

*ELASTICITY, COMMUNITY & HOPE:
UNDERSTANDINGS FROM PARTICIPATORY THEATRE PERFORMANCE*

By

ANNE LOUISE SMITH

B.A. University of British Columbia, 1993

M.A. University of Alberta, 1996

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Curriculum and Instruction)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

October, 2006

© Anne Louise Smith, 2006

Abstract

This performative inquiry begins with a research project I conducted in the summer of 2004, a six week “participatory theatre laboratory” with eight undergraduate students in the Theatre Program of the Department of Theatre, Film & Creative Writing, at the University of British Columbia. Integral to the laboratory were six participatory theatre performances with day camps in the Greater Vancouver area. Seven youth leader participants from three of these performances and two student actors were interviewed six to eight weeks later to discover what they remembered of their experience with ParticipAction Theatre. Their responses cover a wide range of interests, focusing predominantly on the value of involvement.

My conceptual explorations encompass the late twentieth century movement towards audience involvement in theatre performance, theatre for education and social change, performance studies, and the relation of the artist, as mystic, to the community. Community is a contested term: I borrow from the Amerindian¹ understanding of community to ground my own interpretation. I perform this inquiry as an ongoing journey of discovery, using stories from the Tricksters’ Theatre tours, my initial work in participatory performance, to propel the journey between stopping places of reflection.

¹ I choose to use the designation “Amerindian” following Olive P. Dickason’s rationale that it is more specific than “Native”, “Indian”, or “Aboriginal” (Dickason, 2002, p. xiv-xv).

Elasticity, community, and hope, are three concepts that have risen through my exploration of the experience of participatory theatre. Elasticity bespeaks the dynamic of inter-relationships between people when they perform together. I identify what participants have reported as a 'feeling of community' when performing together to be an "excess" of performance" (Kershaw, 1999, p. 64). This dissertation explores how participatory theatre performance can generate these "excesses" and theorizes an elastic connection between performing together and feeling a sense of community. The value of feeling community is that it may reveal an emergent culture of hope in situations where people perform together.

Table of Contents

Page

Abstract ii

Table of Contents ii i

List of Illustrations ix

Preface x

Acknowledgements xx

“We shall not cease from exploration” xxiii

Directions for the Journey 1

 Entry Point 2

 On the Road: the Tricksters’ Stories 3

 Stopping Places 6

 Exit Point 9

Entry Point 11

 What if? 11

The impetus for my inquiry	12
The inquiry project: ParticipAction Theatre	19
Learning through performance	23
On the Road	
Eagle Lookout, 1998.	31
Stopping Place	
Performative Inquiry	42
Finding one's way in the fog	42
Over-arching questions	44
Performative inquiry is a recently conceptualized research methodology	44
On the Road	
Eagle Lookout, 1999	60
Stopping Place	
What the Researcher-participants told me: an initial analysis	68
Context	68

How the ParticipAction performances worked	69
 Interview Responses	
Involvement	72
Specialness	85
Kinesthetic response	87
Memorability	89
Confidence & self-esteem	91
Experience more important than the story	93
Play	96
Connecting	96
Community	99
 On the Road	
Hidden Lake, 2000	111
 Stopping Place	
The practice of participatory theatre: exploring the continuum of audience involvement	119

Un voyage Pas Comme Les Autres Sur Les Chemins De L'Exil	121
We Are One Tribe	131
How do these two participatory theatre projects relate to ... ParticipAction Theatre?	139

On the Road

Linnaea Farm School, 2000	155
---------------------------------	-----

Stopping Place

Theatre as Performance: Where does the audience stand (or sit)?	167
Theorizing audience participation	167
Defining performance	168
The performance is the play	171
Performance as ritualized practice	175
Escaping Blau's vicious circle	178
Reversal, turning, and paradox	181

On the Road

Willow Dale, 2002	186
-------------------------	-----

Stopping Place

The Artist and the Community: a mystical and transforming relationship	194
The artist is a birther of images, a revealer of trueness	196
True self and community	200
Mystical terms; mystical meanings	202

On the Road

Tricksters' Conversation, 2002	214
--------------------------------------	-----

Exit point

Mapping the journey	222
Hope, culture and community	226
A fledgling <i>theory of elasticity</i>	235

Bibliography	240
--------------------	-----

Appendices

1. Thtr 490 course outline	252
2. ParticipAction Theatre plays: The Trail to Munachi	255
The Pied Piper of Hamelin	258
3. ParticipAction interview questions	
Interview Script for Audience Participants - Youth Leaders	261
Discussion Questions for informal student participant discussion groups	263
4. Tough Cookies script	265
5. Ethics Certificate	271
6. DVD of performances of The Trail to Munachi and The Pied Piper of Hamelin	272

List of Illustrations

<i>Maps:</i>	Page
1. Tricksters' Theatre tours	30
2. Tricksters' Theatre tours	59
3. Tricksters' Theatre tours	109
4. Tricksters' Theatre tours	153
5. Tricksters' Theatre tours	185
6. Tricksters' Theatre tours	213

Preface

Recuperating “Community”

Commune v. contemplate, ponder, get close to, converse, parley, dialogue, discourse, reflect, muse, communicate.

(The Doubleday Roget's Thesaurus, 1977, p. 120)

Community n. . . . 2 sharing, participation collectivism, communion, cooperation. 3. similarity, likeness, affinity, resemblance, fellowship, rapport. (The Doubleday Roget's Thesaurus, 1977, p. 121)

“Community as a concept has a definite centre without a well-defined periphery. The core of the concept of community is around people interacting in specific space and time; but these dimensions vary.”

(Stoneall, 1983, p. 5, in Haedicke & Nelhaus, 2001, p. 9)

. . . what constitutes “community” is a contested issue. Some . . . work with conceptions of community that center around unifying social locations or cultural roots; other definitions hinge more on shared interests or

common points of resistance. Some of the communities . . . are decades or centuries old; some are temporary, disbanding after a single event. (Haedicke & Nelhaus, 2001, p. 25)

Community is the word that keeps coming up in my discussions around participatory performance. It is an essential term but a problematic one as it has so many different meanings and contexts. One of the quests in this dissertation is to discover what people mean when they talk about experiencing a “feeling of community’. In their book, *Performing Democracy*, which is a collection of essays by community-based theatre practitioners, Haedicke and Nelhaus grapple with the difficulties of defining “community”. They point out many possible criteria such as geographic proximity; common social position; a shared set of symbols; direct communication with each other; common needs, interests, activities, or desires. They inform us that “by 1955, George Hillery had discovered ninety-four possible definitions of community; but in 1976, Willis Sutton and T. Munson asserted that over 70 percent of the definitions relied on ‘community as a structural entity—a specific population, place, or location,’ and less than 12 percent used social interaction as a determining characteristic” (2001, p. 9 - 10). Haedicke and Nelhaus also juxtapose Barr’s (1998, 181-182) experience of Ann Jellicoe’s community plays as an “undeniable warm and friendly feel’ of commonality, of shared experiences and meanings” with Marion Young’s (1990, p. 318) reservations about the privileging of unity over difference that may lead to exclusion rather than inclusion (2001, p. 10).

Despite the fact that the word “community” “carries too much historical baggage and evokes so many contradictory meanings and emotions” (McConachie, 2001, p. 36), I am convinced that it is the most useful term to encompass the many meanings that are uncovered in this dissertation. I choose to recuperate rather than excise it, acknowledging that my employment of the term is partial and controversial.

To understand how I use the term “community” in this thesis, it is useful to consider the physical components of the occasion of a participatory theatre event. Stoneall’s core concept of “people interacting in a specific space and time” is a good starting place. Individual people, who may not have any other connection to each other, gather to participate in a theatre performance that is bounded by a specific location and within a specific time frame. What occurs within this specific time and place is that the participants will share a common goal, (to act out the play), and in the process of the shared activity of performing together, will come to share a number of symbolic meanings—of the story enacted, of the performance experience and of the relationship of the experience to the greater context of their daily lives. They will also have recognized and contributing roles. The most common expression I have heard people use about their experience of performing together is that they experience a “feeling of community”. This corresponds with Barr’s “undeniable warm and friendly feel’ of commonality, of shared experiences and meanings”, falling into the less than twelve percent of community definitions which signify social interaction as their determining characteristic. I do not see the issue of exclusion of particular concern because there is no ethical consequence for those who were not there to participate - they just missed a ‘good show’.

What does interest me, and indeed, what this dissertation attempts to address, is the value and importance of feeling a sense of community. When structured communities are fracturing under the great pressure of globalization--whether they are structures of cultural roots, of language, or of location, should we not embrace opportunities to experience community in the hope that we will not languish as a race in the miasma of post modern alienation? Alienation is a powerful force in our culture, where people feel they have no recognized place or function. In a globalized world, if our only value is as consumers, we need a place where we count, where we can be more than a statistic. When we participate in a performance, we do count, our real physical presence has an impact: we are recognized through the role we play, as we recognize the other players. We belong, temporarily, to a community. May we not, by recuperating our sense of community, recuperate ourselves?

My fascination with community was first sparked the summer I turned thirteen. At summer camp, one of our leaders was a young Navaho man. When he spoke about what he wanted to do with his life, he spoke about his people, his community. I had never heard anyone speak that way before. As the child of second and third generation immigrant Canadians, the question of community was never broached in my family. My parents were true children of modernity, fiercely independent though always respectful of my grandparents. But this leader's vision of community was something I had no concept of. What attracted me to his experience of community was that he was grounded in who he was and where he belonged. He had a home that was more than just a house on a suburban street. His home was both the land he was from and the people he was from. He would return there; they were waiting for him.

A number of years later, I applied to work on an Indian reserve on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Although I had been to the reserve on a couple of occasions, there was a small frisson of fear as I drove onto the reserve for the first time as an employee. There was a physical and ideological boundary between 'on reserve' and 'off reserve', and I was an outsider. My work, however, depended on my being able to prove that I was worthy of the trust and respect of the people who lived there. Over the months of that first year, I also became aware that I needed to earn the trust and respect of the land. The first task I set myself was to walk to every house on the reserve and introduce myself. I suppose I made a humorous spectacle: a white woman with an entourage of dogs and crows going from door to door. But in that exercise, my body began to understand all the intricate relationships of places, of people to places, of person to person. There was a reason each house was situated where it was; there was a history my body was learning that, later on, my mind would catch up to.

In a paper I presented at the Why Theatre? Conference at the University of Toronto in 1995, I spoke of community in this way:

It has greatly to do with place, the ground you live upon and its features that remain the same over time. It has to do with shared experience and history, and the recognition that this sharing is owned by everyone, with all the different shadings of individual understandings. A community creates its own vital culture as it honours and changes its traditions. It has to do with being home, where you know yourself and are known for who you are. It may not be perfect, but it is where you are known; you are not a stranger. Being a member of a

community does not depend on what you do but on where you are - there: where people have time to know

your smell and the shape of your body when you walk down the road at night. (Smith, 1995, p. 17)

I speak of knowing, of being known. A community is where you have a role that is recognized. This recognition is more than associative, it is somatic and sensory, an aesthetic knowing. This is the kind of knowing that is experienced by people performing together.

My understanding of community comes directly from my experience of working “on reserve”. Jace Weaver, in his book, *That the People Might Live*, in comparing Western religious ideology to the Native world view explains:

This linkage of land and people within the concept of community, reflecting the spatial orientation of Native peoples, is crucial. . . . When Natives are removed from their traditional lands, they are robbed of more than territory; they are deprived of numinous landscapes that are central to their faith and their identity, lands populated by their relations, ancestors, animals and beings both physical and mythological. A kind of psychic homicide is committed. (1997, p. 38)

When one considers that every person who inhabits North America, other than the First Peoples, is exiled from her land of origin, it is not surprising that as a culture, we feel alienated--physically and spiritually. It is by re/cognizing community as a spiritual connection between people, and between people and the land, that the Native American understanding of community offers me hope for connection between diverse peoples.

It is possible that the experience of participating in a theatre performance can, at least temporarily, recuperate the feeling of community. While one may suppose sensing community in the act of performing together has mostly to do with social interactions, the significance of place needs to be considered. A theatre event is place/time specific. What occurs in that event is that one's experience of the performance space and the time spent in acting a story dilates to encompass the imagined reality of the place and time of the story being acted. In both stories that are the basis for the research project of ParticipAction Theatre, location and time frame are crucial. The actual physical space in which we acted the stories transformed into the trail to Munachi and the town of Hamelin in 1359. Each participant has a shared memory of those imagined locations which, while in no way identical, still resonates with the collective experience. When one of us who was there recounts a moment from a performance, the visual image, the sounds, the smells, the feelings of sun and wind, the taste of exhaust in the air, the kinesthetic memory of the land and the crowd of participants comes into our minds through the sensory memory of our bodies. Our somatic memories will not be identical but they will be congruent so that we can grin at each other and enter together into the space of reliving the moment. For after all, we are known to each other: we were there together.

This, I believe is the core of understanding community as I use it in this dissertation: it is a collectively imagined space, created from 'real' time and place and physical presence and transmuted into a dimension beyond its contributing elements that is accessible for those who want to go there through their own imaginative process. The incredible possibility is that

you, as reader, can also enter this dimension through your imagination. You can “be there” too. My invitation to you is through my stories and witness.

Here, I bring forward the idea of orature, of story telling. As my understanding of community has come to fullness through my participation in First Nations communities, so too has my understanding of story telling. I have been blessed by having the opportunity to hear stories from a number of Native elders. Story telling is closely connected to community. Weaver explains:

Language and narrative have tremendous power to create community. Indeed, it may be that the People cannot have life outside of stories, their existence contingent upon the telling and hearing of communal stories. (1997, p. 40)

Native literatures are dialogic texts that both reflect and shape Native identity and community. (1997, p. 41)

In considering the power of story, one can appreciate the power of not just hearing a story but of acting it communally.

This dissertation is propelled by personal stories from my experiences of touring with Trickster’s Theatre. I write from a place of orality claiming the role of storyteller. These stories bring to life the people and places that have, in different ways, provoked me in my quest; they are dialogic texts. Jo-ann Archibald explains: “An inter-relationship between the story/storytelling/listener is a critical principle of storytelling” (1997, p. 41). Kimberley Blaeser, in her paper, “Writing voices speaking: Native authors and an oral aesthetic”, explains how story forms us: “we become the stories we tell, don’t we? We become the people and places of our past because our identity is created, our perspective formed, of their telling” (Murray &

Rice, 1999, p. 54). Through the telling of these stories, I am becoming as I weave a web of community between the Tricksters' actors, our audiences, myself and you. For these stories hold a space for you to enter into this work. As Blaeser explains, (referencing Ortiz, Momaday, Vizenor, Brill, and Bakhtin), "A story is not only told but it is also listened to; it becomes whole in its expression and perception" (p. 55). This means that the reciprocal action of your response to the story is what "creates the reality or life of the story" (p. 55).

Like Vizenor, I bring the oral tradition into my written work: "What I go after that's like the oral tradition is I leave it open, I don't resolve it. Now that leaves open the possibility for discourse. . . And that's liberating and healing" (Blaeser, in Murray & Rice, 1999, p. 61). There are questions in my stories but no answers. What I 'mean' in the stories is not necessarily what the stories are about. They are open-ended and "the 'whole truth' can only be arrived at by the effort of the reader and it is a truth meant to be passed on and lived, not consumed" (Blaeser, in Murray & Rice, 1999, p. 63). This is one way in which I invite you to participate in my journey. Your observations and questions and suppositions will contribute to the journey of this dissertation.

The flag of community is supported by the many testimonies in this thesis. The terms with which people express their sense of community include: involvement, trust, leadership, doing things together, initiative, curiosity, initiation, ritual, focus, specialness, natural tendency, memorability, heightened experience, risk taking, play, connecting, shared experience, relaxing formality. These terms are encompassed by community though they do not define it. I am content to offer that

“community” (despite Hillery’s ninety-four definitions) should not be fixed or delineated. It is a “structure of feeling” as Bruce McConachie describes. He references Anthony Cohen (1985, intro.): “People have always created images of community in order to shape and maintain their sense of belongingness and self-worth” (2001, p. 37). I have not found a better concept to hold the range of responses to the experience of participating in performance.

Acknowledgements

My first acknowledgement is to my mother, Gwyneth, children's creative drama teacher and director,
who has inspired me with her love for theatre and for children play-acting together.

I thank my father, Eric, improviser, fixer, discipline wielder, for teaching me many of the skills I would need as a leader, and
my brother, Stephen, who was the first audience for my story telling.

I thank and bless my sons, Christopher and Geoffrey,
for taking part in the many community theatre productions I directed when they were growing up,
and for supporting me through the years of the Tricksters' tours, giving me stability and loving care.

I also acknowledge my elementary school principal, Mr. Wright.

For seven years of my life he was a mentor and guide and my first teacher of community.

I acknowledge the people of Ittatsoo for accepting me, teaching me, and giving me a place in the community.

My life has been changed by you.

This journey would not have even been dreamed of without the many actors who worked with Trickster's Theatre.

I remember particularly Jove, Caroline, Jody, Jamie, Nick, Brad, Harmony (Rachael), Jeannine, Hazela.

Appreciation also goes to Gail and Joni for their friendship and administrative work.

At UBC I have been blessed by friends and creative opportunities. The CSCI Theatre Collective - Barbara, Jacqui, Chris, Kadi, Jacyntha, and I—have forayed into the unknown as we explored the methodology of performative inquiry through our participatory theatre performances at a number of academic conferences.

I also acknowledge the women of Women Writing Women:

Luanne, Cindy-Lou, Jenny, Barbara, Lynn, Nane, Jeannie, Danielle, Susy, and Karen, whose life ended so suddenly and left us bereft. Without your support and mentoring, the Tricksters' stories would not be here to lead the way.

My unending thanks and respect goes to the intrepid students of Theatre 490: Craig, Zosia, Jenny, Holly and Holly, Matthew, Lena, Duncan. You are amazing actors and wonderful people. And to the children and youth leaders of the day camps at Kiwassa and Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood Houses who hosted ParticipAction Theatre and participated so whole-heartedly - may you continue to act with joy.

And to finally to my supervisory committee: Stephen, who made my research project possible, Lynn, who visioned a research methodology that could encompass all I wanted to do, Rita, who guided me through the shoals of academe and challenged me to think more broadly and write more specifically, thank you for your faith in me.

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

T. S. Elliot, "Little Giddings"

Directions for the Journey

Dear Reader, I invite you to join me on a journey to explore what happens between people when they perform together. This dissertation is structured as a journey/quest/pilgrimage with stopping places, inns, where I take sustenance in the form of writings from other journeyers, where I pause to think and reflect and comment on the stages of my journey. The stopping places invoke Applebaum's (1995) idea of the "stop", the "aha" moment where one is pulled up short to realize that something of significance is occurring (Fels, 1999, p. 49-50). The traveling is facilitated, much like Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, by tales told by a traveler. I am the traveler, sharing stories of the Tricksters' Theatre Tours, the experiences that led me through a Province to the Centre for Cross Faculty Inquiry at the University of British Columbia, to write this thesis. As with Native Trickster stories, this dissertation has no beginning and no end; the Trickster, like Coyote, rambles on, doubles back, jumps over places. You can enter a Trickster story at any point and exit where you choose.

An analogy that may help you to navigate the journey through this grouping of stories and stopping places, is to imagine that you are paddling a canoe through an archipelago. You will stop at different islands, get out of your canoe and explore them on foot. Each island you explore will be unique; you will only discover what the island holds by wandering through it. But it is also related to the other islands through positioning, topography, vegetation, and the fact that the same wave will reach each

island sooner or later. To reach the next island, you must get back in your canoe and paddle there. In the paddling, you will experience occurrences and sensations that are harder to chart; water is a fluid medium, you can swim through it, or float on it, but you can't walk on top of it. When I have paddled in the Broken Group Islands in Barclay Sound, off the west coast of Vancouver Island, the journey between islands is full of mystery: you may hear the cough of a sea lion rising behind you, rush between rocks on the back of a current, feel the atmosphere close in as fog drifts around you, gasp as a killer whale surfaces in front of you or an eagle plummets to seize a fish in her talons, you may get caught in a kelp bed or suddenly see a reef beneath you. Both the paddling and the exploring on foot are part of your journey and one informs the other. Imagine that the Tricksters' stories are the canoe that carries you between islands and that the islands are stopping places where you stretch and explore, gaining further perspectives on the archipelago you are traveling through.

Entry Point

If we continue with the metaphor of a canoe trip, then this is the staging ground and starting point, when you make sure you have everything you need for the journey, particularly a chart and compass, provisioned canoe, paddles and life jackets. My inquiry is into the 'something' that happens between people when they perform together, often expressed as a 'feeling of community'. To undertake this inquiry I created a participatory theatre performance project that would allow me opportunities to question participants. During the summer of 2004, I facilitated the performance of two participatory plays with several children's day camps, and then interviewed day camp leaders and student actors on a voluntary basis, six to

eight weeks after the performance event. To perform the participatory theatre it was necessary to train actors, create participatory plays and rehearse them. The preparation process was facilitated by the Department of Theatre, Film & Creative Writing as well as by Prof. Stephen Heatley, at the University of British Columbia.

A new idea that has grown through the process of writing this dissertation is the idea of elasticity. This idea came to me after much of the writing was done. In reviewing my writing, I began to understand the dynamic of elastic tension and how it is integral to understanding the participatory performance experience and the creating of community.

On the Road: the Tricksters' stories

The Tricksters' Theatre stories are the vehicle (or canoe) that propels and informs this dissertation. When I first began presenting my inquiry to my peers I would explain why I wanted to explore the “something” that happens between people when they perform together. To explain what I meant about the “feeling of community” I would tell a story from my experiences working with Tricksters' Theatre. The feedback I received was that I needed to include these stories in my writing because they allowed the listener to visualize what I was trying to portray. This advice was a great gift to me because I desperately wanted to tell the stories. Now, as I revisit those memories, questions arise that were probably there all along but left unaddressed while I was getting us from ‘A to B’. These questions are in italics and become more insistent

over course of the journeys. Of course, stories are best read out loud (more than once). I hope that you will indulge yourself and read them out loud, preferably to someone else.

Of all the dozens of stories I could tell, the five that are included in this dissertation were the ones that “came out”. The idea of something “coming out” was first introduced to me by a woman who sometimes led the women’s drum group that was initiated by Tricksters’ Theatre. She would listen for a song to “come out”, waiting for it to come into her mind so she could sing it. Since then, I have followed her lead and found that not only do songs come out when they want to be sung but stories come out when they want to be told. Archibald confirms this intuitive approach to story telling: “. . . I waited . . . until a particular story came into my mind and being--wanting to be told. I have heard other storytellers say that they will not know exactly which story will *come out* until moments before they are to speak” (1997, p. 105, my emphasis). These are the stories that want to be told in this dissertation. There are many meanings in these stories and each reader will find something different in them. It may be that the meaning is to be entertained, to be thrown into bizarre situations, to ask, “What meaning-making comes to me in listening to this story?” I do know that they have to do with discovering the nuances of community--among the Tricksters’ actors and in various structured communities. They also have to do with watching the work grow until it demanded that I inquire into the experience of performing together.¹

¹ It is significant that in naming our theatre company we called ourselves Trickster’s Children Theatre Society. Our claiming the calling of being children of the Trickster has undoubtedly affected the path we followed. The trickster speaks to the chaotic forces of nature: “the trickster is a ‘creator and destroyer,’ . . . he ‘knows neither good nor evil yet he is responsible for both. He possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all

The first “On the Road” story is from the initial tour with the actors from the Youth Canada Theatre project. The second “On the Road” section is about our second return to Eagle Lookout² the following year. Like Coyote, we kept returning to this community and each visit brought something new into the collective experience of the company. The third “On the Road” section takes us to Hidden Lake³ where both the journey into and the psychic reality of this isolated community seemed surreal. “On the Road” four introduces new actors, the folks at Linnaea School, and offers my epiphany in seeing for the first time, on video, the effectiveness of participatory theatre. The fifth “On the Road” section, at a Willow Dale⁴, is from the last Tricksters’ tour and tells of an event that invited my understanding of the work I was doing as way of creating community. The last “On the Road” section is an excerpt from a group evaluation we undertook at the end of the final tour. The Tricksters’ actors, in conversation together, share their reflections of what they have learned from their experience of traveling and performing together. The voices of the actors bear witness to the intrigue that was the genesis of my inquiry.

These stories track my personal journey. Each story stands alone but they also build on each other in a progressive way, following the development of the company through the four years we toured. As performances they cannot help but inform

values come into being” (Vizenor, 1988, p. xiv). In this quotation, the trickster is given the pronoun “he”; but the trickster is androgynous, taking on both male and female characteristics at will. Raven and Coyote are most commonly referred to as tricksters but the trickster spirit can influence any creature, humans included.

² Eagle Lookout is a pseudonym as permission for the inclusion of the community name was not obtained.

³ Hidden Lake is a pseudonym as permission for the inclusion of the community name was not obtained.

⁴ Willow Dale is a pseudonym as permission for the inclusion of the community name was not obtained.

each other. My interior journey has been cumulative and the stories serve as chart markings for my own growing intrigue.

While the Tricksters' stories occurred in the five years prior to the inquiry project, they are the current that helps me journey from place to place. As reader, I hope you will resist the urge to 'island hop', missing the flow of the journey and the tension that, with elastic propensity, makes your arrivals and departures a little riskier.

Stopping Places

During my reading of relevant literature, I have discovered that while my specific inquiry is new, other researchers have come before me to similar inquiries. As the writer of Ecclesiastes says, "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun" (1:9, New International Version). A century and more ago, John Dewey grappled with the relationship of art, experience and education. His Pedagogic Creed (1897) states that education must address the child as both individual and member of society and that education is the "fundamental method of social progress and reform" (Hickman and Alexander, 1998, p. 235). This assertion still underlies our beliefs about education and is certainly relevant to the experience of participatory theatre. But the idea of social progress is thrown into question by the recognition that we seem to be always returning to the same concerns in a cyclic fashion. In reading to uncover the roots of participatory theatre I discovered that my interest had already been explored in the 1960's and '70's , while a renewed interest has been realized in recent years. It is my belief that the journey is worth re/turning to: each pilgrimage is a new

experience, for the pilgrim is in different company, the terrain has altered over time, and the season has turned with the slow movement of the stars.

There are five stopping places in my journey where I have undertaken to establish and contextualize my inquiry. The first Stopping Place discusses my method of inquiry, performative inquiry, as articulated by Lynn Fels : "... a (re)search vehicle that embraces performance in creative action and interaction as a space-action of learning and exploration (1999, p. 33). Performative inquiry, an arts-based, action research methodology, utilizes the space-action of performance to address a question(s) or issue(s). It is particularly suited to participatory theatre performance because the participants of the performance become "participant-researchers" (1999, p. 37). Performative inquiry offers a conceptual framework for understanding the experience of performance through participant interviews, narratives, and a hermeneutic process of personal and/or communal reflection, in conjunction with theoretical writings from relevant fields.

The second Stopping Place is where the data from the interviews is presented. The performance situations are described and the voices from the interview conversations are juxtaposed, with my own analysis in counterpoint. The interviewees--day camp leaders and student actors--responded to questions about their own experience of participating in the plays and to questions about what they observed happening with the children during and after the performances. The play scenarios, interview questions, and a DVD of two of the performances referred to in this Stopping Place are included in the Appendices.

The third Stopping Place examines the idea of the audience as participants. If the audience members are enfranchised as active participants rather than distanced observers, a profound shift of focus occurs and an underlying premise of Western theatre is troubled. This chapter describes and questions two diverse examples of participatory theatre, drawing out of these examples some common criteria for successful participatory performance events that I relate to my own inquiry project. I measure these criteria against the ideas of participation developed by Kaprow (1993), Schechner (1985), and Turner (1986).

In my endeavour to understand the dynamic of audience as participant I have entered the field of performance studies to discover a contradictory and challenging terrain. The fourth Stopping Place charts a path through this terrain looking for signs and theories that will ground my findings and make them culturally relevant. The idea of performance as a relationship between subjects--“relational aesthetics” (Bourriaud, 2004), participatory art (Gablik, 2002)--emerges to guide me: “Performance “attempts not to tell (like theatre), but rather to provoke synaesthetic relationships between subjects” (Josette Feral in Carlson 2004, p. 151). Bennett (1990), Blau (1990), Gablik (2002), Hastrup (1998), and Kershaw (1999) provide signposts in this terrain.

The fifth Stopping Place is an exploration of the mystical relationship of the artist to the community and the relationship of theatre performance to ritual. In the summer of 2005, I took a continuing education course at the Vancouver School of Theology with Matthew Fox. I had been struggling to find the language that would allow me to express what I was beginning

to understand about the ‘feeling of community.’ In reading Fox’s book, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (1988), I felt a sudden release as though my tongue had been unstopped. This was an “aha” moment. I wrote to my bemused thesis committee that I have found the language and concepts I needed to express what I was discovering. Often the language artists use when speaking about their work is infused with the ‘spiritual’; they see their art making as a spiritual practice (Fortier, 2002, p. 42,45). Educators are increasingly speaking of learning as a sacred space, a place of awe and wonder. The language of the sacred offers a way to understand “community” as a sacred communal experience. This chapter is fashioned as a conversation with the writings of phenomenologists, spiritual teachers and seekers--Fox (1988), van Manen (1997), Buber (1969), Gadamer (1982), Greene (1995), Palmer (1999).

Exit Point

I exit the journey, returning to the idea of reciprocity first considered as implemental for aesthetic learning. Reciprocity is an elastic interaction, as Phelan asserts, we are “both spectators and actors” (1993, p. 115). Carlson takes this idea further to open up performance to be “concerned not with identity and closure but with interplay and interaction” that “accommodates our shifting sense of ourselves as subjects and as objects, as acting upon and being acted upon by the world” (2004, p. 209). This idea is congruent with Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics: “Artistic practice is always a relationship with the other, at the same time it represents a relationship with the world” (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 85). These ideas explain the apparent

attraction people have to come together to perform and thereby to create community between them, marking them as co-valent players in a shared ephemeral experience.

My closing reflections for this dissertation circle back in order to question the possible implications for the employment of the *new idea of elasticity* in multi dimensional configurations and contexts and for creating community. I question the limits of academic discourse to fully represent the dynamic present of performance. My desire is to inquire further into the relationship between ideology, culture, and performance, and the ways in which community ritual and participatory performance, by bringing the audience into the performance, can reveal, through the “feeling of community”, a culture of hope.

Entry Point

What if?

What if the audience members became the actors in a play? What would happen? What matters in making participatory theatre work? What matters for the audience members in their experience of performing together? So what? What is it about participatory performance that warrants attention? What are the implications of theatre audience engagement in performance? Is there something about participating in performance that is important to education? Who cares?¹

I care because I have lived exciting moments during participatory theatre events and witnessed new worlds of experience being explored. The actors I have worked with care. The teachers and principals and students from the schools in which Tricksters' Theatre has performed care. The weight of caring among these people has led me to inquire into the value of participatory performance in a wider context than my own experience. These questions lie behind the explorations I have undertaken in my inquiry project and in the writing of this dissertation. They are important questions to ask because they speak to the need to be accountable to myself, to my researcher-participants, to the academy and to the public who may, in some way, be affected by this inquiry. These questions also speak to the pursuit of integrity--in the preparation for

¹ I am indebted to Karen Meyer and Lynn Fels for the "What if? What matters? So what? Who cares?" questions." These questions were organizing questions for Lynn Fels' dissertation, "in the wind clothes dance on a line" (1999).

performance, in the performance event, in the analysis and reflection of the performance events, and in the possible learnings among participants.

The impetus for my inquiry is rooted in the experience of my four years as artistic director of Tricksters' Theatre, a touring Aboriginal Company. Tricksters' Theatre developed out of a Canada Youth Services project sponsored by a Native Friendship Centre in a small, rural community on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. Over the four years we did performances and workshops in culturally diverse situations. The theatre performances of this initial group of ten young people began with a summer performing Nuu-chah-nulth and Kwakiutl legends² in three Provincial Parks on northern Vancouver Island. I quickly discovered that the small lecture amphitheatres were simply not big enough to contain the legends and their performance. We began to perform in a large field at the edge of the ocean. Having the opportunity to perform outdoors in different environments with sometimes over 300 people of all ages, races, and abilities, led me to experiment with ways of encouraging the audience to participate in the performance. For "How the Eagle Got Sharp Eyes", the audience became the village, formed a large circle (sometimes a double circle), and the play was performed inside the circle; for "Mink Finds a Wife", the audience was in four quadrants and the play was performed around the outside of this circle with different scenes happening with the participation of different quadrants; for "How the Human People Got the First Fire", the audience

² The primary sources for these legends are Meyers (1994), and Clutesi (1997).

was divided into two tribes and the play shifted from tribe to tribe or happened in the space between them. Audience participation became the unique modus operandi of Tricksters' Theatre.

After the first six month youth project, four members of the group decided to continue to work together, and together with an administrator and myself, gradually developed new plays, generated tours during the Spring and Fall, brought in new actors, and toured for another three years. Our first tour, which took place during the last month of the initial project, took us to eleven different communities in fourteen days. We traveled from Vancouver Island to the mainland, up the Fraser River, through the Cariboo, and out to Prince Rupert, returning through the Okanagan. During this first tour we were hosted mainly by Band offices and Native Friendship Centres, and performed in gyms and halls and even in the fabulous performing arts centre in Prince Rupert. The following spring, three of us retraced part of that journey with a new play about domestic violence. With some Canada Council for the Arts funding we were able to sustain ourselves for another summer performing in the Provincial Parks and added three more Vancouver Island parks to our schedule, as well as three new legends. The subsequent two years saw changes in actors, administration, and two more extensive tours, largely following the same routes we had already established. The summers in the Provincial Parks became a training ground for a number of young people. In all, Tricksters' Theatre has employed over twenty actors and visited over thirty-five communities in British Columbia, created eleven original plays and performed for over 11,000 people.

As our plays became more fully participatory I became increasingly aware of the experience of *the audience as participants*. Something was happening between and among people that was beyond the performance, what Kershaw calls “the excesses of performance beyond theatre” (1999: 64). As our touring took us more and more into schools--public, Native, private--I witnessed, through the performance experience, marked changes in how people saw each other. My barometer for change was the positive shift in attitude, energy and appreciation in school staff rooms before and after a Tricksters’ performance.³ Teachers and principals repeatedly stressed how much more their students got from the performances when they were participants rather than merely spectators. Spurred by my fascination for what I saw and sensed happening between people, I decided to research this phenomenon further by engaging in my doctoral inquiry, of which this dissertation is the result.

While my experience with Tricksters’ Theatre was novel for me and for our audiences, this way of doing theatre, particularly with children, is not new or unique. In England, during the 1960’s and 70’s, there was a children’s creative drama movement that became--and still is--known as Theatre in Education (TIE). TIE companies were structured to implement their audiences

³ The period from 2000 to 2002 was particularly discouraging for teachers in the Province of British Columbia. In the rural communities and particularly on Reserves, there was a sense of disconnection between the schools and the community members. We were often billeted and had the opportunity to converse with teachers and community members beyond just the few hours we might be in a school. While there were occasionally teachers who resented having to participate in our performances with their students, the main response from teachers and principals was positive.

in their performances. Companies in Canada also formed and toured, some influenced by “the Brian Way method”⁴, particularly the Globe Theatre in Regina (Doolittle & Barnieh, 1979, p. 97-117). John O’Toole writes: “This quality of harnessing the children’s desire to be actively involved . . . seems to me to be the really significant contribution Where the active involvement affects the course of the play, *the nature of the experience changes*” (1976, p. 18) (my italics). The theatre experience of being a participant is different than the experience of being an observer. I believe this simple observation is crucial to approaches to education and to building community between people in situations of diversity.

This dissertation explores the elastic tension connecting the communal experience of participating in theatre performance with the resulting feeling of connection between the participants. This concept of elasticity was derived from

⁴ Brian Way writes in the beginning of his book *Development through Drama*:

The answer to many simple questions might take one of two forms—either that of information or else that of direct experience. . . . For example, the question might be ‘What is a blind person?’ The reply could be ‘A blind person is a person who cannot see’. Alternatively, the reply could be ‘Close your eyes and, keeping them closed all the time, try to find your way out of this room.’ The first answer contains concise and accurate information; the mind is possibly satisfied. But the second answer leads the inquirer to moments of direct experience, transcending mere knowledge, enriching the imagination, possibly touching the heart and soul as well as the mind. . . . Direct experience is time consuming, is intangible, and therefore not measurable . . . it contains transitory and fleeting moments which, however enjoyable, real or important they may be for those actually having the experience, are difficult to trace in terms of ‘progression’. (1967, p.1)

the analysis of all of the data gathered for this dissertation. It is a new (for me, at least) way of understanding interactivity. My metaphor of elastic tension comes from a theatre workshop experience where I interacted with a partner, each of us taking the end of a heavy duty, twelve foot long bungee cord and exploring the creation and release of tension. This was not a particularly safe experience as we lost our balance at times, fell down, slid, and even collided. We experimented with holding the ends of the bungee in our hands, wrapping it around our legs, our waists, our arms, experiencing a powerful fascination for the (sometimes) steady pull towards each other and outright fear when the cord exerted its power beyond our control. There was the feeling that, if only we could understand the dynamics of the bungee, could work with its chaotic flexion, we could enter into a relationship with it, exerting some influence over its spasmodic action. As we committed more and more completely to the physical pull and release, there was a palpable feeling of connection, of becoming a unit. As we began to trust each other and our strange connection, our trepidation turned to hilarity and wonder. It was exhilarating!

People who perform together often experience this feeling of elation. The people I have spoken to, in responding to their question, “What are you doing your PhD about?” identify with this elation immediately. As I explain that there seems to be an experience that people share when they perform together that is special, there is a smile on their faces and a look in their eyes where you can see they are remembering an experience they have had. They most often express this feeling as “community”, a tangible, spiritual connection to each other and to something greater than themselves. My inquiry into this phenomenon of “feeling community” has uncovered the surprising idea that, while a theatre presentation may be about a

story, about characters, about issues--in the performance, *what occurs between the participants is as important, and is possibly more important than the overt subject or focus of the play.* As a theatre maker, this is a revolutionary consideration; as an educator, it offers exciting possibilities.

This dissertation is elastic in its concepts, methodology, and inquiry. In a sense, the inquiry began many years ago when I sought ways to bring together my two passions: theatre and community. My journey has been informed by working in community arts development, by working in First Nations communities in child protection, by two academic degrees in Theatre, and by directing an Aboriginal touring theatre company. It is this last experience that contributes directly to the dissertation by providing a narrative that leads the reader through my inquiry process. By sharing the context out of which my inquiry has grown, I highlight key moments and emerging questions as they occurred over the four years previous to my doctoral studies.

There are two questions that I explore in this writing:

- 1) How can I understand how *participatory theatre performance* works?
- 2) How can I understand *community* through the experiences of the participants of participatory theatre performance and through the conceptual lenses of different theorists?

These two questions play through my understandings gained from the performative inquiry process, the narratives from the Tricksters' tours, and my conceptual explorations.

The references to community expressed by many people around their experience in performance has led me into a conceptual exploration of community. Hermeneutic inquiry is an important component of the performative inquiry process thereby allowing the specificity of the actual performances described in the participant interviews to be deliberated upon in relation to participatory theatre practitioners, performance theorists, phenomenologists, and spiritual seekers. The methods I employ create multiple texts that affect each other and contribute to the journey in a many faceted way. This performative inquiry encompasses the exploration of three particular participatory theatre performances from the ParticipAction theatre project, the narrative inquiry of the Tricksters' stories, and the hermeneutic inquiry of the writings of other participatory theatre practitioners, performance theorists and spiritual seekers; each to help to articulate the experience people have when they perform together.

This dissertation is a quest to more diligently explore the “something”, the relational experience, that happens between people in performance. My desire to understand this phenomenon is manifested in my curiosity to know what the experience is like for the participants: what feelings do they experience when they are participating in the performance? what do they observe going on around them? what surprises them about their own actions or the actions of others? The

“ParticipAction” theatre project, conducted as a senior theatre class at UBC, allowed me to engage in this questioning. The other side of my inquiry was to discover what had been written about audience participation in the larger worlds of theatre and performance. Part of this quest has been to find a language to explain what feels like a ‘magical’ experience. *How can I express this ‘feeling of community’ so that I express the depth and complexity of what it entails? What understandings can I draw from my own experience of participatory theatre, from the experiences of other participants, and from the writings of theatre and performance theorists? What further directions can I explore to better understand the participation phenomenon as a cultural form?* These questions spur the journey of this dissertation.

The Inquiry Project, “ParticipAction Theatre”

...theatre should be a meeting place. That is its traditional role within Western cultures and in many other cultures as well. Theatre is a special kind of human encounter; there is always a *meeting together* (my emphasis). (Jonathan Neelands, 1998, p. 151).

To create performances into which I could inquire, Stephen Heatley, MFA, agreed to supervise me while I taught a Participatory Theatre Laboratory summer course (THTR 490)⁵ in 2004. Eight University of British Columbia students were chosen through an audition process, to participate in the six week course, which would cover the collective creation and performance of two

⁵ The course outline is included in the appendices.

participatory plays with day camps in the Vancouver, British Columbia, area. It was necessary to do this project in the summer because of the concentrated time needed to create and rehearse the participatory plays. Rehearsal periods for scripted full-length plays are generally three weeks. In this instance, time needed to be allowed for training actors in a new mode of acting, creating original work, rehearsing, performing, and evaluating. The course was for six credits and was worth the equivalent of two one-semester courses. Our class was scheduled for four hours/day, four days/week, for six weeks. The students were expected to put in extra time for researching story ideas, creating costumes and props, unit rehearsals, and journal writing. This kind of intensive schedule could not be accommodated during the fall and winter academic terms but admirably suited a summer course.

When I was initially visioning this inquiry project I needed to find community organizations that would partner with me to allow my student actors to present the participatory plays as part of their summer programming. I began in early February to contact Neighbourhood Houses in the Vancouver area. Neighbourhood Houses are autonomous community centres that have their own local boards of directors. When I was an undergraduate I had spent one summer as a youth leader at a Neighbourhood House so I understood how their summer day camps operated. I offered a free participatory theatre performance and if the Neighbourhood House was willing, they could partner with me to assist with my interviews by providing a space for the interviews and assistance with language translation if necessary. Since getting permission forms from parents was a common requirement for many day camp activities, the Neighbourhood House staff would be able to handle this aspect of the research project. I did not, at the time, understand how comprehensive the permission forms would have to be.

Of the eighteen Neighbourhood Houses I queried, six were eager to participate. By the time I needed to set up performance times in June, four Neighbourhood Houses had dropped out for various reasons. For some, they did not have space in their programs for these events or their day camp programs had been cancelled due to lack of funding. One of the Neighbourhood Houses agreed to have two performances and the other agreed to have one performance. My goal for the class was to have them perform at least six times and we were able to find other day camps to perform for outside of the research project. This performance diversity was important for their learning experience. It would also have been useful to have had a larger performance base for the interviews but that was not possible as I needed to have research approval so long in advance.

Two Neighbourhood Houses agreed to facilitate the interviewing of participants after the performances. I met with the program leaders to explain what would happen when the “ParticipAction” group came to perform with the day camp. We decided where the performances should take place and I checked out the outdoor locations for suitability. They would hand out and collect the consent forms for the child participants, parents/guardians, and program staff. I stressed that we needed them to participate with the children and even though they couldn’t really visualize what would happen they gamely agreed to do it. There were concerns about engaging the children and about discipline. I learned that they had “time out zones” for children who didn’t want to participate in activities or were disruptive. I agreed that we should use those zones as part of our performance set-up.

The program leaders could choose whether or not to be interviewed. I really appreciate those leaders who made themselves available two to three months later. The interviews were conducted in October, November and December of the same year, requiring some distance of time and the necessity of recall for participants. My hope was that with a bit of distance from the experience their responses would be more reflective and critical than if they had responded immediately after participating in the plays. I was also curious to see what would stand out for them over a period of time. Two of the student actors agreed to be interviewed after the course was completed and also sent me written reflections. The actor interview took place in October 2004⁶.

My initial desire was to also interview child participants. Of the almost 200 children who participated, I retrieved about a dozen properly completed consent forms where the parents/guardians had agreed that their child could be interviewed.⁷ When I matched the childrens' consent forms to the their guardians, that number diminished as not all the children wished to be interviewed even if their parents had consented. I needed to get the contact information for the families from the Neighbourhood House staff and as some families had moved or had changed their contact access that winnowed out a few more. I attempted five interviews with child participants. Of these, only one child was willing or able to respond to my questions. The reasons that I identify for this difficulty are that the children did not know who I was, they were uncomfortable speaking to a stranger, and the question/answer format was not appropriate for eliciting engagement and thoughtful participation. When the children viewed the video of their performances

⁶ The interview scripts are included in the appendices.

⁷ I suspect that the consent forms were intimidating for parents/guardians who were not fluent in English. A large number of the people served by one of the Neighbourhood Houses are ESL and itinerant. At this Neighbourhood House the portion of the consent forms that the parent/guardians were supposed to keep had not been detached from the form.

they became excited and responded verbally to their participation. They remembered the words to the songs and sang along with the video. While I am confident that they had a positive experience participating in the plays, I am unable to offer first hand comments from the child participants. I realize now that group sessions would have been more appropriate and that asking the children to draw pictures and tell stories about their experience acting in the plays would have been a more appropriate way to gather data.

The youth leader participants met as groups, except for one youth leader whom I interviewed on her own as she was unable to make it to the group interview. Their perspectives on the participatory performances intersect in interesting ways with the ideas of the two THTR 490 actors. In writing about the audience-participants I am pleased to use the term “*participactor(s)*” suggested by Stephen Heatley.

Learning through performance, revealing culture, and building community

As my understanding of community has been informed by my experience of working in Native communities, so has my understanding of learning. There are teachings that resonate with my own upbringing. One is that with the Nuuchah-nulth people⁸, stories are told when you are eating a meal so that you will eat the words along with your food and they will become

⁸ The Nuuchah-nulth people live on the west coast of Vancouver Island and also in Neah Bay on the Olympic Peninsula. Nuuchah-nulth means “look to the mountains”, which makes imminent sense when you are offshore in twenty foot swells and need

a part of you. In my family, dinnertime was important because that was when the events of the day were discussed—whether they were from the daily news or what had occurred at work or school or home or a letter received from family far away. These discussions often entailed telling as a way to explain fully what had happened to you. Another teaching that I found intimidating at first, was that if you heard something or saw something or practiced something, you should know it after four repetitions. That was your responsibility as learner. When it was a story or song in English, I found that I could actually do this with a committed openness. When the song was in the Native language then I didn't have the patterns ingrained to recognize and understand the rhythms, the orderings of sounds, and the context for what I was trying to learn. That struggle to learn made me more sensitive to the gaps in communication, differences in lived and remembered experiences.

When Tricksters' Theatre first began to perform in the Provincial Park campgrounds, we were concerned as to whether or not the audiences would understand the stories as they were from west coast Native cultures. We did not tell the stories in advance and often expected the audience to participate (for which they would get some coaching). They would learn the stories by doing them. Also, in the Parks in the summer there were tourists from all over the world so we couldn't assume that everyone would speak or understand English. As I wandered through the people I would often hear translating going on. What amazed us was that people always understood the stories. I attribute this understanding to not just the fact that the theatre company was exceptionally skilled and that as human beings we share certain archetypes, but that when you are 'in

to find your way back to a safe harbour. It is with the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council that I worked in child protection and community development and received in-service training.

performance' you pay attention with a sharpened awareness. Your senses are acutely activated and you rely on them to inform you of the rhythms and pauses and tempos that help you to participate with confidence. Being 'in performance' is the most completely engaged way to learn that I have experienced. There is a sense of responsibility to 'do one's part', of agency; there is the feeling of being focused upon; there is a rush of energy that can literally make one tingle; there is a feeling of giving more of oneself, and if one is part of a group; there is the sense of connection that validates you as a group member.

Haedicke and Nellhaus, community-based theatre practitioners, understand learning through performance as participatory.

They utilize Freire's "problem-posing education" to support their idea of participatory learning:

The performance event in which the spectator becomes artist, passive subject becomes active agent, parallels an educative process that Freire calls "problem-posing education". . . . Freire writes, "Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality" and of culture. Thus culture becomes a "shifting sphere of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages, experience, and voices intermingle amid diverse relations of power and privilege (Freire, 1989, p. 67, 70, 71)". (cited in Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001, p. 16)

Their view of the intermingling of "different histories, languages, experience and voices" expresses my experience with Tricksters' Theatre and ParticipAction theatre. The active participation of the audience brings them into a configuration where they must work collaboratively to tell the story, to problem solve how to do that moment by moment, and to birth a

new creation--their telling of a story that they have learned as they have told it with their bodies, their intelligence, their passion and their spiritual connection to each other. Experientially, their learning goes far beyond 'the story'. They have learned a new way of being in the world. Inherent to Haedicke and Nellhaus' idea is an ongoing creative multiplicity -- of experience, of expression, of relationships of power. The image of "sphere" evokes both the entirety of our planet and the specificity of a 'sphere of action' that is constantly shifting its borders of history, language, and experience.

Another understanding of learning through performance is offered by Drama in Education theorist, Richard Courtney. He explains the process of learning through drama as aesthetic: "The aesthetic is a mode of thinking and learning that is . . . founded on feeling" and "feeling provides the tacit dimension to explicit knowledge--through beliefs, hunches and the intuitive". The value of aesthetic learning is that it is the "the necessary ground for all other kinds of learning. What is learned, in short, is *how* to use criteria for adequate judgment and choice" (paper, 1986, in Booth & Martin-Smith, 1988, p. 130) (my emphasis). The value of aesthetic thinking is that it focuses on the "how" of choice. Aesthetic thinking manipulates the symbolic and is thus able to "effectively construct world-views" and through " 'as if' thinking ", "has the power to affect our operations" in our sphere of action (Booth & Martin-Smith, 1988, p. 138). If, through acting together, we learn to exercise choice, then we are learning a process that can be applied in other contexts such as schools, community organizations, and society at large. The necessity for choice is pointed out forcefully by Fine, Weis, and Powell (1997, p. 252):

If schools are to produce engaged, critical citizens who are willing to imagine and build multiracial and multiethnic communities, then we presume schools must take as their task the fostering of group life . . . within a context that takes community-building as its task. (Gallagher, 2003, p. 11).

Choice alone will not meet the challenge posed by Fine, Weiss and Powell. Courtney also sees the outcomes of dramatic actions as producers of cultural meaning. These meanings have “four main characteristics: they are moral, dramatic, related to identity, and create a “Being-for-others”--a fundamental *agape*”⁹ (1986, in Booth & Martin-Smith, 1988, p. 129). It is Courtney’s identification of *agape* that links participatory performance to the task of community building and fostering group life. It is the characteristic of *agape*, of heartfelt collaboration, that can build a culture of caring in communities.

I return to Native American understanding to connect the ideas of community , culture and learning. Jace Weaver writes in *That the People Might Live*, that knowledge is only useful and can only be defined in relationship to the community. He cites Christopher Ronwanien:te Jocks (1994):

Knowledge without a supportive community to effect it is useless; it is, in some sense, undefined. Until [one] is surrounded by that supportive community, knowledge is not defined because [the knower] is not defined as

⁹ “Agape” is contrasted by Collins with “eros” to align with Christian love or charity, with communal love (Collins, 1986, p. 27)

a human being. Thus knowledge requires a network of knowers, or more accurately, of actors. Knowledge is something you do; not a preexisting tool independent of the person holding it, nor of the uses to which it might be put.” (1997, p. 40)

The efficacy of knowledge can only be revealed through doing and through relationships of belonging. While not conflating participatory performance with the deep-rootedness of Native community, I believe that the same principles can apply to the context of participatory performance, if only within the limited time of the performance. There is an ethic implied by Jocks: that knowledge is not independent “of the uses to which it might be put”. This ethic of responsibility is integral to performance. The relationship of cause and effect is immediately apparent when you are ‘on stage’. Whatever is done, even inadvertently, has immediate repercussions that affect the whole performance. Jocks also implies an ethic of caring. This corresponds to Courtney’s idea of *agape* which comes into being through performance and underlies the choices that are made. Knowledge/learning, community and culture are revealed or “unveil[ed]” (Freire, quoted by Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001, p. 16) through doing; participatory theatre performance is one way of doing.

The understanding of learning that links participatory, aesthetic and communal learning to performative inquiry is that of embodied learning. Fels and Stothers (1996) see performance as an action/site of learning . They engage with the enactivist thinking of Varela and Maturana (1991, 1992) to situate learning within the interplay “between student and the teacher, between the mind and the body, between learner, object and environment” (Fels and Stothers,

1996, p. 256). It is the idea of interplay “between” that expresses the connection between participants, the *elasticity* of performance. Also relevant to learning is the idea that “knowledge is an active verb--knowing, doing, being, creating” (p. 256). This idea corresponds closely with Weaver’s: “knowledge is something you do” (1997, p. 40). Fels’ and Stothers’ understanding of performance as embodied learning, drawn from Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1991, p. xxvi) and Maturana and Rosch (1996, p.11), imagines that knowledge does not exist outside the self but that it is an “ongoing bringing forth of a world through the process of living itself” (p. 256). This becomes particularly powerful when the ethical concerns of Haedicke and Nellhaus, Courtney and Weaver are seen in the context of “bringing forth of a world”. The action/space of performance engages with and augments “the process of living itself” through evoking the *elastic tension* inherent to performance, the tension that “ups the ante”, that sharpens one’s awareness through aesthetic means, bringing critical consciousness of oneself and others through “knowing, doing, being, creating” .



On the Road

Eagle Lookout, November, 1998

12:30 AM, Ashcroft General Hospital Emergency Ward: Jennifer, Carrie¹, and I are having a conversation about orgasms.

Jennifer asserts, "Well, of course you have to fake it. I mean, you don't want to make the guy feel bad because he can't make you come."

Carrie is confused, "How can you fake it?"

Jennifer responds, "Didn't you see WHEN HARRY MEETS SALLY? Annie, you know what I mean."

I have to respond that I am conflicted about faking orgasms. "I guess I don't want to base a relationship on false responses. I mean, if I'm not satisfied why would I pretend I am. Having a good sexual relationship means being honest. Besides, I always have an orgasm."

¹ All person's names in this story are pseudonyms.

“Really? No way!” Both Carrie and Jennifer are really interested. “How do you do that?”

Little do I know that this conversation will lead to the development of a new commercial for “Natural Essence Shampoo” in a later version of HOUSE OF CARDS, the show we are touring.

While we are talking about orgasms we become aware of the man, enclosed by curtains, who is supposedly sleeping in the other bed. We wonder what effect this conversation is having on him. While we are trying to be quiet, we are nevertheless being rather loud for a hospital in the middle of the night. But hospitals are like libraries: the impulse to desecrate the silence with laughter is irresistible.

Why are we there? It’s a long story. That morning, Jennifer and four of the others were climbing a bluff above the Fraser River across from Lytton. They had met a gorgeous young man with dreads, who took them on a hike. The rest of us went agate hunting at the ferry crossing and visited, on the west side of the river, with a family we had met at our performance the day before in Lytton. We had almost a whole day of free time before heading on to Eagle Lookout for our performance there that evening.

When the group of five hadn’t shown up when they were supposed to, the rest of us took the van and headed to where the trail began. We were greeted with the sight of Jennifer hopping down the road, being held up by two of the others.

Jennifer has a fine sense of irony. "You'll never believe it, but I just fell and twisted my ankle in a mud puddle. All that climbing and I have to do this right at the end. Look at my jeans!" She proudly displayed her muddy posterior.

Jennifer insisted on driving her truck, which carried our set, props, and costumes. I scolded them all for being late, but was secretly relieved that nothing worse had happened. The potential for disaster was overwhelming: statistically, it was ten youth to one me, eight of them male. Next time I do a proposal for a youth theatre project I'll make sure I have a partner - or at least an assistant.

When we arrived in Eagle Lookout we went directly to the hotel where we were supposed to stay. The door was locked and the building looked unoccupied. It was an old road house and looked like it had seen a lot of history, perched between the Thompson River and the railway tracks. We pounded on the doors and yelled and some of the group went to look for another way in. Finally, a woman came to the door looking haggard and disheveled. She seemed stunned to see us and knew nothing about our reservation as she was the cook. An uneasiness began to settle on my shoulders. This was only our fourth night on the road and we had already had two experiences with dubious accommodation.

The ten members of the company spread out to explore the hotel while I attempted to sort out our situation. I followed the woman into a kitchen where I could see a whiskey bottle on the floor amidst suitcases and half filled boxes. She was

obviously packing up goods in preparation for departure. As she turned to me I could see tears streaming down her face and her hands were shaking.

“What’s happened?” I asked.

“Those rotten scum just up and left in the middle of the night. I haven’t been paid for three weeks and I don’t know what I’m going to do. I’m just packing up everything that’s left and I’m going to load it in my car and get out of here. If I ever see them again, I’ll . . .

This was a serious situation. I had ten young people, tired, hungry, in unknown territory, a show to do in two hours and no accommodation. I convinced her to call the First Nations Band Office who had brought us to Eagle Lookout. They confirmed that we were supposed to stay there.

“I don’t care what you do. Stay anywhere. The beds are made up and there are towels in the rooms. Here - take my key. I won’t need it.” She returned to her frantic packing.

We unloaded our stuff, lugged it to our rooms, cleaned up, left the poor woman sitting spread-legged on the kitchen floor and headed for the Band Hall. By this time, Jennifer’s ankle was noticeably swollen and she couldn’t put any weight on it.

The community had turned the occasion of our visit into a community celebration. We got set up and performed *House of Cards*. Jennifer hopped around the stage on one foot. Then we ate - real food: salmon, potatoes, salad, spaghetti, bannock. They were surprised that we didn't want to eat pizza. (After only four days, we had discovered that pizza was the food of choice for entertaining youth. That didn't prevent us from taking the leftovers with us.) The Chief and Elders made speeches; there were raffles and door prizes. Finally, we were done. It was obvious that Jennifer needed to see a doctor about her ankle. She was white with pain and sure it was broken.

I approach a group of the local people. "One of our actors has sprained her ankle and I think we need to see a doctor - at least to get her some pain killers. Do you know where we could take her?"

"Well," one of them volunteers, "You could go back to Lytton . . . or head up the valley to Ashcroft."

"Which one is closer?" I get shrugs in response.

"Which hospital's better?"

"Maybe Ashcroft." More shrugs.

“Will they call someone in this late at night?”

“Yeah - if it’s an emergency. But you’ll probably want to get xrays and all that.”

I told Jennifer that we could go back to Lytton or ahead to Ashcroft. She didn’t want to go back so the plan was to head on to Ashcroft. The guys would go back to the hotel, though two of them thought they might go to a sweat lodge somewhere out in the hills that they’d been invited to. We would leave the van at the hotel and I’d drive Jennifer in her truck to Ashcroft. Carrie decided to join us for moral support and so she wouldn’t be left alone with the boys.

The three of us headed out into the dark for Ashcroft. We had phoned ahead so they could call a doctor in but when we got there, they still hadn’t called for one. The nurse did give Jennifer some Tylenol, though. Finally, about 11:00 the doctor showed up. He was sure that it wasn’t broken but Jennifer was determined that her ankle needed to be x-rayed. That meant that they had to call in a radiologist because we couldn’t come back in the morning. We had a lunchtime gig in Kamloops, at a Storefront school.

At midnight, the x-ray technician showed up and an hour later we knew that Jennifer just had a sprain. She was to keep her ankle iced, elevated, and stay off it for 2 weeks. We had about 7000 miles and another 11 days of our tour to go. Only two

other of the young people had driver's licenses and neither of them had experience driving an old standard pickup truck. They would learn. Armed with T3's and thanking a bemused night nurse, doctor and radiologist, we emerged from the Ashcroft General Hospital after 3 hours, to drive back to Eagle Lookout.

As we pull into town at 2 AM, three things are clear: we are beyond exhaustion, having used up all our adrenalin reserves; we are absolutely starving; there was nowhere to get food. Then we see the lights still on at a roadside pub. Even though the parking lot is empty, we wheel in and enter a huge room with a raised platform down the middle. The pub is closed but after some pleading we are allowed to buy a bag of shoestring potato chips and some peanuts. Carrie asks the owner what the platform is for. He looks at us strangely and tells us to leave. As we get back into the truck we see the Strippers sign.

"Ambrose will never believe we went to a strip joint", Carrie laughs.

"Or that you took us there, Annie. Some chaperone you are!" Jennifer grins. "No wonder the guy thinks we're nuts."

"Well at least we got some - peanuts, I mean", I answer. "God, I'm tired. I hope that everyone is there - and sleeping. Do you think they saved us any pizza?"

"Fat chance." Carrie grimaces. "You know they'll eat everything."

Finally, we park in front of the hotel. We creep upstairs in the dark to our rooms and find the light switch for the hall. The guys are feigning sleep and the two that had decided to go to the sweat still haven't come back. They want to know what had happened so we fill them in on Jennifer's status and then crash for the few hours remaining before we have to get up. Keith and Ambrose wake me up at 3 AM by throwing pebbles at my window. They say that the sweat was kind of weird and I tell them to save it for the morning. I've had enough for one night.

At 8 AM I struggle downstairs with my bags to find two large, swarthy men in bulging suits standing on either side of the stairs. I halt uncertainly.

Suit 1: What are you doing here?

Me: I stayed here last night.

Suit 2: Who are you?

Suit 1: Who else is up there? (jerks his head towards the floor above)

Suit 2: The Boss wants to know who you are.

Me: Uh, we're a theatre group from Vancouver Island and we performed here last night at the Band Hall. We're leaving okay? There are ten young people but they're not up yet. You can check at the Band Office. They booked us in here and they're paying the bill.

Suit 1: Well get everyone out as fast as you can.

Me: Sure. I'll just put my bags in the van and get them moving.

Suit 2: You'd better check in with The Boss when you come back in. He's in the front room. (jerks his thumb over his shoulder)

With my heart and head pounding and a dry mouth I put my bags in the van. I look up to see Andrew looking out a window.

"Get everyone up. We've got to get moving. We've got to be out of here in 30 minutes."

Andrew looks puzzled. "What's up?"

"I don't know yet. There are these men waiting at the bottom of the stairs and I'm supposed to go talk to The Boss. I think the quicker we're out of here, the better."

"Okay. It's time everyone got up anyway." Andrew leaves the window and Jack looks out curiously.

"Jack, help Andrew get everyone up, okay? We've got to get moving."

"They're not going to like it."

"Well, tough. If they want to eat before we head off to Kamloops they're going to have to hustle."

Taking a deep breath, I re-enter the hotel and go into the front room. The Boss is sitting there, looking pretty like a TV evangelist, and honest-to-God, reading the Bible. I hold out the cook's keys. "The cook gave us these keys yesterday before she left. We'll be out of here as soon as we can."

The Boss just nods his head at the coffee table and I leave the keys there. He resumes reading. I glance at the page. It is Matthew 5, the Beatitudes.

I turn and leave. At the door I look back and he looks up at me and smiles. With a shiver I turn back into the hall and squeeze between the bulky Suits to go upstairs and roust my charges.

By 9 AM, we are sitting at tables in the PetroCan coffee shop eating bacon and eggs and drinking coffee, courtesy of the First Nations Band, and swapping stories of our night in Eagle Lookout.

Performative Inquiry

Finding One's Way in the Fog: an allegory of action inquiry.

One day in June, we ventured out into the Broken Group Islands from Ucluelet Harbour. "We" was myself, my two young sons and their father. Their father's agenda was to fish for the late June run of blue-back coho. My agenda was to find Hand Island. I had been told that it was a lovely island to stop at, with a campsite and a good swimming beach. We were new to Barclay Sound and so were equipped with a compass and a nautical chart of the Islands. We did not, however, have an anchor.

After some unsuccessful trolling in the general direction of Hand Island, we noticed that fog was drifting towards us. Though the distant mountains were still visible, we could no longer differentiate the treed islets that rose mysteriously out of the fog closer to us. We were still in sunlight but the encroaching fog was ominous for it cut across our way home. Even my sons were nervous and wanted to leave the area. But where could we go?

My husband's solution was to begin to slowly circle a small island close to us. At first, the boys were occupied with jigging for cod and their efforts were rewarded with two lovely lingcod. But eventually, the fog overcame us and all we could see was the indistinct shape of the island rising continually on our port side. We were not able to distinguish features clearly enough to know whether we had completed a circuit or not. The fog's density shifted and drifted and nothing ever looked the same. After about an hour of circling, we began to get worried because it was getting late in the day and we didn't have unlimited gas. Now the need for an anchor became apparent: if we could

anchor we could turn off our motor and wait for the fog to lift. We were afraid to drift because we would become lost or worse, be caught in the currents or tides or wind and either be pushed into rocks or pulled out to sea.

Our over-arching questions were: *Where are we? How can we find our way home?* Specific questions/objectives: *If we keep circling the island can we match its features to an island on the chart? Can we safely plot our route home on the chart and following that route, can we get home before dark?"*

Staying focused on studying the chart and studying the island and guessing at the depths around us kept us occupied even though we were becoming chilled with the damp. Soon we were able to tell when we passed a certain rock each time and then could work out approximately how big the island was by timing our circuit. That narrowed our matching job to four islands in what we believed was the general area we were in. There was a sheer face that dropped straight down into the water so that the depth lines on the chart helped us narrow our island down to possibly two of the four. There was also a point that jutted out on one side of the island and gave it an unusual shape. Finally, we were ready to risk it and choose one of the two islands as ours. As we were plotting our route and noting the rocks and islands we needed to look for to stay on course, we noticed that the fog was brightening. Gradually, the world began to reveal itself. As our hearts lifted, we were able to look towards Vancouver Island and see the mountain peaks that would guide us home.

We bid our island farewell and headed west into a mauve sky, enjoying the rush of water past the sides of the boat and the salty wind in our faces. As I looked back, the island we had circled became one of many and soon I was

no longer sure which one it was. Hand Island would have to wait for another trip. We had not caught any salmon, but the two lingcod would be our dinner.

Over-arching questions:

As a theatre maker, story teller and performer, how might I use my performative work as the basis for my inquiry? How do I inquire into the experience of performing collectively? How do I (re)present learning through performance?

Performative inquiry is a recently conceptualized research methodology in the field of education. It parallels action research as re-conceptualized as living practice by Carson and Sumara (1997):

. . . action research is a set of relations among persons, their histories, their current situations, their dreams, their fantasies, their desires. . . like curriculum, action research is not a form that can be captured and fixed. . . Action research is an endeavor to better understand the complexity of the human condition. (p. xx, xxi)

Performative inquiry falls into the category of arts based inquiry and is conceptually informed by performance studies, complexity theory, hermeneutic phenomenology, and enactivism. Performative inquiry is related to a/r/tography, which is currently being developed across the arts. Irwin, Springgay and Kind (draft, 2006) explain their positioning of a/r/tography:

Whereas most arts based educational research emphasizes artistically informed final products or representations derived from studying particular phenomena, a/r/tographical research is committed to an enactive space of aesthetic living inquiry in and through time. (p.2)¹

My process in writing this dissertation has been informed by the a/r/tographic process as my inquiry intrigue is focused on the effects of performance on participants as understood through my own artistic, pedagogical, and research processes. There is resonance (and *elasticity*) between a/r/tography, as it is being conceptualized, and performative inquiry. My contribution to both performative inquiry and a/r/tography is the attention I pay to the lived experience of participants and the understandings I uncover about the relationship between artists and community.

Since it was my experience of performing *with* audiences that brought me to this inquiry, *my first objective was to recreate these participatory dynamics so that I could inquire closely into the experience of the participActors. My second objective was to find theories that could help me understand the dynamics of participatory performance and the responses of the participants.* One of the first courses I took as a new doctoral student was Dr. Lynn Fels' Performative Inquiry course². This course opened up for me the possibility of using performative inquiry as a form of action research employing participatory theatre performance as the medium of interaction³. The premises of performative inquiry, as conceptualized and articulated

¹ For further writings on a/r/tography see Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind (in press) and Irwin (2004, 2003).

² EDCI 508B, Performative Inquiry: Dancing on the Edge of Chaos, Winter session 2003, University of British Columbia.

³ Performative inquiry has successfully utilized other forms of theatre performance. Fels teaches performative inquiry through her own practice of role drama or process drama. Jacyntha England (2004) utilized ethnodrama as performative inquiry.

by Fels (1998, 1999), while not necessarily unique to performative inquiry, are configured in such a way that they provided the space for me to approach my inquiry project and to frame my ancillary research. I had come to my doctoral program wanting to understand more about what I perceived and experienced as a “feeling of community” generated through participatory performance and to discover how I might theorize this experience. The premises that attracted me to performative inquiry are that it is about what happens “in the moment” (a thoroughly theatrical term⁴) and that one must enter the moment as a participant-researcher. When one assumes the role of participant-researcher, one takes on the double awareness of reflecting on the implications of one’s actions as one is enacting them. This is an emergent space of learning that may be interpreted through a process of embodied and reflective meaning-making which may suggest new understandings, new ways of engagement, and new questions to explore.

Theatrical performance is, in essence, a laboratory for social experimentation, for co-creating emergent worlds. Performative inquiry capitalizes on the inherent structures of theatre to explore performance as a “space-moment of learning”(Fels, 1999, p. 30). It incorporates the responses of the participants and evokes the lived experience of the performance in totality, as

Steve Noble (2006) has recently used the structures of theatre of the absurd in a popular theatre/popular education research project. I have, with the CSCI Theatre Collective, employed forum theatre as a performative inquiry (Smith, 2005). Warren Linds (2001) used performative inquiry to examine his role as facilitator using theatre of the oppressed techniques with student teachers.

⁴ In acting, even if one is working from a script and will repeat the same dialogue and movements time after time, the actor must always act the scene as if it is for the first time. The actor must also be completely responsive to her/his scene partners rather than relying on repetition. This is called “being in the moment” and creates the opening for what performative inquiry means when it speaks to an “aha” moment of realization, a moment of recognition.

folds within folds⁵ (Irwin, Springgay & Kind, in press). Fels defines the role of the researcher in performative inquiry as "researcher-participant": "the term "researcher-participant(s)" includes both the performative researcher and the participants involved in the inquiry" (1999, p. 37). In this inquiry, the actors and the audience participants become active co-agents, participActors, in the research endeavour.

Fels (1999) describes performative inquiry as:

... a creative critical investigation of world(s)
imaginary, perceived, experienced.
(1996, p. 117)

She broadens this poetic description:

Performative inquiry is a (re)search vehicle that embraces performance in creative action and interaction as a space-action of learning and exploration. Its tools of inquiry are our bodies, our minds, our imaginations, our experiences, our feelings, our memories, our biases, our judgments and prejudgments, our hopes and our desires - simply, our very being, becoming. (p. 33)

The researcher embarks on a performative inquiry with researcher-participants through a chosen form--in my case, participatory theatre performance. The form both follows and proposes the inquiry question(s). My goal was two fold: to discover the experience of the participActors in their performing together (*What feelings do they experience when they are*

⁵ "Deleuze (1993) translates the fold as sensuous vibrations, a world made up of divergent series, an infinity of pleats and ceases. Un/folding divides endlessly, folds within folds touching one another" (Irwin, Springgay & Kind, in press).

participating in the performance? What do they observe going on around them? What surprises them about their own actions or the actions of others?) and to discover a theoretical understanding of these phenomena (How can I understand the experiences of the participants in relation to their feelings of community? What meanings can I derive from my interpretation of their responses in conjunction with theoretical writings that relate to theatre performance?). The process of the inquiry entails the setting up of the inquiry project with researcher-participants, the performances themselves, and the interviewing of the participants afterwards. Accompanying the performative process is a reflexive praxis of narrative writing, of searching for theoretical underpinnings to make meaning of the performance experience.

Performative inquiry realizes, recognizes, and reflects on moments of learning that emerge through performative explorations. As inquirer, I employ the action of performance to illuminate, trouble, and explore my intrigue, my question, from which more questions will arise. The moments of performance (which may include the creation and rehearsal processes) offer action sites for exploration. The ParticipAction Theatre project allowed me to focus specifically on the performances with the participActors. While the creation and rehearsal processes were certainly worthy of inquiry, they were preparatory to the inquiry (though they do inform the student actors in terms of what they anticipated and what emerged in their experience performing with the Neighbourhood House audiences). Capturing and making meaning from the moment(s) of performance is possible only through the filters of memory and aesthetic appreciation (Royce, 2004, p. 5). Yet, performing artists recognize their performance as living inquiry: ideas are tested, evaluation occurs in the performance as it is happening, the work changes moment to moment in response to internal and external feedback as the performance occurs. While a live

performance is never replicable, what occurs in one performance will inevitably affect what happens in subsequent performances even if the “work” being performed is not the original work. The ephemeral substance of performance affects human understanding because we revisit our experiences and reflect upon them, looking back on how we felt at the time of the performance and relating that to the present moment. *Reflection is a necessary component of performative inquiry.* It is through reflection that we create a map of our lived experiences, making connections, seeing implications, reinterpreting relationships, questioning ways of engagement, allowing us to learn in the process of our creative journeying.

Articulation of the lived experiences created through the Tricksters’ performances and the day camp performances of ParticipAction Theatre is tenuous. There are no artifacts that endure and allow for continued interaction. The experiences are fleeting moments--“it is happening now” (Fels, 1999, p. 56)--caught and released through performance. These moments cannot be fixed and resist dissection. Fels quotes Brook (1993, p. 97-98): “The present moment is astonishing. Like the fragment broken off a hologram, its transparency is deceptive. When this atom of time is split open, the whole of the universe is contained within its infinite smallness” (p. 56). How does one tell of these new universes when they exist as ephemeral space-moments? We rely on our senses--touch, sound, taste, smell, sight--to witness to what Phelan calls “holes in the visible” (1993, p. 192, cited in Fels, 1999, p. 82). We use modes of telling that allow us spaces to peer into those holes; we use stories, poems, pictures, movement, music, and reflections that provoke a dialogic response. The moments of performance that are so difficult to capture and examine can nevertheless be evoked through the reflective process, the mapping of the learning journey.

The reflective process witnesses the moments of recognition in retrospect through interviews and conversations with participactors, through retellings, through reaching out to those who have participated in other performances and discovering shared and contrasting experiences. The performative space is also a metaphorical space, a space of analogy where one can make connections between experiences within performative contexts and the lived experiences that inform them. This reflective process stretches the bungee cords between all the points of reference so that an *elastic web* is created that will continue to bounce new questions and ideas in the vicinity of the inquiry.

Performative inquiry enters the in-between space-moments that generate “possible worlds” (Varela, 1993, quoted by Fels, 1999, p. 41) . The in-between or “liminal” space (Turner, 1982) is an unexpected place of shifting boundaries where the normal rules of interaction are transformed. Fels (1999) explains this when she speaks of per/form/ance as:

a birthing and rebirthing
simultaneously with form and through the destruction of form

and suddenly find ourselves
in an unexpected space
between structure and chaos (p. 48).

It is in this space that learning occurs.

Fels draws attention to *the inherent tension of the word “performance”* offering the etymological analysis that “per” means both through and “through the destruction of”. Thus, through form and simultaneously through the destruction of form, we come to action which is, as Fels (1998) says, is “knowing, doing, being, creating.” This is the space of complexity: the paradoxical tension of “per” is crucial to understanding the emergence of learning as a recognition or “aha” that moves beyond known boundaries and expectations. It is this generative space of learning that leads to action and the creation of “possible worlds” in performance. Fels , in her conceptualization and articulation of performative inquiry incorporates/calls upon “enactivism” as described by early proponents of enactivist theory (Maturana & Varela,1992; Varela et al,1993; Davis et al,1996):

Enactivism, . . . proposes the co-actualization and co-emergence of possible worlds in inter-dependent action and interaction. Performative inquiry . . . is an interplay of inquiry and performance which realizes co-evolving worlds through an interpretive ecological⁶ co-emergence in which the spelling of possible new worlds may be realized (IE: an ecological birthing realized through performance). (Fels, 1999, p. 41 - 42)

This incorporating of co-actualization, co-emergence, and (re)birthing resonates with the concerns of action research and a/r/tography by “*creating the circumstances* to produce knowledge and understanding” (italics in original, Irwin & Springgay, in press).

⁶ Fels (1999, p.42) defines “ecological” as “interactive, interrelational, interdependent”.

How do I experience a 'possible world'? To begin with, I have agency. It is a world I can choose to bring into being or not. It is a world that is within my grasp; it is not im/possible. *What is a world?* It is a sphere that has its own integral ecology. It functions as a system, but to use Fels' understanding of ecological, it is not a closed system: it is part of a solar system, a galaxy, a multiverse, interrelated, interacting, interdependent with other planets, a sun, the life it supports. If I am a possible world, in constantly changing relationship with others, being shaped as they are shaped by my presence (or absence), then in accepting this new possibility, I may come to new perspectives, new understandings, new opportunities to discover new possibilities for myself, new choices I can make about how I want to live. And while this is happening for me, in the experience of performance, it is happening simultaneously with the other participants.

*Perhaps we are being imagined by someone else
and the presence we are is
in that space of intersection in-between.*

*Or perhaps we are absence
Waiting impatiently in an empty space to be danced into being . . .* (Fels, 1999, p. 120)

In the *elastic tension* of presence and absence we create a new galaxy, a new community, together.

Performative inquiry embraces the idea of 'the edge of chaos' as moments of risk and opportunity, where possibility dances en pointe. The in-between or liminal space where possible worlds emerge is also "a space which complexity theorists call the 'edge of chaos' where patterns or interrelations are continually created and recreated though what Mitchell Waldrop (1992) calls an 'endless dance of co-emergence'" (Fels, 1996, p. 257). While Fels sees the space-moments of creative emergence

as “stops”—moments of risk; moments of opportunity--(Appelbaum, 1995), I see the liminal, in-between spaces as *elastic*. The analogy that comes to me is of the surface tension of water. I have never used a surfboard, but I have body surfed and canoed and kayaked. When you are riding a wave or a current, you are in relationship with the surface tension of the water. *There is a sense of always being on the edge of chaos but also of racing with the flow: both contribute to the elasticity of performance.* As the participActors ride the current through the performance event these moments are embodied and recognized within the performative moment and/or through the solitary or collective reflection of memory.

In performance, there is an elastic tension in the apprehension of becoming a new possible world because I am still connected to the world that I normally inhabit. The space between is a space of learning as I compare the Annie of everyday and the Annie in the performance, playing someone other than myself: I am and am not myself. In self-referencing my performance of both roles (the everyday and the new, unfolding⁷ creation) I have a space for critical interpretation as I become aware of what fits and what doesn't. I may, if I choose, take some of the newly created Annie back into the everyday Annie once the performance is done. Even if I choose not to do this, the learning and the memory of the possible Annie is still a part of me, and may tug at me from time to time. At the same time, I will have been aware of the other participants and how their own *elastic process* has affected mine. As Petra Kuppers explains:

⁷ Irwin, Springgay & Kind (in press), understand unfolding in terms of relationality. They cite Merleau-Ponty's (1964) concept of the “intertwining between self and other. . . where the seer and seen become folded together in a porous encounter”.

We can recognize the strangeness and familiarities in each other, the moment where story and the I are cast asunder, where the experience of the limit exiles us from full presence in the myth we make. But instead of retreating to disappointed selves, we can see otherness within ourselves, and we can begin to build community that is both located in specific conditions and yet open to difference. (2006, p. 8)

My inquiry is into the relational, self-reflexive, and reciprocal experience of performing, the experience of the audience members as witnesses of their own performance and of their collaborators' performing and witnessing. My experience has made me question the relational dynamics of performance and the impact that it may have upon communities or in creating community. Fels' inquiry focuses on learning through moments of recognition (the "stops"); my inquiry focuses on learning through the relational and elastic dynamics of performance (the tensions). Performance provides the vehicle for the inquiry while being the subject of the inquiry. My inquiry also goes beyond what has been, so far, the main interest of drama-in-education researchers. Beginning with Brian Way who states, "Education is concerned with individuals; drama is concerned with the individuality of individuals . . ." (1967, p. 3), the focus has been on individual learning and development even in contexts of social action or community education. What too, is a new exploration in terms of performative inquiry, is to use this methodology to address the experience of performance itself. Fels tells us that, "The catalyst for inquiry may be . . . any phenomenon we wish to explore through performance" (1999, p. 33). I complicate performative inquiry by making the phenomenon of performing the subject of the inquiry.

My quest has been two-fold: to understand the participatory performance experience from the participActors' perspectives and to understand how participating in performance can engender what I am, at this point in time, calling a "feeling of community". I have attempted to capture some of the fleeting moments of performance through my stories, (which are also performances), through the testimonies of the participActors, and through the writing of other inquirers. It is through interstanding, as presented in Fels (1999, p. 31)--the interstanding of the participActors, the interstanding of other inquirers, and through your interstanding as reader--that our collective momentary knowing will exist. *How can we inter/know the possible worlds?* Fels (1999, p. 58) uses the word "transcognition" to express the possibility of collective knowing as interstanding:

To undertake performative inquiry is . . . to illuminate transcognition. It is through the interdance between the "not yet real world(s)" of performance and the "real world(s)" that . . . the not yet known . . . becomes known--transformed into interstanding. (p. 58-59)

This performative inquiry depends on more than the "not yet real world(s)" of the ParticipAction Theatre project and the story telling of my personal experiences with Tricksters' Theatre. Joining the "interplay of research, personal experience, and story-telling" (Fels, 1999, p. 115) are inquiries into "the real world" or the world beyond the specific performance experience: other participatory performances, performance theory, and art as spirituality. These conceptual explorations offer multiple perspectives from which to view participatory performance and community. By moving through all the steps and figures offered by the participActors, the Tricksters' stories, the other participatory theatre experiences, the theorists,

and the mystics, we may dance together to the measures of performative, narrative, conceptual, and hermeneutic inquiry, discovering a complex and *elastic* interstanding.

The steps of this journey of inquiry initially began with my experiences with Tricksters' Theatre. The next step was the performative inquiry project, ParticipAction Theatre with the THTR 490 class. Then I began further explorations to theorize this performance experience which corresponded closely to my own experiences with Tricksters' Theatre. I began by cross-referencing other participatory theatre projects and reading theatre anthropology and performance theory. The last steps of my journey eluded me for some time. I struggled to find the language that spoke to my heart. I had answered my questions of "what if?" and "what matters?" but I didn't know how to address "so what?" and "who cares?" It was at this disjuncture that I took a long dreamed of course with theologian, Matthew Fox, and discovered his understanding of the artist as mystic and the mystic's relationship to the community. Suddenly everything that I had experienced and read came together and I could see interrelationships that before had eluded me. This was my "aha" moment of "transcognition".

Performative inquiry is an ecological methodology concerned with interactions, interrelationships, what is interdependent.

While my inquiry is centred in the ParticipAction performance project, it is the interactions of the participant-researchers, the interrelationships between other forms of participatory theatre, the interrelationships between stories and readers, the interdependency of theory and practice, that turns the performative moment into an ongoing inquiry. There is no endpoint to this inquiry but there are new questions to pursue and at least partial interstandings gained.

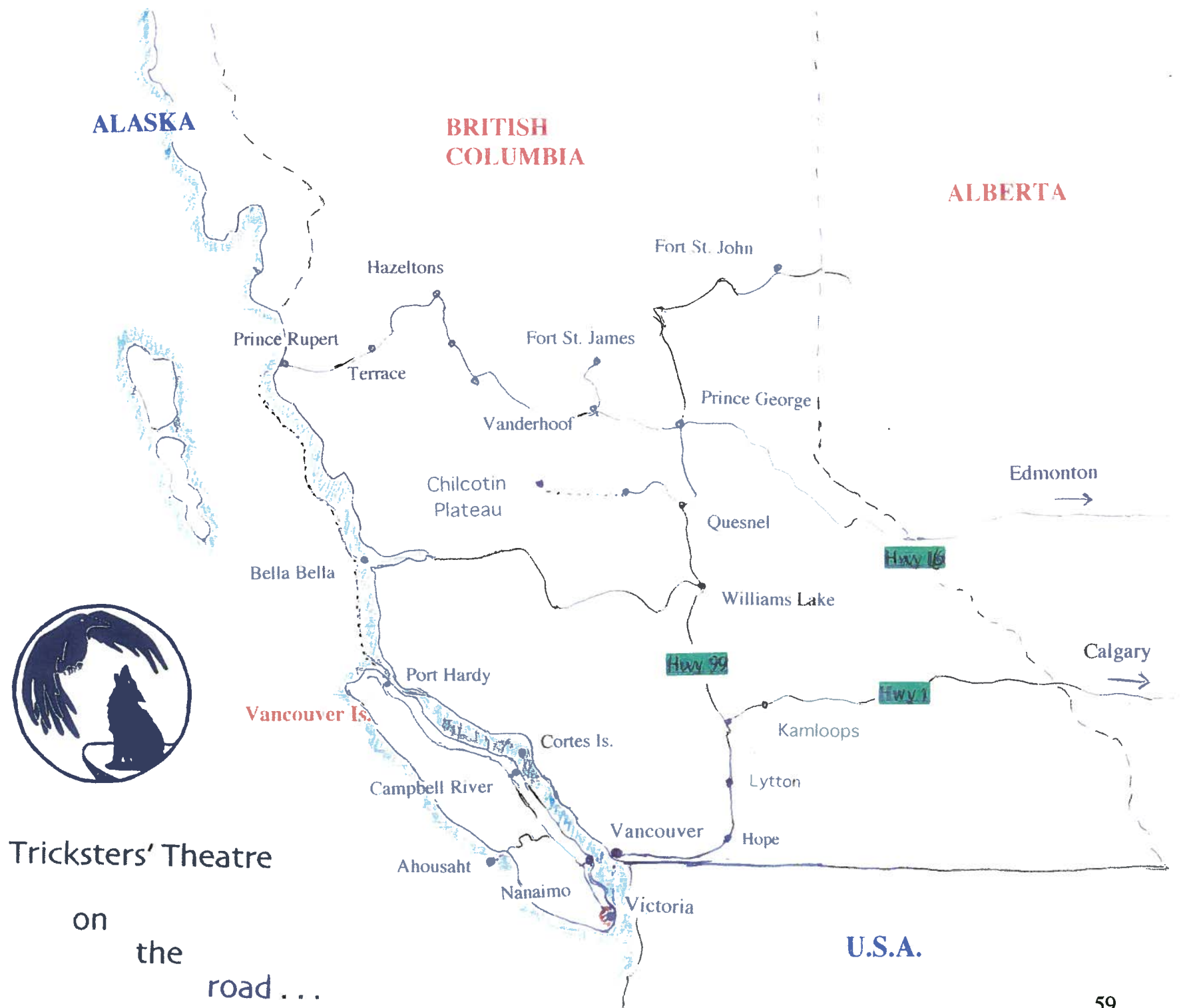
Performative inquiry is a conceptual methodology rather than a recipe of methods. The concept is to use performance to explore a question(s) or issue(s) that will, in turn, raise more questions for inquiry. The form of the performance and the form of the encompassing inquiry will be mediated by the question(s) being explored. The concept statement often begins with, "What happens if?" In this inquiry, my initial concept statement was, "What happens between people when they perform together?" This question necessitated the setting up of the ParticipAction theatre project so that I would have participActors to interview. Then the inquiry moved on to address the question, "How does participatory theatre work and what does it do?" A third question pushed its way into the inquiry: "What do I understand by how the term 'community' is used and experienced?" My questions began to spiral as I occupied different positions of questioning. A fourth question that has arisen in this process is, "How may participatory performance contribute to "unveiling" culture? (in the sense suggested by Haedicke & Nellhaus (2001), and Freire (1989))?" The journey of my inquiry has circled many times (and will continue to circle). This circling is a hermeneutic process, incorporating interpretation and reflection. I have looked at these questions from multiple vantages: from my stories, the participant-researchers, theatre practitioners, theatre anthropologists, performance theorists, phenomenologists, mystics, performance artists, and educators.

Performative inquiry begs a performative presentation. How can I convey to my audience the vitality of the performative experience except by writing peformatively? Most readers will not have experienced the theatre performances that are referred to in this dissertation (though a DVD is included). In my efforts to draw you into these performances, I have written,

(as well as I am able), a performative text. My invitation, as this is an inquiry into participatory performance, is for you to enter into the performance of the text and to participate by registering your impressions in the “holes in the visible” (Phelan, 1993, p. 192), or as Leon Garfield (1967, p.127) has expressed, as thoughts “like the prints left by a bird in the sky”.

What Carson and Sumara suggest I have found to be true: “When we write, we are written” (1997, p. xv). In this writing I have chosen not only to present my understandings, but also “my path of thinking and inquiry” (Carson & Sumara, 1997, p. xvi). As reader, when you engage with this writing, you (re)write yourself in relation to this text. This is a hermeneutic endeavour in which we converse or co-habit⁸. Our prejudgments create new meanings as they encounter “other views, other horizons of knowing” (Smits, 1997, p. 287).

⁸ Carson and Sumara (1997) in writing about ecological thinking explain: “the word ‘conversation’ emerges from the Latin *conversare* meaning ‘to dwell, abide, pass one’s life.’ It is only recently that conversation has come to mean to talk with others” (p. xx).



On the Road

Eagle Lookout, September, 1999

We returned to Eagle Lookout fifteen months later fresh from a summer of performing in the Provincial Parks, arriving in high spirits. This time we stayed a little ways out of town right beside the railway tracks, with a family and a very frisky puppy. We were there for two nights-- the next day to do a workshop on family violence, and in the evening, to do Legends Theatre. There were five of us: Jack, Carrie, Ambrose, Keith¹, who had just shown up after traveling for a year, and myself.

The workshop, which we had been asked to do with the Band office staff, ended up being just us, two wonderful Elders, one of whom was in a wheel chair, and some nine year old boys who were out of school for the day. *(When the people who are supposed to be at a workshop don't show up I always wonder what are the dynamics among the people who have engaged us?)* The Band was having problems with the school discriminating against their children and these children had been asked to leave the school because they were discipline problems. Undaunted by this shifting dynamic, we did a series of theatre exercises, culminating in an exploration of power and status. It was really fun to see the children show very astute understanding of the images we made together, and to experience the energy they brought to all of us. A discipline problem they were not! After lunch it was just us and the Elders and a couple of the Band office staff who drifted in and out. It's interesting how much one's energy drops off after lunch. I think we should all have had a nap!

¹ All person's names in this story are pseudonyms.

After we had done an exercise together and were debriefing it, one of the Elders asked me, “Where is the love?” My actors looked at me and I didn’t know how to answer. I was troubled by her question and it stays with me. I had assumed that I was acting from a place of caring, but her question provoked me to a new awareness of just not my motives, but of how I was presenting as a facilitator. Recently, I met a person who knows this Elder and told him what she had asked me. He responded, “She’s asked me that too.” I think both of us are still trying to figure out her meaning.

It is here, in Eagle Lookout, that we had my most memorable performance of “Why the Tides Change”. After a great feast, with a hall full of children and community members, we launched into an evening of Legends. “Why the Tides Change”² is a story from the Capilano people who traditionally live at the mouth of the Capilano River on the north shore of Burrard Inlet - where the Squamish Reserve community centre and big house now is, overshadowed by the Lion’s Gate Bridge. This is a place where the effect of the ocean tides is felt dramatically, and while the story has a local setting, as a story about treaty negotiations and ethics, it also has larger implications. I always hoped to do this fully participatory story in the context of a tribal council meeting where the chiefs use bombast and rhetoric to bully each other to get what they want. I spent many long days as a witness at Tribal Council meetings from 1988 to 1991, and once had the occasion to address a meeting to ask for funding for a youth theatre project. I had been thoroughly intimidated. When I direct Wolf Chief in this play, I see very

² “Why the Tides Change” is found in: *Children of the Thunderbird: Legends and Myths from the West Coast*, Edward C. Meyers, Ed. pp, 81-85

clearly in my mind a couple of celebrated chiefs standing with their heads thrown back and their chests thrust out, full of arrogance and defiance. I see Raccoon Chief's dilemma as finding a way to have reason prevail without attacking the status of Wolf Chief. This play is not about trying to undermine authority; it is about ensuring that authority is not used to abuse creation, of which we are a part. The power and status exercises we do in workshops and training (adapted from Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*) allow us to explore these dynamics. I wondered how the boys from the morning workshop would read the performance of "Tides".

This is the story and scenarios of "Why the Tides Change". To act this play with our audience, they are divided into four approximately equal groups. Each group becomes a clan: Eagle, Bear, Wolf and Raccoon. Four Tricksters' actors are the chiefs of the clans. The chiefs gather their clans and explain to them what their role is in the play. Eagle and Bear clans are witnesses. Wolf clan and Raccoon clan come into conflict and must negotiate an agreement.

The clans line up, each taking the side of a rectangle. The Wolf clan and Raccoon clan face each other from opposite ends of the rectangle. The inside area of the rectangle becomes the playing space; it is the beach. Eagle Chief enters the space with a drum. She drums for the attention of the clans and begins the story, pacing a circle inside the perimeter of the rectangle. "A long time ago, before there were human people, the animals held dominion over the earth. The Creator gave

to each animal different powers so that all creatures could live in harmony: to the Eagles, power over the skies; to the Bears, power over the great forests of the north; to the Wolves, power over the ocean tides; and to the Raccoons, power over the beaches and the tidal zones. For many ages each animal took care of their responsibility, aware of the balance maintained for all the people. Then one day - things changed.” She beats the drum twice and returns to her clan.

The Raccoon Chief calls her clan forward to gather clams and mussels on the beach while the tide is out. As the Raccoon clan advances towards the tide line, Wolf Chief stands in front of his clan and announces that it is time to go fishing and the wolves advance on the Raccoons, carrying a long blue sheet of cloth which is the tide coming in. Raccoon Chief hurries her clan back up to the dry sand and then goes to the water’s edge to ask Wolf Chief why he has raised the tide so suddenly and when he is going to lower it. His reply is that his clan wants to go fishing and he is going to keep the tide high because this is better for his people. Raccoon Chief reasons with him that the Raccoons need to gather more food and that they must also care for the beach. Wolf Chief refuses to listen. Raccoon Chief retreats and calls a council of the other chiefs. Eagle Chief and Bear Chief agree to support Raccoon Chief and together they go to the water’s edge to negotiate with Wolf Chief. Wolf Chief, pressured by the presence of the other chiefs, offers a compromise. He will lower the tide half way. Raccoon explains that this is not a good solution. If the water sits half way without flowing in and out, half of the beach will drown and half of the beach will dry out. Eagle Chief and Bear Chief explain that their people also use the beach for gathering food. Wolf Chief, having made his offer refuses to back down and goes back to his fishing. The three chiefs leave, Eagle and Bear Chiefs promising to support Raccoon Chief if she calls on them.

At this point, the action of the play shifts to each clan preparing for the next part of the story. The Eagles, Bears and Wolves learn and practice chants; the Raccoons move to a new location (this could be further down a field, or around a corner, or in a separate clearing in the forest). They prepare the funeral of Raccoon Chief. One person is chosen to be the fire, another to be the pool of water, and 3 messengers are chosen to carry a feather to each of the other chiefs and invite them to bring their clans to the funeral. The rest of the Raccoon clan are mourners, and must weep and wail loudly until the other clans have arrived and Eagle Chief steps forward.

The clans come in procession and line up in the same rectangle configuration. Raccoon Chief is sitting in burial position in front of her clan who are mourning loudly. Eagle Chief steps forward and offers her condolences to the Raccoon clan. She leads her clan in their chant to honour Raccoon Chief:

We are the Eagle Clan;

We rule the skies.

We are the ones who mastered how to fly.

We are the Eagle Clan;

We can fly all day.

If you want to fly at all it has to be our way!

Kwi - kwa, kwi - kwa.

Bear Chief follows with his condolences and leads his clan in their chant:

Bears are the biggest;

Bears are the strongest.

Bears know the secrets of the earth and the trees.

Bears shake the ground when they go forth;

Bears rule the forests of the North! GRRRRRR!

Wolf Chief then takes the space and the wolves chant:

People of the Wolf,

The keepers of the Tides,

Creator gave us a job to do, which we will do with pride.

If you want the tides to be low,

It will have to be done when we say so!

AhOooooooooooooooooo!

During the last words of the Wolf chant, Raccoon Chief sneaks up behind Wolf Chief and pulls off his tail. Wolf Chief staggers and wails: his magic power is gone. He tries to retrieve his tail, but Raccoon Chief runs to the fire and holds the tail over it. She forces him to restore the tides so that the beach can live and provide food for all the people. Wolf Chief calls Eagle Chief and Bear Chief to witness his declaration: "The tides will follow the moon and come in and go out evenly every day."

Raccoon Chief restores Wolf Chief's tail and notes that the tip is singed black. Wolf Chief is pleased with the black tip on his tail and declares that all wolves will now have black tips on their tails to remember this day. He then notices that something is different about Raccoon Chief's face. She runs to look in a pool of water and discovers black bands across her eyes. She too is pleased with her new look and declares that all raccoons will now carry black markings on their faces in memory of their agreement with the wolves. Cheers are offered for Raccoon Chief and Wolf Chief. The participants bow to each other and the play is over.

Early on in my part as Raccoon Chief, I realized that the Chief of this First Nation was one of my group. After we had been driven off the beach by the Wolves, our eyes met. He nodded to me and I knew that he recognized the scenario, and that he appreciated having the opportunity to participate in an alternative way of dealing with a bullying chief, and most importantly, that this is how the art of negotiating used to be taught in his culture. My private revenge for the many hours of enforced listening to Native male politicians berate each other was transformed into a mutual gifting of recognition.

I do not know what the outcome of our work was at Eagle Lookout. *Did it make a difference that the Chief was seen acting with the raccoons and working as one of the community? Did the people there find and tell their own stories? Were they able to stand their ground against all the forces that seemed to be ranged against them?*

There is something that physically connects me to that stretch of the Thompson River as I drive on Highway 1 and see the village ahead of me. Maybe it's because I have walked along the river at night. *What did I learn there? How was I taught?* During the afternoon of our workshop, one of the Elders, taking on the role of teacher, sent us outside to each find a stone and return with it. She asked us to tell the group why we had chosen that stone. My stone was a small, smooth black pebble with tiny flecks of white. It spoke to me that every stone holds within it the whole universe. I have that stone still, in my traveling stone pouch, swinging from my rear-view mirror.

Stopping Place

What the Researcher-participants told me: an initial analysis

Context

This first stopping place on our journey together brings us into my inquiry project conducted during the summer and fall of 2004. My interviews ¹ (conducted six to eight weeks after the performances) with the volunteer researcher-participants, seven youth leaders and two student actors, were engaging experiences. The interviews were conducted in groups, except for one, and the energy of the group dynamic, of one person's observation sparking someone else's memory, was exciting for me as I appreciated what other people had experienced. I recognized anew what a collaborative process theatre performance is. I also appreciated the care these young adults took in considering the questions, in contributing to this inquiry.

To prepare you to be able to visualize the responses from the interviews I refer you to Appendix 2 where I have included the two stories we performed with the five day camps (two performances were done with one day camp) and the one public performance. The edited video footage of these two plays is included as Appendix 6. The first play we developed was an original collective creation: "The Trail to Munachi". The second play we developed was a rendering of the traditional German folk tale: "The Pied Piper of Hamelin". Each play, including the preparation process, was

¹ The interview questions are found in Appendix 3.

approximately forty-five minutes in duration. The number of participActors in the different performances ranged from thirty to ninety.

How the ParticipAction performances worked

The fourth and fifth weeks of our Theatre 490 class were devoted to day camp performances. As it turned out, the first three performances we did (in week four) were the ones for the Neighbourhood Houses who had agreed to partner with me in this inquiry. We did performances at other day camps in week five and the public performance at the beginning of week six.

All of the day camp performances were in the early afternoon. There had been some concern from leaders that this was the time when the children were most lethargic and least co-operative. We had other constraints to consider, however, such as actors having morning jobs. The actors from the class had to make their own way to the locations of the day camps around the city. I had all the costumes and props in totes loaded in my car. We would meet up at the day camp facility, check in with the staff, and then go to where we would be performing to plan the movement of the scenes, to set up, to discuss the different dynamics we expected to cope with, to do a dog poop patrol, and to begin our warm up.

Our performances were all outdoors. (The first performance almost had to be done in a small gymnasium because it was raining when we arrived. Fortunately, the rain stopped and we used a gravel school yard beside the Neighbourhood House. When we all looked into the tiny gym we realized that there was no way we could move fifty people through the story "The Trail to Munachi" without losing a great deal of the sense of the journey the play is based on.) After the first rainy day, all the other days we performed were bright and sunny. Finding ways to stay shaded became the most important consideration in staging. Originally, we had imagined "The Trail to Munachi" following a circular route, but that was often adapted to have groupings of children underneath trees and the family wagon would follow a route that would lead them close to the trees. The children and leaders playing the path were chosen because they were wearing hats and could spend more time in the sun.

The day camp leaders would bring the children to where we were. I think this contributed to some of the excitement of the children because they were walking towards something they didn't know. When they would arrive at the park they would see the actors doing their warm-up with a large blue ball. We always timed the warm-up so that they would have a focal point when they arrived, so that they could watch the actors interact with each other and become comfortable with these adults who were completely focused but also laughing and playing with each other.

I would have the children sit in a semi-circle in rows where they could watch the actors. Once everyone was seated and the warm-up was finished we would introduce ourselves. I would explain what were going to do together

(including the 'time out zone') while the actors got into their costumes and gathered the costumes and props for the children. The actors then came and stood with me and would take turns asking for volunteers to play the different roles. (We endeavoured to spread the leaders evenly between the groups and also selected children to keep friends together and make sure that the most obstreperous children would have lots of physical activity to keep them busy. We discovered by trial and error which groups had to be chosen first because they needed the longest to prepare their parts.) Once the actors had chosen their groups they would lead them away from the others to prepare for their role in the play. We limited the preparation time to ten to fifteen minutes. Once each group was ready the play would begin.

Each actor or group of actors developed their own style of facilitation. As a class we had practiced this together, with those actors who had experience working with children coaching those who had no experience. We worked from the premise that people would want to participate. Our job was to be friendly and inviting, clear with instructions, and cooperative with each other. We saw our role as leaders and role models. It was also essential that the day camp leaders accept our authority so that the children would know they were safe and that the process was under control even if the acting of the plays was rather chaotic. Our careful preparation paid off in that we had no unpleasant incidences and lots of fun. There was one performance that was more difficult for us and that is when the leaders of the day camp continually questioned us and refused to participate with the children, taking the role of overseers.

Once the performance was over we took time for a question and answer session. Each session was quite different depending on the age of the children and also probably on the kind of other activities they had been engaged in with their leaders. One interesting discussion after a performance of “The Pied Piper of Hamelin” touched on unwanted pests and sanitation in the city, epidemics such as the bubonic plague and AIDS, and the dangers of introducing non-native creatures into environments. (The rats that invaded Hamelin originated from Africa and overran Europe in three years--from Italy in 1357 to Russia by 1360. One quarter of the population died from Bubonic plague in that three year period.) The student actors and I were always fascinated by the different responses had by the children and would try to understand what dynamics--of the performance, of the over-arching situation, of the childrens’ life experiences--led to those responses.

Interview Responses

There are ten general (but not discrete) areas of observation that I have chosen to highlight in sharing the participant actors’ responses with you. They are not ranked in importance, but discussed as I find them organically linked. I chose the responses using the criteria of clarity (both sound quality on the audio tape and of idea), relatedness to other comments being made, observations that could be applied to more than just one incident, observations that were congruent with the observations of the other leaders or student actors. The greatest interest of both the student actors and the leaders focused on involvement: how would we get all the children involved? During the process of the interviews I believe that the researcher-

participants began to answer this question. While the student actors and youth leaders demonstrate different interests in some areas, in other areas they coincide, particularly when they remember specific people and moments. The responses of the student actors are in aqua, dotted-lined, rounded rectangles, the responses of the youth leaders are in tan, double-lined, rounded rectangles.

Involvement

Question: *What are your most provocative memories of the performance experience and why are they provocative?*

Seeing everyone working as a unit and believing in what we were doing . . . I was hoping it would happen and it did.

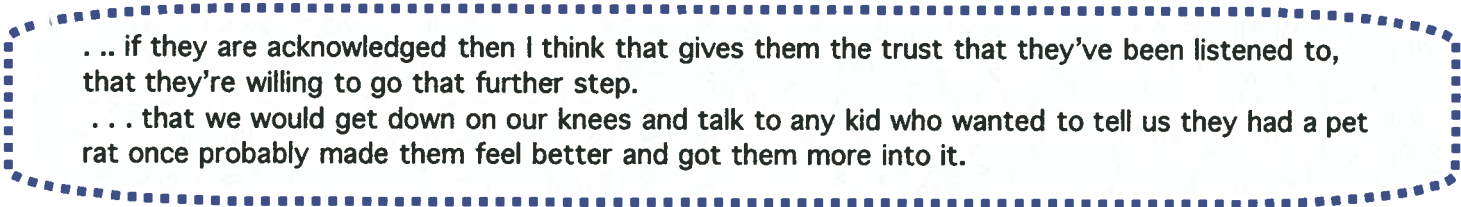
At the beginning I was wondering how you were going to get the preteens and even some of the juniors . . . but in the end they all got involved. .

One of the youth leaders identified a serendipitous circumstance that we, in the theatre class had not thought of in quite these terms. He identified this as the “cool factor”, being able to attract participation through personal charisma.

. . . for example the Trolls - the guy that led them was so enthusiastic. . . If they identify a person as being cool then they want to emulate that person . . . so automatically they were comfortable doing whatever he was doing . . . He'd already established that it was going to be cool.

To me, the term “cool factor” is significant. In the situation of the day camp, the children clearly saw us as outsiders. We had to win their confidence and this could only be done by how we presented ourselves. Actors, because they are performing

consciously, practice charisma and use enthusiasm to attract their audience to them. In participatory theatre, where the audience is being asked to perform alongside the actors, this ability to attract is crucial. The actors identified this ability in different terms. They found that if they listened to what their group participActors wanted to tell them, it paid off in terms of trust.



... if they are acknowledged then I think that gives them the trust that they've been listened to, that they're willing to go that further step.
... that we would get down on our knees and talk to any kid who wanted to tell us they had a pet rat once probably made them feel better and got them more into it.

The issue of trust is of prime importance for actors. Much time during training is spent in developing trust for each other and of oneself. In participatory theatre, the actors have to trust each other implicitly: they must improvise their dialogue within a flexible scenario; they have no stage to provide physical safety, no technical support. And not only do the actors have to trust each other, they have to trust the participActors fully, to do their parts--in a whole that has not been rehearsed and that is being done for the first time as it is being performed. Here, the idea of 'dramatic tension' of the parts of the whole is fully realized as an *elastic band* held and stretched by the palpable feeling of risk countered by the necessary confidence that one can proceed in safety. As Fels has explained: "it is happening now".

One leader tells of his experience of being a troll and trusting that if he did his part he needn't worry about anyone else because they would also do their parts:

The only thing that might have been a problem . . . was if the kids had decided, "Hey, let's just not die when we get shot." But by the time they were actually 'on the stage', as it were, they came through all right . . . But I just went ahead and played the perfect Troll and died without worrying about how they were going to do it.

There was a performance where three trolls did decide not to die right away. As the wagon was leaving the forest they were dragging themselves along the ground, reaching after it, and hurling insults. As the wagon left the (unmarked) space of the forest, I quietly approached them and said that the wagon had now left the forest and their part was over. They had no difficulty with understanding that boundary and returned to the other trolls to watch the rest of the play until they became the city walls.

This leader was able to base his trust on a few factors such as his knowledge of the children and his degree of comfort in playing the role. For the actors, the issue of trust required a bit more faith because they did not know the children or the leaders or even the terrain in which we were performing. People who have never participated in theatre performance in this way are often apprehensive about it working. At first even the student actors were unsure. But there are safeguards that can be built into the performance to help ensure that the participation is safe and fun. The primary factor is always the

willingness of the participants to enter into the experience and to follow the directions of the actors. There are always possible intervention points that we discuss and that the actors are prepared to use. Also, they have the support of all the other actors if a problem should arise.

A factor that is directly related to trust is what I call “leading and following”. In the training of the actors, one of the first exercises I do with them, which is foundational for all subsequent work, is the exercise called “Columbian Hypnosis”, from Boal’s book *Games for Actors and Non-actors* (1992, p. 63-64). In this exercise the actors explore the dynamic of leading and following, discovering the symbiotic relationship between these two opposites. There is dramatic tension between these two poles as the roles of leader and follower shift organically. It is useful to be able to use the vantage point of both leader and follower in understanding any dynamic of power. For the youth leaders, the opportunity to relinquish their roles as leaders and to become followers was renewing for them and also aided the participation of the children:

. . . the ‘not leading’ role was something that I wasn’t normally doing. And I liked that, not having to be the one leading the way every once in a while.

. . . it made it a lot easier to just participate with the kids and with the entire process. When you’re actually going along with the kids you don’t exactly know what’s going to be going on.

The actors were very sensitive to the leadership roles they were taking, recognizing the flow between leading and following.

This was noted by the youth leaders:

The actors were friendly and great. . . and provided pretty clear instructions as to what was going on . . . Having a core group of people that already had everything laid out - were leading the way, pretty much . . .

. . . they were equally as excited as we were. They weren't just giving instructions and then sitting back. They came and acted with us.

The leaders clearly appreciated the commitment and involvement of the actors, which I believe also engendered trust. The youth leader who was also a supervisor had a very clear analysis of the dynamic she observed:

I think, just the [youth] leaders being part of the group and actually listening to the drama leaders . . . In workshops we talk . . . about getting down to the child's level. If you're going to talk to them don't stand above them and intimidate them. Be at their eye level, like you're one of them. And that's what they were doing. They were totally taking it on and I think that really helped the children. . . . And giving them options and choices; I think that really helped.

Another leader tells a story that I think illustrates well Turner's idea of "communitas" - that performing a different role allows one to move beyond customary social boundaries to see people in a new way. Communitas is not the same as community, but is a function of relationship that occurs within the context of community.

Communitas is, to quote Znaniecki,¹ "a bond . . . uniting people over and above any formal social bonds." In *communitas* there is a direct, total confrontation of human identities, which is rather more than the casual camaraderie of ordinary social life. . . . a group unity is experienced, a kind of generic bond outside the constraints of social structure, akin to Martin Buber's "flowing from I to Thou." *Communitas*, however, does not merge identities; instead it liberates them from conformity to general norms, so that they experience one another concretely and not in terms of social structural . . . abstractions. . . . Within this situation the total individual is fruitfully "alienated" from the partial *persona*, making room for the possibility of a total (rather than a perspectival) view of the life of society. Attachment to one's fellows, detachment from one's social structure - these form a transient pairing. Pure *communitas* exists briefly where social structure is not. This is necessarily a transient condition because it does not fit into the orderly sequential operation of day-to-day society. Rather, it tends to ignore, reverse, cut across, or occur outside "obligatory" or "necessary" structural relationships.. . . *communitas* is not sought as an end in itself but is treated as a means of purifying, redefining, and revitalizing a social structure . . . (Turner, 1982, p. 205-206)

In the story below, the leader is speaking about how, as leaders, they were liberated from conforming to the norm of being disciplinarians. This liberation allowed them to "experience one another concretely" to participate "as the children". This liberation allowed the children to participate differently as well - abrogating the structures that had imposed limitations on the day camp participActors within their customary culture. This process allowed for a surprising sense of unity, of a

“comfortable atmosphere”. The leader’s comments also suggest that she experienced a more total view of the community of the day camp and that this had a revitalizing effect.

... there was one time when A_____ [a leader] was a bird ... she had to wear a bird mask and she was flying around and everyone was just laughing at her and it was so funny. This is one of the few moments that actually stuck in my mind because all the kids were hysterically laughing. They thought it was so funny that she was a bird and she went, “Ka Kaw.” Because you don’t see us like that usually. We’re usually saying, “Don’t touch that!” or “Get in your group.” It was more of a comfortable atmosphere, more laid back. Just the fact that there were other leaders that we were listening to helped, because we were the ones stepping back and letting them run the group and we could participate as the children. I think that made a difference as well, because the children, rather than having to listen to us, could participate with us.

As well as giving an example of *communitas*, this story illustrates the efficacy of participatory learning. The phrase that stands out for me in this story is the last one: “because the children, rather than having to listen to us, could participate *with* us”. The differentials of power and status were relaxed so that more was accomplished. This exemplifies to me the value of participatory theatre as an educative tool: it is an activity that you do *with* other people. It is collaborative and fun and through honoring the individual, allows a positive group dynamic to develop.

Another story from an actor is an important reflection on how *communitas* works, also differentiating between the response of adults and children. It may be that the degree of self-consciousness in adults deepens the experience of *communitas*,

allowing for a more conscious understanding of the potential for renewing self and society. This is an instance where I would like to ask further questions because the difference between child and adult responses is brought up by more than one participant. It may be possible that because the interviewees are young adults, bridging childhood and adulthood, they are more conscious of the different approaches to playfulness.

I was surprised when participants got really creative and into it. I wasn't surprised that people did it or that it worked – somehow I knew that it would work. But what blew me away was the level of commitment that people had. Or the level of fun/playfulness that people reached. My example for this is always my dad playing my horse. There are a few times that I can remember my dad actually playing with my sisters and me when we were little. What I mean by playing is actually playing make believe with us, committing to a role or character and actually being it. So it was extraordinarily fun and rare to watch my dad really get into something like playing the horse. When adults, like my dad, did that, I think it was because they felt safe enough to let their guard down. I think it was different when children did it. They didn't seem to be letting their guard down as much as just going with their impulses and letting themselves be carried away into the imagined reality of the play. While my dad didn't get into "horse character" until we were performing the play, I had other horses that started walking around on all fours and neighing like horses as soon as they were given that role by me during the facilitation. They weren't performing for anyone but they were still into it, while my dad seemed to come alive as the horse when it was show time. In this sense, it is clear that my dad (and probably many others) created a divide between the facilitation and the play. But, I noticed that many of the children didn't see a boundary separating the facilitation from the play itself. They seemed to be a part of the play (or playing) as soon as the facilitation began. In this sense, both the facilitation and the performance were part of the play, which I think is neat.

Another observation that interests me is the idea of levels of involvement: as one's experience becomes "heightened" or intensified one enters the experience more fully or deeply. There was a range of participation that extended from being there

physically (there were a very few children who would not participate) to total investment. A leader explained her assessment of the children's involvement:

. . . if some of the kids didn't participate that didn't mean they weren't having a good time. . . They were able to have a positive experience. They didn't get up and participate physically, but they were there.

And thus they were able to share in the experience and in the memories of the experience.

One actor identified how important eye contact was in intensifying the experience:

If you actually turn to them and give them eye contact while you're singing - boom - suddenly their eyes light up and you can see that. You can't really explain it but it's like another layer has been added to their experience.

The story that speaks very strongly to the degree of investment made by the participActors is from the first performance we did of "The Pied Piper". We were expecting fifty participActors and ended up with ninety - many of them preteens who were resistant to participating with the "little ones". Truly, it was a chaotic experience and our company was just glad to live through it. One of the leaders drew my attention to the investment of some of the older participActors:

There was _____ who had that larger role. He wasn't too into it, I recall that morning, and then to see him act it was really exciting. I remember the girls as well . . . they were all getting into it and blaming [the Mayor] and yelling, "It's all your fault." You could see that they were really trying to take it to the next level and not just doing what they were told to do.

The realization that the participActors, in some instances, moved beyond what was required and responded with their own impulses is exciting in both theatrical and educative terms. The initiative that was inspired through the participatory performance had a learning impact on not just the participActors who were taking initiative, but on the participActors who were witnesses to their investment. The stakes were raised for the participActors through the dramatic tensions of the performance: the tension between the parts of the whole and the tension of risk taking, of venturing into unknown territory. *It is in this space of tension that elasticity can play*, connecting the whole in unforeseeable ways—as is evidenced by some of the participActors taking their own initiatives.

A second factor that invited participation was curiosity and intrigue. One of the strategies the company used to intrigue the participActors is that we would be in place where we were going to perform, transforming the outdoor space of a park or playground into a performance space. When the day camp group arrived they saw a group of eight actors doing their warm-up with a large blue ball. The exercise demands concentration and focus from the actors. The ball carries the energy of the group in a palpable way. The watching audience's focus is also captured by the ball and creates a common focal point with the actors. There was a sense of anticipation aroused by the transformation of a common, familiar space into a theatrical space. The actors were also viewed as unusual:

The thing that . . . all the kids noticed was the actors' warm up . . . when they were passing the ball.

I think the warm-up got them intrigued. No one had that specific an idea of what was going to happen. So it was, "What are these crazy people going to do with us? What's going on?"

The result of this anticipation and focus was that the participActors were ready to participate as soon as they were acknowledged. They saw an interesting dynamic with people who were having fun (the "cool factor") and were enticed into the dynamic they had witnessed. One of our Theatre 490 tenets was that as soon as the audience appeared, we² were "in the theatre event" and were performing.

The second you guys came over and started giving instructions, everyone was completely involved with it. They completely forgot about everything outside the play. Being able to focus on that was great.

² I use "we" as the director of the ParticipAction Theatre Project, not as the dissertation writer.

At the final public performance³ we structured the event differently. We had asked our audience to meet at a landmark and we brought our performance to them in the form of a parade with drums and shakers and some of our props in hand. When we arrived we organized everyone in a procession, handed out noisemakers and props and began our procession to our performance space. By the time we arrived there and organized our audience-participActors to explain the process of participatory theatre, they were already members of the company by virtue of being initiated into the ritual of procession and of making music together. This ritual served the same function as the ritual of the actors' warm-up, but was directly participatory rather than just observed. My own contribution to the interview /conversation with the student actors follows:

. . . my Mom said "I'll never forget seeing you walking down University Blvd. with the drum towards us." That was so interesting to me because I hadn't thought about what it would be like for the people down at the flag pole waiting and seeing us coming towards them. So I said to [her], "Was that when the performance started for you?" She said, "Yes. That was when I realized I was coming into a performance."

To summarize the observations about involvement, the participActors interviewed observed seven dynamics that are relevant to participatory theatre performance: the "cool factor" or charisma, trust, leading and following, encompassing a range of participation from passive to taking initiative, curiosity and intrigue, focus and concentration of the actors, ritual initiation

³ The final public performance was not part of the inquiry project but was an important component of the laboratory course (Tht 490), and is relevant to the research, though it was not possible to interview any of the participActors. I think that, because the students had, by this time, experienced six day camp performances, they were much more aware of their own processes and that of the participActors.

into the process. These dynamics provide a useful grouping of understandings in response to the question of how we were going to get everyone involved. These theatrical devices are relevant in any situation where there is the desire to bring people together for common action.

Specialness

A second area of observation that is closely linked to involvement is specialness. Here, the perspectives of the actors and the youth leaders differed. The actors were initially surprised when the leaders gave complete control to them. Looking back at their experience they were a bit frustrated that this kind of activity isn't more prevalent in education and recreation. They questioned the idea that it had to be "special", that it couldn't be done on a regular basis within recreation and educative programs by the program staff. The youth leaders, however, were convinced that it would not have worked if they had tried to do it themselves. The fact that they were as involved as the children, at the same level of entry, contributed to the success of the event.

. . . the kids thought that was kind of funny . . . to see us involved too. And I think it goes back to the other comment about not actually doing it ourselves . . . If we had decided to do a theatre sports day, we'd probably have about half the kids up there doing it and the other half wouldn't.

The leaders, when asked what they had hoped would happen during the event, spoke of their desire to have something that was “totally different than what we were doing all summer.” Their hopes were met: “A lot of them, they’d never had this kind of experience.” The leaders spoke of their frustration in getting all the children involved in activities, that many were zoned into their game boys. The participatory theatre was seen as unique and effective in getting the children to work as a group.

. . . this group theatre is really unique to other activities because it involves so many people. I mean, like when you get a sports game going you may have 12 or 15 kids participating if you’re lucky. Or if you’re making bracelets or something, you may have 5 or 6. But to actually be able to get 60 or 70 people together, all participating, having fun together, that doesn’t happen very often. There aren’t many avenues for that kind of activity to happen - to bring people together.

The actors did agree on this point and saw participatory theatre as something “new and different”:

My question is, “Why doesn’t this happen more often? To me, it’s obvious that it’s good for children to do for many reasons. Also for adults and everyone to do. I wish it wasn’t something so new and different in our culture.

These reflective young adults point to a lack of creative, fun, artistic, participatory events in our contemporary culture.

Bourriaud addresses similar concerns but considers contemporary art as “focused on the sphere of inter-human relations”.

He extends art forms to “meetings, encounters, events, various types of collaboration between people, games, festivals, and places of conviviality”, seeing “encounter and relational invention” as a form of relational aesthetics (2004, p. 28). Though

Bourriaud speaks of this art occurring from the 1990's to the present day, these young interviewees have experienced little of which he speaks. In the case of these youth leaders, there is a gulf between the creation of art and its appreciation by members of their current generation. Truthfully, I must confess that my own access to relational aesthetics in theatre, performance, and art, has also been restricted. From my reading, I know that participatory theatre performance has been offered in Canada (Dolittle & Barnieh, 1979, p. 97-117), particularly during my youth, but it is not something that I (or my children) experienced growing up, nor has it been something these young people have experienced.

Kinesthetic Response

A third area of observation offered by the actors is that performance is a “natural tendency”, that it employs a “sixth sense” that we all have:

There is a sixth sense . . . it's “kinesthetic sense”. . . it's something to do with the body - like there's receptors inside us that can spatially be aware--there's senses of your body in space.

I think that sixth sense totally applies to theatre. Maybe I'm thinking of the connection between people. I guess that's my interpretation of what I'm calling the sixth sense.

To illustrate this “kinesthetic sense” I relate an experience I had watching Denise Clark of One Yellow Rabbit performing solo⁴. Clark’s work was very physical and without words. The audience sat cross-legged on the floor for at least 45 minutes. At the end of her performance we all rose effortlessly, in one movement, to our feet to applaud. Even though we had been sitting in cramped, motionless positions, our bodies had been responding to Clark’s physical movement. An ensuing conversation with Clark revealed the idea of kinesthetic response. I think that participatory performance evokes both the kinesthetic sense of bodies in space and kinesthetic response, the muscles responding to observed movement. The same phenomenon is shown when the audience, especially children, become excited watching live performance that is physically challenging, such as circus acts or dance or figure skating. The children watching the actors’ ball warm-up were being prepared kinesthetically to participate. This sixth sense also contributes to the dramatic tension in performance allowing for an *elastic* play of responsivity.

One occurrence in a performance made me very thankful for kinesthetic response. At the same performance that the three trolls refused to die, the brother who was shooting them with his bow and imaginary arrows had his draw string break unexpectedly in the middle of the troll attack. The children had practiced their dying with this actor by gauging when they were struck by the imaginary arrow by the degree of tension in the bow and the release of the string. Suddenly this

⁴ This performance was part of the theatre conference, Beyond the 4TH Wall: Aesthetic Distance and Community in the 21 Century, at the University of Regina, 2005.

kinesthetic cue was absent. The actor, momentarily at a loss, still needed to physically provide the same degree of tension that had been held in the bow. He immediately shifted his grip on the bow to make it a spear and stabbed out at the trolls. Their bodies adapted immediately to this shift of direction and force to receive the mimed blows and fall in response to a different weapon than they had practiced with. Our actors all noticed the shift with some consternation because the stabbing with the spear was a much more aggressive action than shooting an arrow but I don't think that the participActors noticed at all. No one mentioned it, and this performance was with a group of particularly watchful leaders.

Often the issue of safety is brought up when people contemplate participatory performance. In my considerable experience of over one hundred participatory performances with Tricksters' Theatre, physical safety is not an concern for the participActors during the performance. Everyone is focused and connected through their kinesthetic sense and unconsciously responds to ensure their own physical safety and the safety of others.

Memorability

Kinesthetic sense may also contribute to memorability. I was curious to know if and how participActors remembered their involvement in the plays. The song "Welcome to Munachi" was the most common trigger to memory:

When you first called me back to remind me of the interview, the song popped right back into my head. It's still lurking around in the back of my head somewhere. If I start about one thing it all comes back into my head. But the song's the main thing that I really associate with the whole thing.

For another respondent who has already spoken, it was the hysterical laughter of the children. Both of these response memories were triggered by physical, kinesthetic responses to vocalization. One of the actors offered this analysis:

It's heightened, when you're performing. . . There's a lot of energy that goes into a performance. I always think that when I'm performing that I'm expending a lot more energy than I do in my day-to-day life. And I think, for some reason, that makes me remember it.

One is reminded of the adage that it is what one does that one remembers best. This belief is supported by the theory of embodied learning. I submit that this observation of the participActors supports the use of participatory theatre as an educative tool. The actors also remembered one of the performances of the Pied Piper. After the performance, the children had engaged in a thoughtful discussion of the Black Plague, of hygiene, of city garbage collection, of rodent and raccoon problems, and of epidemics, notably AIDS. Their physical responses to the rat invasion (which had been particularly riotous) opened a space-moment of learning that evoked related memories from their own experiences. One leader gauged the children's response by how they remembered the experience:

. . . a few of them asked about it the next day. . . I think for some of them it was the high point of their summer.

. . . they'd never had this kind of experience . . . They were really excited. They wanted to continue doing something like this afterwards, too.

Confidence & Self-Esteem

Both the actors and the youth leaders remarked on their appreciation of how the experience had opened up children who were shy. They saw their participation as building self-esteem and confidence. My sense is that when the leaders spoke of themselves and their peers then were talking about developing confidence.

This is so good for shy people. It makes it where it's okay to do this because everyone else is, so it's an amazing experience. People that are normally shy can suddenly open up.

What strikes me is the amount of people I know who are on the shy side who tell me, "I've always wanted to get up there but I don't know what it would be like."

I'm quite a shy person, normally. I don't participate in many things and definitely not a performance. If someone told me to, "Go up there and act", I would never have done it on my own. But this was kind of different, kind of unique. It made me realize that I can act, maybe, its kind of fun. I don't have to be really good about it but I can actually try.

Are there any words that come into your mind when you remember being in the play?

I was thinking "surprise". . . surprise at seeing which kids participated. . . surprise at the level of enthusiasm . . . surprise at which kids took which roles. A lot of kids who volunteered had to shed their shyness and go for it. And to be surprised at your own reaction.

When they spoke of individual children I suggest they were speaking about self-esteem. I do see a difference between the two and it is interesting to consider how participatory theatre performance can address both. My understanding of self-

esteem has to do with the ability to *vision oneself undertaking a new role* whereas self-confidence is based on applying one's known skills to an unfamiliar situation. As actors, we can immediately see the change in children (and adults) when they perform. The leaders, who know the children more intimately, can see a deeper change occur:

. . . the girl who was the horse, it was highly [unusual] for her because she's really shy and wouldn't do anything. It was great to see her be out there with people, no other kids, just her. To do something that made her stand out . . . that definitely stuck out in my mind . . . that kids in those roles got a lot of self-esteem . . .

The actors saw other opportunities for learning new behaviours and skills, such as practicing verbal communication, conflict resolution, humanizing people who are aloof, and building empathy with people whose experience is different than one's own. One delightful suggestion by one of the actors was somewhat subversive:

What if you did The Pied Piper and the councilors were the councilors of Coquitlam? The Mayor may be played by the Mayor - or maybe you want to do a role reversal and have the councilors play the kids or the adults or the rats . . . This would actually be making a connection.

This suggestion reminds me of “conscientization”, Paolo Freire’s term which he developed in his literacy work: people who are in a dialogic rather than a confrontational or oppressive relationship “perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (1989, p. 71). Augusto Boal (1992) recounts numerous stories of forum theatre where the audience

members come on stage to take over characters they see as oppressed and change the action of the play to explore possible solutions to specific instances of oppression. Forum theatre is an excellent educative tool as is role drama, where participActors play different roles to understand the complexities of real life situations from different perspectives.

Experience more important than the story

The response from the leaders that was most surprising for me is that when asked about the stories, they didn't see the specifics of the stories as particularly relevant or memorable. When I consider the amount of time and care we, as a theatre troupe, spent on crafting the stories, this was a bit of a shock. It also puts some suspicion on the popularly held belief of drama educators that theatre is an effective way to teach, for instance, historical content.

From many years of experience as a theatre director, I do know that the success of any performance relates directly to the amount of care put into crafting it. This does not necessarily mean rehearsal time but it does include the care given to conceptualizing the piece with all the collaborators. If everyone knows what they are doing and why they need to do it, then there is a clarity that allows the audience - whether participating or observing - to lose themselves in the performance without having to figure out if everything is working properly. As much as it would be gratifying to have the audience appreciate all the preparation that goes into a performance, often the best measure of its success is when the elements of the performance are not noticed at all and it is the overall effect that is remembered.

The response of the leaders does speak directly to my original intrigue of what happens between people when they perform together. I think immediately of one of my attempted interviews with a little boy. He was mostly unresponsive until I showed him the video of the performance he was part of (The Trail to Munachi). Suddenly, he was focused on the screen, watching avidly and making comments such as, "There goes _____. That was so funny when he did that." "Look - there's me falling down." And, most striking for me as interviewer, when the finale of the play began, he rose to his feet and sang along with the video, reliving that moment of belonging to a greater experience. I believe that the action of playing, of being an actor, is more important than the content of the play, though arguably, some plays will offer better experiences than others.

It is experience that is key - in phenomenological terms, lived experience. While theatre has traditionally been viewed as make-believe, when people embody characters and physically act, they are doing--not merely imagining. Again, embodied learning is a key factor. But I believe that another learning process has been triggered here. The participatory actors see themselves as connected to each other and recognize each other in terms of belonging. The efficacy of their knowledge is realized because their learning is communal; they hold signifying roles in the communal experience of the theatre performance.

The importance of the story elements seemed to be that they were recognizable tropes:

How much of the story of “The Trail to Munachi” was relevant to your participation in the play?

In so far as it was a fantasy - there were trolls and angry rivers . . . yeah.

The other important function of the stories is how they were structured for participation. When the participActor groups were taught their parts, they were not taught the parts of the other groups. They had to be observers as well as actors, still retaining their own dramatic tension, waiting to see when they would next be involved and beginning to feel how they were part of the whole. There is an *elasticity* in this tension that allows for both identification and autonomy. This was commented on by two of the leaders:

We were actually trying to see what was going on at the beginning, and doing our part, and seeing what was going on in the end. We didn't really know what was happening. But I think by not knowing, we were more intrigued with what was going on. I don't think the kids would have paid as much attention to the story line if we were told.

If there's something coming up that they have to do then they're going to be:

“Okay, okay, okay . . .

Wait, wait, wait . . .

Now we go . . .

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

Ha ha! We were GREAT!”

Play

The youth leader above evokes the sense of anticipation, of leaping out into physical action, of the elation that comes from taking a risk, of fulfilling the role, of doing it together. This is what play is all about (Jennings, 1993). The actors spoke about the value of play in participating in theatre such as this. They were speaking specifically about how this process would be healthy for adults.

. . . they were playing. Play is healthy. They have courses in Human Kinetics all about the theory of play. People have to play.

It makes your brain work in a different way. It can be relaxing and also really energetic.. . . Your body does it and your brain is just along for the ride. It's a good break from 'real life'.

I think this is part of the attraction the youth leaders had to being able to participate with the children. They spoke as if it allowed them to relax boundaries, to have fun, to not have to be responsible for the children for once. All the interviewees mentioned how valuable this kind of activity would be for parents to do with their children.

Connecting

I asked, in response to this comment: "What would happen, do you think, if you did it with parents and children together?"

It would help parents see them. With some parents - you know - but for their kids they probably would. It would probably open up their eyes a bit too. Maybe get their children involved in other activities.

Bring them close to each other and to their children. Adults maybe feel isolated from their kids. It put[s] everybody on the same level.

These thoughts, I believe speak to the sense of connection felt between the participActors. There has already been mention of levels of involvement. This level is one of equality - where all participActors have the same value in their participation that is nothing to do with the value of the roles they play. This difference is vital because it nullifies hegemony in the offering of the self to the process. It has to do with inclusion and appreciation for each individual, seen differently from their normal context. This too, is part of the “communitas” experience.

The actors also spoke of the sense of family they found in the theatre company, of comfortability. I believe that this is part of the charismatic attraction the children felt when watching the actors’ warm-up. This sense of ease continues beyond the performance experience. As one actor said: “Even now, outside of class, I still feel so comfortable with everyone.” Floyd Favel speaks about this same dynamic: “ a theatre group with common goals and vision where a family and community is created is in a sense an orphanage” (Appleford, 2005, p. 35). Richard Schechner (1994, p. 43) also speaks of this dynamic when he recounts the audience response to “Dionysus in ’69” , that people wanted to join the group, to belong, to share in the closeness of the actors, that they thought the group was as a cult that they could join.

One actor spoke to his amazement at the connection that happened consistently between two characters in “The Trail to Munachi”.

With the Eagle and the Eldest, . . . they always seemed to become friends. . . they just seemed to get closer from the experience. . . Especially in the last one with those two girls . . . they really started to join at the hip. I don’t think they were joined before because they . . . weren’t sitting together before you picked them . . .

A leader spoke of the connection she observed with the children and also her own lack of connection to the performance that she wasn’t part of in comparison to the performance that she was a part of:

. . . if you build a sense of community in that they’re all in this together and if one of them falls or something collapses then they’ll all laugh together. . . to have something to laugh about, to do something that you share, that all the kids share. That can be a point of reference, like, “Oh my gosh, do you remember when ____ and ____ were the rats and running around?” And I think there’s a sense of community I don’t have because I wasn’t there. . . And I think for the kids, if they have a part that they remember - and maybe they remember you and they’re like, “Do you remember when you wore the funny ears?” and stuff. And it’s like a common thing.

What intrigues me in this analysis is that the leader identifies the reciprocal function of performing together. What allows for the connection is that each participant has seen the other in a different role; sharing that experience allows for a bonding because both parties (or more) share the same point of reference. A friend was recently playing a DVD of the musical *Rent*

for me. She had seen this musical in New York and had been profoundly moved by it. While I could appreciate the artistry of the music, I had not been there. I did not have the same emotional connection, the same point of reference.

Community

The experience of sharing in performance contributes to community--to the community that people belong to already - as in the day camp - and to the community that is created between people within and subsequent to participatory performance. The popular phrase, "You had to have been there," pretty much sums it up, as was alluded to by the one leader who talked about not being able to share the memory of participating in The Pied Piper. Shared memory seems to be key to the experience of community:

What has been the value of that experience in your community?

I think it adds to the memories . . . I think it's also bringing in another level of learning. . . it adds variety to the community. And involvement . . . It would be great to have parents do it with their kids.

Two areas mentioned by this respondent that I neglected to question and see as useful for further inquiry are the ideas of "level[s] of learning" and adding "variety to the community". With regard to levels of learning, I see that the "participatory learning" put forward by Hadicke and Nellhaus and the "aesthetic learning" put forward by Courtney both offer other levels of

learning that may not have been accessed by the day camp programs up until the ParticipAction project. This leader's observation supports the claim of performative inquiry that performance is a space-moment of learning. I find the concept of levels of learning curious; I have simultaneous images of both digging deeper and climbing higher. There is an assumption of verticality. *Is there a way to understand learning more multidimensionally, so that, like a child standing on the bridge of the star ship, we might travel outwards, or conversely, travel inwards?*

Adding "variety to the community", is a rich concept to mine. The assumption is that there is some uniformity to the community. This idea resonates with Turner's "communitas", where the performance of ritual allows community members to see each other outside of the usual community structures or expectations. This variety is seen as a positive contribution to community. There is a rhetoric of appreciating diversity within our educational institutions. *It is possible that participatory theatre performance can contribute variety or diversity to structured communities in such a way as to benefit those communities?*

There is also the wish to bring children and parents together pointing to a felt sense of alienation between the children/parents and the leader/parents that the leaders believe could be bridged by participatory performance. I find this idea to be hopeful. It speaks to my desire that revealing a culture of hope is possible through participatory performance as a way of collaborative art making.

When the interviewees were asked about other possible uses for participatory theatre the idea of icebreaker came up:

It can be used to bring different people together. . . It's kind of like an icebreaker . . . you get to meet people from these other groups and disassociate from your own little group. It's . . . an experience they can have when they don't really know each other. . . I think it's a thing that can bring people together - not just for a group that's already bonded.

I think, definitely, if the whole thing had been done somewhat outside of the summer program or earlier in the summer program . . . it could have had a more profound effect on the relationships when we didn't know each other as well.

I think that when you are first meeting someone there is an air of formality . . . where if you introduce something like this early on, you're forced to be kind of goofy. So you immediately have to relax to be extroverted with everyone else. You're forced to interact with them a little more, show them a side - that you don't have to be uptight and formal all the time.

There are three things I find interesting in the response from the youth leader. One has to do with timing--that if the event had been earlier, before the day camp participActors had already established their relationships, the participatory theatre could perhaps have had a more profound impact, according to this leader's perception. The supposition is that if you can share an experience that allows you to let down some barriers, "to be kind of goofy", this could make a difference. This same leader (a great inventor of words) was careful not to qualify the difference as either "beneficial or maleficial", but thought that a difference would have been apparent. The second interesting comment is about formality and the inference that being "uptight and formal" restricts the degree to which people can interact and also the latitude with which they interact.

Formality - or in social terms, staying 'inside one's box' - limits the complexity and diversity of relationships. I take from this that participatory performance has the ability to develop multiple dimensions of relationship between people in groups. Play may be the primary factor in allowing this to occur.

The third term the leader used that is important is "have to relax". One can consider this in relationship to "uptight", but more importantly, there is one of the most important requirements of acting at play here. One of the first lessons an actor has to learn is to relax physically. By relaxation I do not mean limpness but a release of muscle tension allowing for responsivity (unblocked energy flow) and alertness. This is not so easy to do and requires focus, discipline, and above all, attention to the breath. Once relaxation is achieved, the actor brings herself to readiness without losing the responsivity of her relaxation. Her ability to respond to the other actors, to the continually shifting circumstances of performance, depends entirely on her state of simultaneous relaxation and energy. This is one of the objectives in doing the ball warm-up that the leaders mentioned. It is basically a group breathing exercise where all the actors are breathing together with the movement of the ball through the air. The audience watching this activity is not necessarily aware of all the dynamics of the exercise but through kinesthetic response, are drawn into the dynamics of the warm-up, thereby becoming 'warmed-up' themselves. During the "breath of relaxation" they are drawn into a rhythmic, elongated breath with the measured arc of the ball; during the "breath of response", they are drawn into a collective breath that responds to the more erratic and sometimes wild movement of the ball between the actors. This part of the warm up often leads to spontaneous laughter on the part of both the actors and the participants - a sure measure of relaxation and responsivity - that is triggered by the fluttering of the

diaphragm. The audience is able to respond so quickly and wholly because they have relaxed and energized - in a very physical way.

One actor recounted a 'budding relationship' she saw between two adult participants at the public performance:

You could use the group activity to build community instead of as a community activity.

Exactly - people like those two yoga people - they found a bond because they were brought together by an exterior force. With these random people, afterwards, people were saying, "Good job." And they were chatting with each other; they were building connections after they had done something.

The same actor also described a change in her family friendships because of the shared experience of the participatory performance:

. . . the little girls who came with my step mom - my step mom's friends - whenever they see me they get great big smiles on their faces and they're really encouraging to me now, whereas before, I'd walk in and they wouldn't give me a second glance . . . We were all having Thanksgiving dinner together . . . They were being really talkative and silly and they used to make an invisible divider between me, because I'm older, and them and my little sisters. But now it's like we're all friends even though we're years apart. . .

This story is an example of the ideas put forward by the youth leader--of relaxing formality, of being goofy--with the result of building friendship, bridging age difference, and of making the Thanksgiving dinner, a communal ritual, an interactive, "extroverted" community space.

The last observation that I wish to note came from both the youth leaders and the actors, but in different ways. It is the observation of being “outsiders”. The actors considered themselves outsiders to the day camps and wondered how they would negotiate the space between their own group and the group they were going to be working with. The leaders also saw the actors as outsiders, but felt that this gave them an advantage because they were unknown to the children and would hold some mystique because of this. A third use of “outsider” came from a leader’s observation:

I think even the kids realized that . . . “If I don’t, I’m going to be an outsider if I don’t do the play.”

From this observation, I think it is evident that the participActors recognized that a new group or community was being created through the participatory performance and that there was only one opportunity to become part of it. Once the play was over it could not be recaptured except through shared memories.

One way in which communities can be characterized is through the rule of exclusion: there are people who belong and people who don’t belong and we recognize a community as much by who is not a member as by who is. My personal goal for participatory theatre is to include everyone but the involvement should be entirely voluntary. I believe that the investing of oneself in participatory performance pays exponential dividends for learning. Some of these benefits are evident in the observations of the youth leaders and actors of ParticipAction Theatre. Truly, when I asked the leaders if they had any

concerns about their experience of the ParticipAction performances they were unanimous in saying, “None.” They all saw it as a positive experience. My analysis has been to try to understand why the participActors’ experience was positive. Often, as researchers, we may feel compelled to balance the positives and negatives. In this inquiry, where the responses were so unanimously positive, I have interrogated the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ of the experiences to attempt to understand ‘why’, hoping that these understandings can be used to inform other participatory performance situations.

If participatory theatre such as is practiced here is done in a public context, as was our final public performance, there is no on-going relationship between the participActors to be affected. What then, is the value for the participActors in terms of feeling community for such a short, discontinuous time? The leaders also questioned the ongoing effects of the performances once the children no longer were together. At present, I have no way to assess this and it may be that having an already stabilized community is important for the optimal effectiveness of participating in performance. Or, as was also suggested by the interviewees, participatory performance could provide the initial ground on which community could be built, though the implication here is that building community is an objective within a continuing group.

As I reflect on the experience of the ParticipAction performances I can see a major difference between these and the Tricksters’ performances in schools. In the Thtr 490 day camp performances we had the time and space to work more intimately with the participActors. For instance, with all the groups, the actors could take time to learn each person’s name and to hear their stories. The participActors could have the time to develop their characters - to choose a name, to decide

what they liked to do best as their character, to experiment with their actions to discover how they wanted to die as a troll, or run as a rat, or be a pasta maker in Hamelin. They could watch each other and give feedback to each other. The feeling of easy comradeship was able to develop. In schools, there is, in most cases, a rigidly structured timetable that must be adhered to (though rural schools who have the advantage of mechanical systems could turn off the “buzzer” that signaled the end of a period). Also, we had the benefit of being outdoors with lots of space for groups to have their own boundaries and for the performance to sprawl largely. Space-time is a most precious resource, and without it the possibilities for creativity are curtailed. Often, in the schools with Tricksters’ Theatre, I felt the constraints of space - gymnasiums where movement of over 150 children was curtailed - and of time - when we had to fit into a rigid timetable that did not allow for conversation during or after the performances. Conversely, the compression of time and space and the (often) larger number of participActors did make for a heightening of the experience and a huge rush of adrenaline-sparked energy.

Audience participation is again, in the 21st Century, becoming of interest to both practitioners and scholars. There was the burgeoning of audience participation in the 1960’s and 1970’s, with Schechner’s environmental theatre, Kaprow’s Happenings, and the Popular Theatre movement, that seems to have been subsumed generally (though not everywhere) by the rise of media technology. Certainly, there has not been much writing about audience as acting participants in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Kattwinkel (2003, p. xii) suggests that one reason for the rise in participatory theatre and dance is the urge to

“privilege the live over recorded experience”. Haedicke, writing about the work of The Living Stage⁵ in Washington, DC, links participation to empowerment to efficacy. She quotes the director, Robert Alexander, who links imagining possible worlds in theatre to action in the real world: “Creativity, repeats Alexander over and over, will not only ‘affect the lives of individual participants, but also will radically impact the ways in which they interact with others’” (Kattwinkel, 2003, p. 83). The youth leaders and actors, even when they speak of individual participActors, do so in the context of how they are seen and appreciated and function in the group. Alexander’s assertion evokes the image of the stone dropped in the pond and the water rippling outwards. The correlative image of many stones being dropped in a pond simultaneously leads to choppy water BUT also holds the idea that has come out of this study, which is that of tension or *elasticity* between the parts and the whole. This last reflection from an actor illustrates the potential for participatory performance:

⁵ The Living Stage was formed in 1966 by Robert Alexander. Since then, the company has developed many long-term relationships in the city with schools, prisons, and other institutions. Their work is focused on the empowerment of the participActors who are from among the “forgotten”. Alexander sees Art as the “foundation of culture”(Haedicke, in Kattwinkel, 2003, p. 72-73).

I now understand that not only do people like to be part of groups and teams, but that the added element of performance takes group interactions to a new level. I have always found it easier to get to know people who I perform with, as opposed to do almost any other sort of activity, and perhaps it is because we get to share something during that performance. During group interactions that involve performance, everyone gets a tiny piece of the responsibility of bringing the show to life. This responsibility seemed to translate itself, over and over again, into really fun performances that were enjoyable to be a part of. Afterwards, everyone looked flushed with pride and slightly astonished that they had just done such a thing. This has shown me that the right leadership from the facilitators can get a group of people, who probably don't have any / very limited performance experience, to come together and create a performance. Participatory theatre might sound risky, but people are amazingly receptive to the idea. I want to tell everyone, it's not as hard as it sounds, it just takes organization and trust!!

In a study, where one's findings are necessarily subjective, drawn from the subjective responses of the researcher-participants, the most useful way of considering these findings is to use Kershaw's idea of "the potential of performance . . . to achieve efficacy" (1992, p. 41). In Entry Point I cited Fine, Weis, and Powell (1997, p. 252): "If schools are to produce engaged, critical citizens . . . schools must take as their task the fostering of group life . . . within a context that takes community-building as its task" (Gallagher, 2003, p. 11). The day camp leaders hold clearly the idea of the "fostering of group life" and can see the potential of participatory theatre performance to contribute to that process. Their fascination with the active involvement of the participActors suggests that they see this as leading to potential involvement in other arenas. The mitigating factor is that the day camp community is short-lived; the children may only be in contact with each

other and the leaders for two weeks and then they go off into disconnected lives. If one extends the metaphor of community to schools, there is a more encompassing time-space connection for community members; in schools, the potential of participatory theatre performance to build community can be realized more fully—to enrich group life and to contribute to producing “engaged, critical citizens.”



On the Road

Hidden Lake, March 2000

Our trip to Hidden Lake began under trying circumstances. I had, the evening before, seen my partner of nine years, in a drunken rage, attack my son who has schizophrenia. As the police car drove off with the end of my relationship, my other son arrived to stay. The police put a restraining order on my ex-partner and my sons were assured that he would not be allowed to return to gather his belongings until I had returned from the Cariboo. Jack, Carrie¹ and I left early the next morning for our two day trip to Hidden Lake. This was the first time Carrie had left behind her partner, Ambrose, who was also a member of the original company.

We were planning to perform some legends, do a workshop, and perform our new play, "Sorry Is Not Enough", about drinking and driving. From Vancouver Island, William's Lake is as far as we could ever travel without becoming silly with exhaustion. We had a favourite motel, with reasonable rates and a pool, that always welcomed us. We crammed into a room with two queen-sized beds. Carrie and I would share and Jack got a whole bed to himself. Fortunately, the Chilcotin community where we were to meet Les Staines, was only an hour or so West of Quesnel and we were there by noon the following day.

¹ All names in this story are pseudonyms.

This Chilcotin community is a most interesting place. Jack, Jennifer and I had been there the year before with our play, "For Lack of Trying", about domestic violence. We had met Les and Leanne his fiancée, with their number of children from different relationships. They were planning their wedding that was to take place that summer. I was looking forward to seeing the photos. Les was the Alcohol and Drug counsellor. Leanne's mom was the Band chief. They had been so gracious to us the year before, giving us a wonderful country breakfast and the kids' beds to sleep in. We also had had meal vouchers for the General Store. The owner is generosity personified and is an excellent cook as well. It is wonderful to go back to a place and be recognized. We had a total of three engagements there, from 1999 to 2002.

The community is a ranching centre. Beyond the Highways yard, the general store with a gas pump, and the school, the only settlement you can see is the reserve with a mix of old and new buildings, horses wandering freely, and the ubiquitous dog pack. The road turns to gravel at the end of the reserve and then it is wilderness all the way to the west coast.

A few months later when Neil and Barclay and I were back to do a couple of days at the school, Leanne was studying the territory as part of a land claims team to trace the ancient "grease" trails from Bella Coola. We shared stories we had heard from up and down the coast about little green men and other uncanny mysteries. Les was struggling with the government's decision to log in Tweedsmuir Park where he had a trap line. The pine beetle was destroying vast tracts of land and forests were being cut and burned to try to contain the infestation. It would be good paying work. The Chilcotin forest is beautiful - I have a souvenir candle filled with pine needles and leaves. It is also home to notorious packs of wolves. There are many

settler stories about these wolves attacking cattle. We did see a wolf crossing a field of snow in the moonlight on our way into Hidden Lake.

That afternoon we prepared our gear - totes of costumes and props, our coreplast canoe, our Tricksters' backdrop, our personal belongings - and loaded it all in Les's truck. It had to be below the sides of the pick-up and covered with a tarp so that nothing would fall out. About midnight we set out for Hidden Lake, Les's original reserve. The four of us sat in the cab, squished together. None of us wanted to ride in the back even though we were assured it would be perfectly safe and cozy under the tarp. An hour or so later we came to the trail. Les explained that the chief of Hidden did not want the road to connect the reserve to the outside world and had had a twenty foot high embankment bulldozed across it. People from the outside could get there only by invitation.

I don't think Carrie had believed Les when he had described the "trail". Jack and I, having lived on the west coast of Vancouver Island, thought we were better prepared. None of our imaginations were up to the task. We could see ahead of us that the road ended in a high embankment. Without warning, Les wheeled up the snow bank at the side of the road and down the other side, brushing in between trees, around boulders, slithering and sliding until we came to the top of a rise. He screamed the whole time like a total maniac. We all screamed.

As we paused for breath, Carrie was sobbing and clinging onto me. Jack and I were grinning like fools. "Made it!" Les crowed and yipped like a coyote. We were in the hands of the Trickster. The next two hours we chased through the forest, grinding our way around obstacles, up and down impossible inclines, rubbing against trees, spinning out where the snow was too soft. The moon moved through clouds lighting the landscape fitfully. Evidently, we were coming into Hidden at the last possible time before the spring thaw. That was why we had to travel at night, when things froze up. Our trip out would be at night as well. On our way we passed twelve "dead war ponies", trucks that hadn't made it. Les had a story for each one - some of them fatal. Carrie was whimpering with fear and exhaustion. She has not forgiven me that trip to this day.

About half way we stopped to get out and stretch at the old village. This is where Les had grown up. Now, there were just the outlines of parts of log buildings and as we pulled into the site a herd of scrawny horses moved away out of the headlights. Les told us that the village had moved to Hidden Lake fifteen years ago because the water here was bad. The horses had decided to stay. There was one stallion that had managed to keep a herd of up to twelve mares. I shuddered to think of the hardships that herd would endure - deep snow, wolves, grizzlies, wolverines. Evidently there was an old mare that was canny enough to keep them all together. What would happen when she died?

Finally, we pulled onto what was recognizable as a narrow road. Another couple of miles and Hidden Lake was before us, a white expanse shining in the moonlight. The village was not yet visible at the other end of the lake. When we did arrive, snow sparkled on the roofs of what looked like an alpine village above a picturesque frozen lake. Tall pine trees surrounded

the shore. The only way to come to Hidden Lake was on the winter trail, as we had, by float or ski plane, or on foot or horseback, as hundreds of people do every summer for a Native gathering.

Les led us into his mother's house. She was not there at the time as she also kept an apartment in Quesnel where the band office is. The house was icy cold and Les lit the wood stove in the basement. I am always amazed at how efficient the basement woodstoves are in the interior. It must be that the wood there is dry. Having spent my whole life (except for 2 years in Edmonton where there are no wood stoves or fireplaces) at the coast, I had never experienced the wonderful heat that comes from dry wood. Nevertheless, the beds we crept into were icy cold though we were thankful to have a few hours to sleep before we had to be at the school the following morning.

About 10:30 the next morning, we walked through pristine snow--no carbon monoxide here--to a school made from portables and a gymnasium. There were maybe twenty-five students, all told, a young white female teacher doing her first contract, and a middle aged white man who was busy cleaning a room that housed a couple of computers. There were a few children but they didn't seem to be engaged in much of anything. Everyone was surprised to see us. It was like we had appeared out of thin air. Nobody had heard a plane arrive and the idea that white people could come any other way was unfathomable, though the young woman teacher was used to hitching rides in and out with the people from the village when everyone made their weekend exodus. Evidently, they had not been told that we were coming. It was very awkward as I explained why we were there. The man - it turned out that he was the principal - was dubious about us being able to do

anything at all as hardly any children ever showed up at the school and the adults in the community were highly unlikely to come to anything. The young teacher was a bit more hopeful and promised to send the children around the village to tell people that we were here.

In the end, we had enough people to do a sort of combined workshop/performance experience for about 3 hours that afternoon. It was mostly children with a couple of young men and the female teacher. The principal looked in on us, but didn't stay. People were enthusiastic and participated quite willingly, but somehow it all seemed a bit surreal - maybe it was the all night trip in. It turned out that it would be fruitless to try to do anything the next day because it was Friday, cheque day, and everyone would be leaving town in the middle of the night to get out to Quesnel to pick up their cheques, do their grocery shopping, visit family, and go to bingo, the casino, and the bars. Hidden Lake would be deserted to the wolves and the owls until the tired war ponies jolted their way in on the winter trail in the dark of Monday morning. As this was likely to be the last time the trail was passable, everyone was heading out-- except the principal who refused to travel except by plane. There was no plane coming so he would be stranded here alone, as he had been for every weekend since he had arrived in January.

To me it was a bizarre situation--an idyllic winter paradise, that middle class white people would pay to visit -- deserted on weekends and peopled during the week. There was no means of making a living here. People hunted and fished but if they worked, it was in Williams Lake or Prince George or Quesnel. The Band Office had to be in Quesnel because there was no

reliable power or telephone at the lake. They hoped to have satellite connection for the computers in the school but with only generators for power it was dicey. As it was, the generators were turned off at 9 PM and didn't come on again until 7 AM. That night, we played cards with Les until about 10 PM, using an alcohol lamp. The principal had practically begged me to come over and have dinner with him. It was obvious that he had been drinking. Jack had had an uncomfortable run in with him earlier in the day when he was having a smoke break. He reported that the man had spoken about the people there disparagingly, saying, "What can you expect from Indians." Obviously he didn't mark Jack as a Native man. I was concerned, but I just couldn't bring myself to go to his house and neither Jack nor Carrie would go with me. I had been looking forward to spending time with Les anyway. He said that he had spoken to the principal about our coming in, and that people there were very unhappy with him. They wanted to end his contract. I wondered how the young woman teacher managed to negotiate the politics of the situation. It was obvious that she, too, avoided the man. I think she was very brave to be there.

Even though they were trying to keep the community viable at Hidden Lake, the parents wanted their children to go to school in Quesnel where they had better opportunities to learn and where they would have to be to go to high school anyway. *What and whose standards of community, of education, of well-being, can be applied here? What is the nature of the elastic tension between the 'realities' of Hidden Lake and the 'outside' world? Did our theatre work have any relevance there? Les knew our work and had asked us to come but what did he hope for us to accomplish?*

We left a deserted village at about 4 AM. Everyone had left before us and I think Les was a bit concerned that if we ran into trouble, no-one would be coming that way again for a couple of days. But we made it safely to Les's about 7 AM, just in time to wake up Leanne and the kids. They were all for getting on the road to Quesnel themselves. We emptied Les's truck and repacked my Multi. Somewhere on the trail we had lost one of our "boxes" that we used for the story "Ko-ishin-mit and the Shadow People"². But that was all, incredibly. Les, Leanne and kids pulled out ahead of us on the way to the city. We limped tiredly to the General Store for breakfast before starting back to the coast. In the end we decided to make the run straight for home and caught the last ferry from Tsawassen for Duke Point, getting home twenty-four hours after we had left Hidden Lake. That was the last trip Carrie made with us.

² Found in *Son of Raven, Son of Deer*, by George Clutesi, Sr.

Stopping Place

The practice of participatory theatre: exploring the continuum of audience involvement

The term participatory theatre is used for theatre performance that involves the audience directly, along a continuum from getting the audience to sing along or participate in a call-and-response with the actors, to having the audience members become fully vested as performers in the theatre event where the imaginary and physical line between actors and audience participants is erased. Within this range are instances where audience members are chosen to come "on stage" to do certain tasks, as in a magic show; instances where audience members may intervene in changing the action of the play as in Forum theatre; instances where the actors are not professionals, but are members of the community acting on behalf of their community as in a community play. Participatory theatre can also be a Happening where the visitors to an installation interact with the installation and each other.

There are two recent theatre explorations which I find particularly interesting and which demonstrate the wide range of participatory experiences:

- “Un voyage Pas Comme Les Autres Sur Les Chemins De L'Exil”, written about by Susan Haedicke in *Theatre Topics* 12:2, 2002;
- “We are One Tribe: the theatre company Blah Blah Blah and Eileen Pennington”, written about by Bridget Escolme in *Popular Theatre in Popular Culture*, 2003.

This stopping place hosts a discussion of these two productions, their intentions and results, and relates my own practice to these models which embody many of the essentials of successful Participatory theatre.

To preface my description of these two theatre events it is useful to provide a frame through which to interpret them. While these events are radical in that the audience become actor-participants in the scenes as they unfold, they still may be understood in terms put forward by Baz Kershaw in speaking of traditional theatre:

. . . performance can be most usefully described as an *ideological transaction* between a company of performers and the community of their audience. . . I view performance as a transaction because, evidently, communication in performance is not simply uni-directional, from actors to audience. . . the reactions of audiences influence the nature of a performance. (Kershaw, 1992, p. 16)

Kershaw's understanding of “theatre as a public arena for the collective exploration of ideological meaning” (1992, p. 17) helps to position these theatre projects in the terms of their own intentions and efficacy. He cites Julian Hilton who argues

that the interaction of the audience and the performers produces a *performance consciousness* that allows both to engage in the construction of possible worlds - the simultaneous interplay of the 'real' and the 'not-real' (1992, p. 24-25). My argument is that as this interaction between audience and performer exists in the segregated theatre, the experience of co-creation may be intensified in a situation where the audience becomes engaged as participants in the action of the play.

Un voyage Pas Comme Les Autres Sur Les Chemins De L'Exil (A Voyage Unlike Any Other on the Road to Exile), was created as an *interactive exposition* to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The *educational theatrical event* was also a response to the increased number of refugees seeking asylum in the European Union and the climate of *hostility and xenophobia* encountered by these immigrants. Ten human rights organizations under the patronage of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, partnered with Government ministries and non-profit organizations, sponsored the project. Theatre professionals and refugees who had been granted asylum in the EU formed the creative team. A number of cities, including Rome, Brussels, Paris, Frankfurt, and Rotterdam hosted the participatory theatre event between 1998 and 2000.

The set up for *Un Voyage Pas Comme Les Autres*, is reminiscent of the *New York Happenings* staged by Allan Kaprow in the 1960's. This movement was the precursor of the performance art of the 1980's, continuing to the present. The Happenings, possibly because they grew out of visual art, rather than theatre, did not have to deal with the conventions of

performers and audience. The audience was not fixed in seats, but mobile. The performative components in a Happening were as likely to be inanimate or non-human as human. The human performative components were the visitors who came to the Happening and interacted with each other and the constructed environment. We can see this dynamic working in *Un Voyage*.

Jeff Kelley has edited a collection of Allen Kaprow's essays spanning the late 1950's to the early 1990's. Kelley explains Kaprow's vision for participatory art, using words such as "reciprocal" which foreshadow Bourriaud's contemporary concern with relational aesthetics:

Implicit . . . is Kaprow's faith in the communicative function of art. But in the arts, communication tends to flow in one direction, from the artist through a medium toward an audience. We the audience find we've been "communicated" to, and what has been communicated to us is something of the artist's creative experience. But implicit in communication is a reciprocal flow, and reciprocity in art, more verb-like than noun-like, begins to move esthetic experience toward participation.

Actual participation in a work of art courts anarchy. It invites the participant to make a choice of some kind. Usually that choice includes whether to participate To Kaprow, participation is whole: it engages both our minds and bodies in actions that transform art into experience and esthetics into meaning. Our experience as participants is one of meaningful transformation. (Kaprow, 1993: p. xvii - xviii)

Kaprow identifies the elements of 'found space', improvised action and chance, which are employed in *Un Voyage*.

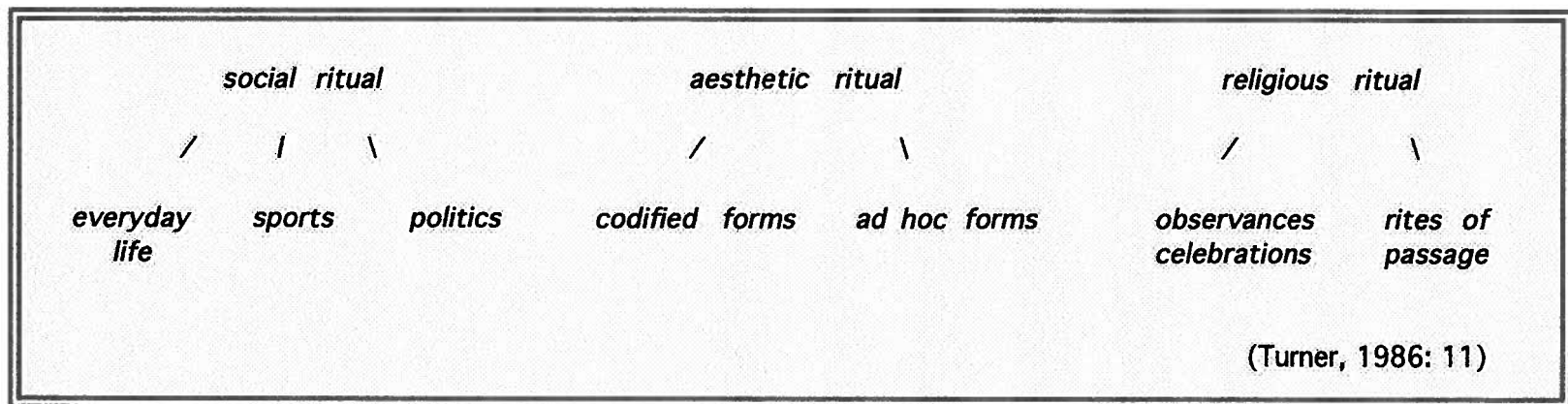
Kaprow: To my way of thinking, Happenings possess some crucial qualities that distinguish them from the usual theatrical works, even the experimental ones of today. . . . The most intense and essential Happenings have been spawned in old lofts, basements, vacant stores, natural surroundings, and the street, where very small audiences, or groups of visitors, are commingled in some way with the event, flowing in and among its parts. There is thus no separation of audience and play (as there is even in round or pit theaters). . .

. . . the second important difference is that a Happening has no plot . . . and is materialized in an improvisatory fashion, like jazz . . . The action leads itself any way it wishes, and the artist controls it only to the degree that it keeps on "shaking" right. A modern play rarely has such an impromptu basis, for plays are still first written. A Happening is generated in action by a headful of ideas or a flimsily jotted-down score or "root" directions.

. . . the involvement in chance, which is the third and most problematical quality found in Happenings, rarely occurs in the conventional theater. When it does, it is usually a marginal benefit of interpretation. In the present work, chance (in conjunction with improvisation) is a deliberately employed mode of operation that penetrates the whole composition and its character. It is the vehicle of the spontaneous. And it is the clue to understanding how control (the setting up of chance techniques) can effectively produce the opposite quality of the unplanned and apparently uncontrolled. . .

Chance then, rather than spontaneity, is the key term, for it implies risk and fear . . . "
(Kaprow, 1993, p. 16 - 19)

Working from the theatre tradition, Richard Schechner's Performance Group, again in the 1960's, developed performances they first called "*Actuals*", and which became known as Environmental Theater, meaning theatre that actively used different environments for performance. Schechner's Performance Group consistently sought non-conventional spaces for their Environmental Theatre. Contemporary use of the "black box" theatre which can be reconfigured for every production, manipulating the performance and audience spaces, is a response to creating singular performance environments. Today, in any city, one will find theatres housed in firehalls, churches, old civic centres, restaurants, factories, museums. The use of "found" space corresponds to Kaprow's Happenings, though I think that Happenings allowed for more audience autonomy. Schechner, who was a lifelong friend of Victor Turner and worked closely with him, approaches performance from an anthropological perspective, understanding theatre as an aesthetic ritual. Turner's schematic is useful to help visualize how both Actuals and Happenings enact aesthetic rituals in relationship to other forms of social drama:



Richard Schechner's rules for "Actuals" are clearly more related to theatre performance than visual art and also offer a useful frame from which to consider participatory theatre and performance and *Un Voyage Pas Comme Les Autres*.

Schechner: An actual has five basic qualities . . . :

- 1) process, something happens here and now;
- 2) consequential, irremediable, and irrevocable acts, exchanges or situations;
- 3) contest, something is at stake for the performers and often for the spectators;
- 4) initiation, a change in status for the participants;
- 5) space is used concretely and organically." (Schechner, 1988, p. 51)

A large circus tent was turned into a warehouse like space where small groups of participants (up to 25 at a time) would enter and embark on individual journeys as characters they had adopted. Each participant would choose who they wanted to be from 12 (composite) characters displayed in life-sized photographs along with a short biography. The refugee characters ranged in age from twelve to sixty-five and were from a variety of countries from Eastern Europe, Africa, South America and Asia. The audience participants were given passports in their character's names and were marked on their foreheads with a colored dot to denote race. The journey of each character traced the created history of their entry the European Union and their attempt to gain refugee status. Of the twelve characters, only two would achieve their goal. The journeys would last

between one to one-and-a-half hours and would be guided by professional and non-professional actors playing officials and significant civilians who came into contact with the characters. There would be occasions on the journeys where the characters would be given further information about their circumstances. Each journey was solitary and unique.

The press release for *Voyage*, October 19, 1998, stated:

By adopting the identity of a refugee who flees his/her country, which is subject to war, persecutions, or dictatorship, the visitor discovers all the stages of a request for asylum. By becoming an actor in this history, the visitor is put into the situation so he or she can live the fear, the uprooting, the wandering, and the difficulties of acclimating to the receiving country, beginning with the flight from one's homeland up to the moment of being granted or refused refugee status. (Haedicke, 2002, p. 102)

It is clear that the intention of the participatory theatre event was to educate the visitors so that they could understand the experiences faced by refugees. Haedicke also believes that there was an unstated goal to encourage sympathy, to ameliorate the growing xenophobia in the EU, and to initiate a grassroots mobilization to change asylum policies. (p. 103)

Each participant journeyed through eleven "zones", acting improvised scenes that included the flight from their homeland, their request for asylum, illegal work, detention, and the final outcome of their appeal. On their journey they were guided, intimidated, befriended and exploited by soldiers, companions, bureaucrats, police, judges, thieves. Once they had completed

their journey and resumed their own identity, they could record their immediate responses to their experience in the *livre d'or* - a notebook in the lobby just outside the exit to the performance space.

Susan Haedicke participated in the event in Paris in 1999. Her character, Wanmin, was a woman from China. As she describes her own journey through the *Voyage Pas Comme Les Autres*, it is clear that it is her emotional responses to her physical interactions as Wanmin that hold the most power. It did not matter that she was always aware that she was Susan playing Wanmin; the experiences she had were still experiences that impacted her body. They physically happened to her - Susan and Wanmin. These experiences included physical intimidation (even though the participants were never touched by the actors), betrayal--by herself and others, deception, isolation, competition. She reports feeling loneliness, disorientation, fear, triumph, guilt, anger, despair. She writes: "The powerlessness experienced by the spect-actor¹ here enabled the participant to feel on a visceral level, rather than on an intellectual level, the powerlessness experienced by a refugee, even though the scale was quite different" (p. 107).

¹ The term "spect-actor" is a term used by Augusto Boal to describe audience members who come into the playing space to change the action of a play. Haedicke uses this term interchangeably with "participants".

The role playing was sustained not only by the conventions of the set up but by the actors who only saw the coloured dot and responded to that, not to the person wearing the dot - character or participant. It was as if the participant stepped into the skin of the refugee; their spectating body became a performing body.

Haedicke speaks of witnessing with the body: "*Voyage* implicates the spect-actors' bodies in such a way that they come to recognize themselves in the refugees and the refugees in themselves - the "I" and the "you" become intertwined." (p. 108-109) This betwixt and between is what Victor Turner calls "liminal" space². Liminality allows the participant to accept the simultaneous experience of the real and the not real. As Augusto Boal explains, the character may be a fiction but the action the spect-actor takes is real action.

² Turner links ritual to theatre through the idea of "liminality". . .The "limen" is the threshold or margin between the sacred and the mundane; it is a limbo where desire and possibility can play:

. . . rather than stating facts, so do liminality and the phenomena of liminality dissolve all factual and commonsense systems into their components and "play" with them in ways never found in nature or in custom, at least at the level of direct perception. (Turner, 1986, p. 25)

This place of liminality may be secret, as in a private ritual, or public, as in a theatrical performance. . . A common way of describing the experience of the audience at a theatre performance is to say that they 'suspend disbelief', that they accept that the performance and that their watching of the performance is in a space/time of 'make believe', a subjunctive liminal space. They accept that the world of the play being performed by the actors is 'as real' for the time of the performance. (Smith, 2005, p. 5 - 6)

The act of witnessing was also worked upon the participant by the actors who saw only the colored dot. The erasure of one's identity was troubling: "The spect-actors . . . positioned as "other" . . . found their identities not fixed and secure, but relational and situational, and they were forced to confront the possibility of the other within their own person" (p. 109). It is this identification with another that Haedicke believes is the key to the potential efficacy of *Voyage*. She cites Elin Diamond's (1992, p. 396) rendering of identity transformation:. . . "identification is an assimilative or appropriative act, making the other the same as me or me the same as the other, but at the same time it causes the I/ego to be transformed by the other" (p. 113).

Haedicke does not believe that identification alone is enough to ensure a change of attitude in either participants or society. She believes that it is the reflexivity of the performance strategy that invites the audience member to question her/his assumptions about exile and to see her/his "subject position" in the master narratives or cultural myths of homeland, exile and asylum. In her own experience as Wanmin there were two instances when she was complicit with the structures of power that overwhelmed her - when she colluded with an immigration officer to prevent another refugee from gaining access and when she was silent while her boss berated another worker. Both of these experiences where she employed duplicitous survival strategies shocked her Susan identity within her Wanmin identity:

. . . I recognized, after the incident, that I had behaved in a way that supported and strengthened the power structure.
. . . the reflexivity encouraged by the performance strategy enabled me to see the hidden and powerfully persuasive agenda of the dominant ideology . . . (p. 114)

This reflexivity is what empowers the spect-actor. It is a method of Paolo Freire's "conscientization" - a critical awareness of social structures that empowers one to act for social change.

Haedicke questions what, if anything, she will do to act on her new awareness of the abuses experienced by refugees. She refers to Diamond's argument that identification is not only psychological but political, that it challenges the status quo (1992. p. 391). She may not change her life course, but the yellow dot remains on her forehead: "And yet . . . I am transformed. Wanmin is still with me. Her identity and mine have merged, and I see her/my face when I hear stories about refugees. I look at issues of immigration with different eyes" (p. 115).

What has occurred for her is a *decisive* shift³; her experience of witnessing with her body has burst through the theoretical and opened the space for potential social action. Haedicke's response to *Un Voyage Pas Comme Les Autres* would argue that for her, not only were the educational intentions of the theatre event realized, the unspoken goals of sympathy and identification were also achieved.

³ "In their work on postcolonialism, Ruth Frankenberg and Lata Mani distinguish between "decisive" shifts and "definitive" shifts - political, economic, and discursive - caused by decolonization. This distinction enables the authors to acknowledge real changes in thinking and action [decisive shifts] without claiming "a complete rupture in social, economic, and political relations and forms of knowledge [definitive shifts]" (Haedicke, 2002, p. 116).

Un Voyage employed the participatory strategy of role playing but the experience of the participants was isolated: it was personal, witnessed only by actors, not by other participants. Testimonies of the individual participants were recorded in the *livre d'or*, but those testimonies were written privately after the performance. The second example of Participatory theatre, while also employing role playing, is entirely different; *We Are One Tribe* is about the group and group process. This play clearly follows established methods of Theatre in Education (TIE). Schechner's rules for Actuals are particularly applicable to this performance project.

We Are One Tribe

Bridget Escolme, a drama teacher, identifies herself as a "an observer and participant" in her paper. She describes a drama project undertaken with a group of eight-year-old students in Leeds, England. The project was a collaboration between Blah, Blah, Blah Theatre Company, a touring company, and Eileen Pennington, a Drama in Education facilitator. The project took place over four days: actor-teachers, facilitator, children, school staff and observers worked together using theatre to explore the Roman occupation of a Celtic village.

It has an overtly educational aim: children learn about Celts and Romans. But it is essentially a piece about living as part of a community, the 'tribe'. [The children have to decide when that involves conflict and when conflicts can be resolved]. (Prentki & Selman, 2003, p. 65)

The children take on the roles of Celtic villagers, investing in their collective traditions and loyalties to each other in the face of an occupying force of strangers. But these loyalties and traditions are examined. In the enactment of the drama there is space for the students to step back from the scenarios presented and consider the consequences of the actions of their characters.

The project was initiated by Blah, Blah, Blah with two intentions: they wished to further develop their theatre programs for schools and also wanted to "become a part of every aspect of [the] community" of Seacroft, where their company is situated" (p. 65). The Artistic Director, Anthony Haddon, saw that there needed to be stronger links built between the school(s) and the rest of the community.

In her description of her own participation and observation, Escolme often remarks on her surprise at the depth and complexity of the students' engagement with 'the work'⁴. She attributes this to a specific approach to the imagination utilized by Blah, Blah, Blah that is uniquely accessible to theatre: materiality. One could also use the word concrete to describe this approach. If one accepts the adage that 'it is through *doing* that one learns best', then acting out a situation, in

⁴ In theatre, we consistently refer to our practice as "the work". This is universal and so common that, as practitioners, we may not realize that this is very disconcerting to the uninitiated. This was brought home to me during a youth theatre project with youth at risk when some of the youth balked at my use of the term. To them, "work" was a very negative term meaning coercion to do something for someone else's purposes. They were unable to accept that they could do work for themselves or that it could be fun and satisfying and productive.

real time, with props, creating a physical representative space, assuming plausible characters, is the *best* way to learn. The imagination is physically engaged through doing. Haddon explains this approach:

To ask children simply to 'imagine' another community, another period of history may be unrealistic, when they may not have had intensive access to books, to complex systems of signs and symbols before coming to school. We wanted to present the young people with building blocks for the imagination (p. 65).

When one considers the multi-ethnic, multi-language realities of inner city schools, drama provides a useful and exemplary means to stimulate and create common experience through practiced signs and symbols among diverse populations. *We Are One Tribe* explores how a “community makes meaning and makes itself meaningful” (p. 65).

During the four days of the project, rituals are used extensively. They are used in the creation of the drama and in the structure of the sessions. At the end of each session the children record their activities in a self-esteem ritual by choosing from a series of notices that reiterate positive actions they have taken in the session. Examples Escolme gives are: “I sympathized with someone. . . . and I shared something The last notice they pick states whether they ‘did their best’ some, part, or all of the time” (p. 66). Choosing these notices is a self-reflexive exercise; the notices are concrete representations of their ideas, emotions, learnings, in the daily 'work'.

Day one is *Learning to Sign*. The first ritual task is drawing and cutting out paper swords. These swords hold personal histories for each participant; each mark bears a story. Once the swords are cut out and each participant is holding their sword, standing in a circle, Eileen Pennington taps each person on the shoulder. They lay their paper sword, the physical sign, behind them on the floor, turn back to her and draw from their imaginary scabbard an intangible sword now made real from the paper representation. This intangible sword has weight and heft and consequence. It must be handled carefully. As a witness, Escolme writes:

I am struck firstly by the investment that is instantly made by the children in these 'real' swords. . . . there was not a flicker of doubt in the face of a single child that these 'swords' represented something more real than the paper ones.. . . the ritualistic slowness and the sense of witnessing something of real significance as each child replaced the material reality of paper with the imaginative reality of the mimed sword was the first of many moments when a real understanding seemed to have been reached amongst the group. It was becoming evident that as a group we can create realities that have meaning for us, that bind us in positive spirals of self-esteem and appropriate action. (p. 66)

Words that Escolme uses witness the profound effect this first simple, concrete or 'material' exercise has on the group: "investment", "not a flicker of doubt", "real significance", "understanding", "create realities", "positive spirals of self esteem". They have taken the first step to becoming one tribe, in establishing a community ideology.

The rest of day one has the children creating their own sword salutes to their queen, learning the visual layout of their village, preparing for the Roman attack. The last activity is a collective frozen image of the children defending their village from the Romans. Each child knows who they are and what they are defending. When the children are frozen in place the actors become the Romans and take positions in response to the children. Suddenly, the imagined potential becomes embodied and physically present.

As Escolme describes her observations of the children during that first day I am reminded forcibly of Victor Turner's "communitas". Escolme writes: "They had begun to relinquish the rivalries and hierarchies of their classroom society and were beginning to become One Tribe" (p. 68). Turner says:

. . . a group unity is experienced, a kind of generic bond outside the constraints of social structure, akin to Martin Buber's "flowing from I to Thou." Communitas, however, does not merge identities; instead it liberates them from conformity to general norms, so that they experience one another concretely and not in terms of social structural . . . abstractions. . . . Within this situation the total individual is fruitfully "alienated" from the partial persona, making room for the possibility of a total (rather than a perspectival) view of the life of society. (1982, p. 205-206)

Anthony Haddon's goal for this theatre project is to understand about living in a community; in Turner's words, communitas opens the "possibility of a total . . . view of the life of society".

Day two's focus is *The Meaning of Death*. To begin with, the participants encounter the paper outlines of three human figures laid on the floor and surrounded by pieces of bark to signify the ground. Each figure is named with their position in the village. They have died in the Great Battle against the Romans. The children create the battle and how each warrior died. Pennington uses film techniques of reverse and play back so that the group can pause at 'freeze frames' to create mini scenes in the story they have created and that are then re-enacted by the actors with the students interjecting the ritual chorus: *All these things happened on the day of the Great Battle*. Next, the children interview actors playing the ghosts of the warriors to discover what will happen to them now that they are dead. They learn about the pre-Christian ideas of the afterlife. The last activity is at the gravesides of the warriors where the participants each offer a gift for each warrior to take with them on their journey.

Day three is about *Signs of Self-control*. This day begins differently as the children are asked to do their self-esteem ritual before they begin the drama activities. My analysis of this tactic is that it diffuses anxiety and anger the children are bringing with them so that they can enter into a delicate and challenging exploration with cleared focus and positive energy. This is the day that the Celts meet the Romans. A tableau of a situation where the Roman Governor bullies his Celtic scribe is animated in 'freeze frames' and the children analyze the signs that they see. As defeated subjects, they must respond to Roman insults in ways that satisfy the Romans and do not endanger their own lives when what they really want to do is return like for like. The ritual developed works like this: Pennington insults a small group of Celts. The group replies in a chorus of tactful response. An adult with each group speaks a running commentary of what they are all really thinking. The insult and

chorus are understood as signs; the running commentary is understood as subtext. The final action of the day is that the Celts promise their Queen to hand in their swords without violence or anger. The promise is made as a group pledge.

Day four celebrates *A Moral Victory*. The Celts are to hand in their swords. They choose ways in which to disable their swords. To symbolize this they tear their paper swords and lay them in a cart. Then their queen offers the Roman Governor, Ostorius, a 'cup of friendship'. Pennington freezes the action and the group discusses whether or not the Governor will drink from the cup. They are allowed to ask him what he will do. It is discovered that he will not drink from the cup because he cannot promise to keep the peace. In the final exercise the children take the opportunity to write what they would really like to say to the Governor and to leave these writings around his red cloak. The children then place their hands on their Queen's sword and promise not to break the peace unless the Romans break their promise and attack them again.

Escolme reports that after this last session the children are much more thoughtful in evaluating their own efforts in the self-esteem exercise:

Children I would have expected to run straight to the card marked 'I did my best all of the time' want to take time to choose the one that truly reflects their sense of their own achievement. There is an enormous sense of self-satisfaction amongst the children, a sense that a moral victory has been won. It is the class's victory, in the concentration they have invested in the drama. It is the tribe's, in maintaining its self-esteem before the bully

Ostorius. A class that according to its teacher has fundamental social problems seems, at least for today, to have become One Tribe. (p. 72)

The self-esteem engendered through the theatre event has grown through *communitas*, as Turner describes. The new relationships between the participants have been forged beyond the scope of their everyday relationships. What has been accomplished through the four day project is that each child has been valued as a member of his/her community; community values have been explored through ritual, art and story; personal and group behaviour and their consequences have been analyzed and certain essential norms (ideologies) have been adhered to.

The educational aims for the drama project have been realized: the class has a concrete understanding of the Roman invasion of Britain. Has *We Are One Tribe* achieved its objective in exploring “how a community makes meaning and makes itself meaningful”? From Escolme's perspective it would certainly seem so. She does, however question the larger implications of a project such as this in terms of the childrens' lives beyond their four day classroom experience. She hopes that there will be a wider and longer term impact for the participants:

The stereotypical inner city community is one where tribalism rules, creating class, racial and inter-generational tensions. However, many children in Britain today may have little experience of belonging to a group with a strong history and local tradition. I do not think it is idealistic to imagine that the project will stimulate a search for communal ties and co-operation amongst the children it touched, as they grow up. (p. 72)

It is also to be hoped that the desire for social cohesion will co/operate with the ability to critique political motives and social mores.

Un Voyage Pas Comme Les Autres and *We Are One Tribe* employ the performance strategy of identification through audience participation. Susan Haedicke identified with Wanmin, and through her, other refugees. The eight-year-old students in Leeds identified with the Celts who were being invaded by the Romans, and potentially, other oppressed groups of people. *Un Voyage's* structure relates closely to Kaprow's Happenings. Both theatre events follow the rules of Schechner's *Actuals*. Both events employ professional actors to perform and to facilitate the performance.

How do these two participatory theatre projects relate to my inquiry project of ParticipAction Theatre?

The two examples of participatory theatre projects are different in their dimensions, their intentions, their participants. There are, however, common features between them. *The first feature is that in both projects there are spoken and unspoken desires for social action to be an outcome* to participating in the performance. In *Un Voyage*, the play is provoked by social issues and is created as an “educational theatrical event”, with the hope that if people experience the

realities faced by an oppressed segment of the population, their attitudes and behaviours will change. In *We Are One Tribe*, the theatre is undertaken as an educative project, as curriculum in a school setting. Beyond the overt teaching of the history lesson, the goal of the theatre company directing the project is to connect the schools to the larger community - a reconciliation of sorts. Escolme sees that there may well be a longer term potential for the participants in their ability to build community in other contexts.

Because my inquiry project was an inquiry into “what happens between people when they perform together”, it would have been inappropriate to focus the plays and the performance experience towards either a deliberately educative goal or changed behaviour. There is, however, an underlying hope that providing an opportunity for people to act in a safe, fun environment will be a positive and confidence building experience. This hope was certainly borne out in the comments made by the youth leaders. While we did not create or structure the plays to teach a story or a lesson, the children did learn stories (one that is based on historical fact), they learned songs, they learned dance steps, they learned to act co-operatively. These outcomes were not overt goals for the purpose of the inquiry, but the fact that the participActors could engage in all these ways did contribute to their active learning.

The second feature is emotional engagement. Haedicke identifies her emotional involvement through her body responses as the most profound mode of engagement in *Un Voyage*. In considering the childrens' responses in *We Are One Tribe*, particularly the creating and the destroying of their swords, their personal, emotional engagement was what most

impressed Escolme It would seem that emotional response, through the physical commitment of one's body to a role other than one's self, is hugely powerful and valuable for aesthetic learning. In the terms of the ancient Greek tragedies, what this speaks to is *catharsis*, an emotional purging that renews the individual and through the individual, society.

The participants at the day camps certainly engaged emotionally. The most repeated word was “fun”, though “happy” was also used. What are the emotions that correspond to “fun”? Happiness, joy, excitement, engagement, release, surprise, are the emotions I think of. There may also have been at times, some apprehension which makes the fun that much more poignant. When you look at the DVD of the two performances the emotional engagement is apparent. As Haedicke and Escolme imply, emotional engagement through physical embodiment is a key to aesthetic learning.

*A third feature is transformation*⁵. Haedicke, through her wearing of Wanmin, has been transformed into a hybrid creature: Susan and Wanmin. She testifies: “I am transformed. Wanmin is still with me. Her identity and mine have merged,

⁵ transform: vb. 1. to alter or be altered radically in form, function, etc.
transformation: n. 1. a change or alteration, esp. a radical one. 2. the act of transforming or the state of being transformed. 6. an apparently miraculous change in the appearance of a stage set. (Collins, 1986, p. 1615)

The aspects of transformation that I think advise Haedicke's, Escolme's, and the interviewees' understanding include change, alteration, radical, action, state of being, miraculous, and appearance. There may be differing degrees of transformation, as is apparent in the testimonies of these witnesses but I would suggest that transformative moments have great power however we measure the apparent change or alteration. For me, Haedicke's witness of her own transformation has great power

and I see her/my face when I hear stories about refugees” (p. 115). In the telling of her experiences in *We Are One Tribe*, Escolme continually notes transformative moments for the participants, herself included. She also notes that the behaviours of the participants change over the four days of the project in ways that show their basic concepts of self have been transformed: “Children I would have expected to run straight to the card marked “I did my best all of the time” want to take time to choose the one that truly reflects their sense of their own achievement” (p. 72).

How is such transformation accomplished? In both projects, rituals are used at key points to bring the participants into character role. In *Un Voyage*, the first action that Susan must do is surrender her own identity (in reality her purse with all her ID), take a passport and visa for her character of Wanmin and receive the yellow dot on her forehead. These simple ritual actions are profound. As Susan, clutching her new identity, enters the immigration labyrinth, she is seen only as Wanmin: she must commit to her new identity. In *We Are One Tribe*, Escolme describes the first exercise where the participants make their paper swords - holding stories of who they are - and transform them into real, invisible swords. Again, the physical action, in this case shared simultaneously between all the participants, but acknowledged individual by individual, ritualizes their taking on the roles of warriors.

because she is speaking with the authority of her own lived experience. The other accounts of transformation are given by observers.

The day camp participants also underwent some transformation. The leaders told of children who came out of their shells and shone. One actor spoke of how her relationship with some children changed because of their experience of acting together. The interviewees spoke of seeing people differently through the performance experience. They also spoke of their surprise that almost all the children participated willingly and with enthusiasm.

There are important differences between the two projects as well. *First, the question of 'who' participates, or inclusion/exclusion, has implications that impact the efficacy of each project. Each project has a radically different range of participants - from disassociated urban individuals across the European continent, to an inner city classroom of eight-year-olds and school staff in Leeds, UK. Both projects have in common, goals of educating for social change. The arenas in which the participants operate in their lives are hugely different, the opportunities for collective action widely divergent.*

The participants in *Un Voyage* acted their roles in isolation. They came to the performance of their own choice. Their performance was witnessed only by themselves, not by other participants; the actors could not step outside their roles (not that they were unaware of the performances of the participants but their roles did not allow them to acknowledge this). There was no opportunity for participants to practice solidarity as was provided in *We Are One Tribe*. The children in Leeds, because the theatre project was part of their school curriculum, had no choice as to whether or not they participated. Nevertheless, group participation only works if everyone in the group 'buys in'. Escolme notes that efforts were made to encourage all the students and that they were enticed by the facilitator through personal acknowledgment. The ritual of the

self-esteem activities was directed specifically towards this effort. The focus in this project was on the group and the group learning. Individuals were acknowledged but did not have character roles that stood out from the others. For much of the project the children were, in fact, audience, albeit a consulted audience, for the actors playing the character roles.

In “The Trail to Munachi” and “The Pied Piper of Hamelin”, there were roles for everyone. There was time for each participant to be acknowledged and to develop their character and their role in the play. In each play there were individual roles and group roles and participants had a degree of choice as to what they would be doing. When the actors introduced themselves, in costume, they would identify how many people they needed for their group and what their group was. Children would raise their hands and be chosen. They would not know what they would be doing in the play, but they did know who they would be.

The role of the 'professionals' in each project also varies. In *Un Voyage*, the professional and non-professional (meaning without formal training) actors were part of the original creative team. They took on facilitative character roles, guiding each participant through the journey of their chosen refugee character. It is noteworthy that the 'non-professional' actors were themselves refugees. In *We Are One Tribe*, the professionals were actor-teachers (this term is not explained) and Eileen Pennington, the facilitator. The actor-teachers took on the character roles and performed scenes for the students. The facilitator ran the show--much as an MC or animateur.

In the ParticipAction project performances the student actors were the 'professionals'. They had both acting and facilitative roles, often carrying out both roles simultaneously. Our goal was to give as much responsibility and opportunity to the participants as we possibly could. The play was about them, not us. In our training and preparation for the performances I stressed that trust was of paramount importance. We needed to be able to trust ourselves and each other, and be able to extend that trust to the participants. While the actors certainly had authority in the performances, the leaders remarked how they came to the level of the participants.

Another area of difference is the sources for the scenes. Un Voyage was developed from the case histories of actual refugees - some of whom became actors in the event. The stories were contemporary and immediate and personal. Blah, Blah, Blah Theatre worked from the accepted history of the Roman Invasion of Britain but chose to focus on the untold stories of the Celtic defenders. The sources of the stories do not seem to be as important as the form the stories take: all stories, to allow for dramatic development, need to have characters who strive against obstacles, whether those obstacles are bureaucracies, invaders, personal foes, or impersonal forces of nature. Dramatic stories need protagonists and antagonists.

In the participatory theatre course, the goal was to create the stories collectively. We used folk tales as models, striving to discover and use archetypes. "The Trail to Munachi" grew from an original story offered by one of the actors. The archetypal structure of the quest proved to be a good vehicle through which to build characters and dramatic tension. The family

characters were modeled on the archetypal figures of the warrior, the healer, the builder, the child, the eldest. The natural forces that they struggled against were monsters, a flash flood, becoming lost. The helpers in the story were the horse and cart, the path and the stars. All the participants became the walls of the city at the end of the play. Thus the story can be seen and understood from many perspectives

“The Pied Piper of Hamelin” is a traditional German folk tale. It is unusual in that it has a specific date for when the story occurred. This made the story seem more immediate and allowed it to exist both in the realms of fairy tale and history. Here, the archetypes include the outsider, the ruler, the unnatural enemy. The participants were divided into three equal groups of townspeople, children and rats, with the individual role of the lame child. Each group had equal weight within the performance. With the actors taking the roles of Mayor and Pied Piper, there was opportunity for the participants to recognize that, depending on the group you were in, you related to these two characters in different ways.

The last feature I wish to discuss, is for me, the most crucial, *the development of communitas*. Communitas is, of necessity, a group phenomenon. It occurs between people, when, through ritual action, they achieve an experience that transcends their ordinary understanding of themselves in their social relationships. *We Are One Tribe* was structured in such a way that the participants were able to experience communitas. In *Un Voyage* the opportunity for communitas was not realized. The solitary nature of the performance disallowed the development of communitas even though a collective action of the participants would have been very interesting - both theatrically and in terms of social efficacy. While, as a theatre

artist, the aesthetic values of *Un Voyage* are exciting, the project realizes less than its potential because the participants are separated from each other. The element of chance is stifled through the logistics of one protagonist against many antagonists. This is essential to the purpose of *Un Voyage*:

By becoming an actor in this history, the visitor is put into the situation so he or she can live the fear, the uprooting, the wandering, and the difficulties of acclimating to the receiving country, beginning with the flight from one's homeland up to the moment of being granted or refused refugee status. (p. 102)

The opportunity for participants to struggle together to alleviate some of the difficulties experienced by refugees is not the purpose; the purpose is to radicalize individuals, to bring them understanding through the embodied experience of acting a refugee.

The ParticipAction theatre participants definitely had opportunities to transcend their ordinary understanding of themselves in their social relationships. Some of the leaders admitted that they would never act in front of other people. Other leaders noted that children took on roles and participated in ways that they never would have expected. They also speculated that if the participatory theatre experience had happened earlier in their programs it might have had greater effect as an ice breaker, bringing people closer together sooner. The idea of shared memories creating community was expressed.

The domain of communitas is where I situate my own practice of participatory theatre. To reiterate Turner's definition: "Communitas, however, does not merge identities; instead it liberates them from conformity to general norms, so that they experience one another concretely and not in terms of social structural abstractions".

What I hope to achieve in my own participatory theatre events is a transformative experience that is liberating and enlarging of the participants' personal and social perspectives. This is the first step towards Freire's conscientization. It is the experience of the participant that is important. The actors are facilitators in this process. Their example sets the standard for the participants: it encourages and challenges the participants to perform beyond their everyday personas, to elevate their experience of themselves and their experience of the other participants, to flow dialogically from I to thou (Buber, in Kepnes, 1992, p. 23). Because this experience is concrete, physically acted in real space-time, the body will remember the experience and the emotions will be activated in response to the memory. Because the participants have experienced themselves acting in ways beyond their normal "habitas", they have, as suggested by Bourdieu (1993), developed the capacity to do this in other "fields", other situations beyond the performance. In Boal's terms, they have 'rehearsed for the revolution'.

What are the features that are essential for communitas? Schechner's five principles for Actuals are a concise guide: *process, consequences, contest, initiation, concrete and organic use of space.* Of the two examples discussed in this chapter, neither *Un Voyage* nor *We Are One Tribe* realizes the concrete and organic use of space. *Un*

• *Voyage* turns a tent pavilion into a warehouse-type space of sectioned cubicles that mask that it is in fact a tent. *We Are One Tribe* takes place in a school; the actual space of a gymnasium is not utilized as a gymnasium but must be transformed imaginatively. The most successfully utilized principle of those above is *initiation*, when the children create their swords and transform into Celtic defenders.

In the ParticipAction Theatre performances, *process* was crucial. We began with our actor warm up with a large ball as the participants were coming to join us. This prepared us as facilitators as well as preparing our participants through watching how we worked together. The participants were propelled into planning and practicing their parts for the play and then the play was acted out without any rehearsal. It all happened with immediacy. For this reason, the actions that everyone took were *consequential*. There was no going back to fix mistakes, no 'second chances'. The story was enough to carry the action forward and to ensure the proper conclusion. If a 'glitch' occurred it was built into the performance - as when Duncan's bow broke or the trolls refused to die.

The *contest* was contained within the stories. In "The Trail to Munachi", the family has to work together to overcome physical barriers to be reunited. In "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" there are multiple contests, but the one that overshadows everything is the one between the Mayor and the Pied Piper. The contest for the participants is that they must stay completely focused for the whole performance so that they do their part on cue - and also so that they watch all the other

parts to understand the story and their part in it. Their contest is with themselves, to be an excellent actor and to improvise their role in the moment they are needed; they have been initiated as actors. The *initiation* occurs as they choose names for themselves, costumes, actions. It also occurs as they learn the songs that are part of the play.

The use of *space* was one of the strongest components of the ParticipAction theatre performances. Each performance happened in a different location outdoors. We had the logistics of terrain to work into each play as well as trying to find as much shade as possible for groups during their orientations and during the performances. The trail to Munachi could wind and double back as necessary, but we always had to make sure that everyone could see and hear each other. The Trolls would always take the highest ground so that they could ambush the travelers. The stars needed to be on a flat area so that they could lead the travelers to the city. The flood often used existing pathways for the river bed. The city of Hamelin needed to be in a wide open space with room for houses, and the rats to invade and to make a circle at the end of the play. The river needed to be placed where everyone could see the rats drowning. The mountain had to be within a short walking distance and with room behind it for the children to sing and dance.

There are mechanisms that work in the practice of participatory theatre that are demonstrated to varying degrees by *Un Voyage*, and *We Are One Tribe*:

- a dramatically structured story,

- an improvised script,
- actors-as-facilitators,
- adaptive use of space,
- real consequences,
- a contest or struggle,
- initiation of audience members as participants,
- participants having roles that are integral to the action of the play,
- immediacy - "it is happening now",
- group identification,
- rituals - as initiation rites, as bridge builders, as concrete expressions of abstract concepts.

These are the mechanisms that were used in the ParticipAction theatre performances and by Tricksters' Theatre. They ensure the success of a participatory theatre event: that it 'works', that the participants are engaged, and that they have a sense of accomplishment and elation in completing the performance.

An abiding effect of participatory theatre is the reflexivity that results from ignoring the conventions of the "fourth wall". When the participants enter the playing space, the line between audience and actors is erased. This allows for the play of real and not-real, fact and illusion, in ways that bring new experiences of the self and others. This is a part of the experience of *communitas*. Participants, in Turner's words, "experience one another concretely and not in terms of social structural

abstractions." While the experience of the theatre event is space-time limited, their bodies have been inscribed by their enacted characters. The temporary, conscious transformations that have been embodied by the participants are not lost; the transformations are integrated into their knowing of themselves. This is how Susan Haedicke and Wanmin co-exist; Haedicke can cast Wanmin's shadow with her own.

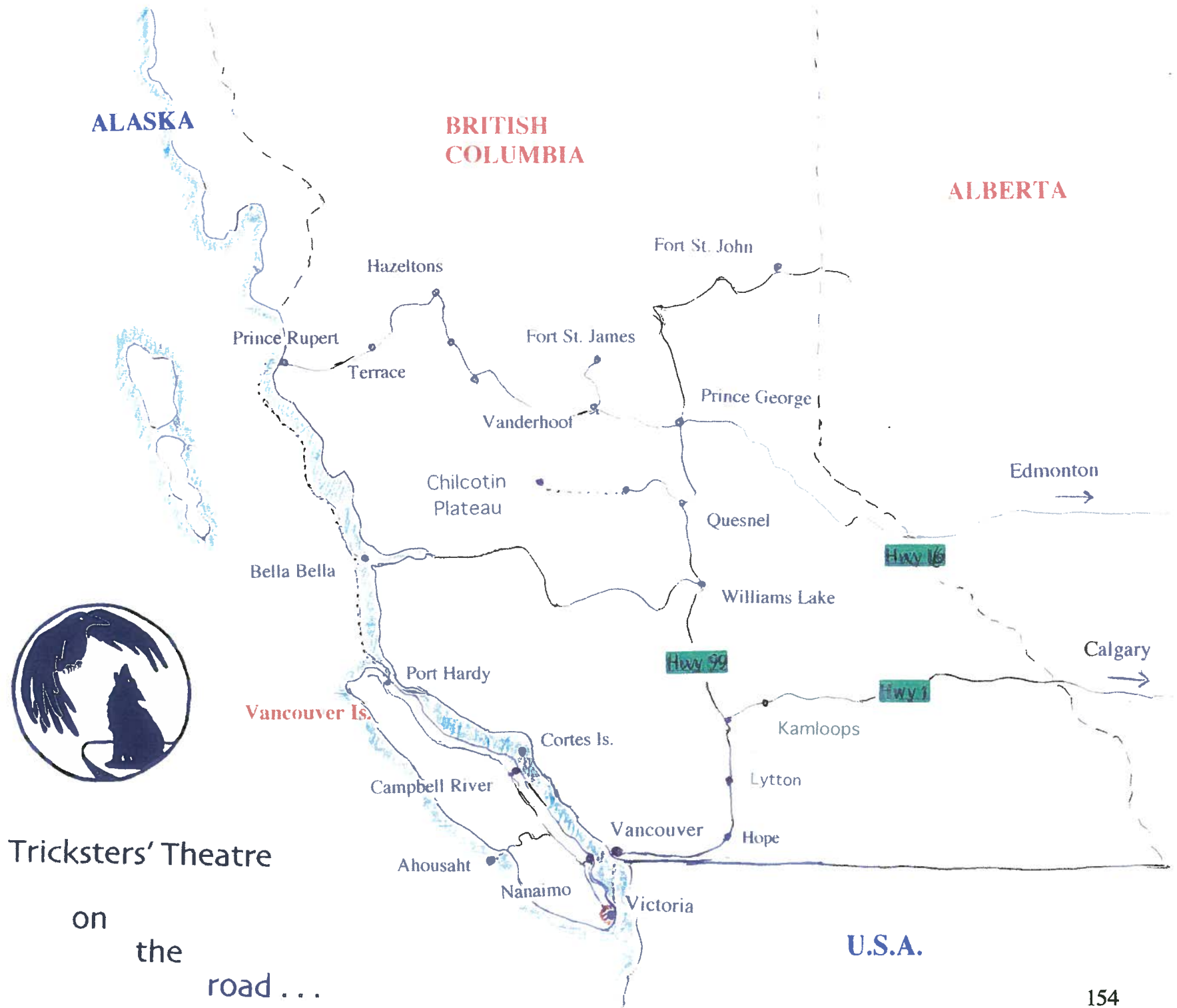
The question still remains: *why would one want the audience to participate in the first place? What draws us to come together in performance?* Perhaps in the act of performing together we are aware of initiating change in the world--not with some utopian desire to realize a perfect society, but with the desire to provoke a continual upwelling of creativity, to realize unimagined possibilities. When I think of the leaders' responses from the ParticipAction performances, speaking of their surprise and appreciation for the participation of shy children, and of their own unexpected involvement, I feel that sense of upwelling creativity. I can see clearly in my mind the first eldest sibling, and "Chrystal" the horse, and the young lad who played the lame child, and the riotous trolls, and the solemn stars, and the gleefully invading rats and I believe that these lived experiences may engender new possibilities for the participActors, possibilities that would never occur if they did not play those parts in those performances.

To return to Kershaw, who sees *communitas* as the "foundation of community cohesiveness", participatory theatre contributes to the "formation of ideological communities" (1992, p. 28). Kershaw's view to the longer term efficacy of radical theatre is exponential:

If the spectator [or participant] decides that the performance is of central significance to her or his ideology then such choice implies commitment. It is this commitment that is the source of the efficacy of the performance for the future, because a decision that affects a system of belief, an ideology, is more likely to result in changes to future action. . . . the potential of performance efficacy is multiplied by more than the audience number. (1992, p. 29)

Kershaw's idea of efficacy corresponds to Frankenberg and Mani's understanding of "decisive" and "definitive" shifts. What he suggests is that a cumulative effect of many decisive shifts could lead to a definitive shift in ideology. Each audience-participant is a member of communities beyond the performance community and will effect change (however infinitesimal) throughout their personal community networks. This theory is supported by the testimonies of Haedicke and Escolme and a youth leader from the ParticipAction theatre project:

I'm quite a shy person, normally. I don't participate in many things and definitely not a performance. If someone told me to, "Go up there and act", I would never have done it on my own. But this was kind of different, kind of unique. It made me realize that I can act, maybe, its kind of fun. I don't have to be really good about it but I can actually try.



On the Road

Linnaea School, November 2000

Linnaea Farm School is the first gig Neil, Barclay¹ and I had after our three week tour up the Fraser, north to Fort St. John, west to Prince Rupert and home via the ferry to Port Hardy. The ferry trip was uneventful (unlike the last trip in March, 2006, where the ship sank) though getting on was quite a hassle. We were over height with the roof top carrier and the over height fee was more than \$200. that would have come out of our collective shares. So the day before we left Prince Rupert we practiced unloading the carrier, dismantling it, nesting it into the car and refilling it with all our gear, costumes and props. Amazingly, it all fit; there was just no room for passengers. Neil and Barclay would have to walk on while I drove. With practice, we got the dismantling down to 20 minutes. The timing was an issue because we needed to be able to do this in the ferry parking lot while we were waiting to get our tickets. The ferry terminal is quite far out of town so it was not possible to do the reorganization ahead of time.

When we reached Port Hardy we were exhausted from the stresses of our tour and a basically sleepless night on the ship. I had made the mistake of laying out my bed beside a family with a baby and toddler. These two children were up a good part of the night crying and the toddler running around - often falling over me. At the other end of the lounge was a group of

¹ Actor's names in this story are pseudonyms.

drinkers who stayed up very late talking and playing cards loudly. I learned that sleeping on a metal deck, even with a thermarest, is not a comfortable experience. I'm pretty sure that neither Barclay nor Neil fared any better than I did, trying to sleep in the semi-reclining lounge chairs. The ship does have berths, but we (and most of the other passengers) couldn't afford them. I have a surreal memory, through rain streaked windows, of the ship silently gliding, (our human cargo finally all asleep), up to a dock in the middle of the night where a few people huddled underneath orange lights, waiting for some of our passengers to get off, a red pick-up truck running orange exhaust underneath a boom loader.

With only two days at home to recuperate we were off again to Cortes Island in Georgia Straight. The plan was to meet up at the dock in Campbell River to catch the ferry to Quadra Island and drive across Quadra to make the last ferry to Cortes. Neil and Barclay were new actors with Tricksters' Theatre. We had originally started this tour with a company of four, but two people had dropped out a few weeks into rehearsal and we had decided to continue on with me taking on an acting as well as directing role. It was sometimes a difficult partnership. We were closest when we were performing together, but beyond that we seemed to have little in common between the three of us. *I wonder what it is that makes for a successful collective?*

When I arrived it was dusk. Barclay was there, but there was no sign of Neil. We walked around the terminal, checked the waiting room, checked the phone booth, checked the waiting room, walked out to the street and looked up and down, checked the waiting room. Finally, we had to face the likelihood that Neil was not going to make the ferry. We had no way to get hold of him and we couldn't wait because it was the last ferry to get us to Cortes. We had a performance of *Tough*

Cookies at the public school the next afternoon and then two days of performances and workshops at Linnaea School and an evening show at the community hall at Manson's Landing. Besides, the people at Linnaea had prepared a dinner for us when we arrived and I did not want to start our three day residency by not showing up when we were expected.

Barclay was really ticked off. He and Neil had had some major differences on the three week trip. Having to share a room had not helped their relationship. I was trying to stay open and believe that Neil would show up by the time we needed him. I really did have faith in his professionalism by this time. Finally, we drove onto the Quadra ferry - just the two of us, and an knot in my stomach.

As we were sitting upstairs in the tiny lounge, Neil appeared. "So where were you guys? I almost missed the ferry. If one of the dock hands hadn't woken me up, I'd still be sleeping."

"Where were we? Where were you? We were really worried that something had happened to you."

"Yeah, right," added Barclay. "I figured you weren't going to show up."

"Hey - I got here early - but I had no sleep so I crashed on a bench in the waiting room."

“No way! I don’t believe you.”

“I looked in there and didn’t see you. I looked three or four times.”

“Well, that’s where I was, okay.”

“Hey - I’m just glad you’re here now.” I hugged Neil. “I was not enjoying trying to figure out how we could do *Tough Cookies* without you. At least now we’ll all be able to get a good night’s sleep before tomorrow.”

“God I’m hungry,” Neil complained.

“People at the school are supposed to have made dinner for us so we can eat when we get there.”

Three hours later we were creeping along dark foggy roads trying to find the turn off for Linnaea School. After going past the driveway about three times we finally went down the right one and pulled up beside an old farmhouse. There were no lights on.

“This has got to be it. Maybe if I honk the horn someone will come.” We waited a few minutes and then could see dark shapes coming down the road. The dark shapes became a woman and a dog. “Hi - are you Donna?”

“Yes - are you Annie?”

“Yes - we finally got here. This is Neil and Barclay.”

“Well come on into the farm house. I put the heat on earlier and there’s food here for you.” Such welcome words. We carried in our bags and looked around.

“You will need to stay downstairs. The bathroom is upstairs, but the rooms downstairs have been refinished and are warmer.” There were 2 bedrooms - one very large that Neil and Barclay decided they could share. There was another room with bunk beds that we decided we should keep for Raymond who would be arriving the next day to take video footage of our work at Linnaea for a promotion video. I would take another room that hadn’t been refinished, but that I liked the look of. It had funky furniture and a grass mat on the floor and a character that made me feel welcome. There was a plug-in heater as that part of the house wasn’t heated.

In the summertime, the Farm School brings in youth from different places around the world to work on the farm and has outdoor programs. That's when the farmhouse is used. During the winter it sits empty. We were there in November, just on the edge of winter. But after the snow and ice we had experienced in Fort St. John, it seemed balmy if damp.

The plan for the next day was that I would come to the Farm School at 8:30, meet the teachers, check out the set up, and get a sense of how we would proceed over the three days. We didn't have to be at the public school until 12:30 so there was time for Neil and Barclay to sleep in. I would get them up before I left for the school.

Once we had eaten our fill of lasagne and salad and bread, we all just wanted to sleep. I was so thankful to climb into my dank, cold sleeping bag, in the quiet dark. But my head was spinning and I couldn't fall asleep. As I lay there I heard scurrying in the walls. "Ah - mice. Well, what can you expect. This is an old farmhouse and the mice are moving in for the winter. As long as they stay in the walls."

Finally I did fall asleep. Sometime later I woke up to something scurrying across me. "Shit!" I sat up and turned on the light. My visitor had disappeared but it had been much bigger and heavier than a mouse. After my heart stopped pounding I decided that I would sleep with the light on and hope that would keep the rats(?) away. I was truly exhausted so I did fall asleep again. The next time I woke up was when I turned over and nudged a critter that was sleeping beside my head.

This was not good. While I was prepared to share the farmhouse with rats, I was not prepared to share my bed with them. As I lay there listening to the scrabbling in the walls, I began to realize that sleep was not something I was going to get much of that night. At some point closer to morning I woke up and looked at the window sill above my bed. There sat a lovely, plump, pack rat. But she quickly disappeared when she became aware that I was looking at her.

As I walked up to the school in the morning I decided that I would need to do something about the rats. I asked Donna if someone could loan me a cat for a couple of days to keep the rats away. She thought that might be possible. When I met up with Neil and Barclay later in the morning, over coffee, they said they hadn't heard anything in the walls or been bothered by rats. They seemed rather smug about it and made light of my experience. I don't think they believed me.

What can I tell you about Linnaea School? I know, without any hesitation, that if I had young children I would move to Cortes Island so that they could go to this school. Linnaea is a small independent school located on Linnaea Farm, a 315 acre land trust of forest, fields, organic gardens and lakefront. There is great wisdom here - in the children and the adults and the land that supports the vision of the school. The school, which was opened in 1987, was founded and is guided by the Principal, Donna Bracewell, and sponsored through The Linnaea Farm Society, a registered non-profit, charitable organization.

When Tricksters' was there in 2000, there were 50 students from kindergarten through grade 7. The school is multicultural with students from all parts of the world as well as from the local First Nation. Parents are an integral part of the school and

often work in the school in exchange for partial tuition. Every day begins with a circle meeting in which the whole school community meets sitting around the perimeter of the multi-purpose room. Everyone sits together on the floor and announcements, commendations, concerns are voiced. The children are there to contribute to the community. This is their place and they have an investment in it - from the 5 year olds to the 13 year olds. I paint an idyllic picture of Linnaea, but it is not just a place to retreat to. It is a dynamic place; the teachers, parents and students are all aware of the hard work they must do to keep the school viable as a place which “nurtures the inner spirit and strives to meet the needs of the whole child.”²

When Donna and I discuss the afternoon performance to be held at the public school, I realize that not everything will be as we had hoped. The grade 6 and 7 students from Linnaea will be bused over to participate. Evidently, the performance, which was to be for grades 6 to 9 (the upper limit of public schooling on the Island) has been sabotaged by the science teacher who has withdrawn his grade 8 and 9 students for a science project. Considering that “Tough Cookies”³ is a participatory exploration of bullying, his withdrawal of students is troubling. This scenario has been repeated in a number of schools with teachers boycotting our performances. *I do not know what factors mitigate this response--that our actors are Native, or that we are performing Aboriginal stories, or that we are doing participatory theatre, or that our topics are controversial?*

Happily, the opposite happened at Linnaea where everyone participated whole heartedly.

² Linnaea School Brochure, 2000.

³ See Appendix 4 for the scenario plan of “Tough Cookies”

Once the public school performance was done (the young people were lots of fun and were very positive even though there were fewer than we had planned for) we had time to check out the multipurpose room back at Linnaea. It is a lovely warm space with a wood floor, windows overlooking the lake, skylights, and gymnasium equipment at one end. The walls are decorated with art work from the school and community members. As was usual, the original plan for what we would do had changed somewhat. Donna wanted us to be present at the morning circles so that we could be introduced to the whole school together. Then we were to work with the kindergarten to grade 3 students. We would do a workshop with the grade 4 and 5 students in the afternoon, and a full day workshop with the grades 6 and 7 students the following day, as well as a community performance in the evening.

That evening we had lots of quiet. Raymond arrived and we spent a couple of hours discussing how and what he would film over the next 2 days. We agreed that the focus needed to be on the children and their participation. Raymond fit in really well and I was glad to have a new dynamic enter our company. When I went to bed I curled up with my novel and relaxed with my protector, a young ginger tom who possessed a reassuring purr. Cat was not terribly interested in the scrabbling in the walls at first. Then he began to recognize that the noises would start on one side of the wall and scurry across to the other. I fell asleep knowing that Cat was on guard.

I woke up to a great commotion underneath my bed - growling and thudding and frantic scrabbling and pouncing and shaking-
-Cat was doing his job. He proved his prowess twice more that night, once on top of the bed.

In the morning I stretched and found Cat curled by my feet sleeping the sleep of the virtuous. I did not see any corpses in the room until I looked under the bed. And there, indeed, was a rat. Not terribly large - (the size of my hand) - but definitely not a mouse. I picked it up by the tail and threw it out the window to be a warning to other intruders. I was relieved that it was a common farm rat and not the whimsical pack rat I had observed the morning before.

The two days at Linnaea School, in hindsight, have proved to be a benchmark for me. The morning circle is still vivid in my mind. Donna introduced us to everyone - parents, children, volunteers, teachers. Then we were asked, on the spur of the moment, if we could tell a story to the whole school. Sudden panic and a whispered consultation. Neil is a wonderful story teller, but he was still half asleep. (Of all the Tricksters' actors I toured with only one person was happy getting up early.) I asked if he would be all right with me telling the story of "How the Human People Got the First Fire", written by George Clutesi Sr. in the book *Son of Raven, Son of Deer*.

Neil nodded. "Yeah!"

This is my favourite of all the Tricksters' repertoire , though not a story I had rehearsed with this group of actors. I had planned to use it with the kindergarten to grade 3 workshop later on, knowing that Neil and Barclay would pick it up. Suddenly, I was telling the story and Neil was drumming softly to build the atmosphere of the cold winter, the cruelty of the wolf people and the desperation of the deer people. It was one of those times when the magic of the story, the moments of surprise, the giving and receiving of gifts, the heartbeats and the breath of everyone is synchronized and we truly live the story together. The feeling of expectancy was palpable. When we all sang the praise of Ah-tush-mit, the youngest deer, there was such pride in the voices and a sense of awe. Neil and I made eye contact. This was the first time we had ever told this story together and I think we were both a little overwhelmed with what had happened in our impromptu partnership. Later, I learned that Neil had been told this story by George Clutesi when he was a child. In his drumming he had gone to the place of hearing George Clutesi's voice. I was somewhat abashed because in working the story for participatory theatre I had changed the songs so that they would be easier for the participants to chant. The Clutesi family has given me permission to use the stories from the book for our theatre company, but I am always cognizant of being careful to honour the story and where it comes from.

When we did do the story again with the kindergarten to grade 3's they were eager to play all the parts and repeated the story switching sides from being wolves to being deer and vice versa. They also were able to perform it for the rest of the school the following morning, bursting with pride. Thus our stay at Linnaea began with an invocation of magical space that the school entered gladly.

Raymond, in his filming, captured much of both the essence and the action of those two days-- evidence of the value of our work. His focus, at my request, was always on the participants rather than our actors. Later, watching all the hours of footage that he took to make our nine minute promotion video, I was able to see many moments of engagement--smiles, laughter, physical commitment, enlarged eyes--that I miss when I am in the middle of a performance where my focus is on making the performance work as a whole and visual cues are not the only ones I am unconsciously processing. In the two evenings after we were done for the day, Raymond's response to what he was seeing and experiencing made me begin to question what was different about the participatory theatre work. It made me begin to look at what Kershaw calls the 'excesses' of theatre performance. *What is happening for the participants that is different than if they are just watching 'professionals' perform? What is it that makes this participatory work so riveting for me and why am I willing to undergo some considerable hardship to keep doing it?*

Stopping Place

Theatre as Performance: Where does the audience stand (or sit)?

It seems clear that art oriented toward dynamic participation rather than toward passive, anonymous spectatorship will have to deal with living contexts; . . . the audience is no longer separate. Then meaning is no longer in the observer, nor in the observed, but in the relationship between the two. (Gablik, 2002, p. 151)

Theorizing Audience Participation

While there has been considerable theorizing about audience reception, there has been less consideration of the audience as participants in performance. The audience is still predominantly viewed by the majority of scholars as separate from the actors (Barba, 1995, Bennet, 1990, Blau, 1990, 1992, Carlson, 2004, Haedicki & Nellhaus, 2001, Hilton, 1993, Kershaw, 1992, 1999, Royce, 2004). As performance becomes more participatory--perhaps as an intervention to mediatization (Auslander, 1999) - there is an increasing need to theorize audience participation in performance. Because of the great range of audience participation, it may not be possible to theorize it "as a whole". Kattwinkel believes that, "it may require a set of theories that can be combined to examine individual experiences" (2003, p. x). One question arises, almost immediately: *If*

*the audience become direct participants, moving out of the audience space and into the playing space, do they relinquish their role as audience?*¹ I hope that the ensuing discussion addresses that question, at least partially. In general, it is the field of Performance Studies that has opened space for the consideration of the audience as participants.

Defining Performance

The field of Performance Studies is so large and diverse it is impossible to define, yet it offers a space from which to consider the audience, and the audience as actors. As Marvin Carlson (2004, p. 1) says, borrowing the observation: “Performance is “an essentially contested concept”.” The field has been influenced greatly by writers of Theatre Anthropology and Ethnography such as Turner, Schechner, and Conquergood as well as feminist theory, semiotics, speech act theory, post modernism, post structuralism, post colonialism. Carlson offers a number of definitions but the one that comes closest to establishing a framework that is useful for the purposes of this dissertation is that of ethnolinguist Richard Bauman:

All performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, according to which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action.

¹ *What is the role of the audience in traditional western theatre?* There is a perception that for performance to exist, it must have an audience (see Bauman’s definition below). The audience, then, validates the performance as performance. If, as I ask above, an audience member becomes an actor then *can she be both actor and audience member simultaneously? What new relationships (within herself, between herself and the other actors, between herself and the other audience members) are created?*

Normally this comparison is made by an observer of the action . . . but the double consciousness, not the external observation is what is most central . . . Performance is always performance for someone, some audience that recognizes and validates it as performance even when, as is occasionally the case, that audience is the self. (Carlson, 2004, p. 5)

In contemporary theatre studies there is some tension between views of theatre and performance. The theatre of modernity, still the standard in most Canadian Universities (if one looks at Theatre Department course descriptions), privileges the written text; post modern theatre focuses on the performance of text, the text being multi faceted and multi dimensional, not restricted to written or spoken language. Performance Art is its own genre that has developed out of visual art. In my tracing of the movement towards audience participation in theatre, I have found Kaprow's views to resonate most closely with my own. Kaprow's Happenings are acknowledged precursors to contemporary Performance Art. Perhaps the clearest way to differentiate Theatre from Performance Art is to see Performance Art as practiced by the artist with and on her own body, as her Self, not as differentiated character(s) (Carlson, 2004, p. 5), though this definition becomes less clear when considering the contemporary manifestation of solo theatre performance where the script is written and acted by the performer, with the performer playing multiple roles.

Performance can also be seen as the umbrella under which theatre resides. Canadian Theatre Review 124, Fall, 2005, is devoted entirely to “Calgary’s High Performance Rodeo”. One Yellow Rabbit is the organizing theatre company for this annual event. Michael Greene, co-artistic producer of One Yellow Rabbit, is styled the “curator” of the festival, which includes a wide range of performance from dance and theatre to stand-up comedy and film. Laurie Anderson, the renowned American Performance Artist was the ‘star attraction’ for the 2005 festival.

Another side to the debate as to what is or isn’t ‘performance’ has to do with the social performance of everyday life where one could argue that all human activity is performance, whether it is framed theatrically or not. Carlson’s answer to this debate lies in ‘attitude’:

The difference between doing and performing, according to this way of thinking, would seem to lie not in the frame of theatre versus real life but in an attitude--we may do actions unthinkingly, but when we think about them, this brings in a consciousness that gives them the quality of performance. (2004, p. 4).

This apprehension of consciousness is what allows the possibility of Turner’s liminal space and “communitas” to occur. Ritual also employs performance and may be explored using these terms but ritual and performance, though responsive to each other, should not be conflated. I think it is useful to focus on the idea of “quality [or attributes] of performance” and “attitude” rather than performance as a category of activity.

The Performance is the Play

A post modern distinction between theatre and performance is offered by Josette Féral: “Performance “attempts not to tell (like theatre), but rather to provoke synaesthetic relationships between subjects” (Carlson, 2004, p. 151). This post modern view stresses the movement away from the universalist discourse of modernity to multi subjectivities: “The post modern asserts the power of *figure* to claim its own disruptive space, no more and no less “universal” than others” (Carlson, 2004, p. 152). This differentiation can assist in understanding the text in relationship to its performance. Carlson cites Gadamer's phenomenological view to support the idea of performance refuting the essentialism of the text:

Performance is not something ancillary, accidental, or superfluous that can be distinguished from the play proper. The play proper exists first and only when it is played. . . . It comes to be in representation and in all the contingency and particularity of the occasion of its appearance. (2004, p. 153).

It is the “contingency and particularity of the occasion” that brings the audience to the fore. What Gadamer holds up for question is the Aristotelian tradition of mimesis: that there is the “world of the spectators which is real and a world conjured up by performers which is not. . .” (Schieffelin, 1998, p. 200). It is the performance that brings ‘reality’ to the text. Gadamer’s assertion troubles the Western view of theatre as illusion and acting as fake or inauthentic (Schieffelin, 1998, p. 201); the play/performance “exists” and it is the audience to whom the performance is directed that gives it the power of existence. In Blau’s words, “the audience precipitates theater” (1990, p. 40).

Performance is also “inherently interactive” (Blau, 1990, p. 198, 200). As Carlson explains:

As theatre moves more in the direction of performance art, . . . the audience’s expected “role” changes. . . to become a much more active entering into a praxis, a context in which meanings are not so much communicated as created, questioned, or negotiated. The “audience” is invited and expected to operate as a co-creator of whatever meanings and experience the event generates (Carlson, 2004: 215).

This echoes Bourriard’s relational aesthetics, where the whole purpose of contemporary art is to initiate interrelationships between those who experience the work of art together as well as with the artist and the work. In an interview with Karen Moss, conducted by Stretcher, Bourriaud speaks of the movement away from the Avante garde utopian dreams of modernity to the contemporary engagement with “micro-utopias”:

What really good artists do is to create a model for a possible world, and possible bits of worlds.

. . . Avant gardes were about utopias. How is it possible to transform the world from scratch and rebuild a society which would be totally different. I think that is totally impossible and what artists are trying to do now is to create micro-utopias, neighborhood utopias, like talking to your neighbor, just what's happening when you shake hands with somebody. This is all super political when you think about it. That's micro-politics.

. . . . artwork is a relation to the world made visible. (Stretcher, 2002)

Suzi Gablik also speaks of the emerging paradigm shift from the significance of objects to the significance of relationships (2002, p. 7), which manifests in a “new connective, participatory aesthetics” (p. 9). She identifies two streams of post modern practice: deconstructive and reconstructive. Her book, *The Re-enchantment of Art*, champions the reconstructive practice of post modern art as a way to counter the alienation of deconstruction (p. 18, 22). For Gablik, the engendering of hope for the future is crucial:

Reconstructivists are trying to make the transition from Eurocentric, patriarchal thinking and the “dominator” model of culture toward an aesthetics of interconnectedness, social responsibility and ecological attunement. . . . “the notion of recovery . . . [of] our sense of community, and our connectedness to one another.” (2002, p. 22)

She sees “healing [as] the most powerful aspect of reconstructive postmodernism” (p. 25).

Kattwinkel (2003, p. ix) points out that it is only since the 19th Century that theatre audiences have been expected to be passive observers. In the case of participatory theatre, the audience members become the actors; without losing their function as witnesses, they enter into a doubleness of self-reflexivity. This self-reflexivity is pointed to by Semiotic theory where not only do the actors’ bodies signify, the audience members’ bodies signify in interaction with each other and the bodies on stage. In Susan Bennett’s *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of production and reception* (1990), she quotes Passow

(1981, p. 240) to explain the different levels of interaction in the theatrical “communicative circuit”, effectively a hermeneutic circle:

. . . the theatrical interaction . . . divides into (A) scenic interaction within the ‘make-believe world’. . . (B) the interaction of the audience with this ‘make-believe’ world . . . (C) the interaction of the members of the theater company amongst each other (real interaction on stage), (D) the interaction of the audience with the actors (real audience-stage interaction) and (E) the interaction within the audience. (76)

What I find particularly fascinating in Passow’s description is the many levels of consciousness the audience member, as spectator, employs. If you then bring the audience members into the scene, onto the stage, the make-believe or fictive world becomes the ‘real-as-imagined’ (as it must be for the actors), adding more levels of consciously negotiated reality. The other levels of communication continue but they are now more complex as the actors and the audience members are both actors and audience for each other within the real-space-time experience of the performance. This multivalent interaction can also occur within the theatre/performance of ritual, which Turner sees as foundational to “communitas”.

This leads to the question of whether participatory theatre is theatre or performance. In light of the definitions offered in this chapter, it is useful to move towards the term “participatory performance”, relying on Gadamer’s understanding that the

“playing of the play is the play” while acknowledging the prior existence of an as-yet-unrealized idea/text, or inversely, to return to Fels’ notion of inter/standing: “It is through the interdance between the not yet real world(s) of performance and the real world(s) that . . . the not yet known . . . becomes known--transformed into interstanding” (1999, p. 58-59).

Performance as Ritualized Practice

To negotiate the relationship of ritual to performance and vice versa, I borrow Felicia Hughs-Freeland’s understanding that “performance in part constitutes ritual practices and ritualization” (1998, p. 6). To discern what is going on in the experience of performance, it is useful to look at the idea of agency and the intention of bringing-into-being. Kirsten Hastrup calls theatre “a site of passage” (Hughes-Freeland, 1998, p. 29), a magic space evoked through ritual. She calls on Artaud (1958, p. 13) to explain the mystery of theatre: “We must believe in a sense of life renewed by the theater, a sense of life in which man fearlessly makes himself master of what does not yet exist, and brings it in into being” (Hughes-Freeland, 1998, p. 29). Hastrup calls the space of theatre performance a liminal space with an inherent alchemical power: “The virtual art of theatre consists in showing what is not” (p. 34) or in Peter Brook’s (1968, p. 47ff.) terms, “Theatre-of-the-Invisible-Made-Visible”. Hastrup cites Artaud, Brook, Barba, and Grotowski in developing her argument for theatre as a transformational or mystical space of performance. She assigns the actor the function of sacrifice who, in Grotowski’s words, “ makes it possible

for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration (1975, p. 34)” (p. 35). It is this act of sacrifice, a priestly action, that makes the actor holy, the space of theatre a sacred, ritualized space.

Hastrup calls actors “double agents”, referring to their explicit reflexivity or self-observation. There is a “dilation of energy” (p. 39) that brings life to the character. When an audience member becomes an actor, they also experience the actor’s creative infusion of energy, while still maintaining their consciousness of doubleness. It is in the performance that the elusive ‘something’, the “dilation of energy”, occurs. Hastrup quotes John Gielgud (1987/1930, p. 105.) to illustrate this alchemy:

It was not until I stood before an audience that I seemed to find the breadth and voice which enabled me suddenly to shake off my self-consciousness and live the part in my imagination, while I executed the technical difficulties with another part of my consciousness at the same time. (p. 39)

Gielgud is acting self-reflexively between identities, in a liminal space, both being and becoming. As Schechner explains, “performing is a paradigm of liminality” (1985, p. 123). In inviting the audience member into the creatively charged liminal space of performance, that human being experiences ‘something’ in their action that actors experience, what Hastrup has termed a “dilation of energy”. If one thinks of dilation as ripples spreading from the impact of a stone on still water, then one can imagine a converging and diverging ripple effect occurring between performers--Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics.

Hastrup brings Charles Taylor's ideas of worth and morality into her discussion of theatre as a site of passage. She paraphrases Taylor (1985, p. 17): "Acting implies a kind of agency that is of necessity governed by a sense of worth . . . an implicit morality." The assertion that acting implies a sense of worth, response/ability, and creative agency is exciting and hopeful. Hastrup claims that this empowerment can be transferred to spectators (p. 41). *What if the spectators are also the actors?* The empowerment is no longer conferred by others but immediate in the experience of being-self-becoming-other-being-other-becoming-a-new-self. "Motivation . . . transforms embodied energy into action. This is what dilates the performer's presence and potentiates him or her" (p. 42). The performer is not acting singly, but alongside other performers. Thus this empowerment reaches beyond the individual to the community of which the actor, in the performance, is part.

Escaping Blau's Vicious Circle

Herbert Blau, in trying to come to terms with the role of the audience sees an "original splitting" in the human psyche that is represented and evoked by the division between audience and stage:

It is the original splitting that has to be kept in mind in reconceiving the nature of the audience, who-is-there mirrored there . . . (1990, p. 10).

Blau puts forward the conundrum that “as there is no theater without separation, there is no appeasing of desire” (1990, p. 10). He acknowledges the desire for community and is skeptical of the ability of theatre to mend the rift between audience and stage:

We are trying to understand, too, in diverse and desperate ways, the possible grounds for community in a reality of fractures of which that originary splitting is the opening fissure. Desire has always been--in the long determination of desire by history--for the audience as community, similarly enlightened, unified in belief, all the disparities in some way healed by the experience of theatre. The very nature of theatre reminds us somehow of the original unity even as it implicates us in the common experience of fracture, which produces both what is time-serving and divisive in theater and what is self-serving and subversive in desire. Behind this memory of original unity--upon which depends whatever is left of the possibility of communal experience--there is a philosophy of light and the prospect of universal knowledge, whether Apollonian or alchemical. The social ideal is unitary, desiring fusion, while the perceiving subject moves, desiring, as if already there, into the collective representation. . . . [but] as there is no theater without separation, there is no appeasing of desire. (1990, p. 10)

Blau's metaphysical vicious circle disallows the emergence of the artist as mystic intermediary for the community beyond that of a mystical dream.

One can then raise the question, *does ritual offer a healing of the original splitting?* Blau references Victor Turner (1974, p. 56) to answer this question: “Communitas in ritual can only be evoked easily where there are many occasions outside the ritual on which communitas has been achieved” (1990, p. 12).

It is in the pursuit of creating such occasions that Turner, Schechner, and Blau conducted experiments in post modern performance to see if ritual patterns employed in theatre performance might evoke communitas. His finding does not discount the desire towards synthesis, but recognizes the necessity of “an initiating energy in prior social relationships and the concurrence of achieved occasions” (1990, p. 12-13). Nevertheless, the dream of “a new transcultural communicative synthesis through performance” (Turner, 1982, p. 18-19)) haunts post modern performance. The question is: *Can desire break the bounds of the circle or are we doomed to cycle endlessly in a deterministic universe?* Or, pragmatically, *Shall we not live as if we can achieve the desire of unity, and in the living, achieve our desire?* I could not offer this dissertation without the belief in the pragmatic usefulness of participatory performance as a way of achieving the desire to create community, at least for the participants for the duration of the performance (who may or may not be aware of a ‘feeling of community’ at all).

There is a further tension that Blau's vicious circle suggests to me: the desire for community is not universal. Truly, while the making of community is fundamentally important to me, it is not fundamentally important to everyone. This is where I see the acting out of the two movements of post modernity described by Gablik: deconstruction and reconstruction.

Kershaw (1999) problematizes the idea of a temporary, localized community of performance as playing into post modern identity politics of fracture. He refers to Lyotard (1984, p. 66): ". . . the temporary contract is in practice supplanting permanent institutions in the professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family, and international domains, as well as in political affairs." (p. 192). Nevertheless, he sees that performance may offer ways to restore confidence in collective action. He calls for an "ecology of performance" to produce radical insights to engage with "the new world disorder" (p. 193) and proposes an "aesthetics of total immersion" in performance, through which spectators become wholly engaged in an event" as "full participants" (p. 194). His hope is:

. . . if, paradoxically, such performance can somehow create access to new sources of collective empowerment, especially through the forging of a strong sense of community, then they may indicate the potential for a radical response to the ecological nightmare promised by the postmodern world. (p. 194)

I say, "Yes!"

Reversal, Turning, and Paradox

Having escaped from Blau's vicious circle of separation and desire, I end this chapter with reference to a "Poetics of Reversal" proposed by Anthony Gash (in Hilton, 1993), which offers a related vantage from which to consider the usefulness of making the audience "full participants", a reversal of the modern Western theatre paradigm. He applies his poetics of reversal to the carnivalesque, referring to shadings of reversal in both theatre and community rituals:

'Reversal . . . shades into . . . words which share the Latin root *-vertere* (to turn): *subversion* . . . *conversion* . . . and *perversion*. . . . it is in theatrical performance, which mediates between elite (written, prescribed) and popular (audio-visual, improvised) culture, that the paradoxes which originate in popular festivity have found their most conscious and sustained expression. (Hilton, 1992, p. 87)

Gash, as well as Kershaw, utilizes the idea of paradox. Indeed, it is paradox that allows the possibility of escaping from the vicious circle of a determinist or a post modern universe. Paradox is also a deeply mystical term encompassing transformation. I am minded both of the turning of the Sufi mystics and of the Shaker song:

'Tis the gift to be simple,
'tis the gift to be free,

'tis the gift to come down
where we ought to be,
and when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained
to bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,
to turn, turn, will be our delight
till by turning,
turning we come round right.
(Shaker Hymnal)

While Blau seeks synthesis, Kershaw seeks transformation. Gash explains transformation in the context of the renewal of carnival, where to “bow and bend” and “turn” are the tools of reversal. On the one hand, the common anthropological understanding (Gluckman, 1977) is that “symbolic reversal attempts to show that harmony among people can be achieved despite the conflicts, and that social institutions are in fact harmonious” (Hilton, 1993: 88). Gash opposes this view with

historical records of acts of revolution arising from cultural festivals of reversal (p. 89). The theorist on whom he chooses to build his argument is Mikhail Bakhtin who suggests:

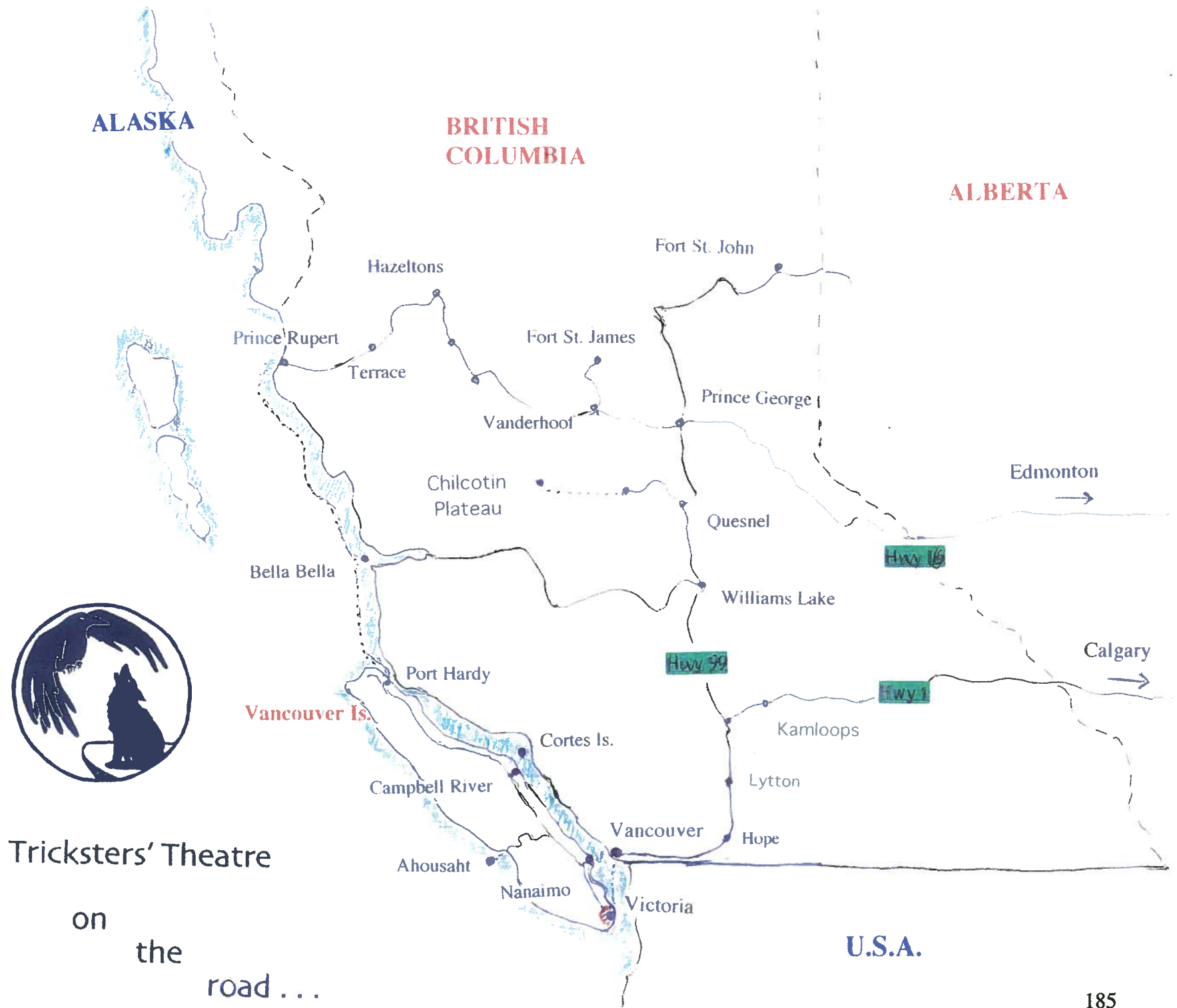
. . . that 'carnival', far from simply mirroring a static and hierarchical order, 'celebrates change itself, the very process of replaceability, rather than that which is replaced. Carnival is so to speak not substantive. It absolutizes nothing; it proclaims the jolly relativity of all things. (Bahktin, 1973, p. 90)

Carnival is not a mirror. Theatre, in Aristotelean terms, has often been described as a mirror of reality, or a mirror of society. The celebration of carnival fractures the mirror into multiple, relative views that allow for examination, change and renewal. To translate this idea to the turn of the audience becoming fully invested as participants in a performance, what is reversed is the "original separation" referred to by Blau. Depending on one's political bent, this spiral can be viewed as conversion, subversion, or perversion, or any combination of the three. What is important to re/cognize is that a participating audience is a reversal of traditional Western theatre since theatre performance has taken place in architectural structures sanctioned for that purpose². Theatre, as it is practiced in modernity,

² Theatre buildings have risen into prominence since the 19th Century so that when one speaks of going to the theatre, one generally means going to an architectural space where a performance will occur. However, the Greek theatre was also staged in outdoor amphitheatres built specifically for that purpose, and Shakespeare's theatre was housed outdoors in The Globe, while competitors used The Swan or The Rose, also unroofed structures.

symbolizes and enacts the institutional structures that society reifies. Thus, structurally, audience-members-as-actors turns topsy-turvy the social order. What this topsy-turvy enactment does is regenerate the structures by bringing focus to them and opening up possibilities for change, for new imagined possible worlds. This is the “rehearsal for revolution” proposed by Boal. It is entirely possible, for an audience of mixed composition to simultaneously and severally understand their participation in terms of comic reversal, political subversion, diabolic perversion, and mystical conversion (Bahktin, 1973, p. 94). This, to me is a fertile space from which to re/imagine the world.

Audience participation in performance, as fully vested participActors, offers a vital and effective means for bringing people together into a shared experience of inter/standing, of unity, of dilated energy, hopefulness, and community. It may be that, in some situations, by “turning we come round right.”



On the Road

Willow Dale, May 2002

Our visit to Willow Dale started out with misgivings on my part. As we drove up (in elevation) from Highway 16 I realized that the principal of the Willow Dale school was the same man who had been principal at Hidden Lake, when Jack, Carrie and I had been driven in, in March two years before, on the winter trail, by Les Staines¹. That trip had been stressful for our threesome and I remember being very uneasy with this man, who, as one of the two non-Native people living in this remote village, probably felt set apart and lonely. Certainly, there seemed to be racial tension in the school. Les, on our trip out of Hidden Lake at 4 AM (to make it out before the trail thawed) told us that the Band Council was going to ask the principal to leave. In retrospect, I can see that my uneasiness had been influenced by my own situation. When the principal invited me to come and visit and offered “lots of good booze”, wild horses couldn’t have dragged me there!

When we arrived at Willow Dale, this same principal graciously invited us for dinner at his home, but the group, tired, and unfortunately, influenced by my memories, refused. We went instead to the rec. centre on the reserve and ate hamburgers to the music of slamming basketballs, blaring hip-hop music, and shouts of children and teenagers. We had turned down a gift, and now, I feel sorry that we, in our effort to be present in the community, may have missed making a valuable ally. On

¹ All person’s names in this story are pseudonyms.

the other hand, when we showed up at the school the next morning, we had already met and been seen by the members of the community, which was a good thing. *Who knows what goes into the mix and how it will affect the outcome?*

The Band school, was a comfortable place to be. There was art on the walls and tables of hand made artifacts in the hall. Children's shoes and jackets were strewn around the gym doors. The children were smiling and the teachers--Native, European, and Asian--were relaxed and curious about what we would do. When we met with the principal in the morning, he spoke about his work as a puppeteer, touring rural schools as we were doing. He had a passion for the arts and its work in education and was so glad that we had come. I did not mention the Tricksters' visit to Hidden Lake and neither did he. I honestly don't know if he recognized me; when the troupe had gone to Hidden Lake, Les may have referred to us as Kulus Theatre². The Principal worked at Willow Dale during the week and then returned home to the Okanagan (a good four to five hour drive) to his wife and children on weekends. So many of the teachers we met on this tour lived away from the community in which they taught.

We discovered that the contract that we had signed two months previously did not really address the present needs of the school. So we quickly redevise our plans as to which age groups we would be working with and what we would do with

² Trickster's Children Theatre Society was incorporated in June, 1999. Kulus Theatre was the name we had been given by an elder at the Friendship Centre but when we incorporated we couldn't use that name as there was already a company using "Kulus". Kulus is the sister of the Thunderbird and holds the attributes of healing and peace as opposed to her brother who wields the attributes of war and destruction. When we first went to the Chilcotin and met Les, who later brought us to Hidden Lake, we were still using the name Kulus Theatre.

them. We would do one story with the preschool and special needs children, a workshop with grades 4 to 7, and a performance with the whole school. One of the benefits of having a large repertoire is that we could accommodate just about all desires - both our contractors and our own. One additional blessing at this school is that we were able to spend time talking with the teachers. I think that it is here that I began to understand how deep our work was and how valuable.

This tour was the last tour Tricksters' was to make as I had applied to begin my doctoral program the following autumn. By this time, after four years of touring, going to remote Native communities as well as urban centres, working with actors of a mix of races, figuring out the politics of Band schools, public schools, Friendship Centres, and Band Offices, and developing absolute confidence in the work that we were doing, I could begin to notice what was happening beyond the performance logistics, which had always been my primary concern. Also, this particular group of actors (including myself) was seasoned, mature and utterly committed to the work of empowering our audiences through having them perform with us. We were diverse in age - 24 to 59 years - but all women, able to share our accommodation, our stories, our fears, our peccadilloes, our heritages, with humour and forbearance. I think that because we were constantly negotiating our own relationships, we were also sensitive to the subtle relationships of power and status that were always at play. This does not mean we could consciously pinpoint all that underlay our performance situations, but our debriefing afterwards was deep. We wanted to get to the heart of our work and I have never worked with a group of people who were so willing to enter into deep analysis after a performance or workshop. I now wish we had recorded our thoughts each day of the tour. *What insights would I have*

mentioned that would inform my reflections now? The only record I have are sketchy notes which are entirely performance related and the evaluation audio tape we made for the Vancouver Foundation who funded this particular theatre project.

One of the gifts that communities would frequently offer us was the gift of the “best place” to stay. At Willow Dale, we were put up at a resort on the lake about five miles outside the community. It was early May, and while the countryside was greening up, the lake was still frozen except for a rim of thaw, alive with eggs and larvae. We watched eagles and ospreys soar, hiked around the edge of the lake past deer, cattle, and horses. One property, fenced with a palisade, had a dead crow nailed to the fence and dire warnings not to trespass. We shared a cabin, two to a room, had a full kitchen to cook in, a bath tub to soak in, armchairs to sprawl in, and a deck on which to lie out in the sun. We were also gifted with an extra day just to relax. Oh bliss!

At the school, teachers spoke of their struggles to encourage the children to come to school; so many children were labeled as ‘special needs’. My hackles always rise at this terminology. My own experience as a supply teacher for ten years, and as an advocate for Native students, has led me to be highly suspicious of labeling students. Most often, I have seen it work as another hegemonic way to ostracize and limit students’ possibilities for achievement. This community had been heavily impacted by the Residential Schools and the parents were uncomfortable even entering the school building. We found the children delightfully curious and eager to find out what we were going to do. The most rewarding experience of our time there was when we did our performance with the whole school. (The ‘special needs’ students had had their session with us

earlier and the kindergarten students had already gone home). We did three legends; “Why Crow Hops When She Walks”³, a Kwaguitl story, “The Reason Raven Is Black”⁴, a Nuu-chah-nulth story, and “The Pied Piper of Hamelin”⁵, a story from Germany. “Crow” is always a good story to start with because it is delightfully silly and only those students who want to participate have a special role. Once everyone sees how much fun those children have then everyone wants to be in a play. “Raven” is a bit more complex story with more groups of participants. “Pied Piper” involves everyone.

The story that had the most impact at this school was “Raven”. In this story, one of our actors plays Raven, but the other three actors play facilitative roles: Otter chief, Cooking woman, Storyteller. The children play Otters, Salmon, Smoke Dancers, Fire, Eagle, Cook’s Apprentices. In the story, Raven, who is always greedy and a show-off, invites the whole village to a salmon barbeque. Unfortunately, she neither knows how to catch salmon or to cook them. She manages to convince Otter chief to give her six salmon and convinces Cooking Woman and her apprentices to teach her how to cook them. True to character, Raven does not concentrate on learning and misses some essential steps in the cooking process. Once she has the salmon gutted, staked, and barbequing in front of the fire, she asks Eagle to watch the cooking salmon while she goes to summon all her guests. Eagle, quite delighted to watch Raven make a fool of herself, watches the salmon (wiggly children)

³ This story is found in *Children of the Thunderbird: Legends and Myths from the West Coast*, Edward C. Meyers, ed., pp. 151-153.

⁴ Our version of this story mainly follows the story “Raven, a Tse-shaht story”, found in *Children of the Thunderbrd*, pp. 98-100, with elements from George Clutesi Sr.’s telling of two Raven stories in *Son of Raven, Son of Deer*: “Ko-ishin-mit and Son of Eagle”, pp. 53-62; and “Ko-ishin-mit Invites Chims-meet to Dinner”, pp. 63-70.

⁵ For the story of the Pied Piper, we drew on a number of different tellings of the story to make our own version.

cook to a crisp while the air fills with smoke and the fire flares. When Raven returns with the village people, the Salmon are beyond salvaging and as Raven hops around moaning and coughing, her beautiful white feathers are turned to sooty black. Eagle, played by one of the children, has a pivotal role in the play as s/he directs the crisping of the Salmon, the dancing of the Smoke and the flaring of the Fire (with help from the Storyteller). S/he also ends the story by scolding Raven and announcing to the audience that, "This is the reason Raven is black."

At this performance, a boy - maybe eleven years old - volunteered to be Eagle. When we were setting up the play, in full view of the audience, who like to see how it is all put together, he asked if he could use the drum we have for signaling changes and building tension. We were quite happy to give him the drum. As the performance progressed, this young boy took his role seriously, guiding the other children in their parts. When he interacted with Raven, he was completely Eagle, proud, disdainful, using a strong voice and gestures. We were delighted that he entered into the play in such a masterful way. The applause at the end was intense and we could see how proud the children were of each other.

After the performance, the teachers were so appreciative of what they had witnessed and participated in. What a couple of teachers said has stayed with me. They spoke of the boy who played Eagle and were overcome with tears in their eyes. Evidently, this child had been in the school for three years and this was the first time they had heard him speak. They were in awe of his performance and of how the other children had responded to him as a leader. They recognized that that

performance had been a turning point, not just for that one child, but for the whole school, students and teachers. *And who knows what the impact would be in the larger community?*

The following teacher responses⁶ from this school speak to the suitability and structure of the performance material and the professionalism of the company because that is what we asked for, but I believe that you can sense that their appreciation for the work goes beyond the performance components:

I've no words to express my appreciation for the Trickster staff and their professional skills. Excellent! It was great fun for everyone. All Staff were well organized and patient with kids. So far, it was the best guest appearance or activity done in our school. Very successful!

It was the best workshop I have ever seen involving the kids. Absolutely fantastic.

The troupe was excellent at pacing and reading the audience, adjusting to the students. This was a ~~very~~ enjoyable performance. This school has many special needs students whose attention span is limited. The troupe did find this out and made accommodations for it.

⁶ from the Trickster's Children Theatre Society archive.

I wonder what the responses would have been if we had asked different questions?: “Do you see yourselves and your students differently after participating in the plays? If so, what happened to change your views? What was hard to do? What was easy to do? What were your surprises? Do you want to make any changes in your own work as a teacher based on new learnings from participating in the stories? What does this experience make you think about? What do we, as Tricksters, need to know about what happened here?”

The knowledge that our performance was the vehicle that brought a child to speak publicly for the first time after three years of silence is humbling. I do not know what awoke in that boy. It could have been the story; it could have been holding and playing the drum; it could have been that he called Eagle and Eagle came to him and lifted him above constraints he had been unable to overcome. What I do suspect is that he will never be quite the same child that he was before he acted Eagle. *Did this one event make a lasting difference for the school community at Willow Dale? What kind of ripple effects could there be? What would the children have said at home about what happened at school that day?* The transformation of one person in a community, witnessed by the other members of that community, can bring the whole community into a new configuration. Witnessing a miracle can change your world.

Stopping Place

The Artist and Community: a mystical and transforming relationship

The gift of the true artist is always a gift to the community. . . . Every person has a gift to give the community and is therefore an artist. Our primary effort in education and child rearing ought to center around the eliciting, the leading out (from the Latin educere from which we derive our word "education") of the gift that is the mystic within. (Fox, 1988, p. 59)

How can one find the language to explain the mystery of performance? I sense that any writer who feels passion for theatre and performance struggles with this dilemma. My Christian upbringing has given me one way of appreciating the artistic creative force. My experience living and working in Native communities has given me another. In my efforts to understand what it is that occurs between people/artists/mystics in the moments of performing together, I find Matthew Fox's language of Creation Spirituality to be helpful.

Much scholarly writing relies on the 'head space', the intellectual, the 'scientific'. Scientific language is inadequate when representing lived experience. Van Manen explains the difficulty of using *any* language to explain experience:

What then is the relationship between language and experience? It seems that with words we create something (concepts, insights, feelings) out of no-thing (lived experience), yet these words forever will fall short of

our aims. Perhaps this is because language tends to intellectualize our awareness--language is a cognitive apparatus. (1997, p. xviii)

Van Manen uses phenomenology to discover “possibilities of being and becoming” (1997, p. xiv). This phrase relates to Fox’s phrase of “eliciting, of leading out” and the endeavour of education. The idea of knowing things “through our bodies, through our relations with others, and through interaction with the things of our world” (van Manen 1997, p. xiv) could be part of a description of the language of the theatre. Theatre Anthropologist, Dwight Conquergood (1991, p. 180) in employing participant observation to study contemporary theatre performance, “privileges the body as a site of knowing” (Kattwinkel, 2003, p. xi)

As academics, when we write about theatre, we often struggle to express, in scientific terms, what might be better expressed in mystical terms. I am reminded of the audition I held for the actors of the Theatre 490 class, the group that would become the actors for ParticipAction Theatre. As their future professor, I was struggling to explain the relationship of the breath to the body and to life in scientific terms - of oxygen and red blood cells and burning off waste in the cells. One of the young men said to me, “I am sick of trying to make everything scientific. Mystery is *good*. I want to hear mystical terms. Breath is spirit; it is alive. That makes sense.” To follow his invitation: when we share breath in a collective experience we share spirit, we share life. This is the foundation of performing together.

Fox asserts that all human beings are creative, are artists with gifts to give to the community. The extension of this is that as every artist is “. . . a birther of images . . . every mystic is an artist and every true artist is a mystic.” (1988, p. 58) To understand what Fox means by “birther of images”, it is useful to examine the relationship he configures between language, image and experience: “It is out of deep experience that language is reborn. This rebirth occurs through the generation of new images, for images are closer to our experience than words. Images are the midwives between experience and language.” (1988, p. 58) Image making is the domain of the artist: shape, color, media, movement, sound, space, texture, are all employed in the art of theatre. *When people perform together they are making images together, they are making art. They are engaging in an activity/event that has mystical connections. Paul Valéry writes: “A creator is one who makes others create” (Royce, 2004, p. 139).* This chapter explores the relationship of the mystical to the creating of community through the art of performing together.

The artist is a birther of images, a revealer of trueness.

What is “true”? Fox describes the artist who is a mystic as being “true”. States (1985, p. 2) argues that “the work of art creates a spiritual presence or truth” (Fortier, 2002, p. 42). I offer that “true” is more variegated and useful than “truth”. Truth is a problematic term that implies some kind of objective measure that is applicable in all circumstances: “To tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth.” In a post modern world, the use of this term is suspicious when deconstruction has shown that truth is subjective; the “whole truth” is not possible. *Trueness*, conversely, is explicitly subjective. Both words

come from the same Old English root, *triewe*, *treowe*, which is also the root of trust and trow, expressions of active belief (The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, 1966, p. 946). The OED of English Etymology defines truth as the “quality of being true, +faith, loyalty” (1966: p. 947). This definition tends towards the abstract: a “quality”. Truth, to me, seems an intellectualized measure of what someone else expects from me. The feeling of soap in my mouth is momentarily strong. When I was a young child this was my punishment for what was called lying. I think that the definition of truth was “what really happened” but that there was also the implication of deliberate deceit that was somehow a betrayal of parental love. As I explore this body memory I am suffused with my childhood anger at the injustice of having to gag on soap. I am also conscious of turning that anger into a dampening of my taste buds, my palate, my throat muscles. When I was faced with my own tearful, fearful, defiant three and four year olds denying that they had done something for which they knew they would be punished I resorted to soap only once. The sight of them struggling to get rid of the awful taste, the look of miserable confusion in their eyes, was a “stop” for me. I questioned then, as I had when I was little, “What is truth anyway?”

True, as adjective, can be applied in many different ways. The Collins English Dictionary (1986, p. 1631) gives eleven uses of true as an adjective, one as a noun, three as an adverb, and one as a verb. In theatre, truth is a common and acceptable term. In actor training, the actor strives to find the truth of the character, the essence, the inner depth, the mystical connection that both actor and audience recognize as true. As a trainer of actors, I teach that you find this connection to the core of the character through the breath, the spirit. There can never be one truth because each actor who plays a

character will find the truth that connects them with the character. There are countless truths that will be recognized as true in a multiplicity of lived and acted experiences.

The first definition for *true* Collins gives is: “1. not false, fictional, or illusory; factual or factually accurate; conforming with reality”. Here is a nice dilemma for the theatre, which, according to Aristotle, is based on mimesis. Fortunately, not all Western theatre has subscribed to the notion that theatre is illusion. Augusto Boal challenges this notion with his plan to turn the spectator into an actor: “one begins to practice theater as a language that is living and present, not as a finished product displaying images from the past” (1979, p. 126). Theatre that is “living and present” is not illusory, it is “happening now” (Fels, 1999) in the ‘reality’ of the moment. “Dramatic action substitutes for real action” (Boal, 1979, p. 155); it is not the illusion of action. The question could then be asked: “Is [dramatic action] true?” My answer is that, in performance, falsity and factual accuracy is not the continuum on which trueness is measured, nor is fiction or conforming to reality an applicable measure. *Trueness is measured by the resonance that the actor and the witnesses experience in an embodied way, in van Manen’s terms: “through our bodies, through our relations with others, and through interaction with the things of our world” (1997, p. xiv).*

Fox speaks to rebirthing language through experience:

Language can be redeemed only in a return to experience, which is language's source. It is out of deep experience that language is reborn. This rebirth occurs through the generation of new images, for images are closer to our experience than words. (1988, p. 58)

If theatre, as Artaud (1958, P. 119) insists, can offer new images rather than only replaying images from the past, language is reborn. The experience of rebirth is a mystical experience. Fox also uses the word “redeemed”, to recover ownership. His sense is that the rational language of science, the “inherited language”, is “not adequate for the task of naming the deep experiences of life” (1988, p. 57). Artaud (1958, P. 70-71, 89) also distrusts the language of text alone to convey the truths of human existence and to heal the great divisions within humanity. Fox goes on to speak to the power of images: “Images are the midwives between experience and language. A mystical awakening will entail an awakening of the power of images to heal, to name, to excite, to teach” (1988, p. 58)

Boal has established that the language of theatre is the language of images; Fox speaks to the power of images to heal, to teach. Boal’s goal is to transform the spectator into a spect-actor: “The spectator is less than a man and it is necessary to humanize him, to restore to him his capacity of action in all its fullness. He too must be a subject. . . . The spect-actor frees himself; he thinks and acts for himself” (1979, p. 155). Boal’s passion for freedom resonates with Fox’s inclusive call to mysticism: “In the creation tradition, all people are mystics. Mysticism is not elitist: it touches the true self in each one of us. All people are artists as well. All persons are both artist and mystic because all are called to be in touch with the true self, the deep experience that is theirs . . .” (1988, p. 58).

What is the “true self”? Fox sees the true self in terms of divinity, uniqueness, creativity, and empowerment:

Each self is a unique mirror of divinity and therefore each person births a unique creation when he or she lets the true self be born. The creativity required in this birthing is one of authentic empowerment. It comes from where the divine dwells within the community, that is from the bowels of its “amongness” . . . (1988, p. 64)

This sense of trueness evokes further definitions from Collins: “genuineness”, “faithfulness”, “inclusive” (1986, p. 1631). These terms also relate to Fox’s assertion that “the divine dwells within the community”, they are relational. The idea of “amongness” also invokes Weaver’s understanding of knowing: “Until [one] is surrounded by that supportive community, knowledge is not defined because [the knower] is not defined as a human being” (1997, p. 40). Trueness is empowering and emancipating but not isolating.

True Self and Community

Kepnes (1992), in writing about Martin Buber’s idea of “the text as thou”, relates this idea to the understanding of Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons”. If we, as Buber and Gadamer do, understand text and language to be “a large variety of communicative expressions” (Kepnes, 1992, p. 31), then Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons” is also a way to understand the relationship between the true self and the community: “To reach an understanding with one’s partner in a dialogue is not merely a matter of total self-expression and the successful assertion of one’s own point of view, but a transformation into a communion, in which we do not remain what we were” (1982, p. 278). If we, as mystics and artists, offer our true selves to the community we may be transformed, not to lose our true selves but to gain in understanding of ourselves in relationship to

the 'thou', the other who is also a member of the community. This gift "comes from the depths and is gifted to the depths of another." (Fox, 1988, p. 59).

The artist is a priest of the imagination, an initiator of transcendence. For Fox, it is the artist who "articulates the journeys of depth for the people", who "names the mystical journey" (1998, p. 58). He references James Joyce as calling the writer the "priest of the imagination" (1998, p. 58). Royce sees the artist as a guide to "a place where [the audience] can glimpse a beauty and a truth beyond time" (2004, p. 133). This religious terminology evokes the vision of Beck (1972, meditations 54-57)) who sees the artist/actor as a priest leading communicants in a holy mystery. Maxine Greene sees imagination as the way to wholeness: "another way to imagine imagining: it is becoming a friend of someone else's mind, with the wonderful power to return to that person a sense of wholeness. Often, imagination can bring severed parts together, can integrate into the right order, can create wholes" (1995, p. 38).

The coming to wholeness through imagination is a transcendent process that leads towards the creating of community. To illustrate this, Greene relates a story of Martin Luther King Jr., a mystic of our time, addressing a church meeting:

As they came awake to a dimension of lived life they could scarcely have predicted for themselves, they came to feel a transcendence that came from their being together in a particular way. The transcendence was often deeply personal, but through experiencing it, they came together in a revitalized community. . . . Regard, responsibility, imagination, yes, and a love . . . : these are what moved them beyond themselves and changed their very lives. (1995, p. 40)

The transcendence that Greene describes is similar to the transcendence Buber expresses in his essay, "On Polarity: Dialogue After the Theatre" (Friedman, 1969, p. 53-74)). Buber is speaking of the actor's experience: "Transformed, he executes with the movements of his existence the secret movement of the world; he lives the life of the world, he does its deed, he works its work--and so he knows it. . . . the union of meaning and being . . ." (p. 69). The effect of this transformation of the actor draws the audience into a unity; "they become one in the act of inclusion" (p. 61):

And now I saw it more clearly than before; before the great play all of them, those stirred to action and those aware of the performance, had a single heart in common. (p. 60)

So my surroundings grew together for me into a community of which I was a member. (p. 58)

. . . that the whole that had just now been, was the fictitious life of an evening, and this piece that had now taken place was the real life of the generations. (p. 62)

Buber attributes the power of theatre to effect transformation to the synthesis of polarities, of being and counter-being, "appearance" and "reality", creation and destruction, brought into unity, completed "like the measure of a passion that supplements everything fragmentary and broken around it to wholeness . . ." (p. 58).

Mystical terminology (adapted from Matthew Fox, 1988)

The language of mysticism offers many terms that take us into the heart of what theatre performance can do in creating community. Kabir, an Indian mystic of the 15th C. tells us: "Experience, O seeker, is the essence of all things" (Fox, 1988, p. 48). *Experience is the basis of participatory theatre.* As Buber attests, the audience can be brought into the unity

of dialectical tension. Boal would emancipate the spectator to become a spect-actor in the hope that the experience of acting would become 'real' in the world.

Unity, Compassion, Connection-making: "mystical experiences are unitive ... not a loss of self or a dissolution of differences, but a unity of creativity, a coming together of different existences ..." (Fox, 1988, p. 49-50) Both Greene and Buber have described instances that are unitive. Their stories resonate with Turner's "communitas". Greene points to love as an active ingredient in making the connection between individuals to renew community. Love as compassion is heart strong, transformative - more powerful, perhaps, than a rational, scientific view of the benefits of collective action. bell hooks, in her text, *Teaching Community*, refers to Parker Palmer's work *To Know as We Are Known*. Palmer writes:

The goal of a knowledge arising from life is the unification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds. A knowledge of compassion aims not at exploiting and manipulating creation but at reconciling the world to itself. The mind motivated by compassion reaches out to know as the heart reaches out to love. Here, the act of knowing is an act of love, the act of entering and embracing the reality of the other, of allowing the other to enter and embrace or know. In such knowing we know and are known as members of one community . . . (2003, p. 132)

Buber speaks of the "union of meaning and being" as the "secret work of the world". This relates to Fox's call to *return to the Source*: "When we do that, we derive a living energy for our work and recover our work as an expression of our truest

self, our deepest being.” (1988, p. 55-56) My question about this “returning to the source” relates to the work of the actor finding the trueness of her character in union with the trueness of herself. *If the actor can find this transcendent place, can she, as a priest of the imagination, bring a participating audience to this place of trueness with her?* For me, this is the goal of participatory theatre performance. For Buber, this “real life of the generations” allows for the experience of community, of “a single heart in common”.

My memory returns to the performance of “Why the Tides Change” in Eagle Lookout. There was a moment when the elected chief’s eyes met mine over the heads of our Raccoon tribe. There was a recognition of the role that I was taking as Raccoon chief, that being a leader requires sacrifice and standing alone, that one’s most important task is the care of one’s people, as is honouring one’s Creator-given task. In all the tribes - Raccoon, Eagle, Bear and Wolf - the people displayed a “single heart in common” and at the ending of the play, the chiefs led their people into a larger community of relatedness, marked by the shared rituals of witness and acclamation. I remember too, the children and leaders at the day camps standing as the cities of Munachi and Hamelin, welcoming and recognizing all the participActors for their parts in the play. These moments of community were deliberately structured, but I sense that the structure only opened the way for the impulse of coming together in celebration to be realized. I also note that when the adult townspeople in the “Pied Piper” returned to Hamelin in sorrow and confusion, they drew together for support.

Theatre performance offers many ways for connection to occur between participants. “We connect - by symbols, stories and myths, music and colors, form and ritual ...” (Fox, 1988, p. 50-51) Buber illustrates this excellently:

There they stood, the tragic pair, like Creon and Antigone and . . . had nothing except their being, their polarity, their destiny. And I felt world-great before them, as though I were the I of the spirit whose primal secret duality they revealed. But already I was no longer before them, rather truly in their midst, and the streams that ran from pole to pole ran through my heart. (Friedman, 1969, p. 57)

The experience Buber is referring to can be interpreted as *awe*, as *radical amazement*. He explains his astonishment coming out of the stage experience and into the intermission: “now the crowd of which I was a part surprised me and filled me with astonishment as though I had associated with it for the first time” (p. 57-58). The depth of his identification with the world spirit changed his understanding of his surroundings which before the theatre he had taken for granted. “Awe is the beginning of wisdom. . . . we overcome the temptation to take our existence for granted” (Fox, 1988, p. 51) Buber does not claim this depth of transcendence for all the audience but he does believe that for the time of the performance they are caught up into a unity:

. . . only a few conjoined in that dynamic wholeness¹ in which the action and performance are submerged in a mythical reality . . . open to all that is happening to the actor, answering the symmetry of his step with the

¹ Literally “in that dynamic wholeness of being-with (Mitsein)” [Translator] (Freidman, 1969, p. 58) “Being-with” corresponds well with Fox’s “amongness”.

symmetry of the soul's step . . . they were still, as long as the stage spoke, united and revealed participants.

(Friedman, 1969, p. 58)

Buber's mystical response is to a theatre performance to which he was a witness, not an acting participant. I wonder, if he had been a participActor, how his response would have been different. Certainly, the people who have offered their reflections about the difference between observing and actively participating in performance have told us that the experience of actively participating is more intense. While Buber, through his own sensitivity, owns his feeling of connectedness, he also owns that "only a few conjoined in that dynamic wholeness".

Revelation or heart knowledge is the outcome of mystical connection through art. Theatre performance, whose medium is the whole body, affects the heart through the body, as Buber tells us: "the streams that ran from pole to pole² ran through my heart". Mysticism is grounded in the trueness of the physical; it is not an ethereal nor a purely cognitive compass. "Part of awakening the heart is awakening the body. . . . an acceptance of the fundamental irrationality of the human being and life in general. . . ." (Fox, 1988, p. 53-54) This acceptance of "fundamental irrationality" can lead to the *affirmation of the world as a whole*: "The mystic is neither neutral nor bitter nor cynical toward the world." (Fox, 1989, p. 51-52)

² Buber's notion of polarity: the duality of being and counterbeing.

The mystical act of *affirmation of the world as a whole* is irrational in that it refuses to be bound by political divisiveness. All is encompassed by affirmation: all polarities, all dualities, into a symmetry that cannot be fully comprehended in human terms. Buber, in his essay "Drama and Theater" (Friedman, 1969, p. 83-87) returns to a vision of Greek theatre as liminal space that Turner and Schechner would recognize in anthropological terms:

Each transformation play took place originally . . . not for its own sake but for the magical aim of achieving in the received form what the community needed . . . What took place on the stage . . . was not an illusory imitation of something that had once happened or even a delusive production of something imaginary, but a sacred reality that concerned the reality of the life of each of the watching and listening audience, concerned it in a way that could not be defined or represented, yet with primal power. (Friedman, 1969, p. 85-86)

The sense that theatre would be participatory and that it would take place, "not for its own sake but for the magical aim of achieving . . . what the community needed" speaks to the idea of affirmation of a larger whole. Turner's theory of *communitas* is also directed towards affirmation of the whole, through the celebration of the individual members, in community ritual - which theatre performance may be considered to be.

Buber's essay "Drama and Theatre" distinguishes between theatre that is obedient to drama - the tension and mystery of *word*³ that "moves between beings" - and theatre that is "soulless". (Friedman, 1969, p. 83-84) His call for theatre to return

³ Word and text, for Buber do not connote only written language, but all forms of physicalized communication.

to “awe” and “belief”, resonates strongly with Artaud’s challenge to the theatre: “In order that a faithless public, which allows “diversions” to be set before it because it fears concentration, to be redeemed from its fear to awe and elevated to belief in the reality of the spirit, great work, great education, great teaching are necessary” (Friedman, 1969, p. 87). Fox also warns us: “Art cut off from its mystical roots becomes sterile and egotistic, an instrument of elitism or consumptionism. It is aligned with competition rather than compassion, which is the basis of community” (1988, p. 59).

Hope is the end I see if one comes to the experience of theatre through mystical awareness. My experience with participatory theatre is that people enter into it with a *child-like playfulness*. Fox tells us that “A mystic is a child at play-the mystic within us is the child within us” (1988, p. 61). One memory from a Trickster’s performance with a tour group of seniors illustrates this. There were about fifty people - Americans and Canadians - on the bus. They were on an educational tour looking at Native sites and history. The youngest members of the tour were in their late 50’s and the oldest in their 90’s. Jack and I did a number of local Native legends with these feisty Elders. It was a delight to watch them play. The woman who acted Ah-tush-mit in “How the Human People Got the First Fire” had been a dancer in her youth. She took such pleasure in her dancing and was most cunning in tricking the wolves and stealing the fire. The wolves were belligerent and raucous; the deer warriors determined to break through their defensive ring. After the performance we all had lunch and the most interesting conversation. Many of the men were veterans - if not of WWII then Korea. A discussion developed around the rights of Native veterans in our two countries. Many people had not known that in Canada, Native veterans had had to

give up their Aboriginal status to fight for Canada. This was not true in the United States. While the men knew about this inequity and discrimination, the women did not. *Is it possible that the performance we had engaged in opened up space for some difficult processing that allowed these people to rewrite history⁴ acknowledging racial discrimination?* I find this a hopeful possibility.

Fox cites Carl Jung (Jacobi and Hull, ----, p. 199-200) to support the importance of fantasy and imaginative play:

Every good idea and all creative work are the offspring of the imagination, and have their source in what one is pleased to call infantile fantasy. Not the artist alone but every creative individual owes all that is greatest in his or her life to fantasy Without this playing with fantasy no creative work has ever yet come to birth.
(1998, p. 62)

Playing with fantasy also allows for the development of self-reflexivity. I believe that this is part of the mystical awakening that allowed for the seniors to be able to bridge from child-like play to rewriting history. The participants had seen themselves embody the characters from Native legends, had adopted, within the parameters of the performance, a Native world view. They were also witnessing themselves as white privileged people enacting a story that tells how the dominators

⁴ The idea of rewriting history came into my awareness recently when I co-taught a course in Native Theatre (THTR 425A, Winter Session, 2006, UBC). Anita Heis writes: "Aboriginal authors are rewriting the history books that have conveniently left out the facts around invasion, colonization and attempted genocide. Aboriginal people today are documenting the history of a people misrepresented, or not represented at all in history books of the past" (2001, p. 221). This rewriting history was part of the pedagogical program of Tricksters' Theatre, though at the time, I had not understood it in those precise words.

can be overcome by art/ful/ness. In their discussion after the play, they allowed the repositioning that had happened in the performance to inform their adult-like performance of who they are. This “conscientization” is the basis of Freire’s pedagogy of hope (1994).

The last reason for *hope* that I offer for participating in the experience of theatre performance is the practice of social justice. There is, in the structure of a play, in the necessary co-operation required in performance, a kind of justice or order at play that is not arbitrary but is a practical means to accomplish a group goal. Fox speaks of “psychic justice”, by which he means a balance—of light and dark, being and doing, play and seriousness (1998, p. 62) which corresponds to Buber’s “polarity”. Fox asserts that balance through mystical grounding brings personalized justice to the psyche and that personalized justice brings social justice: “Thus, to educate the mystic is to educate for peace instead of for war. . . . by confronting one’s projections and by healing psychic injustice, the mystic clears the way for a more effective struggle for social justice” (1998, p. 62).

To close this exploration of the artist as mystic, I will tell the mystery that occurred at the seniors’ performance. The performance was held on the lawn of a fishing lodge, right on the riverbank. I had set out all our costumes and props along a low cement wall that divided the lawn from the rocks, boulders and scrub of the river. For our wolf head pieces we had taken apart an old mink stole made from whole mink pelts. These pelts were complete with little heads with beady eyes and sharp teeth, and little paws with sharp claws. When one was wearing a mink pelt on one’s head, one felt *very wolfy*. While we were

waiting for the participants to gather on the lawn I surveyed everything to make sure that all was in place and where we could reach it easily. I became aware of three of the mink pelts edging their way along the stone wall. I watched closely without moving. “Jack, look at the wolf heads!” I whispered. Just before we were to lose our pelts to the wild river bank I yelled, “Hey!” We saw three sinuous brown backs leap over the rocks and disappear. I have often wondered what the wild mink thought of their long dead brothers and the strange human gathering that encroached on their territory. In Nuuchahnulth and Kwakiutl legends, Mink, or Quaht-yaht, is a Trickster. The visitation of three live tricksters to our Tricksters’ Theatre performance was truly a mystical occurrence.

Fox challenges artists to name their experiences--which is the journey of my research and this dissertation.

The ability to name our experiences is a necessary part of empowerment. It is also a necessary ingredient to community building Mystics must come out of the closets, must gather to share their stories that we might set fire again to our tired and cold civilization.” (1988, p. 66 - 67)

It is *my hope*, grounded in my own experiences, the testimonies of these witnesses, and the reflections of the ParticipAction theatre interviewees and the Tricksters’ actors, that as we tell our stories and make our art, we will build community, bringing light and warmth, like young Ah-tush-mit, to all the human people.

Young Ah-tush-mit, brave and bold,

Let your story now be told:

From the ground you leap up high,

Above the fire you will fly.

Bring us warmth, bring us light!

Dance for fire, dance for life!

Tricksters' Theatre chant for "How the Human People Got the First Fire", (Clutesi, 1967).

It is now that I may have some understanding of the Elder's question to me from when Tricksters' Theatre was in Eagle Lookout the last time. I recently told the story of "How the Human People Got the First Fire" at a gathering at the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia. In preparation, I re-read George Clutesi's telling to refresh my connection to the story. Clutesi ends his telling with this verse:

If your own heart be open to love be there for Ah-tush-mit

you will hear the thump and the beat of his little song . . .

(1967, p. 28)

It is through hearing with an open heart that we become attuned to each other, and through being there, that we can come into community.



On the Road

Tricksters' Theatre Conversation, May, 2002

The last touring season of Tricksters' Theatre occurred from March to May 2002. Our creation process and tour had been partially funded by the Vancouver Foundation. As part of our evaluative process for the grant, we undertook our own group interview and submitted it on a cassette tape. In retrospect, I can see that the questions I crafted, as the Director of the project and the company, and the responses of the other Tricksters' actors, were the discoveries that propelled me into my doctoral inquiry.

Below are some excerpts from our conversation in May 2002. I believe our reflections provide interesting connections to both the responses of the ParticipAction Theatre participants and to the different theoretical stances explored in this thesis.

Question: What are some of the more memorable experiences of the project?

Rachael: It all has to do with connecting - working as a team and really feeling that - or connecting with the children and having all these kids come up to you and hug you and respect you.

Jeannine: Coming down and giving my song to get this job really touched me. The most [memorable experience] was Ahousaht where I was doing Crow, and I opened my eyes and I had every child's eyes on me. And I really grabbed them and that was my most joyful part. . . And treasures . . . eagle feathers from Bella Bella.

Hazel: . . . Mostly to do with being in those isolated communities and being welcomed in and having some degree of acceptance from people who probably had lived around for generations in the same area and always known one another - they have such a long history. And we were sort of included in their communities for a while. And of course, working with the children, because we didn't have any idea who any of them were. We'd just go into these places with no expectations of what they're going to be able to do and then afterwards, some of the teachers would tell us astonishing stories - for instance about the boy that hadn't spoken anything - more than two words - for about three years - and suddenly, during our performance, was very voluble. And another boy who had huge problems and was the victim for the rest of the school - even the smaller children used to beat him up. He was a liar and a thief - and he took one of the leading parts in the play. For him, it was a very empowering experience. We didn't know anything about this boy, that this was his history. Just to see him stepping forward and speaking his truth. And seeing the change that we were able to offer some of those children, chances to become somebody different. That's what performing can do for people; that's the value of this kind of work.

Annie: This is really early on . . . when we decided to do The Crystal Spring . . . and it was so complex and we didn't know if the kids could actually carry it off and we were going to have to trust them with so much they would have to do without us being there to lead it . . . and then we did this absolutely horrific test performance. We were told that there would be 60 kids and there were 150 and it was the wrong age group and . . . and there were all these expectations from the teachers and we weren't doing what they thought we were going to do . . . but nevertheless we did it. And we learned a lot from the experience. Somehow it was that jump out of being in training and being in rehearsal and taking that jump and saying, "Okay, we're going to do this," and even though we weren't sure how it was all going to happen, we just *did it* because we'd made that commitment and we were just out there and it was going to happen. That was a real transition we made in the project and once we'd made that transition everything just seemed to fall into place.

Hazel: One of the most memorable experiences was when we did The Crystal Spring . . . the last time, with all the kids in Victoria - these were children who were all there for a conference on children and the environment¹--that's different than kids who are in school because lots of kids who are in school don't want to be there. But these kids did want to be there--and it was just this magical unfolding.

¹ The United Nations International Children's Conference on the Environment was held at the University of Victoria, in May, 2002.

Annie: That was definitely one of my memorable moments too, I think because all these kids - some of them hardly even spoke English and they were from all over the world - and they took the characters and they got right into it - and we got to do it outdoors which was so much nicer than being stuck in a gym - and these kids just took it and ran with it. And we only had an hour to do this thing and our time got cut short . . . but it all happened and that was really exciting.

Rachael: Something that I remembered while Hazel was speaking was being at [that training centre for adults] - and it was our second day there and this one woman was near tears about how we'd touched her and opened things up for her. I don't know exactly what we did to help her but we know that we made a positive light, maybe, in her life. Seeing her being moved like that was very rewarding as well.

Annie: We gave opportunities to people to see themselves in a different way and to speak out. Sometimes just to have the opportunity to speak and be heard. . .

Question: *What new skills did you learn?*

Annie: There were differences on this tour that I really had to come to terms with. One was when we'd go into schools - the climate in the province right now is really horrific for teachers and they are very threatened - so there would be

this huge undercurrent of tension and negativity and suspicion. Teachers were basically at war with each other, in some situations. And it was horrible. And yet, so often, afterwards, we would be sitting and talking with teachers and they would be telling us all this stuff - about students and how awful things were - and part of me wanted to say, "Forget it. I'm out of here." I didn't want to listen to this stuff. And then I started to realize that when we go into those schools, we're there to work with the kids, but we also have a really strong role with the staff, with the teachers, that I hadn't recognized before. We were able to validate *them* because what would happen was we would come in and do stuff with their kids. And the kids would do things that were amazing, that they'd never seen those children do before - and what we did in that case is we were validating all of this work that those teachers have done over all of this time. They work and they work and they work with the students and they don't necessarily get to see any great response because they're locked into this routine. But, if they weren't doing that work with these kids, then when we come in, [the kids] wouldn't do what they do with us. That was something I learned that I hadn't realized before. So I started to pay a lot more attention to how I interacted with the teachers and how I began to facilitate their being able to express their own concerns about the children.

The second thing I learned was . . . I really felt like I was collaborating . . . I guess it was when we did that first performance . . . that was so difficult ["The Crystal Spring" test performance] and realizing that, "This wasn't all up to me", that this was a collaborative thing and that we all had different strengths and weaknesses and that I could really rely on other people. I didn't have to try and do this by myself. Then the whole rest of the project was a journey of discovery for me, learning about all the different strengths and weaknesses each of us have because we were together, 24 hours a day, for a long time.

It was really fun. There were times I could see somebody doing their regular thing . . . and we'd get to know each other's patterns - but we also broke our patterns - and there were surprises all the time . . . I learned a lot about myself in the process of working in this kind of a group and it was really a gift.

Rachael: I grew a lot through this project. . . One [skill] that's very strong is team work . . . Because we had that teamwork so strong I believe I was able to really explore my own strengths and weaknesses and not fear my weaknesses but recognize them and learn from them and strengthen them. . . . I definitely learned acting skills. . . And some communication skills . . . I was given the chance to facilitate, which is something I've always wanted to do. Even the first time I led a talking circle, my heart was pounding so strong . . . It really got the ball rolling for me in terms of my own confidence and how I'm able to present myself.

Jeannine: The time I knew that I was changing was when I was doing Crow and they would put the feet on me and I would wake up - when they would put the feet on me [Crow is asleep] I would go, "Huh, mommy?" The little kids just laughed so hard. But one night we had to change our characters - to sexy "Marilyn MonCrow"². And when they put the feet on me I went, "Not now, Fred, I've got a headache." . . . I can actually change my character, just like that!

² We were asked to perform at a high school as part of their Cultural Day. We had a few moments of panic as we deliberated how to perform our Legends for a high school audience when we had been performing mainly in elementary schools. Our

Rachael: Jeannine reminded me, as she was speaking, about doing things ‘at the snap of a finger.’ . . . We had to be ready to do anything at any time.

Annie: I don’t think we went anywhere - we’d spend two to three hours, planning *in detail*, the night before, what we were going to do, and then we’d get there and be told . . . they’d changed everything around, “Oh, is that okay?” And we’d just look at each other. . . I think, sometimes things worked out better because we were flexible. But sometimes, I think we might have stood our ground a bit more.

Hazel: Sometimes the teachers didn’t understand what we were doing. . . . We had much more problems with the teachers that we ever had with the kids. Because they didn’t understand the process - and teachers are very much into controlling things - it freaked them out: first, because they weren’t going to control it and [second], that *we weren’t* trying to control things either. We were presenting opportunities and opening doors for people.

strategy was to perform “Raven” as a rapper and “Crow” as a “valley girl”. To our relief, the students appreciated our interpretation and participated willingly.

Looking back:

I am so immensely proud and grateful to have worked with these wonderful women: Jeannine Scheurs, Rachael Freer, and Hazel Lennox. There are themes in our conversation that have been picked up throughout this dissertation: connecting, teamwork, transformation, commitment and risk and trust, conscientization, *communitas*, self-knowledge, change, confidence and self-esteem, flexibility, opportunity. Our responses are felt, they are subjective, they are sometimes emotional. They do not prove anything objective, but suggest that our lives were changed through the experience of performing with Tricksters' Theatre. And that hopefully, we had a positive impact on the three to four thousand people of all ages that we interacted with—in twenty-six different schools and communities around British Columbia. If we take Kershaw's idea of "potential efficacy" and visualize all that choppy water we created in many different places, we can hope that there has been a large potential dropped into many people's lives.

Exit Point

Mapping the journey

Part of what performance knows is the impossibility of maintaining the distinction between temporal tenses, between an absolutely singular beginning and ending, between living and dying. What performance studies learns most deeply from performance is the generative force of those “betweens.” (Phelan, 1998, p. 8)

At my exit point to this journey, I return to my idea of *elastic tension* in the ‘between’ and the metaphor of the bungee cord. Tension is an idea that comes up frequently in art, theatre, and performance. When I train actors, the essential element they must learn to manipulate is ‘dramatic tension’. If the dramatic tension is lost in a scene, the scene is over. The audience no longer cares about the outcome or the characters for there is no longer anything at stake—for the characters or for the audience. The same observation could be made of the corporeal body. When a body loses consciousness, it loses tension, it becomes a ‘dead weight’. As long as the body is in dynamic relationship with all its parts, there is tension, there is movement, there is life and signification. McConachie (2001) cites Erickson (1995, p. 62) to explain this in semiotic terms:

“The tension between the body as object and the body as sign gives birth to an awareness of presence as the tension between basic corporeal being and the becoming of signification.” . . . Thus, actors live at the dynamic center of image schemata experienced in the theater. . . . we can conclude that performers and

audience members enjoy the dynamic oscillation between corporeality and signification in the embodied images they have constructed together in the theater. This experience occurs in all theatrical events that “work”, grassroots theater included (p. 41).

I believe this tension is what holds the engagement of the participants in the day camp audiences or any performance where people feel themselves to be participating. *It is this tension that I call ‘elasticity’ that allows that “something” to happen “between” participants whether it is described as community or connection or belonging.*

Courtney explains that tension needs to exist, but that tension is not the same as conflict. He theorizes that oppositions can only be understood in the light of similarities:

The first of the differentiations made by the baby are those of similarity: of whole and part, of figure-and-ground. From these evolve all subsequent mental structures. . . . In other words, opposition is set within the context of similarity; it is similarity, not opposition, that grounds all mental structures. We should not confuse the tension between parts of a whole with the conflict of opposites (in Booth & Martin-Smith, 1988, p. 131).

Courtney’s distinction between tension and conflict is crucial to appreciating the dynamic of performance. It is also crucial to understanding the dynamic of building community. We can relate this to Freire’s “problem-solving education” (1989), Fels’ (1999) and Varela’s (1993) “possible worlds”, Courtney’s “polysemic meanings” (in Booth & Martin-Smith, 1998, p. 131).

Courtney develops his idea further to connect symbolic thought with the dramatic process: “when we metaphorize and dramatize we create polysemic meanings” (in Booth & Martin-Smith, 1988, p. 131).

The concept of tension or *elasticity* allows us to focus on the between/ness rather than the oppositions, escaping from the binaries implicit in colonial and patriarchal views. Buber sought synthesis of opposites; Fox speaks of the balance of opposites. Bourriaud’s theory of relational aesthetics clearly posits the between/ness of relationship that is integral to Buber’s and Gadamer’s understanding of art: “Artistic practice is always a relationship with the other, at the same time it represents a relationship with the world” (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 85). In/between/ness is also Victor Turner’s liminal space where performance plays into *communitas*. The questions I ask are, “*What is the heft of this in/between space?*” “*How does it work?*” I propose that how it works has to do with *elasticity*. *What are the tensions between the oppositions? What are the possibilities of interplay?* Bourriaud extends relationship from one to the other to relationship with the world. This simultaneous movement is *elastic* with multiple interactions occurring concurrently--a very choppy pool of water, a post modern, post structural world pool, containing many dilations of energy (Hastrup, 1998) and a good deal of Kershaw’s potential efficacy. My mind’s eye is seeing a noisy, focused, rampage of children wearing rat’s ears overwhelming a circle of townsfolk in Hamelin. They are caught up into a space-moment of possibility, of dilated energy, that is transformative, offering *new ways of experiencing themselves and each other and the multiple worlds that co-emerge with each unfolding/emergent moment*.

I return to Courtney's "context of similarity" and relate this to Judith Butler's forays into performance and performativity, explained by McKenzie (Phelan & Lane, 1998, p. 217-235). Butler posits Turner's liminal space as not only a transgressive space but also as a normative space. Ritual, as repetitive action, reinforces normative behaviour. This is performativity: "Performativity is thus not a singular 'act,' for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms" (Butler, 1993, p. 12). This is the status quo, the 'normal' of the ParticipAction day camps or the schools Tricksters' Theatre visited. What participatory theatre is able to accomplish is a turning of performativity, within the familiar context of known relationships. The participatory performance introduces an *elasticity*, troubling the norm; that *interrupts* the repetitive actions of the subjects, to allow behaviours that transgress normative expectations. But these 'new' behaviours can only be apprehended through the *similarity* of the mental structures of the norm. This is a hermeneutic circle, for the "polysemic meanings" based on metaphorical expressions (for instance, a pool of choppy water), must necessarily diverge: they are only held in the tension of the similar, between a multiplicity of oppositions; they are not the same.

Phelan speaks about the perpetual disappearance of performance, that it cannot be saved; even if recorded, it becomes something other than the performance, a representation of the performance. It is through the disappearance of performance that it becomes itself (1993, p. 146). The 'it is happening now' of performance even when documented through audio and/or visual recording, is "only a spur to memory, an encouragement of memory to become present" (p. 146). Phelan (following Calle) explains that it is the loss of the object, or in the case of performance, loss of the event, that precipitates its recovery through memory: "The disappearance of the object is fundamental to performance; it rehearses and repeats the

disappearance of the subject who longs always to be remembered” (p. 147). *What performance does, which documentary cannot do, is implicate “the real through the presence of living bodies”* (p. 148). I think of the youth leaders talking about how the children were remembering each other in the performance and how this created a bonding between them, of *how the memories of shared performance generate community--a place where people are seen and recognized by each other.*

Hope, culture and community

The last Stopping Place, *The Artist and Community*, ends with *hope*. Phelan, too, ends her book *Unmarked* (1993) with “notes on hope - for my students” (p. 167). What she recognizes is that “there is no apprehension of the body of the other without a corresponding (re)vision of one’s own” (p. 171). These re-visions can occur within the *elastic* space-moments of participatory performance. Phelan’s call is to create a performative pedagogy that contracts the “acquisitive model of power-knowledge” for control and instead dilates towards a pedagogy for “disappearance and loss” (p. 173). Phelan envisions the class/community as a performance event--a whole--and each member-collaborator-participant animates a part of this event. The dynamic energy of the performance is in the tension or *elasticity* of the parts to the whole. Her vision is of a continual doing and looking that cannot remain fixed because the seeing of self and object, object and self, is continually in revision, as “the sources of power evaporate and re-emerge elsewhere” (p. 174)--a pool of choppy water. Her invitation is that “pedagogy must involve training in the patient acceptance of the perpetual failure of in/sight” (p, 174), or as Fels has

explained, through moments of interstanding. It is here, “*on the rickety bridge between self and other*” (my italics, Phelan, 1993, p. 174) or *in the elasticity of performance, that hope is created*.

The implications of Phelan’s vision are discussed by Carlson (2004), who refers to ideas put forward by Jackson (1989) and Conquergood (1991). Both ethnographers see the world performatively as lived experience “concerned not with identity and closure but with interplay and interaction” that “accommodates our shifting sense of ourselves as subjects and as objects, as acting upon and being acted upon by the world . . . of belonging and being estranged” (p. 209). In this shift towards *revealing culture* Carlson asks: “What are the consequences of thinking about culture as ‘an unfolding performative intervention instead of a reified system’?” (p. 209). One consequence, I believe, is pointed to by the Tricksters’ Theatre actors when they recount stories of empowerment and transformation, of individuals within communities re/visioning each other, thereby creating new ‘possible worlds’, and the potential for *communities infused with a culture of hope*.

It is important to hold on to Carlson’s idea of culture as “an unfolding performative intervention” to negotiate the idea of a *culture of hope*. *What do I mean by a culture of hope?* First, we must circumvent the idea of culture as a “reified system”. I prefer to imagine ‘culture’ as a collection of cells growing on a petrie dish. As each cell grows and performs it interacts with the other cells and together they multiply to form an interdependent and cohesive structure that will continue to change until it becomes atrophied and rigor mortis sets in. The nature of the culture is revealed

as it grows and changes. This understanding of the ongoing nature of culture illustrates the idea of culture as “unveil[ed]” by Freire’s “problem-posing education”: a “shifting sphere of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages, experience, and voices intermingle amid diverse relations of power and privilege” (Freire, 1989, p. 70, 71 in Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001, p. 16). Carlson uses the word “unfolding”, while Freire uses the word “unveiling”. In both these words is the suggestion of revealing something that already exists. I find that this terminology is hopeful in itself--that culture does not have to be created ‘out of thin air’ but that the work of performance, as a process of problem-posing, will reveal culture in multiple and heterogeneous ways and with multiple and heterogeneous voices.

When I was in Human Services training with the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, one of the issues we explored was the relationship between traditions and culture. I discovered that they are not synonymous. My basic understanding then¹, which I apply here, is that traditions are structures that provide a framework for culture, but that culture is relational, living and changing and will inevitably discard traditions as they atrophy, no longer providing support for new life. This distinction is crucial for artists of all peoples, for art’s importance in society is that it generates new forms and enlivens culture. If, as Gablik and Bourriaud, among others, believe, art is experienced and understood in the interrelationships between people, then there is an ethical importance to the work of the artist to create art that will lead to life and the continuance of our world.

¹ I was employed as a family care worker with the Usma program from January, 1988 through May, 1991.

As I reflect on *hope* and uncover its usages in this writing, I am struck by how central it is to what I am coming to understand. It wasn't until I read Gablik that I began to relax the self-censor that was telling me that 'hope' was too soft, unscholarly, unprofessional. As I have begun to question the nature of *hope* other questions arise: *What opposes hope? Is hope an essential quality of elasticity? Is the absence of hope the snapped band, an inert and lifeless 'between', a void? How do I relate hope to community?*

Hope is connected to belief, to change, to connection, to the future. In reviewing the ways in which *hope* has been used by the various voices in this dissertation, I interpret *hope* as an active force that makes things happen. The youth leaders hoped that the performance would be something different from the routine they were working in, something that would be and would bring a change. They also expressed their hope that parents and children could bridge their separation from each other through participatory performance. Fels uses hope in conjunction with desire (1996, p. 33) which for me evokes an erotic sense² of the word. Boal (1985, 1992) expresses hope through his belief that taking action 'on stage' will lead to action in 'real life'. Freire (1989) believes that conscientization will provide hope through understanding the relations of power and privilege. Haedicke (2001) hopes that the experience of acting in *Un Voyage* will have future impact on her behaviour and the choices she will make, and the same impact for the other participants, eventually leading to social change. This too, is the hope of Kershaw (1999) with his idea of the "potential efficacy" of performance. Anthony Haddon (Escolme, 2003), the

² The two terms for love that have been surfaced in this writing are agape and eros. When the Eagle Lookout Elder asked me, "Where is the love?" she may have been referring to either or both of these ideas of love. Both are needed, I believe, in a culture of hope and in a community.

director of Blah Blah Blah Theatre Company, hopes that the performance of *We Are One Tribe*, will have the effect of strengthening connections between the school and the community.

Is hope an ideology?³ If hope can be an ideology then it can be the basis of culture. Questions that arise for me are: if we undertake an action without a conscious hope for an outcome, will the action be stillborn? What is the relationship of hope to predetermination? When does hope become coercive? How is hope conceived? If hope is an essential quality of elasticity, then the absence of hope nullifies the tension that holds the life and vitality of relationship(s).

When an actor is being trained using the ideas of Stanislavski, she is told to discover what her character's 'objectives' are for each line she says. The formula that is used is: "I want to _____". The blank must be filled with an active verb and must be directed towards another person in the scene. An example is: Hamlet: "I want to provoke Ophelia (to get her out of my hair)". This objective will guide the actor/Hamlet in his physical actions in the scene. The idea is that when characters have differing objectives, between them they will create dramatic tension and the scene will have vitality and a direction in

³ The Collins Dictionary offers two definitions for ideology that need to be considered in the context of this supposition: "2. . . the set of beliefs by which a group or society orders reality so as to render it intelligible. 3. speculation that is imaginary or visionary" (1986. p. 760). The third definition is the one that led to my self-censoring voice that belittled the idea of hope as 'wishful thinking'. The second definition is closer to the meaning that I think is most relevant to my argument. Nevertheless, hope is visionary because it is tied to belief and to the future. The idea of future can only be understood because one believes in one's own existence. Belief in a future without hope is nihilism.

which to move. The scene is over when one character achieves her/his objective. The dramatic tension and *elasticity* of the scene has been worn through. In the example above, the scene ends when Ophelia flees Hamlet's scorn (and eventually drowns herself). It is a truism that one must have a goal to achieve success. Truly, my inquiry project was undertaken with clear objectives and hopes. *To what extent did my hopes affect the experiences of the participActors? Did my journey of inquiry exceed my hopes? What absences were called into presence by my hopes for this endeavor?*

My hope for the participActors was that they would have a positive and confidence-building experience. This is an acceptable pedagogical objective. I do not see my hope as predetermination because the participatory theatre event is so rife with uncontrollable elements that while I can have some considerable influence over the process and outcomes, I cannot totally control them. This is what Fels (1999) means when she speaks of per/form/ance as:

a birthing and rebirthing
simultaneously with form and through the destruction of form

and suddenly find ourselves
in an unexpected space
between structure and chaos (p. 48).

Fels draws attention to the inherent tension of the word "performance". She offers the etymological analysis that "per" means both through and through the destruction of. This is the *elastic tension* implicit to performance. *It is also in this "birthing and rebirthing simultaneously" that hope rests.*

The other hope that I had in facilitating this inquiry is that the participant-researchers--the youth leaders and student actors--would be reflective and critical. I crafted the questions for the interviews in the hope that they would engage the interviewees thoughtfully and also that the interviewees' ideas would spark off each other. My hopes for participatory performance on a larger scale are that people would find it a space for connection with others, that the experience would be transformative and life-giving, that the multiplicity of bodies and voices in each performing group would be acknowledged and honoured. *These are actions that are not only hopeful but hope generating.* The negation of these actions would be to create performance where nothing changes, where life is sapped from the audience, where only the privileged few (in the sense that the performance is only about them) are acknowledged or honored. This seems to me to be a fair representation of the popular culture of movie and television fame that reiterates itself endlessly, preying on the resources of those who yearn for but will never win the fame portrayed on the covers of movie star magazines. The rampant culture of "Reality TV" is just a new manifestation of an old paradigm.

How could a culture of hope create community? Or could a community create a culture of hope?

My discussion of *community* in the preface to this dissertation posits community as a shared place, as an understanding of belonging, of having recognized and integrated roles of engagement. Connected to this understanding of community is the idea of performance as the "ongoing bringing forth of a world" (Fels & Stothers, 1996, p. 256). Unless the world that is brought forth is an autistic world of one, it must be relational, shared with other beings. It holds the potential of becoming a

community. Worlds and communities, to exist and recognize themselves, must develop a culture to order “reality so as to render it intelligible” (Collins, 1986. p. 760).

Lest *community* sound like a panacea or utopia, it is useful to remember that it is a difficult and contested term. Community is not easy. When I worked “on reserve”⁴ in child protection, I met with elders to discuss what had been done within their own laws and customs to deal with pedophiles and people who offended against the community. This was a difficult conversation as we were expecting the release from prison of an elder who had impregnated his fifteen-year-old granddaughter. To further complicate this, the man was well-loved and a community leader. His absence from the community was felt in many ways. The worst punishment that could be put upon a person was to banish them from the community. This was considered more severe than death, for by oneself, one would no longer exist as a human being. This person would not be able to reintegrate in any community of the people. Since the imposition of ‘white’ culture in North America, banishment became impossible to enforce and ‘white law’ over-rode tribal law. The decision of the elders was that this man should be allowed to re-enter the community but that he should never be allowed to be alone with children and that he must always be watched and confronted if it appeared that he was considering re-offending. If he did re-offend then he would be banned from living on or visiting the reserve. In no way were the elders optimistic that this solution would work, but they saw that it did provide a way of hope for the community to confront endemic child abuse through taking responsibility

⁴ “On reserve” is common parlance for working on an Indian reservation as opposed to working “off reserve”, which signifies working with Native peoples, but in an urban context. There are legal and resource-based differences between working on or off reserve.

for the offender and for the safety of children on reserve. If the elder re-offended it could not be hidden but would require engagement from community members and community action to protect the children whom it saw as its future. Through performing their role as elders these women created a culture of hope within their community for a future that could hold all the members of that community through revealing “shifting boundaries” and “relations of power and privilege” (Freire, 1989, p. 70, 71, in Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001, p. 16)). They unfolded a “performative intervention” (Carlson, 2004, p. 209).

It is the invitation to participate that opens the space for community to unfold; it is the hopeful action of participating that allows community to swell and tug in that space. The Tricksters’ actors, in the last “On the Road” conversation, spoke about our first performance of “The Crystal Spring”. It was a harrowing experience for us, but one thing we did learn from that performance was the importance of the invitation to participate and its implementation. There was a child in a wheelchair at that performance. When she went with one of groups the Tricksters’ actor in charge of that group couldn’t see how to include her and told her and her attendant that she couldn’t participate. Her attendant would not accept that ‘dashing of hope’ and took the child in the wheelchair to another group. That group’s actor-facilitator was not at all sure how the child would manage but recognized that she needed to be included. There was something heart-stopping when, in the performance, we witnessed the girl in the wheelchair participate in a dance ritual to welcome the goddess of the spring. She had determination in her confined body and joy on her face as she wheeled her way through the measures of the dance. When we debriefed together afterwards we discussed how to include people with different abilities so that no-one would be left out. We recognized that *the participatory theatre event is a unique space where everyone can have a place and a role*

that counts; it is a momentary community with a culture of hope where a “shifting sphere of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages, experience, and voices intermingle” (Freire, 1989, p. 70, 71, in Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001, p. 16).

A fledgling theory of elasticity

As I stand at the centre of a crossing place there are many paths to choose from which may well intersect in unforeseen ways on different planes. Carlson (2004, p. 209) puts forward a consideration concerning viewing the world as performance that will definitely impact my future inquiry journeys: *what is the relationship of performance to ideology in different contexts?* If, as we create our culture through our performances, we form “the world”, and interpret its reality through per/forming the world, *what comes first-- the performance or the ideology? Or is the relationship always in the elastic tension between the two?* I return to Fels’ (1999) idea of per/form/ance as: “a birthing and rebirthing simultaneously” and finding “oneself in the unexpected space between structure and chaos” (p. 48). This space holds an exciting *elastic* possibility for unveiling a *culture of hope*.

How do I relate hope to community? The work of this dissertation has been to understand the possibilities of participatory theatre performance for creating community. I return to the definition of community in performance that I offered in the preface: “it is a collectively imagined space, created from ‘real’ time and place and physical presence and transmuted into a

dimension beyond its contributing elements that is accessible for those who want to go there through their own imaginative process” (p. xvii). Through the process of Turner’s *communitas*, community may be achieved. As I proposed in the preface, in the enacting of a story, participants share a common goal, they create and share symbolic meanings that are peculiar not only to the story but to their particular performance. They “count” because they have a role that is recognized as essential to the story. Because they are there together they have the resonance of shared memories. The enacting of the story affirms their existence. The participants can feel a sense of community, of caring for each other—that “warm and friendly feel[ing]” of commonality mentioned by Barr (1998, p. 181-182, in Haedicke and Nellhaus, 2001, p. 10).

My understanding of the potential of this felt commonality, of community, is that people begin to develop a sense of hopefulness through knowing that they belong. Their belonging in the acting of a story is physicalized; through their somatic memory this belonging extends beyond the experience of play-acting, generating hope. This sense of hopefulness can influence the culture we create. It can influence the culture we create in schools. When children (and teachers) feel they belong they can thrive and learn and contribute to the structured community they co-habit. Through participating in performance they can re-vision themselves and their peers beyond the constraints that must operate in any normative situation. Through recognizing their own growing and changing they must practice compassion for themselves, and through self-compassion develop the ability to have compassion for others. I believe that this does matter, particularly in a time when our culture is under great stress with escalating war, racial and ethnic prejudice and fear, rampant corporatism and consumerism. Performing together, making art together, relating aesthetically, offers the possibility of creating physical

connection and common ground; when we share a common ground we engage in revealing emergent community. And we can dare to hope.

In the process of writing the stories and the stopping places, *a fledgling theory of elasticity has emerged*, which I hope to pursue to further understanding as I believe it bears on the many manifestations of participatory performance in contemporary culture. These forms of participatory performance include: flash-mobs, raves, concerts, festivals, public rituals, interactive media, historical re-enactments, site-specific theatre, group story telling, stand-up comedy, variety shows. Recently, I saw an advertisement in the Globe & Mail newspaper⁵ for people to send their self-portraits to the Art Gallery of Ontario for a public exhibition. In April, 2006, a “Flash Mob” staged a “die-in” on the lawn of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “A flash mob occurs when a group of strangers come together in a public place, perform an unusual act for about 10 minutes and then disperse” (Vancouver Courier, April 26, p. 35). Jennifer Moreau, the Courier reporter interviewing the initiator, Chelsea Sherbut, reports:

A handful of actors wearing nerdy jackets and glasses met on the gallery lawn for a “die-in”. “We had a whistle and at noon sharp everyone just came into the area and died a dramatic death,” Sherbut said. (p. 35)

These events, which are organized through the internet, began in New York in 2003. They were initiated by Harper’s Magazine editor Bill Wasik, and quickly spread around the world. From Moreau’s description, I see links to Kaprow’s

⁵ (January 21, 2006, R10)

Happenings of the 1960's. I also chuckle at the "dramatic death" as this is exactly what occurred for the trolls in the "The Trail to Munachi". Moreau continues:

. . . Wasik's experiments reveal the need for people to come together in a social setting. "I think it's totally fascinating. It says something about people. It says we're totally isolated." She [Sherbut] said flash mobs build a sense of community even if everybody leaves the event afterward. (p. 36)

I am curious about what draws people to these performances, what the experience of participating brings them, and what this movement into what Bourriaud has called "relational aesthetics" means in our ongoing creation of culture. I see my future inquiries moving outward to explore some of these creative spaces through my own participation and also to create future participatory performances to refine my own inquiry practices.

What draws me to the relational experience of art are the moments of magic, such as when the boy in Willow Dale played Eagle. Somehow, we knew that his performance was true. As I have expressed in "The Artist and Community": "Trueness is measured by the resonance that the actor and the witnesses experience in an embodied way". Resonance is caused by vibration and vibration can only occur when there is *elastic tension*. In Willow Dale; in the ParticipAction performances; we were making art together, the actor-facilitators' creativity sparking the creativity of the participActors. As Valéry says: "A creator is one who makes others create" (Royce, 2004, p. 139). There is awesome energy in this collaborative, creative work. In the *elasticity of dramatic tension*, in the resonating connections between us, we can experience *communitas*

and community, feel mystically connected, learn about ourselves and our fellow participActors, and imagine new possible worlds which have the possibility of becoming communities enlivened by a *culture of hope*.

Kattwinkel (2003, p. xv) has observed that the field of participatory performance studies needs more exploration, more theorizing. I believe that my *concept of elasticity* warrants further theorizing with implications across all performance disciplines. Performance is by inclination interdisciplinary. I look forward to further inquiry with collaborators who wish to enter the choppy water of participatory performance and to play with the *elasticity* between us.

All my relations.

Bibliography

- Appelbaum, D. (1995). *The stop*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Archibald, J. (1997). Coyote learns to make a storybasket: the place of First Nations stories in education. Unpublished Dissertation. Simon Fraser University.
- Artaud, A. (1958). *Theatre and its double*. M. C. Richards (Trans.). New York: Grove Press Inc.
- Artaud, A. (1970). *Theatre and its double*. C. Victor (Trans.). London: Calder & Boyers.
- Auslander, P. (1999). *Liveness: performance in a mediatized culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Bakhtin, M. (1973). *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*. H. Iswolsky, H. (Trans.). Cambridge, MS: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Barba, E. (1995). *The paper canoe: a guide to theatre anthropology*. R. Fowler (Trans.). London: Routledge.
- Barnstaple, R. (2000). Open the house. *Canadian Theatre Review* 103, 14-23.
- Barr, R. (1998). *Rooms with a view: the stages of community in modern theater*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Beck, J. (1972). *the life of the theatre: the relation of the artist to the struggle of the people*. San Francisco: City Lights Books.
- Bennett, S. (1990). *Theatre audiences: a theory of production and reception*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bennett, S. & Farfan, P. (Eds). (2005) *Calgary's High Performance Rodeo: 20 years of new performance*. *Canadian Theatre Review* 124.
- Biner, P. (1972). *The living theatre*. New York: Horizon Press.

- Blaeser, K. (1999). Writing voices speaking: Native authors and an oral aesthetic, *Talking on the page: editing Aboriginal oral texts*, Murray, L.J. and Rice, K. (Eds.). Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 53-68.
- Blau, H. (1992). *to all appearances: ideology and performance*. London and New York: Routledge.
- (1990). *The audience*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Bogus, R. J., (Ed.) (1977). *The Doubleday Roget's Thesaurus in Dictionary Form*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc.
- Boal, A. (1985). *Theater of the oppressed*. New York: Theatre Communications Group.
- (1992) *Games for actors and non-actors*. London and New York: Routledge.
- (1995) *The rainbow of desire: The Boal method of theatre and therapy*. New York: Routledge.
- Booth, D. & Martin-Smith, A. (Eds.). (1988). *Re-cognizing Richard Courtney: Selected writings on drama and education*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers Limited.
- Bourriard, N. (2002). *Relational aesthetics*. S. Pleasance & F. Woods with M. Copeland (Trans.). France: Les presses du reel.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production: essays on art and literature*. US: Columbia University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J-C. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. R. Nice (Trans.) London, Newbury Park, New Dehli: Sage Publications.
- Brook, P. (1993). *The open door: thoughts on theatre and acting*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- (1968). *The empty space*. New York: Penguin.
- Buber, M. (1969). On Polarity: Dialogue After the Theatre, *Martin Buber and the theater*, Friedman, M. (Ed.). New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 53-74.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of "sex"*. New York: Routledge.

- (1993). Critically queer. *Gay and lesbian quarterly* 1, 17-32.
- (1990). *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- (1990). Performative acts and gender constitution: an essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. *Performing feminisms: feminist critical theory and theatre*. S. E. Case, (Ed.). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Butterwick, S. (2003). Re/searching speaking and listening across difference: exploring feminist coalition politics through participatory theatre. *Qualitative studies in education*, 16 (3), 449-465.
- Carlson, M. (2004). *Performance: a critical introduction*. 2nd edition. London and New York: Routledge.
- Carson, T. R. & Sumara, D. (1997). *Action research as a living practice*. New York, Washington, DC/Baltimore, Boston, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Vienna, Paris: Peter Lang.
- Courtney, R. (1990). *Drama and intelligence : a cognitive theory*. Montreal, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- (1995). *Drama and feeling : an aesthetic theory*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Clutesi, G. (1967). How the human people got the first fire. *Son of Raven, Son of Deer*. Sidney, BC: Gray's Publishing Ltd., 17-30.
- Cohen, A. (1985). *The symbolic construction of community*. New York: Youngstock.
- Conquergood, D. (1991). Rethinking ethnography: towards a critical cultural politics. *Communication monographs* 58.2.
- Davis, B. & Kieren, T. & Sumara, D. (1996). Cognition, co-emergence, curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 28 (2), 151-169.
- Dewey, J. (1998). *Experience and education: the 60th anniversary edition*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Kappa Delta Pi.
- Diamond, E. (1992) The violence of 'we': politicizing identification. *Critical Theory and Performance*. Reinelt, J. G. and Roach J. R., eds. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 390-98.

- Dickason, O. P. (2002). *Canada's First Nations: a history of founding peoples from earliest times*, third edition. Don Mills, ON, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Doolittle, J. & Barnieh, Z. (1979). *A mirror of our dreams: children and the theatre in Canada*. Vancouver: Talonbooks.
- Dunlop, R. (2004). Presentation at the University of British Columbia.
- England, J. (2004). Histories of forgetting, geographies of remembering: exploring processes of witnessing and performing in senior secondary humanities classroom(s). Unpublished MA thesis. Vancouver: University of British Columbia.
- Eliot, T.S. (1979). Little Giddings, in *Four quartets*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Erickson, J. (1995). *The fate of the object: From modern object to postmodern sign in performance, art, and poetry*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Escolme, B. (2000) We are one tribe. *Popular theatre in political culture: Britain and Canada in focus*. T. Prentki & J. Selman (Eds.). Bristol and Portland: Intellect Books, 64-73.
- Fels, L. (1998). In the wind clothes dance on a line. *jct: Journal of curriculum theorizing*, 14 (1), 27-36.
- (1999). In the wind clothes dance on a line: performative inquiry - a (re)search methodology: possibilities and absences within a space-moment of imagining a universe. Unpublished dissertation. Vancouver: University of British Columbia.
- Fels, L. & Stothers, L. (1996). Academic performance. *Drama, culture and empowerment: the IDEA dialogues*. O'Toole, J. and Donelan, K., (Eds.). Brisbane: IDEA Publications, 255-261.
- Fine, M., Weis, L., & Powell, L.C. (1997). Communities of difference: a critical look at desegregated spaces created for and by youth. *Harvard Educational Review* 67 (2), 247-84.
- Fortier, M. (2002). *Theory/theatre: an introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Fox, M. (2004). *Creativity: Where the divine and the human meet*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin.

- (2003). *Wrestling with the prophets: Essays on creation spirituality and everyday life*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- (2000). *One river, many wells: Wisdom springing from global faiths*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin.
- (1988) *The coming of the cosmic Christ: the healing of Mother Earth and the birth of a global renaissance*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, HarperCollins Publishers.
- (1983) *Original blessing*. Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Co., Inc.
- Fox, M. & Sheldrake, R. (1997) *Natural grace: Dialogues on creation, darkness, and the soul in spirituality and science*. New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Auckland: Doubleday.
- Freire, P. (1989). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. M. B Ramos (Trans.). New York: Continuum.
- (1994). *Pedagogy of hope : reliving Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Robert R. Barr (Trans.). New York: Continuum.
- Friedman, M., (Ed.) (1969). *Martin Buber and the theater*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls.
- Gablik, S. (2002). *The re-enchantment of art*. London & New York: Thames and Hudson.
- Gadamer, H-G. (1982). *Truth and method*. New York: Crossroad.
- Gallagher, K. & Booth, D. (Eds.). (2003). *How theatre educates: convergences and counterpoints with artists, scholars, and advocates*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.
- Garfield, L. (1967). *Smith*. New York: Pantheon Books
- Garoian, C. R. (1999). *Performing pedagogy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Gash, A. (1993). Carnival and the poetics of reversal. In *New Directions in Theatre*. J. Hilton (Ed.). London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 87-119.

- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Haedicke, S. C. (2002) The politics of participation: un voyage pas comme les autres sur les chemins de l'exil. *Theatre topics*, 12, (2), 99-118.
- Headicke, S. & Nellhaus, T. (Eds.). (2001). *Performing democracy: international perspectives on urban community-based performance*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Hanks, P. (Ed.). (1986). *Collins dictionary of the English language, 2nd edition*. London & Glasgow: Collins.
- Hastrup, . (1998). Theatre as a site of passage: some reflections on the magic of acting. Hughes-Freeland, F. (Ed.). *Ritual, performance, media*. London and New York: Routledge, 29-45.
- Heathcote, D. & Bolton, G. (1995). *Drama for learning: Dorothy Heathcote's mantle of the expert approach to education*. Portsmouth, NH: Heineman.
- Heis, A. (2001). Aboriginal identity and its effects on writing. In Ruffo, A. G. (Ed.), *(Ad)ressing our words: Aboriginal perspectives on Aboriginal literatures*. Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, Ltd.
- Hickman, L. A. & Alexander, T. M. (Eds.). (1998). *The essential Dewey, vol. 1: pragmatism, education, democracy*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Hilton, J. (Ed.). (1993). *New Directions in Theatre*. London: The MacMillan Press Ltd.
- Holzman, L. (2000). Performative psychology: an untapped resource for educators. *Educational and Child Psychology*, Vol. 17(3), 86-100.
- Holzman, L. & Mendez, R. (Eds.). (2003). *Psychological investigations: a clinician's guide to social therapy*. New York and Hove: Brunner-Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: a pedagogy of hope*. London and New York: Routledge.

- Hughes-Freeland, F. (Ed.). (1998). *Ritual, performance, media*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Irwin, R. L. (2004). A/r/tography: a metonymic metissage. In Irwin, R. L. & de Cosson, A. (Eds.), *A/r/tography: Rendering self though arts based living inquiry*, 27-38. Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.
- Irwin, R. L. (2003). Towards an aesthetic of unfolding in/sights through curriculum. *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies*, 1(2), 63-78. Retrieved July 24, 2006, from <http://www.csse.ca/CACS/JCACS/V1N2/essays.html>
- Irwin, R. L. & Springgay, S. (in press). A/r/tography as practice based research. In Cahnmann, M. & Siegesmund, R. (Eds.), *Art-based inquiry in diverse learning communities: foundations for practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Irwin, R.L., Springgay, S. & Kind, S. (in press). Communities of a/r/tographers engaged in living inquiry. Draft for Knowles, G. & Cole, A. Eds.. *International handbook of the arts in qualitative social science research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jellicoe, A. (1987). *Community plays: how to put them on*. London: Methuen.
- Jennings, S. (1993). *Playtherapy with children: a practitioner's guide*. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications.
- Johnstone, Keith. (1992). *Impro: improvisation and the theatre*. London: Methuen Drama.
- Jocks, C. R. (1994). Combing out snakes: violence in the longhouse tradition, unpublished paper.
- Kaprow, Allen. (1993). *Essays on the blurring of art and life*. Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- (1966) *Assemblages, environments & happenings*. New York: H.N. Abrams.
- Kattwinkle, S., (Ed.) (2003). *Audience participation: essays on inclusion in performance*. Westport, CT and London: Praeger Publishers.
- Kepnes, S. (1992). *The text as thou*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Kershaw, B. (1992) *The politics of performance: radical theatre as cultural intervention*. London and New York: Routledge.

- (1999) *The radical in performance: between Brecht and Baudrillard*. London and New York : Routledge.
- Kupper, P. (2006). Community arts practices: improvising being together. *Culture machine*, 2006. Retrieved April 4, 2006, from <http://culturemachine.tees.ac.u/Articles/kuppers.htm>
- Kustow, M. (2002). *theatre@risk*. London: Methuen.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. & Davis, J. H. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Leggo, C. (2004). The curriculum of becoming human: a rumination. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 1 (1).
- Linds, W. (2001). A journey in metaxis: been, being, becoming, imag(in)ing drama facilitation. Unpublished dissertation. University of British Columbia.
- Macey, D. (2001). *The Penguin dictionary of critical theory*. London: Penguin.
- McConachie, B. (2001). Approaching the "Structure of Feeling" in Grassroots Theatre. *Performing democracy: International perspectives on community-based performance*. S. C. Haedicke & T. Nellhaus, (Eds.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 29-57.
- Mason, B. (1992). *Street theatre and other outdoor performance*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Maturana, H. & Varela, F. (1992). *Tree of knowledge: the biological roots of human understanding* (revised ed.). Boston: Shambhala.
- McKenzie, J. (1998). Genre trouble: (the) Butler did it. In *The ends of performance*. P. Phelan & J. Lane (Eds.). New York and London: New York University Press, 217 - 235.
- Merkin, R. (Ed.). (1994). *Popular theatres? Papers from the popular theatre conference*, Liverpool: John Moores University.
- Meyers, E. C., (Ed.) (1994). *Children of the thunderbird: Legends and myths from the West Coast*. Surrey, BC and Blaine, WA: Hancock House Publishers, Ltd.
- Moreau, J. (2006). Flash mob performs die-in. *The Vancouver Courier*, Friday, April 26, 2006, 35-36.

- Myerhoff, B.G. and Moore, S. F. (Eds.). (1977). *Secular ritual*. Assen and Amsterdam: Van Gorcum.
- Nachmanovich, S. (1990). *Free play: improvisation in life and the arts*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- Neelands, J. (1998) Three theatres waiting: architectural space and performance traditions. In *The research of practice; the practice of research*. J. Saxton & C. Miller (Eds.). Victoria, BC: IDEA Publications.
- Noble, S. (2006). Rural Adult Popular Education Performatively Inquiring Into Psychiatric Experiences. Unpublished Dissertation. University of British Columbia.
- Oldenquist, A. (1991) Community and de-alienation. *Alienation community and work*. A. Oldenquist & M. Rosner (Eds.), New York: Greenwood Press.
- O'Neill, J. (Ed.). (1974). *Phenomenology, language, and sociology: selected essays of Maurice Merleau-Ponty*. London: Heineman.
- Onions, C. T. (Ed.). (1966). *The Oxford dictionary of English etymology*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press.
- Palmer, P. J. (1999). The grace of great things: reclaiming the sacred in knowing, teaching, and learning. In *The heart of learning: spirituality in education*. S. Glazer (Ed.). New York: Putnam, 15-32.
- Phelan, P. (1998). *The ends of performance*. P. Phelan & J. Lane (Eds.). New York and London: New York University Press, 217 - 235.
- (1993). *Unmarked: the politics of performance*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Radice, B. & Baldick, R. (Eds.) (1965) *Aristotle, Horace, Longinus: classical literary criticism*. T. S. Dorsch, (Trans.) Harmondsworth, GB, Baltimore, Victoria, AU: Penguin Books.
- Rasmussen, B. & Wright, P. (2001). The theatre workshop as educational space: how imagined reality is voiced and conceived. *International journal of education & the arts*, 2, (2). Retrieved June 1, 2004, from [://ijea.asu.edu/v2n2/](http://ijea.asu.edu/v2n2/)
- Royce, A. P. (2004). *Anthropology of the performing arts: artistry, virtuosity, and interpretation in a cross-cultural perspective*. Walnut Creek, Lanham, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Altamira Press.

- Saldana, J. (Ed.). (2005). *Ethnodrama: an anthology of reality theatre*. Walnut Creek, Lanham, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Altamira Press.
- Salih, S. (Ed.) with Butler, J. (2004) *The Judith Butler Reader*. Malden, MA, Oxford, Victoria, AU: Blackwell Publishing.
- Saxton, J. & Miller, C. (Eds.). (1998). *The research of practice; the practice of research*. Victoria, BC: IDEA Publications.
- Schechner, R. (1994) *Environmental theater*. New York : Applause.
- (1993) *The future of ritual : writings on culture and performance*. London and New York : Routledge.
- (1988). *Performance theory*. London ; New York: Routledge.
- (1985) *Between theatre and anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press
- (1969) *Public domain: essays on the theater*. New York: Avon Books
- Schecher, R. & Appel, W. (Eds.) (1990) *By means of performance: intercultural studies of theatre and ritual*. Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press.
- Schieffelin, E. L. (1998). Problematizing Performance, in *Ritual, performance, media*, Hughes-Freeland, F. (Ed.), London and New York: Routledge.
- Schirato, T. & Webb, J. (2002). Bourdieu's notion of reflexive knowledge. *Social semiotics*, 12, (3)., 256-268.
- Schumacher, C. (Ed.) (1989) *Artaud on theatre*. London: Methuen Drama.
- Schutman, M. & Cohen-Cruz, J. (Eds.). (1994). *Playing Boal: Theatre, therapy, activism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Sergiovanni, Thomas J. (1994). *Building community in schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Shaker Hymnal. 'tis a gift to be simple. Retrieved November 22, 2005, from <http://www.oremus.org/hymnal/t/t717.html>
- Smith, A. (2005). The movement towards audience participation in theatre: trends from the last half of the 20th Century. Unpublished paper.

- (2005). The practice of “participatory theatre”: exploring the continuum of audience involvement. Unpublished paper.
- (2005). Variation on a theme “Polyvocal disruptions and re/constructions”: a performative inquiry. In *Views from the edge - twelve: papers from the 12th annual graduate student symposium, April 14, 2005*. The University of British Columbia, Centre for Women’s and Gender Studies: Occasional Working Papers, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2005.
- (1996). Forum theatre and the role of the joker: social activist, educator, therapist, director; the changing perspectives of Canadian jokers. Edmonton: University of Alberta, Unpublished MA thesis.
- (1995). Community and the theatre exchange. Unpublished paper.
- Smits, H. (1997). Living within the space of practice: action research inspired by hermeneutics. In *Action research as living practice*, Carson, T. R. & Sumara, D. J. (Eds.). New York, Washington, DC/Baltimore, Boston, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Vienna, Paris: Peter Lang.
- Springgay, S., Irwin, R. L. & Wilson Kind, S. (2005). A/r/tography as living inquiry through art and text. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(6), 897-912.
- States, B.O. (1985). *Great reckonings in little rooms: on the phenomenology of theater*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stoneall, L. (1983). *Country life, city life: five theories of community*. New York: Praeger.
- Stretchor. (2002). Nicolas Bourriaud and Karen Moss. Retrieved April 26, 2006, from http://www.stretchor.org/archives/i1_a/2003_02_25_i1_archive.php
- Tarrington, C. & Verriour, P. (1991). *Role drama*. Markham, ON and Portsmouth, NH: Pembroke Publishers.
- Taylor, M. & Saarinen, E. (1994). *Imagologies: media philosophy*. London: Routledge.
- Trazfer, C. E. (1993). *Earth Song, Sky Spirit*. New York: Doubleday.

- Turner, V. W. (1986). *The anthropology of performance*. New York: PAJ Publications.
- (Ed.) (1982) *Celebration*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- - (1982) *From Ritual to Theatre: the human seriousness of play*. New York : Performing Arts Journal Publications.
- (1974). *Dramas, fields, and metaphors: Symbolic action in human society*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Van Erven, E. (2001). *Community theatre: global perspectives*. London and New York: Routledge.
- van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience*. London, ON: The Althouse Press.
- Varela, F. & Thompson, E. & Rosch, E. (1993). *The embodied mind: cognitive science and human experience*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Vizenor, G. (1988). *The trickster of liberty: tribal heirs to a wild baronage*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Wagner, B. J. (1998). Drama as a way of knowing. In *The research of practice; the practice of research*. J. Saxton & C. Miller (Eds.). Victoria, BC: IDEA Publications.
- Waldrop, M. (1992). *Complexity: the emerging science at the edge of order and chaos*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Way, B. (1967). *Development through drama*. London: Longman Group Limited.
- Weaver, J. (1997). *That the people might live: Native American literatures and Native American community*. Oxford, New York, Athens, . . . : Oxford University Press.
- Young, M. I. (1990). The ideal of community and the politics of difference, in *Feminism/postmodernism*, Nicholson, L. J., (Ed.). New York: Routledge.
- (1973/78/84). *The holy bible: new international version*. Grand Rapids, MN: The Zondervan Corporation.

Appendices

Theatre 490 – Participatory Theatre Lab.

Summer Session, 2004

July 12 to August 19

M, T, W, Th, 1 pm to 5 pm

Hut M18/FWT Theatre

Instructor of Record: Stephen Heatley.

Graduate Instructor: Annie Smith.

Syllabus:

- Week 1** July 12 – 15. Focus on developing the class as a theatre ensemble. Exercises drawn from physical theatre, Boal, voice training.
- Week 2** July 19 – 22. Focus on exploring models of participatory theatre taken from the repertoire of Tricksters' Theatre.
- Week 3** July 26 to 29. Focus on creating and rehearsing 2 new participatory theatre pieces for performance.
- Week 4** August 2 – 5. Performances of participatory theatre pieces with community organizations.
- Week 5** August 9 – 12. Performances of participatory theatre pieces with community organizations.

Week 6 August 16 – 19. Public performance(s), intensive debriefing, final explorations, closure.

Evaluation:

Students will be graded 100% on participation. This will include: participation in class exercises; cooperation with the class instructor and fellow classmates (35%); daily journal writing (15%); contributions to the development of new work, costumes, props, advertising, documentation (20%); performances with community groups and general public (30%).

Grading will be according to the criteria commonly used for the BFA program:

A (85-89) to A+ (90-100) Shows an understanding and ability to handle basic material, Shows competency and evidence of growth in work, Shows ability to control and develop material, shows originality in handling material.

A- (80-84) Shows an understanding and ability to handle basic material, Shows competency and evidence of growth in work, shows ability to control and develop material.

B+ (76-79) Shows an understanding and ability to handle basic material, shows competency and evidence of growth in work.

B- (68-71) to B (72-75) Shows an understanding and ability to handle basic material.

C+ (64-67) Shows an adequate understanding of material.

Note: Consistent student lateness (3 classes) and/or absence (more than one class) is grounds for dismissal from the course resulting in an “incomplete”.

Class Fee: There is a \$35. class fee in to cover cost of supplies. This fee is due by July 15/04.

ParticipAction Theatre Plays

The Trail to Munachi

How the play was set up:

- *Roles played by the Thtr 490 students:* the four siblings - two brothers and two sisters (the youngest of which is always picked on by the others), the leader of the path, the leader of the trolls, the leader of the flood, the leader of the stars.
- *Roles played by the participactors:* the Eldest sibling, the Eagle messenger, the Horse, the wheels for the cart, a group for the path, a group for the trolls, a group for the flood, a group for the stars, all the groups doubled as the city walls and the path became the city gate.

The story:

A long time ago there was a poor family who lived on a farm. Their parents decided to journey to the city of Munachi to sell some of their goods. On their way there, they had to pass through the forest of the Trolls. They were never seen again. A few years later, the eldest of the siblings went to the city of Munachi to try to make a better life for the family. One day, an Eagle messenger came to the farm with a letter from the Eldest. The letter told the brothers and sisters to gather their belongings and come to the city where s/he had made a new life for them. The letter also gives them traveling instructions in the form of a riddle:

Follow the path and do not stray;
As you go through the forest watch out for Trolls;
When you cross the dry river, beware of thunder;
Follow the sky path across the plains
and you will see the city before you.

The brothers and sisters thank the Eagle and ask him/her to return to their brother/sister and say they are leaving right away. They gather what they will need for the journey: one brother takes a bow and arrows to defend them from the Trolls; the other brother takes his healing potions in case anyone is injured. One sister readies the cart that she has made and harnesses the horse; the other sister brings her shawl and promises to sing for them along the way. She is promptly told that, "That's useless!"

The party follows the path, which always moves ahead of them. They come quickly to the forest where their way is blocked by the trolls, who deny them passage. An argument ensues and as the trolls attack the travelers, the brother with the bow and arrows shoots them one by one until they have all died dramatically. The travelers leave the forest and follow the path to a dry riverbed. They journey down into the gully and then hear the sound of rumbling, realizing too late that it is the sound of thunder. A flash flood rushes down, tumbling them over and over and breaking apart the wagon. The brother who is the healer recovers first and

seeing the destruction rushes to each person to see if they are still alive. He heals each one and they reassemble the wagon and soothe the horse. As they climb out of the riverbed they discover that the path has also been swept away by the flood. They are exhausted and decide to camp and rest overnight before going on. The youngest sister offers to sing for them but they spurn her offer and she wanders off to sing by herself under the stars.

As she sings to the stars they sing back to her¹ and tell her that she can follow them across the plain to Munachi. She rushes to wake up her brothers and sister and explains her plan. The others realize that this is the star path in the riddle. They reload the wagon and sure enough, the stars lead them across the plain to the city where they can see the walls standing and the gate open to welcome them. (The trolls and flood have formed the walls and the path has become the gate.) As they go through the gate it closes behind them and the travelers see their eldest sibling who greets them. They each tell of their part in the journey and as each part is told, the participactors parade around the city to great applause and cheers. Then the eldest calls, "Let's celebrate!", and everyone sings the song "Welcome to Munachi":

¹ Star Song: Star light, star bright
First star I see tonight
Wish I may, wish I might
Have the wish I wish tonight.

Star light, star bright
We will be your guiding light;
Follow us and you will see
The pathway to Munachi.

Welcome, welcome to Munachi, city shining in the sun.

Welcome, welcome to Munachi, you are safe - your journey's done.

Everyone bows together and the story is finished.

The Pied Piper of Hamelin

How the play was set up:

- *The roles played by the Thtr 490 students:* the Pied Piper, the Mayor, the leaders of the children, the leaders of the rats, the Lame Child and Mountain facilitator and challenger of the Mayor.
- *The roles played by participactors:* the Lame Child, a group for the townsfolk, a group for the children, a group for the Rats some of whom also (temporarily) became the group for the Mountain.

The story:

In 1359, the town of Hamelin, in Germany, was invaded by rats. The rats terrified everyone and destroyed the food and livelihood of the town. The Mayor called a town meeting to assess the situation and to hopefully discover a way to rid the town of rats. The townspeople called out the damages the rats had done and their attempts to kill them - to no avail. Into the middle of the town meeting walked a stranger. This stranger

offered to rid the town of rats for 200 guilders. The Mayor and townspeople quickly agreed, the Mayor offering to pay even 2000 guilders if this stranger could do as she promised.

The stranger produced a recorder and proceeded to play a mesmerizing tune. As she walked through the town the rats began to emerge from their hiding places. Soon there was a long line of rats following the Pied Piper to the river. As she played her tune, the rats rolled into the river and were swept away. As the townspeople saw the rats disappear they laughed and danced and sang a song in celebration:

Ding, dong, the rats are dead!

Which old rats? The dirty rats!

Ding, dong, the dirty rats are dead.

The Pied Piper goes to the Mayor to receive her payment. The Mayor, suddenly evasive, refuses to pay her. The Piper threatens to play a tune that the town will not like and the Mayor tells her to leave. As she leaves she plays a different, jolly tune. The children leave their parents, who are enchanted and frozen, and begin to dance after her out of town. The Pied Piper leads them to the mountain, which opens to let them inside, and then closes behind them. There is one child who cannot keep up to the rest and is left outside the mountain when it closes. The children inside the mountain are heard (and seen) singing and dancing:

You put your right hand in, you put your right hand out,
You put your right hand in and you shake it all about.
You follow the Pied Piper and your follow her around,
And that's what it's all about. . .

The Mayor and townsfolk are released from their enchantment when the children finish their song. They rush towards the mountain and meet the Lambe Child returning. The child tells them what has happened. The townsfolk are stunned. In shock, they return to their town now empty of children. The story has ended but the play finishes with the rats and children returning to form a circle and everyone sings the children's song together. Each group and the Lambe Child are applauded.

Interview Script for Audience Participants - Youth Leaders

Introduction:

Thank you for consenting to participate in this interview. I have an audio cassette here which I would like to turn on if this is acceptable to you. If our conversation is recorded then I will be able to use your exact words. Do you agree?

I will use some questions to guide our conversation. The first set of questions refer to you as an individual. The second set of questions refers to you as a person having responsibility at the Neighbourhood House.

Set 1:

- This summer you participated in a theatre event hosted by the Neighbourhood House and performed by students from UBC, with the audience members. What are any moments that were memorable for you at the time of the performance?
- What are any moments that you still relive in your memory today?
- What are any feelings you had at the time of the performance? Are these feelings that you welcome? Why or why not?
- What expectations did you have before participating in the play(s)? How were these expectations met or not met?

- Did you take any actions in the performance that were different from what you would normally do as a person? If you did, what were they and how did they affect you?
- What did you notice about other people and what they were doing in the performance?
- What changes have you experienced in how you relate to people that were part of that theatre performance?
- What ideas or ways of acting that you experienced in the theatre performance can you use in other situations? Have you tried any of these out? What happened?
- What, if anything, has troubled you about your experience of performing in the play(s)?
- What would you do differently if you had the chance?
- What would you like to do again or try in a different way?
- How was the story itself relevant to your participation in the play(s)?
- What elements of the performance helped you participate easily?
- What elements of the performance hindered you from participating easily?
- What are some words that come into your mind when you remember being in the play(s)? Can you explain any of these words further?
- What has the value of this experience been to you personally?
- What has the value of this experience been to you as a member of your community?

Set 2:

- As a person having responsibilities at the Neighbourhood House, what is it that you do there?
- What did you hope to see happen during the theatre performance event?
- How were any of these hopes realized?
- What expectations were not met during the theatre event?
- Have there been any ongoing effects from the theatre performance? If so, what are these? Are they what you might have expected? If not, how are they different?
- Are there any experiences from this participatory theatre event that you think are noteworthy? Can you describe these and say why they are important?
- How do you see participatory theatre as useful in terms of the community context in which you work?
- How do you see these uses playing out in other community contexts?
- What concerns do you have about participatory theatre in your particular community context or other community contexts?
- How would you envision participatory theatre working in a non community or public context?
- What would you like to say that has not been addressed by these questions?

Discussion Questions for informal student participant discussion groups

- What are your most provocative memories of the performance experience? Why are they provocative?
- What did you see happening with the audience participants during the performances?
- What questions do you have about the work that we accomplished together?
- What did you feel your relationship was to the other actors? To the audience participants?
- How do you see participatory theatre working as a community group activity?
- What other potentials do you see for using participatory theatre?
- What were the most important things you learned for yourself from participating in the Participatory Theatre Lab.?
- How has participating in the study been useful (or not) for your own work?
- What else is it important to talk about that we haven't addressed?

Script/Score OF “TOUGH COOKIES”

Created collectively and performed by Tricksters’ Theatre

between October 25 and December 5, 2000

Context:

“Tough Cookies” was performed in gymnasiums with groups of children, youth, and adults, grade 4 and up, with group sizes of forty to 150. For costumes we used coloured headbands. The Mediators wore white sashes. Our one prop was an aboriginal hand drum. We did nine performances altogether in 6 communities: Canoe Creek, Nazko, Fort St. John, Cumberland, Crofton, Powell River. Depending on the size of the group, the play takes 30 minutes to 60 minutes.

Funding for the development of “Tough Cookies” was provided by the Race Relations Canada Foundation.

* * * * *

“TOUGH COOKIES”

Set-up: The actors introduce themselves: one Mediator Leader, two Gang Leaders. The “Mediator Leader” explains the set-up to the group before we start.

- 1) 4 rules - Listen, Watch, Respect Personal Space, Follow Instructions without question.
- 2) Signal - double drum beat means freeze and stay frozen until someone releases you.
- 3) The Mediator Leader chooses volunteers to have a special role in the play (about 10% of total group).
- 4) The Mediator Leader exits the space with the group of volunteers.
- 5) The Gang Leaders divide remaining audience into 2 groups and move them to opposite ends of the gym.

Movement 1: Indoctrination

1) Gang Leaders explain to their groups that they are a gang and that they have to follow the gang rules. They will be taught what to do and they will obey. The gang members choose someone (if in a school, then a teacher) to be the Enforcer. This person will send anyone out who does not do what they are told. They are also there to assist people who need help. The Enforcer distributes coloured headbands to each gang member. (One gang is red, the other is blue) The Gang Leader has all gang members line up in rows.

- 2) All communication in English ends at this point. Gang leaders teach and drill gang members in the gang walk, gang language, gang gesture.
- 3) Members of the Mediator group also learn and practise their role in the play during this time. If any of the volunteers feels they can't do the role they are free to go back into the larger groups (gangs) before the Mediators begin their part..
- 4) Mediators (wearing white sashes) enter and report to gang leaders to join gangs. (1/2 to each gang) Gang leaders assign them a place in the rows and have Enforcer give them headbands.
- 5) Gang leaders continue with indoctrination (now quite complicated in terms of movement and sound). New members (mediators) fail in carrying out the required moves. They are singled out and held in detention by the Enforcer.

Movement 2: Harassment & Bullying

- 1) Gang Leaders place their gang members in a circle. Each mediator is called into the centre. The Gang Leader leads the gang in harassing and humiliating the mediator (victim).
- 2) The mediator is banished from the gang and goes to stand with the Mediator Leader.

These 2 actions happen 4 times, so sometimes more that one mediator is bullied and banished at a time.

Movement 3: Challenge

- 1) The Gang Leader celebrates with gang members and leads them into one long line across space. They end up lined up opposite the other gang.
- 2) The Gang Leaders see each other and alternate challenges (3 times)
- 3) The Gang Leaders lead their gangs in challenging the other gangs (3 times)
- 4) The challenges become simultaneous until the intensity is extreme.

Movement 4: Crossfire

- 1) The Mediators walk between the 2 gangs. Each mediator faces the gang they came from.
- 2) Double beat on the drum. The gangs freeze. The mediators die (dramatically).

Movement 5: Rebirth

- 1) The Mediator Leader walks around the mediators beating the drum. (4/4 time: II:/ / // / I/ // / / I// / / // :II)
After one circle the mediators come to life. The drum keeps beating.
- 2) The mediators stand in a circle. They look at each other. They take off their coloured headbands (gang insignia) and put them on the floor in the centre.

- 3) The mediators each go to one gang member and invite them to come to the centre, to take off their head band, add it to pile on the floor, and to form a circle. This is done through mime.
- 4) The mediators continue to go to one gang member at a time to bring them into the circle until all are included and all the headbands are in a pile in the centre. It is possible that some gang members might refuse to join the circle. The drum beats continually.

Movement 6: CELEBRATION

- 1) The Mediator Leader paces the circle and sings:

"Who wins? Who loses?

What is all the fighting for?

Red and Yellow, Black and White,

We will pay the price no more.

We will pay no more."

- 2) The circle of participants moves into a spiral dance as the song continues. There is a pause at the centre. Then the spiral unwinds to the song and the circle is reformed.
- 3) The Mediator Leader thanks the participants. This is first time English is used in the play except for the song.

* * * * *

We have found that it is really good to do talking circles right after the play while people are caught up in it. I always ask them for one word that expresses how they felt during the play. The range is good--stupid, weird, confused, angry, scared. . . it's a good starting point for discussion. The mediators often have a lot to offer because they have seen the dynamics from the outside. I get them to tell what happened in the play. Then the stories start to come: suicide, family violence, everyone has a touch point. If there is time for them to really explore their responses it is very moving and exciting. You can see ideas in their eyes, because they have taken action, and it opens up the possibilities for more.