

**A JOURNEY IN METAXIS:  
BEEN, BEING, BECOMING, IMAG(IN)ING  
DRAMA FACILITATION**

by

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## Abstract

*A journey in metaxis* explores the facilitation of drama workshops using an adaptation of *Theatre of the Oppressed*, a participatory drama process used with high school students, teachers and others in the community. New possibilities of engagement open up as knowing emerges through a variety of forms of dramatic action which are simultaneously the *medium*, *subject* and *re-presentation* of research.

As a theatre pedagogue I explore how knowing and meaning emerge through theatre and in the interplay between my life and my work. Writing, then reading, narratives of my practice engages me in a conversation that helps me draw attention to my practice. Diverse roles and points of view of the drama facilitator begin to become apparent as these narratives speak through a spiralling process of shared experiences. Commentaries on these experiences lead to discussions of the implications of this inquiry for other forms of reflective leadership practice in drama and in education.

Particular attention is placed on the role of the body and mind (bodymind) of facilitator and participants as they journey into an increasing awareness of senses, histories, the landscapes worked in, and the relationships that intertwine through the constant ebb and flow of the drama workshop. Using a framework that parallels the drama workshop I facilitate, I play with forms of texts, languages and styles to enter into the text(ure) of the worlds of facilitation so that we may come face to face with kinaesthetic and discursive experiences remembered and reconsidered.

Writing my body into this exploration enables me to become mindfully aware of, and extends and transforms, my practice. I re-awaken the memory of my senses and re-connect with them in the moments of "performing" my teaching. Such poetic and expressive writing enables an evocation of the world of drama. Writing from and through a sensing body means that reflection on practice becomes not merely reporting experiences, but also celebrating and expressing the multi-vocal, multi-layered events that develop drama facilitation skills.

Writing, then reading, about this process of coming to know my identity-in-process as a drama

facilitator enables the interpretation, interrogation and transformation of how one *becomes* facilitator, “making the way as we go,” (re)writing/performing our presence.

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## OPENING CIRCLE

This dissertation is a gathering that explores drama facilitation and the different points of view that role involves. In particular, I introduce four *masks of the facilitator* which, in each subsequent section of the dissertation, will comment on what I have written. This provides ongoing reflection and evaluation on the sections' contribution to understanding drama facilitation.

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## **Invitation**

# An Invitation to a Drama Workshop

*Welcome to this Journey into Drama Facilitation<sup>1</sup>*

**Dear Friends:**

*A journey in metaxis<sup>2</sup>* explores transformative drama facilitation with high school students, teachers and others in the community. In particular I journey into an adaptation of *Theatre of the Oppressed*, an interactive theatre methodology used to explore controversial social issues in the classroom. I invite you to participate in this drama workshop process.

Through active participation in this reading, you will learn alongside me as I share a process that involves

- building effective groups through theatre games and trust exercises
- exploring verbal and non-verbal communication
- coming to an understanding of social issues directly from experiences
- developing plays on these issues through images, improvisation and storytelling

I work with students and teachers in workshops using theatre games and exercises to explore common concerns, build group trust and develop some basic acting skills for performance. The workshops occur within one school, several schools together, in conference presentations and

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<sup>1</sup> "Facilitate" is a dissatisfying word to describe what I do: "to assist the progress of" (Hanks 1979, 521). But this word is one among many to describe my role (for example, Johnston [1998] outlines five tasks and seven different role models for this work). I find the word problematic as the roots of the word is the Latin *facili* "easy" while some of the work in fact involves making things more difficult for participants through the challenging work. So I use the term provisionally as I improvise through the complex interactions with others in my inquiry.

<sup>2</sup> A word used by, among others, Augusto Boal (1995). It is adapted from the Greek *metaxu*, which was used by Plato and Aristotle, meaning: "adverb, metaphor, verb, grammar, preposition, plural, etc. In the state of in the midst, betwixt, between, between-whiles, in the interval" (Liddell 1996, 1115). Though Allern (2001) contends that Plato and Aristotle only write of *metaxy* and *methexis*, and not *metaxis*, I have chosen to use the latter term as a central metaphor for my journey between the world of the workshop and work in the world as well as between word and wor(l)d.

university classes. Participants explore many themes as they decide what their plays are going to be about, what the theme means and how to express it. I guide them through an exploration of the issues, asking them to draw from their own lives. The exercises are, to a large extent, non-verbal, using theatricalized images to explore personal experiences and issues.

Facilitation creates a third space, where knowing amongst participants and the worlds being created are reframed and decentred and collaborative community is developed. Through mindful reflection, the facilitator begins to see/recognize knowledge as it is enacted in each moment. Pedagogical possibilities are opened up through the shaping of a dramatic structure as we play within it, as knowing emerges through a variety of forms of actions which are simultaneously the *medium*, *subject* and *re-presentation* of research. As a theatre pedagogue I explore how knowing and meaning emerge in the living practices of theatre in the interplay between my life and my work. Conversing with narratives of my practice (through writing, then reading), helps draw attention to my practice. Diverse roles and points of view of the drama facilitator begin to become apparent as we explore these narratives in a spiralling process of sharing experiences and my commentaries on them. Implications emerge for other forms of reflective leadership practice in drama and in education.

The role of the facilitator is to enable the unfolding of learning by encouraging critical practice and innovation in the use of the drama methods. Facilitators become aware of the possibilities of drama through paying attention to the verbal, nonverbal and intuitive landscape that is part of dramatic play. Thus the facilitator becomes attuned to his/her complicity in the process and their cap/ability to improvise within it. As a result, one realizes that leadership doesn't reside solely with the teacher, but flows amongst both participants and facilitator/teacher from moment to moment.

My particular focus is the role of the body and mind (bodymind) of facilitator and participants as we journey into a co-emerging awareness of senses, personal and social histories, the landscapes we work in, and the relationships that intertwine through the constant ebb and flow of dramatic interplay. The dissertation is organized in a framework similar to that of the drama workshop as I play with forms of texts, languages and styles in order to enter into the text(ure) of the worlds of facilitation. Bringing together body mind world and spirit, we come face to face with kinaesthetic

and discursive experiences remembered and reconsidered. Writing our bodies as facilitator into this exploration enables us to become mindfully aware of our practice and, at the same time, extends and transforms it. Through writing, I re-awaken the memory of my senses and re-connect with them in the moments of “performing” my teaching. Writing from and through a sensing body means that reflection on practice is not only just a reporting of experiences, but is also a celebration and expression of the multi-vocal, multi-layered experiences that is the development of drama facilitation skills. Through such poetic and expressive writing I explore ways that enable an evocation of the world of drama.

It allows the reader/audience to participate in the text by opening our senses and emotions to, and enabling interactions with, our experiences of the text as a living medium. In addition to my commentary, themes and content will (e)merge with/from your own interests as you read.

Writing, then reading, about this process of coming to know my identity-in-process as a drama facilitator enables the interpretation, interrogation and transformation of how one *becomes* facilitator, “making the way as we go,” (re)writing/performing our presence.

Let us journey together....

Warren Linds

Enclosure: *Background Notes to the Workshop*

## Background Notes

This dissertation is based to a large degree on my own training in, and experience leading, *Power Plays*,<sup>3</sup> a workshop adapted by Headlines Theatre of Vancouver from Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979). *Power Plays* is a week-long process that systematizes the principles articulated by Boal. Some of these underlying principles are:

The human being is a unity, an indivisible whole. Ideas, emotions, sensations and actions are interwoven. A bodily movement is a thought and a thought expresses itself through the body. All ideas, mental images, and emotions reveal themselves through the body.

The five senses are all linked. We breathe with our whole body, we sing with our whole body, not just our vocal chords. Living in the world with its overwhelming stimuli, our senses suffer. We start to feel little of what we touch, listen to little of what we hear, or see little of what In order for us to be "in the moment" we need to re-sensitize and

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<sup>3</sup> I was trained by Headlines Theatre in 1991. They have since entitled their approach *Theatre for Living*. However, their work still originates in the principles articulated by Boal.

we look at. We adapt to what we need to do at any particular moment but we don't use fully our entire body.

re-awaken the memory of our senses. We need to re-realize that we control our senses, our muscles, and our body. The body begins to speak through sound and movement.

### Power Plays Workshop Process

The core of the drama workshop process is to become aware of the way in which our body expresses power:

*We can begin by stating that the first word of the theatrical vocabulary is the human body, the main source of sound and movement. Therefore, to control the means of theatrical production, the human being<sup>4</sup> must, first of all, control his/her own body, know his/her own body, in order to be capable of making it more expressive. Then he/she will be able to practice theatrical forms in which by stages he/she frees him/herself from his/her condition of spectator and takes on that of actor, in which he/she ceases to be an object and becomes a subject (Boal*

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<sup>4</sup> Quote corrected to be gender neutral.

1979, 125).

Theatre is developed in intensive week-long, or in a series of shorter, workshops over longer periods of time. Workshops explore the inter-related aspects of becoming aware of our bodies, enabling us to use the body as a vocabulary of expression, creating theatre through verbal and non-verbal language, and using Forum theatre<sup>5</sup> to activate audiences.

Boal's plan for transforming the spectator into actor is systematized in the following outline of four stages:

*Knowing the body*: exercises where one gets to know one's body, its limitations and possibilities, its social distortions and possibilities of rehabilitation.

- *Making the body expressive*: games where one begins to express one's self through the body, abandoning other, more

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<sup>5</sup> Forum Theatre is a theatrical game in which a problem is shown in an unsolved form, to which the audience (spect-actors) is invited to suggest and enact solutions. Many alternative solutions are enacted in the course of a single forum - the result is a pooling of knowledge, tactics and experience. This is a very simplified description of Forum Theatre, and, as befits a form of theatre that has been used in many different contexts, there are many different manifestations of it in operation all over the world.

common and habitual forms of expression.

- *The theatre as language*: we begin to practice theatre as a language that is living and *present*. While the two preceding stages are preparatory, centring around the work of the participants with their own bodies, this stage furthers the transition from passivity to action by culminating in a Forum theatre performance where the spectators (now spect-actors) intervene directly in the dramatic action and act.

- *The theatre as communication*: the spect-actors now create theatre themselves according to their need to discuss certain themes or rehearse certain actions.

These stages are intertwined throughout the workshop as each exercise probes deeper into the work that has emerged before. As a spiralling process embodied understandings are "always growing, yet never covering the same ground" (Cook 1914, back cover). So the process is not "merely an explanation of the past, but also a prophecy of the future" (Cook, back cover), leading to possibility through interactive performance.

## **Entering the Space**

Research: from the French *rechercheur*

parcourir en cherchant  
(Rey 1990, 1623)

to  
travel  
through  
while

s

e

a

r

c

h

i

n

g

*I come here*

*in the middle of a journey*

## Whispering from Shadows

*A high school auditorium.* A group of high school students with special needs, otherwise known as Special Education students. They are developing a series of tableaux, their bodies in static inter-relationship one with another. *Gossip* is the topic they have chosen for the exploration that will eventually lead to a play.

*Gossip:* A topic with many layers as there are a large number of aboriginal students in the class. This makes for a complex situation amongst the teenagers as well as between students in the regular stream of the high school and these special needs students.

We go through several scenes – of whispering, of silent looks and pointing fingers as one aboriginal girl, who has an apparent physical disability, a learning disability, and a speech impediment is talked about, double-crossed and ignored. I clap them through a series of “snapshots” to tell this simple story, an experience almost everyone found similar to their own.

At the end of the story, the gossipers go off into the audience, which is composed of students who have been silent witnesses to the playbuilding, and begin whispering in their ears.

At one point I want to stop the play but my voice doesn't seem to carry over the whispering hum. Suddenly, I wonder, are they talking about me, about my inability to control them? I am swept up into the (inter) play of me and the group and the play. I am *becoming* facilitator trying to move on but also *being* actor, engaged with the audience as well, moving them on in the play. At moments I too am back in high school, *having been teenage student*, wondering in this *moment* what they are saying about me ... wondering what whispering whispers whisp in the wind.

*Imag(e)ining in practice this metaxic journey I am engaged in/with....*

*Pssst ... did you hear?*

*What are they saying about me?*

*What am I saying about me?*

*Metaxis shadows me  
World outside World inside  
Texts Inter texts*

*Circular shadows*

*Shadows from African savannah  
Canadian prairie  
Shadows coming together  
To reflect each other  
Shadows quietly rambling  
Tearing at the sinews of my stories*

*Holding me within their wide grasp*

*Eyes softly focused*

*Just out of my peripheral*

*vision*

*Shadows watching me,*

*I hear masks of shadows I once knew*

*and will know again*

*Shadows drifting through spaces*

*Cutting through thickets of words*

*Embodied shadows*

*Representative shadows; No,*

*shadows glistening, dancing with me in the flickering light*

*Spiralling Swirling just out of my reach*

*yet part of me*

# GLIMPSES IN/OF THE UNFOLDING JOURNEY OF FACILITATION

Knowledge acquired aesthetically is already in itself, the beginning of a transformation (Boal 1995, 109).

What is this, this *facilitation*? And what is a facilitator in drama?

## Metaxis

To address this question I explore in this dissertation facilitation as a process of *metaxis*, as we straddle the boundary between the mystery beyond what we can conceive (including the limits of reason) and the world we live in, and where we belong “completely and simultaneously to two different autonomous worlds” (Boal 1995, 43).

My body is a body in the world and the transformation of my body as facilitator occurs in the social situations of the workshop as change co-emerges in working together towards consensus.

The term consensus is often misunderstood to mean agreement reached by all members of a group or community on some issue. Rather, the word actually comes from a Latin word meaning “a feeling or perceiving together.” Don Johnson (1983) points out that

communities seem to be more pulled apart by divisive ideas than impelled by organic rhythms which might unite them. Recovery of our shared genius requires utilizing the somatic resources we share with animals for acting in concert (176).

In a social situation like a drama workshop, drama opens up a space for an exploration between self and other as stories are told one on one and in a group. In the early stages of my workshops stories are shared through non-verbal images. No one ever has to say what the story is about. Not

only does this emphasize the traditional theatrical aphorism of 'show us, don't tell us',<sup>6</sup> the process also leads to participants/observers being able to 'write' themselves into the stories of others. A dialogical relationship of self and other emerges.

This relationship connects us to the concept of *metaxis* which I feel is a key to understanding drama facilitation. Metaxis involves belonging to two worlds at the same time – the one of what we are doing in the workshop as being separate from the world, and that of what we are doing that is of the world. I, as facilitator belong to both these worlds simultaneously and completely. In the drama workshop I am not in an imaginary world. This world is a real world but is a contained world that allows me to play with others in the imaginary.

A new kind of knowing emerges from this process of inter-action between me observing the workshop, me involved in the workshop, and working with the others. I begin to see everything in new ways. I hold up a mirror to the world of the workshop, and, instead of trying to re-present it, find it accessible. I begin to see myself as flexible and mutable, as my knowledge as facilitator emerges in interaction. Self-observation through metaxis allows me to see knowing as enacted in each moment of the present, not as something which already exists.

*How does metaxis occur in this dissertation?*

The world of metaxis in ourselves is autonomous. Metaxis occurs in the artist's body and is embodied. Self and mind are woven through my entire body and through the web of relationships that I am involved in.

I play with the texts before me. I momentarily forget the world that was the origin of the stories and play with the stories themselves. I practice in the world of the text, the aesthetics of this text, in order to transform the world of my practice. The artistic creativity of me, the protagonist of my stories, should not be limited to simple realistic reproductions or symbolic illustrations of the events that have occurred, I must play with words and text to create a new aesthetic dimension.

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<sup>6</sup> A discussion of this is on page 141 .

Boal (1995) writes,

if the artist is able to create an autonomous world of images of his own reality, and to enact his liberation in the reality of these images, they will then extrapolate into his own life all that he has accomplished in fiction (44).

Although I do have some problems with the language of “reality” versus “fiction” that Boal uses, I am provisionally using this concept to explore how my writing has helped me to transform my practice. Reflection through writing can allow knowing to unfold and emerge and become more explicitly known. Learning becomes more tangible – I can feel it, I can taste it, I can sense it – and it is made available to future deepened exploration, always sitting there, smoldering.

Thus, the processes of *metaxis* (many autonomous experiences in the singular body of me, the facilitator) and *analogical induction* (whereby I engage in multiple readings on each story) are illustrated.

*How can I as a becoming-facilitator continue to engage in this process?* One way is through performative writing – a form of mindful reflection whereby I explore my facilitating presence in metaxis.

## **Mindful Reflection through Performative Writing**

*[W]hat is being investigated itself holds part of the answer concerning how it should be investigated (Smith 1999, 39).*

I began my research with a question to myself:

*What are the possibilities for writing performatively so that the drama facilitation process can be re-presented through a type of reflective text that might bring both the reader and the writer into a re-experiencing of the process?*

I journey *into* this question through experimenting with forms of translation that interplay the experience of drama facilitation and the written word about it. I share the choices made and a range of styles used that intend to engage the spirit, capture the imagination, move the heart, evoke feelings and memories, and open possibilities for drama facilitation practice.

I work in the body, I work with the body, I work through the body. Writing my body into this exploration extends, transforms, and makes me ever mindful of my practice. I hope my own writing of the process of my becoming-facilitator illustrates the improvised nature of the practice as new worlds emerge.

Engaging in theatre requires us to be in the moment of performance. In order to achieve this, I need to re-awaken the memory of my senses and re-connect with them, with these muscles, and with this body. Writing from and through this sensing body means reflection on practice is not only a reporting through writing – it is *the writing* and thus, the “kinds of writing employed will constitute the kinds of reflection enacted” (Bleakley 2000, 12). We become aware of feelings, thoughts, and physical responses to those events as they are happening. Through writing, we then practice our awareness so that it has unpredictable effects for me and my practice, thus becoming part of my teaching. The *re* in reflection is not a second look at my practice, but a re-activation of presence, “making it bloom, bringing it alive and into the conscious presence of its being”<sup>7</sup> (Smith 1995, 77). The dynamics of this writing that incorporate educational bodies with/in worlds of practice become markedly different from introspective forms of writing. Writing becomes an homage to language itself, where “language offers the very ambiguity, uniqueness and value conflict that Donald Schon characterizes as the “indeterminate zones of practice’ that we must inhabit effectively in establishing practical artistry as the heart of reflective practice” (Bleakley, 11).

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<sup>7</sup> I specifically draw from the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer’s (1989) exploration of philosophical hermeneutics where aesthetic experience is not located in the subject (me as facilitator) nor in the object (the drama process being interpreted). Rather, experience occurs in the place of interpretation, “the space in which ‘play’ occurs” (Silverman 1994, 19). In the playing of dramatic work meaning and understanding emerge. This process also challenges me to transform writing into something that “takes on the heat of its topic” (Jardine 1994, xxviii), breaking open the “helplessness of the written word” (Gadamer, 393), so that I am always questioning not only what I want to say, but also how I would like to say it.

The embodied nature of the learning arrived at through reflection cannot be emphasized enough. All thought is a consequence of reflection upon embodied nervous activity which, through its further interaction with the nervous system, becomes an object of additional nervous activity. “All doing is knowing; all knowing is doing” (Maturana and Varela 1992, 27). Maturana and Varela argue that, through the process of reflection upon experience, we define – moment by moment – our changing world. Explanation then takes that definition into a social domain, creating another context for both experience and reflection.

Thus the performance that is writing and the writing that performs (which is the process which I engage in) has unknown and unpredictable effects for me and my practice as drama facilitator. This process that allows me to live my knowing, a knowing that includes the ephemeral work that is drama facilitation, those “sites of mystery ... where energies converge...where we stop and look, that double look, double glance, the sigh, being moved yet not moving” (Scott 1995).

This interweaving of that which I can see and that which is invisible to me is the ambiguity of the in-between. Writing within the intertwining of the text and my experiences means that the style of my writing becomes an interplay between form and content as the aesthetics of my writing leaps over the gap between my life and my work.

So, in this dissertation I am opening to question the idea of writing. There is a tension here that I play with. Can performative writing enable us to experience these unknowns under the waves? Can it render the absent present through evocative language? If that unknown is the ineffable, that is, beyond language, what role does writing have? Could this quest for what is “possible” open up writing (and consequently the practice being written about) for interrogation and interpretation?

“Lightning grasps, thunder speaks” (Laird 2001, 63). What happens through writing is always one step removed from the energies I feel, see and touch in the moments of performance. That doesn’t mean I stop creating, nor just write *about* my experiences, but that writing can be the sound of the lightning. “There is a distinct difference between reflecting on something – which is a common practice in teacher education – and being aware of feelings, thoughts, and physical responses to those events as they are happening” (Kozik-Rosabal 2001, 103). Through writing, we *practice*

our awareness as a re-encounter with mindful practice.

Thus, embodied reflection is not a re-collection of experiences, but part of the well of my experience. *Writing is productive*. It brings me into contact with those thoughts, feelings and intuitions I did not know I had. *It is also transformative*, because it brings me to an understanding that is beyond the writing (Merleau-Ponty 1973). Such expression takes me to a different orientation of thought and being, links me to forgotten memories, and enables the expression and exploration of issues, which I may be aware of, but hitherto have been unable to articulate. Writing as expression lays down tracks of my sensing being as I smell the emerging scents/sense-making of facilitation. Writing brings me closer to the ineffable, the narrator becomes the narration, an embodied and enacted approach to “continually coming to terms with the world” (Turner 2000, 53) in which I live.

“We experience the course of events as something that continually changes our plans and expectations” (Gadamer, 372). Writing puts me in touch with my experiences and, with certain paradoxes within them. In this state of “attentive reflectiveness” (Ringer 2000), I become reflexive, re-discovering suppleness, a willingness to bend or curve and begin to let go of the certainty of what I know, of the certainty of action and where it takes me. I come face to face with my own not knowing, as well as not knowing that I don’t know. Planning becomes only one part of the creative process, leaving me to the opportunity to modify things, and to adapt to the process in its own natural way of being and working. Writing then opens me to the circular possibility of discovery, not only in the writing, but also in the working. “Adventurous not knowing” (Laird, 31) emerges, as certainty and control are sacrificed for a receptivity to what happens.

## Reading this Work -- Working this Reading

[R]eading is dramatized ... not as an emotive reaction to what language does, but as an emotive reaction to the impossibility of knowing what it might be up to (de Man 1979, 19).

Becoming open to the possibilities of this performing writing/writing performing also challenges me to explore how I may bring the reader into the dance between the text and the reader's interpretation of it.

But what kind of dancing? Paula Salvio (1997) relates that, unlike those who dance simply to win by miming other people's steps, the actors in Baz Luhrmann's film *Strictly Ballroom* attend to "motion, synergy and the internal and variant rhythms of consciousness" (248) in their own bodies as well as to the bodies of those with whom they live/dance. The meandering between and amongst such bodies means that we must move beyond only intellectual understandings of experiencing something. Feelings must come *into play* for

only when we dance in the flow of emotioning of another can we experience understanding. Then we are moving in the same stream – cognitively flowing together. Other metaphors from physics such as 'being on the same wavelength' or 'getting up to speed' also reflect this idea" (Fell and Russell 1994).

How can we negotiate this tension between the structure of the dance/text and the need to transcend it using the "variant meanings of motion, space and time to articulate [its] aspects" (Salvio, 248) of our identities as pedagogues? This requires an enactive<sup>8</sup> understanding of language and knowing. As educators, we need to look more creatively at the stances we embody when we engage with texts and seek out diverse modes of interaction that extend written ideas

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<sup>8</sup> The enactive helps me see language not a representation of a world 'out there,' "but rather as an ongoing bringing forth of a world through the process of living itself" (Maturana and Varela 1992, 11). I discuss the implications for facilitation of this view in the section in this work entitled *Warmup and Trust Exercises*.

into verbal communication, body language and other forms of performance.

In reading and re-reading the text I recall, I re-collect, I re-embody the actions through the perspective of all the other times I have used it. And these writings enable a productive tension between the tradition of the technique and the transformation of me who learns by leading the technique...learnings which can now be fulfilled in other situations.

Writing becomes a form of experience itself, performed with awareness, "open-ended to possibilities other than those contained in one's current representations of the life space" (Varela et al.1991, 27) of dramatic knowing. Thus the text and the world it presents is open and always promising future perceptions as I read and re-read it, becoming a work that is always in the process of becoming, coming to a completion that I try and achieve, but which never *quite* happens. This provides the opportunity for play:

Rereading, an operation contrary to the commercial and ideological habits of our society, which would have us "throw away" the story once it has been consumed...so that we can then move onto another story, buy another book...rereading is here suggested at the outset, for it alone saves the text from repetition (those who fail to reread are obliged to read the same story everywhere)...rereading is no longer consumption, but play (that play which is the return of the different) (Barthes 1975, 15-16).

After performing and writing my facilitation I am wary of any staged reading/text that precludes opportunities/invitations for the improvisations and spontaneous interactions of the players, the audience, and even the authors. I now invite my readers to join me in considering how writing with aesthetic vision might avoid linear presentations and smoothed out themes (Alvermann and Hruby, 2000) to differentiate it from traditional/scientific and even qualitative/interpretive forms. Such poetic texts are "plays with no final curtain" (Pelias 1999, xiv), with all the ambiguities that implies, where there is space for the writer and reader to engage *through* the text. This is in the tradition of the Midrash, the interpretation of the Torah, a narrative interpretation of a narrative,

“a way of finding in an existing narrative the potential of more narrative” (Kermode, xi). In contrast to getting *behind* a text to recover its meaning, midrashic hermeneutics sees meaning in intertextuality and the “possibility” of a plurality of meaning that overflows from the text and frustrates our effort to fix upon a single, static presence behind it. So, rather than seeing this process of interpretation as messy and too complex, it allows me to leave space for the unknown that I will never know, and to realize that questions will always remain.

Della Pollock (1998), in an essay on performative writing that has greatly influenced my inquiry, shares the story of a colleague of hers who argues for conventional writing (“the dull and steadfast forms of the academic article and monograph” [76]) which are more accessible and democratic than the “new (or renewed) forms of narrative history because they (conventional writing) could be taught” (Pollock, 76). Her colleague points out that because conventional academic style can be easily taught across the board, “anyone could contribute to the formation of social knowledge” (76). Pollock's response to this idea was of horror, as she envisioned a “gray, undifferentiated space of this democracy of the lowest common denominator ... the democracy of the Food Lion, Kmart and superstores everywhere: flatline consumption disguised as purchasing power; democracy turned over to the bland multiplicity of bodies pushing identical carts up and down aisles promising equally bland satisfaction” (77).

Pollock feels that the argument of her colleague is that we shouldn't take *risks*, that we should shirk *challenge* and conflict and debate. Pollock's colleague has also separated academic writing from the poetics and style of writing and distrusts imaginative writing, thus refusing writing that, “does not translate a reality outside itself but allows for the emergence of a new reality” (Trinh 1989, 22).

How might performative writing happen? I come to understand what I want to say and what needs to be said through writing. I confront traces from the past. My original purposes are left behind, and the text at hand becomes the new traces of my desires. I interpret my experiences through my stories and, as I re-read them, I am also re-interpreting my experiences. Hence, as David Loy (1993) says, “text never attains self-presence, and that includes the text that constitutes me” (481). He asks us “what would happen if this claim was extrapolated into claims

about the whole universe?" (481). Textuality (literally meaning "that which is woven, web") thus extends us beyond language. It means that what I write and how I write moves beyond being exclusively my own insights and interpretations and towards writing as being nothing less than part of the interdependent interplay with/in the web of my living.<sup>9</sup>

This perspective means that performative writing is an enactment and bringing into being of a "whole orientation toward the world, toward culture, toward persons, and toward our own experience of the world, culture and other people" (Silverman 1994, 184).

Following Bleakley (2000), while language works on me as writer and you as reader through my text, we must also engage recursively in a reflexive dialogue with language's aesthetic possibilities. Perhaps this writing only sensitizes us to the world of facilitation, rather than simply forcing us to introspection, thus responding to Abram's call for a writing of bodies that move *within* the world:

For those of us who care for an earth not encompassed by machines, a world of textures, tastes and sounds other than those we have engineered, there can be no question of simply abandoning literacy, of turning away from all writing. Our task, rather, is that of *taking up* the written word, with all its potency, and patiently, carefully, writing language back into the land (Abram 1997, 273).

In this way, this writing tries to enter into the texture of the facilitation of the worlds that emerge through the drama workshop. Perhaps in doing so it can also open the possibilities of the transformative drama process, where style, expression and its significance in particular social contexts leads to processes of communication, understanding and action that are not only valued but also indispensable. The power of language to enhance or diminish words and worlds of being is entangled with our engagement with these narratives. Such poetic and expressive writing

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<sup>9</sup> I have tried to write the performance of facilitation into being through the writing. Pollock has challenged me to try this through six "excursions" of performative writing: evocative, metonymic, subjective, nervous, citational and consequential (80-96). This framework continues to haunt me as questions addressed to my writing strategies. In particular I explore one of these (subjectivity) in the section of this text entitled *Metaxic Becomings*.

enables an evocation of the world of drama, allowing the reader/audience to participate in the text through our interactions. Opening up our senses and emotions to the momentary present that lives within the sounds and images that emerge, the text enables a mutual triggering between and amongst practitioner/writer and the reader/audience, with the text as a living medium.

### **In-forming this Reading**

What follows is both linear and not linear. It is linear in terms of one step following another. But each step is a complete one at least until the next one begins, and then the first step is then understood differently. The text spirals through experiences as each part expresses something of, and has significance for, the whole, just as its own significance is determined by the whole. Each section is the whole and is the part. But as we read on, our understanding of what came previously grows, resonating with what we have read before but growing larger. So there is no beginning, nor one end. While exploring metaxis, everything is in a shifting middle. This is not a journey with a specific map that has an endpoint of a workshop I may facilitate. Each workshop takes on a different tone as it intertwines with the landscapes of participants', and my, living.

One way to explain this dynamic tension between linearity and circularity is through the Hua-yen Buddhist tradition of *Indra's net* (Cook 1997). This net has a crystal at every knot, stretching multi-dimensionally, through all space and time. If you arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, you will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the other jewels in the web, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an "infinite reflecting process occurring" (Loy 1993, 481).

Bringing these jewels into being becomes a process of noting experiences so that the writing becomes a marker, an obelisk, which in its original Egyptian was a "merkhet" or "setchet" (Gazalé1999) that was used to tell time. The obelisk was a form of sun dial – "that which allows one to know." In such a marker, each part is similar to each other much like a nautilus shell where each chamber that develops is identical in shape to its original.

By exploring these narratives in such a process we begin to see ways of interacting in the flux and flow of the spiral between jewels: there is no static "I" that exchanges experiences with an audience nor any one "experience" that we focus on, as our being continually unfolds.

The spiral is a useful idea for looking into the journey of theatre facilitation because

our mental processes and experiences are closer to a maze than a motorway, every turning yields another turning, not symmetrical, not obvious when we enter the maze (Winterson 1996, xiii).

As a shape, a spiral is fluid, allowing for infinite movement, backwards and forwards, high and deep. Spirals drift one into the other as (a) maze / ing interminglings emerge. Learnings, too complex to grasp in a single occurrence, spiral past me again and again. Partial understandings emerge through "experience," allowing for later returns.

I play with forms of texts and languages, bringing together BodyMindSpirit through word, body, gesture, feeling and theory so we come face to face with kinesthetic and discursive experience remembered and reconsidered.

This is a relationship of "mutual identity and mutual inter-causation" (Cook, 2), iteration and re-iteration. The immense is taken as a given. There is no centre or, perhaps, if there is one, it is everywhere. Mirroring jewels reflecting other mirrors, trace of traces. Each section contains traces of the others. Some of these threads are taken up again with a view of the theme from another angle; sometimes this other angle mirrors a new theme.

I see in a jewel the title: *A Journey in Metaxis*. The words split apart, to rejoin each other later on....let's continue to explore these jewels as they revolve around in the light of this writing.

## **Opening Circle –**

### **Where the Facilitator Holds the ‘Talking Stick’**

*Introduction of the “drama facilitator”  
and the different points of view that role involves*

**(Un)Masking:**  
**What are Facilitators made of?<sup>10</sup>**

How can we know the dancer from the dance? (Yeats, 1962, 117)

*I come here*

Where?

To this place, to these writings

From where?

From many experiences

*in the middle*

Always in this space, between coming and going and coming

*in the thick of things*

*here I am*

Stopping for a moment

*of a journey*

What preceded this stop? What will follow afterwards?

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<sup>10</sup> With apologies to the jump rope rhyme: "Doctor, lawyer, banker, thief, sailor, soldier, indian chief" or, in an alternative, and more poignant, version - "Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, sailor, soldier, indian chief." In either case, while jumping rope to the rhythm of the words sung in cadence, whichever word you stumbled on was what you'd be for the rest of your life. This contrasts to these roles of facilitators below being related in a more dynamic process as we "skip" to and fro!

This stop is a beginning, but one that is “incipient” (Gadamer, 2000, 17) which refers to something which is not yet determined in this or that sense, not yet determined in the direction of this or that end, and not yet determined appropriate for this or that representation. It is “just starting to be;” on the edge, just before.....

This means that many things are still possible. Such beginnings start out in uncertainty, and are excited by the possibilities that lie ahead. This is movement that is open and not fixed. This is a seeking without knowing where and when awareness will unfold.

A beginning also implies an ending. Yes, this dissertation will have an end, just as it has a beginning here at this stop. “The anticipation of the end is a prerequisite for the concrete meaning of beginning” (Gadamer, 15). So saying that *I come here* means that I came from a beginning, somewhere. *In the middle* says there is some beginning and some end, even if I am always in the middle, it implies I am on a fulcrum, a hinge point, between two points.

This dissertation is about this journey. This journey is about the “here” and it is about where I have come from and come to.

The stop returns me to my body. What do I bring to this journey here in my body, here in this text?

I wrote the major sections of this dissertation in the past three years about experiences that have happened both recently, and up to 30 years ago. Thus these layers upon layers of experiencing are writings I have some distance from. I am re-visiting, re-collecting, and re-newing my acquaintance with these experiences with/in these texts. I am also the origin of these texts, yet these texts announce me as facilitator. So, the temporal distance from the physical experience helps to re-illuminate them, but it is still a challenge to get to know the text of my living experiencing as “object” while also continuing to be engaged with it. This seems to be a vicious circle but it isn’t. In the circular hermeneutic process of making what has been familiar to me strange and in-reacquainting myself with the unfamiliar, I re-discover facilitation and, at the same time, engage in an interpretation of it which opens spaces for others to engage with its practice.

But who is this I?<sup>11</sup> Well, what about I as facilitator/academic?

Which facilitator?

Explorer, Mentor, Interrogator,

Animateur,<sup>12</sup> Provocateur, Difficultator,<sup>13</sup>

Instructor, Friend, Expert, Guide,

Presenter, Planner, Coaching from the side...

Or just along for the Ride?

What is this body of the facilitator and how can we begin to understand it?

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century German playwright and director Bertolt Brecht provides me with one idea

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<sup>11</sup> This "I" is linked to the idea of "self." The theatrical process involves actors developing a play out of their own experiences according to the "script" they have improvised. But in inter-acting with spect-actors, they are constantly shifting between the character they are playing and their own experiences. The self in this performance is not stable and unchanging. Boal (1995) links the question of self to the transformation of action in Forum theatre:

Who is I? It is very easy to decide that we are the way we are, full stop, end of story. But we can also imagine that the playing cards can be re-dealt. In this dance of potentialities, different powers take the floor at different times, potential can become act, occupy the spotlight, and then glide back into the sidelines, powers grow and diminish, move into the foreground and then shrink into the background again – everything is mutable. Our personality is what it is, but is also what it is becoming (39).

In similar ways, as the reader engages with this text of my becoming self I hope they open themselves up to the experience of reading and the reading of their own experiences in facilitation, or facilitating drama.

<sup>12</sup> Though this is the term used in French, as in "animation sociale" and is untranslatable to English (Walt Disney has taken care of having another use for the word "animator"!), I have always found the word an evocative metaphor of my work. Somewhat of an analogy can be made, though, of thinking of the cartoonist making static drawings move and speak and extending this to working with a group or community.

<sup>13</sup> A bit of wordplay from Augusto Boal who has said at workshops I have attended that he finds the term facilitator problematic as it implies making things easier, when in fact he sees his work as making things more challenging. Hence the term I use here.

that I can spring from:

Once I get my hooks on a theatre, I shall hire two clowns. They will perform in the interval and pretend to be spectators. They will bandy opinions about the play and about the members of the audience ... The idea would be to bring reality back to the things on stage (Brecht, 1979, 32-33).

Joel Schechter points out that Augusto Boal drew on Brecht's writings to develop the "Joker" system practising "what Brecht had only dreamed of" (161). This system, used by Boal in stage productions in Brazil in the 1950s, led to the development of the role of the Joker used in Forum theatre performances.<sup>14</sup>

In a workshop process there are often moments when I ask the participants to reflect or comment on a series of exercises we have just completed.

*What happened to you? How did it feel? What did you learn about the particular sense we were exploring, or the particular theme we were investigating?*

Drawing from Brecht's clowns and Boal's Joker, and extending the idea of embodied reflection in a workshop, I have developed commentators that are intertwined in the facilitation of the workshop. This exteriorization through writing of my inner dialogues about facilitation brings in the in-between-ness between the workshop stage and the world.

These dialogues speak through four points of view (expressed as masks) that have helped me understand, as well as unfold from, my sense of the work. I see them as points of departure that have helped me in a hermeneutic process which deepens my understanding from, and through, the patterns of my facilitation.

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<sup>14</sup> The Joker is a bridge between audience and performers in an interactive Forum theatre presentation. S/he is the 'wild card', sometimes director, sometimes referee, sometimes facilitator, sometimes leader. It is this ambiguous 'in-between-ness' that is learned in practice. This will be elaborated on further by the Joker mask in the section entitled *Metaxic Becomings*.

One specific way that helps me in this process of interpretation and interrogation is using a metaphor of the theatrical mask to develop the skeleton connecting it to a body (inter)acting in the landscape of the workshop. Taking a journey into each “mask” means looking at what I see through it, (inter)act with it, and feel/think inside it. The masks chosen, per se, are not examined in depth, but my musings/trying outs/exploring of what this perspective *might* mean keeps options for action open and projects possibility around every corner. This enables me to distance myself from my practice as well as explore its familiarity.<sup>15</sup> In other words, these “masks” become hermeneutic interpreters within me, and each one comments in a form of “workshop notes” at different times within the workshop/play process.

Why these four in particular?

The Italian writer Italo Calvino in his Norton lectures (1988) chose five qualities<sup>16</sup> to look at the peculiarities of literature that are close to his heart and tried to “situate them within the perspective of the new millennium” (1). Similarly, I looked at the range of masks I have worn in the process of my been, being and be-coming facilitator and imagined which ones would help in exploring this ambiguous process. I wanted to avoid masks that closed-off possible exploration, and chose instead ones that open up spaces of possibility for the journeys to come. For example I put to the side roles of the facilitator, that had fixed relationships (like observer, participant, director); rather, I picked masks that embodied for me a point of view that opened up similar values and qualities that emerge from the practice.

I have explored a mask, my eyes closed, carefully exploring with the tips of my fingers the recesses and bumps of one’s surface, and *then* putting it on so that I may bring it to life through my inter-actions with others and with the workshop space. On the other hand, in this writing, I will explore through these masks both the material that is this dissertation and the mask itself. In other words, there will be an intertwining of the material-that-is-the-dissertation “subject” (facilitation) and the materialness of the mask itself, its qualities, what it sees and doesn’t see,

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<sup>15</sup> I am aware of the irony of the reference to Zorro (who hid his identity behind his *mask*) as my childhood hero in the section of this dissertation entitled *Journeying into the landscape of the drama workshop!*

<sup>16</sup> *Lightness; Quickness; Exactitude; Visibility; Multiplicity*. The sixth memo (*Consistency*) was not completed before his death on September 19, 1985.

interprets and reinterprets. This will be an iterative process, probing and re-probing, collecting experiences and re-collecting experiences, re-visit(t)ing and re-writing.

## **What is it to Be-come a Mask?**

Mask improvisation asks us to 'see' with our transforming imagination (Eldredge, 1996, 64).

*June 1991. Edmonton. The Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance Festival Bread and Dreams. A workshop on mask with Jan Henderson.*

*I enter the room, not knowing what to expect. An afternoon of play? It was the end of the festival; I was tired but energized by the cabaret performances about Saskatchewan life and politics our theatre group, JustUs Players, had done and the workshops I had facilitated. Now was a chance to play, with masks.*

*A group of actors and directors are here to explore. After a short introduction Jan asks us to go to the end of the room and choose a mask. She explains that in a longer workshop (this one would be only a couple of hours), we would have developed, through visualization and construction, our own full-faced papier maché masks, but for this workshop we will be using masks previously developed by university students in her mask course.*

*I choose a mask after looking at all of them, then return to a spot on the floor.*

*Jan takes us through what could be called "tactile visualization" as we close our eyes and get to know "our" mask. This is not a rational knowing but a sensual knowing, as we slowly and deliberately probe the hills and valleys of the form that is our mask.*

*We put on the mask and open our eyes. Odd really. I saw the mask when I picked it up; it had some resonance for me. Now I have it on and somehow I know this newly masked body.*

*There is no mirror in the room so I begin to explore myself behind this mask that I am coming to know and in front of the others through interaction with the landscapes of this room, including the people I encounter. I have very little vision – I realize that one of the qualities of this mask is that it has very tiny eyes.*

*How will I continue to navigate this space?*

*There is a pile of cloth and trinkets on the floor which we are asked to choose from. I select three long pieces of material that I insert into my waist. My costume matching the mask I am feeling I am becoming*

*From Jan's side-coaching as we moved, we are gradually becoming sentient, and sensing, beings.*

*I walk and crawl close to the ground, the material hanging from my waist swishing, my rounded knuckles connecting to the ground .... Almost blind, I rely on my clothed body to warn me of unknown creatures coming too close.*

*Jan carefully takes us through the life cycle of our (been, being, becoming) characters. We slowly get to know ourselves as embryos, as fledglings, as maturing beings, and as dying beings. I have become a three-tailed monkey, ambling, playing, squeaking around the room.<sup>17</sup>*

*I am me playing this monkey. No, I am this monkey. Where has Warren gone to? Only a whisper in my mind letting go. There is a residue of me in this metaxic space. I know that I am becoming a three - tailed monkey through this process but I am also not leaving completely behind Warren, learning this process and knowing I can return to the self I was.*

*I have a feeling of exhilaration as I am born, living and dying; loving and warring with other*

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<sup>17</sup> It is fascinating that nine years later I am recounting this story in the context of this dissertation and, at the same time, reading that the monkey is a trickster and reader-of-hidden-meanings (hermeneut) in African-American myths (Hyde, 1998, 112n). Perhaps I was intuitively exploring, even back then, the embodied texts of my practices as facilitator.

*beings – the amoeba who just sat there; the royal queen who pompously strode among her subjects.*

*We live, we interact, we experience the freedom behind the mask. We die.*

*We take off our masks. We live again.*

*Jan explains that this process can lead to an incredible awareness of character, created through tactile visualization. So complete is the transformation of human into being through the circular process of creation, transformation and interaction, that the actor can take off the mask and continue to interact as that being.*

### **Masks of Facilitator Masquerading – An Introduction**

I hear my own voice, and I cannot avoid thinking that this voice, although it is mine, belongs to someone else. When you are facilitating an exercise how much of yourself is hidden behind the mask of the “role” you are playing? Because the facilitator is, in a way, an outsider, a spectator. But is also an actor-witness-observer. Spect-actor (Alejandra de Medellin,<sup>18</sup> personal communication with Warren Linds, in Linds 1998).

As I have outlined above in my experience of coming-to-be the three-tailed monkey through mask characterization, be-coming a mask involves, through a process of visualization and interaction, a process of surrendering the bodymind to visual, aural, tactile and kinesthetic experiences.<sup>19</sup> This enables the mask and the body behind the mask to become a living, breathing being in the

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<sup>18</sup> Alejandra was a fellow graduate student at UBC I met in a course on Popular Theatre in 1996. Several of the students in that course, including Alejandra, continued to explore popular theatre after the course had ended. This email comes from a dialogue Alejandra and I had after one particular session she had facilitated. Alejandra is now a theatre researcher and university acting teacher in Mexico City and Puebla, Mexico.

<sup>19</sup> This is not restricted to masks. In July 2001 I participated in a rod puppet making workshop. I found a similar process of me understanding the character of the puppet as the puppet was being developed by my hands. When the puppet came to life on stage, the experiences of making was transformed into a living character interacting with my bodymind.

landscape of the workshop.

We are not aware of the mask that our bodies hide behind in our living in the world. The process of re-visiting our experiencing of the world in the experiencing of the workshops enables us, through a variety of theatrical exercises, to bring forth the knowing of our mask. Similarly, as the facilitator (a type of spect-actor), I work through several masks. I am never in a neutral state; rather, I am “able to move from one mask to another while retaining a critical distance from all masks” (Auslander, 1994, 131). This is a process of “trying on” these positions as they emerge. And, as you will see, each mask’s abilities emerge from the work of the ones that have come before as they engage in a circular (inter)play of embodying-intuiting-sensing-transforming.

I will use the mask workshop process as one that parallels my own theatre workshop which investigates our bodies, first individually, then interactively; then we find ways to express ourselves. Individual masks will be introduced after each section of the dissertation as a prelude to the masks commenting on the particular themes that have emerged.

### **I. Viewing the Masks**

What kinds of masks work, enhance, develop, and extend an analysis of my work to incorporate my thinking, doing and interacting body?<sup>20</sup>

In order to choose and name the masks, I engage in an interpretive process as I enter into, and draw from, my history of practice and my own understandings of the mythologies of these particular masks. Since I am writing masks into being, rather than actually putting them on their feet, I have attached a label to each in order to distinguish one from the other. But you will see as we move on that each mask has another one as its complement and all four form a circle of masks

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<sup>20</sup> Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1991) call this integration of the physical body and the body that experiences the world *embodiment*. *Embodiment* moves us away from the legacy of viewing knowing and knowledge as concrete things that reside in the body or mind and suggests a seamless, though often elusive matrix of bodymindworld, a web that integrates thinking, being, doing and interacting with/in our world. How this seamlessness emerges through our work, and under what conditions it flourishes, are critical questions. The *Warmups/Trust Exercises* section of this dissertation explores this concept in the context of facilitation and *Image/Storying* looks at in the context of Image and story.

that co-enacts a bodymindspiritworld, “a seamless, though often elusive matrix, a web that integrates thinking, being, doing and interacting within worlds” (Hocking et al. 2001).

Let me take you over to the lineup at the end of the room where I have laid out my masks of facilitation. There, in order, are four masks:

Shaman

Div *in*  
er

Wri(gh)ter

Joker

I have selected these four; there are more in the props room.

These masks are ones that you may know, that you have been, that you are (even in this moment of observation), that you are becoming.

Imagine what it might be like to put on these masks!

What happens when we put them on?

## **II. Becoming the Mask**

Behind the mask students are free to create a personality, paradoxically, because the mask hides the self, it enables the students to probe more deeply into themselves (Appel 1982, back cover).

Using a mask extends my boundaries, “allowing impulses and imagination to flow in conjunction with a flexible and vulnerable body” (Appel, xiii), enabling me to experience the world anew. So using these character masks enables me to re-experience my imagination in these sections. The characters thus are not limiting but expanding my range of interpretation.

It is an interplay of the mask that is me and the mask as me acting, living in the spaces in-between.

*But the mask does not act alone. It is attached to a face and to a body.*

*They are not static, they are dynamic...*

Lewis Hyde (1998) writes in his work on the trickster that there are “moments when the practice of art and the myths coincide” (14). Speaking *through* the masks, I articulate their points of view as I encounter specific cases of “imagination in action” (14). They become illuminations against, and of, my practice as I see different perspectives on the world of my practice as I try them on, seeing what emerges, exploring what happens.

If this method of masking/unmasking my experiences as a facilitator “works”, it is not because I have uncovered some truth or lesson behind a particular practice (which after all happens in a specific landscape of time, place and circumstance), but more that the co-incidences and intertwining of mask and action have been fruitful, enabling me and the reader to see, hear, feel think, and interact with drama facilitation through another perspective.

These masks sit within my been, being, becoming, imag e/in ing facilitation. They are always present; one coming to the fore at a particular time, then receding into the background. But like the backdrop of a set they are always present, in-forming and re-forming my work.

Boal divides the senses for further exploration and then brings them back together as a way to see hear and feel what happens through one bodymind. Similarly, I bring these masks out one by one, exploring their emerging character.

### **III. The Masks Speak**

When you are facilitating you are also open ... You have also unmasked yourself ... One is not only observing and guiding, one is being observed and guided at the same time (Alejandra de Medellin, personal communication, in Linds 1998).

When I have worked with participants in a workshop to create a static Image<sup>21</sup> of a particular situation, there is an exercise that brings out some of the thoughts, emotions and characteristics of a particular pose. The actors freeze in a tableau that represents their relationships to each other. They fill up their minds with the random and connected thoughts that come to them in the particular pose and discover its relationship with the others around them. This is the *Internal Monologue*. Then, at my direction, they think out loud for a period of time. This is the *External Monologue*. Next, still frozen in place, they dialogue with each other. Then they make their thoughts physical in slow motion. “This takes a relatively long time but the six minutes spent frozen tend to be full of wonderful discoveries of sub text and character quirks for the actors involved. This can add a great deal of richness to performance” (Diamond 1991, 37).

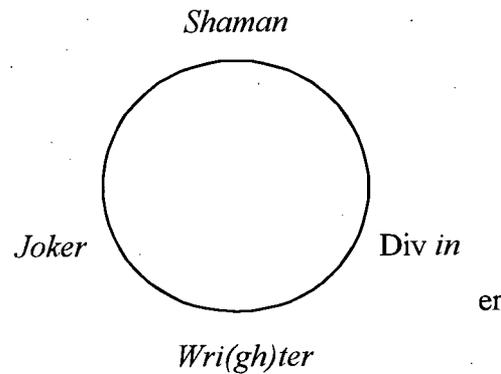
Similarly, my text includes the *external monologues* of my masks with the workshop I am conducting through/by this dissertation. Each section will be followed by such monologues which are forms of dialogues-to-be – where I explore some of the sub-texts of facilitation.

But these sub-texts not only depend on reflecting on what has gone before and on where we will go next; they also depend on the position I am in as I finish a particular section of the workshop. More and more the workshop process involves articulations of a language and a vocabulary. The workshop journey is one which moves from direction to direction, constantly evolving. So the masks are not static but move in the landscape of the workshop. In other words, the form and the content of these poses emerge together, informing one another. And these forms are not static (after all, these forms are my own body-as-facilitator which is always moving); they relate to one another as well as to the section that has gone before and to that which will follow. They move from section to section. In this interaction of writing masks into being and reading the main sections of this work there is an interplay between content, methodology and re-presentation, with each section intertwining with the characteristics of the particular mask that will comment on it.

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<sup>21</sup> For more exploration on Image, see the *Image/Storying* section of this work.

## The Circle of the Masks



Though we will meet these masks one by one, they do not act only as individuals. When I put the four masks I have chosen into a circle where they interact and play off one another (as I will do at the conclusion of this work), I find they contrast with one another, adding to each other's qualities. For example, Shaman/Wri(gh)ter and the neighbouring masks of Shaman/Diviner are spiritually related. Wri(gh)ter/Joker are more practically grounded so these pairings complement each other.<sup>22</sup> The four "poses" are also related to the four directions of the aboriginal Medicine Wheel – North, South, East and West.<sup>23</sup> They present a balancing, a harmony in spirit, natural surroundings, body and mind. As such, these masks are part of the world of facilitation that will continue to unfold in this work(shop).

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<sup>22</sup> See also footnote 59 on page 178 for a comment on the relationship between Shamanic energies and Wri(gh)ter as creative artist.

<sup>23</sup> Among other attributes in North American aboriginal traditions, North is "Wisdom;" South, "Emotion;" East, "Spirit;" and West, "Introspection."

*Each day is a journey*

*and the journey itself home*

– Matsuo Basho (1689/1968, 15)

## **Journeying into the Landscapes of the Drama Workshop**

*We continue the circle as we journey  
into my embodied experiences as travelling facilitator,  
re-encountering a(d)ventures in many landscapes of practice.*

## Fremd, Toubab, Étranger: The Facilitator “en Aventure”

An adventure lets life be felt as a whole, in its breadth and in its strength ... It removes the condition and obligation of everyday life. It ventures out into the uncertain.

But at the same time it knows that, as an adventure, it is exceptional and thus remains related to the return of the everyday, into which the adventure cannot be taken (Gadamer 1989, 69).

I rummage around my basement office, looking for one of the two “talking objects” I usually use in the opening circle of a drama workshop. One is a glass ball with what looks like a piece of fluff in the middle – the seeds of a poplar tree that normally clog the sides of our prairie city's streets in June. The other is a small sea shell I collected off a beach in 1984 or 1985 in the eastern Caribbean. Each one is a memory object, connected to a landscape of my experience and infused with the energies of my travels, connecting workshops *and* my home.

Of workshops far away, in other parts of the world  
And close by, but on themes I am not familiar with

These two objects, seemingly so different, are connected in both their rounded, smooth shapes, the spirals of their natural forms, and in the feelings, thoughts and stories they evoke.

*May, 1991. Near Toronto, Ontario. I am attending a participatory research and development workshop at a retreat house. Gathered together are community development workers from Latin American and Canadian communities. For the opening session of this three day workshop we gather around a bonfire and are led by Reg and Rose Crowshoe, members of the Peigan Nation of southern Alberta and northern Montana. Reg began by noting that it was their tradition to “circle a campsite before leaving, to make sure they don’t leave behind the shadow that is their spirit. Upon arriving at a new site, the Elders make contact with the earth to introduce themselves, and community members assemble and call out their names to help their shadows*

*find their way home" (Participatory Development Workshop 1991, 1). We call our shadows which we have left behind in our communities so we may be fully present in this retreat and not be worrying about problems and situations we may have left behind.*

*Here*

To collect myself,

and in a circular process return my shadows to me to make me whole.

*What are the shadows I bring back to me in writing this work and in working this writing?*

*Shadows of Haiti*

The first time I ever left North America I went to Haiti as a group leader in a development education exchange program. As a group leader for Canada World Youth, I worked alongside Haitian counterparts in both Canada and Haiti to organise community projects in both countries, and set up weekly development education seminars. The experience gave me direct exposure to the multifaceted issues (and difficulties) at work in cross cultural communication, community development and adult education.

*Shadows of a Journey Home*

I returned to Canada with an acute interest in the pedagogies of adult education and how they might be used to communicate about development issues. I secured employment as a development educator in Saskatchewan, the province where I grew up. Initially hired as a rural development education worker, I found myself immersed in the parallel issues of food production and rural development in both the developing world and the Saskatchewan farm community. The job demanded adaptability as well as an openness to learning about the issues of development, and the appropriate methodologies to educate others about them.

*Shadows of Connections*

My work put me in close contact with development work and organisations in the developing countries. They would provide travelling speakers and content for our programs and this helped us learn from their methodologies and approaches in popular education (Arnold 1991, 198). These methods involved practices and activities based on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire that moves from an individual describing his/her experiences in the world to understanding these experiences as part of a community or group learning in order to transform particular situations. This demonstrates as well as develops democratic process, by encouraging participation and demonstrating respect for the knowledge and experience of participants. Through this process popular education is used to develop political participation, be it in local government or in non-governmental organizations (or what is now called "civil society"), for people-centred and holistic development.

### *Journeying Again*

In 1985 after 2 years of engaging in popular education as a method of development education work I had the opportunity to go to the Eastern Caribbean as a development worker. I spent three months in Dominica, training several local development workers in the technical and production skills of video production, including the basics of story and documentary production. I helped them to set up a video production program by giving several community workers a series of introductory video production workshops. I worked with the 'Small Projects Assistance Team' (SPAT) which uses a community animation and education model to mobilise communities for development action. Through this model, media (such as SPAT's *Kon Lanbi* production unit which ultimately grew out of my initial training sessions) and popular education are used to develop political participation and people-centred holistic development. This happened in local government and in non-governmental organisations (or what is now called "civil society"). As a result I started thinking that development was not just about economic and social development, but also included developing people's own cultural skills.

I was also exposed to the work of popular educators and theatre workers in Dominica. When I went there I was perturbed and dissatisfied with my development education work in Canada, which seemed to be all about passing on information *about* other parts of the world, with little attention paid to either *how* education was done, or *how* method and content were intertwined. My exposure to the popular theatre of Dominica (called the *Movement for Cultural Awareness*) there in a "foreign" context enabled me to return home with an inkling of the possibilities of "cultural awareness" through theatre in my own community. From then on grew a long journey into popular theatre....

### *Back and Forth*

In that year *JustUs Players Popular Theatre* formed from friends and colleagues working in support of el Salvador and Nicaragua. We came together with like-minds and organized ourselves to learn more about theatre while also serving as a resource for the community we lived in. We always seemed to be only one step ahead of those we were working with. And we were also familiar "theoretically and politically" with popular education and community development techniques. That group, with many changes in membership, lasted about 10 years. It was in the context of that group that I found myself learning about Augusto Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed, a process I had never had much in-depth experience with prior to 1987.

This progression from my development education background to developing my skills in popular theatre was an integrated process as I continued popular theatre while also teaching popular education courses. My approach thus centred on enabling communities to tell their stories through the medium of popular theatre, while also enabling them to seek solutions to their problems.

I had been introduced to popular education as a concept and coherent methodology by two Canadian development workers who had worked with Freirian programs in Central America. I had read (and met) Paulo Freire. Yet I had adopted popular education as a methodology without really understanding the particular context from which the process had emerged not, ironically enough, from the context of my work in Canada. My encounter with popular theatre was not an encounter with a theory of popular theatre but an encounter with theory as it "hit the road" in concrete action. I only began to understand this through its praxis. And, counter to a mimetic transfer of the methodology, theories changed in their application in the communities in which I worked.

*Shadows of worlds walking together*

It wasn't enough any more to talk about popular education as happening over there as some exotic but exciting educational process, but to actually engage in its practice. In other words, to respond to Australian aboriginal social worker Yolanda Walker's call to some people visiting her community, "if you have come here to free me, I don't want your help; but if in some way your liberation is tied up in mine, let us walk together" (in Linds 1991).

I welcome my shadows as they return to me, then greet the others around the campfire.

**Greetings**

In Haiti when one first enters a village and approaches a household (where everyone is sitting outside), as a man, the first thing one does is go around, greeting each other man, shaking hands, leaving hand in hand. Still connected, each person would ask about my family. The same thing would happen every morning. If I met a woman, the greeting would be the same but without a handshake.

In 1994 in Mali, I sat in a courtyard and listened to the rhythm of greetings in Bambara of two men.

E-nee-soh-goh-mah (Good morning)

E-koh-kay-nay-wah? (How are you?)

Tarasité (OK)

and your mother

Mba (fine)

your father

mba

your sister

mba

your brother

mba

Finally, (to a stranger) with emphasis

Togo?

Warren

Jamu?

Linds

This could take 5 minutes. Then the pair would move to the discussion at hand.

In the cliffside villages of the Dogon people of eastern Mali, there are open meeting areas covered by eight layers of millet stalks held up by eight wooden pillars. One has to duck down to sit down and if one stands up suddenly one's head strikes the straw ceiling. Thus these meeting places (of men) are built so that if someone suddenly gets upset and stands up in anger, he hits his head on the straw and then must leave the meeting place to, presumably, rub his head, and cool down. I was reminded of these meeting and greeting rituals in a workshop I attended in the summer of 1999 at the annual conference of the American Association for Theatre in Higher Education. The workshop was going to bring together the acting training techniques of Sanford Meissner with the movement work of contact improvisation. Both of these forms are challenging to our comfort level with our bodies and ways of interacting. I was surprised to find that, while people were gathering, the facilitator of the workshop talking individually with each participant with what I saw as heartfelt and attentive presence. She was getting to know each person, where they came from and, more importantly, getting a sense of each person in the informal time before the workshop began. A community was being formed through this person-to-person networking, not only by gathering every one together but through the facilitator as a common connector.

The theatre workshop is an odd thing – it is separate from the world, yet part of it. We come in with all our baggage, our shadows, our feelings. We use theatre to reflect on the world outside the workshop but in a metaxic process, the workshop is also part of the world we are exploring, probing, questioning, and challenging. This facilitator I hadn't known, and probably would never meet again, had our lives in her hands for this brief moment of a two-hour intensive workshop.

*Journeying to*

## **You make the way as you go....En "Aventure" – a risky endeavour?**

Our journeys over the earth are experienced directly. A day spent dodging rapids and rocks will seem a lot longer and more different than a day spent sailing over a calm lake. We are creatures that flourish in the intimate interactions of life. . . . The river is a dynamic living organism . . . . Just as there is a constant dynamic relationship between the river and the riverbed, there is a constant interplay between the genes and the flesh and bones of the living organism. . . . Mappings with destinations carefully laid out for the reader can lead to preconceptions (McLaughlin 1999, 6, 52, 59, 63).

The story, the experience lives beyond its telling. My work blossoms *since* my experiences in the Caribbean, West Africa, Newfoundland and Regina, and I didn't realize this when I was living through them. They become part of my own *ancestry* and I have become my own descendant, part of my own living memory, part of what calls upon me as the source and re-source of my own work, of my own being in the world, for good and ill.

I cannot explain these experiences, not because I don't want to, but because when they occur, and when I write them down, I don't know what will come of them in the future. They become part of my response to events that occur.

I am reluctant to begin any journey. Beginnings are so difficult. Stepping out. Taking a chance. Wondering where it will lead. This is doubly true in beginning a workshop.

A workshop is not just what happens there. It is not just an event, but incorporates all its relations,

a vast, roiling, ambiguous, contradictory, generative network of multicolour interdependencies and unanticipated histories and

contestations. It summons up *worlds* full of dependants, both offspring and ancestors ... It is not a given, not simply because of the vastness of the arrays of intersection, contesting life-worlds that make it what it is. It resists because such worlds are still unanticipatedly arriving (Jardine 1999, 98).

## Travelling A(d)venture

### Back to the Baché<sup>24</sup>

Travel writing [is] an act of translation that constantly works to produce a tense 'space in-between'. Defined literally, 'translation' means to be transported from one place to another, so that it is caught up in a complex dialectic between the recognition and recuperation of difference (Duncan and Gregory 1999, 4).

*6 am. June 15, 1994. Ouagadougou, Burkina-Faso.*

Up early in the morning to catch the cool dawn. This city of red dust is just awakening. I take a taxi from my hotel to the bus station. The taxi's radio announces it is 32 degrees Celsius.

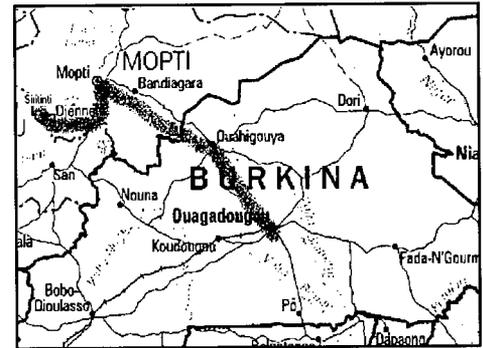
I was in West Africa to attend the 3<sup>rd</sup> *Festival Internationale de Théâtre pour le Développement (F.I.T.D.)* held every 2 years in Ouagadougou. I had given a workshop there to actors on Theatre of the Oppressed techniques and had become friends with one of the participants, Cheikh Omar Coulibaly, who worked as a popular educator in Sirititinti, a rural Malian village. He had returned home and I was to follow.

I read in my *Lonely Planet* guide (Newton 1992): "There are no regular connections between Ouagayoua, Burkina-Faso and Koro (91 kms) in Mali... The road is in very bad condition, then

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<sup>24</sup> *baché*: also called taxi brousse/bush taxi – a small pickup truck with covered seats on the back that can take about 15-20 passengers. The luggage is piled on to the roof of the back of the truck as well as between the two facing rows of seats.

good, then bad again” (183). With some trepidation I select this route because it is the shortest, but is also, again according to the guide book, the most difficult one. But this only increased my interest. I liked the sense of adventure on the road less travelled. I was up for the challenge, even though most of the people I knew in Ouagadougou counselled me against it, not because of any great danger but because the roads were so bad and “I could be waiting for a transport for several days” (Newton, 183). I wanted to take the risk that conditions might have improved, but was ready to turn back if the road was out.



This journey became not only a memory, it also became part of my performance/work/journey as a drama facilitator.

***June 15, 1994, The Road from “Ouaga” to Siritinti, Mali.***

*11 am Ouayagoua, Burkina-Faso.*

A perfectly ordinary bus ride to get to this town near the border with Mali. Getting off the bus here, a man, knowing I was looking for the place where the bachés leave from, offers to take my luggage. Not an unusual act of assistance, but in West Africa where I am a *toubab* (foreigner, usually white) unusual in that he is doing this to help me and not to earn money from a traveller who is visibly richer than him. A switch, and a shock to my expectations. A moment of disruption.

I search out a taxi-brousse. I find one going across the border.

Or so it seems.

These bachés leave at all hours, but only when they are “complet” (full). The driver tells me this one is full. But it doesn't depart. There are passengers who have gone to the market others who are visiting family. All have paid the fare to the driver to assure their spot, so he wouldn't leave

without them.

Waiting waiting several hours

then finally departing.

I was the only *toubab* on this local truck and one of the few who spoke French, the others speaking only local languages. For that entire morning and afternoon as we journeyed through the sandy, dusty, bumpy Sahel I was in the front seat of the pickup truck, wedged between the door and a Muslim elder, who had been over the border to see an ailing brother. My eyes were wide open, taking in the life of the countryside, watching the moving of the local herds of goats north to pasture where there might be grass when the rains came, watching camels that I had never ever seen before outside of a zoo. Wondering about how people determined the boundaries of their properties, and knowing they could, wondering where we were going when we went “off-piste” because of dry washouts in the road ahead. Red dust, hot sun, foreign tongues, quiet serenity.

I had had a phone conversation with Cheikh before I left Ouagadougou. He suggested a meeting place in Mopti, which is a large market town on the Niger river not far from the border with Burkina-Faso. Cheikh was also a bit of a stranger in his own country. He had grown up in Bamako, the capital and was the son of a teacher in a country where the majority of people are subsistence farmers, and he was a Bahai in a country that was 99% Muslim. He was working far away from the city, and among Muslim students, in Siritinti, a tiny Niger delta community, guarding his religious secret to himself. Cheikh had noticed the traditional cultural movements amongst these people and had gathered some people from the village to go to Ouagadougou for the theatre festival. Many had never left their region, and some had only been as far as the market town nearby. Now there they went in a bus, off to another country for two weeks of theatre workshops and performances..

*Afternoon, the same day, on the road in Mali.*

And I, now in another mode of transport, on another route, journeying through the sandy red

skies of southern Mali, pores open to the wind and the sights. Unable to comprehend what I was seeing and feeling, I was awakened with the impossibility of being able to understand this myself, let alone make these landscapes understandable to the people back home in Canada. Still vivid experiences even at almost seven years distance. A tourist, yes, but more of a traveller, or what the West Africans call "en aventure," surrendering to the world I was surrounded by.

I had a camera but my eyes took the pictures.

Years ago I had done some long-distance hiking in the mountains of coastal British Columbia. I had had a camera with me, so every time I saw a beautiful view I wanted to stop and take a photo, a recording of this beauty. I remember little of that journey except that which I looked at through the frame of a photo and not through my senses.

On another mountain trek I didn't take a camera along. The experiences of that journey remain in my sense-memory, not something just to be recalled when looking at snaps or a slide projected on a white screen.

Being *toubab* in that taxi-brousse meant not wanting to further mark myself as tourist and allowed me to relax and let my senses do the recording.

"Every sense perception is an immediate disclosure of the world, into which all the details of background enter" (Whitehead in Barrett 1979, 14). This trip, a mere 8 hours in length seemed like a week as I opened my senses to the context in which we were riding and the landscapes we were crossing. This journey is still firmly enmeshed in my body and intertwined together with my experiences since then to be called up at any moment:

*The camels being led out of a collection of thatched huts.*

*The baché driver taking off on a bicycle he was presumably delivering (as he came back on foot without it) to a group of little houses on the plain.*

*The pastoral herds of goats being readied to move north when the rains came, so that the red earth could be sowed with crops.*

*The solitary baobab trees starkly placed against the red dusted horizon of the Sahel.*

*Stopping at several border posts as we crossed boundaries between two countries, leaving one and entering another. An encounter with a customs agent at one post who roared up on a red motorcycle and asked me, as a "friend" for a "gift," and I comply with an envelope full of Saskatchewan wheat sheaf pins that I had brought along on the journey for just such a "request."*

*The two men from Cote d'Ivoire who are, they tell me, "en aventure," on a quest just to "see" the countryside on their (long) way to Dakar, Senegal where they have hopes of getting a visa to work in Europe. I sense that being "en aventure" in rural West Africa is unusual in that most travellers I have met on my journeys are doing so for a specific purpose, be it illness or death in the family, to collect goods to sell, or taking a child from the city to live and learn in an Islamic school in the ancestral village.*

*These two "en aventure" were my companions on this journey as they were the only ones who could speak French. They sat on the back benches, but at every stop we made (and there were many!) the three of us French-speakers would chat about our journey together as the others, more devout Muslims, laid down their prayer mats and prostrated themselves on one of their five daily homages to Mecca.*

*We finally arrived at dusk in Koro, a town just over the Malian border and found the only way forward was to hire a taxi at a high price. Since I was not in any hurry (this journey of 50 km in 8 hours had taken care of that desire), I decided to stay the night. My choices were a backyard to sleep in (which most of the travellers opted for if they had no relatives in this town), or a campement (primitive village hotel). (My notes scribbled in the guide book say, "very friendly manager"). I opted for the latter and said my good byes to the others.*

So this journey ended.

But, of course, the French *au revoir* (see you later) was meant literally, because,

a day later, after searching Mopti for Cheikh with no success, I took another bus towards a town near his village. Broken down at a crossroads, I waited in the cool shadows for repairs to be made to the engine. A bus arrived from the south and there descending from it were my two friends “en aventure” and the Muslim holy man. For the first time, my front seat companion of the day before smiled at me and greeted me, asking me how I was doing as if I were long, lost family.

If only for that brief, daylong journey I felt I was part of this community of African travellers, bemused with the common adventures that had befallen us. This was a journey that had become part of my own learning with/in African theatre.

### **Making my way**

I have shared above *notes from an adventure en aventure*, a record of my own journey. But this experience I have recounted is itself composed of memories which interconnect between one experience and another.

*Where is the beginning of my journey into theatre facilitation?*

*What is behind the mask of me, facilitator?*

So many journeys....memories...a(d)ventures....

*There is a story told about the psychologist William James and an older lady who was attending one of his talks about the nature of reality. James had just finished his lecture when the elderly woman approached him:*

*“Excuse me, Professor, but I'm afraid you've got it all wrong. The world is really supported on the back of a great big turtle.”*

*The venerable professor, being a gentleman, decided to humour the woman. "Tell me, then, what is holding the turtle up?"*

*Quick as a flash, the lady snapped back: "Another turtle, of course."*

*"And what is supporting that turtle?" James asked, trying to ease her gently to a realization of her mistake.*

*The conversation went on like this for another round or two and eventually the lady interrupted with a noticeable tremor of exasperation. "Save your breath, sonny. It's turtles all the way down."*

This story, shared in several courses I have taken and widely available on the World Wide Web (I have included but one version) captures nicely that in a hermeneutic process in which I am engaged there are no beginnings to my journey, just experiences layered on top of others. There is no core of meaning at the centre, merely journeys from "turtle to turtle." And these journeys are connected to all the others in a web of "infinite reflecting process" (Loy 1993, 481).

My work is such an intricate web of rhizomatic journeys. As a figuration (which "scatter certainties and prod and poke at positivities and foundations" [St. Pierre 1997, 407]) the rhizome tunnels into my multivocal self/experiences. No experience matters more than the other, and no entrance is more privileged even if it seems a diversion or an impasse, a tight passage or a siphon. We will be discovering what other points our entrance connects to. Sometimes you will have to go in reverse, to find another passage (in two senses of the term), sometimes you might stay in one spot and ponder what is right there, or before and above you. What crossroads and galleries do you pass through to link two points, two stories?

Caminante, son tus huellas

Wayfarer the only way is your footsteps,

el camino, nada más; caminante no hay camino,

there is no other

wayfarer there is no way;  
se hace camino al andar.  
you make the way as you go.  
Al andar se hace camino,  
As you go, you make the way,  
y al volver la vista atrás  
stopping to look around  
se ve la senda que nunca  
you see the path that your feet will never travel again.  
se ha de volver a pisar;  
Caminante, no hay camino,  
Wayfarer there is no way,  
sino estelas en la mar,  
only tracks on ocean foam (Machado/Trueblood 1982, 142-143.)

We make the way by going there, discovering what the map of the journey into drama facilitation is and how the map is modified by our journeys. And, as I look back, I see only tracks, traces of what I have done. My writing of these experiences is a re-living.

The journey becomes a rhizomatic assembly of demanding entangled crossroads, passages and galleries complemented by multiple stances, providing an uneven reading, always open to multiple meanings that merge as these experiences intersect: “art is a mirror, which goes ‘fast’, like a watch – sometimes” (Janouch 1971, 143).

You see me through the eyes of participant, of observer, of facilitator, of transformer, of reader, of traveller, translator and nomad. What you see depends on/through what lens I use. I change my glasses, my bodily stance(s) and, as that changes, the mirror you are looking into also reflects back on your own past, present and future as new passages open up to investigation.

Like my journey through the Sahel, we go back and forth across borders and boundaries. Translations, transportations, transitions, transformations. A journey that spirals back and forth,

between theory and practice, workshops and performances, me and others, between here and there, now and then. And, as experience, everything has “something of an adventure about it” (Simmel in Gadamer, 69).

### **Opening Spaces**

*The boys gather around the kerosene lantern. They are talking to Cheikh and laughing away. I ask him, “what are they saying?” “Telling stories,” he says, “and they want you to tell them one.” I take a stick and draw a series of lines. “Here is Siritinti,” I say, “here is Bamako,” “here is the ocean,” “here is North America.” I draw a series of concentric circles, a map of lines on sand, that begins to connect my world to theirs, so my stories might be told (Journal notes, Siritinti, Mali, June 1994).*

A drama workshop begins with such an opening circle, a place for each of us to introduce ourselves, to place our selves in front of each other.

Often people are quite reticent at the beginning, unsure as to what to share, what to say. This itself is an adventure, as well as the beginning of the adventure of this workshop. Where to begin?

There is a quiet of anticipation in this space as I begin to speak as I hold the talking object in my cupped hands.

Where are we?

A medium sized city on the Canadian prairie.

The world is very large,  
the sky ever larger  
and you are  
very small.

But also  
the world is flat,  
empty,  
nearly abstract,  
and in its flatness  
you are  
a challenging upright thing,  
as sudden as an exclamation mark,  
as enigmatic as a  
question mark.

– Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow*

(journal entry found in a comments book in a bed and breakfast on the edge of Grasslands National Park, Val Marie, Saskatchewan, October, 2000)

*September, 2000. Regina, Saskatchewan. At home.*

I am glancing through a new book by Wanda Hurren (2000), *Line Dancing: an atlas of geography curriculum and poetic possibilities*. I am looking for some material on travel notes which she used as spaces of reflection. I open the book and there in front of me is this memory I had forgotten:

**Cool Memories and Dreams I**  
**Teacher Education Classroom**

I invited Warren to come and talk with my teacher education students about bodies, spaces, and drama in our social studies curriculum class. He came to class today and shared some of his ideas with us. We used our bodies within our classroom space to map/locate our home places, and also in some way to represent our place. Two students and myself were from the prairies – we grouped together according to our geographical region. We decided to use the entire room to depict our place. The three of us spread out in the room and held out our arms. We were lonely trees on the prairie.

One of the “prairie trees,” a tall quiet man, said to me, “I hate doing things like this.” He was very shy and held up his arms self-consciously. He was a perfect tree for our self-conscious prairie landscape. A few weeks later, when he handed in his portfolio, he had reflected on the experience of using his body to represent a place. In his portfolio, he outlined an idea he had for using Warren's approach to bodies and mapping in a physical education lesson on lines of movement in space (51).

A landscape of memory. The image is that of a mirror capturing only the reflections of other mirrors. This play of mirrors “defers to infinity the real subject and subverts the notion of the original ‘I’ (Trinh 1989, 22).” This mirror from Wanda and her students, reveals to me my “double, my ghost, my perfections as well as my flaws” (22). A memory forgotten of an exercise remembered. Recalling engaging with it over and over again in many workshops to make a landscape of participants that enables participants to embody the historical and geographical landscape of their group. For example, discovering in a cross-cultural education class that its students are almost all descended from northern European immigrants or seeing a group of teenagers eager to state their desire to leave their prairie birthplace.

Remembering this workshop in a building on the Pacific Coast of Canada that brings forth this

story of the prairie....

....realizing that it is this prairie that connects me to my experiencing of the Malian Sahel.

Solitary baobab trees on sandy soil,  
(that eerie tree that looks upside down,  
its branches seeming like roots,  
struggling to survive the harsh climate).

those eerie solitary trees  
across the Canadian prairie,  
“in the middle of nowhere” (Gruending 1998)  
filling in my eyes for all to see.

Another explorer, Ulysses, writes Adriana Cavarero (2000), finds himself in the court of the Phaeacians, incognito. A singer sings of Ulysses and his undertakings: “only when he hears the story does he become fully aware of its significance.” This is the paradox of Ulysses where Ulysses was thus confronted with his experiences, but,

when he had lived them directly he had not understood their meaning. It is as if, while acting, he had been immersed in the contextuality of events. It is as if, each time, he was captured in the present of the action that cuts off the temporal series of before and after. But now, in the tale of the rhapsod, the discontinuous times of that happening come together in a story (18).

This story of Wanda and the “tall, quiet man” is a gift to me. An unknown, ironic gift titled “cool memories and dreams I” (this Roman Numeral I standing for “one” but also for the Eye and the “self that is not a self”). Teacher Education Classroom. There in full splendour is this person called “Warren.”

Who am I in Wanda's narrative? I take many roles: character, narrator, author, subject. I am a character in my own story, but I also find myself in her story, even beyond the interactions of that class. But I am not just the third person. Funny feelings of reading this story, in print, in front of me. “In this unwonted spectacle made of reality and fiction, where redoubled images form and reform, neither I nor you come first. No primary core of irradiation can be caught hold of, no

hierarchical first, second, or *third* exists except as mere illusion. All is empty when one is plural” (Trinh, 22). This story is not just about me, it is about this tall young man, and it is about Wanda, and it is about acts exceeding the telling. And it is about trees and landscapes in square university rooms, spaces of possibilities in the young man’s classrooms-to-be. Such re-collections implicate me both as reader and as facilitator as I glimpse how my actions live beyond my (inter)actions.

“Writing reflects” Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) says, “it reflects on other writings and, whenever awareness emerges, on itself as writing” (23). This reading of Wanda's writing meshes with my writing of the reading in “the machinery of endless reflexivity” (23).

And another memory emerges, of a solitary figure –

Me, in the middle of yet another circle

## **Enacting a(d)venture**

### **The Slash**

*Omaha, Nebraska, United States. March, 1996. Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed conference.*

There is an exercise called *The child's dream – what I wanted to be when I grew up* (Boal 1979) that I learned to do a few years ago in a workshop with Augusto Boal. But I always found it an odd exercise, playing through gesture, facial expression and movement revealing characteristics within a memory of a childhood hero. The activity always seemed out of context as an exercise, more of a game that revealed for me primarily gender differences in our childhood hero (women as ballerinas, men as soldiers and knights).

I hadn't seen the activity linked to a particular theme that we would explore further until Mark Weinblatt, then of Seattle Public Theatre, led a workshop called *Theatre of the Oppressed to build community*. There I was, along with many others, emulating the motions of our heroes. I remember particularly the men – soldiers, fencers, and I, embodying memories of a TV show of

the late 1950's when I was but 6 years old,

tracing with a sword thrust and a twirl of the outstretched finger

the Z of the "masked avenger"

Out of the night,  
when the full moon is bright,  
comes the horseman known as Zorro.

This bold renegade  
carves a Z with his blade,  
a Z that stands for Zorro.

Zorro, Zorro, the fox so cunning and free,  
Zorro, Zorro, who makes the sign of the Z.  
Zorro, Zorro, Zorro, Zorro, Zorro<sup>25</sup> (Cotter)

Sometimes as facilitator I am that solitary figure, gathering my wits about me, trying to make my skills fit a situation. Or not....

How does this happen in my own journeys from facilitating one workshop landscape to another?

### **Nomadic Wanderings**

Think of a fire sending its sparks out into the atmosphere, landing on receptive soil and burning again, trying to renew those relations between the bodily acts of walking through a life while at the same time undertaking the spiritual, intellectual and emotional acts of understanding the world.

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<sup>25</sup> Zorro, "Spanish for 'fox', is the story of a masked rider who battles the unjust rules of the pueblo of Los Angeles during the days of Spanish rule" [Cotter]. He was like Batman and Superman – one character in day-to-day life and another as the masked freedom fighter. But always one and the same person.

What is that fire? What feeds it? And what were those sparks that we were/are?

Exile, departures, leavings. Wanderings in the wilderness hoping for a promise of home yet overwhelmed by the threat of renewed homelessness.

What better way to enact theatre than to do it in this state of dispersal and impermanence?

I sit in the tension between being nomad and being sedentary, between wandering and staying put, becoming part of a place but also moving on.

### **Nomadic arrivals**

The quality of recognition in any experience suggests a meeting of something already present within with something in the environment (Bateson 1994, 201).

*Siritinti, Mali, June, 1994; the end of the dry season.*

*Everyone in the village was awaiting the annual rains to begin their seeding of corn, millet and beans. Waiting. Watching the skies. Is that cloud in the distance the rain? Or just another dust storm?*

*It had been a long adventure to arrive here. Missed connections, long nights, rides in the back of pickup trucks. Visits to historical villages. Becoming part of the landscape of the Sahel. Waiting. Sleeping on the roof of Cheikh's house. Waking up at dawn to the sounds of the students chanting the Koran below me. Hearing stories. Sitting around one evening drawing a map in the red dust as to where I came from and where we were. Making connections. Finding out what? Wondering what I could contribute.*

Translation marks a stage in the continued life of a technique, "a watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own" (Benjamin 1968, 73). In this

tension between the development of the original through the birth of its application there is a tension between fidelity and freedom to experiment in new contexts, and learn that I will always be surprised.....

*I was asked to lead a week-long theatre workshop for actors at the Festival Internationale de Théâtre pour le Développement in Ougadougou, Burkina-Faso. To begin one session I decided to use **Wolf and the Caribou**, an energizer I had learned at a Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance Festival in Canada a few years earlier. This activity involves one participant – the wolf – and the rest of the group – the caribou, where the weakest caribou of the herd is stalked by the wolf and the rest of the caribou protect its kin. If the wolf was able to capture the single caribou, then that person/caribou became another wolf, and a new weaker one was hunted. Much energy is generated in this process as the wolves slowly stalked the herd and the caribou, in spiralling movement, guarded its weaker animals. Senses were aroused – the wolves' sense of sight as they honed in for the kill; the caribou's sense of being sighted and knowing which one of them was being targeted. And a sense of community slowly emerged as they protected each other from predation.*

*In Burkina-Faso, I knew they didn't know the wolf, nor the caribou, but they did know other animals of their landscape. So in that gymnasium I selected (from my own limited experience of Africa) two parallel animal species – the jackal and the gazelle.*

*Similar to the wolf and caribou, the game began with one jackal the hunter and the rest of the group the gazelles the hunted. The jackal, searching for food, spied a herd of gazelles grazing near a waterhole. It saw one weak gazelle slowly moving along and went in for the kill. To my amazement, all the other gazelle's scattered and there was an easy kill. Now there were two jackals. They looked for another weak gazelle and once again the herd scattered to all corners of the room, making the capture quite easy. Senses were aroused and flight ensued. As soon as the jackal identified their prey, pandemonium ensued as the other gazelles scattered away from the predator, running just ran as fast as they could away from it.*

*I stopped the activity and shouted, "No, why aren't you protecting the weak one being*

attacked?" "Oh, the 'gazelles' answered, "everyone knows that gazelles never work together. It's each gazelle for itself. That's the only way they can survive!"

*I explained the purpose of the game was to protect the weak animals.*

*"Oh, you should have used another animal as the prey!"*

*A moment of mis/understanding, a moment when the metaphor of the game crossed over with the game of the metaphor. I had asked them to react to the chase as if they were the animal being chased. And they did!*

*Another moment: each actor was given a little sheet of paper. On it written the name of an animal and its gender. Each actor was to find their mate by acting like the animal as I recounted the moments of an animals life. Everyone went merrily on their way but I saw two young people from Mali still sitting there, doing nothing. I looked at their paper, it said giraffe (f) and elephant (m). I went over to their group leader and asked the young people through him what the problem was, was it they didn't know how to "be" a giraffe and an elephant? No, the group leader said quietly, "they can't read. And besides even if they did they only read Bambara. And besides they have never seen a giraffe ... there are very few animals in their village."*

This seems like a simple story of mis-matching and mis-understanding. But it also symbolizes how I was in this workshop setting in this hot gymnasium, outside the context of the participants' lives *and* landscapes. This was before my trip "en bach." through the Sahel to their village and before I had become immersed in the landscape of an African journey and before I had a chance to experience the intersections of a living theatre and a theatre of living.

### **Nomadic Travels**

What do I learn by using a technique in particular contexts? For example, like the story above, I may learn something in a "training" workshop or a conference. What would be different if I were to use the technique in a particular local community setting? The temptation when I learn new

exercises is to concentrate on the technique itself, rather than how we are affected by it. Much as Boal's Forum Theatre is a place to "rehearse" actions for the world outside the workshop or stage, I as facilitator take something in one context and apply it to another context. This involves translation. I learn something in one context; I take it into another place, another time, with other people. I try and be loyal to the original method with all its underlying forms and *raison d'être*s, but I also must allow it to flow in (inter)action.

As inter-actions, popular theatre practices are a form of metaxic text where internal relationships in theatrical work activates, through resonance, external ones to the world beyond the theatre. As such, theatrical processes are meaningful actions of importance which move "beyond" the initial situation. They not only mirror the initial experience but also open up a world, opening up interpretation through "present *praxis*" (Ricoeur 1981, 208).

Benjamin (1968) says that the "basic error of the translator is (s)he perceives the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue" (81). This is perhaps what happened in that Ouagadougou gymnasium.

This example is somewhat similar to something that happened to me a couple of years ago. I ran into a high school drama teacher whose class I had worked with the previous school year. She asked me how a recent theatre education conference had gone. I proceeded to tell her about this exciting workshop I had been to and where I had learned some interesting new approaches. I shared one exercise I had learned which tried to build consensus and team-work through a theatre game I had previously used. Her response was, "oh, my students would just try and sabotage such a game."

I share this story not to discuss why she might have said such a thing, nor to examine my own naiveté about the potential difficulties in applying a theatre game learned with university teachers to a group for teenagers. I relate the encounter to point out that this might be an example of where this teacher's reference point of HER class might prevent her from being affected by the

possibilities of a new approach.<sup>26</sup>

*I met Beatriz Cabral at a drama in education research conference in Victoria in 1997. A resident of Florianopolis, Brazil she had done graduate study in Britain looking at the drama work of Dorothy Heathcote working in Yorkshire. Her city in Brazil where she was now working was completely different from Yorkshire. I asked her how she applied the Heathcote approach. She said, "well, the techniques had to change, we were in a different place, so the content was different." She had immersed herself in Heathcote's work and knew it in its context in Britain. I remember her saying that in bringing the work developed in England back to Brazil she was forced, by the circumstances, by the context and the people she worked with in Brazil to change her practice, or rather, her praxis. The methodology she had learned in England changed as she applied it in the realities of poor communities in Brazil. The method had to change in action. It then became easier to realize its potential and difficulties back in Brazil. A form of translated action happened when a Brazilian theatre educator worked in Britain, then returned to Brazil.*

How do such possibilities emerge through translation? Spivak (1993) addresses this in regard to the translating of written text. She argues that translation is "the most intimate act of reading," so we must first "surrender to the text" (183) and respond to its special call, thus enabling the limits of the original language be shown because "that rhetorical aspect will point at the silence of the absolute fraying of language that the text wards off, in its special manner" (183). My task as the drama facilitator is to facilitate this love between the original and its shadow. Within the translation that is my leading of workshops is the potential to hold me back from who I am and the demands of my own imagined or actual audience at bay.

When we get into this Self/Other dichotomy (ie. the translated text/the text) our temptation is to try and understand, to "true see" (Phelan 1993, 174). Rather, we must train ourselves in the patient acceptance of the perpetual failure of in/sight (174). The inevitability of my misunderstanding might lead to generative and hopeful moments. In this way, mis/understanding becomes an "attempt to walk (and live) on the rickety bridge between self and other – and not the

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<sup>26</sup> I explore other aspects of this encounter on pages 90-91.

attempt to arrive at one side or the other – that we discover real hope” (Phelan, 174).

This then becomes a pedagogy which refuses the acquisitive model of knowledge (Phelan, 173) and accepts the generative power of “just about” understanding. Playing bodies, Playing roles, Playing at being someone else.

Language, of course, is not everything. But it is a clue that enables us to cross boundaries. “The ways in which rhetoric or figurations disrupt logic themselves point to the possibility of random contingency, beside language, around language.” In translation, “meaning hops into the spacey emptiness between two named historical languages, we get perilously close *to control*. By juggling the disruptions to our understandings that break the surface in not necessarily connected ways, we begin to feel the “selvedges of the language-textile give way, fray into frayages” (180).

Through this term *frayages*, Spivak leads me back to facilitation as she points out that the word *facilitation* is the English translation of the term *Bahnung* (pathing), which is translated as frayage in French. The psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud’s uses *Bahnung* (1895) to refer to when energies flow in the brain and run into certain resistance. When the energy finds a passage, there is a permanent reduction in the resistance. That is where there is said to be *facilitation*. Energies will opt for a facilitated pathway rather than for one where no facilitation has occurred.

The history of the language, the history of the artist's moment, the history of the language in-and-as translation, must figure in the weaving (of translation). My own experiences, the theatrical exercises/games and techniques I use, in different ways in varying contexts come together in a complex spiral of telling being doing.

I think of when I was in that village in Mali. I would often think that these experiences seemed very foreign to me, and that I would be unable to transmit or share my experiences with others. Thinking that way prevented me from embracing that experience of engagement with the Other, that original experience in that land space. Consequently, I tried to be mindful of my experiences, savouring their taste, smell and motion. I took a few notes, but wrote little. Yet on my return I was able to share my stories as the experiences returned through the writing (and still do to this

day). The experiences were still foreign and incomprehensible, and forced me to question values, actions and attitudes.

On my return, though, I was asked to convey something about this experience in an article that appeared the next year in a development agency's newsletter:

*Siritinti, Niger delta of Mali:* A good example of the need for theatre and cultural expression was in the Bambara village where I was invited to facilitate a theatre workshop for young boys ( 8 - 14 years) old. This village was composed of sorghum, rice and corn farmers and some fishers in the Niger delta of Mali. I was in Mali at the end of the dry season where many were out preparing their land for the time when water would come.

In these isolated villages, the *Institute d'éducation populaire* of Mali has two animateurs who have started small schools. Like in much of rural Mali, these villages have no state-run schools (though there are Koranic schools run by the local marabout.) So the Institute, with support from Oxfam America has opened some small schools where boys and girls (separately more because of home duties as well as cultural reasons) attend every day until the rains come. The girls attend in the morning and late evening after home chores are done; the boys in the early evening after they return from the fields. This, of course, conflicts with the requirements of family and field. At many times the parent would come to fetch the child and pull them out of class. Cheikh Omar Coulibaly, the male animateur was continually frustrated by this...he told me that children in these villages are viewed as sources of labour for the family, and thus have no life of their own..

The life in these villages is hard, though there is no lack of water in the wells and, good crops and Allah willing, no lack of food. On the other hand, Cheikh is trying to give these children a life other than the field and foyer...encouraging sports or, in the case of my visit, cultural expression using dance, drums and theatre. Cheikh had attended my workshop in Ouaga (along with a non-literate female member of the community who spoke only Bambara – the father of this girl was praising of me and Cheikh for giving her the opportunity to see life outside her village). He had also seen WAMDE, a Burkinabe children's theatre group that incorporates schooling and cultural expression. He wanted to start a similar process in this community by exciting the children and adults of the community through my visit.

I asked the children whether they had ever done any theatre. No, they said but we're interested. An hour later, in the light of a kerosene lamp, some boys come to sit with me. One begins to talk. I ask Cheikh, what is he talking about. Cheikh replies, "they are sharing stories; they want you to share one too." Theatre for these children is something staged, something separate from everyday life. Telling stories, spinning tales, singing, celebrating through traditional ceremonies is not our view of theatre.

Yet it is, in a way. For centuries, the celebrations and traditions around the hunt, the harvest, weddings, funerals, etc. were carried on and passed on. As Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o says in *Decolonising the mind* (1986), "[d]rama has origins in human struggles with nature and with others...it was part and parcel of the rhythm of daily and seasonal life of the community. It was an activity among others; often drawing its energy from those other activities. It was British colonialism that destroyed that tradition"(36-37) with classical theatre and radio drama.

There was enormous interest among 25 boys in the workshop I gave and an adult member of the community helped in some of the exercises. I have never worked with such a group, one eager for knowledge and focused and concentrated on the theatre exercises we were doing. It is hoped that over the next year, a cultural group can be formed in this community. But that will require more cooperation from the community. For example, the children have no access to musical instruments even though an adult social development movement has drums but will not lend them out.

In October 1994, I received a letter from Cheikh. In it he states he completed the workshop I had begun and that, "there was no need to evaluate the success of it, such was the smiles of joy, pleasure and satisfaction on the faces of the boys" (Linds, 1995).

## **Fremd/Toubab/Etranger: The Dance of Mis/Understanding**

The existential tension between “home” and “exile” at once distinguishes our human situation and also is the very condition that makes understanding possible (Keremmann, 252).

The article above was an attempt to convey my own understandings of what I experienced. It also shows that my experience lived beyond my being there enabling a reflection on the effects of my work as I read Cheikh’s letter. But when understanding is conceived as embodied, familiarity and strangeness become not simply rational assessments of my experiences but ways in which I actually experience being-in-the-world. Strangeness means living through a situation like the one I was in in Siritinti where I might feel confused, unable to find my bearings. The familiar is that which I live through as an experience of affirmation and comfort, a condition of belonging, of being at home. In contrast, I find myself in a liminal space, “not quite at home in the world, yet not entirely estranged from it” (Keremmann, 252), pulled between the familiarity of why I was there (to conduct a theatre workshop), and the strangeness of being there.

For example, there I was in West Africa, a theatre facilitator running a workshop in this Bambara village in the space behind those mud walls. I was, to borrow from Derrida (1998), *of*, but *not of* this space. But my being-in-those-spaces was embodied materially (through my drama techniques) in my own presence or absence there. In the article above, I may be able communicate *about* theatre for development in West Africa, but how do I bring these diasporic practices to Canada, especially since I am an outsider, a non-schoolteacher/ schoolteacher working in a high school in Regina, working, for example, with special needs kids? I am the Fremd, stranger/foreigner, the *toubab*. I was comfortable in the strangeness of being toubab as I lived in the space of my difference in West Africa, much as I was comfortable after the initial shock of being called *blanc*, *blanc* (white, white but also a double meaning of foreigner) when I was working in Haiti in the late 1970’s. Could this dis/comfortability be something to do with always being an outsider, outsidened as a Jewish teenager in Regina, where the small community meant I was always the outsider looking in/on? Or, as Jacques Derrida (1998) so eloquently writes in *Monolingualism of the Other*, within the conundrum of “I only have one language; yet it is not mine”(2)? These are

questions brought on by Derrida's reading of language and identity, as well as my own experiences as I think about my work.

At the *Festival Internationale de Théâtre pour le Développement (F.I.T.D)* in Ouagadougou, there were several plays from Europe on racism against immigrants. A German theatre group had performed *Fremd* (Stranger/Foreigner) (Welt 1994), a play that used iconic myth to explore racism, the story of God sending a black Adam to Earth and the difficulty Adam had crossing borders. Having to wear certain clothes, to do certain menial jobs. Always finding tension and difficulty and interrogation. The Belgian theatre troupe *Compagnie Broccoli* did a more conventional play on a similar theme, and I attended one performance for a rural audience just outside of Ouagadougou. A performance of a play about foreignness in French to an audience that spoke only More, one of the languages of Burkina-Faso, yet I felt communication across the divide about a theme that touched their lives.

Perhaps it is this status of "toubab/Fremde/étranger" that enables me to continually adapt to changing circumstances. Being always in the space of the in-between, constantly negotiating space. Or saddled with, on the other hand, what I have come to call the *Zelig* complex.

In his 1983 movie, *Zelig*, Woody Allen explored an (exaggerated) aspect of Jewishness that resonated with me, of fitting in by actually changing his way of speaking, his mannerisms, his body, his very being. Always trying to fit in, but always being the Outsider:

A comical pseudo-documentary about an ordinary man named Leonard Zelig whose chameleon-like social skills place him in most of the 20th century's defining moments. Zelig is able to transform himself into a reasonable copy of those around him, altering both body and mannerism. Allen stars as Leonard Zelig, who copes with his social insecurities by becoming exactly like whomever he's with at the moment—a Greek waiter, a black musician, Babe Ruth, Adolf Hitler (Allen 1983).

In addressing the perils of assimilation, Allen crafts a statement about being Jewish in America.

What does this *Zelig*-like adaptation look like in nomadic facilitation practice?

For an *Association for Canadian Theatre Research* conference in May, 2000 I wrote and performed a script to explore one embodied metaphor for the journeys of facilitation which I literally carried forward from my African journey:

## Scripting A(d)venture

### The T-Shirt

*Audio: Super Rail Band de la sortie de gare de Bamako*

At the closing ceremonies of the Theatre for Development festival in Ouagadougou in 1994 I was given two gifts

*Bring out statue and present it to the audience*

A large bronze statue commemorating the festival that I would have to lug around Africa and Europe for another two months, and,

a T-shirt

*Warren puts on T-shirt*

that I would wear through my journeys in the Sahel.

The statue still remains incongruous, as it is heavy. It is a memento, a 16 inch high representation of an actor and a drum. An artifact. The T-shirt, on the other hand, imbued with the red dust of the desert, serves as a continual reminder of the aspects of that experiencing that still seeps out of my pores.

No, these experiences are not just stories of my histories of engaging in theatre, they are part of me. Wearing that T-shirt, I literally carry that environment as part of me. And specks of red dust cling to my skin as I shed the T-shirt and then transfer to other shirts I may wear.

Listening to the African music beat of the “Super Rail Band de la sortie de la Gare de Bamako” (a band that literally played in a hotel just outside the train station in the capital of Mali) I am, at once, carried back to Siritinti, just as I carry Siritinti back here in this writing.

## Travelling Community

How and what we do depends on so much; what are the communities we work with, whether they are already a community with a history, or whether they are a community who meet because of a common experience but do not know one another.... It is, so to speak, the skeleton on which the movement, the analysis, the action and the empowerment can safely hang (Lib Spry in Smith 1996, 13).

Deleuze and Guattari (1988) emphasize that the nomad is not defined by movement, but is one "who does not move" (381). In contrast to the migrant, who leaves behind a milieu that has become hostile (think of the Jews leaving Egypt after Passover), the nomad is one who does not depart, does not want to depart, who clings to the smooth space left by the receding forest, where the steppe or desert advances, and who develops nomadism as a response to this challenge, always crossing the boundaries between these eco-systems.

As nomad, I as facilitator, have an effect much like in crystallization, which is a process "which may be observed in the passage from a metastable, amorphous state to a stable crystalline state. Crystallization begins when a 'seed' crystal (or a different substance with an analogous structure) is introduced into a substance which is in an amorphous state" (Bogue 1989, 62). I think of the traveller out in a journey, "en passage" in French. Passing through, but also absorbing the spaces and times of a new land. The seed crystal communicates its state to a molecule of the substance, which then communicates its shape to another, and so on. Of course, in this process both the 'seed' crystal and the hosting substance change! In the crystal, the species and the individual are simultaneously determined, the seed dictating what kind of crystal will be formed (species) and the specific conditions of crystallization dictating the characteristics of the individual crystal.

According to Phillip Zarrilli (1995), intercultural performance is "the process being inspired by encounters with non-Western performance to forge alternative dramatic forms, techniques and/or discourse of acting" (74). However, though some of these encounters "led to the crystallization of

some of their concepts, [they] accomplished little in terms of helping westerners to understand the complexities of these genres within their cultures of origin” (74). On the other hand, many non-Western dramatists, directors and actors have forged new dramatic forms and modes of performance which meld indigenous cultural concepts and techniques with what they borrow from western mythology, drama, theory or techniques. For example, Zarrilli notes that Bertolt Brecht's theories have vitalized activist theatre through the developing world.

The drama facilitator could be limited to the one way process of technique acquisition which Zarrilli refers to. However, if we conceive of this work as “passing through” as nomadic practitioners then we can see the possibilities of a circular, no, an enfolding process, of a two way process. Nomadic tribes impose no fixed or sedentary boundaries on a territory, but occupy a space to the extent of their capabilities and then move on. Nomadic encampments, each its own configuration of tents, flocks and tribesmen, are structured in improvisational conformity to topographical, meteorological and internal tribal/social constraints.

Is popular theatre such a nomadic phenomena? Or is it more migratory, with a departure but no arrival? Its techniques develop, borrow from particular contexts, and travel across boundaries. Popular theatre has as an implicit underpinning the idea of community. The local, but also the connections to the wider world. How in these nomadic adventures do I bring parts of those environments to my work, along with my stories, my experiences, the techniques and awareness?

### **Crossings and Re-crossings**

You can't stop the waves

But you can learn to surf

(Satachidanda, quoted in Craig 1996, 286)

In the dance that is the interplay of a drama process each of us resonates with each other and the biosphere. As we individually change we do so in accord with others and the biosphere, much like the surfer must maintain the delicate balance with their surf board or be swallowed by the waves. I and the circumstances in which I work change together. Another way of putting this is in thinking

about our feet in relation to our shoes; we make the space in the shoe fit us more comfortably as we wear it in, while our feet are simultaneously changed by the shoe. As others and the biosphere are systems with their own dynamic, they in turn are triggering changes in us.

This organismic adaptability and intricate dance (Pippin 1997, 66) of mutual change between organism and the environment it is part of is at odds with a more traditional view of an organism living *in* an environment. The relationship of cause and effect on each other means that specific techniques can manipulate for planned change. The concept of a living system, on the other hand, involves coupling *with* other systems and the whole biosphere, change factors multiply.

This aspect of facilitation requires a special commitment to reflection and scrutiny, demanding that the facilitator be intensely connected to the experiences of the group while at the same time being separate from them. This is a skill that provides the foundation of a very difficult, but necessary task: comprehending all the interaction patterns that one is a part of; yet, paradoxically the facilitator is also complicitly involved in these patterns, sitting on the boundary between being “a part of” the group and being “apart from” the group.

I must participate for in participating I am moving alongside the group; but I also must be able to reflect on this process I am participating in. The only way to do this in order to avoid becoming totally in my mind, is to be in my body. Using all my senses. I am an observer; I am a listener; I am a smeller; I am a thinker; I am an actor. I must be able to reflect on my own emotions and feelings as they are evoked by the actions of the group. I must scrutinize these thoughts, constantly analysing the meanings; and make myself available as a conduit between and amongst the group.

A friend of mine recently asked me: what is this intersection between me and the group, such that I, working in front of them, have a credibility that enables them to trust me in the process?

The fabric of all experiential events emerges in social interaction, the texture being created out of what the participants bring to their interactions with each other and with the facilitator, together with the interpretations attached to those interactions by the facilitator and the members, whose

relationship is deeply symbiotic. The facilitator depends on the members of the group, on their behaviours and effects, both those expressed and those kept latent, for his/her interpretative material. At the same time, members, in depending on the facilitator for guidance and direction, even when this is not being offered, are mutually making the facilitator into a shared repository for their projections, projections that contribute a great deal to the group's character.

### **Stories across boundaries**

What I remember most of all from workshops I have taken with Augusto Boal are his stories, rather than techniques he shares or the particular relationships he has with people in them. He shares many of these memories, which are a form of "mythologising of his own event" (Johnston, 20), as he introduces a particular exercise. This is also the case in his books. Anecdotal accounts serve to contextualize his work in different contexts. These are not only illustrations of the effect of theatre work, but a link within the workshop world to the world outside the workshop, and particularly with the world of other groups, other communities, engaged in similar and different endeavours.

These stories also connect me to those other communities and the work being done around the world. I use them, too, to illustrate the potential effect of a particular activity, or to make participants aware that they are part of a larger world of popular theatre.

These stories don't appear out of thin air. They are intertwined with the particular theatre game/exercise or approach I am sharing at a particular time. I am not only transmitting these stories orally as a form of practical knowledge, but I am also enfolded in, and unfolding from, the physical action that is within the techniques I am leading. Stories then become part of my work and not something that I am just recounting to an audience.

These stories

hold, in their narrative layers, the sedimented knowledge  
accumulated by our progenitors ... The practical knowledge, the

moral patterns and social taboos, and indeed the very language or manner of speech of any nonwriting culture maintain themselves primarily through narrative chants, myths, legends and trickster tales – that is, through the telling of stories (Abram 1997, 181).

But stories are not just episodes in a facilitator's life. "Episodes are a succession of details which have no inner coherence and for that very reason have no permanent significance. An adventure, however, interrupts the customary course of events, but is positively and significantly related to the context which it interrupts" (Gadamer, 69).

The adventurous process that is the theatre workshop is composed of oral and non-verbal interactions. These things that have happened to me are translated into actions as they create layers of history and meaning. Sharing stories of my experiences, though, is limited. I am also linked to the work of others who I have learned with and from. And they, too, have their own stories that have been passed on to me. Of course, as Abram underlines, "the stories told within oral culture are often deeply bound to the earthly landscape inhabited by that culture" (182) and, consequently, every re-telling loses a connection to the original place. But I also feel that re-told tales not only become dis-connected but also re-connect in the telling in new landscapes. And a drama workshop is a particular localized place, with its own geography of space. So stories told of my own experience in another place, another time, will always be connected by the work – ie, the actions I am engaged in with others.

It is this aspect of translation that interests me. How in these nomadic adventures, through that dialogue with the world, that process of *osmosis* (Boal 1995), do I bring parts of those environments to my work, along with my stories, my experiences, the techniques and awareness? Inhaling the world of breaths and exhaling my breath into the world, this breath "is the very mystery that enables life to live, uniting our breathing bodies not only with the under-the-ground, and not only with the beyond-the-horizon but also with the interior life of all that we perceive in the open field of the living present ... this air is the soul of the visible landscape, the secret realm from whence all beings draw their nourishment" (Abram 1997, 226), joining me with all that I come into encounter with.

Osmosis means there is an interweaving of societal values in the body, values, ideas, tastes. The role of the theatrical process is to make the dialogue between stage and audience totally transitive and transparent. The smallest cells contain all values of society. The role of theatre is to help these values emerge for investigation. And because the theatrical process is in the world, it has the values of the world within it. So we must transform theatre to transform the world.

This is not without its difficulties.

### **Mis/translations**

*Theatre of the Oppressed* is not a Bible, not a Recipe Book: it is a method to be used by people, and people are more important than the method (Boal 1998, 120).

Roberta J. Herter, a high school teacher in Detroit, Michigan outlines a case study (1998) of a program where middle and upper-class university students worked with a group of working-class African American students in a central Detroit high school. Guided by the writings of Freire and Boal, these students sought to engage the high school youth in *Theatre of the Oppressed*. However, the life experiences of the college students, plus the lack of a dialogue between them and the high school youth “left the college students’ lives unexposed” (160). What they had learned in their university English classes could never really “capture the complexity of the group of students they would meet at the high school; neither had their suburban high schools prepared them for an inner-city classroom” (158).

This provides an example of mis/translation. Rather than being open to the experience, Herter says the students saw their learnings as the “true and only legitimate form for a theatrical politics” (Schutz 2000, 243). This prevented a dialogic space from being created about, for example, what type of liberatory theatre the college students were proposing to do and why. They hadn’t been able to adapt the process learned in college to the interests the youth had to contrast “the everyday level of their lives with an imagined ideal” (Herter, 161).

In the travels from the suburban world of the college students, through their college classrooms to the high school, the theories and practices of Boal and Freire did not change in their application. Herter suggests that the one-way process where the college students elicited experiences from the high school students while not sharing their own stories or their own understandings of the purposes of the theatre, left the high school students confused. As a result, issues of power emerged and Herter found that the response of some of the high school youth to the application of these theories in their lives generated resistance (Schutz, 244). This points out to me the importance of not only an openness to the lives of those I work with, but also the need to create a “dialogic” (Schutz, 244), shared space of investigation.

*March 1996. A workshop at the International Conference of Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). A story is being told about the treatment of Chicano youth in a mid-western American city. The witness of the incident, a white Jewish Uruguayan woman, shared the experience and then played a Chicano youth in the play we created. The question she outlined in the story was why she hadn't done anything about the mistreatment. When I suggested to the facilitators that it would be far more useful in this context to explore the role of the witness/storyteller (especially since the participants in the workshop were mostly like the storyteller), they responded that Boal always focuses on the oppressed and the participant defined the oppressed as the Chicano youth. Besides, one said, “we are facilitating this workshop as if we were Boal.”*

*May, 2000. Another TO facilitator is on the phone. We are talking about an annual conference being held in the United States on Theatre of the Oppressed. He shares an incident that happened at the last one he attended. There had been a long discussion about TO and what is the “correct” way to undertake TO; what would Boal do in certain cases, etc. Finally, frustrated, he related to the assembled group how Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal developed this work in the 60's and 70's in Brazil in their particular political and social contexts, so what is so wrong with adapting it to different situations in North America in the 90's? He said to me that his comments were met with cold silence.*

*June 2000. I am at another conference on the same theme chatting with a theatre educator and*

*TO facilitator from a large American university. He has just completed a study of the use of TO with Grade 3 and 4 elementary students. One of the goals of the study was to see how "pristine" TO techniques work or don't work with that particular age group. I ask him what he means by "pristine." He responds, "doing the exercises 'exactly' as described in Boal's books."*

### **Performing amongst Local Knowledge Traditions**

Such journeys into different landscapes of practice take me into popular theatre as both a global and local phenomenon. The world is becoming more and more global yet, at the same time, more and more localized in our communities and traditions. How do these at times opposed qualities interact through cultural and pedagogical practices?

The Australian science sociologist David Turnbull (1993-94) has been investigating "local knowledge traditions" which emerge from the local landscape and co-exist with influences coming from the outside. These local knowledge traditions are simply the strategies of community, social, cultural, or economic development but are also spatial in that they link people, sites and skills. Using examples of the achievements of gothic cathedral building, Polynesian navigation, modern cartography, Indonesian rice farming and Western science, Turnbull finds ways for diverse knowledge traditions to coexist rather than one displacing the other.

To ensure the diversity of these traditions (rather than their being absorbed into some mass "global order" [Barnet and Cavanagh 1994, 22 ] where a sense of place is lost), Turnbull outlines how disparate traditions have worked together to create a third space of hybridity,<sup>27</sup> where local knowledge traditions can be "reframed, decentred and the social organization of trust can be negotiated. This is a process of what African theatre scholar Bala Musa (1998) terms "glocalization" (142) where there is an adaptation to the global environment while staying sensitive to local needs, where trust can be negotiated as the "local, the particular, the specific, and the individual are not homogenized but are enabled to talk back" (48). There is an interwoven relationship between theatre and changes in the culture as a whole. Wilson and Dissanayake

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<sup>27</sup> I draw here on Venkatasawmy's (1996) analysis of hybridity in Australian cinema where, quoting cultural theorist Stuart Hall, he refers to a conception of diasporic identities as "those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (Hall 1990, 235).

(1996) call these *transnational imagineries*: “the *as-yet unfigured* horizon of contemporary cultural production by which national spaces/identities of political allegiance and economic regulation are being undone and imagined communities of modernity are being reshaped at both the macropolitical (global) and micropolitical (cultural) levels of everyday existence” (6).

Engaging in popular theatre work involves working at both levels and being adaptable between the two. Our work is tied to specific local contexts and individual stories, yet is also open to the world as the experiences we have in the world provide the energy and commitment. As facilitators of this process I am a translator in action as the translations, embodied in our own practices, are connected to the world.

The knowledge of our practices are not simply information, it is also performative, involving a “complex heterogenous blend of knowledge, practice, trusted authority, spiritual values and local social and cultural organization: a knowledge space” (Turnbull 1997, 560). This means knowledge is knowing that is constantly being negotiated in its performing. With this perspective the popular theatre workshop is a site where the emergence of a third space of hybridity could grow out of a process that has enabled disparate local knowledge traditions to be performed together, rather than seeing one displacing another.

How does this happen? Edward Said (1983) writes of the process by which theories travel into new environments. This involves “processes of representation and institutionalization different from those at the point of origin” (226), complicating how theories are transplanted and transformed in new landscapes. There is, however, a pattern to these travels as theories emerge from initial circumstances, then there is a journey or passage through various contexts, a set of conditions of acceptance or resistance which confront the transplanted theory or idea and finally the idea is transformed through new uses and in its now changed position in the new time and place. Because I feel theories are also a set of practices and my drama facilitation includes theories and a set of practices, Said’s account of “travelling theory” is relevant here. In order to avoid theory/practices becoming a new “cultural dogma ... where they quickly acquire the status of authority” (Said, 247), my practices must remain a living, organic dynamic, responsive to the landscapes I work in. Said warns, “left to its own specialists and acolytes, so to speak, theory

tends to have walls erected around itself" (247). I must move skeptically in the world of my practice, trying things out, ready to change, ready to look for alternatives.

This conception of the travelling of theory and practices as a process of continuous translation means the transformative theatre process, though it may emerge in a certain place, is transformed in work in other countries and transformed again in practice in North America. For example, when Augusto Boal began working in exile in Europe he encountered stories of oppression that were far different from what he had dealt with in Latin America. In *The Rainbow of Desire* (1995) Adrian Jackson, his translator, states:

Boal's transplantation to the West brought him into contact, particularly in his workshops, with people who found it less easy than peasant and worker groups in Brazil and other Latin American countries, to synthesise their experience of the world into the sort of Manichaeian equation suggested by the terms "oppressor" and "oppressed"; this confrontation – and the resulting proposition by groups of "emptiness," "fear" and the like as fit "oppressions" to treat with his work – led directly to the invention or discovery of Cop in the Head/Rainbow of Desire techniques (xix).

Augusto's first reaction to the stories he was hearing in Europe was that

for someone like me, fleeing explicit dictatorships of a cruel and brutal nature, it was natural that these themes should at first seem superficial and scarcely worthy of attention ... I was used to working with concrete, visible oppressions.

Little by little, I changed my opinion (8).

My work, too, across disciplines and in other places in the world means that my knowledge about things are made foreign to me. The techniques and approaches in popular theatre are something of

a foreign language (Ellsworth 1997) to me. I must inhabit this text of teaching/learning differently. Once explored, these foreign languages reside nearby just beyond the boundaries of my practice. Their borders are permeable. They are the stuff of the subsurface dramas that constantly are ready to erupt into my best-laid plans. When I begin to view things from these shadows, these shadows ask me to re-vision my teaching. I am not talking here about using theatre to serve traditional pedagogical ends, nor to correct my understanding about teaching, but to engage in a paradox – how can such practices be taught? How did I learn them if they were foreign knowledge (Ellsworth 1997) to me?

These are discourses and practices that support and even demand a revision of the meaning of my teaching. The idea isn't to turn around and cast a light upon those shadows that are following me and that I am following (ie. to make the foreign understandable and continuous with what I am familiar with), nor discovering something that can then be added into or used to correct my teaching. I must stray into these “the alien yet uncannily familiar shadows” cast by my own knowing about education and theatre.

These paradoxes open up possibilities. They don't close them off. They trace my limits as a facilitator and at the same time challenge those limits. In order to turn and face those shadows behind my back, that past that is continually catching up to me, I have to continue to stray into unfamiliar fields as my practice is continually defined in the foreignness of my practice, a practice that breaches the defined circle in the name of continually learning.

When I turn about and face the shadows, I won't find myself reflected there. They won't be confirmed, enlightened, or made continuous with my interests, understandings or desires. But I will find myself and my practices continually unsettled by the paradoxes and empowered and condemned in those paradoxes (Ellsworth, 194-95).

*March 2000. I am working with a group of special needs students over a 2 month period, going into their classroom twice a week, helping them develop a little play on their chosen theme – gossip and how it leads to violence. There is a constant to and froing of the cast as the students walk in and out of class.*

*One day I am rehearsing a scene with them where the main male actor is to play a jilted boyfriend and is pushed to fight the person who, he is told, has taken his girlfriend. This actor is having problems playing the angry boyfriend. He seems quite passive. Finally the teacher suggests that I become an actor to enact the scene with the second actor. I am taken aback. This method "requires" the actors to investigate their characters through their own actions. Now I am to model these actions for them? I reluctantly take the stage and suddenly become a 17 year old high school student. It works fine. The teacher says afterwards this idea of modeling is a strategy she constantly uses with the students due to the trouble they have with some new concepts.*

*March, 2001. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. I am Joking<sup>28</sup> a forum scene on homophobia in the locker room and in sports. The audience is quite involved and wants to add more interventions while ones are going on. With a hand up and a shaking head, I hold them back so that the person trying something out can complete their (inter)action. Finally, there is a particularly interesting intervention on behalf of a basketball player who is being victimized by his teammates. It ends. A hand goes up.*

*"Who do you want to replace?" I ask.*

*"The coach but I want the actors to play the scene as if it was the changed scene from the previous intervention," the audience members shout.<sup>29</sup>*

I have travelled many kilometres. As each kilometre passes by, I absorb the wind, the sun, the landscapes that I pass through. I will not know what happens in the next stage of this journey, but I carry these memories with/in me, ready to emerge in a new encounter.

*June, 1994. In front of Cheikh's house in Siritinti, on the flat, red plain of the Niger delta. At the end of the dry season it seemed like a desert but I was told the rains would soon come and the land would flower in green. One evening I saw a cloud in the sky off in the distance; but, as it*

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<sup>28</sup> Joking is the method that a Joker uses in a Forum theatre performance.

<sup>29</sup> Forum theatre involves playing and re-playing a particular scene several times as spectators intervene, replacing a character to try to explore alternatives ways of dealing with the situation.

*passed overhead it was yet another storm of swirling red dust.*

The rains will come one day. The red dust will turn green as new shoots of maize, millet and beans emerge. The boys will go out into the fields with their fathers with memories of a theatre workshop long ago. And I, too, will continue to see those adventures en aventure re-emerge in my living work.

## Embodying Travelling:

### *Shaman*

The first mask in our workshop that I, as writer, and you, as reader, will meet is Shaman. Chris Johnston (1998) includes the Shaman in his description of some predecessors and disciplines that the drama facilitator draws on. The shaman leaves the tribe, and returns to connect it to the spirits and energies he has encountered. But the shaman is not “possessed”. Rather, he is always in control of the “inhabiting energies” (55). By acting provocatively through the use of rhythm, movement, mask and symbolic objects, Shaman releases these energies within the participants. This is often a “powerful, sometimes disturbing, often invigorating” (55) process.

Acting in a syntonic<sup>30</sup> way, the shaman is a healer imbued with spirit but, s/he derives this ability from a continuous practice of balancing the relationship of the community with the surrounding land. This practice involves

the ability to readily slip out of the perceptual boundaries that demarcate his or her particular culture – boundaries reinforced by social customs, taboos, and most importantly, the common speech or language—in order to make contact with, and learn from, other powers in the land (Abram 1996, 9).

Abram reports that the shaman is an outsider/insider who rarely lives at the heart of the village,

[r]ather, their dwellings are commonly at the spatial periphery of the community or, more often, out beyond the edges of the village ... [this] provides a spatial expression of his or her symbolic position with regard to the community. For the magician's intelligence is not encompassed *within* the society; its place is at the

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<sup>30</sup> “Reacting to surroundings in a highly emotional way” [C20: from Greek, *suntonos*, in harmony with]” (Collins, 1475).

edge of the community, mediating *between* the human community and the larger community of beings upon which the village depends for its nourishment and sustenance ... The traditional shaman ... acts as an intermediary between the human community and the larger ecological field (p. 6-7).

I liken Shaman to Calvino's (1988) description of Hermes-Mercury, the trickster of Greek-Roman myth. Like Mercury, Shaman moves with flighty swiftness, participating in and within the world around us. Imag(e)ine the traveller, moving from place to place as Shaman moves between various contexts, spheres of practice, neither willing nor able to stop moving.

Depending on being fleet of foot to restlessly cross various disciplinary borders, Shaman is not skittish in the sense of being superficial in movement, or lacking focus; for the focus of shaman is to bring things back to the landscape of practice that is the drama workshop. There Shaman interprets what s/he has experienced through embodied action. And, the speaking of Shaman has a quality of "nervous performativity ... which takes as its pulse ... a discontinuous recurrence of disciplines and practices, of 'interpretations' incorporated in history as events" (Pollock, 91).

There is an ongoing process of transmission and transformation as Shaman constantly moves back and forth, going out and coming back. (The Joker who we will meet later in the *Metaxic becomings* section is the counterpart of the Shaman *inside* the drama workshop and in performance.)

As this mask comments on this work the idea of Shaman will be informed by, and informs, my practice as facilitator.

## Shaman Journeying into Energy

We interpret always as transients (Kermode 1979, 145)

A workshop begins

With an empty space

That I enter into

But I come from somewhere, with sheets of plans at the ready, after long nights of thinking about this day.

Shaman nervously approaches the space. Imbued with energy, but patient.

How do I introduce myself? With energy, I am told.

Nervous anticipation

I was beginning a laboratory course in communications for teacher education students. A room with windows facing south – so it was very hot. The room was set up classroom style with lines of desks in rows.

I wanted an empty, semi-circular space amidst these desks. So I asked the students to help move the chairs back to the wall. At the moment they stood up and began moving the chairs, I decided to begin the class with an introduction exercise.

No, I didn't decide it – as if that decision was carefully considered, to and fro in my mind

Rather, the bodies moving in the space moving chairs to the edge of the space elicited a response

from me as facilitator.

*Walk in the space. Become comfortable in the space as you walk. Pay attention to your weight as your feet hit the floor. Walk around the room randomly.*

*Now, quick glances to other people in the room*

I walk alongside them. Bodies moving in space as we gradually get to know one another, dancing “in the flow of emotioning” (Fell, Russell and Stewart). Experiencing embodied recognition. Engaged in embodied conversation in a respectful exploration of space. Moving in the same stream – “cognitively flowing together” (Fell, Russell and Stewart). Becoming accustomed to play.

The void becomes filled with the concentrated energy of those in the room....

My original plan for the morning focussed my attention on what was to happen in the class. But in starting the activity, this plan was released from me in that moment of decision as I discovered the “reality of time’s flow ... tapping into living synchronicity” (Nachmanovitch 1990, 195). Ironically, then, the abandonment of my plan released the energy that had been contained within that classroom.

### **The Play of Energy**

The theatre work I engage in with others is about power and empowerment, yet it is also about nervous energy. We normally think of energy as power. For example, the local electrical company where I live in Saskatchewan is called SaskPower. It harnesses the energy of hydro-electricity, coal and gas-fired thermal generators. This energy comes to us from sources in the Earth’s history, of water carving river valley, of forests long ago compressed into potential energy.

We think of energy as something that is generated from somewhere else to then be used. Even the language we use in a theatre workshop shows this ... we call warmup exercises *energizers* as if

there is something in our bodies that must be affected from the outside (the activity).

But we could also think of them as activities that tap into the potential energy that is within us. This potential is force that has intensity, that is blocked, diverted, converted, attracted, repelled, and enabled. All these attributes of force are experienced through interaction as our bodies move through space.

Energy is also linked to our thoughts. Our brain operates through a series of activated nerves. All thought is a consequence of reflection upon embodied nervous activity which, through further interaction with the nervous system, becomes an object of additional nervous activity.

I come to the workshop....

from somewhere else

in contact with my own energy that I brought from many experiences

knowing the potential of this work from the possibilities generated in other workshops in other places in other times I embody the connections to the world

**Present/Presence/Being Present:**

*Last night I was attending a vocal recital where my wife was performing. There was one woman performing there, hesitant as she went up on stage. She nervously arranged her music. And began. Her mouth opened and suddenly she was someone else, a performer, there in all her (vocal) glory. She finished her song, and radiantly returned to her chair.*

*There was another one, an opera singer. Totally present on stage; in her body, in her voice. There - bringing us as an audience with her into her world. Confident. Experienced. Though she had technical problems with her voice, she was able to help us transcend this (March, 2000).*

Presence becomes central, a dynamic of living. Presence emerges in relationship to its opposite - absence. I am present in the empty space but I am also present for the audience, in the space, in the time, ready to let things unfold because the present is a transitional form between past and future "that has no permanent substance" (Varela et al 1991, 116). "One can see forward, one can see backward. One can be in the empty space and experience stillness. One can ask, 'Who am I? Where am I going?' But the empty space must also be filled" (Christoffersen 1993, 195). By presence. Energy is the tension which sits in the relationship of presence and its absence in this empty space.

So I wonder about my presence. At times I am confident, at others, fearful, tense. As facilitator, I move from being audience member to observer to performer in mere moments in the metaxic interplay of a workshop. Shifting back and forth keeps me on my toes – moving around, sometimes creating energy, sometimes flowing into the energy of the room.

How do I become mindful of my energy, harness it, concentrate it, remake its potential and connect to the living energies of the room I am working in, where "something is already at play" (Jardine, 23), and where meaning is already emerging in embodied actions?

Those sparks I spoke of in introducing the Shaman are a fire that needs to be tended. Embers are created that produce a glowing light, illuminating our world. The workshop is like a crucible where these embers are created by hours of intense heat. Even when the fire is subsiding, there are always the embers which could ignite a newly added piece of wood in seconds, suddenly rekindling the full force of the fire, transforming the dormant coals into a roaring blaze. The energy has been concentrated, then released.

*A few years ago I was asked to help a group of immigrant women develop a play on issues of violence in their lives (documented in Ellis 1994). I was to assist them in learning about facilitating a Forum Theatre play which they would develop in a workshop with Lina de Guevera, theatre director and founder of Puente Theatre of Victoria, British Columbia. Lina led the group through an eight-day workshop that developed the play through thematic exploration out of interviews the woman had previously conducted with their families and friends.*

*Lina insisted on disciplined practice and exercises in our work so she suggested we begin each day working individually. Every morning of the workshop we were all to come in and silently warm-up for ourselves. A little music was on as we silently worked on our bodies, integrating ourselves for the workday ahead – returning little by little to this space from the world outside. Running around, stretching, slow movement, yoga, centring ourselves...whatever emerges.*

*Although this idea is a common one in actor training, this group was not composed of experienced performers. And the group of women were used to taking care of their families every morning, and not finding space for themselves. Even if they got together for a workshop, their first instinct was to greet the others after a night apart, not to find a silent space for themselves.<sup>31</sup> So initially this was a difficult process. The first day we didn't know what to do. But gradually one of us might try something and others would see the possibilities. Though we were doing our own work, I constantly sensed others were also there in the common space. This activity built a sense of community amongst the actors and those of us assisting Lina in the work. By participating in this "energetic engagement" (Pippen 1987, 57) with others in the performance space I was able to learn about focus and concentration through doing it. This was made possible by Lina as facilitator without her directing it. We were engaging in a form of improvisation, which releases energy, where we began to get in touch with our bodies in space. We rarely take time to articulate such a necessary discipline that allowed us to work through the day without pause, and without noticing how tiring the work was.*

This experience got me wondering, how do I prepare my energized body as a facilitator for the workshop? Do I plunge in with the others in the initial work? I must become conscious of my own bodily energy in order to be ready to receive others. In order to socially negotiate trust (Turnbull 1993) in this community of exploration, I must connect with my own energy, even if it

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<sup>31</sup>This is not restricted to this group. Writing this story suddenly called forth another memory of a similar experience in my youth. In 1974 I attended a weekend retreat organized by the student services department of my university. The school had engaged Jack Gibb, one of the developers of T-groups (group dynamics) in the United States. Jack was applying TORI (Trust Level) theory that he was engaging with corporations and communities as a group development tool. When Jack began our retreat, he said (I am paraphrasing here), "I am not here to tell you what to do, but am here to tell you you can do anything." A lot of people were shocked at having paid money to be told to do what they wanted. But Jack's point was that we often need permission to do so. He was providing that permission but in the context of the containment of an organized retreat. I did have some problems with Jack's approach, but appreciated the learning that re-surfaced in Lina's workshop.

is from the middle of my body in the middle of a workshop.

### **Shifting Energy**

If I as director/facilitator/performer am animated only at my edges, I move my hand, feet, face, but my gut isn't energized – then I am indicating, demonstrating or telling, but not showing. I am there, tired, working on the surface, in language and movement but with no (e)motion, no response. I am trying to connect but there is no audible click. Or, only some people are with me as, through my peripheral vision, in soft focus I see some sitting on the edge of the work. I try and identify where the edges are, and try to respond to the signals coming from there.

I too have been on the edge, away from the centre, floating....I became aware of this again a few years ago....

*Spring, 1996. A conference on Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed in Omaha, Nebraska. I am attending a workshop on "building community through theatre." We are using Image to show our "ideal community." Our small group has created a wonderful idyll of mutual support for each other. Then we physically begin identifying our childhood dreams and then transformed this childhood dream into a vision of a larger ideal community. There I was, moving towards the outside of the group, moving further and further away, yet still connected to it...moving outside but also looking back in.*

I become aware through these types of workshops of this tendency to be on the outside of a community yet, at the same time, keep connections within. What do I do? I use an activity to provide the opportunities for participants *and* myself to flow in the rhythm of the community. Using a circle I reconnect after a break to see how the group is functioning. One time I sensed a group wasn't working well together, so, after a break, we just sat down in the circle and did a series of rhythm exercises. I could sense the resistance (saying no is a form of energy), but also that resistance was gradually being replaced by a commitment to resolve whatever is blocking interaction.

As a shamanic facilitator, I go away and return, but from where? Where is home? Often I am absent from the communities in which I work. I have journeyed away, to other places, other communities. “The journey or the exile ... makes one’s past, one’s origin, one’s home, visible” (Christoffersen, 194). Perhaps I am not centred anywhere but in the workshop which is a floating culture (Barba 1986) whose own foreignness to day-to-day life (especially for non-actors) enables an intense energy to emerge. But like the intercultural theatre artist Eugenio Barba, my workshop facilitation is a chance to bridge exile and home. It links me to another – to the participants, to the person I once was, to the person I am becoming. “It is the interweaving of one solitude with another by means of an activity which obliges a total concentration of my entire physical and mental nature” (Barba 1988, 298). Like Barba’s Odin Teatret, which uses foreign languages to generate material through the very energy it generates, the emotive force from the foreignness of the language of the workshop in a school or university class has the potential to break through day-to-day traditions.

I sense that my criss-crossing of these boundaries each time I am asked to lead a workshop is generative for me. The workshops “contain the possibility of unfolding” (Freire 1970, 92, n.19) my becoming-facilitator. As a nomadic subject I am in a constant state of multiple changes and becomings. “This view aligns itself with that of thinkers as far back as Heraclitus, who, Nietzsche says, ‘conceived of the world as a realm of immanent becoming’ of ‘play as artist and children engage in it’” (Bogue on Deleuze, 29).

I come in as an exile to a home that I was once in. A high school for example:

*In 1999 I was working with some English as a Second Language students at a local high school. It was springtime. I had to go away from the city and when I came back to town several weeks later, I gave the teacher a call. She told me, referring to a short workshop I had given to her class, “you inspired my students.” Now they had developed several short scenes from Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet as a parable about the war in Bosnia and were going to perform them at their annual high school presentation to the seniors in the community neighbouring the school.*

I don't remember what I did in that class. Even when the teacher told me this I couldn't remember doing anything that was particularly special. I had left energy behind me, mysterious sparks that had danced with excitement, that had come from I know not where. I don't know how I did it, but I know it happened. I need to learn to detect and amplify the collective breath each time I have such an experience, even if I find out about it much later.

Why do I get so emotional when I write about these ineffable qualities of inspiring and being inspired? I think back on those people and those landscapes which continue to mentor me in my work and how I was inspired by them. I think also of those mythical figures from television of the 1950's like Zorro and the Lone Ranger, masked heroes that re-emerge for me in theatrical play. Thinking about when this happens, I too become re-inspired. I breathe deeply and emotional energy is released.

I pause and move on.

### **Blocked Inspiration**

Inspire: [C14 (in the sense: to breathe upon, blow into); from Latin *inspirare*, from *spirare* to breathe] (Hanks, 757).

*Montreal, 1999. I am sitting on the outside of a group of arts based researchers, watching them share the results and methods of their inquiries. Sitting there, I am in waiting (Spolin 1985, 10) for my time to start. Listening, wondering when my time will come (as I missed the rehearsal.) Someone tells me I will come after the discussant of the session who will be providing comments on the session....*

*What? I don't understand.*

*Why?*

*Oh, I see, I am literally on the outside of this session (which is itself on the outside edge of the*

conference.) *My session on performative inquiry through Image<sup>32</sup> is now going to be the response to his comments as we will use our bodies to summarize all that has happened in this past hour and a half.*

*Here I was on the edge of this space, yet not ready to be thrust into it. No time to energize or prepare myself; but I am in a comfortable space as I have in my hands a written script that I can cast aside. I begin to listen/look/feel even more intensely to what is going on, concentrating my energies to inspire me to inspire the space...*

Energy moves as a current which can be broken or blocked. This results in tension. Some moments stop my breathing. This is not the taking in of breath when I see something amazing but those moments of tension that often happen in performance situations. For example, once I was dancing in motion a tableau in front of other graduate students. Members of the audience pointed out that I noticeably stopped breathing as I performed. I wasn't aware of this when it happened. Often as facilitator I am subject to this too as I engage in the world of practice.

I meet resistance and immediately feel deflated. Rather than exploring the knot of tension in my gut, I recoil from it like a spring. But a spring has energy bound up in its coils.

*I mentioned earlier that I was at a theatre conference where some American theatre professors were sharing what Sotigui Kouyate, a Malian member of Peter Brook's theatre company, had taught as methods to develop ensemble work in theatre – "promoting the ensemble through exercises of rhythm, movement and sound which focuses on concentration, flexibility, relaxation and awareness" (ATHE 1999, 53). One of the exercises they shared was a variation on Electricity or Pass the Pulse or Clap which has a long history of use<sup>33</sup> in workshop situations. This activity, which I often use, involves linking crossed-over hands in a circle. I squeeze the hand of the person to my left (with my right hand) and that person squeezing the hand of the*

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<sup>32</sup> This session is part of my inquiry which is described in the section entitled *Image/Storying* in this dissertation.

<sup>33</sup> "Theatre games by nature resist copyrighting. Whoever originates a particular exercise is likely to be echoing an earlier one, which itself may well be rooted in a children's game or folkloric ritual" (Johnston 1998, xiv). So it is difficult to source the ultimate beginnings of many of these drama exercises. Many are very old and only have recently been written down in books. Others are (re)invented as they are modified in action.

person on their left and so on. Once the group catches on to the technique I add another squeeze and then another. I let the pulse go round and round and then "catch the pulse." The activity is a useful way to see the energy flow of the group, to pick up the "pulse" of the concentration and focus of the group. Sometimes, if it is working well, I add a squeeze in both directions and so someone (usually in the middle of the group) has to squeeze in both directions at once when they receive both pulses. There is a noticeable frisson of energy when that happens, with energy flowing in both directions at once as each person retains the focus as I have added a new challenge to the activity.

A variation of this is to pass a clap and then several. Here what is added is the need for each person to turn their head and look into their neighbour's eyes as they pass the clap.

At the theatre conference workshop the facilitators added a new element of challenge to this activity. Not only would one have to concentrate and pass the pulse or clap back and forth, but they asked us to try and ensure that the pulses that went to the left and right at the beginning would come back to the leader at exactly the same time! In a group of 40 plus people, this was a difficult task as we had to focus on "passing" in a constant rhythm in both directions and on retaining that rhythm all the way through. After several tries, both in using the pulse and the clap we succeeded to great cheers and hoorays.

I came back to Regina from the conference enthused about this energy, this collaborative activity as well as other experiences I had there. I happened to run into one of the drama teachers I had worked with a few months earlier. I remembered then that several times Janice, the teacher, had had to quieten down her rambunctious class by stopping the workshop. Sometimes she had also pulled out one of the boys for being too raucous and rowdy.

That was the spring. Now it was mid - August when I met her and she knew I had been at the theatre conference. She asked me, how was it? So I shared the workshop experience described above. She replied, "Oh well, if it was my class, they wouldn't have tried to accomplish the challenge you described, but would have tried to ensure they never achieved the ensemble pulse or clap."

*I was brought down to earth in an instant. I had been so excited about our discoveries that my energy now sagged. I wonder why. Partly I imagine it was the shock of her response (I would have expected at least an, "Oh, that's interesting"). Partly because in the back of my mind I was thinking I would be sharing some techniques with Janice the coming fall. Now I felt a barrier to her being open to learning, as she would always be thinking about what would or wouldn't work in the classroom. And partly, it was my own exuberance, a form of inaccessible excessiveness.*

At least in this case, the teacher's blocking "no" to my excitement was a form of resistance based on her experiences confronting what she probably saw as my naivete. Other times, there are just blank faces in front of me – no connection; just empty vessels ready to be filled, expecting, in Viola Spolin's (1985) words, that the director would "literally pour this energy into the cast as one might pour water into a glass. The class will respond and be able to pour it right back again" (11).

I come to the workshop imbued with energy. I know what is going to happen – sort of – based on past successes. If I am not cognizant of this and don't put it to the side, the work could become in(exe)(acc)essible. Surplus energy, beyond full. Pouring over. Drowning the participants, save ones with the energy to swim. Csikszentmihalyi (1977) says flow comes from being inside the current of energy. So I use energy exercises to tap into my own energy and the flow the community that-is-becoming, as well as to calm myself down by using games that draw on all our energies and that push, pull and touch our bodies. We jump back and forth between various qualities of energy – slowness, speed, calmness, frenzy, as we play with intensity and concentration. This enables me to begin to listen and be with the group.

### **Aesthetic Presence**

In daily life I carry my energy with me. It flows through me, and is blocked, in specific ways, which is determined by what I do and feel and my own presence in the world. It links to self confidence and control in confident action. Only when a doubtful outcome is at stake do I sit in the tension of knowing whether I am in control. This often happens when I take risks, where I become more aware of the tension in my body. These spaces where I risk are opportunities to

“address energetic engagement with others in the performance space rather than self-absorption” (Pippen, 57). They are places where I radiate, where my energy is a living force in the moment of facilitation, where, because I am not familiar with the outcomes of the activity, I am acting intuitively; my fear of falling is forgotten, and energy is released. If I feel inhibited, I take fewer risks and my confidence ebbs.

Different aesthetic forms of expression, although using different techniques, have a “common level – the way the actor forms energy and presence, the way theatre becomes ‘living’” (Christoffersen 1993) and attracts the spectators’ attention. Similarly, my own energies can enable a workshop group to reflect on their own presence in the acting of their stories.

Kinaesthetic approaches can inform every level of the creative process rather than remain at the level of “just daily technique.” A return to the senses does not preclude other forms of awareness. The capacity to be aware of my energetic body is vital to performance as a facilitator because it is the source of my presence in the workshop, enabling me to be adaptable to situations and the flowing inter-relationships that occur. Even if these exercises are learned by memory, our attitude to these activities should be of reflective awareness of our sensing bodies in motion rather than mindless repetition, and simultaneous awareness of the other rather than self-absorption. This kinaesthetic awareness can be carried into heightened, and deep, play.

So, it is from travelling energy to playing with/through the senses that we now turn to in the next section of this workshop/dissertation.

I leave the space

Only to return

## **Warm-up and Trust Exercises**

*Facilitating group building and sensory awareness games/exercises.*

## Wandering through a Hall of Mirrors ... A Meander through Drama Facilitation

### Wandering Arrivals

A hall of mirrors, a passage way in which (two things) not only reflect one another and get confused in the multiple reflexivity, but in which reality and illusion often co-mingle (Brougher 1996, 14).

After the opening circle, the embodied work begins. At the beginning of every drama workshop there is a space ... a space of possibilities. I enter this space initiating action but from that moment forward I (inter) play with others in that space....

*It is the opening series of presentations at the BodyMind Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia in May 1999. I decide to begin the session with a series of warm-up (or tuning-up [Johnston 1998, 116]) exercises that will enable the group to begin to find its collective rhythm.*

*I ask everyone to walk around randomly,  
Pay attention to the ways your*

*feet hit the floor, your  
bodies move in the space, your  
thoughts, your  
breathing,*

*Become aware of others around you, then  
greet them with eyes,  
face,*

*body,  
Shake hands,*

*Talk to each other,*

*As partners for further exercises.*

*One inter-action flows into another as I sense their readiness to play.*

*Things are moving (in both senses of the word) but,*

*What about me?*

*I begin in a static position, eager to see the activity commence. I—confident, but giving directions in Instructional Mode ... As I guide the group I find myself walking with them in their randomness ... paying attention to what they are doing, but also becoming aware of MY body, MY breath, MY place in this space of being and interbeing. I am the sole voice in this room, but this voice is calmly moving alongside the rhythm of the walking around me ... a resonating process of entrainment (Nachmanovitch 1990, 97) where my words weave in and around their movements. Yet at the same time, I am aware of time pressures and the need to move on.*

*I press on letting the movements of the dozen or so people dictate the rhythm of my suggestions. I am consumed by the meandering, but also observing its consumption.*

*Wandering                      and                      Wondering ...*

As improvised dramatic creation, Theatre of the Oppressed investigates relationships and embraces and recognizes the tacit and implicit knowledge that emerges in the performance process. This knowing is expressed in the interplay between our lives and the stories of our lives that is opened up by participants through the drama process. In this way drama is an enactive process where “every reflection brings forth a world” (Maturana and Varela 1992, 26).

Inspired by Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) concepts of embodied action, an enactive<sup>34</sup> approach means

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<sup>34</sup> “The world that is enacted is inseparable from how we act in it” (Varela et al. 1991, 140).

that knowledge does not develop only in minds, but emerges collectively through engagement in joint and shared action. I will explore the interplay between my learning

*enactively,*

where I am part of a particular series of improvised dramatic experiences which are shaped by, and unfold in, the drama workshop environment I am working in;

and through

*embodied knowing,*

where my learning depends upon having a bodymind<sup>35</sup> actively attuned in the world.

*(Inter)actively* ... I will explore the interplay between sensing, and sentient, experiences I have as an improvising living learning facilitator.

*Meandering* ... in the spaces between and amongst these mirrors, experiences will reflect and refract as we encounter them from different perspectives.

*Reflecting, Refracting, Responding* ... Through this I hope we can learn about the pedagogical possibilities of thinking/doing “educational” facilitation.

I lay down the flowing passageways between mirrors; as I uncertainly peek around a corner, I come face to face with my new perceptions. The refracted (from Latin *refractus*, broken up) experiences I have depend on my angle of view. I engage with my (e)motion as I discover through writing/dramatic improvisation....

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<sup>35</sup> I use the term bodymind or BodyMindSpirit to indicate the integration of feeling and thought that emerges from/within experiential knowing by our “sensuous and sentient” (Abram 1997, 45) body. Our awareness of this knowing exists only in the interactions it has with the world.

Improvisation is a process in which experiences arise through focused physical explorations of stories and themes. The heart of improvisation is the free (inter)play of consciousness and action as situations emerge from our bodymind for further exploration. Through facilitation of dramatic exercises by "side-coaching" (providing ideas for focus or concentration) I enable participants to become conscious of their moment-to-moment thoughts, sensations, emotions, actions, feelings and fantasies. They observe where they place their focus, how they react to the context they are part of and examine who they are and how they (inter)act. Because this happens collectively, those other stimuli include other human and non-human parts of the workshop environment.

I am a learner in the workshop environment. Although I am facilitator, I am co-implicated and co-evolving alongside the other participants in the process. I shape the process and the process shapes me in a circular exchange. Facilitating learning becomes a continuous tinkering (Sumara and Davis 1997a) with what is going on around me. So as facilitator I must improvise in an *encounter* of spontaneous creativity, which is "extemporaneous, unstructured, unplanned, unrehearsed ... in the moment," in the here, "in the now," and "in becoming" (Moreno 1960, 15-16), dealing with always fresh experiences.

As pragmatic inquiry, the practices involved will help me transform my own drama facilitation experience. As I respond to the situations I am working in, I skillfully cope (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1999) with the living/lived experiences of the participants. This is a process which Varela et al. (1991) have described as "letting go," unlearning the habits of mindlessness, and beginning to pay attention to what I am thinkingfeelingdoing in the moment of (inter)action with others.

Jacob Bronowski (1973) relates that Danish physicist Niels Bohr "used to begin his lecture courses by saying to his students, 'Every sentence I utter should be regarded by you not as an assertion but as a question'" (334). In the same manner, this inquiry is an effort to raise more questions for me (than I started with), to transform my own practice in doing this and thus enable other practitioners to see the possibilities that emerge from mindful, open-ended reflection on embodied and enactive facilitation/teaching practices.

## Mirrors, Mirrors everywhere ...

mirror n. (from Latin *mirari*, to wonder at)

Performance requires us to be in the moment. Our senses suffer as a result of the overwhelming stimuli in our world. We start to feel little of what we touch, listen to little of what we hear, see little of what we look at. We adapt to what we need to do at any particular moment but we don't fully use our entire body. Augusto Boal in his *Arsenal of Theatre of the Oppressed* (1992, 60) has codified a series of awareness exercises in order to rekindle our sensitivity to our senses, to re-awaken a memory of our senses, to re-connect with these senses, these muscles and this body. We breathe with our whole body. We sing with our whole body, not just our vocal chords. One example is chess. Good chess players do physical training before a match because they know the whole body thinks, not just the brain. This training enables them to respond intuitively to situations on the chessboard as they come along (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1999).

Throughout the workshop, the body begins to speak through sound and movement. The facilitator helps in this process, enabling full participation with all our senses. Journeying through these exercises we begin to see elements of the flow of facilitation through a synaesthesia, a fusion of the senses (Abram 1997) as rhythm and movement sensitizes us to, among others, our eyes and ears.

A series of mirror exercises incorporates one such exploration....

*I have started the group in a rhythm of movement, introducing them to feeling their bodies in this space of this room, walking automatically around the room. Then becoming aware of each other in the room, greeting first with the eyes,*

*then the face,*

*then the full body, then a warm handshake.*

*Non-verbal, then verbal conversations, a delicate dance of dialoguing.*<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "The roots of 'conversation,' con versare, mean 'turn together' " (Fell, Russell, and Stewart 1994).

*A flow from body in space through body in social space.*

*Gradually a community is being formed.*

*Partners now, mirroring each other's movement of greeting.*

*One leads, the other follows. Slow movements of rhythmic dance.*

*I lead, the group follows me. Paying attention to each other.*

*Then switch. The other leads, the other follows.*

*I watch them work in slow moving spirals. Some move around the room. Hands moving rhythmically, bodies moving towards the floor ... Up to the ceiling ... Yes, they are now caught up in the dance of possibilities.*

*Now, the critical moment ... I cry out, "Unify." No/Every one leads; every/no one follows. Who leads, who follows?*

*What is the feeling of facilitating/being facilitated by the group? Where is the start/Where is the end? Slow motion rhythms, spiralling one into the other.*

Each partner has the right to do any movement he wants, together with the duty to reproduce movements made by his partner ... The key to the exercise is synchronization and fidelity of reproduction (Boal 1992, 122).

There is a graceful flow in the room. *Synchronization and fidelity of reproduction*. The tension between the freedom to move and a structure provided by an exercise that begins and ends. I provide suggestions for focus of explorations but ultimately the group is free in its movements. Yet, there are not all curves and sweeps of the arms and legs. One couple finds its own freedom through using jerky motions to create machine-like movement.

In this (inter)play of bodies where actions flow one into the other, a synthesis of senses surfaces. I

as facilitator must become attuned to this intertwining and, at the same time, respond to it as the flow of my energy (e)merges in a fully sensed (inter)action with others.

*I follow the group's actions. My voice takes on a rhythm of the mirroring going on in the room. Partners working together in a slow Cadence. I move slowly around the room.... Watching ... Listening ... Participating. The group leads.... I follow.... I make a suggestion.... some follow.... others are in their own space of possibility flowing one with the other....*

### **Unveiling the Flow of “Feeling-thought”**

*Last year I guided a group through a mural-making exercise. One preliminary exercise involved participants speaking only numbers as they walked around the room interacting with each other. Playing with emotion and feeling and communicating through the numbers. A harsh six ... A soft o ... n ... e. Explore which number fits which feeling ... Which consonants, which vowels express power, anger ... I felt the power of the feeling in the room, sometimes as though I was watching a performance, sometimes feeling a part of everything as I make a suggestion and a ripple of actions and emotions move through the room as we interplay in a kind of secret complicity between us. I was amazed at the effect and the seriousness and tension in the room. Excited, in fact, but also very aware of feeling fear of the intensity of the work and responsibility for it, too. Where to go with it, what next? And envy I couldn't be “playing” in the midst of it ...*

I offer suggestions for actions as I guide the group. Not only do these actions bring forth an awareness of feelings in the group, they also bring me into contact with my own senses as the ripples of group action echo back to me. These senses are “translated” into each other, or at least understood in terms of the other senses, as a unity provided by the body (Merleau-Ponty 1962). The visual resonates with the sayable; the light is capable of eliciting a tactile response; hearing can be visualized. Senses combine their effects with each other. Each sense meshes with the other “sensory worlds.”

I hear the sounds of the numbers and, simultaneously, see their effect. And, in a split second, I respond intuitively with new suggestions for focus as I swim in the flow of interaction between

my instructions and their actions. In those moments I feel a part of the integrated BodyMindSpirit.

What is this idea of BodyMindSpirit? An integration of the senses, including thought as a sense (I think of the expression “making sense of something”). As Levinas (1996, 41) points out,

to perceive is both to receive and to express, by a sort of prolepsis.<sup>37</sup> We know through gestures how to imitate the visible and to coincide kinaesthetically with the gesture seen; in perception our body is also the delegate of being.

This kinaesthetic sense (what Clive Barker [1977] calls “body-think”[29]) means that sensing and being sensed do not happen separately; they function and flourish in bodies of interaction, flowing (Csikszentmihalyi 1997) together. Flow is “autoletic,” that is, it seems to need no goals or reward. Action and my awareness of it are experienced as one. To flow is its own reward....

*Sometimes feeling a part of everything, I watch my suggestions ripple through the room. Actions and emotions intertwine in a kind of secret complicity between us.*

*I hear numbers and at the same time see the feelings/feel the seeing of the numbering....*

*Wasn't I also playing in the vortex of this flowing interplay?*

*“And envy I couldn't be ‘playing’ in the midst of it?”*

*Feeling left out of the intensity because of my role leading this ... being in a rotating centre yet not in the spinning, flowing spiral around me.*

Flow is movement in which one action blends into another according to an inner logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part: we experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which our actions and responses become one. There is little distinction

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<sup>37</sup> By this he means that one action anticipates its own response.

between self and others, between stimulus and response, or between past, present and future.

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) sees this type of flow as a common, though by no means inevitable, experience arising when people act with total involvement, whether in play or sport, in the creative experiences in art and literature, or in religious experiences. Within a dramatic process, each interaction presents new challenges, demanding new skills. My skills are in constant tension with the situation as together they stretch the full participation of bodymind.

My "self," who is ordinarily the broker between my actions and another, simply becomes irrelevant. As facilitator I often find myself in synchronization with my (inter)actions and environment. I usually don't know it when "flowing" but on reflection "in tranquillity," I begin to realize in these situations that my skills were perfectly matched to the demands made upon me. But I am not reflecting on these experiences as a detached observer looking for guiding principles. In writing this I am fully engaged in feeling again those "gripping, holistic experiences" (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1990, 242) that have become the basis for new learning.

*Through improvisation we synchronize our bodies. Interacting with our Mirror. Encountering moments of resistance. Pausing ... Waiting for our partner to slowly move ... Tuning into each other's eyes, bodies ... the rhythms of motion in space.*

*Synchronization*

*Oscillation*

So I continue to dive into those spaces of oscillating interactions between and amongst individual bodyminds....

*Last year I was facilitating a guided visualization in a teacher education class in drama in education at the university. I was very nervous at first and it showed in my rhythms and in the words that came out. My words became a list of actions I was asking THEM to do.*

*It was funny.... I said before we began, we're going to do a visualization. The participants immediately all found a comfortable spot, closed their eyes and were ready for me. But I wasn't*

*ready for them.... I hadn't found a comfortable spot nor closed my eyes.*

Ted Aoki (1991, 185-86) asks us to reflect on how enchanted we are with the eye:

Could it be that the time is right for us to allow sonare [to hear] to dwell juxtaposedly with videre [to see]? ... Might we offer ourselves to listen to [the earth's] soundings and resoundings, to the tone of sound, perhaps even to the tone of silence, which some say is the mother of sound?

*As I gradually got into the experience, into the flow of words, I could feel my body relax, my eyes close, my directions change from being*

*closed*

*("breathe through all your muscles," you are in "such and such a place")*

*to*

*opened*

*("you look up and you see...")*

*and even more pauses and silences. Freeing of my voice, a freeing that was a slowing of the momentum ...*

*I wasn't trying to finish one part of the visualization to move on to another, but now in the moment(s) of my own visualization process ... seeing, hearing and feeling the words I am speaking. I speak the words.... I feel the wind as I fly high above a river watching the rocks below.*

*Afterwards the participants commented I had talked too much for the first half of the process, so that my words were interfering with their processes of exploration. They underlined that they could sense my nervousness and also when I was in tune with them – when there was a noticeable*

*relaxation and freeing of my voice, a freeing that was a slowing of the momentum. I was no longer trying to finish one part of the visualization to move on to another, but now in the moment(s) of my own visualization process.*

*I had had a whole plan that the visualization fit into.... I wanted to "get to" the heart of the plan. This hampered my presence in the process. Only when I let go of the "plan" and concentrated on the moment was I able to be present with the others.*

*So, closing my eyes, playing with the words as poetic form and rhythm and leaving behind the questioning judging mind helped....*

In Oman, the ethnographer Unni Wikan's (1992) found that people treasure silence. This called her to rethink her ethnographic work:

I gave into the silence, and suddenly I tuned in to a lot that was happening between people. To experience silence not as a void or an absence but as a space full and pregnant with meaning is difficult for a word-mongering academic (470) .

Being forced to live with silence, Wikan learned to tune into her momentary connections with the Omani. Embodied knowing occurred through experiential knowing in-action, where there was a momentary, but full, encounter with other worlds, perceptions and experiences. What resulted was a feeling similar to how Ted Aoki (1991) reports figure skater Brian Orser as knowing

resonance with the surface of the ice, with the music and with the spectators [so-called] ... . Such a knowing known bodily seems vastly different from rational knowing that knows action only derivatively as application ... He is calling for an attunement such that thinking and acting simultaneously inhabit his body (183-184).

I think of that similar tension I felt when I started that dramatic exercise, and then tuning my

rhythm of side-coaching suggestions, watching and feeling....

*So, closing my eyes, playing with the words as poetic form and rhythm and leaving behind the questioning judging mind helped ... opening myself in all my senses to the experience I was part of in that room ... listening and feeling those resonances between my sensing/sentient body and the others...*

Resonance, Re-sounding ... Wikan also did research in Bali, in which she says the Balinese don't split feeling from thought but regard it as part of, "one process, *kenehWh*, which I translate as 'feeling-thought' ... 'Can anyone think but with the heart?' they ask rhetorically (463). Thus resonance is a way of reaching for that hither side of words, attending "to the concerns and intentions from which they emanate" (477).

A Balinese philosopher-teacher told her she must create resonance through "feelingthought" in herself with the people and the problems she sought to understand. Resonance "requires you to apply feeling as well as thought. Indeed, feeling is the more essential, for without feeling we'll remain entangled in illusion" (463).

How is this cultivated? Partly through engagement with the Other, which conveys meanings that reside neither in words nor texts but evolve in an encounter in a constantly moving shared space.

We need not have the "same" experience to be able to attend in the same way. But we must dip into the wellsprings of ourselves for something to use as a bridge to others. It does not come by an act of will, though will helps. Practical exposure to a world of "urgency, necessity" is required (471).

This engagement does happen in drama workshop facilitation, although at times, I am not aware of it when it occurs. It requires some form of being in an embodied and flowing experience myself as facilitator just as I might have had as a "facilitated participant" in other drama workshop experiences. Thus facilitation becomes an embodied dialogue between and amongst the artist-

participants-facilitator.

### **Sensing/Being Sensed through the Looking Glasses**

In *Fill the Space* the actors must walk around very quickly trying to ensure that their own bodies are always more or less equidistant from everyone else's, and they all spread out over the whole room. From time to time, the leader yells "Stop!" and everyone must come to a halt—it should be possible to see an empty space in the room. Whenever one sees an empty space, they go and fill it with their body, but they can't stay there, so a moment later it is empty again, except that someone comes to fill it, but they can't stop there either... (Boal 1992, 116)

As an artist I engage in a facilitated process of dramatic creation that is filled with such rapidly evolving uncertainties. As in this exercise, facilitation is a dialogical and social process. Things happen spontaneously as people play and inter-play with each other, finding and filling spaces for dialogue and interaction. We don't know where the spaces will open up. We jump into these uncertainties whenever they appear. This intertwining of subjectivity, context and meaning in facilitating theatre is illustrated in this evocative metaphor:

To draw a carp, Chinese masters warn, it is not enough to know the animal's morphology, study its anatomy or understand the physiological functions of its existence. They tell us that it is also necessary to consider the reed against which the carp brushes each morning while seeking its nourishment, the oblong stone behind which it conceals itself, and the rippling of water when it springs toward the surface. These elements should in no way be treated as the fish's environment, the milieu in which it evolves or the natural background against which it can be drawn. They belong to the carp itself ... The carp must be apprehended as a certain power to affect and be affected by the world (Morley 1992, 183).

This metaphor captures nicely the sense of what Varela et al. (1991) call structured coupling in a co-emerging of world and entity. One does not exist without the other as organism and environment enfold into each other and unfold from one another in the fundamental circularity that is life itself (Varela et al. 1991).

Similarly, I as the drama facilitator work in/am part of a series of constantly shifting spaces that emerge from the interplay between my suggestions and what the participants do. These spaces are much like an ecotone (Booth 1998), a term used in botany and ecology to designate the transition zone between plant communities such as marshland and better-drained ground. "Tone" is a Greek term that means "stress," as in maintaining muscle tone. Ecotones are places where the interplay of resources and nutrients generate rich possibilities for living, of habitat where knowing might emerge. These overlapping places of my experience and those of others are places of complexity and dynamism. In this process,

human intelligence and the given cosmos are engaged in a co-creative dance, so that what emerges as reality is the fruit of interaction between a given cosmos and the way Mind<sup>38</sup> engages with it. We actively participate in the cosmos and it is through this participation that we meet what is Other. Participation between sensing body and other bodily beings (Heron and Reason 1997, 279).

That sensing body is also being sensed. We need to make "sense" of what this means for facilitation.

Our bodies are multi-sensory, not only in sensing the world but also in being sensed by the world. This fundamental gap of being is illustrated by the concept of the double sensation (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

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<sup>38</sup> In an email communication with me, Peter Reason (1997) clarified their use of Mind rather than BodyMind: "With regard to embodiment I think our perspective on this is embedded in the notion of experiential knowing, by which we mean the *full* encounter with otherness (emphasis added)."

Just think of it. My right hand is touching my left hand, yet the left hand is also touching the right hand at the same time. Between touching and being touched, seeing and being seen, there is reversibility. My left hand has the sensations of being both object and subject of the touch as well as the interaction between the two. At least in the case of the feeling of touch, the subject is implicated in its objects and its objects are constitutive of the subject. Between feeling and being felt is a gulf spanned by the indeterminate and reversible phenomenon of the being touched and of the touching; the ambiguity which entails each hand is in the position of being both perceiver and perceived.

Other senses also illustrate this. I never hear myself as I hear others. Seeing entails having a body that is itself capable of being visible. This is the fundamental basis of the mirror exercise, in which we begin with one person leading the other, then the other leads the first, then, when I give the direction, “unify,” there is no leader and they work together. The mirror shifts.... At that moment of transition to “no/every one leading” is a moment of transition to unspoken unity. This is the space where interaction flows as the reversibility is always “just about happening.” There is always a slippage, a transformation as the interacting bodies bring to the world the capacity to turn the world back onto itself,

to fold it over itself and the world, introducing that fold in which  
the subject is positioned as a perceiving, perspectiv[e] mobility  
(Grosz 1994, 102).

The human body thus is both perceived in a world as well as a perceiver in the world doubling back on itself. With “I” and the “other” perception each is implicated in and necessary for the existence of the other. They are indelibly etched one into the other, open to each other, coupled in sensing/sensed bodies and world.

### **The Flowing Encounters of Facilitation**

In the everyday coping activity of a drama process, I as facilitator am not standing back from some independent product and observing it. We are in a much tighter relationship, as (inter)acting

is experienced as a steady flow of skillful activity in response to my own sense of the situation. I continually adapt to the situation in an embodied way. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) puts it,

whether a system of motor or perceptual powers, our body is not an object for an "I think"; it is a grouping of lived-through meanings which moves towards its equilibrium (153).

I don't think about what I want to do but, rather, experience the situation and that experience draws my "doing" out. Those experiences build up one upon the other and I draw on them the next time a similar situation occurs. This is a common phenomenon in artistic creation. The process of

painting is an intimately communicative affair between the painter and (their) painting, a conversation back and forth, the painting telling the painter even as it receives its shape and form (Schon and Rein 1994, 167).

An artistic process involves a simultaneous process of making (I do) while also reflecting on that intuitive making in the process of developing form (I observe). The resulting form is often the only evidence of the intuitive understandings that occur during the development process. Implied in those interpretations are my judgment and standards as to what has worked or not, and choosing processes for the next stage.

As potter Ellen Schon (1998) explains,

I try to push myself to be open to the reflective process in order to be more responsive to what the material/situation is telling me so that I don't impose my tools and ideas on the material in a mismatched way.

This is a description of skilful mindfulness (Varela et al. 1991) or spontaneous coping (Dreyfus

and Dreyfus 1999), as skilful activity responds to the sensed needs of a particular situation. Furthermore, whatever part of the workshop process I'm in, each part of the process informs and is integrated into the other. And other experiences I have had emerge through a reciprocal process, full of surprises and accidents (unintentional results to be noticed and made use of the next time or not). There may be no clear end point to the process. This uncertainty is typical in my work.

Ellen Schon works with clay. A successful form results from an artist such as she being able to “regard the wood or the metal as a living thing with needs and feelings of its own and to let the material direct them as much as they direct it” (Schon 1964, 127).

An example of this relationship to the material is my facilitating with people as “intelligent clay”,<sup>39</sup> using images as part of drama workshops. Either form of clay is not static. In potter's clay each form is part of a series or family of forms that are different but related. The difference from the potter is, of course, that I am working with *thinkingfeelingacting* clay where each person's dramatic telling of a story through image changes in terms of emotion, feeling, thought or action, depending on when and how it is told and by whom. I react to these non-verbal, kinesthetic images that I see in front of me ... It speaks to me, I feel something and I respond by asking questions of those inside it or making suggestions for further exploration within that image. Quick and spontaneous transformations occur in these interactions as the invisible is made visible. Time and space, people and relationships unfold, are condensed, and changed. Memory and imagination become engaged in an interplay as we become engaged in a conversation, an *encounter* of togetherness where we are “communicating with each other in a primary, intuitive manner by speech or gesture ... becoming one—*una cum uno*” (Moreno 1960, 15). This conversation allows me “to be conducted by the subject matter” of the process (Gadamer 1999, 367).

Many images are produced and erased and called up again perhaps another day. Participants begin

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<sup>39</sup> Intelligent clay is a sculpted person who fills the shape s/he is in with feelings and thoughts that come from the interplay between the physical shape and the bodymindspirit. Thoughts and words emerge from an interaction of the individual's awareness of the static body in the image and the world around that image. Image is explored in depth in *Image/Storying*.

to “remember” these images, their bodies in interaction with each other, the stories and feelings recalled. In the same way, I remember these *encounters*, but that memory is not in thought; it is embodied memory of all the feelings I had at that moment. These memories call up a set of actions I have had in the past to these varied situations. This is a form of structured method, with certain thematic or physical boundaries—and improvisation—where many things interact and change at once. Structure becomes co-dependent with the freedom to experiment ... and to venture into places where there is no flow.

In this context, facilitation can be seen as a constant improvisation in which each person becomes a spontaneous actor, writer, audience member, director, and critic. This is in contrast to a master plan, with preordained roles according to some script. Mis-takes, mis-cues, and forgotten lines are part of the play of “persevering and bringing our desires to fruition” (Nachmanovitch 1990, 12).

### **Wondering Still...**

Relationship is the mirror in which one can see oneself as one is ...

[It] can help people to observe, listen, be attentive and alert and to understand one another (Rahnema 1990, 218).

Our bodies speak from experience if we listen to them. I continue to learn facilitation through opening up my senses to, and being sensed through, the relationships that emerge in both taking and leading workshops. Such connections are made bodily through experiencing the process itself. We then use what we have lived through to open up possibilities for interpreting and understanding new experiences. We become listeners in the drama experience as we begin to know and understand through intuition and introspection. In this way, by going through similar experiences we might listen better to the experiences of others (Howard 1996).

Using “experiences” rather than words has implications for learning to become an expert facilitator. Dreyfus maintains that the

teachers of a skill are frequently articulate dispensers of helpful

facts, procedures and principles. As such, they may hasten the student's progress from novice to advanced beginner to competent performer. But if, like expert systems, all they know are facts and rules of inference, such teachers cannot possibly be successful doers or guides on the way to expertise (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986, 201).

How can I move beyond "facts" and "rules of inference" to intuitive action based on common sense, wisdom, and mature judgment? I move within the space/time of my working not as a detached observer but as someone implicated in a spell of involvement in the here and now. In this way, skills aren't something I just turn to, but we experience the enactment of drama as the drawing of movements out of us (Dreyfus 1999, 15).

So how can this be applied in learning to know sensing/sensed facilitation? I recognize how a variety of situations to which I have responded in the past have provided a set of skills. These situations, as seen from the perspective of facilitator, each have required different tactical decisions, thus enabling me to adapt what has worked in the past.

The tools to develop these skills are present in the Theatre of the Oppressed workshop process. There we rediscover our senses through exercises that enable us to feel what we touch (walks, massages, gravity); "see what we look at" (images, the memory and integration of the senses, object games); "listen to what we hear" (sounds, melody, rhythm, breathing internal rhythms) ... There are over two hundred exercises of the first three alone in *Games* (Boal 1992).

In the continuing development of my own expertise in this work, this will mean not to develop new exercises, but to enhance, and accentuate, in situated practice these aspects that are already present in the exercises. It will mean me continuing to experience these exercises from constantly shifting perspectives as I explore the hall of mirrors. At one point I am facilitator. At another point a participant. Just as in the Hall of Mirrors I turn a corner and see myself at another angle, experiencing the spontaneous surprise of recognition in an embodied way, shifting in the flowing process of interplay between human mirrors.

*For example, in May 1997 I was part of a workshop in Seattle, Washington, with Augusto Boal. I was there as participant, engaged in the activities, but part of my mind was evaluating where I might take these exercises and the adaptations I might make. This "reflective" stance as participant enabled me to notice things that were happening to me.*

*We engaged in an exercise called Brown's Blank Character. My partner was to become a "blank character" and I was to choose an oppressor, someone in my experience who had power over me and become that person. She would create her "oppressed" character in reacting to me.*

*But I tried an experiment. I didn't have a clear idea of who my "oppressor" was so I watched her reaction to the little I did know and we fed off each other as I watched her and she watched me. A conversation was created in a flow from just using the eyes, then the whole face, then the entire body (with more time we could have gradually used different parts of the body), then the body in space, then dialogue with gibberish, rhythm and sound, then dialogue with words, sentences of improvisation.*

*What happened for me was that my oppressor was vague at first. This enabled me to construct that oppressor from the gradual building up of gestural, then physical, then verbal dialogue. I saw the reaction to my oppressor in my blank character opposite me and the oppressor/oppressed emerged in dialogue with me. She was no longer a blank from the first instance she act or re-acted to me. Engaged in a "dance of understanding" (Fell, Russell, and Stewart 1994), we emerged in a dance of becoming characters.*

Such relationships are not based on cause and effect....

*We moved through passages and spaces in the Hall of Mirrors that resonated, reflected and refracted off each other in an unspoken unity of expressive interaction.*

... They are open to the possibilities where being, knowing, and acting come forth in dramatic reflection "allatonce" (Sumara and Davis 1997b).

*The visual, the aural, the unknowable, the unspeakable emerged in moments of creative spontaneity.*

I was fully there in *Brown's Blank Character*, experiencing the moments of spontaneous (inter)action in the same moments with the facilitator and with my fellow participant. Through this wandering process, set off by a facilitator's suggestions, our evolving characters co-emerged. My learning through facilitation comes through such active participation as facilitator/participant. When that happens in a drama process as participant or as facilitator I find myself interwoven with/in the situation, absorbed in, and encompassed by, embodied interplay.

*A complex series of improvised interactions in a Hall of Mirrors spirals into Being Doing Knowing myself as (becoming sensing/being sensed) facilitator.*

## Intuiting Acting:

Div *in*

er

Depth is hidden. Where? On the surface (Hofmannsthal [1603] in  
Calvino 1988, 77).

Beside, and very much related to Shaman is div *in*

er

An unusual mask. One that takes risky jumps but, at the same time, also develops a sense of intuition. It might seem to you now that this is a split personality but I conceive it as two personalities working together, acting and sensing together as they find themes through the games and exercises and then propose them as subjects for thematic exploration through tableau/image.

I write div *in*

er

to intertwine the acts of divining -- probing from above, and diving -- to jump in, to get below the surface. Searcher searching for what lies beneath and between

There is a bit of shaman in the div e/in er. S/he intuitively taps into hidden energies and brings to the surface what the shaman's energies have tapped into.

*Divining*: Otherwise known as dowsing: "What is dowsing? An ancient art of searching for hidden things (water, precious metals, etc.) using one of the senses that many of us are not even aware of possessing...reportedly 80% of people have this special gift – an ability to sense things not perceptible to others" (Wojtowicz 1998). Often these sense experiences are ones that can be known but not told.

The embodied interactions of the workshop often go beyond words. But words do have a role.

They are part of the process of divining, an unceasing pursuit of things, an approach not to their substance but to the infinite variety of things below the surface, out of vision. Div e/in er is a “reader-of-hidden meanings” (Hyde 1998, 112), “that deep, true, inner form which can be sensed only beyond the domain of rhetorical tricks; that form which one can no longer say that it organizes subject matter, for it penetrates it, dissolves it, creating an once both dream and reality, an interplay of eternal forces” (Hofmannsthal 1603).

So the div e/in er is both spiritual and practical.

I use the idea of the Diver to link Diviner to the world of the workshop.

IMAGE: Standing, hands outstretched eyes looking downward. Ready to take the plunge.  
Sensing what is below. Diving in.

*Diving in. Diving + in = Divining.*

Curious this wordplay. Something to play with. What is below the surface is hidden. In several workshops I have heard Augusto Boal talk about the workshop as a place and time to encounter that which is hidden below the surface. Using the metaphor of the iceberg or shark, he describes the fin (or the ripples it creates) or the ice above the surface, as indications of indicating, but at the same time, concealing something below the surface. When we come to performance, the Forum play is the evident, the visible, but it also hides the invisible. The invisible is not only the possibly visible but its “absence counts in the world” (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 228). The invisible, that not-yet-seen, is behind the visible. It is potentially visible, and important because, oddly enough, the above would not float without that immense quantity of frozen mass below. In order for the Forum to become a place of exploration and investigation there must be something below the surface for the spect-actors to encounter when they intervene in the drama.

The Diviner dives into the workshop and in that diving in, divines, through sensory exploration that 2/3 of the iceberg in order to bring up some clues, some tangible evidence of what is below.

Diviner can also skim close to the surface to guess what is below. This also corresponds to the “divinatory” (Schleiermacher in Ricoeur, 211). Because language, even the language of the body, is representational and metaphoric, it unfolds several layers of meaning.

“Even the judgement of importance is a guess” (Ricoeur, 211), so Div e/in er visits and re-visits text. Each time, there is a new angle of view, a new perspective that has emerged from previous diving in. Each time, there is nothing to indicate what is important or unimportant except the previous experience and the parallel diving the diviner engages in with their own layers of experience. So Diviner as facilitator is operating with a series of guesses as the text accumulates in a holistic process (212).

Guessing is always in tension with validity because the latter doesn't mean verifying whether a guess is correct as if there is some universal truth we are searching for in a text. Rather, validation is based on uncertainty and qualitative probability, as well as possibility (ie., it could/might be true). “In arguing about the meaning of an action, I put my wants and beliefs at a distance and submit them to a concrete dialectic of confrontation with opposite points of view” (Ricoeur, 214).

But this guessing is not about argument in the literal sense. It is an embodied response that happens in further inter-actions and new layers of meaning.

*On the one hand*, Inter-separates, places between two or more entities, keeps them apart, puts up a frontier, prevents them from meeting, joining, mingling and maybe identifying...

... *On the other hand*, inter-joins, provides a meaning of communication and exchange....

... The joining after the separation joins the joining and the separation (Bennington 1999, 103-104).

Central to the concept of diviner is this *interplay* between diving into Others' experiences, and into my own, as they intertwine. This requires inter-standing:

Interstanding is relational but not dialectical, connective but not synthetic, associative but not unitive. The between of the “inter” neither fragments nor totalizes (Taylor and Saarinen 1994).

Diviner sees the surface and cannot articulate what it looks like. Diviner looks for evidence on the surface to find what is below. Drama is that surface: the encounter with it is interstanding. Interstanding is in the between of diving and divining – seeing the surface and exploring the depth below. The drama workshops must arrange journeys between the two...this will give participants the opportunity for a complete engagement with the form of the work.

But even if Diviner can see the surface, it cannot articulate it, as that surface is constantly in motion. Even if we discover something, it is a glimpse of secrecy which we have seen only “through the meshes of a text, this is divination, but what is divined is what is visible from our angle” (Kermode 1979, 144). So, we must be content with our “perception of a momentary radiance, before the door of disappointment is finally shut on us” (Kermode, 145).

Diviner and Diver are also related to Shaman/Hermes. We try and relate what we have seen at or below the surface to the whole, “the divined glimmer to the fire we suppose to be its source” (Kermode, 145), but we see we may be wrong, that something is missing. “We like to think of living as a place where we can travel back and forth at will, divining congruences, conjunctions, opposites, extracting secrets from its secrecy, making understood relations” (Kermode, 145).

But we discover that the world is a depthless sky that goes further than we can see. Something in us understands the world is plural and unfollowable and we are unfathomable. We have to immerse ourselves in the depths of the text of the action in front of us. The meaningful patterns which a depth interpretation then wants to grasp cannot be encountered without a kind of personal commitment that makes it our own. We need to let all of our senses sing – the visual, aural and tactile together – but also realize there is a lot we do now know or will never know. This depends on intuition, that which some have called the sixth sense.

Intuition is mysterious, but something Gadamer relates to the philosophical notion of *sensus*

*communus* (common sense – “our bodily and social history living in the world” [Gadamer, 22]). That is, intuition is the basis of “the structure of the living, organic being in which the whole is in each individual.<sup>40</sup> ‘the whole of life has its centre in the heart, which by means of common sense grasps countless things all at the same time’” (Oetinger, 1753, in Gadamer, 29).

This capability is a sense that is acquired through living in community, just as the sense of the common emerges as I work instinctively within the community of the workshop and with the participants in it. The other senses are intertwined with this “*le bon sens*” which is the “inner energy of an intelligence which at each moment wins itself back to itself, eliminating ideas already formed to give place to those in the process of being formed” (Bergson in Gadamer, 26). “*Le bon sens*” relates to the Diviner’s work as s/he works with the intelligent clay of a drama workshop and, as it changes, the Diviner changes to respond to the dynamic form flowing. This is not something methodical, but a certain way of acting. It involves the discovery of the free flow of action and thought that is just below the surface of language; but it also means engaging in interpretation in the movement back and forth from the below to the surface.

Diviner probes the responses of the participants as well as his/her own interstanding in all the interactions that occur in the workshops (this would include breaks, meals and other places of engagement. As Bergson points out, this is “less a gift than the constant task of ‘renewed adaptation to new situations’” (in Gadamer, 26), so that there is a constant adaptation of the principles of the work to the changing landscape of the workshop.

This “background know-how” (Varela et al, 147) that is part of divining works at the same time as an exercise is being led. This background, the idea of “the situation drawing the skills out of me” is akin to what is behind the mask of the *wri(gh)ter* which will be explored later. There is a history that this background comes from... a history of many workshops in different situations, contexts and historical moments and, more importantly, of living in the world. So it is difficult to

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<sup>40</sup> This concept is similar to Boal’s hypothesis of osmosis that “the great general themes [of society] are inscribed in the small personal themes and incidents” (Boal 1995, 40). This idea is the basis for Theatre of the Oppressed work which begins with personal stories, but, through symbolic characterization and collective exploration, generalizes to the wider world. This is the interpenetration of structures of domination and power in “all the cells of our social life” [Boal 1995, 41] – in family, in work, in the institutions, in school, in advertising, in the media, in the Church. Even in theatre. The part and the whole are self-similar (Cohen and Stewart 1994).

package this knowledge into something explicit, since “it is largely a matter of readiness to hand or ‘knowledge’ how based on the accumulation of experience in a vast number of cases” (Varela et al, 149). We also can’t identify what is an independent object – either on the surface or in the depth – because we are dealing with living, breathing, moving (and moved) human beings.

So we must pay attention to the laying down of this landscape of practice. If we wish to have any indicators as to what is “le bon sens”, Diviner needs to pay attention to it as a creative knowing-how to interact with/ in the world, a world “that is inseparable from our bodies, our language, and our social history, in short, from our embodiment” (Varela et al, 149). Diviner pays attention to this knowing as meaning is brought forth in the enaction of understanding. In other words, understanding and interpretation happen as a response to events. They are action-events themselves, an act of embodied experience and perception. And, in turn, these experiences help “to determine the nature of our meaningful coherent, understanding of our world” (Johnson 1983, 175).

## Diving/Divining

It is in the performance and only in it – as we see most clearly in music – that we encounter the work itself, as the divine is encountered in the religious rite (Gadamer, 116).

### Diving

*The Diver:* I was watching the Olympics in Sydney, Australia in September, 2000. A new sport in the Games – synchronized diving. Two divers side by side on the top of the tower. Ready to plunge together in synchronicity. One after another, duos from many countries, silently counting together in different languages:

*Uno, dos, tres, echad, shnayim, shloshah, yut, yee, sum, u"ks, kaks, kolm...*<sup>41</sup>

I understand the countdown as their heads nod together, ready to plunge together through the air to pierce the surface of the water simultaneously.

*Diving in:* Perched on the edge of knowing, hands out in front to slice through the water. Energy in the legs, ready to jump. Prepared (it looks like a simple matter of just jumping, but even this simple movement demands careful preparation).

Fear.

In Taoist philosophy, the energy of deep water begins with disorientation, with a sense of being drawn onward in ways that are uncomfortably challenging (Laird, 76).

That time when I was asked to play the part of a boyfriend who is angry at another student for “looking at his girlfriend.” But he is having trouble getting angry at this guy – having difficulty

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<sup>41</sup> Spanish, Hebrew, Cantonese, Estonian.

showing his jealousy. So the teacher asked me to show/model how he should exhibit his jealousy. I agree, hoping this will move things along. And it does. But, I have a moment of dread about finding my own feelings. And I do. I am transported back into my high school on the other side of this city in 1970 in this school in the year 2000 and, for a moment, have an inkling of what is going on amongst these students in the here-and-now.

Past, present, future collapse into one breath, as I am a 17 year old actor responding to other teen-agers as they goad me on to fight. Wisps of unease pass through me.

No chance to test the water, just dive in! No chance to count down, an instant before I was facilitator, now I am facilitator who is not....

Feel the flash of coldness and breaking through as I enter the water to investigate below, searching for the mysteries of the deep in my "descent into the unfathomable" (Laird, 33)....

## **Divining**

When the phenomenological inquirer enters a classroom, he or she can no longer do so with the assurance of exemption, domination and authority; something is already at play, and the living character of this setting is not waiting upon the inquirer for some beneficent bestowal of meaning. It is already meaningful, and then connections must not be severed in order to understand them; they must, rather, be delicately gathered in all their contingency, locatedness and difficulty (Jardine 1998, 23).

*The Diviner:* I enter the room. What do I see as I gaze upon these workshop participants? Potential based upon past experiences. Something hidden. Something hypothetical. If I do this ... that might happen ... might lead to this.

I gaze upon the still waters and try to imagine what is below. I see the fin, or the ice above the

surface, but there is a lot below that surface. If I look only at what is on the surface or only at what is beneath (which gives the above surface its form and shape), I have reduced the scope of our potential material.

The exercises I have explored in the previous section have provided me with some clues, tangible sensory exhibitions of what is below the surface. But these exercises and games are not mere preludes to the stories that will follow. If I listen and watch and feel closely I can begin to sense more as I move.

The word connects the visible trace with the invisible thing, the absent thing, the thing that is desired or feared, like a frail emergency bridge flying over an abyss (Calvino 1988, 77).

Where does this diving and divining take me?

Into the middle again.

And interested (from *inter esse*: being in the middle of things).

Both the diviner and the diver have their hands out in front of them moving forwards – one to jump, the other to focus and sense. Well grounded, connected to the energy of the universe.

Judith Phippen (1997), an Australian movement and voice teacher explores the mysteries of learning to become an actor through voice and movement training. Like Barba (whose work with Odin Teatret in Denmark has led him to “not take the differences between what is called ‘dance’ and what is called ‘theatre’ too much into consideration” [Barba 1988, 128]), she addresses the twin skills of movement and the voice in theatre pedagogy. Elaborating her reflection on teaching, she outlines these skills as being based on an “ecological” approach to learning the craft of acting. This approach, which emerges from the theories of cognition of Humberto Maturana, is based in the “dynamic inter-relationship of our bodyhood and its multidimensional relational space” (Phippen, 72), which overcomes body/mind, voice/movement splits in human relationships and our relation to the world we are in. It does this “because it postulates the dynamic of our bodyhood-

in-relation as *generative* of both moving and languaging,<sup>42</sup> rather than movement belonging to the body and voice as somehow separated from it” (72).

Her approach has resonance for me as facilitator-as-diviner and brings meaning to the questions I have posed in the previous section about my own learning to divine and to dive.

- How mindful are we as facilitators of the ways in which we respond verbally and kinaesthetically to what happens around us?
- Do we have an approach to workshop leadership that recognizes the primacy of relationships, the braiding of language and the shifting emotional states in our behaviour?
- How can we open up the possibilities for learning reflective and mindful awareness so that others learning facilitation may access and develop their intuitive and embodied abilities?

These questions challenge me to examine my own divining and diving. Other facilitators have responded with their own approaches. For example, an Australian facilitator, Martin Ringer, (1999) writes that

[o]nce facilitators have a sound grasp of active listening, assertiveness, models of group development, tools for facilitation they will be in a stronger position to focus on building their capacity to work directly on unconscious, intuitive and systemic aspects of groups. Concurrent focus is fine, but the emergent aspects of groups tend only to fully make sense once the empirical aspects are understood.

Martin is saying that, rather than dive into the divining, we should first of all learn “how” to do this, through basic technique and skill development. He is saying that basic skills are somehow

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<sup>42</sup> An example of this is provided by Eugenio Barba (1988) in his description of Odin Teatret’s explorations of the “sonorous richness of language which have an emotive force capable of transmitting information above and beyond the semantic” (128).

separate from other aspects of knowing, and we must “understand” these skills first of all. On the other hand, as diviner/diver I am interested in exploring these skills *through* embodied and mindfully aware reflection. My body dives in; my body divines. I improvise and explore.

We spend our whole life living within the binary boundaries of mind versus body, me versus the other, self versus world. Skills involve embodiment and sensory awareness as part of what I call “being-in-the-landscape-of-practice” where I probe below and beyond the level of consciousness and wilful action, thus cultivating the refinement of my capacity to interact. This is vital for the performance that I am engaged in in the workshop, grounded in a “learning and a flexibility that keeps clarifying the edges of creativity” (Christoffersen, 194-195).

I asked an experienced theatre teacher about this. She said she agreed one does need to learn the basic techniques and become comfortable with them, but that one can also at the same time learn to be mindful of, and reflective in, the process. Linda, another theatre facilitator I was training in the *Theatre of the Oppressed/Power Plays* approach, shared with me a conversation she had had with her daughter, who, as a high school student 8 years before, had gone through a 5-day Power Plays workshop I had co-led. As Linda shared her worries about facilitating a particular exercise, her daughter, the memories of the Power Play process still fresh in her mind, told her mother, “don’t worry, mom, it’s organic.”

I had watched Linda facilitate an introductory exercise; I saw her responding in the moment to the students in the room, talking of, and eliciting, respect as we began to explore racism and diversity in a 3 hour workshop. She was standing apart at some times, divining the situation, but also diving in as her voice was both a voice of authority as well as one voice within the circle of emerging relationships. She reinforced the idea of respect with the walking students, asking them to interact with each other respectfully, to touch each other with respect, to speak with respect. Diving into the theme of the workshop – racism – by invoking its opposite.

Michael Rohd (1998), a *Theatre of the Oppressed* practitioner in the United States, conceives warmup games as activities that:

- get a group of people playing together in a safe space,

- energize that space, and
- create a sense of comfort in the collective doing of specific and structured activities (4).

Notice in his description the separation of people from the space, and the instrumentalist notion of creating comfort and getting people to play together. He goes on to say that the goal is to demechanize the body and mind (separated again) and to engage in responses that are fresh and utterly in the moment.

These activities have nothing to do with “issues.” In fact, one could argue they aren’t even “theatre.” They simply aim to get people out of their seats and interacting in a different way and to prepare them to participate as the work gets deeper, more focussed, and more “theatrical.” It’s all about creating moments where participation is impossible to resist, moving forward into the process you have set up, and having fun along the way (Rohd, 4).

I have taken workshops from Michael and respect his work immensely, but this explanation of the purpose of warmups, addressed to potential workshop facilitators, directors or leaders seems to separate out the complex aspects of these games and exercises (as well as the issues that emerge from them), rather than see them as integral to theatre work. On the other hand, I see kinaesthetic-based approaches as part of the knowing that emerges in theatrical work and thus can inform every level of the creative process rather than just remaining at the level of simple warmup games.

The theatre director Tadashi Suzuki (1978) underlines the point:

Any time an actor thinks he is merely exercising or training his muscles, he is cheating himself. These are acting disciplines. Every instant of every discipline, the actor must be expressing the emotion of some situation, according to his own bodily interpretation. That’s why I don’t call them exercises or physical fitness teachers don’t go on stage. We do (Suzuki in Brandon 1978, 36).

For Suzuki's actors, training exists to "make the whole body *speak*, even when one keeps silent" (Zarilli, 78-79). For Suzuki, "the body" becomes the primary metaphor for the optimal state of the actor in performance. Culture is the body.

As facilitators, we also must "do." How one acquires these skills and how one uses these skills involves an embodied awareness of what the participants are going through as well as an awareness of the techniques not as simply something to use, but as something that has an effect. This connects me to the wellsprings of myself (to quote this section), including my personal and social histories that emerge from the past in the present.

So I learn to dive by divining and to divine by diving. I must be implicated in the play. Play is always a matter of context. It is not what we do, but how we do it: It cannot be defined, because in play all definitions slither, dance, combine, break apart and recombine....In the play of diving/divining I find fresh approaches to relating in novel ways and combinations. Engaging in the play myself fosters a richness of adaptation. By reinterpreting what constantly emerges and by trying out variations of old dives, I keep myself from becoming rigid. "Play enables us to rearrange our capacities and our very identity so that these skills can be used in unforeseen ways" (Nachmanovitch 1990, 43).

### **Diving under**

*It's difficult to believe, walking along the beach, looking out at an expanse of flat, empty water, just how much delicate life and beauty there is beneath the surface.....*

*.....And suddenly there you are. The reef spreads out before you and you realize there really is magic here under the sea. Then you are gone, lost in another world, a world filled with light and wonder (Kull 2001, 40, 42).*

I am perched on the diving board, divining what is to come. I remember the feeling of the water, the air, the sun in previous dives. My sense memory remembers the entry into the water, what was underneath and all that I have encountered before. I am ready to take risks but secure in knowing

that I have dived before from this height. Maybe I will raise the bar a little higher, dive into a new pool, or a new lake or stream or ocean full of coral reefs. I remember here some surface diving I did in the Caribbean. Swimming alone in a quiet bay, I snorkeled and dived down to observe a school of brilliant blue fish. Amazed by all the colours and the mini-undersea mountains and cliffs that were mere rocks, I am also aware that I am not swimming with a companion so prepare to retreat. Mistakes down here could be dangerous. I resurface and see a few metres away a couple snorkeling hand in hand together, viewing these undersea wonders. Remembering the wonderment, I wander off to divine other wonders from the hills surrounding this bay.

*How can such organic views assist us as workshop leaders in creating conditions for a learning community? How can leadership facilitate emergent networks of relationships that continually grow, transform and accept challenges?*

I asked in the previous chapter of this dissertation: how do I move beyond “facts” and “rules of inference” to intuitive action based on common sense, wisdom and mature judgement? I am implicated (ie. I have a role) as diver/diviner in the spell of involvement in the here and now. Why stand on the diving board if I am not going to dive? My skills therefore are not a set of rules but are where “acting is experienced as a steady flow of skillful activity in response to one's sense of the situation” (Dreyfus 1999).

Merleau-Ponty's concepts of *intentional arc* and *maximum grip* (in Dreyfus 1999) helps us consider the development of these skills:

The *intentional arc* names the tight connection between the agent and the world, viz. that, as the agent acquires skills, those skills are “stored,” not as representations in the mind, but as dispositions to respond to the solicitations of situations in the world. *Maximum grip* names the body's tendency to respond to these solicitations in such a way as to bring the current situation closer to the agent's sense of an optimal gestalt.

This gestalt is that energy which I spoke of earlier in the dissertation. It is a sense of connection,

of balancing on the edge, and is much like what happens in an activity called *Balancing* which I use at the beginning of a workshop:

*Partners about the same size as each other. Each one puts their hands on the others' shoulders, using their palms. Push against each other and find the balance of strength between each other. Each will really work at this and communicate with their muscles. This can also be done in three, fours, eights, etc. Sitting down together, standing up together; see-sawing in pairs and in groups (Diamond 1991, 19).*

This is a great way to burn off energy at the start of our work together. It also embodies teamwork, challenges participants to take risks and enables me as diviner to get some indication of the potential in the group to work together.

Exploring through divining/diving opens us to spaces flowing with such rich bodymind interactions. We have a responsibility to embody an awareness of our intentions, values and beliefs that emerge *through* such partnerships. Education thus no longer characterizes or announces what is, but takes on a participating role, intertwining with all bodies, including educators.

The interplay I have engaged in through our changing emotional states and our familiar use of language are braided together to form a bridge between ourselves and the world. Through my developing awareness as drama workshop leader I become an “agent of human connectivity” with the world beyond the workshop.

As educators we cannot think of ourselves as just “operating in” the workshop setting -- planning, theorizing, leading, learning, teaching and then leaving the cultures we have temporarily become a part of. Educational practices and research informed by and respectful of the complex worlds of schools/community are not just “interventions” but instances of complicity whereby our work unfolds with communities-in-the-making through our partnerships with them.

Divining means becoming part of this community of relations. I must continually sense what kind of community we are becoming, yet, at the same time, I am partially responsible for creating the conditions for this community to emerge. I am trying to understand what others see, and, simultaneously, I am creating a space for them to see me.

Biologist Jack Cohen and mathematician Ian Stewart (1994) write about the space of the possible as an ever-evolving, ever-dynamic, ever-expanding web of interrelationship. Spaces of possibility do not just exist but evolve through our interactions with/in the world. When spaces interact, delightful possibilities spring forth. This “space” is dynamic because the living world and our bodyminds, are always evolving and developing through interaction with one another.

This idea of complicity arises when simple systems interact in ways that change each other. Although there are patterns, the interrelationships of the parts within the whole are such an intricate and convoluted ball of intertwined threads that “any attempt to dissect its internal workings and past history just leads to a Reductionist Nightmare” (Cohen and Stewart 1994, 415). We need to look at the parts and the spaces as systems that are reiterated like fractals, “where simple systems interact in a way that changes both and erases their dependence on initial conditions.” These systems include our living experiences with/in the world.

This idea of complicity doesn't fit with fixed binary distinctions. It emphasizes relations that are intertwined and fluid while alerting us to a contrived and over-determined simplicity. Complicity – being implicated in/with – moves us as educators from managing a simplistic system of designed input/output-based pedagogy towards one of dynamic engagement and interaction. This requires an attentiveness to our participation through events, engaging in knowinbeingdoing in a complex and forever unfolding world.

These distinctions between simplicity and complicity are similar to Fritjof Capra's (1998) contrast of designed structures with emergent ones. Designed structures are formal structures and content, while an emergent one is the informal network of relationships that “continually grows, changes, and adapts to new situations” (47). An emergent structure requires a different form of leadership from that of a designed structure. Whereas a designed structure is based on rules and procedures, an emergent one facilitates the continual emergence of new structures by encouraging questioning

and rewarding innovation. This fits in more with the idea of complicity which I have outlined whereby facilitating new structures to emerge requires us to pay attention to how the system operates in order to continually create conditions for it to flourish.

Learning leadership and education within this model means becoming attuned to complicity, to be able to improvise within it and to realize that leadership doesn't reside with the teacher all the time, but is distributed *amongst* the participants from moment to moment. Leadership then becomes a form of "instruction" which, after all, comes from the Latin *instruere* which means not simply to teach, but to put into order, to set up a structure, to build, to put into form. Instruction then is the process of formation found in the participants' playful movements in the drama workshop. Creating the conditions for learning in this light, means teaching is not the transmission of some passive knowledge, preconceived, believed to be known in advance, "believed to be (exclusively) a *given*" (Felman, 56). Educational experiencing then becomes an "open space through which thing-flows are distributed rather than plotting out a close space for linear and solid things" (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 361). Such spaces emerge through the dramatic workshop but we must be aware of them when they do, attending "closely to my nonverbal experiences of the shifting landscape that surrounds me" (Abram, 59-60).

AHA! There we arrive again...in/at these nonverbal sites of mystery that I will never divine. The body, and its ability to move spontaneously and independently in space means that the body is always expressing itself in the world, be it individually, socially and ecologically and, in its very transformation, it finds new ways to act in the world. This bodily experience forces us to acknowledge that there are some things that are pre-cognitive.

A new kind of knowing emerges from this process of interstanding between I the diviner, I the diver and the not-I, the other. *Diving* and *divining* connect so we begin to see everything in new ways. Thinking of learning drama facilitation as a quest means that spiral diving can not result in pre-determined outcomes. I find myself underwater, where things appear differently from how they looked from above the water. Pretty stones I bring up to the surface look plain in the air. How light refracts underwater means that even if I have seen something from above, I find it difficult to grasp. The knowing I gain in any process changes in its application.

Through drama new versions of our story, in new languages emerge to be explored at a distance away from our day-to-day experience.

Which returns me to the diving diviner and the divining diver.

At times I will see those I work with coming up for air, applying what they learn.

At other times I won't.

And, at other times,

the beauty of the dive will be all that remains.

**Mid-Workshop Break**

**Energizer**

## Bull in the Pen

The theatre workshop is a place to play. Often we adapt competitive games that are familiar to everyone. But they are not only familiar to the participants. They become places to play in the gap between analysis and action. And link myself to my own storied life....

Do you remember those taunting competitive games held in the school playground every recess? *Red Rover Red Rover please come over?* You are called to try and run across and break the chain of kids hand in hand. If you broke through you could bring a kid from that line over to yours. If you didn't, you became part of that line. At the end of the game, the longest line wins. There was another game of power that we played on the elementary school playground – *Pom Pom Pull Away*.

**Pom**

**Pom**

**Pull**

**Away**

One person serves as the “tagger”

and stands in the middle of the field.

Everyone else lines up on one side of the square, facing the tagger.

When the tagger calls out “Pom pom pull away” everybody starts running and tries to get to the other side without getting touched by the tagger.

Anyone who does get touched joins the tagger in the middle.

Anyone who runs off the playing field boundaries becomes a tagger as well.

Now everyone is on the opposite side of the square.

The taggers simultaneously call out "Pom Pom Pull Away," and the players run toward the opposite side, trying to evade those in the centre. The last person remaining untouched becomes the tagger for the new game.

In the mid-80s I organized a visit to Regina by *Sistren Theatre*, a women's theatre company from Kingston, Jamaica. They gave a workshop based on their own theatrical process. I remember *Bull in the Pen*, an exercise that was used to bring out energy, commitment and identify issues that "hemmed in" people.

A word, a phrase.

That meant so much. So much physically.

A word that captured an emotion but also an analysis, a thought. A children's playground game like Red Rover or Pom Pom Pull Away, but much much more.....

*Bull in the Pen come out*

*Bull in the Pen come out*

A circle of people, hands linked, tightened, slowly circling around. Surrounding one lonely person looking for a way out.

*Bull in the Pen come out*

*Bull in the Pen come out*

All of us in the circle shout

*What kind of Pen is this?*

This bull, this person, feelings welling up inside, what is imprisoning me?

*Bull in the Pen*

*Bull in the Pen*

*come out*

*come out*

*Bull in the Pen*

*come out*

*come out*

What kind of **Pen** is this?

Racism,

Pain,

Fear

(whatever comes forth)

In the Pen I try and marshal up my energy

Tears welling up in my eyes

Now, and

Returning to the hurt on The playground, o those long years ago

*Pom Pom Pull Away!*

I feel the energy

To break the circle

To break free

*B u l l   i n   t h e   P e n !*

Are you Out?

Or are We?

I am trying to understand the emotion of this. A memory of a theatre game triggers a memory of a childhood on the playground. Aggressive, competitive games that seared the soul become games that understand that searing. Through writing this, I am witnessing a doubling of a performed past.

Fear, Hurt, Anger emerge from the depths of my soul through my sweating hands.

Body with/in the pen becomes/harkens back to body on the playground, another social/environmental and historical space which is the source of material that theatre re-presents.

A children's game, Barker (1977) tells us, is where unselfconsciousness can combine perfectly with involvement in imaginary situations.

Embodied in the performing present of the workshop space, these games become a place to open up the body to expressive resistance as I muster my energy to break out of the pen.

## **Image/Storying**

*Image Theatre:*

*Learning the Language of Image through Body Sculpting.*

*Sharing our Stories. Activation of Tableaux*

## Lea(r)ning on the Edge of Words:

### Imag(in)ing/Embodying Experience

Everything begins with the image and the image is made up of human bodies. Through perception of the body everyday experiences become performance (Auslander 1994, 124).

The workshop is in constant flow, moving through processes of emerging trust and community as we explore a theme. Watching a trust exercise enables me to sense what is possible. As these possibilities emerge through Image,<sup>43</sup> our work together takes advantage of the energy generated earlier to theatricalise our imaginations. Creativity blossoms as we begin to story our lives with/in a structure that is open to improvisation.

Changing our view of the world “necessitates a language that speaks to the lived experiences and felt needs of students, but also a critical language that can problematize social relations which we often take for granted” (McLaren 1995, 74). As forms of re-experiencing our lives, imagery as drama opens up a space for potential exploration among bodyminds as individuals step into the realm of the possible co-created worlds. This “middle ground” is reclaimed with/in moments of dramatic reflection as the personal presence of facilitator in the life-world of the participants meets the participant being personally present in the life-world of the facilitator.

Image crystallizes an issue, story or experience so that meaning emerges in the doing and seeing. As an aesthetic landscape emerges that doubles for the world, the theatre practice of Image becomes a form of text – a tissue or weave of potential meanings – where internal relationships activate external interactions with the world beyond the workshop space. As such, theatrical processes become meaningful actions of importance which go beyond their relevance to the initial story, not only mirroring it, but also opening “up a world which it bears within itself” (Ricoeur

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<sup>43</sup> I use the capitalized Image to refer to the particular theatricalized use of bodies in frozen motion in a drama workshop. When uncapitalized, image refers to the visual concept.

1981, 208). This structured language sets off embodied explorations as bridging work between community and trust building and the development of plays. This enables me as facilitator to continue to “read” the actions of the group.

We hold a mirror up to nature but, instead of trying to represent it, we find it accessible. We can see that, as knowledge is enacted, this bodymindworld is plastic and mutable. Self-observation through Image allows us to experience knowing as it is enacted in each moment of the present, not as something which already exists.

Then we play with the reality of the images before us. The characters must forget the real world which was the origin of the image and play with the Image itself, in its artistic embodiment, thus practising in the second world (the aesthetic), in order to modify the first (the social).

The artistic creativity of the protagonist must not limit itself to simple realistic reproduction or symbolic illustration of an experience or event: it must have its own aesthetic dimension. Boal concludes:

if the artist is able to create an autonomous world of images of his own reality, and to enact his liberation in the reality of these images, they will then extrapolate into his own life all that he has accomplished in fiction (1995, 44).

Drama becomes the interplay between the imagined and the actual, the tangible and the ephemeral. Reflection within drama allows knowledge to unfold and emerge and to become more explicitly known. Sitting there smoldering in our bodily memory, learning becomes more tangible, and, when we recall these embodied moments, available for deeper exploration in the future. As Simon (1994) describes:

[o]ur images of ourselves and our world provide us with a concrete sense of what might be possible and desirable. What we do in classrooms can matter; we can begin to enable students to enter the openness of the future as the place of human hope and worth (381).

Image is just such an embodied language that emerges through our interactions with/in the world. Once the image emerges it can be manipulated in many ways. It just requires using the imagination and finding ways to involve the audience. Image and imagination are an interplay of structure and de-structure, the image providing a form of closure to play with; the imagination providing a way of opening up the form to possibility. I can play with the remote control as if it was a videotape – fast forward or rewind to events in the past. Or I can create a tableau using more people to show a “slide show” of the story. All these techniques allow for a manipulation of time and space in the “staged reality” in the classroom. Or the “staged reality” of these words on the page....

A set of images, A Time, A Place:

*I remember...*

I was part of “What is Education?,” a collaborative “poster session” on arts-based educational research at the 1999 American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting in Montreal, Quebec. After a series of presentations by other artist/researchers I was asked to use Image to sum up the session. A colleague and fellow drama educator Lynn Fels had been a spectator inside the Imag/inary ing world that was this session. Afterwards, we decided to converse through our performative writing about the experience, collaboratively exploring our interplays of Imaging and, at the same time adding another layer to my own experiencing....

## **Prologue**

Not walls  
of cement, but...  
the melodies  
of your temperature<sup>44</sup>

We are reading the temperature of the room, writing embodied melodies, choreographing

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<sup>44</sup> Barba, 1995, 162.

intertextual<sup>45</sup> explorations of imagination and interpretation. Performance<sup>46</sup> becomes the liquid inquiry of our research. Disrupting expectations, we invite our audience to circle around what Peter Brook (1968) names “the empty space of theatre,” a space anticipating as yet to be realized pedagogical possibilities.<sup>47</sup>

Montreal 1999. The conference at which we are presenting is attended by thousands of North American educational researchers who have gathered together to share their expertise, research and hopes for the future. In the lower level of a Montreal hotel, secreted away from the main stage presentations, conference presenters in the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Arts-Based Educational Research Special Interest Group have collaboratively and physically rearranged the schedule of their presentations. Originally planned as a walk-through of separate presentations in individual secluded areas of the room, the session has been restructured as a performative occasion. Tables are rearranged and wall dividers are moved out of position. Dislocation. Presenters gather the audience into a large circle around an open space of carpet.

Here, in this space re-imagined, presenters and participants embark on a personal and collective journey of re-imagining research through presentations of quilt-making, art installation, self-portrait sculpture. We hang our linen of words on a clothesline; we listen to the intertwining of the personal, aesthetic and research within poetic lines of possibility. Disruption and invitation are the intertextual play that invites new languaging, new actions, new relationships of inquiry. These presenters and spectators are pioneers, seeking entry into academic conversation through new means of actualizing and performing educational research. One of us has prepared an inter-active process to round out the session. One of us hangs on the periphery of the circle, in a position of

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<sup>45</sup> By intertextual we mean interactions or embodied conversations between texts such as those between participant(s) and researcher, between individual and landscape, between a poem and personal experience: each a text in interaction and relationship between. A text may be an object, living being, or place embodied with a personal and communal narrative (i.e. cultural, racial or ethnic, socio-economic, ecological, historical, and gendered) that informs and intertwines through lines of multiplicity and complicity.

<sup>46</sup> Lynn Fels and Lee Stothers (1996), introduce performance as an action-site of space-moments of learning, an ecological dance on the edge of chaos that breathes new meaning, new relationships, new possibilities into being, becoming. The term “performance” acknowledges both the “process” (journey) and “product” (landscape) of exploration. While performance in this dissertation plays within the co-evolving worlds of drama/theatre, performance voices the creative explorations of dance, music, writing and visual arts, and these fields of artistic endeavor become action-sites of research. See also Fels, 1999.

<sup>47</sup> Pedagogical Possibilities are not just thought of in the mind but, more importantly emerge in experiencing as “an interplay of human bodies and landscape (animate and inanimate) bodies” (Haskell, 2000, xxix).

observer.

The following text is a conversation in, and between, the voices of the Facilitator and one of many Spect-actors. Centred text is the action.

## Opening

**Warren:** I, Facilitator as final presenter, am called to the centre of the space.

**A Spect-actor:** I, as spectator, watch his approach.

Voiceless, one among many observing, has not yet recognized the invitation that awaits the interplay of presenter and spectator and inquiry. An intertextual dances of possibility where performance anticipates our presence.

Collectively,

we wait<sup>48</sup>

**Warren:** In the Space, I wait.<sup>49</sup>

I find myself thrust into the void.

Breathing slowly, I begin by reading . . .

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<sup>48</sup> We are both drama educators and researchers, exploring the possibilities and potential of performance as a means of research. My article, *A Journey in Metaxis* (Linds, 1998), explores in more detail *Theatre of the Oppressed* as embodied knowing. Co-writer/Spect-actor Lynn Fels has concentrated her work on performance through drama-in-education as a learning and research vehicle across the curriculum. Her dissertation, (1999) introduces performative inquiry as a research methodology.

<sup>49</sup> Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1993) point out that in *The English Patient* by Michael Ondaatje, the author uses a recursive plot with incomplete and unclear information. In the interaction with the unconventional narrative structure (which we would call a form of performance), the readers they worked with discovered they learned a great deal about themselves and each other. They point out that readers couldn't become "lost" in the reading, or to relax and let the text determine the experience for them. Rather, the text forced them to deliberately write themselves into the reading. More space is created in such a text for the reader. Space to become uncomfortable, to engage, to col(labor)ate (co-labour: to toil, working together), as readers unravel the text in the actions of reading, unraveling the knots of discomfort and frustration.

*Only images in the mind vitalize the will.  
The mere word by contrast, at most inflames it,  
to leave it smoldering<sup>50</sup>*

I turn to the expectant audience . . .

*“You have before you, I, (Warren Linds), facilitator/participant/Joker”*

(nervously becoming performers)

I come into the middle of the circle

and take on a shape that means something to me

(I am on tip-toes, my arms extended leaning out into [invisible] space)

but I don't tell the group what it is.

*What do you see?*

(a pause, my nervousness escalates as I wait, still on tippy-toes)

**Spect-actor:** Anxious laughter. Everyone is watching.  
Reluctant to break the space of observation. Afraid?  
Uncertain? Waiting for an answer.  
No one is willing to commit to sound. I hesitate, not  
wanting to abort the moment.

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<sup>50</sup> Buck-Morss quoting Benjamin 1989, 290.

Performative inquiry, such as I introduce to this circle of on-lookers through the drama activity called “imaging”, invites embodied participation, requiring creative action and interaction between researcher, participants and inquiry. Performative inquiry seeks, not explanation, but an interplaying of identification and interpretation through performance. To enter into an embodied text] is to acknowledge risk, trust, collective censorship, collaborative creativity. Performative inquiry performs in spiralling circles of realization and recognition.

Step outside of the box. What does it look like? How does it feel? Poised on the edge of watching, I catch my breath and then with others, shout into the uneasy silence

**Chorus of Spect-actors:** *Baseball! You're a catcher! Something is falling and you're trying to catch it! Anticipation! Teaching someone how to swim! You're catching a football! Nervous! Scared! Waiting for an attack! Defending yourself! You're holding out your arms as a baby walks towards you! You're reaching out for your lover!*

**Warren:** *“And....And....Any thing else?”*

Many stories (I repeat some of the things I am told)

(I pause...)

*What would you see if I came up and*

(I retreat from the circle, then go back in, anguish on my face....)

*scream, I want to kill myself!!!*

DISLOCATION

SHOCK

SURPRISE

**Spect-actor:** From multiple possibilities, the image crystalizes into a single story. Clearly now, we see him poised on the ledge of a window, frozen before the leap. A captured moment, anticipating the fall, the empty silent

space between. But why? What story/ies motivates this image? What journeys, landscapes, passions, loss leads to this moment on a window sill.

A single image with multiple possibilities. Each one of us becomes authors of numerous plots, reading the embodied image with the enthusiasm of amateur psychiatrists or with the cleverness of detective novelists. What has led to this moment? What anticipates the leap? A welcome freefall into possible research?

**Warren:** The participants perform, through responding, what my story is.

Image  
Form  
Without Words.

Whose Image?

If I name my image, I am naming my story.

If I remain silent, does everyone name their own story within my image?

Can we build on each other's story, to make a new one?

**Spect-actor:** Why has he named his image? In doing so he wrests away from us the power of naming - that soaring pleasure of embodying an image with our own interpretations, possibilities, a carefree scaffolding of multiple images within one image, our motionless man in the centre of a circle, stopped in action. What action? What cause?

What possibilities of outcome? He takes away the authoring

we have written on the text of his body.

And yet, in the space-moment of naming, as possibilities are momentarily dis-stilled into one, the gaps sing loudly, making visible the invisible of our collective embodied knowing. We read, write individually collectively upon the embodied text of his image. A textual interplay of possibility. Now named, new naming awakens as we replay his embodied text through possible tellings not yet imagined.

Invitation :

Acceptance?

**Warren:** Clay, formless earth.....

then formed, moulded into a pot, a bowl, a cup.

Intelligent clay, the body as something to mould, to create our own image.

The clay, our bodies, then speaks to us, calling up emotions, feelings and thoughts.

We create thoughts and feelings through what we give that person's sculpted physicality – so that their body speaks to us as intelligent clay.

*(Another nervous moment as I ask for two volunteers,<sup>51</sup> as I continue to lean precariously on the edge of impossibility).*

**Spect-actor:** How reluctant, hesitant, afraid we are to voice our presence. To speak with our bodies. To place ourselves into the circle of attention.

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<sup>51</sup> Called *Complete the Image*, this drama activity may first be done in pairs and then in the large group. When in the large group, anyone who has an idea can jump up, tap one of a pair shaking hands and replace them, adding a new element, a new story. After a few tries of this, add more people until there are six or seven people who are making a story out of the image. When it seems the group has understood the method, begin again; when it comes the time to add four or five people, ask the group to use a particular theme when completing the image.

Performative inquiry through dramatic activity requires a breaking with audience; demands that we find the courage to voice presence. How to respond to our presenter's invitation welcome into embodied conversation? Fearfully courageously we move from spectator to spect-actor. request to make active passive observation.

A man pushes up from his chair, volunteers to enter the first line of our anticipated as yet unknown text. I hesitate then move into the slipstream, to join him in the space. "Here I am."

We eye each other apprehensively.

**Warren:** The group stands in a circle facing inward.

A pair of participants go to the centre and shake hands.

They freeze the image.

One of the participants removes himself from the image, leaving the other with her hand extended.

*"Now what is the story?"*

Instead of speaking out loud the meaning of this new image,

the partner who has left returns to the image

and completes it;

putting himself in a different position and relationship

to the partner with the outstretched hand,

thereby changing both the interaction

and the meaning of the image.

Then the first partner comes out

of this new frozen image,

looks at it  
and, re-entering,  
completes it,  
changing its meaning yet again.

And so on, each partner alternating positions.  
Participants look quickly at the half-images they are completing,  
arranging themselves in a complementary position as fast as they can

thinking with their bodies.

It does not matter whether or not there is a literal meaning to the way the participant chooses to complete the image – the important thing is to keep moving and the ideas flowing.<sup>52</sup>

*“See it and go with your intuition. Act. React.”*

**Spect-actor:** First, I try to control the image. What image, statement, picture, story should I/we make? But the images unfold too quickly. I cannot keep pace with a literal reading of my partner's embodied text, and so I let my body sculpt space-moments of relationship, carving spaces the air holds between us, shaping absence into presence.

How do others read me?

Am I endangering the text?

Am I grammatically correct in my stance?

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<sup>52</sup> Almost every time I do Image work the first response by participants to an image is – what is the person in the Image trying to say? and then the inevitably “guessing” begins. This happens even when I begin a sequence with a shaking hands exercise as I emphasize that there is no right or wrong answer. I add that the Image I show at the beginning allows everyone to “read into it” their own story. Despite these assurances, I feel the inertia and habit of “playing charades,” of “guessing” what someone is trying to say remains so ingrained that participants cannot trust to let the image be, to come into its own meaning. As writers of performance, we seek ways to create meaning through intertextual play that invites the participant (performer and reader) to abandon the expected, the explanatory as they read the text (each other's embodied text and this text that you breathe into knowing).

*“Don't think  
Trust  
Flow Response Flow  
Just be”*

Performative inquiry seeks participation, commitment, embodied intertextual readings and writings of collective texts, and yet the potential for participants to freeze, to shy from the bodily writing of unspoken text, to fear that their “guess” is the wrong one, remains our challenge as researchers, facilitators, educators.

Imaging through performance invites participation through performance - embodied explorations of the interplay through body, mind, and imagination; we perform possibility and absence into being, becoming. Performative inquiry is an action-site of learning; educational questions may be researched through drama activities such as role play, improvisations, tableaux, play-building, and imaging.

**(Re) Imag(in)ing**

**Education**

**Facilitator:** So it is as we struggle to enter into the writing/reading of embodied intertextual play, our bodies position and reposition, not dictating the story but inviting us into relationship through collective story-making.

Initially, there is the frustration of not knowing in a linear literal way the meaning of the constantly evolving text, adding our bodies to the text, shaping the air, limbs, bodies in relationship, not yet named. And then we revel in the free interplay of simply shaping space and relationship without naming, without preconception. To not expect, nor analyze, nor explain, but to write embodied possibility into the air.

**Spect-actor:** Now he says a word, a single word and his word names the story, the relationship, the space moment of being becoming in our collaborative textual writing/reading of our embodied text.

Warren: *"Image the word concept possibility –*

*Education"*

**Spect-actor:** Counting seconds until one then another breaks through the physical barrier of distance, inaction, to place themselves into the text, to become the text. Reluctance to participate gives way to the unexpected pleasure of writing embodied text, changing lines, dancing presence. Soon others jump into our embodied conversation, and we spiral towards interstanding.

In the hotel conference room, our circle of spectators enters into performance; we have become what Boal (1979) calls "spect-actors," active participants exploring the theme "Education" within embodied text. Collectively, one by one, without verbal consultation, we add to a beginning image presented by the first volunteer participant who has placed her body rag-doll on the floor.

We write lines of text: a raised arm, a cowering retreat, a lecturing finger, a winged flight momentarily stayed. I position myself behind the man who is standing over the rag-doll creature. We do not speak. The others who have remained in the circle read our embodied text, a collective image that presents multiple possibilities.

**Facilitator:** *"Speak a word, a phrase, a sentence that spells your presence in the image."*<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Based on the idea that a "picture is worth a thousand words" (Jackson in Boal 1992, xx), Imaging enables the participant to fill the shapes s/he is in with feelings and thoughts that come from the interplay between the physical shape and bodymindspiritemotion. Thoughts and words initially emerge from the individual's awareness of the static body in the Image and the world around the Image. Images can also be put into further motion, movements that arise out of the interplaying of bodymind.

**Spect-actor:**

*“Puppetmaster,”*

I say, and hear a gasp of interstanding from those still standing in the circle as they re-read our image in response to our spoken words. A moment of recognition; our embodied story layered in meaning-making through image and voiced text. And so we begin to reimagine the interplay that is education....

**Epilogue**

Though bodies act, react – and though bodily inscriptions are always reporting some mode of being, thinking, acting on the world – the special moment of “mime” calls attention to this literacy and iterates loudly the sometimes unconscious thoughts and feelings that are verbally incommunicable.<sup>54</sup>

**Spect-actor & Facilitator:** As we have explored above, performative inquiry is not apart nor separate from the text but is the text; an embodied text that is dynamic, fluid, unexpected. Through our imag(in)ing, we spell silence to sound, singing possibility within the gaps and spaces between our bodies and the air we carve in danced conversation with each other.

He brings the session to a close and we are released from our role of spect-actors. From the moment of his opening image leaning on the edge of words, we entered into the creative action and interaction of Performative inquiry, an illustration of the potential and possibility of performance as embodied intertextual exploration. We have had an opportunity to realize through our embodied writing/reading/creating of text, the conference's ambition: reimage(in)ing educational research in the 21st Century.

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<sup>54</sup> Brunner 1996, 13.

As researchers and educators who investigate the potential of arts-based inquiry and teaching in education, we need to recognize the power and possibility of collaborative exploration through performative inquiry, as experienced through imaging and other forms of embodied interplay. Creating interstanding through intertextual play brings to voice and recognition the embodied texts of our students. Performative inquiry within the classroom is an invitation to students to freefall within explorative spaces where as-yet unknown melodies sing absence into presence.

*I remember - November 2000....*

*I was leading Complete the Image as part of a conference presentation. People were rapidly replacing each other as they completed the Image, the theme emerging from their bodily (inter) actions. One participant was about to jump in and I called out "Now this Image will be about Education." She stopped on her tippy toes, unsure what to do next. Unknowingly I had created a moment of Freefall. A moment when her next action would mean something more than just her body being in space.*

Freefall is an embracing of unexpected moments that happen when what we do challenges us. These events regularly occur in our lives, but often our smell, sight, feeling, touch or hearing are not sensitized to them when they occur. We need to open our senses to, and welcome, these moments that "stop interaction and provide freshness to perception" (Haskell, 2000, 19). This requires "a balance of skill, trust, risk and flow of interactions" (xxvi).

*I was crossing a narrow gap between rocks on the coast of British Columbia at a place I had been many times before. As I jumped, I felt a brief moment of being on the edge of an abyss, (a) void. A brief sensation of what if? I lose my balance, if gravity takes me down the narrow rock..... A loss of control that only lasted a micro-second but seemed much longer.*

*Like/not like being in control of a sailboat. I am at the tiller, feeling the tight tension as we work with the wind, my hand attuned to the feeling of the wind on the sail. Cautious that it isn't too tight because then we will heel over too much at an angle, but not too loose, because then we will lose speed. Aware also of my friends (whose boat it is), watching me watching the wind. Donna*

*more wary of the speed; Dave willing to go with me. Feeling on the edge, feeling of just slightly in control.*

*But, unlike in sailing where one can anticipate wind by watching the waters ahead for that slight change in the ripple, in crossing that gap of those two rocks I can only judge the distance. Feeling an unexpected whoosh, a slight glimpse that passes yet resides in my remembered senses at the edge of embodied knowing.*

So in these moments of freefall there had better be something connecting me to certainty, someone on the ground, serving as an anchor, ensuring there is security as I develop an interweaving between rock and myself.

*I remember taking a mountain climbing course years ago. One of the classes was held on some cliffs and boulders just off the British Columbia Railway tracks north of Vancouver. There I was climbing a boulder, pressing my fingertips onto the pebbled surfaces of the rock as I inched my way upward. I was secured in my journey by someone who was belaying me below. This was a total stranger whom I had only just met but whom I completely trusted. I was also gradually learning to trust the rock, which to the untrained eye looked like a slick surface that could never be climbed. It was the interplay of the rock, its pebbled surfaces, the belayer and my own embodied trusting that ensured my journey to the top. Embracing freefall, or should I say the risk of it, can only occur when there is an intertwined network of relations that will support my fall.*

This web with entwined connections instills confidence. A net that can only work if the connections hold and contain the risk. Risk in tension with safety. Such a container<sup>55</sup> is a sacred space that has an ability to hold people with/in the tension of a relationship, a relationship which works through both mutual consent or connection and the space across what seems the other looking back.. This container has a gap that can't be too open or it will hold nothing, transmit and allow nothing, thus destroying the structure so there is no connection between storytellers and

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<sup>55</sup> The word for container comes from the Greek *temenos*, "meaning a sacred space and time specially prepared and set apart in order to reconnect with ancient energies" (Salverson 1996b, 185).

their listeners. It loses form and luminosity as the large space doesn't allow the storytellers to explore through their stories "what they know and what they are trying to discover (Salverson 1996a, 47). If "too small or nonexistent, there is no room for Other, no space across which the familiar and the strange can gaze upon each other" (47), losing life and the ability to breathe, grow and be inhabited. A container must hold people within the tension of a relationship involving both mutual investment or connection and the space across which we see the other looking back. This seam of mutual investment is held in place, paradoxically, by both the pull of connection and the push against the tension of difference. In rock climbing this means that the belayer acts as an anchor holding open the gap that enables trust to emerge in the interplay of rock, person and belayer.

Richard Mitchell (1983), in his wonderful book *Mountain Experience*, characterizes planning as both creation and calculation. It is a process of "fantasy and dream, of imaginatively constructing future and potential experience" (3). It is also forecasting in that there is an enumeration of possible outcomes and preparation for contingencies. But that forecasting is based on the experiences of the mountaineer and involves preparation for contingencies of weather and terrain and the teamwork necessary to summit.

Even in my limited experience of climbing I realized I was beginning to trust my body, my partners, and my relation with the rock. I hadn't taken the course in order to take up the sport of climbing but to learn to trust myself in the outdoors. I wanted, to become comfortable with the unpredictable and to know the skills required to live with the unfathomable which might be just around the corner, be it a grizzly bear, an unforeseen storm, or broken equipment.

Around the same time I took an outdoor survival course. Again I didn't take it to prove myself in the outdoors but to learn the skillful trusting that enabled me to realize I could "survive" in the outdoors if I had to, if some unforeseen, invisible, unknown event happened. I remember our instructor, a former Outward Bound leader, who kept talking about the outdoor survival course being about learning to see the wilderness as a place we could live with/in with healthy respect, not as some dark unknown that we had to fear or overcome.

“The risk of moving upward is never planned or forecasted, but embodied through the action, the groundless embrace of the emergent, unexpected unpredictableness of inching up a rock face” (Haskell in Hocking, Haskell and Linds 2001, 230). Similarly, reading the action of a group means, in the words of a co-facilitator I worked within a high school workshop, “being in the moment, feeling where the group needs to go” (personal conversation, April 2000).

Empowerment of participants  
both  
within action-sites of educational research and learning  
heartbreath of being becoming

### **Imag(ine)ing Storying**

How does Image work help to build that atmosphere of trust and safety, thus enabling a sharing of our storied lives?

Victor Turner (1982) suggests that “narrate” traces its lineage from the Latin *narrare*, “to tell,” and Latin *gnarus*, “knowing,” both derivative from the Indo-European *gna*, “to know” (86-87). Thus, narrative is a way of knowing, a search for meaning, that privileges experience, process, action and risk. The shared roots of both storytelling and knowledge indicate the way knowing is shared through action. It comes about through representation through word, image or sound.

One way I introduce such forms of representation is through a handshake. Image is a form of narrative that begins with partners with a simple hands in hands together, a transfer of grounded energy, eyes looking at each other. In such a handshake “the function of mutual friendliness is maintained only if attention is not consciously directed to it” (Van den Berg 1959, 29). But a simple handshake can say different things with the ways we use the rest of our bodies. If we begin to interplay, we may notice the use of the eyes, the face, the stance of each other. What is the metaphoric handshake I as facilitator engage in with the group?

The first few times I facilitated *Complete the Image* my handshakes were simple. But even in each handshake there are immense possibilities. We can have a subservient handshake, a superior handshake, a handshake of servant to master, a handshake of master to servant. In many countries the quality of handshake is determined by the length of time you are engaged. To let go before all the greetings are finished is considered a grave insult, a "breaking off" of conversation. In Haiti where I have lived and worked, one must shake the hands of everyone in the household before beginning a conversation or visit. This happens every morning as we connect ourselves in these moments to our families back home, a re-making of our world together. Developing and maintaining connections as an atmosphere of communion develops, maintaining an individuality within a community. Similarly, this has to be done every time one works together with a group, done anew, beginning new conversations.

Martin Ringer (1999) links this aspect of connections to the need for adequate containment in groups where participants have a "sense of being firmly held in the group and its task, yet not immobilized by the experience" (5). Julie Salverson (1996b) says this firmness with flexibility means there must be a space or gap within the container. This form is moulded as we work together holding "the circle of knowing open and invites a current that prevents steering a straight line through the story, or arriving at predetermined destination" (184). She refers to Jungian therapist and writer Marion Woodman's notion of the container as "home," but a home that is open to possibility, the possibility of being wrong, with a gap ensuring "there is always something more to say" (186).

*I remember – February 1991....*

For many years I had wanted to learn about Theatre of the Oppressed work. Now I had the opportunity. I was being "trained" to be a drama facilitator in a workshop.

It was the beginning of the workshop. David Diamond, the facilitator, was working with 30 high school students from across Regina "exploring race relations." It was the first day. We had an introductory circle, shared a bit, just a bit about ourselves.

I was a facilitator-in-training, but I was participating in the workshop. One eye on what was being done, one body involved. I, and two other teachers participated in games and exercises; but we were to become observers for drama work involving the theme.

It came time for *Complete the Image*.

After playing around with the images, rather than ask them to practice the technique in small groups as he normally did, David said, "Ok, now the theme is school life."

All of a sudden the images became less playful, their faces became serious, their movements slow and considered; as they built up image after image of

isolation

alienation

accusation

the playful level of energy changed

Afterwards I asked the facilitator to explain why he had chosen to do that particular step.

"Normally," he said, "we don't get to that until the second or third day....as I wait to see how engaged the students are; how much trust there is and how safe it is to explore these hard issues."

"But here I felt they were ready."

End of Story?

This happened almost nine years ago. I still remember it as if it was yesterday.

I remember the experience of experiencing...the shift in temperature, the tension in the room at that moment. It was like a cold wind after a blizzard, as the low pressure system moves through in January and, behind it, an Arctic chill descends on the prairie....

I'm not referring to that chill, I'm talking about that "moment" of the shift in winds.....

or perhaps it's being in the outer reaches of a hurricane and moving into the calm, and eerily quiet, eye of the storm.

That moment of transition .....From a lively, chatting, joking, laughing group of teenagers to a serious commitment to the “work” of drama...Work that is not only a noun but also a verb.

Since then this has also happened to me. Sometimes, I took the risk and asked for the theme early on working with a group. Sometimes that atmosphere returned; other times, the depth of analysis in the images was shallower, or should I say I didn't feel the tension, that shift in energy from inside my role as facilitator ....

What was it that drew the facilitator to decide, to take that risk that would bring the participants into “serious play?”

I have conducted many workshops since then, with students, with teachers, and with student teachers. I have continued to participate in workshops and many times I have felt that rush of adrenalin as we worked on *Complete the Image*, as the images emerged from the interplay between bodies and the experiences and worlds which participants re-presented in the workshop environment.

But the question remains, how do I know when to take the risk, to move from play to serious play as we deepen our understanding of the themes and issues in our lives?

What would an Image of this transforming moment (this frozen image that is the starting point to movement), look like? As Boal's translator, Adrian Jackson (Boal 1992), says:

The image work never remains static - the frozen image is simply the starting point for or prelude to the action, which is revealed in the activation of the image, bringing the images to life and discovery of whatever direction or intention is in them (xix - xx).

As text, images are a form of communication between producer and audience. They access events, places and personalities that exist, not as isolated facts, but as inter-related representations that emerge as we remember (Simon 1994).

In my experience, working with non-verbal images leads to an exploration of different levels of themes and issues present in those images. New narratives develop. As Simon (1994) outlines:

while the deployment of images in practices of commemoration are most often meant to tell or elaborate some story, there is at times something present in an image in excess of this narrativization. This is crucial to the difference between showing and telling ... (14).

Often there are images that take a group's breath away as they look on. Something symbolic or metaphoric touches emotional chords.

Simon calls this effect of the image in works of art "gestural excess" which

attracts a rich array of associative memories, knowledge and emotion that clings to the image and enhances its primacy within the dynamics of remembrance. So evocative are such "sticky" images, if widely circulated they can accumulate an iconic weight (14).

An image is a tool of Bertolt Brecht's (quoted in Roman 1993) "complex seeing of analysis" (158) – a set of visuals which emerge from generative "themes which contain the possibility of unfolding into again as many themes, which in their turn call for new tasks to be fulfilled" (Freire 1970, 92) with rich ramifications in the lives of learners (Perkins 1993). This knowledge is both of the world and of the individual. Just as there is a transformation of the story teller into story shower, playing with Image leads us to a transformation of meaning. As Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989) writes about the dramatic play, "what no longer exists is the world in which we live as our own. Transformation into structure is not simply transposition into another world" (112). Image is not

of another world—it is a world that “exists as something that rests absolutely within itself”(112). Developing image is a process of transforming into a new world, “one which was potentially there in our ‘undecided possibilities’” (Gallagher 1992, 121). Through this process, Image brings to light what is otherwise hidden and withdrawn.

In the case of Image, this language of “double seeing,” where the image of the real is real as image (Boal 1995, 43-44), the Image forms a kind of container with us being both inside and outside it. Salverson (1996a) applies these concepts to the form of theatre pieces but it can also be applied to the process of facilitation itself. Facilitation that has no straight line to some predetermined goal is a process of risk. It’s about providing a frayage, an opening or an interruption that “breaks a path” (Nancy 1997, 135), developing a container of safety, where risking is possible, where testimony is possible, where witnessing is possible. This container is not totally closed as that would be suffocating and too divorced from the world outside the room, but it is a container that has openings so that people may share and risk. It is that risk that maintains its energy. And I am in the liminal space, both outside and in, standing in the crack of the in between, keeping the threshold open. So I as facilitator must be aware of my own role in the playing; that when I ask a question I might not get the answer I expect. Then into this new empty space, full of meaning now, it is my responsibility to ask new questions that enable thought, voice, and embodied action.

*Fast Forward...*

March 21, 2000. A high school in Regina. A day to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I have been asked to work with a group of 20 self-selected high school students for the morning, and to prepare them to facilitate small groups of grade eight students to explore racism. This group of students were representative of the diversity of the high school, mostly at the grade 11 and 12 levels. About 1/3 of them were English as a secondary language students and recent immigrants to Canada. The mix made for a very interesting group who were more than ready to listen to and learn from each other.

*No! Further Forward!! To that draining experience where you lost your voice....*

I am standing in the middle of an auditorium. One hundred and twenty-five Grade 8 students are arriving and taking their seats. They have arrived from all this high school's elementary feeder schools for an afternoon in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racism. I have spent the morning working with an excellent group of high school students, exploring racism in their school lives. The morning had gone well and we were all on a sort of a high, ready to work with these grade 8s.

A week before my co-facilitator and I had sat down and planned out the day. A plan that would serve as a tether, but which would also allow us to experiment, realizing that if we took risks, we might fa(i)ll. We had envisioned a two-stage process...developing Image plays with the high school students; showing them to the Grade 8s gathered in the auditorium and working with the elementary school students to develop their own Images of

What does racism look like?

What would a world without racism look like?

It all looked good on paper and after the morning's activities with a group that had really jelled, we were optimistic, though with a twinge of doubt nagging at us.

The afternoon began with a stream of noisy Grade 8s entering the auditorium.

Noise Buzz Losing My Voice How to Ensure that the Audience can see our Work Feeling Responsible for What Was Going. I had the feeling I was trying to fit gears together

To Make it All Work. And It Doesn't.

Another group of 125 - 20 groups of about 6 each. The lack of

Noise Buzz Losing My Voice How to Ensure that the Audience can see our Work Feeling Responsible for What Was Going. I had the feeling I was trying to fit gears together

To Make it All Work. And It Doesn't.

Another group of 125 - 20 groups of about 6 each. The lack of time for trust and context. The novelty of being in a high school. Noise, Crowded. Being a Ringmaster in a 20-Ring Circus.

No one willing to risk except for the high school youth facilitators we had worked with in the morning. I was trying to shove the students into this container we had developed in the morning; and they were unwilling to go there. They didn't know enough; they wanted to have fun, they wanted to compete with each other.

Here Was a Container That was Totally Open. No Cracks. No Trust. No community. Executing Control. Grinding Gears. Shouting Above the Tumult Trying to Do the Right Thing. Yet there was no right thing - "the dynamic complexity of the situation" (Davis et al. 2000, 179) made it impossible. Freefall, with no belayer and nowhere to land.

What a Contrast to the Morning.

**Rewind Fast!!!! Let me out of this memory....**

We had spent the first part of the morning doing warmup exercises, a sense of community emerged. There had been a slight glitch when I asked for volunteers to try *Complete the Image*. A reluctance to come forward. A space, a void as we waited. I felt stuck. No response.

As we moved on, I had consulted with my co-facilitator, who was learning this process as we went along. She was a school teacher used to these sorts of problems. She said we should try to

## The Circle of Stories

We begin our work with circles where everyone has the time to speak. It is a place for people to share. Aboriginal architect Douglas Cardinal explains circles this way

When you put your knowledge in a circle, it's not yours any more – it's shared by everyone (*Leader-Post*, November 28, 1995, 2).

I was hoping someone would share a story that I could work with to create an image, and to show the group how Images can not only be created to tell a story but can be created from a story-moment. This is the beginning of building community that engages the imagination, establishing an atmosphere that is theatrical, nurturing and about dialogue (Rohd 1998).

I began the circle by asking “Would anyone like to share a story of experiencing racism?”

There is a pause

Silence as the group processes the question

A stop (Applebaum 1995), “a form of movement purer than that of body, mind or feeling alone” (24)

We were at a hinge of the workshop as we moved from abstract play about racism to the lives of the players

What have we been hiding behind in our play?      What would be on the other side of the hiding?

Andrea jumps in. And proceeds to talk non-stop for what seems like ten or fifteen minutes. The story of her life.

This is the first time the group begins to listen to words rather than creating Imag(e)nary symbols

of racism.

But I had only asked for a moment!

An expectation.

Of an instance of racism

Every experience worthy of the name thwarts an expectation. Insight is more than the knowledge of this or that situation. It always involves an escape from something that had deceived us and held us captive (Gadamer 1989, 356).

Why isn't she sharing such a moment? Why do we have to have all the details of her life in China? Her life here. The comparisons between the two. How wonderful things were in her home country. How lost and isolated she was feeling here. What had happened one day as she came to her high school ...this high school....How she had tripped and her books went flying and no one helped her. The laughter behind her back as she scrambled to pick herself up off the icy pavement...

Ah, at last. I seized upon this moment and relaxed. I now had my example of a moment in her storying that I could base my use of the Image on.

But this was no longer a question of the tool or technique of Image operating in a void, where a certain number of steps would lead invariably to a desired end, but

embodied materially and socially in the form of our technology, shape(d) a new human environment for us. (It) place(d) us as human beings in a new relation to our environing nature, to the cosmos and so ultimately to ourselves (Barrett 1979, xx).

This was her/Andrea living in this moment. In telling the story inner/outer conflated and (e)merged. Her body spoke through language but it was her whole bodily kinesthetic intelligence, “the ability to use one’s own body in highly differentiated and skilled ways, for expressive as well as goal-directed purposes” (Gardner 1983, 206).

Andrea’s emotional telling of her life as she was living it defied my expectations for what kind of story I was going to hear. It filled me with wonder as I felt “pulled up short” (Gadamer 1989, 266). This was not comfortable. The unexpectedness of the telling of the story meant there was a difference in the workshop between before this story and after it had begun. I felt a momentary sensation of freefall, where my intellect (expressed through my “plan”) was arrested; we just listened. As time came to a stop, we experienced time “unqualified by intellect” (85). Then time became part of the event of the telling. In Andrea’s speaking, and in my listening (no, feeling), there was a pulse, rhythm and tempo as her telling rose and fell. I sensed we were all becoming engaged in the telling and the listening.

I sensed in this rhythm of telling how the story related to the Image we were going to explore and in what manner to engage the others in this process. I didn’t know what was going to happen but I began to sense when to open things up and when to close them down. What would be enough information and what might be too much? What could be entered more deeply (the incident) and what should be postponed (her alienation). Triggering its initiation as well as listening to its momentum and tempo, I heard the silence of the others and saw the intense speaking of their bodies in that quiet circle. Even when they became absent in the listening I would glance at them, ensuring the gap was still opening and closing. Paying attention to the timing of the workshop; but also the timing and rhythm of this story.

Even though I had heard many such stories before, here I was listening, without knowing why....before I knew what it was I was listening to. I looked around at the others and saw they were also drawn in, and engaged with, the story, becoming “obtrusively present, throughout the testimony” (Felman and Laub 1992, 71). We were becoming respectful (Readings 1996) witnesses to this story; and this witnessing event which implicated us in a new relationship with Andrea. I had a moment of self-doubt as to what to do as her story touched, and directly

implicated, me since I, as facilitator, had asked the question. I was both “imminently present, in the lead” (Felman and Laub, 71) yet also non-directive in that leadership. I was the one who had triggered the initiation of the story, as well as the guardian of the momentum of its process. Being in the frame of a workshop, with a task to do, enabled me to be present and active, letting the fragments of her story make their impact both on me and on the others as we all became witnesses both to her story and to our own responses to it (58). I was an explorer, but also a guide for the group in its own exploration; a companion in a journey into an uncharted land, a journey we all would not traverse or return from alone. Knowledge of racism was not simply a factual given that was being shared but a genuine advent [a be-coming], that stood in its own right, an advent ure. This journey brought forth aspects of “acknowledgment, remembrance and ... consequence” (Simon and Eppert 178), emerging through my own double attentiveness – double in that it involved both an appropriate pattern of acting as facilitator/witness as well as being attentive to the effects of my actions as witnessing facilitator.

Through the telling, and the imagining as we listened, Andrea’s experience was bearing “witness to itself in the image” (Hillman, 1982, 78) it was offering to us. We could hear the story, but we were not required to listen to it. Thus, it was “claiming but not requiring our witness” (78). Such an ethical practice also included the obligation<sup>56</sup> to re-testify, to somehow convey what one has heard and thinks important to remember. In this process, a community of memory emerges. These are relationships through which people

engage representations of past events and put forth shared, complementary or competing versions of what should be remembered and how...To participate in a community of memory is to struggle with the possibility of witnessing (Simon and Eppert, 186).

We were all part of that community then **and** now. We had a responsibility, an obligation to not only hear her story, but take her story and transform it for others to hear and see through image.

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<sup>56</sup> “Obligation happens” (Caputo 1993)

I looked around. Everyone was engaged with their whole bodies, looking intently at Andrea, listening.

Understanding?

What would it mean to be able to say we understood her story? Thomas Schwandt (1999) points out that understanding is not just an internal process involving text and reader (or in this case, her telling the story and us listening). Being engaged with Andrea's story was not just a mental act of interpreting the text of her life (through image), but, as Schwandt points out, it was an educational "process," a process of learning. "On this model, understanding and interpretation are not acts of an individual conscious mind but enactments, performances or a kind of praxis" (455).

Thus, understanding is practical and moral and has less to do with grasping her story (or the meaning of it), and more to do with the engagement with all of us in a dialogue as the Image emerged in an embodied way.

The whole basis for which we had gathered together was to use theatre to explore racial discrimination, and this was the first time anyone in the group had volunteered verbally a story of racism. So Andrea's story became an enactment of the to-and-fro movement that Gadamer calls "play," an encounter with that issue which we sought to understand.

Schwandt underlines that such a quest for understanding is not separate from our making meaning of the story; rather "understanding and speaking are intertwined," so speaking it in the form of this text is another form of understanding at play.

Such understanding as "relational" involved the rest of the group intently watching and belonging to this community of learning. "Belonging together always means being able to listen to one another" – listening to Andrea, moving with her as she sketched her life to this moment and the frustrations she was facing. This was a doubling process as we got to know Andrea in the (familiar) here and now as she talked about somewhere else (strange).

Familiarity and strangeness are not simply rational assessments of this experience, but ways in which we actually experience being in the world. They co-existed in her life, her story, of that country of China and her embodied presence (and the presence of other sons and daughters of recent immigrants), in this high school, this room, this drama workshop. And they also co-existed in our witnessing of something she was saying about her life. This story was not just said into the air. Talking about the incident had the effect of an address where her story, a response to my invitation to “share,” was thus a reply with a gift in the form of a question – I have addressed the group through my story, what is your understanding of this work now?

Such an understanding requires being awake to the living-in-between so we can have new experiences and learn from them. It requires an openness to experience and a willingness to engage in dialogue with that which troubles or challenges us – risking confusion and uncertainty and struggling with it.

What of me?

Standing or sitting in this crack of the in-between, in-between containment and an opening, in-between being outside watching and in participating, in-between the world of the workshop and the world outside the workshop, I try and keep it open, connected to the world outside this room. Image enables this to happen as our embodied experiences leak into the Images we create. But I also try and keep the gap narrow enough so that there is an atmosphere of safety where participants can risk, and play.

“In the attempt to walk (and live) on the rickety bridge between self and other” (Phelan 1993, 174) – between the body and the mind, the physical and the psychic, the internal and the external – we discover real hope.

I didn't know what it was like to be this other who was speaking and who had grown up in China, nor what it would be like for this Chinese student to all of a sudden be in a high school in Canada. But her story struck a chord...a chord in the in-between, between strangeness and familiarity. I glimpsed that space as I remember running across the “play” ground of elementary school, caught

in-between two lines of children as I am wrestled to the ground, others laughing, my toque being pulled off as the bell signalling the end of recess rings.

The familiar is that which we live through as an experience of affirmation and comfort. Strangeness is an experience of disorientation, exile or loss. Unable to find our bearings. Always in the middle of an ongoing liminal experience, not quite at home but yet not entirely estranged from it. As Kerdeman points out this tension “at once distinguishes our human situation and also is the very condition that makes understanding it possible” (252) I only began to “hear” her story when it was placed in the context of the container I call Image which captured an instant of all that she said. Enacting such stories became an immersion in witnessing the past, my/her past that is only a brief Image which flashes up at an instant “when it can be recognized and is never seen again” (Benjamin 1968, 257). But articulating that past did not mean that that was the way it really was. “It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger ” (257). At another level, I only begin to understand as I write this because understanding and speaking (or showing) meaning are intertwined. Image, word and world entwined in the Image of her story.

I waited some more while Andrea continued. She paused once or twice, caught her breath and then kept on going. It was as if she had waited all the time since she had arrived at this school for this moment, to tell her story. Unknowingly in that I wasn't looking for this, though this was part of the workshop process, I was responsible for opening the crack and letting her, and the rest of the group, in.

I feel my muscles straining at the weight....memories of another time, another Image.

*Rewind .... back .... back*

In 1991 at a training workshop in Vancouver I created an Image of my role as facilitator, stretched to the limit, my body in tension as I attempted to connect, to mediate. I don't remember much about the content of the Image; but I still remember that tension, of my muscles stretched to their limit, feeling the heat, the fibres “fraying,” stretched out. An act of mediation, of conciliation perhaps, but also an act of translation. I feel in my body “the selvages of the language textile give

way, fray into frayages or facilitations” (Spivak 1993, 180). How does such translation occur?

Although every act of reading or communication is a bit of this risky fraying which scrambles together somehow, our stake in agency keeps the fraying down to the minimum except in the communication and reading of and in love ... The task of the translator is to facilitate this love between the original and its shadow, a love that permits fraying (Spivak, 180-181)

Spivak mentions that the word facilitation comes from an English translation of Freud’s term *Bahnung* which means “pathing.” *Bahnung* is translated as *frayage* (opening a path) in French. The dictionary meaning is the term used by Freud to refer to the excitation in passing from one neuron to another, which runs into a certain resistance. The passage which results in a permanent reduction in this resistance is said to be facilitation. Energy will opt for a facilitated pathway in preference to one where no facilitation has occurred.<sup>57</sup>

The energy of the group was now concentrated in serious play, renewing “itself in constant repetition” (Gadamer 1989, 103), as together we developed more and more Images. The work we began to do together was the playing; playing with her story – working it out in Image – opening up its “own possibilities of being that emerge[d]” (Gadamer, 118) as the Image of Andrea’s story and the story of racism, explained themselves – “a coming-into-existence of the work itself” (Gadamer, 116). On this day for the elimination of racism, they were doing so, by opening themselves up to listening to one of their own fellow students.

And I too opened up to her story, moving from facilitator to someone part of the circle, watching

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<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, I read this material to a group at a conference presentation I was making in May, 2000. One German speaking participant was unaware of the term *Bahnung*. But she offered another word – *Vermittlung* – as a translation of the English term facilitation. Interestingly enough, the “mitt” in *Vermittlung* means middle, which expresses very well my sense of the metaxic in-between of facilitation. So an intermingling of the dynamic roles of facilitation are in the words themselves – opening pathways/being in-between.

and listening in wonderment, becoming part of the container and, at the same time, the gap within it. Realizing that the planned activity, however simple, exposed something resonating on a deeper level., my own automatic following of the “plan” came to a stop.

A plan, like a method, must be watched with great care as the rational mind takes over, giving “over to mechanical replacement” (Applebaum, 1995, 89), thus easily cut off my own perception of the events as they emerge. Returning to a presence in the here and now becomes an “effort to stop the linear, discursive, explanatory mode and return to an organic awareness of things” (Applebaum, 90). I was staying with/in those moments. Remembering not past experiences of Image work but the rhythms and tempos of the engagement of Image through story through Image. Digging deeper through an Image that becomes a response to the story, rather than having a desire to fill up every minute with activity. How I have joined in, participated as participant and as facilitator and as initiate to this language. The connections between one event and the other (the story and the Image) leads to perceptual moments and moments of awareness of the stop. Practice in the stop leads to a memory of timing and relationships, which in turn leads back to the stop. “Recognizing such time relations – stops, starts, repetitions, echoes, overtones, undercurrents”(Applebaum, 93) – permits me to appreciate the complexity of matters of timing and why the afternoon wasn’t working and the morning was. Perhaps this aspect of timing helps me understand that we planned everything to the minute for the afternoon. Time got in the way of timing.

There is an unfinishedness to this story. It was contained within that circle but that circle was also open as we were operating in this high school; outside the school calendar but inside the school. We were not talking about some school somewhere else; some world somewhere else; but here and now – down the hallway, turn left, out the school doors to the parking lot.

There. Here. Now. Then.

This event was unfinished in the remembering; unfinished in the telling.

Andrea’s story became a work that will/has led itself to be read and re-read.

## Here. Now. Then. When?

The resonances are still moving beyond this particular workshop. They resound in my discussions with my co-facilitator about these moments.<sup>58</sup> They rebound in this rewriting of my experiences. As Gadamer says, the experience “cannot be exhausted in what can be said of it or grasped as its meaning” (69).

But these resonances don't only echo into the future; they echo the past. I recall in this writing something that happened in a class on anti-racist pedagogy. Another story at another time, yet strangely parallel to Andrea's story.

Two graduate students were sharing with a class their impressions of a film about Mexican maquiladoras. One student, in reflecting on their work together, said, “While we were discussing the film I realized that, while to me, what I saw on the film were poor Mexican women in horrible working and living conditions, what my partner saw was her mother – a mother who had done piece work for low wages in East Vancouver.” Here was a form of understanding, an understanding borne in difference. Not that this graduate student could ever understand what it might be like to be a Mexican maquiladora worker nor to be a piece work labourer in an East Vancouver sweatshop. Nor could his partner ever understand what it would be like to work in the border factories of Mexico. But her partner could understand that there was a difference in their life experiences. And from there a conversation could begin.

I hadn't realized all this as the workshop moved on in a hubbub of action. But when it came time for the closing circle, we passed a talking object around and student after student commented on how important the morning had been for them. They had begun knowing others across the divide between the regular stream of classes and the English as a Second Language students. They also realized that taking a stand against racism meant more than speaking against jokes or acts of

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<sup>58</sup> For example, 14 months later we were evaluating a one day workshop we had conducted at the same school with other students. My co-facilitator brought up the difference between the new group and the one that Andrea had been part of. She commented that the group's openness to listening to her story indicated a level of maturity that continued throughout the day. This maturity had emerged in the trust exercises conducted previous to Andrea's story. In contrast the group we worked with a year later had not engaged in similar ways. Another co-facilitator at the same workshop also reported that Andrea had matured enormously over the previous year.

discrimination. It was also wrapped up with/in their relationships with others in school; relationships that we had begun enacting in the world of the Image. Image thus became an encounter with an “unfinished event which [the encounter] itself was part of this event” (Gadamer, 99). As Gadamer points out, since the development of this Image (as a work of art being performed) occurred in the world of the workshop, and since we were encountering Andrea’s world in the Image, our work was not just a product of our imaginations. The Image had moved us beyond simply a visual representation of a story. The Image’s development through Andrea’s story moved beyond Andrea, surpassing her experiences to include our/my own. And now, aware of how I have portrayed this event as coming to a happy ending, I continue to question the experience:

Was this truly a circle of equals? Where do I fit in?

Familiarity and strangeness.

My own familiarity with this story of otherness, of the voices above, behind and beyond me.

Yet also strangeness. Now an adult, not an 8 year old boy and certainly not from another country in this strange white land.

What resonances did Andrea’s story have with my own

of fights on the playground

teasing words

standing in the hallway nose to the wall

after one fight too many?

Tempted to return to these memories past made present

*How do I keep myself in the crack of the in-between?*

## Sensing Creating:

### *Wri(gh)ter*

Our third mask is the Wri (gh) ter, who moulds what emerges from/in the work. This is another two part mask, but in this case the brackets enclose and link similar ideas of wrighting and writing. Wrighting is more often thought of creating, or building, something – Play wright; Ship wright; Mill wright. But if one gives it a life on its own and then attaches it to the idea of writing any form of language, we have a mask that depends on its senses to wri(gh)te worlds of imagination, crafting new modes of being and relating that emerge through a form. This form provides us at the same time with the very means by which it can be “read.” Boal hypothesizes that “knowledge acquired aesthetically is already, in itself, the beginning of a transformation” (Boal 1995, 109), so the wri(gh)ter has the important role of working with *that* aesthetic form to strengthen the potential of *this* transformation..

The British drama educator Dorothy Heathcote (2000), writes of the teacher as craftsperson, “a maker collaborating with the nature of the material” (32). She calls this process *wrighting* because “it performs its intention in collaboration with the readiness of the material to receive the stimulation” (32). But the interventions of the wri(gh)ter are tempered through a sensitivity to the nature of the materials, as, rather than a canvas or piece of the clay, the “materials” in drama are “intelligent clay.” As you have read in this dissertation, this is the heart of the challenge the wri(gh)ter faces and the reason for a wide range of strategies and negotiation skills being needed in order to play in the intersections between the flow of life of the material and the rigour of the artistic technique that brings it to life.

Thus the craftsperson is also a guardian – a protector of the material being worked with. The facilitator's strategies must defend the participants from feeling threatened, being stared at or exposed in negative ways. This is one of the reasons there is what some might call preparatory work playing with the verbal and visual languages before beginning to craft the play. I wouldn't call it preparatory work, though, but one layer of the story itself that is continuously being developed through different languages.

The main result of a workshop, the play, depends on all the masks coming to life. Wri(gh)ter as craftsperson is similar to the Roman god Vulcan who is connected by Calvino (1988) in his chapter on quickness to Shaman/Hermes/Mercury. (Vulcan, “shut up in his smithy, where he tirelessly forges objects that are the last word in refinement ... To Mercury’s aerial flight, Vulcan replies with ... the rhythmic beat of his hammer” [53]). Vulcan/Wri(gh)ters’s concentration and craftsmanship and Mercury/Shaman’s mobility and adventures bring the workshop material into light.<sup>59</sup>

Writing about the plays of Sam Shepard, Jack Gelber (1981) links the diviner, the play(wright) and the shaman. Reading a play, he says, requires an “intense and vivifying concentration if (the reader) is to get anything out of the experience.” There is much happening below the surface of the script. “Dialogue is in the air in the bubbles breaking sea surface” (45) from the experience intended by the author.

Like Diviner and Shaman, the Wri(gh)ter works in this metaxic in-between. Working with the point of view of Diviner, who is continuously paying attention to what is behind the material – out of sight or hearing – Wri(gh)ter is crafting the material to be ready for performance. However, this is working in an in-between different from that of the Diviner. It is more artistic, more hands-on, paying more attention to both his/her experiences and those of the participants. Additionally, Wri(gh)ter is mindful of what happens after the writing of the work as it is moulded into a form that can be performed in front of others. This tension within the material between individual interpretations of experiences, and the need for stories to be presented in an understandable form, places demands on the material so that it may “meet the productive tension” (Heathcote, 2000, 33) of performance. The performance becomes a space which makes a statement that then opens up paradoxes, struggles, and dreams for questioning and further exploration.

This demands focus and concentration on the part of Wri(gh)ter and, in the social experience of the workshop, col(labour)ation. As opposed to the relationship of writer-text-reader in reading a

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<sup>59</sup> Bruce Chatwin (1996) writes that “[i]n Siberia and elsewhere there was a close relationship between the Shaman, or creative personality, and the craftsman, especially the metal-smith” (98). Quoting a Yakut proverb – “Smiths and shamans come from the same nest” (98), he points out that, in mastering fire, Shaman linked energy with the mysteries of artistic practice.

play like Shepherd's, the Wri(gh)ter pays attention to the emerging texts of many in the world of the workshop, and helping to write these worlds into being.

Thus, Wri(gh)ter is a type of spect-actor in the performance before the performance for others. I depend on my senses to intervene so that Wri(gh)ter can mould the work, keep it open, enabling to respond to what I have seen, heard and felt from my vantage point as spectator.

In this openness, Wri(gh)ter keeps the text of the work open to possibility – that all has not been said or done, and that there are mysteries hidden beneath, behind and around the work that can never be writ/wrighted (nor divined). As Douglas Hofstadter writes of writing *from* image (much like the work of Image theatre is writing *through* image):

Think, for instance, of a writer who is trying to convey certain ideas which to him are contained in mental images. He isn't quite sure how those images fit together in his mind, and he experiments around, expressing things first one way and then another, and finally settles on some version. But does he know where it all came from? Only in a vague sense. Much of the source, like an iceberg, is deep underwater, unseen – and he knows that (Hofstadter 1980, 713).

## Wright Writing

The senses bypass language: the ambush of a scent or weather. But language also jump starts the senses; sound or image sends us spiralling into memory or association (Michaels 1995, 78).

### Exploring Bodies

We are moving forward in our journey into performance. Each step we take through exercises and Image work plays in the tension between process and performance. There is no one moment where suddenly crafting for performance becomes paramount. But each step I take within the workshop brings me closer to direction and form and further away from formless play. Image is one such step. Stepping into Image work doesn't leave sensory work aside but deepens it.

As Wri(gh)ter I ask, how is Image a language that communicates with the mysteries of the senses, rather than just an instrument or result of knowledge?

In the expression *the language of the body*, the *of* is not the possessive but the relational. The body does not have its language, but through its language it *is*, that is, is allowed to stand forth as itself. The body exists as a vitality or vital force through sensation, its vocabulary. The language of the body is a language of presence (Applebaum, 78).

Ironically, though I as Wri(gh)ter stand there focused on working with the storied and storying bodies I see in front of me (or those that are absent), I work from my body, I work in my body, I work through the body. I become aware of the role of my senses, listening, hearing, playing with the Image as tactile *aesthetic* form. This is the difficult work of forming the informing and informing the forming as I perceive the moments where the world of the Image is presented to us.

As I move through sensory exercises we gradually turn from the play of our senses to something

more focussed on the language of/through the senses. Two linked activities that are examples of this transition that require participants to begin wri(gh)ting themselves through their bodies are *Exchange Balls/Exchange Oppressors*.<sup>60</sup> In these exercises, expression becomes a reflective mirror in which kinesthetic senses of sight, being seen, and feeling are realized and re-cognized. I begin to see what participants are capable of, and what disrupts their understandings and what moves them.

This process connects Image to imagination, “as participation in the truth of the world” (Calvino, 88), where images are charged with meaning (energized), connected with outside the individual, outside the subjective, outside the objective. Playing in the spaces between Image/imagination can also mean there is a third option implicit in my question – an exploration of the “potential,” the “hypothetical,” “of what does not exist and perhaps will never exist but might have existed” (Calvino, 91).

We have talked about imagination. What is this? It is a sense, not something separate that occurs in the mind but,

[is] the way the senses have of throwing themselves beyond what is immediately given, in order to make tentative contact with the other side of things that we do not sense directly, with the hidden or invisible aspects of the sensible. And yet such sensory anticipations

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<sup>60</sup> In *Exchange Balls* everyone plays with a ball of any size or weight that they imagine. Then they walk about the room with it. Then they find a partner, and teach each other their ball without language (by actions only) and in this way exchange balls. When each is satisfied the other person has the right ball they part company. This process is repeated, meeting someone different and exchanging balls again. Three exchanges in total are made, then everyone keeps walking about with their new ball and looks for their original ball.

In *Exchange Oppressors* a similar series of exchanges are made. First of all, everyone walks about the room and thinks about an oppressor from their own lives (or they make up a character). They take on this person’s walk, a gesture and a sound. These oppressors now walk about relating to each other only through the walk, gesture and sound. In partners they exchange their oppressors in the same manner as the balls above and, finally after three exchanges, look for their original oppressors. The thing about this activity is that the oppressors, being thrice removed, change drastically and it is sometimes hard to find the original.

Both these linked exercises help develop the physicality of character as well as embodied awareness of how we notice through our senses other characters.

and projections are not arbitrary, they regularly respond to suggestions offered by the sensible itself (Calvino, 58).

In our work, imagination becomes Image, not only, as I wrote a few years ago, “[to make] thought visible” (Linds 1996), but also to enable imagination to emerge through Image. This enables us to become mindful of things on the “hither side of words,” these mysteries evoked through Image which move us. So Image and imagination are both linked to how we convey these mysteries.<sup>61</sup> As visual form of the body, Image's limitations is precisely also its strength. It is not word, so how do we write it down – recording each arm, leg, head in its position, or do we write down the evocations arising from those within or without it? I offer no solution to this paradox, but it does lead to an observation that Image is not separate from oral or written language but possibly part of the process of knowing that includes the visual, the oral or the written. As re-creation, not re-presentation,

a work of art expresses a conception of life, emotion, inward reality, but it is neither a confessional nor a frozen tantrum; it is a developed metaphor, a non-discursive symbol that articulates what is verbally ineffable – the logic of consciousness itself (Langer 1957, 26).

Using imagery to express something that can not be presented in other ways allows us to explore paradoxes – coexisting and conflicting opposites. It is these visual contradictions in the embodied relations in the Image (for example, someone smiling while doing something an observer wouldn't think would result in a smile), that are complex prompts that open up questions, moving the exploration of the theme into deeper water,<sup>62</sup> where there are more knots that need to be worked through.<sup>63</sup> Image becomes part of a spiralling process which sparks our imaginations, enabling us

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<sup>61</sup> Calvino, in his “memo on Visibility” (81-100) believes that such things have been, and will continue to be, seen and written.

<sup>62</sup> Ross Laird (2001) reminds us that *Rua*, the Tahitian god of craftsmen also means “abyss.”

<sup>63</sup> Chris Johnston (1998) notes that once the visual language of the Image is learned, the paradoxes in a workshop between individual and collective experiences and surface/depth explorations become fruitful spaces to challenge a group in its exploration of a theme. Then these journeys become experiences to draw on in the Forum performance. So the Wri(gh)ter is both a teacher of the visual language and also, via this teaching, uses the language to shift the

to dream of alternative futures.<sup>64</sup>

### **Dis/E rupting Characterization through Image**

Most groups I work with have found it easy and fun to play the sensory awareness games and exercises (described in *Warmup/Trust Exercises* in this work) that enable them to play within the embodied space of the workshop, making a comfortable beginning to the workshop process. People just jump in as we dive into the mysteries of our body in interaction with others.<sup>65</sup> Garner (1994) quotes Jacques Derrida claiming that play itself is the “disruption of presence” (40) and this is evident particularly in the transition between sensory awareness and the improvised performance that I use to make the transition from playing with each other to playing with each other through the language of Image. *Complete the Image* introduces the idea of a *space of possibilities* where the stability of the text is constantly challenged. This is an open and “writerly” (Barthes 1975, 4 ) text as our bodies speak in a new language involving relationship and action with an audience. This awakens the sense of mindfulness but there is still initial resistance and discomfort. Some of this is due to the dis-ruption Derrida speaks of. The work implicitly involves participants discovering their character-as-becoming in collaboration with those watching. Being “writerly” means the authors (in this case, the actors) don’t attempt to control the actions or feelings of the reader but, instead, create a structure where individuals can bring themselves into the text. When there is such room, there will be discomfort, ambiguity and uncertainty about what we will discover about ourselves through the character that is being explored. Referring to something Margaret Atwood wrote, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1993) write that good research

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group into another level of exploration.

<sup>64</sup> David Diamond developed an exercise called *Your Wildest Dream* which takes an Image of oppression and asks the participants to make an Image that is not a reaction to the first one, but one that takes us into our imaginations to explore what our dreams might be in a particular community. Then Images are made between the Image of oppression (which is a concrete situation) and the Image of the *Wildest Dream*, which is much more imaginative and abstract. Polaroid photos of these images are made and used to create a story. This exercise illustrates the back and forth process of Image and imagination. The activity is also used to play in the tension between individual stories as participants trace their own life stories (which is also the story of the larger community) through the photos. “Although they have very different narratives, the stories use the same photographs to create the spine of the narrative, helping individuals in the community see even people who they know very well in ways they have never seen them before” (Diamond 2000).

<sup>65</sup> The warm-up exercise *Person to Person* involves pairs being directed to connect different parts of the body to each other. For example, the suggestion “Shoulder to knee” means that one member of the pair touches their shoulder to the other’s knee. Adding further directions develops not only a wider range of positions the body can take, it also leads to the symbolic and literal intertwining of bodies in relationship that I am referring to here.

occurs at knots and intersections of texts. Such knots are points of tension in the work, places where there is no solid ground. These knots need to be worked through.

I am often asked to wri(gh)te the characters for the actors in the first Image, or to give some "clue" to the story being told. Participants in workshops who are watching also want the same answers. But the script of the stories emerges from the actors' bodies in inter-relationship to others in a particular image. The silent Image becomes a canvas to play with, as we, for example, can have other participants wri(gh)te "word bubbles" for the actors to speak or we the static image can be activated by the actors moving according to the motivations and feelings they are beginning to discover. Not only is the knowledge that emerges from the interior/exterior monologues enacted, new knowledge is developed through the inter-actions that occur. I have found that working through the resistance and confusion of the process of "discovering" the actor's character in the story enables the entire group to break through to another level of the work.

### **Activating the Images through Forum Theatre**

As Wrights/Writers, what do we do with these images? The image also enables us to access something significant that emerges at certain moments of realization. This "Aha!" becomes another layer of meaning that is cracked open to probe. The material works for us metaphorically only just as long as it involves several layers of hidden meaning that come from the story of our experiences. Theatre is a place for investigation of these meanings. As Jonathan Kay, a performer and teacher argues, "it's about a dream, a place which is inaccessible. Secrets start to speak through us" ( Johnston, 31) as we begin to explore themes and ideas through embodied Imagery.

Accessing these secrets is a process of performative articulation, a "bodily boundary that makes movement, positioning, and positional change possible" (Aoki 1996). It is also the hinge point (Applebaum 1995) of that movement. Adventuring into performative articulations forces all of us to be awake to the living-in-the-in-between so we can have new experiences and learn from them. This requires openness to experience and a willingness to engage in dialogue with that which troubles or challenges us -- risking confusion and uncertainty. In struggling with such breakdowns

(Varela 1999), these “hinges that articulate microworlds” (11), we encounter opportunities to take appropriate action.

The idea that the storyteller doesn't verbally tell the story to the other actors is a disruption that also enables an eruption of meaning as the story is worked through. As Hyde (1998) points out, the terms *art* and *articulate* (as in the doubled meaning of the articulated joints of the body as well as speech) derive from the same Latin root *artus*, meaning joint. All of these involve changing the shape of things, or refer to places where there is a potential for transformation, as in a Forum theatre presentation which is “open text” where moments are developed for audience interaction. These hinge points are also places where we rework the joining of two or more different forms or stories.

This challenge only occurs, though, when the idea of representation as an “illusion” of reality on stage is also confronted. This disruption occurs, I believe, through both the transformation of the role of participants watching (who become spect-actors) but also through the role of the actors who are, if I could coin a phrase, actor-spectors. The actors who have developed the play out of their own experiences play out the text according to their improvised “script.” But in inter-acting with the spect-actors, they are constantly shifting between I/not-I (the not-I being the character they are playing which consists of I/not-I within it). The self, in other words, cannot be stable and unchanging as this circular I/not-I within a character that is I/not-I means that my own self cannot be fixed in any point of time or space.

The development of the play through Image enables audience members to find themselves in the story on stage and to become involved in the action. Image work also helps the actors to find their way into their own stories. The goal is a play that opens up a world of interaction and speaks from a group to its peers in a language that is accessible. The development of character and plot is done in such a way as to give the actors a range of possibilities for their characters which they can use when an audience member intervenes. These rehearsal processes enable the discovery of nuances in the play that are thought and felt, while at the same time, helping invent the text and prepare possible responses to future interventions.

No one knows beforehand what will 'hit home' and what will have an impact. Every performance is an event, but not one in any way separate from the work -- the work itself is what 'takes place' in the event of performance (Gadamer, 147).

The performance becomes an *occasion* to speak, bringing out moments where the audience *may* intervene. In my experience these are not the only places plays are stopped. So playing with these hinge points, where intervention *may* happen enable the actors to become aware of the possibilities inherent in this form of theatre.

I think of a lesson on the tennis serve which I had from an instructor last year. He was teaching me a second serve that would disguise where the ball would go. Since a player's second serve is usually the weaker of the two serves, placement of the ball is important. The pro had commented that most of the players he had seen just hit the ball with the same motion and grip as the first serve, but slower. He suggested I change my grip to one that disguised where the ball was going until the second I struck it. The trick was to just flick my wrist at this last moment, so that when I turned my wrist one way the ball would go more to the left; the other way, to the right. That moment is the hinge point -- the place with the most potential to surprise my opponent. I look up at my opponent on the other side of the net, see where he is leaning, my body memory remembering his weaker stroke from our histories of playing together. I bring my racket back and up and, at the same time, toss the ball in the air, bring the racket forward and, at the last moment, flick my wrist one way or another. The more I try it, the more confident I get, adding more oomph to the serve.

Much like the second my racket hits the ball on my second serve, that hinge moment is also the moment of AHA! where things can change. These moments, Hyde points out, are ones which ask for spontaneity, where the shape of things can be changed. Image often creates such a structure that "ignites spontaneity" (Nachmanovitch, 83). Just a touch of the form keeps improvisation from wandering. Image acts as a catalyst, a frame, like the "seeding of a crystal" (Nachmanovitch, 83). The rules of Image don't dictate the form. They provide the conditions through the bodies of its creators to provoke a reaction from the audience.

But notice that there is a goal, a form, and a process in this spontaneity. On the tennis court, the task is to fool my opponent. In the drama workshop it is to move participants on in their dramatic work towards performance while, at the same time, in the flexibility of the Image, deepening understandings of the issue by both actors and audience.

The Forum performance involves characters in complex interactions with each other and with the new worlds that emerge during and after each audience intervention. Knowing is being is doing, been-being-becoming in a process of constant creation and interpretation that emerges from our capacities of understanding (Varela et al 1991, 149). The world that is enacted is inseparable from how we act in it (Varela, et al, 140). Through the Forum performance, we simplify this complexity without making it simplistic.

One way to understand this complexity is through a drama exercise like *The Parade of Images*:

*Participants form groups of four or five people. Each member of these groups must, in a short space of time, make an image of a story. The protagonist sculpts the image and then takes up his/her place in the image, that is his position in the story. He is not allowed to speak during the making of the image but uses mirror or modelling or marionette language, making a gesture to be reproduced, pulling an actor's hand with invisible string or manipulating an actor with his hands, like a sculptor with clay. Not speaking enables all participants to really see the Image. Image is a language, if it is translated into words, all its possible interpretations are reduced to a single one.*

*One by one, each participant makes their own image, using the other participants as "intelligent clay."*

*In the second stage, the large group assembles, and each little group shows its images in front of everyone. One by one, one after another all the images are paraded in front of the whole group. Then interpretations of what the Images say, and the feelings, memories, sensations that are evoked, are shared through the creation of new images based on these themes or through discussion and dialogue. Common, as well as disparate, themes, knowings and concerns emerge.*

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I use two types of Imaging processes: one that starts with the word and arrives at the visual ie. *I say a theme, you visualize it*, and the other, like I have just done, starts at the visual image and arrives at its verbal expression – *you create an image and we then verbalize what we see*; this is a circle of imagination and verbal expression. But when we want to go beyond authority, and aim for novelty, originality and invention, then, as Calvino (1988) says, “the priority tends definitely to lean toward the side of the visual imagination...these images that rain down into fantasy” (86-87). These epiphanies come through individual or collective unconscious, reemerging from memories that were heretofore lost. These moments are beyond our intentions and our control, and carry a sort of transcendence, as meaning is found through engagement, revealing “itself as one takes part in its revelation” (Buber 1952, 36).

The image as symbol requires us to make a “leap” both into it and out of it. We are limited by our imaginations, which are formed by the world outside the image. But as collaborative exploration, the forming and re-forming of the image means everyone contributes, one by one. The frozen image becomes the prelude to action, “which is revealed in the activation of the image” (Boal 1992, xx), thus bringing the images to life and discovering the direction or intention in them.

“All encounter with the language of art is an encounter with an unfinished event and is itself part of the event” (Gadamer, 99). This idea has far-reaching implications for working with Image. Every showing of the Image becomes part of the Image, even if only in improvisation or rehearsal because what is “essential to an experience is that it cannot be exhausted in what can be said or grasped as to its meaning” (Gadamer, 66). As text, Image is a “cumulative, holistic process” (Ricoeur, 212). The Image is developing and because it is silent, it allows other layers of the story to embed themselves into the actors and the participant-audience members in the workshop. And, as I have related in the previous chapter, the sharing of the stories, be it through verbal or non-verbal means, implicates the theme of the story in its telling. Thus the *imag(e)inative* work of art is always incomplete until it is presented to others who watch it, even if it is just to other groups in a workshop. That is why I try and use small groups as much as possible. This enables me to continue to explore the incompleteness of the process of imag(e)ination in an atmosphere of col(labour)ation which requires “constant rebuilding and ongoing revision if it is to fulfill goals of social change” (Herter 1998, 173).

*How can this awareness lead to presence in the Forum play that is ultimately developed from Image work?*

### **(E)merging Image in Performance**

Most of the workshops I conduct are oriented to the performance that is Forum theatre. As mentioned earlier on, Forum is “open text” and its development through Image enables audience members to find themselves in the story on stage and to find ways to become involved in the action. Image work also helps the actors find their way into their own stories. The goal is a play that opens up a world of interaction and speaks from a group to its peers in a language that is accessible. This requires a story-Image-play development and rehearsal process that enables actors to discover characters that are well-defined but ready to improvise in the moments of interactive performance. Much as I mentioned earlier about a lot of the workshop happening below the surface of our knowing, the characters in a Forum play are developed in a process whereby most of the character is discovered in performance, in interaction with audience members who have come onto the stage to replace one character in order to try and come up with alternative ways of dealing with a particular situation.

There are many ways to tinker with Image as story. I toss out directions that enable the actors and those watching to focus and concentrate in the container of the Image. For example, I often use the rehearsal exercise *Play to the deaf* where the actors craft the story without words (but without miming) so that the story speaks through the body. This also enables the actor to connect with the character, as she/he discovers more and more layers in embodied and interactive exploration.

As Wri(gh)ter I move back and forth from facilitator to director. I act as audience and observer, responding to what I see, tinkering with the Image and the story. For example, in rehearsal I ask the actors to play the story with different emotions or motivations (all the story with love, hate, envy, etc.) or by style (opera, soap, comedy, keystone cops). I also facilitate others to be audience and provide comments. A variety of these techniques also involve the other watching participants as collaborative investigators in the performative inquiry into the many layers and sub texts of the play.

Peer pressure sometimes means participants are reluctant to do initial play development in front of the whole group, so in high school situations I use small groups. The energizing quality of small groups and the opportunity to perform for other groups as audience means that small groups work towards performative articulation in the workshop itself.

Recently I facilitated a day long workshop/forum performance at the same high school around the same theme as the one described in the previous section. There were a few students who had participated the previous year who knew the underlying principles and methods of the work.

Three groups were developed using the strategy of *self sculpting* whereby participants create with their bodies a response to a particular word. This process started slowly, working from easier concepts (like *student*, *teacher*, or *education*) to more difficult ones, like the pre-determined theme – *racism* -- of the high school workshop I have described. This process allowed the themes of context, identity and issue to unfold from Image to Image. There were, however, three students who had particular difficulty in self-sculpting an Image of racism. I asked each of them to look around and see if they could find images that were similar or which were telling similar stories. They then grouped the images in three groups. These groupings enabled a shared emotional vocabulary, bringing people together and leading to collective storytelling through Image from these individual responses to my initial prompt.

In this workshop I was Wri(gh)ter working with three teacher-facilitators who were assisting me so that they might learn about creating Forum theatre plays from Image work. I had been training two of them during the past year, while the third one had participated in a *Theatre for Living* training workshop conducted by Headlines Theatre the previous summer. All three had never participated in a Forum performance and two of the three had not worked with creating stories from Image. They were all anxious about this process so they asked me to roam around and provide them with support and suggestions to their small group when it was needed. This allowed me to Wright from the outside, assisting them in their crafting of the play without concentrating on the details of the story. I also served as an audience member watching a first run-through of the scene and helped them to build in the moments for intervention that are needed in Forum theatre plays.

I was interested in the different approaches used by the three teacher-facilitators. One group, which had formed around a particular Image that they identified as expressing “I don’t want to look,” sat down and told stories about discrimination – in this case, about teenagers in downtown stores. A second group, which had the most confident student/actor in the entire workshop group, formed around an Image that they identified as expressing hatred and victimization. They instantly got on their feet and started working with more Images, creating a strong visual story that easily led to a Forum play. Lastly, the third group, which was composed mainly of English as a Second Language students worked on date violence through improvisation. All three stories incorporated important themes from the lives of the youth.<sup>66</sup>

The facilitators for each group were there because they also had self-sculpted Images and went to the groups that were most akin to theirs. The different methods of Wri(gh)ting resulted from a complex web of inter-relationships of context, students, stories and the interests and abilities of the teacher-facilitator. With the facilitator initially at the centre of this web, his/her role had to change from facilitator to wri(gh)ter (and director). One of the facilitators commented after the day’s activities that another Forum theatre facilitator they had worked with had talked about the shift from facilitator to director but that she had never understood this shift until she herself had to engage with this change in role.

Becoming the Wri(gh)ter involves infusing the role of the facilitator with increased powers of concentration and focus. It requires paying attention to the material that emerges, becoming aware of the performance that is to become deeper, and using the frame of performance as a context that concentrates the actor-students on refining their craft. This means paying more and more attention to form and content.

### **Style as a way-of-being in the imag(e)inary world**

Both wri(gh)ting through performance and writing performance involves a style. Style is an

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<sup>66</sup> Two months later in an all-day workshop in the same school, these three same teacher-facilitators worked with a three groups of students (the majority of which had been in one of the earlier workshops). I observed that the methods of each facilitator changed dramatically as the type of Wri(gh)ting required of the facilitator-as-wright responded to the particular needs of their small group.

ambiguous concept. It is not a production of an object form, nor just a concept to be played with. It enacts and brings into being a “perceptible form” (Saint-Denis 1960, 62) that reveals “a whole orientation toward the world, toward culture, toward persons, and toward our own experience of the world, culture and other people” (Silverman 1994, 184). Style is the outward manifestation of something that lies beneath the surface.<sup>67</sup>

The interweaving of the visible (of the Image) and the invisible (of style) takes what is ambiguous or not readily apparent in the Image and brings it to life. Thus, Images concretize the subject in a theatrical form and, at the same time, enrich and deepen it. Style and content go together. Images can be abstract – without an intended meaning; representational – with specific meanings; and/or projective – exaggerations that emphasize a quality or feeling. The styles are in the in-between, and in the intertwining, where differentiation has not yet resolved itself into the objective or the subjective, where a distinct position cannot be found, asserted, or offered. Style is the in-forming, the giving form to what is not yet formed, not yet specified, not yet shaped. It is a form of instruction (Latin: *instruere* – meant not simply to teach, but to put into order, to set up a structure, to build, to put into form). Style is thus the framework that emerges from the interplay between form and content.

“Insofar as play is educational experience, the player risks herself to acquire an openness for new experiences. The result is self-transformation” (Gallagher, 50) as the aesthetic of writing “leaps over the gap between personal and professional” (Bolton 1999). So expression cannot be located simply in writing but takes writing beyond itself; it transforms writing and brings writing to an understanding that goes beyond itself. Expression, like performative writing, is both an activity of writing and an effect that transforms writing. It is both productive and transformative. And it means something.

Style cannot be a private, individual activity. It must enter into a

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<sup>67</sup> Because of this elusive quality, determining style is as much the work of Diviner/Diver as it is of Wri(gh)ter. It involves the wri(gh)ter “interstanding” (Taylor and Saarinen 1994) what is below the surface at the point of contact between the actors and the world, “in the hollow” (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 59) of perception and as a demand that arises from that perception. For more discussion on interstanding see page 119.

texture of the world. In that way, and only in that way can it fulfill its political necessity – communication, understanding, and action are not only valued but also indispensable features of writing and its realization of itself as an indirect language (Silverman, 192).

### **Playing with style**

Style is a way into an unfolding of deeper knowing, experience and understanding in the multi layered Image. In the performance of a Forum and in its preparation I explain that with the story we can play with time like we were playing a tape on a VCR. We can go fast forward or in reverse, or pause wherever we want to.

In wri(gh)ting the Image we can also tinker with it. There are moments where there is a surge of emotion, tears of recognition. This comes with wrestling with images that are texts, playing with the form and the characters until they mesh with one another. In the process feeling may emerge or be uncovered among the participants in the story or in the workshop audience. This is often something that may have been always behind the scenes but has never before surfaced. Re-forming and trans-forming the Image through many different stylistic techniques<sup>68</sup> elicits aspects of the story that would never have been thought of if it had been expressed in just *any* form. At some moments I feel a shock of recognition where the whole thing has slid into a shape; it has clicked when the feeling and the form have come into a state of harmony. This Image might be something quite abstract or symbolic, but the impact is immediate. There is a gigantic surge of energy in the group; they are almost floating. “No one knows beforehand what will ‘hit home’ and what will have no impact” (Gadamer, 147). *Something happens*.

There was a door there but they hadn't been able to find it before. Sure there were clues, but we don't know where or what they are. We don't recognize them until we find the door in amongst

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<sup>68</sup> Styles are not only forms of Image but they are also rehearsal techniques that enable actors and facilitator to discover elements of a character or plot. These techniques can take many forms. For example, a technique called *Silence:Action!!* enables anyone looking at a scene to propose an idea for the actors to try with their scene. Any idea, no matter how crazy must be tried. Their validity is immediately tested in action, rather than in discussion.

the images which we have thrown up in front of us, and then cast aside.

You will recall that in the previous chapter I wrote about a group of grade eights which wouldn't connect with what we were attempting. There I was trying to get the gears to connect and they kept clashing. These were moments where I tried to "(w)right the sinking ship" and failed. I needed to pick myself up by remembering success, remembering moments when Image did connect. This is what I am describing now through the playing with Image, crafting it and forming it. What happens is that the forming, playing and communicating of the story to others occurs simultaneously. "Knowing moves in tune with being" (Bringhurst 1995, 52) as "memory and intention and intuition are fused. The iron is always hot" (Nachmanovitch, 18).

This creativity I am developing is spontaneous but is also borne of many past experiences, where/in I have sharpened my awareness of the visual language. Immersed in the workshop I use my training and my experiences. I refer to it. I ground myself in it, but I don't allow it to blind myself to the people in front of me. I "pass beyond competence to presence" (Nachmanovitch, 21). Technique is acquired but creation happens *through* my technique and not *with* it.

Can we, through exploring Image as opportunities to wri(gh)t(e) ourselves into being such "moments where we can stop the linear, discursive, explanatory mode and return to an organic awareness of things?" (Applebaum, 90) Wri(gh)ting thus becomes visible as form:

The polymorphic visions of the eyes and spirit are contained in uniform lines of small or capital letters, periods, commas, parentheses – pages of signs, packed as closely together as grains of sand, representing the many coloured spectacle of the world on a surface that is always the same and always different, like dunes shifted by the desert wind (Calvino 1988, 99).

Similarly, the work of developing a series of Images or developing Images from story, or story from Images is a work that inspires. There is a flash, like lightning in the prairie sky on the

horizon, lighting up the landscape around us. The air tingles. The work of the wri(gh)ter is “to stretch those momentary flashes, extend them until they merge into the activity of daily life” (Nachmanovitch, 19).

I continue to mould this spectacle through focus and direction. Concentrating on the material at hand, I am aware of the performance that is to become, and use that fixed deadline as part of the process that brings the actors to a better craft. I am also aware of the world outside of the workshop intermingling with this workshop and performance space. This is what I will turn to in the last section of this dissertation as Wri(gh)ter becomes Joker.

**Break**

## **Exploring the Space of Power**

## Exploring the space of power

How do I use transformative drama as a process of w/r ighting power? How do others perceive these approaches? I always look for opportunities to answer these questions.

I was invited to use drama to lead a university teacher education class on “teaching controversial issues in schools”. The course is a requirement for graduation. The instructor, Rick Ast, a high school teacher whom I had trained in the *Theatre of the Oppressed* approach wrote this after my visit:

*We met in a large multi-purpose space where the chairs were set up in a formal audience arrangement facing the front of the room. There was a table for the “presenter” at the front. As the 25 students entered the room they occupied seats in the audience much as a group of high school students would have with “boys” at the back and “girls” in the “middle zone.” Very few students in this class took seats near the front, nor the “presenter.”*

### *A Table, An Instructor*

*ChairChairChairChair ChairChairChairChair  
Chair Chair Chair Chair Chair Chair Chair Chair*

*Chair Chair Chair Chair Chair Chair Chair Chair*

*The arrangement seemed to represent a set of classroom politics in that the “boys” who disliked the entire class placed the most distance between them and the presenter. They set a tone with their body language, noisy kibitzing around and occupation of space that was, I think you said it best, Warren, toxic.*

*Their expression of disapproval and distance influenced other students to the extent that they were put in positions of taking a side or being independent.*

*They did not “settle down” when the session began with my introduction.*

*I had to pause and use silence to bring their attention to the fact that we were going to start.*

*Warren then assumed leadership of the class as he spoke about his purpose in being there and the plan for the evening. The “boys” at the back maintained their closed and guarded demeanor as he spoke.*

*When we began to perform the warmups and sculpting images, students became more cooperative and involved. It was as if they were released from the bonds of constraints of the lock-down seating arrangement and the power relations the “boys” imposed on the group. The half-dozen or so “boys” were fragmented and no longer in a position to push the negative energy influence on the group.*

*It was a pleasure to participate in the activities and to observe Warren's facilitation of the group. His manner approached that of a thoughtful jazz artist. He used the theatre methods repertoire as a rhythmic structure in which to improvise and experiment with whatever action/tactic worked best. The flow of action moved swiftly through whole group, small group and individual exercises and responses, with Warren fluidly adapting to the idiosyncrasies of students' responses and initiatives.*

*The dilemmas he created for individual and small groups were telling: I could observe certain students making choices about engaging – committing to, and inventing themselves honestly – in the activities. Some were taking risks and being authentic. Some, particularly some of the “boys” were cynically holding back, choosing disengagement, contesting the evening's curriculum and occasionally attempting to turn exercises into clowning around and the ridiculous.*

*Warren's response to the disengaged was where the jazzy nature of, and improvisational nature as, a facilitator were most valuable. He was able to move through and around the contestation*

*and resistance offered by some characters while simultaneously being sensitive and responsive to the engaged students.*

*Without doubt, the most effective act of the evening that finally involved the whole group was the Game of Power. Perhaps it was the focus on the concept of power that finally drew the disengaged into the exercise.*

### **Game of space and power:**

#### **Cast of Characters:**

A table,            A bottle  
chair   chair   chair   chair   chair   chair

Participants are asked one at a time to arrange the objects so as to make one chair the most powerful object, in relation to the other chairs, the table and the bottle. Any of the objects can be moved or placed in any form whatever, on top of one another, on their sides, or whatever, but none can be removed altogether from the space. The group runs through a great number of variations in the arrangement.

When an arrangement is arrived at which the group feels expresses power, a participant is asked to enter the space and take up the most powerful position, without moving anything. Once someone is in place, the other members of the group can enter the space and try to place themselves in an even more powerful position, taking away the power the first person established.

*During the following week I touched base with several students and inquired about the session. All of the students, including two of the "difficult boys" replied that the class was one of the best they had experienced (Ast 2000).*

### **Exploring this Story**

A teacher's performance is never in full possession of herself, of the student, or of the texts and the meanings she works with (Ellsworth

1997, 163).

What is going on here as I ponder this new “textual object” of my practice? As teacher and workshop leader I want to hear stories of my work narrated back to me. Sometimes this is simply through evaluation forms, or on reading students’ journal entries. Other times it is in the conversations and de-briefing sessions I have with co-facilitators or adult observers of my work. These types of texts draw me into a new relationship with my practice, prompting me to consider “its broader, deeper and inner meaning” (Smith 1999, 147), as I receive, and feel obligated to consider and care for, it. Do I, as facilitator, desire this “narratable character of [my] identity” (Cavarero, 32) to come to me through this unforeseen gift to me of this teacher’s journal? How I look this gift in the eye enables me to reflect on how I meet other experiences, which in turn holds further questions and (part of) an answer to my own authentication and identity as facilitator.

How can I gain access to this story so I may learn from its ambiguities, its paradoxes and the evolving knowledge that emerges in the reading? Perhaps I can respond to the texts of my practice through my ability to detect and generate patterns of meaning, holding only those aspects that are meaningful, thus enabling the interpretation of the images, words, rhythms and nuances of what I have done.

What is my story of (t)his story?

### **Re-Stor(y)ing**

### **History/His Story**

The special function of the story is that its importance is decided by neither the actor itself nor the agent but rather the story that the agent, through his actions, left behind him (Cavarero, 17).

The meaning of the story is beyond the story. An interplay has happened where the meaning of what happened has become detached from the events. The event of this class is sitting in tension between its status as something that constantly appears and dis-appears, and its status as having

such-and-such meanings (as I will try to describe here) or “sense-content” (Ricoeur, 205), as “we come to be ourselves only through the projection (a revelation and a production) of our possibilities in the interpretive process” (Gallagher, 158). This is the push and pull of the hermeneutic circle of interpretation.

This important event in my practice exceeds, overcomes, and transcends the social conditions of what occurred. The event goes beyond me as creator and teacher and yet I have become complicit in this happening. It is the very openness of the drama work I have led that has enabled this transcendence. At the same time, it is my knowing that in other places at other times this openness has worked that gives me the confidence to engage in it with yet another group. Each time I engage with a group I will again be in the tension between familiarity with the “technique” and its past results, and thus also unfamiliar with the new context where this will emerge. The moment I begin this exercise, it will become familiar again. Yet the moment there is a response to my direction, I will have to adapt to its unfamiliarity. I am constantly stretched and pulled this way and that. My body will be in motion, in concentration, in focus; my words may be the same, but everything around me will be new.

In the *Game of Power*, a story is created where we move from an image of power to a story of power, moving back and forth in time and space, some solid ground is developed and then swept away by the next proposed arrangement of chairs. Similarly, at one moment I grasp the story of these events and at other times that meaning disappears.

I receive my own story from Rick’s narration but, much like in a play, it has developed apart from me with its own characters of “boys,” facilitator and chairs. Thus it is like a mirror, but an oddly refracted image with characters and my actions slightly askew. At times I recognize myself; at others, I don’t, and at other times there is simply no image in the mirror reflected back to me.

Rick was observer as well as participant in the class; I was facilitator as well as observer to its interactions. My work in this class was part of the training Rick went through both in a workshop with other teachers as well as through observation of me working in-situ. Thus Rick knew the

underlying structure, purposes, and *potential* of the process I was using and could recognize it *through* my work, as I adapted to the particular situation of this class. Yet he too was also unfamiliar with what would happen in this class, in this context, with his students, and with this particular set of exercises. He was also in that in-between-ness of familiarity and strangeness, making sense of it through his own interpretation of the events that occurred. So we both moved from what was always unfamiliar and new (the play of the participants) to the familiar and well-known (my knowledge of this particular aspect of a workshop and the connections I had to all the other times I had played it).

**Inter**

**Inter**

**rogating**

**pretation**

I question the text, and, in doing so, I find I begin to question my own pedagogical practice as its meaning constantly open itself up to me, and then, hides itself from me.

A writer comes to understand what he or she wants to say and what needs to be said through the process of writing. Confronting traces from the past, whether in time-honored texts or our own, we are never led back to an author's original intention or purpose; the author is effectively gone, never to be retrieved from traces left behind. The text at hand, becoming, is inter-preted and applied, appropriated to an unfolding occasion within a new and emerging context (Jones 1988).

I shift back and forth between Rick's story, a trace from the past which is now present; I re-present this memory, re-calling what I did in order to question it and the experiences becoming available for me in new contexts.

In this class my asking a question about power unblocked "power," opening up new worlds of

exploration about and through it. It was a task, not a question, but it opened things up just the same. And in asking the question, what got questioned was both me, the questioner, and the respondent, the student.

*Here you have these chairs, this table, this bottle. Show me power.*

“A question presses itself on us; we can no longer avoid it and persist in our accustomed opinion” (Gadamer, 366).

I was calling for a particular kind of answer, but not in the form of words but of actions.

*One student said, “well, you should put one chair on the table.”*

*“So,” I said, “show us.”*

I use such encouraging words to try to negotiate *interpretation* (from the Latin: *negotiator*, one who explains; from Inter + “pres”; probably related to price) with the group, drawing the bodies of the students into the space of play.

One person got up and proposed one arrangement, then there was another option, then another and another. Their bodies moving into and inside the (hermeneutic) circle of interplay, where each proposal fore-grounded a conception of power, worked it out and then, directing “its gaze on the things themselves” (Gadamer, 266), each person stepped back to see what they had done. Thus, the students were guided by the chairs but this was not a matter of a single, conscientious decision, but “the first, last, and constant task” (Gadamer, 267). Each proposal was played with, leading to another, then cast aside. Chairs were moved one by one, onto their sides, one on top of one another. I could see them make one movement, then step back and pause, think of another, then change the arrangement. Working out what power is and was became a constant process of collective re-vision, as meaning emerged right there in front of the class from each arrangement.

I kept asking for further alternatives. My own openness to the responses allowed the play to persist. Engaged in the interplay I was allowing myself “to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue” (Gadamer, 367) were engaged in. And there I was in the midst of a world that I didn’t know, here for these two and a half hours in the lives of these students.

Because power is such an abstract concept, (yet, in the task of this exercise, concrete), to ask a question around this perspective is to anticipate no one single, exact, answer. Adding the elements of play, where we “manifest fresh, interactive ways of relating with people, animals, things, ideas, images, ourselves ... Our actions take on novel sequences” (Nachmanovitch, 43), we expanded our field of action by creating unforeseen circumstances. Thus the *play* of/with the chairs, rather than allowing a verbal response to the question – what is power?– complicates the indeterminacy of the game. It becomes a process that is bounded, boundaried and framed by its rules yet open in its application. So the chairs exercise as a different way of handling the objects (note that it is called by Boal (1992), *The Game of Power*), became a play within the play of schooling. So students experienced their own possibilities in the interpretation of power in the application of, and response to the question. The application and interpretation of “power” were intertwined. Each student had the power to decide what power looked like. And immediately that interpretation was questioned as it was transformed by another. This transformation was also a form of interpretation.

Where did my question come from? And why did I ask it? Was I looking for a standard answer? And now Rick’s text asks me, what is my power? And how did I use it? How did I “obey” the question in my own practice of facilitating this class and this exercise?

## **Empower ing**

## **Questions**

*What is this power?*

According to Foucault (in Smith 1998), power is a force that produces. Power is not held, it is exercised. But it is more than its expression. It also has potential – power is not only the cause of

the effect of power, but power has the capacity wherever it is used to have that effect. In other words, it cannot be known or measured, but can be “only experienced as an indwelling” (Gadamer, 205) as it is exercised. We saw in front of us the structure and effect of power in the tableau of the chairs, but we can only experience this power if we are in those chairs or if we have experienced power itself in our own lives or in the life of this class. Power is also exercised in resistance, so the women students offering resistance to the “boys” and their physical stances, for example, by crossing the boundary into the “free space,” was an interplay with and against power, as well as also an expression of it.

Often in a class, the teacher just talks and resistance is offered by simply not listening. There is no opportunity to physically or visually choose not to participate. One listens or doesn't but this is expressed individually, with minimal disruption to the rest of the class. On the other hand, in this class, when there was a choice like getting up or staying put, then those who wanted to opt out were noticeable because they weren't playing the game. This also carries a certain power.

*Did I empower the students through the image work?*

The notion of “empowerment” itself suggests to me a sense of separation between the students and the context/structures/discourses/landscapes that contain the student. In this interpretation, in order to be “empowered” the student would need to either step outside the context to “act” on it, or act from within the context, but as someone with no relationship to others in the class.

The use of Image and the chairs was an approach that recognized ways in which all participants (including me) are always already part of the context and the discourse within it. They were unable to separate from it, and needed to work, not apart from it, but within the dynamic flow of re-arrangements. This was a process of performative inquiry which acknowledged “both the ‘journey’ (process) and ‘landscape’ (product) of exploration where creative action and interaction occurs between participants within a site of inquiry” (Linds and Fels, 2001). As opposed to something cognitive and discursive, where we may talk about power through theory in the abstract or experientially through narrative, we were *performing* power, striving to change our perspectives as we negotiated its meaning through the placement of the chairs. Thus the session

was not just about information *on* power. This also enabled the participants *to transform themselves* in relationship to the information on power that was being generated.

Ironically, this was all done through an abstract form (an arrangement of chairs!) that was also at the same time very concrete (that same arrangement of chairs!). After all, these were only chairs and tables. But the framing of the exercise— arrange these chairs and table so that one chair has the most power—was a question that broke the framework of all that had gone before in this class. This was also evident in the students' journal entries as several commented on their increased awareness of the power dynamics in the class.

These dynamics included the setup of the class. As mentioned above, chairs were in a semi-circle, with an empty space in the middle, and me at the top of the space. The class was a negotiation in action of this space of difference, between me as facilitator and the students. Yet surrounding this empty space of possibility were lines of desks as the power dynamics of the class played out in the seating arrangements with an intertwining of circular spaces and linear rows of desks. To enter the space of play meant a participant had to cross a boundary—to jump in, to take a risk, to live with the uncertainty of the playing as they concentrated on the game. And each time they crossed into the space there was a disruption, a breaking of the frame. Something was *happening*. Power was not just being transmitted as some passive knowledge, preconceived, believed to be known in advance, “believed to be (exclusively) a *given*” (Felman 1995, 56). *Everyone* (including those who resisted by refusing to jump in) was part of this unfamiliar space. This was in contrast to the way university classes are often normally conducted through a discussion in words, not bodies in motion.. Here I had come in to a room different from the normal classroom, into a new space that broke the frame, and now I was asking the students to stand up and rearrange the room from rows to semi-circle and to get out of their chairs to learn. This was a challenge to the class, but they also became complicit in meeting the challenge because, through their movements, they enabled an opening to emerge as they walked participated in the activity, one after another. This opening turns the circle of understanding into an unfinished, and always moving, spiral.

I have written earlier in this dissertation that “we begin our work with circles where everyone is

equal and has time to speak his/her minds. It is a place for people to share.” This circle is where people can introduce themselves and begin to bond as a community, if for at least the one session.<sup>69</sup> This stated preference for circles strikes me now as somewhat naive. I am mindful of theatre facilitator Julie Salverson’s comment (2000) to me, “I am starting to get very suspicious of circles, so I have to ask you about this everyone is equal business.” The arrangement of this class disrupted the use of opening circles, forcing me to question its completeness.

Opening with a circle in this class was just not possible. It could not be forced onto this class which was not a separate drama workshop where, by beginning with a circle, there is a signal to participants that it is a different place from the classroom. But when I arrived to begin the class I saw that in the arrangement of chairs (and the stances of the students in them) there was already an arrangement of power even before we got to the arranging of chairs to express power (which was the exercise I conducted). That initial arrangement of chairs put my own practice of circles into question and demanded a response which was in the conduct of the exercise. There was a different form of sharing as students crossed the boundary between conventional rows and the semi circle of the space of play. This puts into question the idea of pre-formed/per-formed circles as if this is *the way it is always done*.

Ironically, even though I created something of a semi-circle in this class, Rick points out that a hierarchy of power remained as certain students resisted the circularity, sitting in certain places, literally and physically exerting their power from “behind the scenes.” This placed things well in the space for everyone to see not only me, and not only what people were proposing in the empty space, but also those who were “sitting back”, thus creating a distorted mirror of the hierarchy of the class, with me as facilitator directly across from the “boys” who were “refusing” to be facilitated.

In a conversation I had with Rick back in 1995 when I was preparing a final assignment for a qualitative methods class, he pointed out,

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<sup>69</sup> I develop this idea of community as *communitas* on pages 257-258.

The thing about [this type of theatre work] that is so fundamentally challenging to schools is that if your school system is structured hierarchically and all the power flows from the top to the bottom, students are basically at the bottom of that whole thing, it points out a wonderful number of contradictions and paradoxes about the system. One of them being we're supposedly preparing these kids to be functioning, socially responsible adults in a democratic society where citizens are empowered to make decisions; but [students] never experience any of that in a high school setting (Rick, in Linds 1995).

And here we were in a university class, and I was using a dramatic process to explore such hierarchies, using the languages of power ("power-over," "power-with," "power-to") to examine the concept through Image work. Yet now, there was resistance to the kind of activity that might open up for questioning hierarchies of power. That resistance was a challenge to me then and now, bringing up all sorts of memories of my own struggles with power.

### **Inter preting**

### **Inter Play**

Questions happen in the Open, in the clearing, in the lighting, in the place of appropriation itself. Interrogation is asking in the between, in the chiasmatic intertwining of visible and invisible, in the place where visibility makes interpretation possible (Silverman, 2000, 37).

I interrogate Power by asking the question...what is power? This opens up the space of difference as student after student enacts their own (re)presentation of power. Right there, in front of us, in the free space in front of me and the students, that open question asks for a response in the form of a philosophical concept embodied in the concreteness of an arrangement of chairs. "When philosophy interrogates, it neither expects nor receives an answer in the ordinary sense. This is because there is no variable or unknown variant whose disclosure would satisfy the question. It is

also because the existing world already exists in interrogative mode” (Silverman, 45). I do this by asking more questions, requesting more exploration and play structuring more analysis by, for example, asking students to name an issue the arrangement may represent.

“The movement of playing has no goal that brings it to an end; rather, it renews itself in constant repetition” (Gadamer, 103). Each student who stepped into the space lost themselves in the play. The allure of the playing was that each participant would propose an option, get engaged in the play of chairs, then step back across the line and become a spect-actor to gaze upon one’s (hand[i]) work.

In play we become so fascinated with the world that we move beyond ourselves, we transcend the limits of the self. What becomes primary here, is play itself, not the world or the reality created by the game. If we become lost, we become lost in play. So play opens the world up to question or strips the real of its reality. Play involves the player in an original kind of instruction (Latin: *instruere* – meant not simply to teach, but to put into order, to set up a structure, to build, to put into form). “Insofar as play is educational experience, the player risks herself to acquire an openness for new experiences. The result is self-transformation” (Gallagher, 50). Instruction then is the process of formation found in the participants’ playful, but serious movement of chairs and table. Play bestowed a continuously emerging reality on the unreal of a bunch of chairs and a table, and in doing so it gave weight to imagination and possibility. And I, as facilitator became both immersed in the (inter)play that was the game but also found myself at the same time outside of it, as I viewed the arrangement and asked more questions.

Similarly, my gaze on Rick’s text interrogates it, and in doing this, asks questions about my practice. This is not a theoretical question but a question of what “is originally a practical, lived experience involving the mustering of one’s whole mind and body. The theoretical is only a reflection of this lived experience” (Varela et al, 30). Interpretation is the very activity in this in-between place, as I always find myself “within a situation, and throwing light on it is a task that is never entirely finished” (Gadamer, 301).

Hermeneutics cannot speak from a ground. It must place itself where the ground sets itself off against the absence of ground (or abyss), operating in the space of difference between subject and object, ground and non-ground, thinker and thought, speaker and spoken about, knowledge and that which is to be known (Silverman 1994, 33).

*What is below the surface of Rick's text?*

*What is in-between his text and this writing?*

### **Inter preting**

### **Inter rogation**

We are genuinely responsible for ourselves only when we challenge the ready-made answers provided by others (Gallagher, 157).

The temptation of Rick's text (and the actions in the class that gave rise to this response) is that it could function as if it were the source of knowledge and authority. But this text, though it provides some "data," is not all there is to know. It is an object, but not *the* interpretation of what happened. Inter-pretation only happens in the in-between, between me as subject (and object of Rick's analyses) and the object (the class and this text). I am the object of Rick's interpretation; yet, when I am reading his interpretation it has become the object. So I am object and subject at the same time. But I also have no authority as subject. Neither can the text direct or determine what the questions are that I place on the text. This is quite a complicated concept and turns around and around inside my head so let me try and probe this further.

Rick's text raises questions, questions I have of myself and of my practices of drama facilitation. And I, in turn, have questions to ask it. As interrogator I am operating in the "between," in the space of difference which is neither that of me as facilitator nor that of the text and the actions that it describes.

Knowing what I did, and understanding it (which is derived from knowledge) are not my responsibility. Rather they belong to the place in which the knowing occurs, where I encounter these students (and when I encounter this text) and, later on when I work with other students in other classes, becoming ever-mindful of the *potential* of this exercise. Then knowing and understanding *may* occur in my relationship with all these texts (written and active). And that place of relation has no content.

If it has no content, what does it have? Well, to me, content means some specific understanding, some *thing* that I might understand. To say we understand something is a bit of a piece of trickery. We may think we understand; then, as we are moving bodies, understanding disappears. In this unfollowable world of movement we live in,

[h]ot for secrets, our only conversation may be with guardians who know less and see less than we can, and our sole hope and pleasure is in the perception of a momentary radiance, before the door of disappointment is finally shut on us (Kermode 1999, 145).

Relationships are all about the in-between in the space of difference between me and the story about me and the story about others. These glimpses and glances in the spaces of difference is the process of inter-standing: “when depth gives way to surface, under-standing becomes inter-standing. To comprehend is no longer to grasp what lies beneath but to glimpse what lies between” (Taylor and Saarinen 1994).

The space of difference between me and other, teaching within a “suspended in the space between self and other” (Ellsworth, 158) is a difficult place to be (in); hence, the difficulty in writing this. Meaning becomes a practice, an activity, an elaboration of a field of activity. The interpretation of my practice creates new questions and brings out the respect in which the event means, speaks, and discloses its limits. Interrogation places things in question, questions emerge about my relationship, for example to other men who exert power.

Reading this story reminds me of, and enables me to, recall and re-member many instances of such interplay in tension. Working with “guys” with attitudes. What is the significance of working with these “boys” and these “girls?” How significant was it that I was a “boy” up in front of this class, and Rick was too? Was/Is there some sort of empathy across the gender divide? Experiences with these types of guys...harkening back to the *Bull in the Pen* theatre exercise and to playing a jilted boyfriend in a play. Experiences rolling back and forth raising question after question. For example, how was my gender important in negotiating the power dynamics of this class? And what significance does that question have to my own practices as facilitator in mixed and/or single gender situations?

And then there is the exercise, a metaphor for power whose significance “may be, quite literally, embodied in the action.” Perhaps it was the power of *this work* that has called me to look at it as a world of its own, which sets in motion the hermeneutic circle, which encompasses in its spiral both “the apprehension of projected worlds and the advance of self-understanding in the presence of these new worlds” (Ricoeur, 171).

More Questions, Questions

Of the strategy I used.

Of trying to seize, to grasp something in this text and my relation to it that has some meaning. And resisting this in the effort to keep meanings open and unresolved.

Of the complexities of power and the dynamics of empowerment.

And whether I used dramatic play to slyly avoid conflict with the “boys.”

Asking me,

## What have I learned?

There is an undecidability to teaching. The good teacher is the one who gives what s/he doesn't have; the future as undecidable, possibility as indeterminable (Ellsworth, 173).

Rick's text doesn't only outline a strategy that was used for teaching but also problematizes the very idea of teaching itself. It is a new lens for me to look through. The pedagogy as/through performance which I engaged with in this class in is unrepeatable as this "limited number of people in a specific time/space frame had an experience of value which left no visible trace afterwards" (Phelan, 149). The challenge to my writing has also been to make this performative, making something more of this performance, suspended in the space between self and other, in the time between the before and after of learning. Learning comes "as a surprise"; a surprise not only to the students and to Rick but also to me. It happens when the answer to my question about power in effect displaced the question...from power in/ about some world outside the classroom, inside it and afterwards through these texts.

This object, this exercise broke through something. Even though I had done this exercise dozens of times before, I discovered I couldn't avoid treating it as if it was the first time, but, paradoxically, also the result of many first times. This was and is a tension with any teaching strategy. Predictability in that it would also be unpredictable. Leaving it open but also containing it. Aware of my responsibility, always ready to re-contextualize any crisis and put it back into perspective, to relate the present to the past and to the future "and to thus reintegrate the crisis into a *transformed* frame of meaning" (Felman, 56). So, in contrast to previous uses of this exercise where I used it as a prelude to Image exploration, in this class, it turned into a deeper journey into power and, ironically, an example of dealing with a controversial issue as something enacted and played with.

Like Kevin Kumashiro (1999) who used dramatic forms to explore stereotypes with high school students, I am reticent to suggest there was here a *particular* strategy that "worked" in this class

that enables these (or some of these) students to “critique, present, challenge and transform oppressive interactions, social status and ideologies” (40) present in this particular classroom. In fact, I am not even sure this happened, or if it did it only happened on reflection. Yet I did have a strategy, “something that suits a situation” (Spivak 1993, 4) that emerged in the doing. This strategy involved recognizing my own limitations. For example, I am not a classroom teacher so I wasn’t there to teach “how to teach,” but to open up the possibilities the use of Image might offer for teaching. I acknowledge that the use of Image as strategy in this case led the class into an ambiguous space which led to uncertain results. But this strategy was not “designed” to provide answers, but rather to open up questions, illuminating aspects of power from the different perspectives of each student. Thus the process involved *playing with* the transformation of power, an aspect that wouldn’t normally be considered in this class.

So I return to my original questions – What is this story that Rick has shared? Is it a story about power? Is it a story about a successful lesson? Is it about the beautiful words Rick has crafted? Is it about his and my memories of these events? Is it simply the Inter – this in-between-ness?

In Haiti there is an expression in Creole: *dye mon gin mon* ..... “behind every mountain there is another mountain.” I climb up a mountain and anticipate reaching the top, but as I climb I see another top emerging on the horizon. This workshop was the journey to the top of one mountain...I wait for the next opportunity to see what route awaits me.

Caught (for only a moment) in the space of Inter.

Ready to move on.

Looking backwards *and* forwards, perched with the wide horizon before me, still wondering what comes next.....

*I come here*

*in the mi(d)st of journeying*

the spaces

between

a column

of

emptiness

the

potential

of

energy

to flow through

purposeful

surrender

a willingness to be taught<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Inspired by Laird (2001, 28-29)

**Metaxic Becomings:**

*Forum Theatre –*

*Taking what we've learned to performance and,  
at the same time, back to our living lives*

## The Spiraling Journey(s) of Living/Loving Popular Theatre

Everyone, whether they acknowledge it or not, is serving an apprenticeship for elderhood (Minister 1981).

*(Re)turning....A University Classroom, fall 1999. I am in the middle of a 2 hour long theatre workshop for Social Work students that hasn't been flowing well. Though they have been exposed to role play in their social work classes, I sense from the looks on their faces and their reluctance to get out of their chairs that the idea of using drama to explore issues affecting them as social workers seems to be difficult to grasp. I decide to demonstrate to them the possibilities that come from telling a story of a moment of our lives through Image by re-enacting an event that happened to me as we use our bodies to tell a story of my encounter with the system of care for the elderly.*

*I am back in the \*\*\*\* Home, where my mother has been living for 6 months, in a non-verbal sculpture a moment when my family met with the staff of the special care home. A ritual (re) enactment of ritual. The staff, including a Social Worker sitting rigidly upright in a chair, smilingly (in the pose of) a rote reading of their reports from their clipboards. An image of bodies sitting around a table, mouths open, without words, without (e)motion as they clinically inform us of (our) mother's status, condition, prospects.*

*I glance around the Image I am part of and sit down in my chair... Suddenly I am back there in the Here and Now and Then, in these square sterile rooms.*

I interplay my life in a particular theatre process with my life as a theatre pedagogue, examining how knowing and meaning emerges in a living practice of popular theatre. Moments of action are

interwoven with the embodied emotions of one's life, as I and the reader begin to experience how knowing might emerge through this performative text.<sup>71</sup>

### **The Metaxic Facilitator**

*Reflecting...I am transported into a memory yet I am embodying that memory in this chair.... "chairing" that meeting in the \*\*\*\*Home and conducting this theatre workshop in this classroom. Remembering .... That tense moment of silence after we started to ask the staff questions about their reports. Why wasn't our mother getting physiotherapy treatment? Why is she being left in her bed all day? Can't you play her some relaxing music instead of leaving the TV on all day?*

*....And, in the hall, after the meeting, a stilted "Thank you for coming. We heard your concerns," and a warmer,*

*"Thank you for coming. This was the first time I've seen a family take such control of these status report meetings. I really appreciated your questions. This home needs this kind of a dialogue between families of people in care and front-line staff. It's the only way change will happen."*

*There is a moment of silence in the class's eyes as I finish moving the students' bodies into the Image and adjust their poses. I ask the students to tell me what they see in my silent Image...What stories do they have that emerge from this viewing?*

Facilitation is a dialogical and social process as people spontaneously play with each other, finding and filling spaces for dialogue and interaction. We don't know where the spaces will open up. We

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<sup>71</sup> As an experience of spiral writing I have at times split the text so that in our reading we are entwined amongst reflections on writing these texts as well as on my own experiences in popular theatre. It is up to the reader to decide how to engage inside these winding wor(l)ds.

jump into these uncertainties wherever they appear as individual stories are interwoven with others in a multilayered, nested text/performance. Similarly, I, as the drama facilitator work in/am part of a series of constantly shifting spaces that emerge from the interplay between questions and what participants do. Working with/in these spaces requires reflex/reflectivity, paying attention to what I am thinking, feeling and doing in the moment of (inter) action to maintain a connection with the space I am in.

This means the facilitator is an ever-evolving performative “self” which is metaxic<sup>72</sup> ...where I as participant share, and belong to, the world of my experience and the images I create of these experiences. Yet, when working with a text in the form of an Image, it quickly becomes evident that each individual “reality” is interwoven with others’ “realities.”

A different type of knowing emerges from this process of inter-action between the I-as-observer, the I-working-in the situation and the not-I, the other. We begin to see everything in new ways. We hold mirrors up to nature but, instead of trying to represent it, find it accessible. Through metaxis, “self”-observation allows us to see knowledge as it is enacted in the present, and the idea of self/other/world becomes flexible.

*(Re) fracting....as the Image shatters. Drama facilitator asking a group of social work students to “take apart” the image he presents. “What was happening? Who was that woman, back turned, that I put outside the square arrangement of nurse, social worker, administrator and physio-therapist? Why was she there? The students “read” the image. “That person sitting with their back to the woman outside the table is the social worker who is more connected to the administration and not to the family.” “That is an uncaring system.” Students giving impressions of my Image of that meeting turns into me hearing my feelings at that meeting returning through others’ voices...”Uncaring...More concerned with paper work than human beings.” They resonate with their view of a social worker (that they are becoming) and their relationship to a complex system that they will*

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<sup>72</sup> See page 26 and pages 33-35 for more discussion of metaxis.

*be working in.*

*Have they only understood my image or are they making it their own? Have I only (thought I) understood my image or is it finally my own?*

In facilitation I use the idea of performance to develop interaction between the Image and the audience. The worlds of the “reader” of the Image intertwine with the worlds of the “creator” of the Image. Performance becomes that intermingling. To describe this I use performative writing which emerges from the multiple interactions amongst reader, writer, text and our embodied world(s). It gives expression to the experience of creating meaning as it is negotiated and realized in the reading/writing process. The authorial/facilitator role is (re)moved from one of authority to co(labour)ator. It is through this process of creativity between facilitator/author that a possible performative reading emerges and is (re)cognized.

Yet the binary nature of metaxis also limits my exploration of the ever-evolving identities of the facilitator/writer. If I expand the concept by reflecting on the idea of a crystal (Richardson 1994), I am able to see that there are far more than three sides from which to approach the world. With an infinite variety of shapes, substances, and angles of approach, crystals provide a structure of de-structure, of fluid form constantly changing as the light reflects what we look at. What we look at changes, causing a deepened, complex, yet partial interpretation which allows me to explore simultaneously contradictory ideas (like light moving as waves *and* particles) in particular situations at particular times.

As my performative self moves forward in (inter)action, the multiple identities of been-being-becoming emerge through different lenses. I see situations and relationships differently depending on how they emerge through a complicit/complex series of different involvements,

moving away from a metaxic binary that opposes

the image of reality

to

the reality of the image

(an attempt at representation)

(a new experience is created)

or from the duality of

facilitator versus participant

towards a more complicit/complex series of divergent involvements.

While interacting with others, I experience my own emerging identity as facilitator through reenactments of some aspect of my life; at another as a dialogue about it, and at still another, as a model of its transformation.

*Spiralling Into... Warren, who is that son in that meeting, was also now facilitator listening to the students' interpretations. I ask them to go into small groups and share their own stories. One group comes back with an Image of one experience, which we read as someone dead on a hospital bed, family members, including the student, surrounding the corpse and a social worker sitting away at a desk, back turned. A family isolated in their grief. I ask the class to share their readings (themes, captions, thoughts of characters) of what they saw in this Image:*

*Disinterest*

*What Does the Book Say?*

*It's Too Late Anyways!*

*Resonating and Rippling... I feel twinges of recognition from what they are saying about this students' Image that takes me back into my own spiraling Image. Twinges... no, tears, of recognition, of the system I was/am entwined in, yet also realizing how my theatre work deepened my own interstandings of my own experiencing. Resonating with the resonances they are sharing. Mis/Understanding yet another layer of my own journey... How in "becoming" facilitator am I unraveling this twisting tangle in (e) motion?*

One aspect of this process of metaxic "becoming" began with involvement in a video theatre project on care of the elderly. In 1994-1995 I was an actor, co-writer and co-creator of *Curtains for Hilda* (JustUs Players 1994) as I participated in collectively creating a play for care givers on

preventing violence towards older adults in care. To develop the work, we interviewed disabled residents of a rehabilitation residence, spent a morning observing routines in a special care home, and then developed the script with them through a continuous process of writing and performing.

Although the play in its structure was a safe place to talk about “those” characters rather than ourselves, and was to be used as a “rehearsal for reality” (Boal 1979), it became for me an overlapping of realit(ies)...the story of the characters became interwoven with the story of my life. Although the video was designed for training staff who cared for the elderly, the drama also brought out many issues confronting all of us as we strived to put our ideals of liberation and emancipation into practice in our relationships with our aging parents. Using extracts from the script and narrative, this performative writing questions how, in dealing with Bill's story and my own and in other work, do I as a pedagogue act instead of “just playing a role?” How is my living experience contiguous, unfolding and enfolding on itself across time and space? How I live my life as Warren becomes inseparable from how I live my life as Warren, theatre worker, and raises further questions about my/our own ethical practices as an pedagogue<sup>73</sup> (From Greek, *paedagogos*, one who accompanies children, Smith 1997, 272). In the play, the character that I would become, “Bill King,” was a character I have been/am becoming, with feelings, thoughts and a life and a relationship with an elderly mother in an institution. At the time, my own mother was in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease and still living at home, so the “system” was still an abstract concept to me. The character, Bill, had a mother in an institution and he was trying to help her adjust, talking to staff to improve her care....but who didn't have time to visit her often so,

*(Mr. King comes in, stamping his feet and rubbing his hands together.)*

Mr. King: Boy this is a cold winter...Hi,  
how's my mum?

a year later, I was in Vancouver, beginning graduate school and lived for a month with my mother as my father and I prepared to put her into a “Home” as we euphemistically call it. I was now the son Warren who had been “Bill” and now was “Bill/Warren” as the text of the script overlapped with the living

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<sup>73</sup> This resonates with Yolanda Walker's statement about walking together that I related on page 38. Freire (1985) points out that before one can work alongside someone else we need to *cross* the boundary between self and Other. However, we sometimes “forget to recognize that no one gets from one side of the street to the other without crossing it! No one reaches the other side by starting from the same side. One can only reach the other side by starting from the opposite side” (189).

Bea Holden: Oh, hi Bill. (*leafing through report*), Nothing about her in last night's report. I assume she's had a good night. She'll be so glad to see you.

**In the hall**

(*Mr. King goes down the hall and knocks at a door*). Mum, mum, mum are you up?

(*Mr. King opens the door, sees the bed curtains drawn and the light off. He returns to the hallway*)

Mr. King: Maria, why isn't my mum up yet?

Maria: She isn't?

Mr. King: No.

Maria: I have no idea.

(*Ruby and Bea have been watching the exchange from the side. Ruby comes forward*)

Ruby: Mrs. King didn't want to get up this morning. She made that very clear.

So, rather than forcing the issue I gave her some time out.

Mr. King: But she couldn't reach her call bell. Isn't that a little dangerous?

Ruby: She must've thrown it away in a rage. She wouldn't cooperate this morning.

Mr. King: My mother always cooperates.

Ruby: Maybe with you, Mr. King, but she

text of my life. After she moved into the "home," and therefore, into the "system" I became enmeshed in what had previously been an abstract net. I visited with my mother, cajoled staff to spend more time with her, and visited her on my way home from university. Warren who had been Bill now knew a bit about what actions needed to be taken, what issues to raise, as we had explored the subtle complexities in our research, not of "abuse" which must be reported, but of "neglect"; uncaring systems and lack of knowledge about my mother, not a patient, not a resident, but Ruth. (I remember early on as my mother suffered because of her unhappiness of being there, a staff member commenting to me that she was glad she had known Ruth before she deteriorated...she wasn't a patient with depression but a person who had been happier...and could be happy again.

A Turn, A Look with her eyes  
Ruthie, Ruthie?

Yes

Are you O.K.?

Head shakes yes

Responding, Reacting

Perhaps I'll feed you beans today. You like beans?

she doesn't, never has, but now she eats everything.

A resounding laugh.

What once was, is.

For a moment.

To sustain us.

In the summer of 1997, I facilitated a workshop called  
*Taking Care.... Forum  
Theatre and Issues of Health/Institutional*

takes everything out on us girls.

(*Mr. King looks to Miss Holden*)

Bea: I can vouch for that, Mr. King. Your mother can be quite difficult. In any case, we'll have her up in a jiffy.

Mr. King: Well, Aunt Gladys will be here any minute. Mum really enjoys shopping with her...Aunt Gladys so seldom can get here from the coast.

Ruby: I'll go get Hilda up!! (*Ruby leaves*)

Maria (*glancing at Bea*): I'll help. (*Maria leaves*)

Bea: Your mother will be up in a jiffy. Why don't you get a coffee while you wait.

#### SCENE SEVEN **Near The Nursing Station**

Mr. King (*greeting his mum who is in a wheelchair*) Morning Mum.

Hilda: (*a bit confused by the rush of events, but glad to see her son*): Hi, Bill.

Mr. King: I'll be right with you. I just want to speak with Miss Holden for a minute.

(*Mr. King approaches the nursing station*)

Mr. King: Miss Holden, I was wondering if I could speak with you for a moment.

Bea: Sure, how can I help you?

Mr. King: Can Maria be assigned on a regular basis to my Mother?

Bea: Your mother must like Maria a lot.

*Care*  
at the International Festival of Theatre of the Oppressed, using the video of *Curtains for Hilda* to talk about theatre and issues affecting the elderly. The workshop used an adaptation of Forum Theatre which provided an opportunity to explore issues of institutional care affecting older adults. This workshop presented the process of developing the Forum Theatre play/video and an opportunity for participants to investigate both the issues raised in the video and the ways to use it to apply the Theatre of the Oppressed pedagogy in similar areas..

I recall the reaction of a theater group from Brest, France who remarked that they had never really thought of those issues, even though they had parents who were elderly. We often think of theatre for social change as covering issues for our own generation. In this case, it extended these issues to our own dilemmas as we attempt to live with what happens with elderly parents.

I remember being anxious leading the workshops....these were after all people from all over the world with their own skills and experiences in theatre. But I found I had been engaged with these issues both as a theatre worker and someone living with them. Both aspects inhabited my own Mind/Body/Spirit – caring for my mother and caring for the issues involved had come together.

As part of the festival I also co-facilitated (with Turning Point Theatre, a British company that had themselves produced their own interactive play on Caregiving) a three day workshop with a 55 plus peer support and educational

Mr. King: Yes, Maria's a great nurse.

Bea: Nurse's aide, Mr. King.

Mr. King: Oh yes, of course. You're the nurse. Anyway, how about it?

Bea: Out of the question, Mr. King, I'm afraid. You know how the system here works. Three shifts and the buddy system. It works well and it gives variety.

Mr. King: But my mother needs more companionship. I'd like to be with her more....

Bea: We know how much you care about your mother, Mr. King, but short of moving her to a facility that permits private nurses and hiring one or even two, well!? Meanwhile, for round the clock care, your mother is in excellent hands with staff like Maria and Ruby here at Tick-Tock Manor!!!

Mr. King: Well, maybe so. I have to go out of town for the rest of the week.

I'll be back next week and maybe we can sort this out then.

Bea: Have a good trip, Mr. King.

SCENE TEN

Seminar Room

Bea: I want to talk to you, too, Maria.

(Maria defers to Miss Holden)

outreach group. This primarily Portugese-speaking group of mostly women, working out of St. Christopher house in Toronto, was educating other seniors and community organizations about the issue of isolation and abuse in families and the community.<sup>47</sup>

In the process of doing the workshop I discovered some of the issues that concerned immigrant seniors. I also saw that how I related to them and their concerns was enhanced by my emerging becoming of son/caregiver with my mother in an institution and with my father in his own home. One lady in particular, 83, who spoke no English, took a shine to me. We danced in one exercise and in our performance of the (nonverbal)scenes in a public performance at the end of the festival gave me a big hug in parting.

I was in a performance there on stage in Toronto. A performance of myself as facilitator, caring for these women in "a rare, unforgotten experience of total reciprocity" (Moreno 1960, 15). Caring. a place to be human....treating them as I was/would be treating my own mother.....

Caring, coming from the embodied experience of relationship with my mother. A place to be human....

People in the audience commented on how "genuine" the piece of theatre they had seen was. Although it was a forum piece, here it was a piece of life of the seniors and what the audience was/is becoming as children and as adults moving forward in years.

One audience member commented afterwards as to how real my interactions with

<sup>47</sup>Two years later (July 1999) I was informed that the group continued in its work. It is using the theatre skills they developed to outreach, for example, to Chinese and Vietnamese senior's groups in their community.

Bea: I had a compliment today about you from a resident's family.

Maria: Oh! That's nice.

Bea: Yes, but watch you don't fall behind schedule, Maria. All morning patient care must be complete before 11 am in order to keep the noon meal on time.

Maria: I understand.

Bea: Don't get bogged down. You see, Maria, these old people are very lonely and they'll try every trick in the book to get attention; and then, before you can say "Bedpan!" you get behind in your work. So try to keep working while you're talking, and keep one eye on the clock!

SCENE ELEVEN      **The Lobby near the  
Nursing Station**

*(Hilda is sitting in her wheel chair in the lobby. Mr. King is with her.)*

Mr. King: I'm trying to work things out, but I'm running late today. I have to call work. Oh, Maria, can you help my mother for a minute?

Maria *(hesitating as he speaks to her, then walks by)*: I'm sorry, I'm in a hurry. *(then looks back sorrowfully to Mr. King)*.

the group were. I was Warren, facilitator but also son of Ruth living within the system of her own care. It had been interesting for me to see the reactions of my peers, not based on the issues/themes in the play but on the human relationships we had created, perhaps enabling a reflection on the audience's part of their own relationships with their own (becoming) elderly parents and their own apprenticeships for elderhood.

They didn't need to have the same stories but they needed to "dip into the wellsprings" (Wikan, 471) of themselves to use as a bridge to others. This doesn't happen through just wanting to observe in a detached way. "Practical exposure to a world of 'urgency, necessity' is required" (Wikan, 471).

Acting human through genuine relationships that are important because they "are the mirror in which one can see oneself as one is" (Rahnema 1990, 218). What Smith (1997) has called "finding one's Original Face," becoming awake to what sustains us. Living awake..a matter of not depending on language, rationality or culture, it requires a simple openness and curiosity to that which meets us at every turn, every thing, every thought, feeling, idea, person.

I was, and continued to be, constantly surprised as I found myself as son/caregiver facilitating the process as my own process of taking care of myself and of those I loved... and those I was working with in popular theatre

One day later in the year I walked into the home where my mother lived.

Nurse: Hi, Bill.

Warren: Huh?

Nurse: I'm taking this course on dementia care.  
Last week we saw a video with you in it.  
When I saw you I said to the others in the class,  
I know that guy. He's the son of one of our residents!

What comes from all this? I haven't just *had* these experiences; I exist inseparably (Smith 1997) from them.

In this part of my life connections were made bodily through experience. Through going through the process my own bodymindemotionspirit spoke if I was able to listen to it. What I lived through opened up possibilities for interpreting and understanding new experiences. As I lived through similar experiences I began to listen better to the experiences of others (Howard 1996).

What has emerged in the process of writing and thinking about the experience was that to conduct, and be conducted by, a play/workshop called Taking Care required taking care, no caring for the people I was working with and caring for the issues we were dealing with.

David Jardine (1987) shares a similar thing that happened to "Ellen," a nursing student who found that her skills as a nurse were called upon while doing an interview of a stroke survivor. Referring to the "reality of stroke and its effects" he says there is something profoundly intractable about this experience of silence, speechlessness and withdrawal.

Dealing with this phenomenon well, understanding it deeply and generously and speaking its truth, might also be a problem of character, of wisdom, of patience, of becoming someone who can hear and tell the truth of the tales that their own lives tell, unafraid, willing to not blunt the intractability of living one's life with troubles such as strokes and the mumbling drools of loved ones ... (165).

And I find myself wondering also...

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What comes from all this? There is a knowing that emerges from the writing. That knowing not only informs the writing but writes the informing. Couture (1997) writes that experience is a structure built by the text(s) of our stances taken in the world, "moments of action weaving patterns of love or pain, fear or hate, sorrow or celebration into life's choreography" (Fels 1995). In this way, the play was no longer just something on stage, but part of my life. And I find myself wondering also

In dealing with Bill's story and my own and in working with those Portuguese seniors, was my living experience folding in on itself, one experience wrapped up and, at the same time, (e)merging with all the others?

I agree with Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1990) that there is no way to explain logically what I did. Ethics emerged in the (com)passionate actions of everyday life. It is in the groundless and shifting sands of experience that I and my work "enfolded one into each other and unfolded from one another in the fundamental circularity that is life itself" (Varela 1991, 217).

Even in retrospect I can not say one interaction preceded the other. They coincided, overlapped, (inter)acted, interplayed. Because I was/am not a detached observer reflecting on the situation of those moments of my life, these "holistic and gripping experiences" (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1990) became the basis of the development of my own skillful coping with the people (and the interplay within their own lives) I was working with.

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In relating and re-interpreting Bill's story and my own and in dealing with those Portuguese seniors, how is my writing enmeshed within a re-visioning and re-making of my own path-of-life?

Richardson (1992) found that in representing sociology as poetry she was forced to re-examine her own role as researcher and as sociologist. In much the same way I expect that is happening in my

Re examining,  
writing,  
enacting,  
performing

of my role as facilitator/inquirer in a dramatic/writing process; But this approach still questions this idea of "my."

**Me, Myself, I?**

My writing must also take into account the dynamic unfolding in "me" over time

Obligation happens” (Caputo 1993, 18) and in this case, it happened in the process of discovering myself in the character of Bill and in myself who had been Bill and who was also the son of Ruth. There was something in that whole process that I recognized then, and continued to engage in, something that *might* return – not a “lesson” or a “moral” or a “technique,” but acting with care and obligation, compassion, thinking with the heart, “feeling-thought” (Wikan 1993, 493).

Com passion: with passion, desire, love.

Compassion: together feel, that

spontaneous compassion that arises when one is not caught in the habitual patterns--when one is not performing volitional actions out of karmic cause and effect--is not done with a sense of need for feedback from the recipient. It is the anxiety about feedback--the response of the other--that causes us tension and inhibition in our action. When action is done without the business-deal mentality, there can be relaxation (Varela et al 1991, 249).

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enabling a maturing understanding of my own praxis. We must also consider William Tierney's (1995) questions about the static “I,” a self that is unchanging in terms of time or place, a singular identity that becomes an authorial voice.

This ambiguous “becoming” is a characteristic of what Paul Ricoeur calls “lived” or “enacted” narrative which

creates another type of opening, not in the sense of extension, but in the sense of the uncertainty of our position. We are capable of occupying each of these three positions, character, author, narrator, in turn. We cannot rest with any one of them.

We are also a character in others' stories and histories, in that story that others set forth and write, that they write in setting it out, and that they set out in writing it. In short, how we are caught up in others' stories is what creates an inextricable aspect to our lives (1995, 310).

To go beyond our own egos means going beyond responses from others, that everything we do is traded for something else...

### Wondering

Habitual patterns of mother-son conversation

Standing at her side, observing how she makes cinnamon buns  
Now I am an adult, caring for her, with hope in the im/possibility that some day  
she will say, "Thanks for being with me"

Cause and effect, the need for feedback

I am asked, "Does she recognize you?"

I never answer. Or I answer, in some way she does,

*With a look of her eyes,  
an expression on her face, that shake of her head.  
that crystalline light as she searches the sources of sounds to connect with.*

A light that lives and a life that lights as in these moments our relations past and present emerge.

But does it matter?

Yes,

to remember her Now as a person,  
remember that laugh at the beans (the thought of eating beans)

Moments, moments together of connection, of removal of inhibition, of playfulness

I remember being struck by something in the movie *Smoke* (directed by Wayne Wang and starring Harvey Keitel). In it characters did things for each other out a sense of community. A did something for B, B did something for D, C did something for E, D did something for G, etc. and eventually G might do something for A. It was not a linear sort of doing things for each other, it created a complex community as their lives sected and inter-sected. I would argue that sometimes moments of spontaneous compassion co-emerges with our distancing ourselves from habitual patterns or routines (because they are so unusual). For example, in *Journeying into the landscapes of the drama workshop* I talked about my trip in 1994 through West Africa. As a North American white man travelling there, I was quite aware of myself and the interactions of people around me and with me. On many occasions during that journey there occurred what I came to subsequently call unexpected instances of generosity/compassion by total strangers, matched by instances of gratitude on my part, made more remarkable by the obvious physical and sartorial differences between me and the African people I encountered. At first when this happened I was surprised, I didn't know how to respond. But no response was necessary.

These rare, unforgotten experiences of total reciprocity (Moreno 1960) do occur in our day to day lives. We are just not aware of them. Our senses are dulled by the routines of existence. We do not notice the transcendental moments of compassion. Or if we do we allocate them to the human interest section of the newspaper (the *Vancouver Sun* actually ran a daily series of such stories in its City Limits section). These moments in my past and present enable me to go beyond Me, trying to incorporate the Other, which ironically helps me to just relax and live. The meaning of all of this doesn't read in words or texts, but has evolved in my meeting and interacting with others in a constantly moving shared space where relationships

are defined,

and defined by,

(our) interactions with our surroundings.

Who am I in the narrative I've shared? I take many roles, character, narrator, author, subject. I am

a character in my own story, but I am also telling my own story so I am author. But I am not just the author, I am telling the stories of others so I am also narrator. And, of course, I am the son mindful of the irony of writing down an evolving and unfolding relationship with a mother whose “self” in relation to her world and me is constantly shifting.

### **Performing Writing -- Writing Performance<sup>74</sup>**

In writing with such an idea in mind, in this section of the workshop I have specifically tried to find ways to open up the multiple possibilities of involvement of writer and reader. As I mentioned in the section of this work entitled *Glimpses in/of an Unfolding Workshop*, I play with the form of writing in order to help dis/rupt representational writing, forcing both me (in making the choices of form and how I play with it) and the reader to become more involved. I do this mindful of Pollock's caution (1998, 75) that performative writing has its own faux references that could project a kind of new set of rules. To her, performative writing is not a matter of style but a flexible discursive practice that lies at the intersections of speech and writing. It is a process of writing that is not referential (as a metaphor might be) but an experience itself, an experience of reading writing and an experience of writing reading. Simply put, “making writing perform” (Pollock, 79). Ultimately, performative writing changes both writing and performance, so that in writing in other ways, I change the way I view what I am writing about, and in turn see a transformation in that practice while I engage in it.

Writing thus becomes a form of performance that brings forth experiences that become present; first in the writing, then the reading. This idea of performance is clarified by looking at it as a translation from the French word *représentation*. Moving from the English sense of the word (descriptive fidelity, to “stand-in” for something) to one French sense (performance) moves us beyond approximating or substituting for experience (and experience not as something separate from me, but part of my life). Performative writing is not a description of a past event; rather, it abolishes time, making the past immediate and present. In this process, when something from the past is shown again -- “something that once was, now is” (Brook 1968, 139). In bringing the

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<sup>74</sup> I return here to some themes introduced in the earlier part of this work but specifically draw here from experiences and material in this section as well as the reader's own experiences in reading this text.

reader back to past and forward to the future, some solid ground is created. But this solid ground in the “moment of the present” is swept away in our inter-actions with the text. The past and future become traces, as the text and reader passes through the transitory present of reading.

Such poetic texts are “plays with no final curtain” (Pelias 1999, xiv), with all the ambiguities that implies, where there is space for the writer and reader to engage *through* the text.

**Becoming is never imitating**

(Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 305)

Subverting and questioning the unitary subject

...much as fragments in a fragmented life...

Going beyond data or representation

Not only am I playing with content,

a process of been-  
being-  
becoming in drama facilitation,

A process that cannot,  
should not,  
be pinned down,

As butterflies in a display case (McNiff 1999)

Rendering,

boiling down to its essence

dead what is living,

I am also playing with form...and in doing both I am playing with the interplay between form and  
content ...

How many ways can one write on a page?

Interactivity

Reflexivity

Shifting Sands

Struggling to pierce my own positioning, situatedness

teacher poet pedagogue artist academic performer (Jipson and Paley 1997, 12)?

I try and develop modes of writing linked to research practice through allusion, contradiction, fragments, or absence. When we don't attempt to resolve ambiguities, meaning emerges as relational, performance becomes partial, "opening us up to a wide range of associations, part biography, part intertextual, part 'reality'" (Strine et al. 1990, 185).

From my experience of writing these texts, I concur with Della Pollock (1998) in saying that the terrain grows larger with each step reaching almost terrifying proportions, not only in size and range but also requiring us to look at often divergent, tension-filled and/or contradictory forms and content. But in these tensions, and through a wide range of stimuli, possibilities open us up to the kind of writing that demands attention to the choices made at every step of the way. She raises some questions about the characteristics of performing writing that have been useful in exploring how my own writing can be put into question. Her "excursions" into performing writing are not checklists to judge my writing by, nor criteria for good writing but a "suggestive framework"<sup>75</sup> (80) that has seemingly contradictory or conflictual possibilities existing in tension with one another. I outline these in order to look at where further exploration is needed in the context of my own writing and performance.

One of these "excursions" is the idea that subjectivity does not enclose a fixed or multiple "self," but refers to a performative self where writing is the performance of relations of being and knowing between or among subjects, thus enabling a shift from the situated "me" to the possible "we." These interrelations are contingent, contiguous and overlapping, shifting in the interplay that brings you (and your worlds) as reader, and me as an evolving identity-in-process, face-to-face with our own doubts and the uncertainties of our lives. It thus draws us together in the critical intimacy of performing writing/writing performing as I, too, am no longer separated from the text but beside it, "becoming part of the texture of its discourse" (Hall 1998, 90).

This idea of intimacy has been / is becoming / will become intertwined with a process that has left my living experience of facilitating theatre open and unresolved,

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<sup>75</sup> Pollock elaborates on six "excursions" of performative writing: evocative, metonymic, subjective, nervous, citational and consequential (80-96) which have challenged me in my own approach to this entire text. I do not claim to have incorporated all of them, but have used them as questions that are posed to me in my writing strategies.

Stumbling in ambiguity (Grumet 1988, 470)

and, at the same time,

giving it a voice  
(Jardine 1992).

What emerges (in this part of my life) is the concern for a living practice of theatre, a practice that is folded into the character of, and relationships with, the settings I am part of. How was I trying to enlarge the spaces of the possible (Sumara and Davis 1997) within the communities I worked with? How I live my life as Warren became deeply entwined with how I lived my life as Warren, theatre worker, and raised deeper questions about my own ethical practices.

In other words, this process of

playingcaringperformingwriting became a working apprenticeship of my own *life*.  
(and continues to be)

## Transforming Bridging:

### *Joker*

The last mask we will meet (and this mask is similar to the others that have gone before, but also ambiguous in character) is Joker.

In contrast to

Shaman, whose journeys to and fro influence energies,

Div e/in er, who is in a static place but is searching for that which lies beneath and between – thus, a questioner; and,

Wri(gh)ter who is moulding what emerges,

Joker is in-the-middle, is doer and searcher and traveller in the spaces amongst and between stage, audience and world as well as between stories and the analyses of them. The mediator as well as the means of mediation are intertwined in Joker's mask.

Boal originally used this term to designate someone<sup>76</sup> in his Arena Theatre in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil who was a representative of the audience on stage. He was a bit of a master of ceremonies in the performance of plays. But he also switched roles during the play, often becoming lecturer, other times a judge or a stagehand. Sometimes he used slides, films, diagrams or made rhetorical statements.

Most writing about the Joker (eg. Smith 1996, Matthijssen, 2001, Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994) elaborates on this role in facilitating the Forum theatre presentation, using the ambiguous

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<sup>76</sup> Boal uses the word *comodin*, meaning playing card joker, who has something of a general utility (Schechter, 162). In Spanish the word means a card which may be applied to different *purposes* in a game (emphasis mine).

word-describer of Facilitation to describe the Joker's role in the workshop process.<sup>77</sup> But the Joker often also develops the play all the way through the workshop to performance. Thus the Joker brings together into performance – story, plot development and a link to the potential issues of concern of the audience – so that the play may draw on the expertise in the audience.

At the moment that we have the “embryo” of a play, I tell workshop participants that the facilitator's role changes to that of director. I become more directive. When the play is being developed for public performance, the Joker in performance is all the things that have come before; the shaman unravels threads from other experiences, at other places; the diviner probes beneath about certain actions and responses; and the wri(gh)ter crafts the material for visual, aural, and kinesthetic display and interaction. The Joker is always there, too, playing in the background, taking in everything and bringing this face to face with an audience, being and becoming:

master of ceremonies;

circus performer in the middle of the ring of a 3 ring circus –

*look over here, look at this; look at that;*

“exegete”<sup>78</sup> (Schutzman 1994, 147)

the interpreter whose material is behind Joker and,  
at the same time, in front of the audience.

interpreter

whose material is the interplay between the audience,  
who doesn't only just have to watch all the time;

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<sup>77</sup> Michael Rohd (1998) is the exception. He uses the word “facilitation” to describe the “questioning, replacing, and guiding that takes place” (112) in a Forum theatre presentation. On the other hand, Chris Johnston (1998) lists the Joker as one of the role models for drama facilitation, whose function “derives responsibility to present groups - or audience - with theatricalised opportunities for change... Within Image theatre, this means directing exercises and managing a process which moves towards articulacy” (59-60). I am extending here Johnston's definition of the Joker's function to the workshop process as a whole.

<sup>78</sup> A person who practices exegetis (“explanation or the critical interpretation, of a text” [Hanks 1979, 511])

and the actor who doesn't always have to act (Schechter 1985), and

interpreting all the in-between.

Thus, the Joker straddles a series of dynamic spaces. Rather than standing, the Joker is floating, and is an amalgam of the other three masks in that s/he takes the play to performance. But that isn't the main goal of the Joker in the workshop. As floating straddler, Joker connects the world of the stage and the world of the audience, the world of the performance place and the world outside it, and the world of the workshop and the world the workshop is situated in. This doesn't mean that the Joker is a neutral bridge, passing messages from one side of the mirror to the other. Floating, Joker also constantly stretches to maintain contact with the liminal spaces which are constantly shifting. Ideally, this liminality means that all participants, including the Joker, are stripped of their usual status of power. It is a process of transition, sometimes known as "betwixt and between," in which participants are removed temporarily from social structures. The Joker as "liminal servant" (McLaren 1988) develops a discourse of embodied critique and possibility by clearing away obstacles to this embodiment of knowledge. This means the Joker must be aware of power and how s/he embodies it as well.

The workshop doesn't always lead to public performance of a Forum theatre play. In short workshops, often there is no "play" per se, just a series of images. As we have already seen, though, workshop facilitation itself has elements of the Joker to it. Looking at the Joker in a Forum theatre performance may provide us with some clues to discovering this mask, but it is not all there is. The mask is much more complicated than that.

Perhaps it is best to understand this mask through the other masks, or to see the Joker as a mask that is always negotiating space, traversing boundaries between the personal and the political, the detailed stories that are being explored and the wider world, and other such complementary polarities.<sup>79</sup> "It is the sum of all that happened before. And in bringing them together, it also

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<sup>79</sup> Johnston (1998) has proposed six such polar opposites in community drama workshops that need to be explored by the facilitator. "We need to experience and consider all the different polarities and to move between the poles in each, not allowing ourselves to become immobilized" (24). Such polarities are useful in that they describe some of

coordinates them” (Boal 1979, 172).

I like to think of the Joker in the context of an exercise called *Zoom in/Zoom out* which I use to help clarify the story within an Image. We may see a few characters presented in relationship to one another, but this is often a limited view. We need to see a view of the world outside the story, or the world that has an impact on the particular story. Or, sometimes, the Image involves such complex characters and relationships, it makes it hard to understand the key relationships within it. So we need to narrow our view.

Not only is the Joker as facilitator aware of the need for different views to the story (and the other masks enable sensitization to these aspects of the Image), but the Joker is also the instrument of that viewing, the Socratic “midwife” (Boal 1992, 234) in a process of *maieutics*, but “a *maieutics* of body and spirit, not simply cerebral” (234). Like the midwife, the Joker enables the *conditions* of metaxic (inter)play so that stories can emerge into the world. The Joker is aware of the craft of performance, so acts on behalf of the audience (in the workshop, or, potentially, in the performance space). Continually finding balance between honouring the process of the group and the needs of an effective final product, the Joker is acting like an “intelligent camera” that can zoom in or out on the story in Image. Zoom inside the story; zoom out to connect the story to the world outside the story or outside the workshop. So the Joker mask is aware of what is on the other side of the mask within, but also beyond and behind, the body of the person wearing the mask.

Joker lives in this liminal space, the land betwixt-and-between, a “fructile chaos ... a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structures, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to postliminal existence” (Turner 1986, 41-42). How can one ever keep all these elements of past, present and future, performers and audience, stage and world, that emerge in consideration? Mady Schutzman, a TO facilitator puts the question this way:

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the tensions the Joker mask is constantly negotiating.

Sometimes I wonder if animators, jokers, whatever have lost the connection with what it feels like to be *protagonist* doing the techniques – how the experience of working on *our own issues*, not just empathizing with others’ – affects an understanding of how the techniques are working, how we change them, and how we dialog with people of different classes, races, cultures than our own (Schutzman, 220-221).

The mask of Joker must answer this question by recalling the masks of our experiences and the analyses of the world that have emerged from them. But at the same time, the Joker also asks those questions the audience wants answered. The questions are used to foster a critical attitude, choosing a few elements of the questions and magnifying them. Sometimes Joker works from outside the frame as Trickster,<sup>80</sup> asking questions that disrupt conventionality, rendering “possible, within the fixed bounds of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted” (Kerényi 1972, 185). Kevin Kumashiro (1999) engages in such a pedagogy of possibility in ways similar to the Joker’s role as Trickster – “I am not trying to *move to a better place* but just trying to *move* – avoiding the repetition of sameness, the goal is producing difference, getting un-stuck from this harmful repetition” (40).

So we find ourselves, through Joker as Trickster, returning to the Shaman, who is on the borderlands, who leaves behind tradition to explore but remains mindful of it, embodying and exploring what it means to “*constantly become*” (Kumashiro 1999, 39).

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<sup>80</sup> Lewis Hyde (1998) outlines trickster myths in diverse cultures: monkey gods in India; Anansi the spider in Africa; Coyote or Raven in North American aboriginal culture; Loki in Norse myth are some examples. He also explores the role of Trickster in art. While I haven’t explored in depth the facilitator as Trickster, the four masks I have chosen to use as commentators in this work all have elements of this figure who warns us to be wary of boundaries and divides, and reminding us that performance is a knowing of the world.

**MOVING ON,  
AND CIRCLING BACK**

## Staging Departures

The aesthetic attitude is more than it knows of itself. It is a part of the *event of being that occurs in presentation*, and belongs essentially to play as play (Gadamer, 116).

### Performing Possibility

*When the play is ready for performance as the interactive Forum play, Facilitator/Director becomes Joker.*

**Joker:** Beginning the performance I greet the audience and outline what is going to happen in this “rehearsal for reality” (Jackson in Boal 1992, xxi). The performance becomes a place to try out ideas in the safety of the stage, so we might learn from what we try out when we encounter similar situations in our day-to-day lives.

**Shaman:** We have shifted energies again and we have moved locations, both physically and in the transition from workshop group to one that has something to say, or rather, something to show, to open up to a wider group, these people in the audience in front of us. The group has left their community to at least temporarily form a new one, and now it is time to cast off new sparks to root in new soil.

**Joker:** I begin by introducing myself and the actors and then outline the work we have done in the workshop, of introductory exercises, tune-up activities (like those outlined in the earlier *Warmup/Trust Exercises* section of this work) and developing story through Image. Finally we develop a play we present to you in this forum.

**Diviner:** I am still present in the background, within Joker, probing beneath the faces and bodies of the audience and getting ready to dive into the play, a play now in the context of this experience, with this audience.

So you should simply make the instant  
Stand out, without in the process hiding  
What you are making it stand out from.  
Give your acting  
That progression of one-thing-after-another,  
that attitude of  
Working up what you have taken on. In this way  
You will show the flow of events and also the course  
Of your work, permitting the spectator  
To experience this Now on many levels, coming from  
    Previously and  
Merging into Afterwards, also having much else Now  
Alongside it. He is sitting not only  
In your theatre but also  
In the world (Brecht in Berger 1980, 61)

**Joker:** I ask the audience to try some simple activities to come into the Here and Now of performance. This is done to not only get them moving, but also to help me connect with them in a humorous way.

**Wright:** Carefully, I ask the audience to make a circle with their right hand. Then to put that hand down and do a plus sign with their left hand. Then I ask them to now, at the same time, make the circle with their right hand. This is very difficult to do. Then I ask them to make a circle with their right hand; then, with their right foot at the same time, ask them to sign their name. Again, almost impossible to do together. (Boal claims the only person to be able to do this was someone named "O".) This brief warmup involves the audience in something that I tell them is difficult to do well and brings them into the embodied fun of the performance space.

**Shaman:** Now is the time to begin the play. And we do the performance and the interventions. And I straddle the gap between audience and stage, cajoling the audience with my eyes, my face,

my extended arms as a master of ceremonies. Watching, listening, asking for responses, enticing reluctant bodies, playing with the doubt about this. This performance is a form of a genre, which E.D. Hirsch (1967) describes as language-games, each with its own grammar, linguistic tools, norms and rules, and boundary and horizon. Participating in such a game means taking part in a form of life – practicing in the scene of writing transformation through performance as part of the rules for playing the game.

**Diviner:** My eyes see someone ready to jump up. But they don't. I sense an intervention in their facial expression.

**Wright:** I play with the play's scenes as if they were a video-tape recorder, fast forward, reverse, pause. I am concentrating on the audience, and, at the same time, the actors. I even may dive in once in awhile.

**Joker:** We/I wrote earlier that the beginning of the workshop process was about “coming here in the middle of a journey.” Now we have arrived at the conclusion of this exploration and we are still in the middle. We are always in the middle, the in-between of metaxis. Shaman wrote earlier, “something is already at play, and the living character of this setting is not waiting upon some inquirer for some beneficent bestowal of meaning. It is already meaningful...” (Jardine 1998, 23). This is important in the facilitator's arrival in the workshop, but it is also important in the arrival of the Forum theatre presentation into the community-that-will-be-becoming in the performance space. The relationships of the players will change, and so will the audience. And the Joker has to be ready for this, and ready to go with the flow of interaction.

Boal has said in many workshops I participated in, “anything that is not expressly forbidden is permissible.” This creates another tension for me as a Joker. What is permissible, what isn't? What should I forbid? What are the rules anyway? I emphasize that the Forum is not a competitive game with right and wrong answers. (This contrasts with a Joker I once saw introduce a Forum performance by saying that the “actors were going to make certain errors, and it was up to the audience to correct these mistakes”.) The Forum is more a play where we all “dance with light feet” (Loy 1993, 497), an “infinite game for the purpose of continuing the play ... [where] the

change" (Carse 1986, pt 1). Putting together "forbidden" and "permissible" means that the play is not *within* boundaries, but involves play *with* boundaries. To do this I must come to know the community of the audience through the workshop process and the players within it. So I rehearse forum interventions within the workshop and coming to know, through those experiences, some openings to (inter)play and some that are closed off.

But then, I might never know what will happen.

The Italian director Giorgio Strehler (1996, 270) reports that Brecht taught him "doubt" as the fundamental essence of his theatre. Doubt, the dictionary tells me, is "to hesitate to accept as true." My word processor's thesaurus gives me the synonyms of indecision, questioning, reservation, uncertainty, apprehension, qualms, misgiving, scepticism.

Doubting something, Strehler adds

doesn't mean everything is a contradiction but that you are always able to change your ideas, that you are not bound for life to an ideology, and that you can seek truth in opposites (270).

*I was always told that one rule of "Joking" was not to intervene in the Forum play myself. But one time I broke that rule and started to realize that I, as Joker, as straddler, had to be ready to figuratively jump to one side or the other. I would never know when I would have to do this – it would just happen.*

*A student group was performing a play about the harassment of an aboriginal woman at a bus stop. In the play was an aboriginal woman, a white woman standing beside her and another white woman further away. Up rolled a car full of teenagers who were teasing each other. When they saw the aboriginal woman they started harassing her from afar by swearing and calling her names. One of the teenagers got out of the car and really started harassing the aboriginal woman.*

*Now the driver of the car seemed, off stage, quite a meek, shy guy. In the Forum play (the anti-model--the problem situation) he didn't do anything when the teenager got out of the car and started harassing the woman. But this was a Forum play where audience members could replace one of the characters if they felt they could do anything about the situation. One of the audience members replaced the white woman standing further away from the aboriginal woman and tried to stop the harassment.*

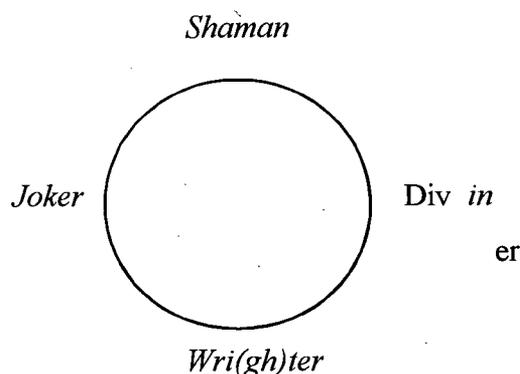
*All this time I was watching the play from the side. At one moment my glance stopped on the shy student playing the driver of the car. I sensed he was asking me for permission to react to what was going on. (This student was so quiet during the workshop no one really knew what he was thinking during the week of the workshop, but the odd time he would say something that indicated things weren't going very well for him at home.) I nodded my head and the driver of the car got out of the car and approached the harasser and asked him to stop teasing the aboriginal woman.*

*A small movement, but for this student, a major step that I had a part in. Later on, in a closing circle this student commented on how important that moment had been for him. He had tried to intervene in something...failed...yet succeeded.*

*When it came time for the closing circle after the performance, this student who had normally been quite quiet during the workshop, thanked the rest of the group for welcoming him into their circle. Another participant wrote us later saying he was angry because he had now seen what was possible to do in his life and now had to do something with this awareness.*

Similarly, now is the time for the facilitator to sit down with all his masks (on) and talk about his experiences and where this leads to next.

## Closing Circle



**Facilitator:** After the performance, the workshop concludes with a time for a closing circle where the actors and facilitators share where they have been, how they feel, and where they are going. This is a spiralling process of community: a sharing of thoughts, feelings, intuitions, and any plans participants may have to followup this experience.

This is also a time for I as facilitator to reflect about the meanings that have emerged or are beginning to unfold, and those questions that I know not how to ask (or ones that I don't know I have). As before, what I share as facilitator in the circle depends on the mask that I use in viewing my experiences. What are the patterns (divergences and convergences) and links between points of view? What can each mask learn from the others? Where to next?

There is space in this circle, too, for you, the reader as this dissertation continues to play with/in the meanings that have emerged in the spaces between writer and reader and all the worlds that emerge in facilitation.

This is not a conclusion, but new spirals reflecting new jewels of experience. Because of this, and because this work has incorporated an ongoing process of evaluation, commentary and questions, it is hard to write concluding thoughts. Better to say that we continue here at this moment to experience the unfolding of possibilities.

Who will pick up the talking object first and begin?

**Shaman** (*jumping forward, collecting the object, scurrying back to the circle*): This object in my hand has all the energies of what we have experienced in this workshop/dissertation infused within it. I draw energy from all these experiences. The *Metaxic becomings* section has confirmed my instincts that confronting an issue that concerned me directly strengthened me as facilitator. The story I told brought me from somewhere else to my work as theatre facilitator. It connects my history of facilitation to my presence in the here and now, as well as generates hope for the future.

My commitment in this case assisted in the process of facilitating around an issue I was concerned about, even if I was in a community different from my own, working with those seniors in Toronto. This was a process that enabled me to model myself as *present* in the concerns of participants because they resonated with my own. So I could see negotiation of trust in the becoming- community of the workshop. So being shamanic means being, simultaneously, a distracted outsider and an emotionally connected insider. It means I am part of the landscapes of my own stories, but at the same time, I, as facilitator, bring the stories of other landscapes to the workshops I lead. Through a process of metaxis, this chiasmic<sup>81</sup> process means I need to continually develop my sensitivity to the landscapes I de-part, as well as those I enter into and become part of, if only for a brief period of time. The practices I engage in then can become spaces where different ways of knowing and transforming the world can be performed and thus made visible (Turnbull 2000, 228). This requires me to further develop my attentiveness and flexibility as the landscapes I work in interact with the practices I will continue to offer.

I have more stories to share, and questions to ask, but I am aware of time and leave this object for another.

**Diviner** (*carefully approaches the centre and picks up the object and begins to slowly ponder this object in his hand*): Yes, Shaman, as we have seen in *Journeying into the landscapes of the drama workshop*, you dive into many stories! The experience with the seniors is one where knowing the issue as yours allowed you to divine from inside the workshop process and, as

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<sup>81</sup> I am referring here to Merleau-Ponty (1962) use of the term as he refers to perception as a *chiasmic* process, where the senses cross-over and flow together.

outsider, to sense what was going on in a pre-expressive, pre-cognitive way. As you say, that was an example where facilitation took place within a shifting landscape that surrounded me, and thus allowed for improvisation. Such spontaneity enabled a realization that leadership is also a shifting phenomenon, always there, but also always sitting in the tension between diving in as leader and sitting out as diviner.

When you enter a room or a classroom for the first time, you are engaging in an improvised encounter with a new landscape of practice. You can draw upon all your skills and logical knowledge; you have learned how to plan, how to make objectives, but you must also have the intuitive ability to respond to the situation as the students respond to your plan-in-action. A lot of this intuitive ability is unconscious, or should I say, not apparent to you. We spend most of our lives “coping” (Varela 1999, 19) with immediate situations. So we, as human beings, bring something to this encounter. But, because it is so immediate, we don’t see it, nor are we aware that we do not see it. So this process involves a re-sensitization to your own living in the world; a re-sensitization to the process of becoming that brings your entire been and being into the encounter.

How does this re-sensitization happen? As I have shown, it involves an integration of being present in inter-actions, and finding ways to express that presence, be it through writing or dramatic work – a combination of stepping back and diving in that is embodied in this mask I am wearing. It involves looking at the ethical practices in my work, not as principles to be applied, but as emerging in the embodied responses to situations which I encounter including, in particular, problematic situations.

I once asked a new teacher about this. Like most recent graduates, he is a substitute teacher who is always entering different classrooms. He is constantly being called back to take certain classes when the regular teacher is absent because the teachers know he does more than just manage the class while they are away. He told me the students are always testing him; playing a game of how much they can get away with. He responds to this game by playing it – immersing himself as substitute teacher in the flow of the classroom but, at the same time, through his responses, negotiating a way through its give and take. He is playing the game (with all its unstated rules) in

the spaces that open up as he interacts with the class. Yes, he has “a sound grasp of active listening, assertiveness, models of group development” (Ringer 1999) and class planning. But he is also, at the same time, developing a “capacity to work directly on unconscious, intuitive and systemic aspects [of classes]” (Ringer 1999). One did not precede the other, they emerged together in his relationship to the students.

In planning a workshop or educational program, we focus attention on the field we are about to enter, then release the plan and discover the reality of time’s flow. We thus tap into living synchronicity. This type of improvisation is acceptance, in a single breath, of both transience and eternity. In contrast to waiting for something to happen, we cannot know what will emerge while we are engaged in what Viola Spolin (1995) calls “in waiting” (10), while we wait for something to unfold.

*Something is always happening!*

How might this occur more often? I have proposed that we must recognize the importance of relationships and the role of language being intertwined with the sensing behaviours of the facilitator. This is a type of embodied understanding, “a deep sense that something has been profoundly heard” (Smith 1997, 41). Mindful understanding wouldn’t just mean being aware of what we see, hear, feel, touch and think about in the present, but registering them as part of the jewels that make up the deep webs of our experiences – our language, our memory, and our hopes for a better world.

In *Image/Storying* Wri(gh)ter spoke about hinge points and AHA moments. These become places to dive deeper into the work. At a theatre research conference I was at in the spring of 2001 a theatre teacher mentioned the importance of “breaking open the AHA.” Here the facilitator doesn’t let moments of realization that emerge through the work to “just happen” in the workshop and then be left “hanging,” but uses them as an opportunity to move the group (be it through dramatic work and/or discussion) further and deeper into the work of the journey of transformation. Andrea’s sharing of her story (and the group’s response to it) as outlined in the *Image/Storying* section was such an AHA or hinge point. Was it only an AHA in retrospect? Or

does this idea of “breaking open the AHA” also challenge me to be learn to be attentive to such moments, and to take more risks to dive into them in the workshop as well as in the writing. Of course, just as taking dives depends on the temperature of the water and the amount of time it takes to dry off, my own sensitivity to the time or other constraints in a workshop will determine whether or when to play with/in the possibilities of such AHA moments. Playing with performative writing as an expressive method of reflecting in/through our experiences has helped me, and could help others, become mindful of the intuitive and embodied abilities necessary for dealing with such situations..

Just imagine....

*Tennis involves a lot of balls in the air. High lobs and serving into the sun. Courts are sited north - south. In the late prairie fall the sun starts dipping into the southern sky. The trees have lost their leaves and their stark skeletons cast shadows on the court. Serving into the sun one becomes aware of the ball, without actually seeing it as the glare of the sun makes the ball disappear. A good approach shot at the net brings a response of a high lob. I attempt to hit the ball, finding it somehow and it goes into the opposite court or the net.*

*I switch sides. Without thinking I can recall those moments of blindness. I don't have to think: "hit the ball high into the air." Now, seeing clearly, I can embody respond to the Other on the other side of the net. I can sense what it is like on the other side of the net, but this is not an intellectual feeling I am sensing; it is a bodily, landscape, and sky memory of what it was to be that Other, across the distance of the court. "Knowing" that feeling, because even though it took place just seconds ago, I am no longer in that space of blindness; but somehow I can recall it.*

This is the skill of the facilitator as listener and as speaker.

*He carefully looks at the object and then sets it down.*

**Wright** (*looking intently at all the others in the circle as he picks up the object*): As always, Div in er, you take us back to our bodies in action, whether it be moving forward as in diving, or

sitting back as in divining. How can I craft the theatre performance and process to take into account these things at the hither side of words?

This means being comfortable with spontaneity, but also becoming aware of what I have done in the past, where I have continually sharpened my awareness of both the visual language and the feeling in the splash of the dive. These moments define the creative process. But, as Shaman has pointed out, this sharpened "edge" to the work is concentrated energy that holds my gaze, but is also so sharp it cannot be held for long.

I am going to take Shaman's idea of the energy of the facilitator and extend it to the emergence of community in the workshop. Energy must be contained in the form of a community-in-process with/in a bounded space, so that it can be sustained and the spontaneous flow of ideas can keep moving. At the same time, the flow of energies cannot be immobilized or held rigidly. Rather, these energies enable a playing in the tension between clarity about the task of the group, the time limits involved, and the roles that unfold for group members and leaders. Sometimes I am not aware of the strength of the container until the performance. Sometimes I never become aware of it at all. But I carry with me examples of experiencing containers of different sizes and shapes and remain curious about new ones which will unfold.

In this process of forming the reflexive space of drama, I am observer, but also participant, leader and follower.

I am focussed on the container, but also sitting in the gap that is being created for the powerful energies to emerge.

This also applies in education. If we think of the container as community, then our role as facilitator means we are not just intervening in the worlds of our students, but we are part of the unfolding community-in-the-making. The images created in the workshop process provide us with images of this community, that enabling students to express themselves about their fears as well as hopes for the future are not just *educational method* but also expressions of the knowing that emerge through these activities.

This idea of community-in-the-making is a space of *communitas*, the camaradie where normal roles are suspended. Victor Turner (1982) has defined three types of *communitas* – *spontaneous*, which is temporary and intense; *normative*, which is a preservation of the spontaneous but with a system of rules; and, *ideological*, which involves a utopian blueprint for the reform of society. The educational practices of a drama workshop bridge the gap between the *spontaneous* and the *normative* *communitas*. Initially a temporary phenomenon, it also crosses over the in-between of liminality “where it has the potential to free up human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc” (44) from normal boundaries, thus unfolding new possibilities for forms of relationships and understandings. But this means I take risks as facilitator, developing my own creative abilities alongside the group and, further, question the relationship of style to content and analysis that is contained in the work.

**Diviner/Shaman/Joker/Wri(gh)ter:** This has relevance for education and teaching. As was mentioned several times, if we look at drama facilitation as more than just a “creative glimmer” in schools, and see its role as that of enabling the unfolding of communities-in-the-making, then it has implications for other areas of teaching and learning and changes the role of the teacher, putting in question the way the teacher develops reflection through action and how the teacher pays attention both in the doing and in the learning.

**Joker:** As you say, we also need to keep connecting to what the implications of this are for educators in general. This happens through a dialogue with others who have read these texts, and enables them to interpret and question the resonances and divergences in their own practices that have an impact both in the world of the stage and the world of the high school.

There is this beginning to the journey. But the journey through this rhizome of facilitation has always been in the in-between, the between that joins and separates. The fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction “and....and...and” (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 25), which asks us, not,

where you are

nor

where you are going

but proceeds from the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing.

A conjunction that is alone but also connected.

**Joker/Wri(gh)ter/Diviner/Shaman:** The “knots” exercise we will conclude with is not only a metaphor for, but is also an embodiment of, the work we have been exploring. The workshop process has included great complexity as a great many factors, people and experiences have been continuously intersecting with each other in a great many ways (Waldrop 1992). At times during the process, something has clicked with me the writer, and you the reader. A spark may have ignited, or there has been a pregnant moment, a crucial instant which is *both* totally concrete *and* totally abstract (Barthes 1977). Or was there a moment of crisis or an exciting moment of individual or collective consciousness? How and why it has occurred is not important; what is important is to be aware of it when it happened.

*How might you write into being the resonances and stories that have emerged in this reading?*

So I conclude this circle with

and

and

and

***Knots:** We all stand in a circle, facing inward, holding hands, eyes open. We drop our hands, then raise them in the air, and move towards the centre until we have a tight bunch. We close our eyes and take two different hands by reaching over and into the group. Opening our eyes, and without talking, look around us at “the whole web of intertwined relations” (Loy, 489) that we are part of. We begin to move together,*

*swirling,*

*spiralling,*

*dancing,*

*space into being*

## Light Playing with Shadow

He who wonders discovers that this itself is a wonder (Escher 1971, 8).

We mill around the room, chatting as we delay the final goodbyes. Some linger on, engaged in intense discussion. Others have families to feed or work to do, work they have put off for another day while they spent this time (inter) playing.

I can hear a voice saying,

“Isn’t it over?”

“So, finally, what is facilitation?,” another voice joins in.

I began this work *in the middle of a journey*, in the light shimmering and reflecting off many jeweled experiences.

Eyes softly focused, I return to this middle, continuing to meander through the landscape of facilitation.

These have been quiet ramblings with moments of inspiration, and of contemplation. Questions have popped up which I watch fly by, remembrances that were to be recalled later. I never know what will become of these insights. They lie there smoldering or just below the surface of my perception – to re-emerge in my reading this work or in my working this reading.....in some drama workshop in the distant future.

I explain to an acquaintance that my writing contains a lot of repetition. He responds, “oh, like a spiral.” A facilitator-teacher with whom I work says that one section of this work holds a lot of echoes for her. Another talked to me recently about how workshop planning, then improvising from the plan, was like using a recipe as the framework for a good meal.

“Drama and theatre do not exist without entrances and exits, and, of course, every entry is an exit

somewhere else” (Kershaw 1998, 81). And every exit is an entry somewhere else; perhaps at another level or in another dimension of experience.

Recently, along with three teacher-facilitators, I worked with a group of high school students a second time after a two-month hiatus. In the opening circle we asked that they share the memorable moments from the initial workshop.

What do I remember from the beginnings of this journey? What was the beginning? What is the end?

This dissertation was a journey in metaxis – a journey in-between. But this space of doubling is not the same space. The writing of this doubling has changed the doubling.

I said at the beginning of this dissertation the circle of experience and action through the dramatic process leads us back into the world. Yet the world of performance and embodied exploration has always been with us. We are not now “exiting” the performative space, so much as continuing to – be being becoming image(in)ing – the world, and all that that encompasses, just outside this room.

I pause before the doorway out of this work. But this is also a doorway into something else. Another beginning. Another middle. Another part of my journey. Another space of curiosity, an openness to understanding what challenges me. This desire, “of feeling, living, realizing what lies in the realm of one’s ‘vision of depth’” (Freire 1997, 94) means I am always ready to question what is. Without this probing below the surface, there is no possibility of knowing what might be.

I continue to work with several teacher-facilitators developing a long term theatre program that has an anti-racism focus. This project will involve several schools and dozens of high school students. I see fractured and refracted mirrors as the light plays in the spaces in-between in this complex living work. Some mirrors are irretrievably lost, never to be encountered again. Others appear at the most surprising moments. Old mirrors are transformed into new questions that place me in the middle of new journeys.

Salman Rushdie (1991) writes, "the past is a country from which we have all emigrated" (12). The embodied spiral is moving forward, backward, to and fro. The jewels of my experience are glistening.

I feel shivers up my spine as I write these last words. But they are also the first words of another journey. I have been operating "As If." But this "as if," this "could be," now "is."

Darkness arrives slowly on the prairie. Similarly, learnings and transformations slowly transform the world of the facilitator as I "revolve in the space between utter darkness and blinding light" (Kerdemann, 247). The shifting light of the spaces in-between blend into darkness and light. Shadows move and lengthen. Dusk descends. The stars slowly appear.

Perhaps there will be northern lights tonight?

*I decided to go away into foreign parts, meet what was strange to me ... Followed a long vagabondage, full of research and transformation, with no easy definitions ... you feel space growing all around you, the horizon opens*

– Friedrich Nietzsche<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Translation (White 1992, 5) of a passage in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (1921, 427).

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