s local newspaper editor Keith Roulston, aided by business woman Helen Gowling, encouraged the town to raise the \$50,000 necessary to renovate and rejuvenate the space. It is interesting to consider how much the desire to save this building actually drove the formation of the new theatre company: Joanne Tompkins underlines this material primacy when she cites Julian Meyrick's observation, "venues do not house theatre productions; they create them" (Tompkins 4, Meyrick 169). When *The Farm Show* toured through Blyth in 1973 the company played in the still usable basement of the Hall, and Roulston enlisted the now famous Paul Thompson to make a speech from the stage in support of the fundraising effort. He also offered Thompson the job of Artistic Director of a new theatre company he imagined residing in the refurbished Hall. The idea of a rural town of 900 sustaining a professional summer theatre festival seemed highly implausible, but Roulston felt it would give the Hall the stability of occupation and animation. Thompson declined the job, but steered Roulston toward James Roy, a young TPM staffer who had grown up in Clinton. For these and other important founding actions, a 1979 article in *The Toronto Star* would later call Thompson "godfather to Blyth" (Mallet). The town raised the money for the Hall, renovations were undertaken, Roy was hired, and in the summer of 1975 the Blyth Festival began operation. Interviewed in the *Globe and Mail* in 1979, James Roy would later admit that the appearance of

the actors that descended on the town that summer to make up the new company worried the residents: “some people thought we were hippie weirdos” (qtd. in Conlogue). The sense of invasion from outside and the expansive threat of the festival would come to be an ongoing issue as the theatre company worked its way into the culture of the town.

Opening night of the new festival on July 9th 1975 solidified the company’s local status as a triumph of community engagement and patriotism. Also celebrating the completion of the renovation, the village used opening night to re-dedicate the Hall to the WWI dead, and sold the whole house to the administration of the village of Blyth to be distributed to members of the Canadian Legion. The first production was an adaptation of *Mostly in Clover*, a collection of childhood experiences about living in Huron County by writer Harry J. Boyle, who grew up 10 km east of Blyth. Artistic Director James Roy’s wife Anne Chislett undertook the theatrical adaptation. Karla King paints a suspense-filled picture of the evening, as the company founders waited with bated breath to see if their first offering would be accepted by their new community (12). By the end of the performance it was clear that the show and the company had been embraced by the town. The truly mythic event came later however, as the local Canadian content of *Mostly in Clover* greatly outsold Agatha Christie’s *The Mousetrap*, the internationally popular play which had been programmed to run alongside it (Stuart 256, King 12). The company artists were thrilled to find that the area’s inhabitants were “more interested in their own folklore and developing their own mythology than in having kings, queens and Broadway belles imposed upon them” (qtd. in King 13). Dashing the then widely held belief that Canadian plays would not sell tickets, Blyth’s success became a beacon for the new populist nationalism in the Arts and helped Roy hone the company’s first mandate: to create and promote, “events which

reflect the heritage and life styles of south-western Ontario” (qtd. in King 13). Eschewing the international and even the national, programming content from that moment on would focus on the local and the rural, and on the still radical idea that Canadians could be engaged by their own stories.

2.3.3 Caravan Farm Theatre’s founding

Farmer, writer, and activist Wendell Berry was an early critic of corporate agriculture and its ensuing soil erosion, pollution, and alteration of ecological balance through monocultures. To stem the tide, he advocated that farmers should return to doing their work with horses (Jacob 7, Berry 105-116, 195). Taking up Berry’s ethos in a radical challenge to the theatrical status quo, The Caravan Farm theatre began its life as a touring theatre of horse drawn caravans. Formed by Paul Kirby and his wife Adriana (Nans) Kelder in the late sixties in the Sooke area of Vancouver Island, the company shifted from puppet work to live actors, and practiced a nomadic, labour intensive, rustic lifestyle, that combined acting with animal husbandry, and made *The Farm Show* actors look like effete dabblers. The gritty, small-circus feel of the collectively-created shows and the slow tempo of touring “at two Clydesdale miles per hour” (*History Caravan*) are vividly captured in the 1979 NFB documentary *Horse Drawn Magic*. Moving into the interior of BC by the mid-seventies, the Kirbys met Nick Hutchinson through designer Catherine Hahn and brought him into the company as a seminal collaborator. Both Kirby and Hutchinson exemplified the cliché of back-to-the-landers as affluent children of privilege turning their backs on the system that had nursed their freedom of thought. Kirby grew up in Vancouver’s wealthy Shaughnessy area and was indoctrinated into counterculture political activism while a student at McGill University in Montreal. Hutchinson, the son of renowned British actress Dame Peggy

Ashcroft and Baron (Jeremy) Hutchinson of Lullington, left England to get away from his mother's reputation and the classical English theatre scene. He was radicalized in the 1968 Paris student revolution and the Canadian FLQ crisis (Godfrey, "Grass"). Together with Kelder and Hahn, these collaborators honed an aesthetic that, while still popular, was based more in the "folk traditions of outdoor entertainment" (Anderson, "Breaking" np), than it was in the documentary localism of the TPM collaborators. This aesthetic was imbricated in the politics of their lifestyle, as they practiced the back-to-the-land tenets of self-reliance and voluntary simplicity in the material aspects of the theatre's operation.

In 1978 Kirby, Kelder, Hahn, and Hutchinson pooled money and purchased an 80 acre asparagus farm 11 km outside of Armstrong BC. Dubbed "Equapolis" for both a breed of Clydesdale horses and the commune-like utopia they saw emerging there (Godfrey, "Grass"), the land was originally intended as a stud farm and home site for the horses and company between tours. Existing farm buildings were converted into what the company calls a 'designery' (scene shop, costume shop, and wagon bay), and into office headquarters and a cook shack. Kirby experimented with farming, plowing, sowing, and harvesting oats and hay in the back forty acres using only horse power. As the company deepened its presence in Equapolis, however, a rift was brewing that would tear asunder the collective fabric of their utopian experiment. Hutchinson and Kirby grew apart both artistically and in their relationship to the land. Hutchinson wanted to stay put and produce theatre on the farm site, and Kirby and Kelder missed the nomadic life of touring and began to see the farm, with its mortgage and plethora of attachments, as a burden. Characterized alternately as a "mutiny" and a "divorce" (Godfrey, "Back"), in the early 80's the ensemble collectively worked through the painful separation of its

founders. Kirby and Kelder left on an extended tour of the Western US culminating in a run at Vancouver's Expo 86, while back on the farm a new mode of production was birthed under Hutchinson's leadership. Kirby framed this evolution in nuclear terms: "the atom has split" (Godfrey, "Back"), and indeed the energy released sent the two new entities in opposite directions, though they both still shared the basic aesthetic and political principles of the early company. Kirby and Kelder eventually turned their focus to water, using their Caravan Stage Company to build a 30 metre long 'Stage Barge' that was still touring waterways in Europe in 2013.

Back on the farm, the new Caravan Farm Theatre experimented in 1983 with a short run, Bread and Puppet-inspired pageant called *The Last Wild Horse*, led creatively by designer Catherine Hahn, and dedicated to the mythology of the horse (Kirkley 4). The first full production in an extended run was Peter Anderson's adaptation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* in 1985, directed by Hutchinson. Still in mid-split at that point, the self-referential nature of Orwell's dystopian fable about the failure of a collective revolution and the power struggle between two upstart leaders, was not lost on Hutchinson: "The play is dealing with the things we have to deal with, in terms of the growth pains of a collective organization" (Godfrey, "Grass"). Staged at various sites around the farm, both *The Last Wild Horse* and *Animal Farm* began the scenographic exploration of the farm site landscape and built environment that has characterized the work ever since. As the farm-based company has evolved, artists continue to work, live, and eat together on the land during production periods. A winter show, with the audience carried on horse drawn sleighs across the back 40 acres, is now a feature of the annual programming, as well as a fall Halloween event and the occasional spring production (see Appendix C for a full

production history).

2.3.4 4th Line Theatre's founding

Back-to-the-land chronicler Jeffrey Jacobs observes, “In the affluent 1980’s interest in the movement seemed to wane, but the recessionary 1990’s have revived the search for both material and psychological security in the countryside” (3). Robert Winslow inherited his family farm in 1990 when his mother died of cancer. Originally settled by his great great grandfather George Winslow in the 1850’s, the farm site had been an active farm in his family for five generations. Winslow the younger had never taken an interest in farming, instead pursuing a theatre career that took him across the country, including notable participation in some seminal collective creations with Edmonton’s Catalyst Theatre in the early 1980’s. His politicization included dissatisfaction with the built environment of his art form: “I didn’t really like theatres very much. I was sick of working indoors . . . in dark rehearsal halls” (McCarthy 47). In the summer of 1991 he returned to the land to try to figure out what to do with his 100 acre mixed farm (primarily vegetables and hay) that was falling into disrepair: “I was really faced with this dilemma. How could I keep this place?” (McCarthy 47). Like the Blyth founding was deeply tied to the saving of a building, 4th Line’s was tied to the rescue of a farm. In Winslow’s story, the back-to-the-land ethos merged with the familiar trope of the threat to the family farm, which has been a constant and emotionally complex narrative in rural communities since the economics of farming began to shift mid-twentieth century. To the difficulty of starting a professional theatre in a rural setting, recession-era leanness added an extra heroic element to Winslow’s endeavor, one that he drew on gritty grassroots producing experience to solve: “I’ve only produced theatre myself in

recession times. . . . I learned how to do theatre on virtually nothing. I mean starting a theatre like this of this scope in these economic times is crazy in the first place” (McCarthy 50).

4th Line justifies its mandate and sells its artistic product in large part by connecting to stories from the original European resettlement period that seem to spring from the land and drive the company’s programming. Winslow articulates the beginning of this focus as a kind of vision that came to him during his 1991 familial and professional crisis: “I walked to the fence behind my old barns and looked into the field beyond. In my mind’s eye I saw horses beating down hard on a primitive nineteenth century settlement. I looked into the barnyard and saw an 1840s Orange Parade come around the corner, drums pounding, fifes blaring and marchers strutting. I looked up into the barn loft and saw men raising a section of beam and post” (“About the Author”). These images would become part of the company’s first production, *The Cavan Blazers*, a chronicle of the violent religious conflict between Catholic and Protestant Irish settlers set in 1854 in Cavan Township – the very space of Winslow’s land. The farm was transformed into an outdoor theatre with the farm outbuildings functioning as a stage area and 25 acres of farmland in view beyond the barn as a backdrop and set. Scenes were played on horseback and in one scene characters seemed to set fire to nearby farm buildings. *The Cavan Blazers* was a success that united disparate stakeholders in a community-based consideration of an important untold story: “Between acts, Anglican ministers and Catholic priests, university professors and farmers discussed local history. Onstage they saw not just their countrymen but sometimes people bearing their own names – neighbours attacking one another” (Peacock 1).

As with Blyth, the founding mythology transfigured itself into a mandate that continues to drive the company. 4th Line works “to preserve and promote our Canadian cultural heritage through the development and presentation of regionally based, environmentally staged historical dramas” (“About 4th Line”). In the early days of the company this environmental staging included multiple locations and sometimes ushered the audience into nearby woods. Later, concerns about safety and the desire to accommodate a growing audience have meant that most recent shows are staged in the barnyard with audience in bleacher seating. The 4th Line aesthetic eschews theatrical lighting, preferring not to separate the audience from the performers and focusing instead on the changing natural cyclorama of the night sky. Performances begin at 6pm to accommodate this experience. Although the mandate specifies “historical dramas” (overwhelmingly settler stories, often investigating of Winslow’s own family history), notable exceptions have referenced later social shifts. In 1996 4th Line staged their own version of *The Farm Show* (see Appendix B). Intending to use the TPM version, the original’s temporal and spatial specificity frustrated to the point that they gave up and created their own; “a revue of rural life that includes an imaginary reunion with his [Winslow’s] dead parents and grandparents” (Enright). Even in 1996 Winslow still felt the need to speak out in media interviews against “imported culture” and the need to “create a body of work that represents this area” (Enright), all fervent recycling of the tropes of the populist nationalism of the 1970s. This impulse extended to the company’s rare adaptation of canonical texts. 1998’s *The Orchard* transposed Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard* to Millbrook in the 1960s, when property developers battled with counter-culture conservationists over land use.

2.3.5 Two Planks and a Passion's founding

Much like the early Caravan, Two Planks and a Passion is the creation of a husband and wife team, Ken Schwartz and Chris O'Neill, whose focus in their early company days was primarily touring. After theatre school in Canada, they were inspired to follow the path trod by the many vibrant, tiny, locally focused touring companies they encountered in Ireland. They returned to Nova Scotia in 1992 with a determination to reach new and rural audiences, which they did successfully with a combination of scripted and collectively created work (Nicholls). The company garnered national attention for *Westray: The Long Way Home*, a work they created about the aftermath of the 1992 Westray mine disaster that killed 26 men in Pictou County, Nova Scotia. Drawing on the documentary impulse that also fueled *The Farm Show*, and the affective power of place that inspires 4th Line, Two Planks opened *Westray* in Pictou, next to the courthouse where the Westray trial was taking place (McKay). The show was met with emotional gratitude by many of the mourning families, which laid the groundwork for The United Steel Workers of Canada sponsoring a tour of the work to mining, fishing and logging communities across Canada.

In 2000, however, Two Planks did not receive the touring grant that they had requested from the Canada Council, rendering them unable to move their work around the province. With their identity firmly tied to touring, this crisis prompted a reevaluation of their relationship to land that would eventually give rise to a unique rural arts centre. Crisis and instability, as the ebb and flow of the back-to-the-land movement has shown, tends to push people back to the land, and Schwartz and O'Neill began to look around them with their eye to a new dream. While touring they had encountered places like the Vermont Studio Centre, where artists create in deep

interaction with their environments. They also wondered if the combination of stunning natural beauty and a retreat-like focus on development that thrived at the Banff Centre for the Arts, could also work in the Annapolis Valley. Working with local government, their initial search for land was met with resistance and confusion by local residents. The Annapolis Valley is not only valuable farm land, but it is managed by a local community that is fiercely attached to it: Two Planks' first choice for land was rendered impossible when local duck hunters claimed it as prime hunting ground. The farm that is their current site became theirs because it sat at a higher elevation on the North Mountain rather than in the fertile valley below, and was therefore less valuable as farmland.

Two Planks is unique as a farm theatre in Canada, contained as it is within the envelope of the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, the multi-disciplinary entity that Schwartz and O'Neill created that focuses on creation, development and Arts education for youth. Opening in 2005, the massive barn of the 182 acre cattle farm was converted into seven studio spaces as well as administration offices and storage. Artists stay in the farmhouse, a large cottage with seven private bedrooms and communal living space. The producing theatre company (Two Planks) now focuses its work on summer productions on the land under the moniker "Theatre Off The Grid" (Two 2). Vestiges of farming exist on the land in the company's organic garden, grown to feed the acting company in the summer. Neighbouring farmers are given the fields to hay for free, in exchange for organic meat, again to feed the acting company.

In stark contrast to their touring successes and the programming favoured by 4th Line and Blyth, Two Planks' programming at Ross Creek has shifted to scripted classical work – Shakespeare

and the Greeks, and even American classics like *Our Town* and *The Crucible* (see Appendix D). The aesthetic is less experimental and populist than the Caravan, but benefits in detail and intimacy from the smaller scale and audience capacity. Initial fears about whether an audience would drive up the mountain to this secluded spot to see a show were quickly dispelled, and the company now operates a shuttle bus from Halifax during its run. In a letter from Artistic Director Ken Schwartz on their website, Two Planks highlight their seemingly impossible achievement in heroic terms, describing themselves on their website as “a gutsy and innovative outdoor theatre company that produces incredible works of art in rural Nova Scotia against all odds” (*Letter*).

2.4 Performing inscriptions

Returning to Pearson’s “multi-temporal stratum” (the notion that the past is co-present with the now, inscribed in both material and intangible ways), the four farm theatres described above explore, inhabit, and market elements of their resettlement histories in both their material operations and their artistic output. They perform the past and invest in rurality in ways that, “very directly reveal their ideological preferences and positions within the specific social and cultural context in which they have been created” (Rokem 24). Their founding narratives act as a kind of rough script through which they improvise their identity within certain shared, delimiting parameters. These include: careful management of their site’s built environment and landscape, continued demonstration of a connection to farming, para-theatrical experiences that cultivate historicism, and the development of a kind of character for the company that interacts with the outside network.

The Caravan's version of the past is characteristically anti-authoritarian. When the farm was purchased, the not-for-profit society that was formed to manage it was given the name "The Bill Miner Society for Cultural Advancement". Bill Miner was the pseudonym of Ezra Allen Miner, an American train robber who came to the Okanagan around the turn of the 20th century and was renowned for his extraordinary politeness when robbing. This locally resonant and cheeky society name still graces the company's grant applications and official documentation. In choosing a pioneer mascot, the founders looked past the upstanding citizens and chose instead this local image of friendly disobedience, and Miner's six-foot visage is still painted onto the façade of the farm's cook shack. Rejecting the need to update the farm for greater comfort or convenience, very few buildings have been added to the site over the years, leaving the landscape dotted with functional but clearly aged buildings augmented only with the rustic artistry characteristic of the Caravan aesthetic. Of the cook shack, one reviewer said nearly thirty years ago: "to enter it is to enter another time and place, possibly a western saloon at the turn of the century or an outpost in the Belgian Congo" (Godfrey, "Grass"). In a parallel fashion, the company's engagement with classic and sacred texts can be disorienting and challenge traditionalists. When the company performed Peter Anderson's *Creation*, a modern retelling of bible stories inspired by medieval dramas and performance in 1991, *The Globe and Mail* reported that the irreverent portrayal of some biblical figures caused some audience members to cancel or stay away, and a few of the offended described the company as "New-Age Satanists glorifying Lucifer" (Dafoe).

At Blyth the company performs its local agrarian community connections in an active effort to blend in with the local 4-H clubs, women's church groups, and the farmers. Karla King draws

attention to the company's "Survival Guide" for actors dated as late as 1992, which warns them that "Sundays are taken seriously here – it is a day of rest reserved for families and church" (King 31-32, Blyth Festival, *Survival*). Founding Artistic Director James Roy admits that he avoided hiring certain actors because "the people in Blyth would never be able to cope with their way of life" (qtd. in King 31). The artists who have thrived in Blyth largely have pre-existing rural Ontario connections: Roy came from Clinton, Roulston from Lucknow, Paul Thompson from Listowel, and later Artistic Director Janet Amos was an original *Farm Show* cast member. Karla King chronicles how Katherine Kaszas had a difficult time being accepted as Artistic Director because she was unmarried (100), and Peter Smith had a cold reception because he wore an earring (106). Rather than challenge these social mores, the company has instead allied itself with the town through para-theatrical events that involve the community and emphasize their shared nationality. For the first few years of the Festival, the national anthem was sung before every performance, and local church-women served "country suppers" in the basement of the Hall (in 1979 \$5.50 got you a full turkey or ham meal with home baked pie) (King 80). Though the suppers are no longer served, local female volunteers still operate a quaint concession with the ethos of a church bake sale in the basement during intermission. The village of Blyth is actively involved in the marketing of its settler heritage, and the upkeep and historical presentation of the Blyth Memorial Hall through intermittent capital projects is a big part of that. The company's connection to farming has been constantly reinforced through its programming. The need for rural-themed plays rooted in Huron County and the resources the company has invested in generating them has created a generous cache of playwrights and plays, some of which have found their way to broader acclaim. For example, Anne Chislett's *Quiet in the Land*,

first produced at Blyth in 1981, about the Amish of rural Southwestern Ontario, won both the Governor General's Award for English Drama and the Chalmers Canadian Play Award in 1983.⁴

Like Blyth, Millbrook, Ontario actively promotes itself as a heritage attraction. Under the tagline, "Where the past lives on", the Millbrook & District Chamber of Commerce website extols the fact that the railway passed the village by, freezing it in time ("History of Millbrook"). It maintains that the village has more historic buildings per capita than any other Ontario town. Over on Winslow farm, the scene is similarly frozen in time. The farm site is pristine, with the white clapboard farmhouse sitting close by the historic barn buildings where performances take place. Even the box office is run from a historic shack. In the person of Robert Winslow 4th Line performs the role of the "good son"; a holder of a community history through an authentic patrilineal line. 4th Line promises an immersive experience that will "transport you" (4th Line) into the version and segment of the past that defines their programming. They continually engage their farm-based audience by reenacting the drama of resettlement, but also by incorporating them physically in performances. Unlike most of the other farm theatres, 4th Line has a regular practice of including local community performers in some of its larger shows to facilitate large group staging, sometimes with as many as fifty people onstage (4th Line, Taylor).

⁴ Some of the other successful scripts to come out of the Blyth Festival Theatre include: Peter Colley's *I'll Be Back Before Midnight*, premiered in 1979 and then produced at many Canadian and international theatres; Kelly Rebar's *Bordertown Café*, premiered in 1987 and made into a feature film; David S. Craig's *Having Hope at Home*, premiered in 2003 and produced widely across Canada; Gary Kirkham's *Queen Milli of Galt*, a Samuel French Playwrighting Competition winner produced in 2007; Beverley Cooper's *Innocence Lost: A Play about Steven Truscott*, premiered in 2009 and a finalist for the Governor General's Award in English Drama; and Ken Cameron's *Dear Johnny Deere*, a jukebox musical based on the songs of Fred Eaglesmith premiered in 2012 and produced widely at Canadian regional theatres and others with rural connections.

With their “Theatre off the Grid,” Two Planks and a Passion seek to appeal to a community looking to ‘unplug’: a twenty-first century manifestation of back-to-the-land ideology. The built environment of the site combines mid-twentieth-century farm buildings with newer, more sustainable and less energy dependent structures, creating a complex blend of the icons of farming with a kind of forward thinking minimalism. The company actively markets their careful environmental focus, avoidance of common theatre technology, and stewardship of the land as part and parcel of their aesthetic vision for both the performing company (Two Planks) and the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts. Within this very contemporary take on renunciation and ecological concern is an evocation of the past rooted in a theatrical golden age that is imagined as empowering the artistic work: “On a secluded farm far from the bustle of modern life, we choose to evoke a time when theatre was central to the sharing of ideas, aspirations and emotions” (Two 2). In this formation, Two Planks have cast themselves as contemporary visionaries using an idealized past to resuscitate the future. The organic garden that feeds the actors is prominently in view as you drive onto the farm. The hike to the performing site is unmarked with path or signage. The Shakespeare is unadorned, both materially and conceptually. At night, the after-piece (in 2013 the *Iliad by Fire*) is a retelling of a foundational Western text using nothing but the human voice and flame, as the audience huddles, in the most iconically ancient of human performance forms, in circle around a fire.

What is missing from all this repurposing of the past, and actively returning to the past, is a deep acknowledgement that the past extends beyond the colonial settlement of Canada by Europeans. This collective amnesia is not unique to farm theatres, but is perhaps more deeply felt because

the land still maintains the shape and texture of a farm – the colonizers’ main tool for claiming and branding the land in the name of the parent state. Several theorists have discussed this amnesia and its impact on settler culture. Freddie Rokem invokes Michel de Certeau’s observation that historiography and fiction are closely related (Rokem 12, de Certeau, *Writing* xxvii), to point out that both are as much characterized by what they leave out as what they choose to include. In *Performing Remains*, Rebecca Schneider proposes that we are drawn to reenact settlement history (she focuses on the US, but her idea works for Canada as well) in order to be constantly a *new* country and re-animate our own innocence and naiveté (24). Joanne Tompkins, in *Unsettling Space*, suggests that we are compelled to reengage continually with issues of place and landscape in theatre in order to ease the spatial anxiety that lurks beneath the surface of colonized spaces. This anxiety comes from the active forgetting of what is deeply known – that the land was never empty and remains haunted by unseen others (Tompkins 24). This anxiety and the desire to ease it, may hint at why Canadians in particular are drawn to engage with farm theatres and to manage their unease in such a material way.

Chapter 3: The Blyth Festival Theatre's *Beyond The Farm Show*

In some ways the Blyth Festival Theatre stands apart from the other farm theatres that comprise this study. Its performances do not take place outdoors on land that once was used for farming. Instead, Blyth's performance space is, and always has been, a building. The Blyth Centre for the Arts stands at the centre of the village of Blyth, a village that is a small node of commerce in a large network of farmland in Huron County. So why include this theatre at all? It could be argued that this company and its performing space are more aligned with the various professional and amateur performing arts venue structures commonly found in rural centres across the country, such as the Thousand Islands Playhouse in Gananoque or Lighthouse Theatre in Port Dover. In this chapter I argue that the Blyth Festival Theatre is nonetheless profoundly unique as an entity and, more than any other professional theatre in Canada, it is deeply engaged with the materiality of farming.

Marx's concept of metabolic rift "suggests that consumers will become less aware of the social and environmental implications of production as they are more distanced from it" (Rosin, Campbell and Stock 12, Foster ix). Most urban dwellers want food on command, in huge variation, and in plenty, but have little knowledge of the means through which this abundance is created. At Blyth, bridges are built to straddle this metabolic rift, as the labour of farming, its economic basis, its rapidly shifting practices, and its ethical dilemmas are front and centre in the narrative content of the work onstage. Further, its highly unusual building creates a container for performance that, as Nigel Thrift suggests, serves to "cook", or deepen, the affect of its offerings ("Understanding" 88) (see Chapter 1.2 for an introductory discussion), and encourages affectual carryover from ancient cultural memories that tie theatre performance to its possible roots in

agricultural festivals. The play from the 2013 season under consideration here is *Beyond The Farm Show*, created collectively to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the original version of *The Farm Show*. This landmark production provides a particularly rich opportunity to consider the transmission of memory in performance and the human and other-than-human life-cycles at play in this distinct place.

While questioning nineteenth-century theories that describe theatre as emerging from ritual, Bert O. States nevertheless reinforces their image of Western theatre's first site: "And it is probably less through anthropological findings than through nostalgic stirrings that we have always thought of the early stage as having begun on the circular threshing floor on which the community's food was winnowed from nature. It does not matter whether this was in fact the case, only that the image of the threshing floor substantiates our feeling that there is a connection between theater, as ritual, and the symbolism of food" (39). States suggests that these nostalgic stirrings tether our theatrical past to our dependence on food, and yet in most Western theatres food is carefully packaged and contained at the concession or reproduced in prop form onstage. The original *Farm Show* venue however, Ray Bird's barn with audience members seated on hay bales and in the rafters, was as close to a threshing floor as one could imagine in twentieth-century North America. The process of researching and creating both the original *Farm Show* and *Beyond The Farm Show* was rooted in the notion of performers actually doing real farm work; working actively in the growing, harvesting and dissemination of food. Much of the comedy and insight of both plays relies on the friendly clash of the community of farmers with the community of actors. More significant than the actors' difference from the farmers however, is how they gained cultural knowledge by acquiring embodied skill. As Tim Ingold suggests in

The Perception of the Environment, “much if not all of what we are accustomed to call cultural variation in fact consists of variations of skills” (5). The physical hardship of training the body of the actor in what Ingold calls the “lifeworld” of the farmer (9), together with the powerful evocation of the substrate of food production that underlays Western performance space, created rich potential for the release of cultural memory into the present with *Beyond The Farm Show’s* run at Blyth in 2013.

The Blyth Memorial Hall is described on a Blyth website promoting its legacy as a “living cenotaph” (“Blyth Memorial”). It is a monument through which its community’s experience of death has been transcribed, translated, and transformed into life again. Funded and built by the residents of Blyth, East Wawanosh, Morris, and Hullet to commemorate the lives of thirty-one local young men who lost their lives in World War I, the article reprinted in the *Blyth Standard* that documents its opening in 1920 also chronicles the sacrifices local residents made to be able to contribute financially to the project and to honour their neighbours and family members “who paid the supreme sacrifice” (“Many hours”). What is remarkable is that instead of erecting a statue, the mourners of Blyth made their cenotaph live by imagining it as a theatre, a choice that Minister of Agriculture Manning Doherty, who officiated the opening, noted as original and “far in advance of that of a tablet of brass or stone” (“Many hours”). In Marvin Carlson’s notion of theatres as a “memory machines” (*Haunted* 133-4), cultural memories bleed from the past through to the present. Closing in on a full century since the shattering trauma of the First World War and the opening ceremony, the building has surprisingly lost none of its memorializing function. The local legion, an artifact of the Second World War, has added stone benches in the courtyard and two mini-museum outdoor kiosks that display artifacts and tell

stories from both wars. Inside the theatre space, the proscenium is framed with the names of the dead: World War One soldiers on stage right and World War Two soldiers on stage left. These are taken down while the festival plays its season and then carefully reinstated for the remainder of the year. Several other framed memorial pieces decorate the inside of the house all year round, on the side and back walls, thus encircling the audience in an act of remembrance. Moreover, the front door of the building is crowned, in glaring confirmation of Carlson's thoughts about theatre space and memory, with the iconic words "Lest We Forget".

This memorializing function, so foregrounded in the building, is what allows the space to "cook" affect so notably and to "bleed through" cultural memory from the recent and distant pasts.

Phenomenologist Dylan Trigg has written about the memorial as an object "that disrupts and offsets the world" (88). It decentres our spatiotemporal selves so that "the past is given room to breathe into the present" (83). For David Wiles, this is also a function of sacred space, of which the tomb is a major example (25). The Blyth Memorial Hall is, in one of its manifestations, a collective tomb for the unreturned bodies of local heroes. Benedict Anderson, in his seminal work on the cultural roots of nationalism *Imagined Communities*, has discussed cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers as one of the ways secular societies give meaning to fatality (9-12). John Bodnar continues this line of thought when he asserts that "wars bring to nations not only hardship and death but massive cultural struggles over meaning" (139), as communities struggle to cope with losses. Therefore, "a traditional frame on remembering war is necessary to heal the breach that war creates between a nation and its citizens" (141). It becomes imperative to "restate the war in sacred categories of honour and national unity" (143), and to place it within the soothing frame of sacrifice. The concept of sacrifice makes death and killing both bearable

and defensible, while monuments and cenotaphs stand in defiance of the power and cruelty of death, with its twin masks of time and silence. So as the Blyth Hall memorializes, it also “alters the status of the past” (Trigg 77), recycling its tragic and intolerable aspects into manageable emotions that then infuse the space with affect.

Beyond The Farm Show is a deeply “haunted” production, in Carlson’s definition of the term (*Haunted* 96-130), recycling its predecessor *The Farm Show*, as well the theatre’s founding narrative, and elements of its production history. As the audience enters, a photograph of the original *Farm Show* collective is projected on the set, drawing us immediately into negotiation with the past. Our relationship with this haunted image is nurtured by an actor in the opening monologue: “And that fellow on the end there, that’s Paul Thompson and he gathered together this great group of actors and they went out into Huron County and they talked with and worked with farmers and their families” (Collective 1). This monologue also tells us that, while the process of the original show has been duplicated, the scope has been widened to include all of Huron County. It quotes its predecessor’s warning about its lack of narrative structure: “As the actor said at the beginning of the original Farm Show ‘this show kind of bounces along one way or another and then it stops’” (Collective 1) (Johns 19). About halfway through the first act, Festival founder Keith Roulston comes in, performed by an actor, to say,

Hello . . . I’m uh – just up to my eyeballs on an article on pig insemination.

Thought I’d poke my head in. But it’s nice to see so many people in the theatre tonight. Actually this is quite a good picture. Everybody say Rural Voice (28).

Roulston tells the story of meeting Paul Thompson and wrangling a ticket to see *The Farm Show* in Ray Bird’s barn. “That was the first time people around here had seen themselves onstage”

(28). He chronicles the early tension with between actors and townsfolk, but it ends on a high note: “when so many of these people aren’t being listened to – certainly not by the government – there is a real benefit to having a place like this. Telling the stories of this community right here on this stage” (29). The character of Roulston alludes to two of the major themes of *Beyond The Farm Show*: change and powerlessness, and to how local perception of the theatre’s work has in many ways shifted from a threatening to a protecting role. As the show progresses, it is clear that the impact of the original *Farm Show* is so deeply ingrained in the cultural history of the County, that the farmers interviewed are savvy about the theatricalizing process they are being subjected to: “Just be damn careful what you say because they quote ya. . . . You’re being quoted right now. They’re recording this right now” (59).

Cradled in the arms of actor Anne Anglin in the archival photo of the original Farm Show cast is *Beyond The Farm Show*’s director and collective member Severn Thompson. She is less than a year in the photo, and in the program she shares personal memories of the show’s impact on her childhood (Blyth Festival, *Stories* 7). Family, as the human manifestation of the life cycle, is front and centre in both farm shows. As Ingold says, “genealogical thinking in agricultural and pastoral societies is carried on within the context of a relational approach to the generation of knowledge and substance” (*Perception* 133). In the context of Blyth, this is the knowledge and substance of farming and of theatre, both passed through bloodlines to the next generation. Three families weave special threads through *The Farm Show* epic. The first is the Thompsons. Eric Coates, the Artistic Director who commissioned the sequel and hired its director, chose someone with a claim to the content of the project by birthright: Paul Thompson’s daughter Severn. The second family is the McGavins, who spread a wide web across *Beyond The Farm*

Show's material manifestation. In Interim Artistic Director Peter Smith's Front of House speech the night I saw the show, he acknowledges McGavin Farm Equipment as the Production Sponsor, notes that they were interviewed for the original show, and points out members of the family in the audience. They are given a round of applause and then the show starts. The first scene of the play features an actor playing Neil McGavin welcoming an unseen *Beyond The Farm Show* actor/researcher into their farm implements museum in Walton where they have been in the business for 75 years (as of 2013) (2-4). Later in the play, they are given a song:

The McGavins have 75 years
Come on in and they'll give you the gears
They trusted their tractors
To a bunch of fool actors
But their building's still standing my dears (11)

This song harkens back to the Lobb Song, a major structural element of the original *Farm Show*. Chronicling the building of the Lobb family tree: "Mobbs of Lobbs, Lobbs-in-laws, ready-on-the-job Lobbs, . . . that ever spreading, farming, Lobb dynasty, dynasty" (Johns 74), the Lobb Song mythologized a local lineage in a recurring refrain that assigned a tempo to the cycles of human life unfolding in a rural setting. In the sequel, the Lobbs are revisited, but this time they know the power of theatrical celebrity and seek to harness it to defend against the threats they perceive to their way of life. The actor playing Alison Lobb says: "There is ONE thing we need to get into this show. Government is designing ALL of their regulations, all of their EVERYTHING . . . for the GTA. And they have no understanding of how it's hitting Rural Ontario". She quotes a survey in the *National Post* back in 2004: "They actually said that, 'rural

areas should be taken off life support and allowed to die a natural death'. I mean we were STUNNED. There is this tremendous sense of vulnerability on people's parts" (Collective 38).

Beyond The Farm Show documents the matrix of complex technologies and economic variables that combine to make farming in the twenty-first century a risky and daunting undertaking. As one farmer says, "as God is my witness I'm confused and I studied economics!" (21). Another says: "I don't even buy green bananas. You know, what I mean? How long am I going to be here?" (77). The "massive structural changes in food systems following World War Two" (Rosin, Campbell and Stock 6), which are just beginning to take shape in the original *Farm Show*, have radically redesigned the face of farming in Huron County in the forty years that have elapsed. The family farm has become economically untenable, corporations have consolidated their control of every element of farm work, government regulation has become unwieldy and Kafkaesque, and the pressure to intensify production towards higher yields is extreme. This pressure manifests in the show in the forceful presence of biotechnology with its attendant revision of the "taskscape" (Ingold, *Perception* 194-200) of the farm worker. In one scene, actors visiting a farm as research for the show don biosuits, wash hands, and dip their feet before entering the barn, a moment punctuated ironically by their host's exclamation: "Welcome to our farm!" (7). In this barn there are 10,000 chickens downstairs and another 10,000 upstairs. Clearly, "the days when you could just come home from school and go over and play in your friend's barn, well those days are done" (5). In their introduction to *Food Systems Failure*, Rosin, Stock and Campbell declare that the green revolution that sought to save lives and feed the world using biotechnology has left the same amount of people starving (7). The promise of biotechnology remains undelivered, and instead the current global food system is "sustained

through an ideology that justifies exploitation of resources and labour” (9). So while *Beyond The Farm Show* closes the metabolic rift between food producers and food consumers, the glimpse it gives us of the means of production is disturbing and disheartening in what it reveals about the health of humans, animals and the land, and in what it suggests for the future viability of farming in this country.

More than any other image in the two farm shows, the tractor is the heftiest symbol of the materiality of farming, and as the intermediary between the body of the farmer and the land, it does the work of chronicling the growing distance between the two. In Ingold’s theories “the transition, in the history of human technicity, from the hand-tool to the machine, is not from the simple to the complex, but is rather tantamount to the withdrawal of the producer, in person, from the centre to the periphery of the productive process. It is a history, in other words, not of complexification but of externalization” (*Perception* 289). A similar process happens in the evolution of the two shows as the machine itself grows in sophistication, externalizing the farmer even further. As Filewod says of the original show: “As the universal tool of the farmer, the tractor figures prominently in the play as a symbol of work and death” (45). In Act 1 Scene IX ‘Man on a Tractor’, what would become an iconic image of *The Farm Show* is described: “Three actors standing in a row form a tractor with appropriate sounds. Man mounted on middle actor’s shoulders steers” (Johns 62). The scene describes the work involved in maneuvering the tractor to get the right effect, the awareness required, and the danger of flipping it and getting crushed. In Act Two, two tractors are introduced through a litany of their mechanical features like professional boxers, after which they fight each other in a tractor tug. And the show ends with ‘The Ballad of John Deere’ (Johns 104-7) the heroic tale of the first John Deere tractor that saves

the day for farmers in distress. By the time we get to *Beyond The Farm Show*, however, the tractors have lost these anthropomorphic features. Endowed with complex electronics, these new state of the art tractors do much of task-based work of farmers for them. Early in the show, farmer Scott Martin is on his iPhone: “This is what I do when the tractor is driving itself. I check the markets” (13).

The original *Farm Show*, with its numerous formal innovations, had a significant impact on later collective creations and on the aesthetic of Canadian theatre in general. The play’s associative structure combined character studies with choral techniques, physicalized landscapes, rapid and surprising transformations, and the elevation of elements of everyday life to the status of myth. Alan Filewod describes this synthesis as: “the actors’ combination of a realistic ‘identifiable base’ with a non-realistic presentational technique that freed them from naturalistic portraiture. The fusion of these two approaches resulted in a form of gestural story-telling” (Filewod, *Collective* 27). Nowhere is this gestural story-telling more apparent than in the Act 1 Scene 5 ‘Bale Scene’, in which actor Miles Potter recounts helping Mervin Lobb store hay in his barn. In Michael Ondaatje’s documentary film *The Clinton Special*, about the 1973 revival of the play, the scene is captured in its full effect (*Clinton*). With a mime score built around heaving bales of hay onto a loader, Miles Potter turned the comic struggle of an actor trying to master the grueling physicality of farm work into a brilliant and hilarious lazzo. In *Beyond The Farm Show*, the convention is recycled with actor Jamie Robinson joining a gloved and masked work party at midnight, whose job it is to load 20,000 chickens into trucks. Whereas Potter’s lazzo emphasized the physical strain on the body and the stamina required, Robinson’s lazzo highlighted his disorientation in the task and his economic relationship to the work. Like the

tractors in the *Beyond The Farm Show*, this section chronicles contemporary farm work's lack of groundedness:

The more chickens I load in the truck the more they seem to multiply. I'm starting to lose all sense of space, time and reality. I think I can actually start to understand what the chickens are saying. Catchers are swarming around saying "He's doing this for free! He's doing this for free? He's doing this for free!" (31)

Several of the farm theatres in this study have traditions of featuring animals outside in performance, but Blyth, for the vast majority of its programming, does not perform outdoors. Instead, Blyth has a tradition of featuring live farm animals *inside* the Memorial Hall on its proscenium stage. Towards the end of *Beyond The Farm Show*, a farmer recounts the story of the cow that gave birth onstage in 1981 during the run of Ted Johns' *He Won't Come In From The Barn*:

I wasn't there, I just heard about it. The cow was pregnant and she gave birth and they decided that it would be less disruptive if they just left her on the stage in between shows – so for the evening show the cow and the mom were there together and every time the cow got up to drink the audience applauded! I don't think anybody watched the show (82).

He Won't Come In From The Barn is one of Blyth's most popular shows and was remounted several times (see Appendix A). The Original *Farm Show* featured no live animals, but animal mimicry and animal transformations are important to its aesthetic. One stage direction reads: "Marion's speech has been gradually speeding up until now, gyrating furiously, she is incomprehensible . . . With a loud squawk and flap, Marion turns into a chicken" (68). This

technique continues in *Beyond The Farm Show*, but then is sloughed off by what Bert States calls, “the upsurge of the real into the magic circle” (34). Two farmers are showing off their goats. The stage direction reads, “Enter actor goats making goat sounds” (52). One farmer exits to retrieve their “show goat, number 149” (53), and returns with a live young goat. The next stage direction reads, “Actor goats look offended and leave” (53).

Nicholas Ridout says that animals onstage highlight questions of labour: “our economic and political entanglement with the animal is something that is not simply registered intellectually, but felt in the body” (125). Because non-human performers never consent to performance and cannot engage in the illusion, the affect of the animal is “cooked” by the shame we feel at being exposed in our own act of domination. Ridout also suggests that this surplus affect is a bleed through of ancient cultural memories of ritual sacrifice (122-123). Helene Foley, in *Ritual Irony*, documents the close relationship between early Western theatre and animal sacrifice. She suggests that the ritual of sacrifice was used to atone for the killing and consumption of animals that were previously considered kin: “Sacrifice denies by its procedures its own violence, and legitimizes the killing and eating of domestic animals” (Foley 38). The formalities of sacrifice elevated it above murder, removed the guilt of the murderer, and reframed the sadness for the victim: “to call murder sacrifice is to put an act of human violence into a social and religious context” (Foley 42). The breeding, raising and slaughtering of domestic animals is deeply embedded in the rural community that surrounds Blyth, and thus constantly harkens back to the cultural transition that animal sacrifice negotiated. As one farmer says in *Beyond The Farm Show*: “If you’re going to have live stock, you’re going to have dead stock” (86). And yet husbandry skills (at least for farmers on smaller operations not completely entrenched in

biotechnology) engender an intimacy with animals foreign to most urban dwellers. With its double edge of love and domination, and the memory of inter-species disruption through animal sacrifice haunting the act of perception, it is not surprising that the heightened presence of the live animal onstage should elicit such a deep response from the audience at Blyth, and scatter in its wake mimetic counterparts such as the ‘actor goats’ in the scene described above.

In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams proposes that, “The countryside is the place of production and oeuvres. Agricultural production gives birth to products: the landscape is an oeuvre. This oeuvre emerges from the earth slowly moulded, linked originally to the groups which occupy it by a reciprocal consecration” (118). A significant piece of Huron County’s oeuvre is the Blyth Festival Theatre’s productions, harvested annually in the summer and seeding continually the creations of future seasons. The 2013 offering *Beyond The Farm Show* ends with a group of spellbound actors watching the birth of a calf in awe. The theatre-savvy farmer hosting them cannot resist a taunt: “How you gonna put this on the stage?” (81). The staging chosen elects to leave the cow and her calf to be imagined by the audience, and instead focuses on the atmosphere of sacred humility that accompanies the emergence of new life. Crafted and birthed in the living tomb that is its theatre, this piece of the emergent oeuvre of Blyth, highlights the reciprocal consecration that links human and other-than-human life-cycles. Tim Ingold embraces this link when he rejects the grand narrative of human transcendence of nature. In his analysis, we are not masters of the land, using it to “make” things, but subservient to its growth process, on which we are becoming increasingly reliant (*Perception* 77-88). For him, works of art are just another form of human skill designed to help us learn, remember and grow things: “To focus on song and craftsmanship rather than language and technologies is to foreground the

poetic and performative aspects of speech and tool-use that have been marginalized by rationalism” (*Perception* 293).

Something is happening in contemporary Blyth that foregrounds the poetic and performative and intriguingly blurs Marx’s productive and non-productive categories of human labour. The town that has sometimes struggled with, and complained about, the heavy presence of artists in its midst is rethinking its future in light of uncertain times and rapid change for agriculture. The village is rebranding as “The Heart of Canada’s Rural Creativity” with a “Canadian Centre for Rural Creativity” headed by former Blyth Festival Artistic Director Peter Smith. The strategic entity driving all this, The Blyth Arts and Cultural Initiative 14/19 Inc., states on its website that it will “create a cultural hub in the Village of Blyth that drives social and economic renewal through the arts and cultural industries”. It will do this by “building on the 40+ year history of the Blyth Festival” (“About” *CCRC*). After more than 40 years of operation, Blyth is looking to the Festival to define its future and help it address things like employment and quality of life. Where theatre had played the role of a supporting industry adding social benefit to an agricultural community, this plan looks to a time when the Arts may be the economic driver of the region and the vestiges of local agricultural practice remain only through subsidy. The new vision at work in the strategy could only have emerged from the oeuvre of Blyth’s utterly unique fusion of agriculture and culture, death and creation, memory and materiality. As Alexander Leggatt predicted, a shift in livelihood is marking a place where “the gap between culture and farming has been sealed up” (24).

Chapter 4: 4th Line Theatre's *The Real McCoy*

In the program for *The Outdoor Donnellys*, one of the few Blyth shows not staged in the Memorial Hall, Paul Thompson suggests that the body memory utilized by actors has an environmental counterpart: “Towns and land have their own version of this kind of memory and it is the power of these memories that drives our attachment to the land and our sense of place” (Blyth Festival, *Celebrating 4*). In this chapter I focus on 4th Line Theatre, a company that builds precisely from this kind of memory. Whereas The Blyth Festival Theatre invests in the contemporary stories of its audience, 4th Line focuses on historical narratives embedded in and surrounding the land of its locale. In the 2013 summer season they produced two plays in repertory: *The Winslows of Derryvore* by Robert Winslow, and *The Real McCoy* by Andrew Moodie. *The Winslows of Derryvore* explores the country of origin political struggles of the English and Irish settlers who first farmed the site of the theatre. *The Real McCoy*, chronicles the life and achievements of Canadian-born Black inventor Elijah McCoy. Born numerous counties to the west of the Peterborough region in Colchester in 1844 at the informal terminus of the Underground Railroad, McCoy’s story is nevertheless a window into a rarely seen layer of regional history that had a significant impact on Southern Ontario.

In his Playwright’s Notes for the published version of the play, Andrew Moodie discusses his struggle with fictionalizing someone whose contributions have been erased, denied and contested. Showing early promise, McCoy went abroad at age fifteen and studied mechanical engineering in Edinburgh, Scotland. Upon his return he brought forward numerous inventions (among them the folding ironing board and the lawn sprinkler), the most impactful of which was a method for lubricating steam engines that transformed railroad technology (Hayden 92-103).

As Leslie Sanders says in her introduction to the play, “His invention is likely the source of the saying “the real McCoy” because others’ versions of McCoy’s invention did not work as well, leading buyers to insist on the original” (iii). McCoy’s race is undoubtedly the reason why his achievements have not been properly recognized and there is a clearly a public need to acknowledge the “Real McCoy”. In order to achieve this, Moodie opts for artistic license in his portrayal: “This is not the real Elijah McCoy. This is a fiction” (“Playwright’s” vii).

Leaving the documented man behind, Moodie gives us instead an epic and poetic theatrical biography in which McCoy struggles with the clash of his father’s faith-based world view and his own highly rational mind, and is haunted by the death of his mother and first and second wives. He encounters oppression from nineteenth century society at every turn. However, the social critique implicit in this aspect of the narrative plays a supporting role to Moodie’s focus on his subject’s desire to rein in the fundamentally entropic nature of the universe. Prejudice is given a mathematical figuration in the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which the play defines for us: “All systems, left on their own, tend to become disordered, dispersed and corrupted” (*Real* 10). Thus, when his employers try to cover up the fact that it is a Black man that has created a revolutionary lubricating system for steam engines, McCoy responds with an analysis of the shortcomings of the whole social system: “all the evils in this country, the hatred, the ignorance, bitterness and greed are inefficiencies that corrode the gears of our society” (80). Rejecting his own anger for its blinding quality (“When you get angry, you can’t see” [13]), he nevertheless finds himself rendered invisible by an angry world: “They don’t believe me, that I’m Elijah McCoy, Mom, they don’t believe me” (114). The play ends with McCoy hovering in a

transcendently lucid insanity in an asylum for the sick, poor and mentally compromised, and uniting emotionally with his mother in the moment of death.

The Real McCoy premiered in 2006 at the Factory Theatre in Toronto directed by the playwright. The version staged outdoors at 4th Line in 2013, this time with the playwright playing the roles of Young Elijah and McCoy's friend Don Bogie and Kim Blackwell directing, reveals the unique place that 4th Line holds somewhere in between environmental and site-specific theatre. In Andrew Houston's definition, "environmental theatre concerns the placement of a text in a site, and site-specific theatre concerns the generation of a performance from a site" (xv). The 4th Line site, Winslow Farm, is rich with cultural messaging and semiotic layering. The plot on the 4th Line of Cavan Township, near Peterborough, just outside of Millbrook is 100 acres; a standard colonial land grant. The theatre construct is nestled in the U-shaped conglomerate of the property's weathered barn and stables. The audience sits on bleachers, partially covered by an outcropping of the stables, with the action on the ground of the barnyard and on a series of levels built against the façade of the barn. Though elements of it are adapted, the *objet trouvé* of the farm buildings never disappear, but are seen through the staging elements and create an acoustic container for the human voice. The audience of 350 sits in a standard audience configuration: proscenium with a bank of seats stage left. The expanse of the surrounding meadow with its changing night sky functions as a cyclorama. In some ways the production of *The Real McCoy* at 4th Line conforms to Houston's definition of environmental theatre: as a "placement of a text in a site" it appropriates its landscape "as a scenic backdrop against which to place its figures, in an enduring echo of the close origins of landscape painting and proscenium architecture" (Pearson, *In* 17). As with other environmental theatre experiences, the conditioning elements of

the site have a significant impact on audience experience. The materiality of the aged buildings and the farm landscape act as a mnemonic trigger and assist in the felt experience of the past that the play summons. Yet, Robert Winslow asserts that 4th Line does more than use the site's specificity decoratively. In insisting that all programming spring from regional history he works to "establish a very tactile and strong, tangible connection between the themes and the environment" (McCarthy 48). The programming of the theatre must engage the narrative of the site in some way, and the visibility of the farm buildings in the productions ensures that the site narrative never loses its fight for perceptual dominance. Mike Pearson has said, "Site-specific performance is the latest occupation of a location where other occupations are still apparent and cognitively active" (qtd. in McAuley *Place* 602). So while the text of *The Real McCoy* was not created for the site, its engagement with the regional cultural history of the theatre and farm place it beyond the catchment of pure environmental theatre, or theatre that bears no relation to its space of performance.

Just as 4th Line's programming has a unique relationship to its site, founding Artistic Director Robert Winslow's relationship to the programming and the site, which includes writing and performing in many of the theatre's shows, defies easy categorization (see Appendix B). Marvin Carlson, Joseph Roach and Freddie Rokem have all theorized the process by which actors revive the dead in the act of performance. Carlson talks of "a backward awareness on the part of the audience" (*Haunted* 94), whereby they recall past roles, historical figures, and even an actor's biography in the course of receiving a performance (52-95). Roach, in *Cities of the Dead*, posits that culture reproduces itself by a complex process of "surrogation" whereby survivors fit alternates in to "the cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure" (2),

quelling anxiety about these ruptures and seeking to support a sense of collective memory.

Freddie Rokem, in *Performing History*, describes actors as “hyper-historians” (13), functioning as connecting links between the past and the here and now. Together, these theories help to account for the hyper-haunted body of Robert Winslow in performance at the 4th Line site. Not only is he fifth generation on the land that is his stage, he also regularly explores his own family history in his plays and performs his own ancestors. The other show on offer in 2013, *The Winslows of Derryvore*, is a kind of prequel to the company’s inaugural *The Cavan Blazers* (described in Chapter 2.3.4) and tells the story of the English Winslow family coming into Ireland with plantations as part of a colonizing movement. It shows the accumulating force of the religious, cultural and land conflicts that settlers brought with them to the Peterborough region. Performing this or any 4th Line show, Winslow uses as a dressing room the stalls that he milked cows in, and as a stage the yard of his young farm life. Functioning as a kind of conspicuous specter who summons the past, Winslow’s body runs the current of cross-generational negotiation, registering the co-presence of figures that use his bloodline as a touchstone. He is like a one-man genealogy, a human archive constantly pulling up the past of his family and region in order to pass it through his nervous system and set some embodied version of it in front of his audience.

If Winslow’s ghosts need a voice, then it is the land that gives it to them. A variety of reviewers and commentators have noted that a big part of 4th Line’s success and appeal is the activation of stories held in place. Kate Taylor said in the *Globe and Mail*, “At the 4th Line Theatre, history and theatre are the fruits of plentiful fields to be picked by anyone with a mind to it” (“Blazing”). Historian Shane Peacock, writing in *The Beaver*, is entranced by scenes set “almost literally on

the ground where the original historic events took place, . . . Characters seem to emerge from their nearby graves, to live and breathe and make their case again” (38). Many theorists have worked to shed light on the connections between story, history and place like those at play at 4th Line: American Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has said that “the land is a repository of memory” (*Topophilia* 97), and Pearson claims that “landscape is a matrix of related stories” (*In* 17). Both of these thinkers observe that there are places where histories are denser, where memories seem to inhere and accumulate. But how do these memories fuse to place, how are they held, and how are they released? Lefebvre’s idea that the social production of space reproduces social relations may hold some clues. Lefebvre’s theories are given practical application in Ingold’s theory of dwelling; that we can understand landscapes by looking at how people move in and through them. Through patterns of dwelling, landscapes become “communicative devices that encode and transmit information” (Chauduri, “Land” 14), from both historical and cultural action. 4th Line’s farming and settlement history have shaped the land into a tight matrix of coded stories which the theatre company is dedicated to releasing. To support this idea of the communicative property of landscape both Rosemarie K. Bank and Tim Ingold have gestured to alternative versions of time in Aboriginal cultures, in which “What has happened in a place is always happening” (Bank 2, Ingold, *Perception* 20-22). If we accept this worldview, then theatre simply gives a fleshy coating to events that are always present anyway, but now are brought to the foreground of perception by the embodied materiality of performance.

Stacy Douglas has pointed out in her thesis *Settling Pasts and Settling Futures*, that 4th Line programming promotes “a conception of Canada as naturally belonging to settlers that feeds into national narratives that erase violent histories of colonialism and imperialism upon which the

nation-state was founded” (3). So while the company may be tapping into memories held in landscape, those memories begin with European settlement and neither address the millennia of occupation by First Nations nor chronicle anything of their of their often brutal expulsion from the land upon which they dwelt. As she points out, “the very name of the theatre conjures up legacies of colonial cartography through its direct association to a place defined through processes of land allotment, mapping, and surveying” (85). She concludes that the purpose of the 4th Line farm theatre is to grow a settler audience for itself using received power structures: “the ideology of the state functions as the land upon which settler identities are cultivated” (148). While this critique is compelling and justified, the settler identity that the company is cultivating is one that is significantly problematized by its programming. The company’s inaugural production, *The Cavan Blazers*, took up bloody sectarian violence in the region and portrayed the forbears of local families as major players in that conflict. *The Winslows of Derryvore*, centres on the forcing of the Irish clans from their homeland, with clear parallels to how that process remade itself in the New World with the European and indigenous populations. The content of their 2000 production *Crossings: The Bell of Batoche* as well as a 2011 production of Drew Hayden Talyor’s *The Berlin Blues* both acknowledge First Nations stories and voices. Further, *The Real McCoy* draws attention to the plight of non-European and racialized settlers. With a largely Black cast, the show offered a strong suggestion of the diversity present in rural Canadian culture, both historically and currently. In comparison, in the shows that I saw at the other farm theatres that are discussed in this thesis, there was not a single visible minority on stage. If Canada’s violent colonial spatiality maps onto the already haunted art form of theatre another fundamental layer of ghostly presences and absences in the form of First Nations histories which are “always happening”, then this is true for any theatre in the country that is not run by

aboriginal artists. Douglas is right to point out that 4th Line's mandated pursuit of historical drama generally includes only settler voices. There is value, however, in considering how the settler identities proposed at 4th Line are neither hegemonic nor universally celebrated. Instead they contain what Joanne Tompkins calls "contemporary traces of instability" (6) that stem in part from this history of displacement that underlies them.

The construct of the farm in Canadian historiography was supposed to link settler culture to the land, but beneath it, held in place, is always the trace of what came before. In *The Lie of the Land* Paul Carter suggests that, "we idolize the picturesqueness of places because we sense our ungroundedness, the fragility of our claim to the soil" (2). The longing for groundedness implicit in this suggestion may account for some of the appeal of farm theatres, especially those located on previously active farms. Perhaps themes of displacement, oppression and denial recur in the settler stories of 4th Line because the land itself is haunted by histories of the same.

The Real McCoy summons the early history of the Black population of Canada which is all displacement and oppression. Slavery, though never as entrenched in Canada as it was in the southern US, was practiced by both French and English colonizers and included both Black and First Nations slaves (Winks 9). Towards the end of the eighteenth century several cultural shifts conspired to make Canada an appealing destination for Black slaves seeking to escape American slave states. The Upper Canadian Act of 1793 prevented further importation of slaves (though the practice was allowed to continue for those that already owned slaves). The freeing of the slaves in the British Empire on August 1st 1834 made the practice illegal in Canada (Wylie 88). Though slavery was also illegal in many northern states, "After 1830, race relations became

strained in these states as the issue of slavery became more central in politics and as European immigrants continued to arrive” (Wylie 27). Competition for jobs pitted blacks against whites, and race riots as well as sudden changes in laws “sent many hurrying across the river” (Winks 145). This was the Detroit River at the Windsor-Detroit border, one of the most popular end points for the Underground Railroad, the invisible network of support that helped thousands of Blacks escape the southern slave states. Elijah McCoy’s parents were fugitive slaves from Kentucky and trekked to Canada via the Underground Railroad some time in the 1830s. They settled in Colchester, Essex County in one of the many Black communities that developed in all of the western townships along the American border. In the later nineteenth century, as political conditions began to shift in the US, Robin W. Winks estimates that of the fugitive slaves “perhaps two-thirds of those in the Canadas, more recently arrived and often with family ties in their former homes, moved in reverse down the Underground Railroad” (289). Among these were the McCoy family, who shifted to Ypsilanti, Michigan very close across the border when Elijah was five.

A perception has been cultivated that Canada played an honourable role in the continental attack on slavery, harbouring fugitives from that condition. As Winks notes, “an official marker of the Canadian government notes the spot on the banks of the Detroit River where the Underground Railroad is said to have its terminus. There the monument proclaims, the fugitive ‘found in Canada friends, freedom, protection under the British flag’” (x). It is true that free Blacks had deep roots in Colchester: “The earliest Black landholder in Essex was James Robertson, a veteran of Butler’s Rangers, who settled in this township in 1787. By 1821, there were perhaps 100 free blacks in the area and a church had been opened” (Wylie 85). With the influx, by the

1850s Blacks made up 33% of the population of Colchester (Winks 493), but land grants were still hard to obtain and schools were decidedly segregated. In rural areas Black people did much of the work in clearing the land, or they lived on the northern outskirts of the town of Colchester on Lake Erie. By mid century the racial climate in Canada had worsened for reasons “somewhat analogous to that in the northern states” (Wylie 27); the Irish began to settle the area creating competition for jobs, and whites reacted with anger as Blacks attempted to assert their rights. So Elijah McCoy was born free in a racist society: “Canadian soil meant freedom for fugitives, but rarely social equality” (Sanders iv). In *The Black in Canada*, Winks concludes that most Blacks left Canada better off than when they entered it, heading back to the US with some education and perhaps the proceeds from the sale of a plot of Canadian land (289), but the atmosphere was not positive enough and the living not lucrative enough to make them stay.

In Moodie’s play, racism is an entropic force that erodes societies and stifles progress, and this entropy is given theatrical form with imaginative staging and iconic use of props. Robert Winslow plays William Rankine, one of the originators of the theory and study of thermodynamics, who mentored McCoy in Edinburgh. After introducing the primary concepts to his students in the play, he issues a warning to McCoy: “These two laws are the left hand and right hand of God. And they are absolute. Learn them. You’re going to spend the rest of your life in defiance of these two laws. With these hands, God pummels the earth. He takes away your loved ones. He shatters the lives of Kings” (27). Rankine becomes an alternate father figure to Elijah, handing him the tools with which he attempts to understand the world and make his mark on it. The thematic landscape of *The Real McCoy* is the inner workings of the universe, mechanisms that are hinted at with stylized sequences involving the ritualized and suggestive use

of simple household objects and detritus from the period. Every time a character dies they are handed a bowl of water, they put their hands in the water and they put water on their face in a kind of cleansing baptism that washes them of the world. Then they take the bowl offstage. The show opens with the death of a horse, shot because it broke a leg. This image is young Elijah's introduction to entropy, and it is created when a horse made of a quilt, a broom and a mop shatters into its constituent elements when a block of wood is hit offstage. Quilts are everywhere in this production, holding imagery created by projection in the indoor premiere production, and hinting at their (highly contested) role as maps and guides in the Underground Railroad.⁵ Quilts make horses live, stand in for the sky, birth babies, and age people. Actors create the soundscape of the play by using worn metal pieces strewn about the set for percussion, evoking the world of mechanical invention both in its reassuring order and in its chaotic collapse. The hand of God pummels McCoy numerous times in the play and each time he regroups defiantly, until finally a car crash killing his second wife leaves him too injured to recover.

Shows at 4th Line begin at 6pm and use the darkening night sky as the lighting environment. A few fresnel lights hung from the stable roof give the playing area a bit of a lighting boost in the darker second half and help the audience exit at the end of the show. These are not engaged further, however, as a true design element. The changing colour palette of the open sky shifts

⁵ The suggestion that African American slaves used quilts hung on clotheslines to communicate coded information about how to escape was propagated in the last decade of the twentieth century through books such as *Hidden in Plain View: The Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad* by Raymond Dobard Jr. and Jacqueline Tobin (1999), and *Stitched from the Soul* by Gladys-Marie Fry (1990). Quilt historians and scholars of the Underground Railroad have publicly discounted the theory, especially in light of the fact that no extant quilts or written or oral testimony have been found in support of it. See Diane Cole's article "Were Quilts Used as Underground Railroad Maps?" in US News 24 June 2007.

with the weather and is unique to each performance. The sun and moon are major images in the text of *The Real McCoy*, with the sun acting as pure life force: “My father always used to tell me; on the day I was born, there was a fire in the sky” (7), and the moon pointing to aspiration and madness.

In its use of the skies, sun and moon, the production may be connected to a much longer history of outdoor theatre. David Wiles and Michael Kirby have both discussed the role of celestial bodies in the theatre of ancient Greece. Wiles says, “Orientation in regard to sunrise, mid-day and sunset ensured that space within any ritual observation was bonded to time, . . . (participants) integrate themselves in the cosmic order and thus come closer to the divine” (Wiles 25-26). Kirby charts how plays appropriated celestial bodies and used them as scenery: *Iphegenia at Aulis* makes reference to Sirius and the performance began at dawn when you could still see it (278). The moon is a linking feature in the relationship between McCoy and Rankine. His mentor asks him early in the play, “Do you believe . . . that it is possible, to send a man to the moon? . . . we are going to unlock the secrets of this universe. We are going to pry loose the hands of God, you and me” (34). After his car accident, McCoy begins to build, “A machine that will allow a man to travel to the moon, and back, . . . a massive iron shaft, that would use steam to shoot a passenger inside a massive steel bullet. Leonardo Da Vinci’s Architonnerre” (111). In a striking moment of the performance, Rankine is led in by a nurse who puts a quilt on him, and then speaks the text of a letter she has written to Elijah: “Unfortunately Mr. Rankine has had a cardiac episode and is no longer able to speak. . . . For some reason, he spends many a night, staring out at the moon from his balcony for hours on end” (100). The night I saw the show a low full moon hovered in the dusk over the fields behind the barn/stage. Winslow as Rankine

turned upstage in this moment reaching towards the lunar visitor, seeming to embrace the moon in its cameo appearance.

In this moment we see the mechanism whereby relationships between people and landscapes mobilize affect, shifting the energetic capabilities of bodies. Nigel Thrift goes so far as to suggest that in these encounters, “things act back” (“Afterwords” 220): the other-than-human world has agency and is in a kind of conversation with its inhabitants. The moon performs itself, and “acts back” in a way that startles the viewer out of separation from the performance space and Carter’s sense of “ungroundedness”, and into a “temporary imbrication within an ecology of place” (Conradson 109). The bodies of the actors and the audience extend beyond normal perceptual realms and the limitations of metaphysics and embrace the moon as a player in the show. This is McCoy’s last state in the play as well. He is effusive: “The universe is an intelligible whole, a teleological whisper, just barely audible to those with hearts to see and eyes to mold the shape of our destiny. The right hand of God. The left hand of God are nothing to me now. I am light. I am the bluest flame” (111).

Rebecca Schneider has said that “the battle of much reenactment, in art and war, is a battle concerning the future of the past” (4). 4th Line’s production of *The Real McCoy* pulls one of the land’s narratives out of the past for reenactment and pushes it forward in time in a fictional form that works to change the picture of our collective selves in the future. In this picture a historical figure that was erased has reappeared and with some force. Although the real “Real McCoy” lived only five years in Canada, the telling of his story reinstates an important piece of collective memory that has been repressed. As a representative of a large-scale migration that left enduring

traces on Canadian culture, his story is vital. As an individual engineer and inventor his impact on his industry and our country was vast, and this story is also vital. The automatic lubricator he invented for oiling the steam engines of locomotives enabled them to run faster, stop less for maintenance, and generate more profit. Automatic lubrication was a boon to the exploding railroad industry, which was integral to the very act of nation building in Canada, connecting the disparate pieces of the vast country in a web of motion that pushed westward to the very edge of the land. That a seminal figure in such a familiar Canadian historical trope should be so marginalized and obscured in national memory speaks to the need for 4th Line's place-based storytelling and its possible impact on the future of our past.

Chapter 5: Caravan Farm Theatre's *Head Over Heels*

At the Caravan Farm Theatre any vestige of the theatre building has been left behind in favour of a shifting and exploratory animation of their eighty-acre farm site. The forty acres at the back of the property have become the site for the winter one-act sleigh ride show, and the front forty form a fecund space that births a new theatre every summer, which then returns to the land when the show is done. As current Artistic Director Courtenay Dobbie states: “the location of the summer production is never in the same place twice” (9). Since shows began on the farm site in 1983, productions have been staged in nearly every corner of the front forty: in the fields, pines, barn and riding ring (Caravan 2). This approach is a conscious challenge to the craft of making theatre: “there is no containment or focus of the action within the outdoor space; one has to determine and create it by means other than architecture” (Dobbie 9). Mike Pearson has spoken of this containment issue with regards to all site-specific work: “If the stage is essentially synecdochic – in which limited resources stand in for a complete picture . . . site is frequently a scene of plenitude, its inherent characteristics, manifold effects and unruly elements always liable to leak, spill and diffuse into performance” (Pearson, *Site* 1). This spillage has its moments of glory, as with 4th Line’s moon moment, and its difficulties. At the Caravan, each summer a new plan has to be made to bring a nightly audience of four hundred (exactly 396 in 2013 for *Head Over Heels*) to a new location, travelling across uneven ground, to a piece of land that will support the Caravan’s substantial design elements, create focus, and allow the audience to sit comfortably without the glare of the setting sun in their eyes. The philosophy at the Caravan is to try to work around and with the land and its features, rather than to create permanent change in the environment. Notwithstanding this commitment, traces of shows from the past can be found on the site: as Pearson says, “we constantly mark our material

surroundings. . . . Our physical contact constitutes an ongoing archaeological record, and microchronology” (*Site* 43), but these traces are explicitly theatrical hauntings. Company members can read the production record on the landscape and identify where a fence shifted or some brush was cleared to accommodate a show’s needs but the intent is to leave as little trace as possible and allow the indigenous plant and animal life to reclaim the performance site.

According to long time Caravan artist Peter Anderson, “Decisions on where to stage performances are strongly influenced by the wear and tear that the consequent human traffic will cause to the environment. To balance the exploitation and cultivation of the environment with its preservation and improvement, performance areas are often rotated, like crops, to allow fields time to recover” (“Breaking” np). Thus visiting the site affords audiences views of both active and fallow performance fields. For those who visit often the farm is a rich landscape of performance memory.

In the summer of 2013 the Caravan staged *Head Over Heels* by Peter Anderson, uphill from the farm’s “downtown”; a path to which the cook shack, designery and original farm house (which now hosts the company’s administrative offices) are connected. The backdrop of the performance was a tangle of bush and trees against which the Caravan’s primary designer Catherine Hahn arranged the elements of her set, with the landscape pressing through and clearly playing itself. The set suggests an alluring crash site with playful wreckage hugging trees and giving definition to playing areas. A basket nestled in a tree suggests a trapped hot air balloon. A trio of live musicians perches atop a platform of stacked abandoned luggage. Thin wooden walkways give the stage area a tree house feel, and clocks are suspended in the trees. Five banks of steeply raked bleachers with powerful lights attached to their backs give definition to the

semi-circular playing space. There is no backstage, so performers appear from the trees or from behind the audience. The lighting rig is much more substantial than any of the other outdoor farm theatres and executes evocative effects and some definition of separate playing spaces even in the first half of the show. The performing style of the Caravan is distinctive and belies a company of actors schooled in clown work and other physical forms. It is *broad* in the broadest sense of the word. Performers engage in direct address, climb into the stands and taunt audience members, work physical lazzi into their stage action, juggle, manipulate puppets, mug shamelessly, play with distance and perspective in their entrances and exits, interact with and ride animals, play musical instruments and sing, and use their speaking voice at the maximum levels of human endurance. It is a labour-intensive performing style with a high caloric drain and a fully embodied and extended presentation of the actor's instrument.

Head Over Heels is a contemporary adaptation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, following Shakespeare's structure loosely but with respect to the major plot points, and written to incorporate the site and the stylistic strengths of the company. Rather than beginning with a shipwreck, we hear a plane crash off behind the trees and Oola (Viola) stumbles on: "Am I dead? No answer. Are you . . . ?" (Anderson, *Head* 3). Oola meets a homeless person named Harquevari (Feste) who sends her in the direction of Vivian Bandello (Orsino), another castaway from the sky who is pining with love for Lividia Swann (Olivia). Orsino's area of the stage is an actual crumpled and ripped front section of a small plane that he has adorned into lavish bush quarters. His version of Shakespeare's famous speech "If music be the food of love, play on" (*Twelfth* 1.1.1) gives a good feeling for the language world of the show:

Me and Mr. Heartbroke here need some music. Play something for us. Kick out the jams, make my ears bleed, give me pain, suffering, shredded E-strings, oceans of bent notes, bassthump my chest, rattle my heart in its cage, crank it don't care what just blast her out of my head, stop me thinking about Lividia. Stop me thinking period, just play something (10).

In Anderson's play love is a force of frightening transformations:

Lividia: (love) crash lands in your life, leaves you ripped open and bleeding, ready to throw it all away with no second thoughts.

Oola: And turns your world upside down inside out till you don't recognize who you are.

Lividia: Yes! That rips you out of who you are and makes you give up everything you thought was you (29).

Love leaves you upside down in a world you don't recognize, so much so that Oola is constantly calling into question the veracity of her experience: "if I'm dead, and this is the afterlife, I hope it's a short one" (48). Eventually we meet Oola's brother Oli (he has survived the plane crash and enters dragging a parachute), as well as Lividia and her household, and Shakespeare's plots and subplots play themselves out in this new form.

Shakespeare has been a significant part of the company's output, with productions of *As You Like It* (1986/87), *Romeo and Juliet* (1989), *Macbeth* (2006), *King Lear* (2007 Winter) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2011). In 2013, however, *Head Over Heels* is billed as "A fresh new comedy about love in disguise" (Caravan 1), and promotional materials for the company's 35th Anniversary (in 2013) draw attention to Peter Anderson's legacy rather than his source material:

the show is “the 15th play Peter has written for the Caravan since hitch-hiking from California 35 years ago to join the company”. In the program he is crowned as a kind of farm theatre Bard: “another Peter Anderson classic to add to the Caravan cannon (sic)” (Caravan 4) (Appendix C details Anderson’s considerable contribution to the company’s production history).

The tension between the rural community/audience and the artist community steeped in the counter-culture ethos of the back-to-the-land movement, noted in the history of the Blyth Festival Theatre, has also occasionally been present at the Caravan. The Caravan, however, has retained more of its radical otherness, while working hard to come into line with its audience’s expectations and comfort level: “Caravan audiences are primarily made up of middle class rural, small town or small city-living people . . . The productions, therefore, can and do reflect the rural, small town experience in theme and content, at the same time challenging its audiences with compelling, important, and meaningful stories” (Dobbie 12). Since “Caravan’s artistic mission is to create meaningful, popular theatre for a broad and diverse family audience” (Caravan 2), the work needs to have wide appeal, while still allowing the critique of mainstream culture and theatrical sophistication that has fueled the company through much of its artistic output. Anderson’s *The Ballad of Weedy Peetstraw* and *Farm Trilogy* (*Law of the Land*, *The Coyotes*, and *Horseplay*) built a strong connection with the Caravan audience by dealing with the natural and farming worlds under siege in a poetic but accessible form. In *Head Over Heels* he puts distaste for the pretensions of classic theatre into his characters’ mouths:

Inkling (Aguecheek): That’s why I go to the theatre. Do you?

Louise McGhee (Maria): No, too elitest.

Inkling: Exactly the elitest of all the arts. (14)

The text is rife with hints about his source material, both overt and obscure. When Belleforest (Malvolio) outs Oola as a woman he says, “It’s so obvious as to be Shakespearean. O, hark, lo, yonder stands the cross-dressed spy” (88). Vivian Bandello’s name draws from Shakespeare’s Italian source for *Twelfth Night*: Matteo Bandello’s *Novelle* (1554), and Belleforest’s name from Francois de Belleforst’s French translation of the same (1570) (Warren, Wells 16). In the classic comic ending of multiple marriages the source of *Head Over Heels* is named outright:

Louise McGhee (Maria): I’m going to make love to you for eleven straight nights.

Throb (Toby Belch): And on the twelfth night?

Louise McGhee: We’ll start again. (90)

In the performance of its otherness, the Caravan has branded itself as a kind of utopia – the “Equapolis” moniker discussed in Chapter 2.3.3 was a form of this. Foucault has said of utopias, “They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down”. In going on to articulate the concept of heterotopias, he again uses upside down language. Heterotopias are: “something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously presented, contested, and inverted (*Other* 24). In *Head Over Heels* Anderson has found an image not just for the world of love in his play, but for the Caravan Farm Theatre itself as experienced by the artists that live and work there, and by their audience. Whereas Winslow Farm is an image of bucolic tradition that the theatre company uses as aesthetic funnel, Caravan Farm is an upside down world where elements of farm life juxtapose capriciously with the fancy and freakishness of the circus. To enter it is to enter a unique version of the world. Foucault has said that an experience like this is “linked to slices in time . . . heterotopias begin to function at full capacity when men

arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time” (*Other* 26). Throughout *Head Over Heels* there is a sense that time is on hold. Oola says, “It’s like some parallel universe where everything’s shifted five degrees, and time has stopped” (22), and Vivien swoons, “But then I met Liv and time stopped” (19). Every time Oola looks at her watch it is 11:11, the pop-numerology signal for a glitch in the matrix. Upside down and functioning outside of time, the Caravan and its programming create a radical space “of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory” (Foucault, *Other* 27).

With *Head Over Heels* Anderson takes particular aim at the partitioning force of surveillance. Belleforest, the Malvolio character, is a high level security officer who patrols Lividia Swann’s forest with a 20,000 volt security fence and his taser. Another of Foucault’s concepts beautifully materialized here is that of the panopticon, built on from Jeremy Bentham’s late nineteenth century writings, through which “the project of a universal visibility which exists to serve a rigorous, meticulous power” is executed (Foucault, *Eye* 152). In the theatrical world of *Head Over Heels*, where Oola, Oli and Vivien fall from the sky (victims of terrorist attacks, refugees hiding in plane wheels), Oola and Harquevari conceal their identity to gain entrance to forbidden places (spies, illegal immigrants), and Harquevari and Throb live in open defiance of societal norms (the poor and the subcultural), Belleforest’s role is to maintain a space uncorrupted by deviance using his jalopy-like version of an all-seeing surveillance machine. “In the Panopticon each person, depending on his place, is watched by all or certain of the others. You have an apparatus of total and circulating mistrust. . . . The perfected form of surveillance consists in a summation of malveillance” (Foucault, *Eye* 158). Malvolio’s malveillance weaves a thread of fear through the play and reaches absurd proportions in the scene where Belleforest’s enemies

trick him with a false letter from his employer Lividia, which he shoots at and scans for anthrax before reading: “Border violation stopped, perimeter penetration thwarted. . . . Apprehended item seized for identification, investigation and interrogation” (Anderson, *Head* 7). As much as Belleforests’ obsessions have comic manifestations, the critique of contemporary first world society, watched and monitored with increasing complexity and force, is pointed: “Panoptism was a technological invention in the order of power, comparable with the steam engine in the order of production” (Foucault, *Questions* 71), and has insinuated itself even into the rural expanses of farm and forest.

Mikhail Bakhtin, in discussing the work of French novelist Rabelais, mapped out the uses of carnival forms in resisting authority within socially accepted frameworks. Carnival activities “offered a completely different nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom” (Bakhtin 6). These carnival forms, like heterotopias, rely on inversion as their main technique: “The king’s attributes are turned upside down in the clown; he is the king of a world turned inside out” (370). Right at the core of Anderson’s source material is a carnival form from Elizabethan England: “the period of licensed ‘misrule’, revelry, and topsy-turveydom traditionally associated with the Twelve Days of Christmas, of which Twelfth Night was the conclusion and the climax” (Warren, Wells 5). Inversions are everywhere in *Twelfth Night* and *Head Over Heels*, but the most classic manifestation is the mock exorcism of Malvolio by Feste as Sir Topaz, behind which lies, “the figure of the bishop of Fools or Abbot of Unreason, who guyed and parodied the ceremonies of the Church as the Lord of Misrule reversed secular norms” (Warren, Wells 57). In *Head Over Heels*, the homeless Harquevari first turns

Belleforest's own taser on him: "you can close your gates, patrol the grid, lock your bars, bar the id, but you're not going to stop us. (ZAP) Cause there's more of us everyday, (ZAP) fallin' from the sky, (ZAP) crawling out of the bushes, (ZAP) our numbers are swelling like the dead" (22). Later he becomes the interrogator when Belleforest is held captive, echoing the Topaz scene in a form of what Bakhtin calls "carnival uncrownings" (370), replete with blows and debasement. In Bakhtin's analysis, carnival forms also concern themselves overtly and obsessively with the "material bodily lower stratum" (368-436); the sexual and the scatological. Instead of Malvolio's famous yellow stockings and crossed garters, in Anderson's text Belleforest is implored by the letter to appear before Lividia wearing her panties.

Carnival forms are also held and supported on the farm site in the visual and historical traces of the horse drawn version of the Caravan that was its theatrical genesis. Of these wagons so suggestive of the British Romani's vardo, with which the touring company was deeply identified, a few survive on the farm site acting symbolically like mascots and functioning practically as concession stands. Like the Romani version used from the 1850's to the mid-twentieth century, these ornately decorated structures are heavily associated with circus troupes and fairground travelers (Ward-Jackson 22). As is grittily depicted in the 1979 NFB film *Horse Drawn Magic*, the caravans were both living quarters and stages (also like their Romani counterparts), and their arrival at performance locations brought their upside down world into unlikely locations around rural British Columbia (*Horse*). An even stronger vestige of these early days is maintained through the presence of Clydesdale horses on the farm. A Scottish draught horse originally used for agriculture and hauling coal, Clydesdales are related to, and bred into, the Gypsy Vanner horse that pulled the vardos (Ward-Jackson 22). Now the Clydesdales earn their keep "by

hauling audience members from scene to scene for the annual winter sleigh ride shows” (Shook 55), and have the odd cameo in the summer show. In *Head Over Heels* the program warns us: “For your safety, please remain seated during the performance, as there will be moving horses on stage” (Caravan 3). In the show we see a single horse that sometimes accompanies Harquevari onstage, acting as a kind of companion in exile for her homeless plight. At one point she turns the horse to lead it to an exit and “Intermission” is written on the horse’s tail. The Clydesdale is still the Caravan Farm Theatre’s logo and the attachment to continuing the horses’ presence in performance is strong from both the artists and the audience. For Richard Kirkley this is a result of the horse being a “central force in building and uniting the communities of the B.C. interior” (35), and former Artistic Director Estelle Shook speaks of the company wanting to “harness our metanarratives to its iconic power” (55). As an icon, the horse deftly unites farm work with carnival and the fairground. It is at once a beast of burden and a conveyance into a world of imagination and misrule.

Also primary to the company’s marginality are the vestiges of the communal living experiments that characterized the back-to-the-land movement. Through the summer months of rehearsal and performance the company lives together on the farm, sleeping in rustic cabin or in tents, eating communally, and bathing in a shared, minimal bathhouse. It is a lifestyle that requires ideological commitment and has not been a positive experience for all artists that have tried it. In 2000, company publicist Ken Smedley called the Caravan “the Third World of the Canadian cultural community” and admitted that the “communal lifestyle and primitive living conditions have certainly been known to wear people down” (Kirkley 35-36). Peter Anderson believes conversely that the lifestyle is seminal to the Caravan’s achievements: “A shared belief of our

interconnectedness with the land and its inhabitants influences the form, content and method of working”, that “open spaces and clean air often trigger profound physical/vocal breakthroughs”, and that through this practice they are “creating theatre that honours relationship” (“Breaking” np). As the company has aged, the lifestyle on the farm looks less like a commune and more like an intergenerational extended family. A corollary to the family dynasties at Blyth and the Winslow family history at 4th Line, the Caravan has its own narrative of family. Couples and families are often hired as units for productions and children sometimes appear in performance. Peter Anderson observed in 1993 that a “generation of twenty-year-olds who ‘grew up’ on the Caravan are now becoming involved in the theatre” (“Breaking” np). This phenomenon continued into the twenty-first century and included Artistic Director Estelle Shook who grew up on the farm and was a leader in the artistic vision of the company from 1998 to 2010.

More than any other farm theatre cited in this study, the Caravan has developed an idiosyncratic and recognizable visual aesthetic and performing style that links its productions. The history page of the company’s website ascribes this to the communal blend of working practices of some of its founding members: “the classical traditions of Strasbourg trained director Nick Hutchinson, the leftist political agenda of Paul Kirby, the large scale Bread and Puppet/Welfare State inspired design of Catherine Hahn and Molly March, and the populist high comedy of playwright Peter Anderson” (“History” *Caravan*). This source goes on to describe the hybrid approach as, “accessing the energy of the rodeo, the celebration of the fall fair, and the ritual of the Easter parade, . . . incorporating music, mask, physical comedy, horses and trucks, dogs and kids, whatever it takes to grab the audience by the coat and take them for a ride”. Anderson gets

more specific when he claims that the shows draw from “the mystery cycle pageants of medieval Europe, commedia dell’arte, circus and puppetry” (“Breaking” np).

The actorly demonstration of extreme embodiment in the performance forms favoured by the company hints at an important component of the Caravan audience experience. Though a substantial amount of the company’s audience is from the surrounding rural locale, the farm is also a site of pilgrimage for town and city dwellers. Travel to the site requires a long car ride for these patrons, and the field of crushed grass at the entrance to the front forty that functions as a parking lot is most audience members’ first encounter with the land. Once parked, the walk across the fields to that year’s site of the summer show is a significant part of the experience, and, for returning audiences, triggers memories of shows viewed in previous years. At intermission and for the walk back after the show, this uneven ground is navigated in darkness with only garden lights and lanterns to guide. Rebecca Solnit has written about pilgrimage in a way that links it to Foucault’s heterotopia: it is “a liminal state – a state of being between one’s past and future identities and thus outside the established order, in a state of possibility” (Solnit 51). That the entrance to and exit from this liminal state is navigated with a deepened experience for the feet demonstrates an alternate theory of head over heels; one put forth by Tim Ingold. In *Culture on the Ground* he critiques Darwin’s linking of the upright posture to human superiority “Marching head over heels – half in nature, half out – the human biped figures as a constitutionally divided creature. The dividing line, roughly level with the waist, separates the upper and lower parts of the body. Whereas the feet, impelled by biochemical necessity, undergird and propel the body within the natural world, the hands are free to deliver the intelligent designs or conceptions of the mind upon it: for the former, nature is the medium

through which the body moves; to the latter it presents itself as a surface to be transformed” (318). The foot constricted in the boot and the body rendered sedentary by the chair, “establish a technological foundation for the separation of thought from action and of mind from body – that is the fundamental groundlessness so characteristic of modern metropolitan dwelling” (323). Increased haptic or kinaesthetic sensation through the feet works to undermine the tyranny of head over heels, and to knit together the bisected human. Tadashi Suzuki has developed a whole method of training actors based around this principle: “I place special emphasis on the feet, because I believe that consciousness of the body’s communication with the ground leads to a greater awareness of all the physical junctions of the body” (165). Though the trek to new areas of the site can prove challenging for accessibility (disabled patrons are often ferried to the performance area by car), the shift in the sensorium it encourages, the “uncrowning” of the audience, make the trip to the Caravan a full pilgrimage experience above and beyond the reception of the performance event.

When Belleforest, tricked by the letter, appears before Lividia wearing her panties, he is unhinged by emotion: “Away with all ‘reason.’ It’s the season of unreason, time to let our bodies talk. . . . The hands on our biological clocks are pointing straight upward towards the stars! . . . The little hand and the big hand at 11:11, the hour of love” (60). He connects his new embodiment and the abandonment of his intellect directionally to the celestial bodies that are just making themselves visible for the audience in the darkening sky. Generally this expansive spiritualism, whereby bodies merge with the enveloping landscape, appears in the text of his nemesis Harquevari: “We’re all clouds, clouds of molecules rising from us, we think we’re solid but we’re not” (3); “It’s all the same then – you, me, that tree” (48). At the close of the play

Harquevari ushers the audience into a radically expanded sense of space as she looks up to the sky: “Look at that. That’s how people used to tell time. All those stars up there. Makes you feel awfully. Little” (91). In his uncrowned state even Belleforest is transformed: “In the name of love, who I was I am no longer; who I’m not I now will be” (51). The Caravan Farm Theatre combines careful stewardship of their land, with a merging of lifestyle, aesthetic principles, radical social critique, and a philosophy of ecological integration to create an upending experience for audience members through which they, like Belleforest, can surrender some of themselves to their surroundings. As Solnit says: “When you give yourself to places, they give you yourself back; the more one comes to know them, the more one seeds them with the invisible crop of memories and associations that will be waiting for you when you come back” (13).

Chapter 6: Two Planks and a Passion's *As You Like It* and the *Iliad by Fire*

In the program for the summer season at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, Ken Schwartz tells the audience that the farm site, and their 2013 programming on it, has allowed them “to explore the very beginnings of the theatre.” He relates the content of the two shows on offer to the “purest form of our central creative drive as a company – Two Planks and a Passion”, and goes on to define that drive as, “a completely unfiltered experience between audience and actor, unfettered by technology” (Two 6). Indeed the tag line for their producing activities, “Theatre Off The Grid” (Two 2), is an engagement of the language of the newest manifestation of the back-to-the-land movement, which places itself outside the purview of the electrical system on which urban life depends. An encounter with the company rewards that promise with an outdoor performance site that employs no stage structures, no electric light and no amplified sound. As the newest of Canada’s farm theatres, Two Planks have consciously borrowed from some of their predecessors. Like the Caravan they stage their work in a different location every year on their sprawling 178 acres, and the ensemble lives on the farm, though in less rustic conditions in the site’s farm house. They regularly hire partners in the acting ensemble and the presence of children and families in the workspace is an integral part of the producing culture. Like 4th Line they work with the darkening natural light and begin performances at 6pm. Their programming and performance model is unique however, with the opportunity to see two shows in one evening. In 2013, after a picnic dinner in their food tent which was prepared on site and purchased along with the show ticket, I saw Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* beginning at 6pm, broke for hot chocolate shortly before 9pm, and then walked across a field in the dark of night to experience the *Iliad by Fire* at 9:30pm. They have the most intimate audience relationship of the four theatres, with *As You Like It* playing to ninety on a small bleacher set up, and the *Iliad by*

Fire accommodating sixty-five spectators in a circle around a central fire. Through their determination to engage with the land in such a digitally and electronically unmediated fashion, Two Planks has created an engaging aesthetic that encourages deep listening to both the cultural and natural voices of their site, and which navigates a complex interweaving of classic texts and contemporary ecological discourse.

Duke Senior's line in Act 2 Scene 1 ennobling his forest exile, "Sweet are the uses of adversity" (2.1.12), resonates with Two Planks' producing philosophy and summons the pastoral genre of which *As You Like It* was Shakespeare's first effort. The pastoral impulse, with its classical origins in the idylls and eclogues of Theocritus and Virgil, seized the Renaissance imagination and maintained popular sway until the eighteenth century (Young ix). As ecocritical Shakespeare scholar Robert N. Watson reports, the "craving for a simplifying reunion with the wilderness was focused and magnified at this historical moment by urbanization, capitalism, and the Protestant Reformation, each of which contributed to anxieties about mediation and the lost sensual past" (79). As a cultural manifestation of a back-to-the-land-style hunger, pastoralism shared the movement's feverish drive: "The desire to recover some original and authentic reality appears to have been epidemic" (79). David Young in *The Heart's Forest* charts how the pastoral migrated from non-dramatic forms by merging with the plot structure of chivalric romance (11-12). The "pastoral sojourn" (20) at the heart of this new structure looks much like the Two Planks founding story: "(the play) reminds us of our own journey to the North Mountain to find the seclusion and focus that is so essential to the creation of our work" (Two 6). Young goes on to list the genre's thematic concerns: "man's relation to the natural world: his search for harmony with his environment; his tendency to idealize, alternately, the life of the city and that

of the country; his dreams of escape, retirement, and a self-contained life hospitable both to sensual gratification and to spiritual fulfillment” (x). While the genre aspires to the pure, it is characterized by its artificiality and self-consciousness: “Pastoral values the simple, but is itself apt to be complex. It praises the rustic, but does so for a sophisticated audience. ‘Take less, have more,’ is its paradoxical advice” (Young 35). These contradictions would seem to summon Raymond Williams’ analysis of nostalgia as a “protecting illusion” creating a false past and obfuscating class relations (*Country* 46). For phenomenologist Edward Casey, however, “Nostalgia . . . is not merely a matter of regret for lost times; it is also a pining for *lost places*” (37). In staging Shakespeare’s loose dramatization of Thomas Lodge’s pastoral novel *Rosalynde: Euphues’ Golden Legacy*, Two Planks engages pastoral tropes with all their inherent contradictions, but additionally creates a contemporary *material pastoral* through their performance site which both troubles and solves some of the genre’s difficulties.

Theorists of Shakespeare’s Arden and the complexities of its staging explore the play’s syntax and rhetoric. Watson finds in pastoralism a syntax of occupation: “Doesn’t pastoralism share the dangers of Petrarchism: not just disguising verbal convention as individual emotion, but disguising aggression as submission, appropriation as donation, war as love?” (86). It is the preponderance of similes in *As You Like It* that speaks to him of the impulse to impose human familiarities on the other-than-human world: “‘like’ is a gesture of conquest – a kind of temporary occupation that stops just short of the totalitarian presumption of metaphor” (Watson 89). In this vein, Duke Senior carries on his previously quoted speech with metamorphic images that decorate his spare new environment with familiar comforts:

And this our life exempt from public haunt
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones and good in every thing. (2.1.15-17)

Bert States has written about rhetorical or heard scenery in Shakespeare and “the power of language to bridge the gulf between sign and thing” (55). The “tension between seeing and hearing is a distinguishing feature of Shakespeare’s theater” (56), and of the two, it is the acts of naming and describing that actually construct the perceived mimetic universe. So what happens when this densely descriptive and evocative world collides with a material embodiment of some facet of it? States says that “Any attempt to imitate this imitation . . . will deprive the line of its unique sensory autonomy” (57). Yet, this is what happens when Two Planks places its simply and traditionally staged production of *As You Like It* in front of a lightly forested patch of trees on its acreage. We see the forest of Arden, but not with the tongues, books and sermons that populate its invading images, or even the lions, snakes and palm trees through which Shakespeare confuses our associations with his locale. Instead we see rural Nova Scotia and the pleasant regrowth of land that was once a working farm. The material pastoral fights with the poetic pastoral for perceptual dominance, both attempting to effect a deeper imbrication with the natural world.

Before we see the actors of *As You Like It*, we hear them. In the full light of the early evening, singing begins deep in the patch of trees that cradles the ground designated as playing space. The volume grows as the voices get closer and then the cast emerges from the trees. The beginning of this production tells us that the auditory will be the dominant sense and that the trees of this wood will also be an instrument that plays upon our ears. There are indeed tongues

in these trees, even before the text readies us to imagine them. The small audience capacity and their close proximity to the action allow an intimacy and precision in the acting work that would be impossible at the other farm theatre sites. The ensemble of Maritime actors animating the text give complex and heartfelt performances rooted in a sophisticated grasp of Shakespeare's language. Under the mentorship of British director Tim Carroll, Two Planks Artistic Director Ken Schwartz has transplanted some of Carroll's "original practices" approach to Shakespeare, mainly his focus on the details of meter and punctuation. So we hear the 'i' as a full syllable in "reputation" in the line "Seeking the bubble reputation" (2.7.153) from the famous Seven Ages of Man speech; the word is pronounced *re-pu-ta-ti-on* – five beats to complete the ten beat demand of the iambic pentameter. This somewhat unconventional and incredibly detailed approach to the language heightens our focus as listeners and amplifies the physical work of receiving sound. Deirdre Heddon, in theorizing auditory spectatorship, helps us remember that sound actually penetrates the full body, not just the ears: "Equal (and indeed necessary) to the speaking body is the listening body; a body that resonates with sound" (Heddon 37). In the case of Two Planks, the bodies of the audience form an acoustic container helping to shape the sound on the open field and to bounce sound back to the actors in a kind of material contact that reinforces our actual presence in the outdoor setting. Theorizing this action, Shakespeare scholar Jonathan Bate argues for a phenomenologically based ecopoetic in which the processes of nature unfold to us experientially in poetry, using language to connect both readers and listeners to the physical world (243-84). The heightened material exchange through sound between the actors and the audience at Two Planks makes us more permeable to the landscape, as poetry chips away at the barriers to our receptivity.

Though the name “Two Planks and a Passion” suggests that you don’t need much to make theatre, it does demand one item: wood – at least two planks of it. The other half of the acoustic container holding this performance of *As You Like It* is a living wood, enacting the forest of Arden, that resonates and reflects the sound of the performance back at the actors and the audience. Jeffrey S. Theis has coined the term “sylvan pastoral” to elucidate the Elizabethan trend of transplanting pastoral narratives to forest settings “to register and negotiate the historical and environmental anxieties the English held toward their woodland regions” (1). The sixteenth century’s population explosion and land enclosures created a rootless proletariat and forced their migration from villages to less developed places (Theis 49-52). By this time the wildwood of England was extinct and replaced by managed woodland that escaped clearcut only by holding game animals for the royal hunt. Though forest laws supposedly controlled these spaces “it was easy for migrants to move in as forest squatters and claim the land as their own”, creating societies with a “Robin Hood-like, anti-authoritarian tenor” (Theis 13). So Arden was a space of defiance created by poor people attracted to the lack of regulation and the free wooden resources. Elizabethan England harboured a pervasive fear that wood - the society’s primary building material and heat source - was vanishing. The price of wood rose, as did the cultural attachment to this once living material, the rapid disappearance of which seemed to signal the end of a harmonious relationship with nature. Vin Nardizzi even surmises that the massive outlay of wood required to build London theatres was marshaled in part because it allowed urban dwellers, for a price, “to experience the pleasures and the frights of being inside virtual woods” (20). Theatrical performance, he proposes, “revivifies the wood of the theatre” (22) and offers the living forest to the sylvan-starved audience. Shakespeare’s Arden then, is a contested imaginary space where the Bard allowed his characters to struggle with the implications of their material

existence, surrounded by a testament to forest annihilation. It is in this particular intersection of Shakespeare's text and the practice of "Theatre Off The Grid" that the poetic and material worlds work deftly together at this farm theatre. On this Nova Scotia field we contemplate our own dependency on diminishing resources, with the support of the sensory indulgence of wood and sound that the text and the performance foreground.

As the sky darkens at Ross Creek, the site is prepared for the second performance of this double header, which will take us even deeper into the experience of sound and wood. The preparation is the lighting of a bonfire in the midst of a circle and it instantly creates a performing environment – the only of the farm theatres studied here that, in 2013, did not have a primarily frontal orientation. Two Planks' "by Fire" series takes a classic or canonical work and adapts it to be performed "by fire" by the same actors that gave us *As You Like It*, now dressed in their street clothes. Initiated in 2013, Ken Schwartz adapted the massive 16,000 line tract of Homer's *Iliad* (from translations by Robert Fagle and Steven Mitchell) into an hour-long performance, with the dactylic hexameter refigured into iambic pentameter. Though rendered in the same verse form as the Shakespeare, the language world of the adaptation is contemporary, and devoid of the "original practices" markers that made the acting work of *As You Like It* distinctive. The performance style of the "by Fire" shows exists somewhere between storytelling and acting, with the actors beginning among the encircled audience and returning there throughout the event. Bert States says of this spatial configuration: "the special significance of the circle metaphor is that theater is the one place where society collects in order to look in upon itself as a third-personal other . . . (it) is a means of looking objectively at the subjective life of the race as something prepared for the community out of the substance of its own body" (9). David Wiles points to the

circle's democratizing function, creating a "feeling of collectivity, when spectators contemplate each other as equals" (205). In the *Iliad by Fire* the actors share the narration and take turns embodying various characters with only slight variations from the style of narration as they move behind, in front and among us. The effect is that we feel we are implicated in a fierce collective debate that seeks to solve the *Iliad's* central problem: why human violence is sparked, inflamed and prolonged.

For the duration of the performance the fire is the single source of light (and heat – the temperature drops rapidly in the summer evening). Though the actors can be seen, they are not fully lit but are perceived more like shadows haunting the ring of the audience. What we watch is the spectacle of fire devouring wood with the wildness and rapacity of siege. C. J. Mackie has theorized the role of fire in the ontology of antiquity: "The ultimate hegemony of Zeus and the Olympians is won by the force of fire, an element which then helps to symbolize the transition from one phase in the development of the cosmos to the next" (Mackie 155). As the well-known phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard argued, fire is a point of concentration through which we mold human and other-than-human transformation: "In the realm of fire, each of us becomes a brazier of beings" (19). In the opening imagery of the piece, fires form a panorama (in which the audience is also implicated, as we are also "Glowing in firelight"), which then zooms in to focus on two of the Greek heroes:

Hundreds of cooking fires, twinkling like stars

Across the inky black of the quiet beach

Soldiers, as far as eyes could see, their faces

Glowing in firelight, The Siege of Troy.

And at one fire, two men, their faces etched

With all the pain that a war leaves with a man (Schwartz 1)

In the *Iliad*, important conversations are had around a fire: Achilles and Agamemnon's quarrel at the beginning, and Achilles' ruminations on war when Odysseus comes to fetch Briseis are examples. It is also the medium that ushers the many dead of battle to the afterlife from the heat of the funeral pyre. For Mackie, however, the major role of fire in the *Iliad* is to herald a "new level of destruction that organized military conflict on a large scale brings, or will bring, to the world of Troy" (19) – a generational change in the conduct of war, advancing far beyond the destructive power employed by Heracles in the previous sacking of Troy. Navigating this shift, the actors use the fire as an interactive set piece, stoking it and throwing flame fuel on it, creating a visual embodiment of consuming destruction, as well as an acoustic base for the sound world of the performance.

As with *As You Like It*, the auditory sense is heightened in the *Iliad by Fire*, but with even greater impact as the performance conjures forms of cultural transmission enacted without recourse to written systems. Two Planks' *Iliad* is not the only contemporary theatrical attempt to return Homer to its oral roots. Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare's *An Iliad* is an acclaimed solo performance that premiered at Seattle Repertory Theatre in 2010, which imagines a poet "doomed to tell the story of the Trojan War until the day when human nature changes, when our addiction to rage comes to an end" (Peterson, O'Hare 3). Further, in 2010, Ken Schwartz's mentor Tim Carroll staged the *Iliad's* sequel with the UK's Factory Theatre in an intertextual, partially improvised group work. The company's website justifies their approach: "Homer's

Odyssey was spoken not written. It was too deep for that. Too malleable. Too epic. It wouldn't be held down, shouldn't be tidied, shan't be tamed. The Factory aren't trying to. Drawing upon a store of songs, dances, new writing, and real life experiences they are delving into their wild souls, and loving hearts to breathe life into Odysseus in whatever way he demands every night" ("Odyssey"). These new works, as well as much philological scholarship, point to a Bardic performance form with the lyre that had little regard for metrical precision or repeatability, and was sung anew at each performance from the reconfiguration of rhythmic units of story (Lord 29, Powell 11). Two Planks' style, while set and rehearsed, offers its own take on this form by alternating choral and solo voice, chanting, creating rhythm structures with sticks, and manipulating the fire for dramatic effect. At the heart of the performance though, is the human voice, alternately forceful and fragile, and penetrating the porous human bodies of the audience to deposit a story that has been shared for centuries.

Both performance texts resonate with Una Chaudhuri's concept of geopathology: "the characterization of place as a problem" (*Staging* xii) appearing in dramatic worlds as displacement, dispossession, and dislocation. In Shakespeare's work, Duke Senior's domain is stolen by his younger brother and the elder now lives with his followers in exile in a disorienting and marginal existence. In Homer's retelling of the story of Troy, we meet the Greek army after nine years of encampment on the beach outside the walls of their enemies, still desperate to avenge the abduction of Helen. In both scenarios, the characters are roughing it, waiting to right an injustice deep enough to uproot masses of people and render their very place a problem.

To understand why these performances of unsettlement and the characterization of place as a problem live so successfully on the Two Planks site, one might turn again to Joanne Tompkins' notion that a culture's disruptions are recycled and rehashed in its dramatic modes. Like the land of 4th Line Theatre, the western shore of Nova Scotia is a highly contested space with a violent and disruptive past (chronicled in detail in Chapter 2.1.1) that includes siege, captivity, expulsion and exile. In her history of Port Royal, just to the southwest of Ross Creek along the Bay of Fundy and a hotspot of the imperial battle for the new world for over a century, Brenda Dunn reports that the area "faced a total of thirteen attacks, more than any other place in North America" (viii). To build a mid-sized ship of the kind that crossed the ocean to explore the new world and do battle for it "it took about 3,800 trees or roughly 75 acres of woodland" (Theis 11). Often these ships were seeking new resources (including wood) for the rapidly diminishing European supply and new places for imperial regents to expand their footprint on the world. Port Royal is also the site of one of the first documented European theatrical performance in what would be Canada, in 1606. Jerry Wasserman's *Spectacle of Empire* and Alan Filewod's *Performing Canada: The Nation Enacted in the Imagined Theatre*, chronicle the floating masque staged by lawyer and poet Marc Lescarbot and a small group of French colonists, which saw a returning ship greeted by Poseidon and his canoe-bound retinue of Tritons and indigenous warriors (Wasserman 11-43, Filewod xi-xvii). Though widely criticized for its appropriative and exploitative use of First Nations, Lescarbot's *Theatre of Neptune in New France* is another theatre of lack and adversity (the previous colony in the Bay of Fundy starved to the point collapse during the brutal Maritime winter). It used the Greek gods in verse just six years after the premiere of *As You Like It* in London, to help adventurers survive on the frontier of a rapidly changing world.

Philosopher Edward Casey has theorized these geopathological disruptions: “Although we acknowledge the suffering occasioned by personal or collective displacement we tend not to trace it back to the loss of vital connection with place itself The result is a suffering not limited to the experience of exile: in a “dromocratic,” speed-bound era, every mobile person is a victim of placelessness in one guise or another” (xiv). This suffering finds a unique image that is startlingly repeated in both *As You Like It* and the *Iliad by Fire* – that of weeping into a body of water. Both Homer’s bereft hero and Shakespeare’s wounded deer partake of this material exchange between beings and their environment, in moments that highlight “the permeability and fluidity of bodily boundaries” (Bondi, Davidson and Smith 7):

And Achilles did not watch them as they left
He turned his back and walked towards the sea.
His tears of rage tumbled into the ocean
And Achilles’ tears flowed without end
They tumbled in the sea where Thetis heard
Her son call to her – quickly up she rose
From the sea foam a misty goddess stood (Schwartz 9)

The wretched animal heaved forth such groans
That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat
Almost to bursting, and the big round tears
Coursed one another down his innocent nose
In piteous chase; and thus the hairy fool

Much marked of the melancholy Jaques,
Stood on the extremest verge of the swift brook,
Augmenting it with tears. (2.1.36-43)

Achilles' tears summon the strength of his mother and the deer drives Jacques to a state of tortured sympathetic pathos. Both emotions are active, as though fusing with a larger body of water expands the affective power of the tears. This repeating image suggests that it may be in emotional connection that the healing force for the rift of placelessness is found.

This says Duke Senior uses his pastoral sojourn to "question the fundamental premises governing human definition of natural spaces" (68). Though he may clutter his environment with similes in an attempt to understand it, both he and Jacques are moved by the plight of the deer they feed off and question their right to hunt them:

And yet it irks me the poor dappled fools,
Being native burghers of this desert city,
Should in their own confines with forked heads
Have their round haunches gored. (2.1.22-25)

In the *Iliad* Achilles uses his retreat from the fighting to question the whole basis of the conflict:

Why must we battle Trojans, Odysseus?
Why did Agamemnon lead us all to war?
For Helen's lovely face and lustrous hair?
Are they the only men, these sons of Atreus
Who love their wives? Of course not! Look around you!
All decent men who camp here on this plain

Loves his own (Schwartz 33)

This fundamental questioning, supported by spare theatrical machinery that foregrounds the material quality and storied history of their site, is what makes Two Planks and a Passion's Theatre Off The Grid so impactful in its desire to merge the politics of land and theatre. That this impact is created through four hours of the human voice speaking in iambic pentameter is a testament to high level of theatrical craft buoying up the company's politics of retreat and contemplation. Though the *Iliad by Fire* ends in atrocity and premonition of slaughter, there are moments when peace and forgiveness seem possible, such as when Priam visits the grieving Achilles to beg for the body of his son:

And they both sat together by the fire

Staring at the embers, unspeaking

Priam weeping for Hector, his son

Achilles for his father, then Patroclus (Schwartz 64)

Weeping this time not into water, which surrounds and accepts, but into fire which transforms, in a desperate bid to change the course of human history.

Chapter 7: Conclusion - Towards a Poetics of Farming

At Canada's farm theatres a kind of agro-poetics is emerging with aesthetic ties to other land-based art. Dennis Oppenheims' 1969 piece "Cancelled Crop" is an example. Only fully visible from the air, to execute it he used a combine harvester to harvest wheat from a field in the form of an X. His artist's statement explains that "The grain was isolated in its (sic) raw state, further processing was withheld. The material is planted and cultivated for the sole purpose of withholding it from a product-oriented system. Isolating this grain from further processing (production of food stuffs) becomes like stopping raw pigment from becoming an illusionistic force on canvas" (Oppenheim). On the other side of the mimetic divide, the town of Aomori in Northern Honshu Japan has become renowned for its annual festival of rice paddy art. Farmer/artists grow different strains of rice in complex arrangements to create traditional Japanese images, and increasingly transnational cultural icons: the Mona Lisa, Marilyn Monroe, or stills from *Gone With The Wind* and *Star Wars*. Spectators view the works from a twenty-two meter tower and the rice is harvested and eaten at the end of the season (*Aomori*). From these examples it is clear that the poetics of agricultural art will need to grapple with the complex interplay of aesthetics and ingestion (we are literally *playing with our food*), and our deep attachment to land, especially highly productive land. This grappling brings me back the questions with which I began this study. What do the histories, geographies, mandates, programming and other artistic choices of Anglophone Canada's four professional farm theatres reveal about each theatre's relationship with the land on which they perform? Do the theatres share any common impulses? What distinguishes their efforts and aesthetics? How does the land itself perform?

From my analysis in Chapter 2 it is clear that Canada's cultural and material evolution is deeply tied to farming. The economic and aspirational forces pulling the settlers of this country to its vast and complex landscape were deeply enticing. They were strong enough to push out the original inhabitants with equally strong ties, using methods whose negative effects are felt to this day. After only a couple of short centuries of farming, the shifting of the country's identity and material economy from rural to urban was not compelling enough to undo this attachment to land. Settler culture still needed to go back-to-the-land to search for a primary platial connection articulated through a variety of utopian and revolutionary discourses. Moreover, it is unlikely that this process of leaving and returning, possessing and dispossessing is over. Vancouver's *Westender* newspaper, in early February of 2015, ran a cover story titled "Back to the Land 2.0" which chronicled former Vancouver city dwellers who had left promising urban careers to build cob houses or work at micro-breweries in small towns and rural settings. The 2.0 version of back-to-the-land builds a narrative of the increasing economic impossibility of urban dwelling, and recycles the tropes of alienation and environmental destruction that fueled the rural return of the 1970s. Perhaps their pioneering spirit is not quite as strong as their forebears however, as the article promises that "Advances in technology have enabled people to live off-the-grid and off the land with little impact on their standard of living" (Mangelsdorf 6).

From this desire for land-based connection come the mandates, histories and material forms of the four theatres studied, each a unique flowering of the collision of their sites, their aesthetics and their artistic output. In questioning if the land performs or speaks in a semiotic sense I was looking to understand the impact of the sites, with their multi-temporal strata now somewhat exposed, on the programming of the companies. In my close readings of a single night's

performance at each of the theatres, I found that they engaged the narrative of their site quite profoundly, in ways that were both explicit and implicit, and through forms that were both readable in a semiotic sense and accessible through more-than-representational means. The Caravan Farm Theatre upends viewers with a carnivalesque performing style and careful yet playful animation of their land, which encourages participation in their radical identity. 4th Line Theatre digs up the settler stories of their landscape, gives a container to their many repressed conflicts and injustices, and then cooks them in the heat of their site, allowing us deep affective connection to the material and perhaps some dialogue and transformation as well. Two Planks and a Passion uses the auditory sense and a sophisticated marshalling of poetic language to engage our eco-critical faculties and force us to consider our footprint on the world, even as we partake of what might be considered “high art” in other settings. Blyth Festival Theatre is a theatrical funnel for the farming community in which they sit, daring to aestheticize rural concerns in their tomb/theatre, creating powerful local engagement with their work. All of these farm theatre practices lay the groundwork for the performative functioning of agro-poetics which these theatres will undoubtedly continue to articulate in their future work.

When Raymond Williams analyzed the figuration of “the country” in English literature and imagined a backward moving escalator towards a rural perfection that was always at one generation’s remove, he was not thinking of Canada. Unlike England, Canada’s rural displacements have been abrupt (some might even say catastrophic) and are, compared to the life cycles of most Western nations, still very recent. Even though the metabolic rift that Marx theorized is firmly in place in this country, many Canadians bodily remember dependence on the land. Perhaps opportunities to re-experience this dependence create a reassurance that fertile

land, and abundant food, are close at hand. Perhaps this is why Canada has such an impressive collection of farm theatres and why audiences venture into isolated rural locales to experience performance in them.

This idea that humans carry some of the body memory of their ancestors is a fascinating suggestion that is also fraught with responsibility. As Paige Raibmon suggests in “Unmaking Native Space,” each Canadian settler is a “beneficiary of the original sin of dispossession” (78) and we should move forward taking ownership of, and working to repair, the damage of that sin. If some of the analysis in this thesis reveals elements of Chaudhuri’s “geopathology”, it is undoubtedly because this important work has not been done. Settlement and farming were supposed to tie the new population of Canada to the landscape, but it did that imperfectly, always with an unsettling heartbeat of injustice beneath it. Perhaps farm-based art can bolster and deepen the affective engagement of all the players in a drama of reparation. Perhaps farm theatres can have a unique role in this process, as Pierre Nora suggests; using the material presence of appropriated land to bring the force of memory back to the reconsideration of history. Like Achilles and Shakespeare’s wounded deer weeping into water and filling the pool of emotional healing, this process could expand and flow through fluid networks outwards, to have a larger impact on the country and beyond. Because of the troubled but unique connection that settler history gives us, Canada has something truly substantial to contribute to a global discourse of rural arts and culture. As the emergence of the “Centre for Rural Creativity” in Blyth indicates, Canada may even lead the way in this conversation. The presence of four thriving professional farm theatres in Canada suggests to me that settler culture still has a form of land hunger. Although local audiences are a mainstay at each site, all of these theatres market to

and rely on urban audiences to varying degrees. Arguably, these audiences go back “to” the land because they want to be back “in” the land in the physical and immersive way that theatre is so good at delivering. While seeing a show at one of these theatres may offer only a short taste of this imbrication, as Dylan Trigg suggests, audiences will carry these places with them in the structure of their memories when they leave the sites.

Like most theatre viewings, the farm theatre experience ends in darkness. At Blyth, the electrically constructed blackout plummets the audience momentarily into the stillness of the tomb in which they sit, after which they spill out onto the lamp lit streets of the village. At 4th Line patrons walk out of the barn and stables assisted with marginal electricity, admiring the farmhouse as they pass to the assemblage of cars in the grassy parking lot. Driving toward the road from the Caravan, returning pilgrims pass once again through the long gate and up the fenced in lane, this time in the forgotten natural darkness that only rural nights can bring. Navigating a vehicle down through the thick black fog of the North Mountain, away from Two Planks and a Passion’s acreage, those who have been drawn there by their deep appetites for farm experience, are temporarily, but substantially, sated.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Blyth Festival Theatre production history

1975

THE MOUSETRAP by Agatha Christie

MOSTLY IN CLOVER by Harry J. Boyle, adapted by James Roy, Steven Thorne & the
Original Cast

1976

THE BLOOD IS STRONG by Lister Sinclair

HOW I MET MY HUSBAND by Alice Munro

MOSTLY IN CLOVER by Harry J. Boyle, adapted by James Roy, Steven Thorne & the
Original Cast

SHAPE by Jim Schaefer

1977

A SUMMER BURNING adapted by Anne Chislett, from the novel by Harry J. Boyle

THE BLOOD IS STRONG by Lister Sinclair

THE BLYTH MEMORIAL HISTORY SHOW by Jim Schaefer

THE SHORTEST DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO POINTS by Keith Roulston

1978

THE HURON TIGER by Peter Colley

HIS OWN BOSS by Keith Roulston

THE SCHOOL SHOW by Ted Johns

GWENDOLINE by James W. Nichol

TWO MILES OFF Theatre Network

1979

THIS FOREIGN LAND created by Patricia Mahoney & Company

I'LL BE BACK FOR YOU BEFORE MIDNIGHT by Peter Colley

MCGILLICUDDY'S LOST WEEKEND by Keith Roulston

CHILD by James W. Nichol

THE DEATH OF THE DONNELLYS by Theatre Passe Muraille & Ted Johns

1980

JOHN AND THE MISSUS by Gordon Pinsent

ST. SAM OF THE NUKE PILE by Ted Johns

I'LL BE BACK FOR YOU BEFORE MIDNIGHT by Peter Colley

THE LIFE THAT JACK BUILT by the Company with David Fox & Janet Amos

1981

HE WON'T COME IN FROM THE BARN by Ted Johns

QUIET IN THE LAND by Anne Chislett

LOVE OR MONEY by Carol Bolt

THE TOMORROW BOX by Anne Chislett

FIRE ON ICE collectively created from an original script by Keith Roulston

1982

DOWN NORTH by Janet Amos

HEADS YOU LOSE by Peter Colley

LA SAGUINE by Antonine Maillet

COUNTRY HEARTS by Ted Johns & John Roby

QUIET IN THE LAND by Anne Chislett

1983

NOBODY'S CHILD by Janice Wiseman & Holden Jones

MY WILD IRISH ROSE by Janet Amos

TIGHTEN THE TRACES, HAUL IN THE REINS by Robbie O'Neill

NAKED ON THE NORTH SHORE by Ted Johns

THE INNOCENT AND THE JUST by Gratien Gélinas

THE TOMORROW BOX by Anne Chislett

1984

GARRISON'S GARAGE by Ted Johns

A SPIDER IN THE HOUSE by Brian Tremlay

CAKE-WALK by Colleen Curran

BLUE CITY by Layne Coleman

COUNTRY HEARTS by Ted Johns & John Roby

1985

POLDERLAND by Brian Wade

MOOSE COUNTY by Colleen Curran

BEAUX GESTES AND BEAUTIFUL DEEDS by Marie-Lynn Hammond

PRIMROSE SCHOOL DISTRICT 109 by Ted Galay

GARRISON'S GARAGE by Ted Johns

1986

ANOTHER SEASON'S PROMISE by Anne Chislett & Keith Roulston

DRIFT by Rex Deverell

GONE TO GLORY by Suzanne Finlay

LILLY, ALTA. by Kenneth Dybat

CAKE-WALK by Colleen Curran

1987

GIRLS IN THE GANG by John Roby & Raymond Storey

MISS BALMORAL OF THE BAYVIEW by Colleen Curran

BUSH FIRE by Laurie Fyffe

ANOTHER SEASON'S PROMISE by Anne Chislett & Keith Roulston

BORDERTOWN CAFÉ by Kelly Rebar

1988

THE COOKIE WAR by Kathleen McDonnell

THE MAIL ORDER BRIDE by Robert Clinton

LUCIEN by Marshall Button

FIRES IN THE NIGHT by David S. Craig

BORDERTOWN CAFÉ by Kelly Rebar

1989

PERILS OF PERSEPHONE by Dan Needles

STICKS AND STONES (PART 1) by James Reaney

THE RIGHT ONE by Bryan Wade

THE DREAMLAND by Raymond Storey and John Roby

THE MAIL ORDER BRIDE by Robert Clinton

1990

LOCAL TALENT by Collen Curran

ALBERTINE, IN FIVE TIMES by Michel Tremblay, Translated by Linda Gaboriau

A FIELD OF FLOWERS by Laurie Fyffe

THE PERILS OF PERSEPHONE by Dan Needles

FIREFLY by Carol Sinclair, with music by John Alcorn

1991

TWO BROTHERS by Ted Johns

BARBERSHOP QUARTET by Layne Coleman

THE STONE ANGEL by James W. Nichol, based on the novel by Margaret Lawrence

END OF THE WORLD ROMANCE by Sean Dixon

CORNFLOWER BLUE by Kelly Rebar

1992

THE PUFF'N' BLOW BOYS by Valoreyne Brandt Jenkins

THE HOMETOWN BOY by Robert Clinton

BACK UP AND PUSH OR THE CONFESSIONS OF A REFORMED CYNIC by Ted Johns

THE GLORIOUS 12TH by Raymond Storey

YANKEE NOTIONS by Anne Chislett

I'LL BE BACK BEFORE MIDNIGHT by Peter Colley

1993

MANY HANDS by Dale Hamilton

CEILI HOUSE by Colleen Curran

SAFE HAVEN by Mary-Colin Chisholm

THE OLD MAN'S BAND by John Roby

WEB by Rosalind Goldsmith

THE GLORIOUS 12TH by Raymond Storey

1994

GLENGARRY SCHOOL DAYS by Anne Chislett

HE WON'T COME IN FROM THE BARN by Ted Johns

THE BLACK BONSPIEL OF WULLIE MACCRIMMON by W.O. Mitchell

BOUNCING BACK by Suzanne Finlay

1995

BALLAD FOR A RUM RUNNER'S DAUGHTER book & lyrics by Laurie Fyffe, music by
Beth Barley

THIS YEAR, NEXT YEAR by Norah Harding

THE TOMORROW BOX by Anne Chislett

JAKE'S PLACE by Ted Johns

HE WON'T COME IN FROM THE BARN by Ted Johns

1996

BARNDANCE, LIVE! by Paul Thompson & Company

MA BELLE MABEL by Cindy Cowan

VILLA EDEN by Colleen Curran

FIREWORKS by Gordon Portman

1997

QUIET IN THE LAND by Anne Chislett

BOOZE DAYS IN A DRY COUNTY directed by Paul Thompson

THERE'S NOTHING IN THE PAPER by David Scott

THE MELVILLE BOYS by Norm Foster

BARNDANCE, LIVE! by the Collective

OVERBOARD! by Deborah Kimmett

1998

YESTERYEAR by Joanna McClelland Glass

WILBUR COUNTY BLUES by Andrew Moodie

THIRTEEN HANDS by Carol Shields

JOBS, JOBS, JOBS by Keith Roulston

HOT FLASHES by Paul Ledoux & John Roby

1999

THAT SUMMER by David French

BIG BOX by David Carley

THE GREAT SCHOOL CRISIS OF '99 by Ted Johns

EVERY DREAM by James W. Nichol

WHEN THE REAPER CALLS by Peter Colley

2000

DEATH OF THE HIRED MAN by Paul Thompson

ANNE adapted for the stage by Paul Ledoux, based on *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery

CORKER by Wendy Lill

THE DRAWER BOY by Michael Healey

STOLEN LIVES-THE ALBERT WALKER STORY by Peter Colley

WHEN THE REAPER CALLS by Peter Colley

2001

THE OUTDOOR DONNELLYS by Paul Thompson, Janet Amos & the Company

THE PASSION OF NARCISSE MONDOUX by Gratien Gelinas

CRUEL TEARS by Ken Mitchell & Humphrey & the Dumptrucks

MCGILLICUDDY by Keith Roulston

SOMETIME, NEVER by Norah Harding

CORNER GREEN by Gordon Pinsent

2002

THE OUTDOOR DONNELLYS by Paul Thompson, Janet Amos & the Company

GOODBYE, PICCADILLY by Douglas Bowie

FILTHY RICH by George F. Walker

THE DRAWER BOY by Michael Healey

BARNBOOZLED: HE WON'T COME IN FROM THE BARN, PART II by Ted Johns

2003

THE PERILOUS PIRATE'S DAUGHTER by Anne Chislett & David Archibald

LEAVING HOME by David French

HIPPIE by Jonathan Garfinkel, Kelly McIntosh, Paul Thompson

HAVING HOPE AT HOME by David S. Craig

BARNBOOZLED: HE WON'T COME IN FROM THE BARN, PART II by Ted Johns

2004

THE OUTDOOR DONNELLYS by Paul Thompson, Janet Amos & Company

HEAT WAVE by Michel Marc Bouchard

SALT-WATER MOON by David French

SPIRIT OF THE NARROWS by Anne Lederman

CRICKET & CLAUDETTE by Ted Johns

TEST DRIVE by Dave Carley

2005

THE GINKGO TREE by Lee MacDougall

POWERS AND GLORIA by Keith Roulston

THE THIRTEENTH ONE by Denyse Gervais Regan

I'LL BE BACK BEFORE MIDNIGHT by Peter Colley

SPIRIT OF THE NARROWS by Anne Lederman

2006

BALLAD OF STOMPIN' TOM by David Scott, songs by Stompin' Tom Connors

LOST HEIR by Sean Dixon

ANOTHER SEASON'S HARVEST by Anne Chislett & Keith Roulston

SCHOOLHOUSE by Leanna Brodie

2007

THE EYES OF HEAVEN by Beverley Cooper

QUEEN MILLI OF GALT by Gary Kirkham

WORLD WITHOUT SHADOWS by Lance Woolaver

REVEREND JONAH by Paul Ciufu

THE BALLAD OF STOMPIN' TOM by David Scott, with songs by Stompin' Tom Connors

2008

AGAINST THE GRAIN by Carolyn Hay

HARVEST by Ken Cameron

COURTING JOHANNA by Marcia Johnson, based on the short story “Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage” in the book collection of short stories of the same title by Alice Munro

INNOCENCE LOST: A PLAY ABOUT STEVEN TRUSCOTT by Beverley Cooper

2009

THE BOOTBLACK ORATOR by Ted Johns

THE MAIL ORDER BRIDE by Robert Clinton

HOCKEY MOM, HOCKEY DAD by Michael Melski

THE NUTTALLS by Michael Healey

INNOCENCE LOST: A PLAY ABOUT STEVEN TRUSCOTT by Beverley Cooper

2010

A KILLING SNOW by Paul Ciufo

BORDERTOWN CAFE by Kelly Rebar

PEARL GIDLEY by Gary Kirkham

THE BOOK OF ESTHER by Leanna Brodie

2011

HOMETOWN by Jean Marc Dalpe, Mieko Ouchi, Mansel Robinson, Martha Ross, Peter

Smith & Des Walsh

VIMY by Vern Thiessen

ROPE'S END by Douglas Bowie

EARLY AUGUST by Kate Lynch

2012

DEAR JOHNNY DEERE by Ken Cameron, based on the songs of Fred Eaglesmith

HAVING HOPE AT HOME by David S. Craig

THE LONELY DINER: AL CAPONE IN EUPHEMIA TOWNSHIP by Beverley Cooper

THE DEVIL WE KNOW by Cheryl Foggo and Clem Martini

2013

DEAR JOHNNY DEERE by Ken Cameron, based on the songs of Fred Eaglesmith

BEYOND THE FARM SHOW by The Collective

YORKVILLE - THE MUSICAL Book and Lyrics by Carolyn Hay; Music by Tom Szczesniak

GARRISON'S GARAGE by Ted Johns

PRAIRIE NURSE by Marie Beath Badian

FALLING: A WAKE by Gary Kirkham

2014

KITCHEN RADIO by Marion de Vries

BILLY BISHOP GOES TO WAR by John MacLachlan Gray in collaboration with Eric

Peterson

STAG AND DOE by Mark Crawford

ST. ANNE'S REEL by Gil Garratt

2015

SEEDS by Annabel Soutar

THE WILBERFORCE HOTEL by Sean Dixon

FURY Book & Lyrics by Peter Smith, Music by Samuel Sholdice

MARY'S WEDDING by Stephen Massicotte

EDNA RURAL'S CHURCH SUPPER From Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes

Appendix B - 4th Line Theatre production history

1992

THE CAVAN BLAZERS by Robert Winslow

THE SECOND SHEPHERDS' PAGEANT

1993

THE CAVAN BLAZERS by Robert Winslow

THE MOODIE TRAIL by Susan Spicer, Tim Etherington, Robert Winslow and Caron
Garside

1994

THE GREAT FARINI by Shane Peacock

THE MOODIE TRAIL by Susan Spicer, Tim Etherington, Robert Winslow and Caron
Garside

THE ENCHANTED FOREST by R. Murray Schafer

1995

THE WINSLOWS OF DERRYVORE by Robert Winslow

1996

THE CAVAN BLAZERS by Robert Winslow

THE 4TH LINE FARM SHOW by Robert Winslow and the 4th Line Theatre Collective

1997

THE 4TH LINE FARM SHOW by Robert Winslow and the 4th Line Theatre Collective

1837: THE FARMER'S REVOLT by Rick Salutin and Theatre Passe Muraille

1998

THE DEVIL AND JOSEPH SCRIVEN by Shane Peacock

THE STONE ANGEL by James W. Nichol, based on the novel by Margaret Lawrence

1999

FAIR PLAY by Robert Winslow and the 4th Line Theatre Collective

THE DEVIL AND JOSEPH SCRIVEN by Shane Peacock

THE ORCHARD by Ian McLachlin and Robert Winslow

2000

CROSSINGS: THE BELL OF BATOCHE by Craig Daniels and Robert Winslow

2001

THE CAVAN BLAZERS by Robert Winslow

TWO ROUNDS AND A SQUARE by Rob Fortin and Robert Winslow

2002

GIMME THAT OLD TIME RELIGION by Robert Winslow, Ben Henderson, Marianne
Copithorne, Murray McCune and Edward Lyszkiewicz

FOR HOME AND COUNTRY by Leanna Brodie

2003

CAVAN CASSANOVA Book by Robert Winslow, Music and Lyrics by Susan Newman and
Rob Fortin

FOR HOME AND COUNTRY by Leanna Brodie

ATTRITION by Ryan Kerr

2004

THE CAVAN BLAZERS by Robert Winslow

CROW HILL: THE TELEPHONE PLAY by Ian McLachlin and Robert Winslow

2005

DOCTOR BARNARDO'S CHILDREN by Ian McLachlin and Robert Winslow

THAT SUMMER by David French

2006

DOCTOR BARNARDO'S CHILDREN by Ian McLachlin and Robert Winslow

THE ART OF SILENT KILLING by Shane Peacock

2007

SCHOOLHOUSE by Leanna Brodie

BEAUTIFUL LADY, TELL ME by Shirley Barrie

2008

THE LAST GREEN HILL by Dale Hamilton and Robert Winslow

SCHOOLHOUSE by Leanna Brodie

2009

RIGHT ROAD TO PONTYPOOL by Alex Poch-Goldin

WELCOME DEATH by Robert Winslow

2010

RIGHT ROAD TO PONTYPOOL by Alex Poch-Goldin

ELDORADO TOWN: THE PORT HOPE PLAY by Charles Hayter

2011

THE BERLIN BLUES by Drew Hayden Taylor

THE CAVAN BLAZERS by Robert Winslow

2012

QUEEN MARIE by Shirley Barrie

ST. FRANCIS OF MILLBROOK by Sky Gilbert

2013

THE REAL MCCOY by Andrew Moodie

THE WINSLOWS OF DERRYVORE by Robert Winslow

2014

WOUNDED SOLDIERS by Ian McLachlin and Robert Winslow

DOCTOR BARNARDO'S CHILDREN by Ian McLachlin and Robert Winslow

2015

THE BAD LUCK BANK ROBBERS by Alex Poch-Goldin, inspired by Grace Barker's book

The Bad Luck Bank Robbers

GIMME THAT OLD TIME RELIGION by Robert Winslow, Ben Henderson, Marianne

Copithorne, Murray McCune and Edward Lyszkiewicz

Appendix C - Caravan Farm Theatre production history

*This history begins with the purchase of the land in Armstrong in 1978, but does not reflect earlier touring activity of the Caravan Stage Company. Touring activities are no longer noted after 1984, when the touring company split from the Caravan Farm Theatre.

1978

THE COYOTES by Peter Anderson, Music by Jude Lee and the company (Touring)

TABOOTENAY collective creation (Touring)

1979

THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE by Phil Savath and the company (Touring)

1980

THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE by Bertolt Brecht (Touring)

1981

HORSEPLAY by Peter Anderson and Phil Savath, Music by Derek Hawksley (Touring)

MR. PUNCH AND THE SECRET OF THE ATOM a puppet play by Peter Anderson
(Touring)

1982

LAW OF THE LAND by Peter Anderson, Music by J. Douglas Dodd (Touring)

1983

THE LAST WILD HORSE by Catherine Hahn (Summer)

WAGONS AND DRAGONS by Sharon Stearns (Touring)

1984

HANDS UP! by Ron Weihs and the company (Touring)

1985

ANIMAL FARM by Peter Anderson and Nick Hutchinson, adapted from George Orwell's novel (Summer)

1986

AS YOU LIKE IT by William Shakespeare (Summer)

1987

BULL BY THE HORNS by Peter Anderson, Music by the company (Summer)

AS YOU LIKE IT by William Shakespeare (Spring)

1988

THE COMING OF THE KINGS by Ted Hughes (Winter)

THE GOOD WOMAN OF SASKATCHEWAN by Dale Colleen Hamilton adapted from Bertolt Brecht (Summer)

1989

THE SHEPHERDS' PLAY by Peter Anderson, adapted from the medieval mystery play (Winter)

THE DRAGON'S FORGE a marionette play by Cathy Stubington (Summer)

ROMEO AND JULIET by William Shakespeare (Summer)

1990

THE SNOW QUEEN collective creation (Winter)

STRANGE MEDICINE by Vincent de Tourdonnet, Music by Allen Cole (Summer)

1991

THE TWELVE TREES OF CHRISTMAS by Sherry Bie and collective (Winter)

MYSTERY CYCLE PART 1: THE CREATION by Peter Anderson, adapted from the
English mystery plays, Music by Richard Owings (Summer)

1992

THE GREAT GRIBOUX by Ken Smedley (Winter)

IN THE TIME OF MIRACLES a marionette play by Cathy Stubington (Summer)

1993

THE SUNHORSE by Estelle Shook (Winter)

HORSEPLAY by Peter Anderson and Phil Savath, Music by Derek Hawksley (Summer)

MYSTERY CYCLE PART 3: THE PASSION by Peter Anderson, adapted from the English
mystery plays, Music by Richard Owings (Spring)

1994

THE BREMEN TOWN BAND by Kelly McIntosh adapted from the Brothers Grimm
(Winter)

ROGUES by Jan Kudelka (Summer)

1995

THE JUNIPER TREE by Greg McArthur (Winter)

THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE by Bertolt Brecht (Summer)

1996

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI by Maristella Roca (Winter)

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA by John Gay (Summer)

ABUNDANCE by Beth Henley (Spring)

1997

THE WINTER ROSE by David Petersen (Winter)

CIRCUS GOTHIC by Jan Kudelka (Summer)

1998

THE FEATHERED CLOAK by Sean Dixon (Winter)

THE CRIMSON VEIL by Allen Cole, Glen Cairns and James Fagan Tait (Summer)

1999

THE DOG & THE ANGEL by Martha Ross (Winter)

THE BALLAD OF WEEDY PEETSTRAW by Peter Anderson and John Millard (Summer)

2000

A SLEIGH-RIDE CHRISTMAS CAROL by Peter Anderson, adapted from Charles Dickens
(Winter)

THE COWBOY KING by Linz Kenyon (Summer)

2001

A COYOTE'S CHRISTMAS by Peter Anderson (Winter)

THE APPLE ORCHARD by Colin Heath (Summer)

2002

THE STAR CHILD by Oscar Wilde adapted by Jennifer Brewin (Winter)

THE MAN FROM THE CAPITAL by Colin Heath and John Millard (Summer)

2003

THE NIGHTINGALE adapted from the Hans Christian Andersen by Estelle Shook (Winter)

JOAN HENRY by Arthur Milner, Estelle Shook and Allen Cole (Summer)

2004

A NIGHT IN THE WOODS by Jennifer Brewin and the company (Winter)

CYRANO OF THE NORTHWEST by Edmond Rostand adapted by Martin Julien, Jennifer Brewin and John Millard (Summer)

2005

WE THREE QUEENS by Amiel Gladstone (Winter)

THE BEAST WITHIN by Estelle Shook, Catherine Hahn, Marina Szijarto, Darcy White, and Cameron Shook (Fall)

THE IOU LAND by Linz Kenyon and Estelle Shook (Summer)

2006

EAST O' THE SUN, WEST O' THE MOON by Amiel Gladstone (Winter)

THE TELLTALE HEART based on the story by Edgar Allen Poe (Fall)

MACBETH by William Shakespeare (Summer)

2007

KING LEAR by William Shakespeare (Winter)

THE WIDOW BLACK'S CAFÉ by Andy Graffitti (Fall)

THE BLUE HORSE by Peter Anderson, Music by John Millard (Summer)

2008

THE SECRET SORROW OF HATCHET JACK MACPHEE by Mercedes Batiz-Benet and Judd Palmer (Winter)

BLUEBEARD'S WIFE by Tara Beagan (Fall)

MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN by Bertolt Brecht (Summer)

2009

THE STORY by Martha Ross (Winter)

WALK OF TERROR (Fall)

SEVEN SUMMER NIGHTS (Summer)

2010

A SLEIGH-RIDE CHRISTMAS CAROL by Peter Anderson, adapted from Charles Dickens
(Winter)

WALK OF TERROR (Fall)

EVERYONE created by Electric Company Theatre, Newworld Theatre, November Theatre,
Pound of Flesh Theatre, Theatre Melee, Theatre Replacement & Caravan Farm Theatre
(Summer)

2011

THE GIFT HORSE by Courtenay Dobbie and Erin Mathews (Winter)

WALK OF TERROR (Fall)

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM by William Shakespeare (Summer)

2012

OLD NICK by TJ Dawe and Mike Rinaldi (Winter)

WALK OF TERROR (Fall)

THE NOTORIOUS RIGHT ROBERT & HIS ROBBER BRIDE by Sean Dixon (Summer)

2013

LITTLE BROTHER, LITTLE SISTER by Adam Underwood (Winter)

WALK OF TERROR (Fall)

HEAD OVER HEELS by Peter Anderson, Music by Ajineen Sagal and Courtenay Dobbie
(Summer)

2014

THE CONTEST OF THE WINDS by Linz Kenyon (Winter)

WALK OF TERROR (Fall)

THE TRAGICAL COMEDY OF PUNCH & JUDY by Jacob Richmond (Summer)

2015

BEDSTEFADER (OR HOW GRANDFATHER FINALLY CAME IN OUT OF THE COLD)

by Sean Dixon (Winter)

WALK OF TERROR (Fall)

THE NIGHT'S MARE by Kevin Kerr (Summer)

IN LIKE A LION by Jan Derbyshire (Spring)

Appendix D - Two Planks and a Passion production history

1992

SEE BOB RUN by Daniel MacIvor

1993

STRAIGHT AHEAD & BLIND DANCERS by Charles Tidler

THE DARLING FAMILY by Linda Griffiths

1994

THE BUTTERBOX BABIES by Ken Schwartz and Chris O'Neill

THE SHUNNING by Patrick Friesen

1995

WESTRAY: THE LONG WAY HOME by Chris O'Neill and Ken Schwartz

1996

CYPHER by Ken Schwartz and Chris O'Neill

SOMEDAY by Drew Hayden Taylor

1997

ONLY DRUNKS AND CHILDREN TELL THE TRUTH by Drew Hayden Taylor

1998

BONDAGERS by Sue Glover

HOCKEY MOM, HOCKEY DAD by Michael Melski

1999

400 KILOMETRES by Drew Hayden Taylor

CYPHER by Ken Schwartz and Chris O'Neill

2000

HALO by Josh Macdonald

2001

A SENSE OF DIRECTION by Michael Melski

2002-2003

HALO by Josh Macdonald

HOCKEY MOM, HOCKEY DAD by Michael Melski

2004

WHEREVERVILLE by Josh Macdonald

WESTRAY: THE LONG WAY HOME by Chris O'Neill and Ken Schwartz

2005 - 2006

PELAGIE by Allen Cole and Vincent de Tourdonnet

2007

THE ODYSSEY by Rick Chafe (first production at Ross Creek Centre for the Arts)

2008

OUR TOWN by Thornton Wilder

JEROME: THE HISTORICAL SPECTACLE by Ami McKay

2009

ROCKBOUND by Allen Cole

2010

THE CRUCIBLE by Arthur Miller

2011

BEOWULF by Rick Chafe

2012

LYSISTRATA by Aristophanes adapted by Ken Schwartz and Allen Cole

2013

AS YOU LIKE IT by William Shakespeare

ILIAD BY FIRE by Ken Schwartz based on Homer (by fire)

2014

MIRACLE MAN by Allen Cole and Michael O'Brien

DUSTBOWL JOAN by Ken Schwartz based on the play by George Bernard Shaw (by fire)

2015

THE TEMPEST by William Shakespeare

THE TURN OF THE SCREW by Ken Schwartz based on the novel by Henry James (by fire)