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Dramaturgy and Community-Building in Canadian Popular Theatre; English Canadian, Québécois, and Native Approaches

Catherine Graham
Department of English (ad hoc Theatre)
McGill University, Montréal
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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

For my father,
William Robert Graham, Master Coppersmith,
who died at sunset on December 27, 1993.

He taught me the value of a good job of work,
and he always kept Christmas.

Abstract

The Canadian popular theatre movement's refusal to accept one of the key binary oppositions that organizes Euroamerican theatre practice, the split between community-based and professional theatre, makes it a particularly interesting subject of inquiry for theatre scholars. This dissertation develops a methodology for analyzing this movement by approaching theatre, not as a unified institution or a series of texts, but as a mode of cognition that can overcome another of the basic binary oppositions of modern Euroamerican thought, the opposition between mind and body. Following an introductory chapter that situates the Canadian popular theatre movement in the context of recent Canadian theatre history and of other popular theatre movements around the world, a theoretical chapter lays the foundation for this methodology by exploring such key terms as "community," "professional," and "theatrical." It suggests that theatre is a particularly appropriate cognitive tool for building participatory community in heterogeneous social milieus. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 analyze three stages in the popular theatre process in these terms. Chapter 3 looks at how methods of organizing community workshops put in place particular forms of community. Chapter 4 explores the ways in which the dramaturgic structures of plays created by Headlines Theatre, the Théâtre Parminou, and Red Roots Community Theatre are formed both by their creation processes and by their analyses of the problems in the dominant public spheres of the larger society. Chapter 5 looks at the specific contribution professional theatre workers make in focusing audience attention on key elements in community participants' stories. The dissertation concludes by suggesting that popular theatre events can be most fairly evaluated by looking at their contribution to the creation of new categories of thought through which we might publicly discuss and enact truly participatory communities.

Résumé

Le mouvement canadien pour un théâtre populaire constitue un sujet de recherche particulièrement intéressant, car ce mouvement refuse une des oppositions binaires les plus importantes de la pratique théâtrale euroaméricaine, l'opposition entre le travail communautaire et le travail professionnel. Cette thèse développe une méthodologie pour analyser ce mouvement en abordant le théâtre, non comme institution ou série de textes, mais comme mode de cognition qui surmonte une autre des principales oppositions binaires de la pensée euroaméricaine, l'opposition entre corps et esprit. Suite à une introduction qui situe le mouvement canadien pour un théâtre populaire dans le contexte de l'histoire récente du théâtre au Canada et d'autres mouvements semblables à travers le monde, un chapitre théorique jette les bases de cette méthodologie en explorant des termes-clés, tels que «communauté», «professionnel», et «théâtral». Il suggère que le théâtre est un outil cognitif particulièrement bien adapté à la construction de communautés participatoires dans des milieux sociaux hétérogènes. Les Chapitres 3, 4, et 5 utilisent cette grille pour analyser trois étapes dans le processus de création du théâtre populaire. Le Chapitre 3 traite du rôle des méthodes d'organisation d'ateliers populaires dans la mise sur pied de formes communautaires particulières. Le Chapitre 4 explore les moyens par lesquels les processus de création et les analyses des problèmes des spheres publiques dominants que font Headlines Theatre, le Théâtre Parminou et Red Roots Community Theatre influencent les structures dramaturgiques de leurs pièces. Le Chapitre 5 traite de la contribution spécifique que font les travailleuses théâtrales et les travailleurs théâtraux en dirigeant l'attention du public sur les éléments-clés dans des histoires racontées par des participant(e)s communautaires. Cette thèse finit en suggérant que des prestations du théâtre populaire doivent être évaluées selon leur contribution à la création de nouvelles catégories de pensée à travers lesquelles nous pouvons envisager et mettre en pratique de véritables communautés participatoires.

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Chapter 1: Situating Canadian Popular Theatre

The history of recent Canadian theatre raises some interesting questions about both the opportunities and the problems inherent in the theatrical medium itself. It is almost a truism to say that Canadian theatre has been marked, in the last thirty years, by attempts to create performance texts[1] based on the distinct experiences of Canadian communities. Indeed, explanations of the recent history of Canadian theatre cannot avoid the question of appeals to popular audiences in establishing distinctly Canadian theatre practices. What is less often emphasized is that these popular practices, unlike many before them, were innovative largely because they led to changes in professional theatre practice and in the way the very notion of "professionalism" in the theatre was defined and determined.

1.1. The Post-Colonial Moment

The new vision of professional theatre established by the collective creations of the "alternate theatres" of the 1970s is by now quite central in the historiography of English Canadian theatre. Those few works on recent Canadian theatre that include a discussion of Québec place similar emphasis on the work of the many collectives that formed the Association Québécoise des Jeunes Théâtres. Denis Johnston goes as far as to start Up the Mainstream, his history of the major Toronto alternative theatres of the 1970s, with the rather astonishing statement that "between 1968 and 1972, a small group of small theatre companies in Toronto completely changed the way Canadians thought about their theatre"

1 I use the term "performance text" in the sense used by semioticians to indicate the text produced in a theatre-like setting before a live audience, and not the written script that may either precede or follow such a production. The distinction is an important one because, as Keir Elam points out, "the researcher in theatre and drama is faced with two quite dissimilar -- although intimately correlated -- types of textual material: that produced in the theatre and that composed for the theatre." Elam refers to the first type of text as the performance text and the second as the dramatic text (3).

(3). He goes on to describe what he sees as the "deliberate myth-making activities" (251) that established a public vision of the alternates as radical leaders of a popular nationalist uprising against a kind of cultural imperialism on the part of the barely more established regional theatres. Most commentators are, however, less willing than is Johnston to give the leaders of the Toronto alternates all the credit for the rising interest in things Canadian.

Renate Usmiani sees the distinguishing characteristic of the "Alternate" theatre movement of the 1970s in Toronto, or of the "Jeune Théâtre" that flourished in Québec in the same period as "passionate and militant nationalism." According to Usmiani, the alternate theatres and jeunes théâtres shared their European and American counterparts' critical attitudes to traditional theatre practices and hierarchies, but the main target of their attack was arts funding policies that tended to privilege the production of plays and the promotion of techniques that originated outside Canada. In English-Canada one of the most important rallying cries of this new nationalism was "against the fact that the nation's showcase theatre should be located in Stratford and feature Shakespearean productions rather than Canadian plays" (Usmiani, "Alternate" 49). In Québec there was a similar revolt against the dominance of Parisian models. In 1969, for instance, the whole graduating class of the French section of the National Theatre School withdrew to set up their own company, Le Grand Cirque Ordinaire, a troupe dedicated to improvisation as a means of liberating the actors from "the 'foreign' [i.e. Parisian] language and culture they had been imbued with at the school" (Usmiani, "Alternate" 55). But the effects of the colonial mentality in Canadian theatres stretched well beyond the Stratford festival or the National Theatre School. Even the "regional theatres," funded by the federal government to ensure artistic development across the country, were seen by the founders of the alternate theatre movement as "unwilling to risk any departure from forms of production tried and tested elsewhere" (Usmiani, "Alternate" 49).

Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly, whose history, English Canadian Theatre, appeared in 1987, remind readers that the rise of "alternate" theatres in the 1960s was an international phenomenon. They do, though, follow Usmiani's analysis in crediting "the development of a distinctively Canadian alternate theatre in which Canadian writers could be fully involved" to "a ground swell of interest in Canadian history, culture and institutions" (85). Diane Bessai, in Playwrights of Collective Creation, follows the same logic in describing the people who entered the Canadian theatre scene in the late 1960s as "outsiders" who "saw the Canadian theatre establishment during the late 1960s as either the last vestige of British imperialism or the new frontier of American colonization" (13). "One reason for the rise of alternative theatres in Canada during the 1970s," she suggests, "was that regional theatres too often refused to be genuinely regional, or, for that matter national (in the culturally indigenous sense of the term). Cultural colonialism, long a Canadian affliction in relation to both Britain and the United States, was being duplicated within the country itself" (26). Those who worked on collective creation in such a situation were, she argues, subversives in the sense that they were "demystifying the gentilities of 'high art' by sharing their themes and performance processes openly with the audience" and setting out to "create their own audiences by addressing the local public directly on subjects of interest to the lives and traditions of those in neighbouring communities" (14). This cultivation of an alternate (and often regional or local) audience was, in Bessai's view, the greatest virtue of the alternative theatre movement, "a Canada-wide phenomenon from which the country has, fortunately, never entirely recovered" (27).

It is this emphasis on developing forms of theatre grounded in the particular experiences of local communities that Alan Filewod emphasizes in Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada, his 1987 study of the aesthetics of the English-Canadian alternative theatre. "In its repudiation of 'colonial' structures of thought and methods of theatrical creation," says Filewod, "the alternative theatre sought to discover authentic and indigenous Canadian dramatic forms" (viii). After discussing six of the best

known collectively created documentaries produced by this movement, Filewod concludes that the movement may in fact have defined these forms as much as discovered them. "There seems," he says, "to be a necessary stage of post-colonial consolidation in the theatre, when playwrights and collectives seek and define images, thematic patterns, metaphors, and performance techniques that can express cultural realities overlooked or repudiated by the received colonial traditions" (184). The English Canadian alternate theatre of the 1970s, he suggests, tried to express these overlooked realities by "explor[ing] localism as the basis for an independent culture" (187). In Filewod's analysis, this localism was both thematic, treating stories and issues of concern to particular communities, and formal, using forms of expression not generally seen in the established theatres. The Theatre Passe Muraille, for instance, is best known for the research and improvisation methods that allowed actors not simply to gather information about issues, but to create performance styles that directly reflected the ways of knowing of the communities they researched. The Newfoundland Mummers Troupe even chose a name that indicated their concern for using popular dramatic forms particular to the area in which they performed, even if those forms were still technically illegal at the time the Mummers started using them (114)[2]. Discussing the differences between this movement and the earlier agit-prop movements that documented Canadian working class history using adaptations of traditional theatrical approaches, Filewod asserts that: "The alternative theatre movement, particularly in its collectively created documentaries, embodied a radical attempt to redefine Canadian theatre by exploring new forms for new audiences" and "developed as a challenge to received theatrical and dramatic forms" (Collective 78).

2 Mumming, which Newfoundland Mummers Troupe founder Chris Brookes argues "provided a cultural precedent for socially active theatre in the province," was banned in Newfoundland in 1861 (Filewod, Collective 114).

This attempt to develop new forms for new audiences quickly led to a reconsideration of the notion of nationalism among both the creators and the critics of the alternative theatre movement. Introducing his anthology of plays originally published in Canadian Theatre Review (a publication that was itself a product of the nationalism of the 1970s), Filewod himself puts forward an evolutionary notion of Canadian nationalism that moves from essentialism to pluralism. "Taken together," he says, "the plays in this anthology can be read as a narrative of the development of the idea of Canadian nationalism, which progresses from the essentialist notion of a national identity arising out of regional difference, to a pluralistic intersection (and often conflict) of community interests" (xvi). Writing in the 20th anniversary issue of CTR in 1994, Filewod is more concerned with a critical historicization of this development: "Our simplistic nationalism of the 1970s," he says:

> was a post-colonial rhetoric that enabled us to reconsider the field of our own possibilities. . . . Our nationalism was, in the end, a strategy rather than a passion. We were, I think, locked in a false epistemology that led us to conclude that the process of de-colonization must necessarily imply national assertion ("Viewing" 16).

Richard Paul Knowles, in his article "CTR and Canadian Theatre Criticism: Constructing the Discipline," traces the same shift of emphasis through Canadian Theatre Review's life span from the efforts at de-colonization to the problems of pluralism. He goes on to suggest that "what was articulated as a debate between internationalist (or Universalist) positions [in the late 1970s and early 1980s] was in fact a struggle between contesting views of nationalism" (11). This crisis was not really resolved until Robert Wallace took over the editorship of CTR in 1982, a year in which the artistic directors of three of the largest of Toronto's alternates also changed, several companies folded, and "the previously clear lines between two essentially opposed visions of theatre and culture in

Canada blurred" (a point to which I shall return in the next section of this chapter) (11). The resolution, according to Knowles, came through a fairly radical change of direction for the review:

> Rubin [CTR's founding editor and Wallace's predecessor] had constructed a critical discourse of objective analysis and institutionalized political advocacy of the role of the theatre in building and communicating (within Canada and abroad) a Frygean sense of national identity through (totalizing) myths as expressed in a Canadian dramatic canon. Wallace, on the other hand, was interested less in the art of the playwright than in the role of the theatre itself, and less interested in the privileged position of the artist (which Paul Leonard, in CTR 57, would call "ersatz romanticism") than in the productive and problematic relationship of the performance text to the community. (11)

Knowles goes on to explain that Wallace defined community "not by some objective measurement or external criterion, but from within" and devoted theme issues to both regional communities and to communities of interest like the feminist community (12).

This pluralistic definition of identity was a central concern in Wallace's writing. In 1990 he produced a book of essays, Producing Marginality: Theatre and Criticism in Canada, where he deals with the problem of creating an indigenous and, above all, a socially and politically relevant theatre in terms of a recognition of the multiple constituencies that Canadian theatres must and do address. "For me," he says, "Canada is neither a unified concept nor a unified culture: it is not a unified country. The idea that 'the true north strong and free' has an essential self that is homogeneous and whole is no longer tenable, if, indeed, it ever was" (Producing 10). This is not by any means an admission of defeat in the struggle to evaluate Canadian theatre in Canadian terms. Wallace simply suggests that we look at the merits of different theatres differently. In response to the

question: "How is the critic to determine artistic merit if value is always subjective?" he answers in part:

> The idea that the construction of meaning -- and, therefore, value -- is part of a continually evolving social process, is particularly relevant to what I perceive as the changing complexion of Canada. It allows me to suggest that "the public" is not a homogeneous entity, but rather, a myriad of individuals -- readers, listeners, and spectators who enter into a dialogical relationship with creative work, who become active partners with artists in the process of making meaning. The recognition that meaning is always plural -- the corollary of this idea -- provides a pertinent perspective on Canadian culture, and facilitates an alternative answer to the question posed above: merit can be decided, but only through a process of negotiation: it cannot be definitively determined. (24-25)

In the long term Wallace argues, "the only antidote to cultural effacement is the cultivation of diversity in as many forms as possible -- the production of marginality as a deliberate and defiant act of artistic resistance" (164).

In a later essay, "Understanding Difference," he demonstrates how cultivating such diversity can focus theatre criticism by using his experience of Québécois theatre to gain insight into the workings of dominant theatre practices in English-Canada. Looked at from the vantage point of "the many Québécois companies that conceive and construct theatre through group collaboration" and for whom "a playwright remains useful but not central," the English-Canadian practice of waiting for an isolated playwright to relinquish a literary text to "a director, cast and design team who usually have no connection with its evolution" but who are "charged to 'realize' the playwright's work" in a production that adheres to his or her demands, seems odd indeed (180-181). Wallace also draws attention to differences

in creative methods by looking at the different levels of acceptance of the collective creation method in English-Canada and Québec:

> Between 1958-1980, virtually thousands of collective creations were produced by Québécois theatre companies working under the umbrella organization L'Association québécoise du jeune théâtre (AQJT). The Québécois collective movement was so strong and so widespread during this time that it would be impossible to pick, as Filewod does for English-Canada, six plays or companies representative of its achievements. (178)

But a closer reading of Wallace's essay reveals some of the key problems of cross-cultural analysis. While his reading of Québécois theatre may be useful in putting into question some of the practices of its English-Canadian counterpart, it tends to portray this "Other" theatre as a homogeneous and ideal example of what is lacking in the culture of origin, and generally functions according to the dominant paradigms of the English-Canadian theatre. In fact Québécois theatre, and the AQJT in particular, looks quite different from within Québec, where it is remembered as much for the sometimes acrimonious debates that divided it as for its contribution to the development of a distinctly Québécois theatre.

Adrien Gruslin, in his Le Théâtre et l'État au Québec, published in 1981, identifies eight distinct categories of Québécois theatre: institutional theatre, laboratory theatre, theatre for children, professional "jeune théâtre," parallel "jeune théâtre," amateur "jeune théâtre," student "jeune théâtre," and summer theatre.[3] Interestingly, several theatres he groups

3 All translations are my own. I have chosen to use the term "jeune théâtre" in French because there is no exact English equivalent and the term functions almost as a proper noun in Québec theatre historiography. While "jeune théâtre" would literally be translated "young theatre," this might mislead the reader into thinking that all those who

under the category of institutional theatres might, by Toronto standards, have been considered alternates. The Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui, for instance, concentrates on the production of Québécois works, while the Théâtre de Quat-sous produced most of Michel Tremblay's plays for the first time and was often a venue for the troupes of the parallel theatre. Even the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Montreal's French-language version of a regional theatre, is well known for its production of the feminist collective creation Les Fées ont Soif, as well as first productions of a number of Québec plays. The category of laboratory theatre also signals a difference from English-Canadian models of historiography and is important for its artistic innovations and later influence. Gruslin prefers this term to the more frequently used "théâtre de recherche" or research theatre, because he believes the latter to be too ambiguous. As he notes: "Quelle maison, à quelqu'enseigne théâtrale qu'elle se loge, n'a pas revendiqué ce statut, à un moment ou l'autre de son histoire?" (39). He defines laboratory theatres as those that exist only to do research on theatricality itself and that are mainly of interest to the theatre milieu (40-45). Theatre for children is what the name implies, as is summer theatre, though it is interesting to note the almost bipolar difference between the two. While many of the same practices are found in theatre for children that were found in the "jeunes théâtres," the summer theatre was, until very recently, the most commercial and sociopolitically lightweight of Québécois theatre practices.

Gruslin's division of jeune théâtre into four different categories points to the different constituencies and agendas that were operating even inside an organization like the AQJT. His attempt to define what jeune théâtre is further underlines the heterogeneous nature of the AQJT as an organization and of the movement it tried to represent. Gruslin

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practiced it were young. In fact, it was more the theatre practice itself that was young, though not always, as we shall see, opposed to the work of the older institutional theatres.

starts with the two definitions the AQJT itself gave of jeune théâtre in 1975 and 1978, definitions which point to the struggles going on in the organization. At the 1975 Festival, during which eight of the most political troupes left the association, the members voted to define jeune théâtre as "toute troupe sans but lucratif n'appartenant pas à l'ADT [Association des directeurs de théâtres] et dont la majorité des membres ne fait pas partie d'un syndicat professionnel du spectacle." At the festival held in Montreal in 1978, this definition was corrected to read: "toute troupe à but non lucratif ayant la volonté d'agir collectivement, de créer et de s'exprimer, de s'intégrer dans un milieu, de s'impliquer politiquement" (51). But Gruslin finds both these definitions inadequate for a notion that includes very different realities and proposes his own additions and corrections:

> Jeune théâtre se veut synonyme de théâtre différent. Les groupes cherchent à produire et se produire dans des conditions qui remettent en cause le statut de la production théâtrale marchande, qui tentent d'échapper aux images figées et de libérer le théâtre par l'imaginaire chez les uns et par l'intervention politique chez les autres, peuvent tous être qualifiés de différents. Faire du jeune théâtre, c'est aussi, très souvent, s'engager dans des processus de créations collectives, modes de créations qui mettent beaucoup plus de temps à parvenir à maturation que la classique présentation de pièces d'auteurs. Par définition, le jeune théâtre participe à la recherche : quête d'une forme de théâtre populaire, recherche aux niveaux des textes, des scénographies et du jeu.
>
> Mais voilà où le bât blesse. Sont qualifiées de jeunes théâtre aussi bien la mini-compagnie qui n'aspire à rien d'autre qu'à se développer et qu'à devenir, à la limite, un autre TNM [Théâtre du Nouveau Monde], que la coopérative qui inscrit son action dans des voies carrément autres et parallèles . . . La différence est fondamentale. Les premiers sont groupés

> parce que, tout en évoluant à l'intérieur du théâtre institutionnel, ils se préoccupent de monter leurs propres créations, qui se veulent différentes et correspondent mieux à leurs aspirations . . . Les seconds se gardent d'évoluer dans le circuit institutionnel qu'ils rejettent le plus souvent et en opposition duquel ils se sont parfois définis. (52-53)

While many of these troupes did practice collective creation and while the script was not, as Wallace notes, the keystone of their theatrical enterprise, the differences between them were important enough to cause major upheaval in the Québécois theatre world. Ultimately this led to the dissolution of the AQJT itself.

Looked at in the terms Gruslin uses, English Canadian theatre might have to be categorized according to very different criteria from the "mainstream-alternate" dichotomy that now prevails. Troupes like Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille, the Factory Theatre Lab, and Tarragon might be perceived as belonging to three distinct categories rather than as the defining centre of the alternate movement. Both Robert Nunn and Alan Filewod have objected to the alternate/mainstream paradigm on just this basis. According to Nunn, Canadian theatre is best viewed as continuum between mainstream and fringe, not as a bipolar split: "It is a matter of continually shifting positions on a continuum: the location of a company like Factory Theatre on the continuum between mainstream and fringe shifts, sometimes drastically, with each successive production" (Nunn 219). Filewod is even more critical and sees this paradigm as an insidious example of the way the categories of commerce slip into academic discourse:

> It constructs the audience not as an active presence but as an ahistorical mass to be acted upon, a target for subscription drives and publicity campaigns. The terms are employed with virtually no reference to the cultural formation of the theatre as an expression of community . . . Even

> within its own ideological paradigm, it fails to investigate the historical mechanisms by which change is effected. ("Erasing" 202)

It is precisely these historical mechanisms that Québécois theatre critic Gilbert David exposes in his discussion of the evolution of the AQJT from its origins as an association of amateur theatres to its later development as a "théâtre intervenant" or interventionist theatre. David places the AQJT and its predecessor, the ACTA (Association canadienne du théâtre amateur), firmly at root of what he considers the most significant and novel cultural expression of the Québécois community. He cites eight major contributions ranging from encouraging the development of a truly national dramaturgy to the creation of the conditions necessary for the emergence of a truly popular theatre. He includes among these conditions: productive criticism of established theatre training methods, the multiplication of occasions for exchange and experimentation among theatre workers, and the creation of a dialectical relationship between amateur and professional theatres ("A.C.T.A./A.Q.J.T." 7-8). More importantly perhaps, David is clear that these contributions were intimately linked to the political situation in which the ACTA and the AQJT functioned:

> Deux autres facteurs, proprement sociologiques, vont contribuer à faire de l'ACTA un organisme empreint d'une forte participation et où s'exercera une critique croissante de la légitimité théâtrale : d'une part, l'explosion démographique de l'après-guerre a renforcé la contestation des vieilles valeurs par la nouvelle génération ; d'autre part, un vaste mouvement de scolarisation de la population va soudainement multiplier les foyers de savoir et façonner de nouvelles élites, agressives et impatientes de réamenager l'espace du pouvoir socio-politique et culturel. Les années soixante au Québec auront aussi mis en place tous les éléments d'une formulation, par la jeunesse, d'un nouveau projet de société à l'intersection

> des contestations contre-culturelles d'influence américaine et des revendications nationalistes que l'on sait. ("A.C.T.A./A.Q.J.T." 11)

By the late 1960s the organization was becoming more and more politicized as it became more and more conscious of its subordinate position in the hierarchy of cultural and theatrical legitimacy and started to absorb the rudiments of a Marxist analysis, something that radically changed the ideological polarizations within the organization. Ultimately this led to the exodus in 1975 of both the most left-wing groups and of those groups most interested in using the AQJT as a stepping stone towards a professional career ("A.C.T.A./A.Q.J.T." 11). This in turn led, in the late 1970s, to a period when "animation" was the key word. During this period, theatre workers put their faith in the creativity of the different social groups they approached and presented themselves as a resource for the development of new practices and the rehearsal of new values. David characterizes this period as a search for a different kind of cultural legitimacy through which high and popular cultures could learn from each other, and one that led to a new confidence, and a hope for the rise of new ways of imagining the world ("A.C.T.A./A.Q.J.T." 12-14). But by 1985 the AQJT as an organization was dead and, while some troupes continued along lines similar to those it had followed, no new organization came into being to take its place.

1.2. The Economic and Epistemic Crisis of the 1980s

The economic crisis of the early 1980s seems to have affected the alternates and the jeune théâtre in similar ways. The recession hit small companies especially hard and the lack of government funding pushed many to look more seriously at commercializing their enterprise. Some troupes collapsed from exhaustion after years of struggling to get by on below-poverty-level incomes and others became more and more accepting of the mainstream marketing culture. In some cases the original leaders moved on to greener pastures and a new generation of theatre workers found their way blocked by an

intermediary level of "established" alternative theatres who already had a foot in the door of government agencies.

But another level of this crisis was epistemic. In Québec there can be little doubt that the defeat of the 1980 referendum on sovereignty had not only left nationalist forces hurting but had dampened enthusiasm for any kind of grand social project, especially in the cultural field. In the words of Adrien Gruslin, writing in Jeu in 1985: "La désaffection frappe surtout l'engagement à caractère politique global. L'absence totale de projet collectif dans la société québécoise n'est peut-être pas étrangère à ce désintéressement" ("Le théâtre politique" 36). Gilbert David and Lorraine Hébert, writing in the same issue of Jeu, note the same problem but analyze the reasons for it somewhat differently. In David's view the new theatre movement of 1965-1975 in Québec had been marked by a quest for collective identity and the exorcism of old complexes, but the second phase of "rethéâtralisation du théâtre québécois" was a natural move inspired by the modernist necessity of deepening theatrical languages ("Un théâtre" 17). Answering a question about the fragmented and technical nature of this experimentation, David asserts that the theatre is simply following a general social trend towards exacerbated forms of individualism that bring with them feelings of isolation, loss, and the absence of any kind of solidarity other than a strictly corporatist defense of common interests (19). For her part, Hébert discusses the change in terms of a sell-out on the part of popular theatre troupes, an abandonment of the project of emancipating popular cultures through theatre, and an increasing concern with attaining professional status. "L'abandon de la référence prolétarienne s'accompagne d'un retour en force de l'idéologie du métier," she says ("Sauve" 25). But in the name of becoming more professional, says Hébert, these theatres were simply accepting the gulf that separates the arts from the general population, rather than working on a more rigourous analysis of the means that would be necessary to develop a popular theatre that didn't take a reductive approach to complex social problems (29).

These analyses, read against those proposed by Filewod, Knowles, and Wallace, point to the intersecting issues that both English Canadian and Québécois theatres had to struggle with at this period in their history. The earlier discourses of a homogeneous and essential nationhood were no more satisfying than other totalizing and essentialist discourses; Marxism and essentialist feminism were also the object of escalating attacks during this period. The increasing distrust of potential thematic reductiveness in "political" theatre was matched by an increasing interest in theatricality itself, especially in Québec. It is worth considering here that these two issues stem to some extent from the same source. At least some of the preoccupation with theatricality and theatrical languages in both Québec and English Canada was a reflection of a new concern with the differences and blind spots within groups that alternative discourses had tried to construct as "naturally" homogeneous. In a special issue of Jeu on women and theatre produced in 1980 Diane Cotnoir provides an interesting example of the kinds of problems faced by women in participating in a seemingly anti-ideological theatre form, the Ligue Nationale d'Improvisation, which organizes improvisation competitions based on the model of the National Hockey League. It was generally accepted at the time that the women participating in the LNI were just not as talented as the men, and so were less active in the improvisation process. But Cotnoir, looking at an improvisation entitled "Le Matin de Noël." (Christmas Morning), shows how the unarticulated social and theatrical conventions that governed the "spontaneous expression" of improvisation made it impossible for the women to participate fully. Attempts by women performers to change sexual stereotypes were systematically blocked by their male counterparts, who consistently based their humour on ridiculing any attempt at autonomous action by the women. Faced with such situations, Cotnoir suggests that the problems women had in the LNI were not due to lack of talent but to sexist conventions, both social and theatrical, that prevented women from taking the active role necessary for success in improvisation (15-22).

Métis activist Maria Campbell's account of her difficulties working with Passe Muraille performer Linda Griffiths, as recounted in The Book of Jessica, points to similar problems with conventions that exclude non-European peoples from decision-making processes by assuming as natural the Eurocentric paradigms of the dominant majority. As Campbell points out, these assumptions touch on a huge number of issues, ranging from the different emotional investments of professional performers and community informants to questions of contract language and ownership of finished texts. Campbell takes particular pains to demonstrate the ways of knowing particular to non-Enlightenment cultures like those of Canada's many Native peoples and of European peoples before the modern era. This reflects one of the preoccupations of the Native cultural renaissance of the 1970s and 1980s that led to the production of an increasing number of Native plays, the founding of several Native theatre troupes and a new questioning of critical assumptions based on a belief in the cultural superiority of those "two founding peoples" that post-colonial critics have since more accurately identified as the French and English settler cultures (cf. Petrone). Jordan Wheeler illustrates how such critical assumptions bias the work of critics steeped in the dominant culture and make it impossible for them to accurately evaluate Aboriginal theatre:

> Criticisms of Aboriginal plays rarely attack content, but they're often brutal when it comes to style. Didactic, horribly paced, flat humour, and unprofessional are terms that are used. Gaining critical acclaim are those stories mired in such overwhelming and gripping tragedy -- Aboriginal people as the defeated, helpless victims pitted in the sewers of society's social ladder -- that the critics feel too guilty to pan them. Often, these plays are not written by Aboriginal people. . . . (11)

In Wheeler's description of critical reception of Aboriginal theatre, as in Cotnoir's description of the problems of women in the Ligue Nationale d'Improvisation, critics seem

to have rigid and narrow expectations of what they should see in plays about Aboriginals and to write off any deviance from these models as a lack of talent or skill. Métis theatre artist Margo Kane, writing about the reception of her one-woman-show Moonlodge, shows other ways the artistic value of the work of Native artists can be minimized. "I express my feelings a fully as I can," she says, "I use my craft to delve as deeply as is possible each time, I want to share honestly what I can and my joy and rage and fear and courage are released. Is that therapy! Why is it art for Sissy Spacek to demonstrate such depth of feeling, and therapy if I do?" ("From" 29). Wheeler contrasts the critical expectations underlying such negative commentary with a more traditional Aboriginal approach to the role of the artist and the evaluation of his or her work:

> Surviving with the people, the pow-wow singers, dancers and traditional story-tellers have always filled a role that goes beyond art. Teacher as well as entertainer, the story-teller still had to be a master of his craft. Despite its role as a healing tool, the same philosophy is held by the contemporary artists. "If you can't grab people, if you can't entertain people, then they won't come, it's boring. So art enhances the message." (12)

Where mainstream critics generally use the word "didactic" as a negative judgment, here we have a description of an indigenous culture in which teaching or healing, and not "art," is the highest status to which communication can aspire. Even more important, this is a culture whose theatre is not exclusively grounded in a written dramatic literature or in European traditions of theatricality, but in a variety of performance forms its artists must master as part of their daily lives among the people.

Confronted on several fronts with similar questioning of the "naturalness" of previously unquestioned social and artistic conventions, quests for a homogeneous vision of an essentially Canadian culture (or even of two essential cultures coming together in one bilingual and bicultural political unit) came to seem not only inadequate, but dangerous for

the continuing development of artistic institutions. Faced with this problem, and David deplores this in the case of Québec, some troupes chose to work alone, counting only on their own resources and ignoring general trends in the theatre and in society alike ("Un théâtre" 17). In English Canada a similar move might be seen among the alternates, many of whom concentrated mainly on ensuring their long-term financial stability in the early part of the 1980s (cf. Denis Johnston, Up the Mainstream). Having recognized the inadequacies of previous collective movements, these theatres seem to have rejected the idea of collective action altogether in favour of the more liberal notion of individual agents in a commodity system where theatre is not a generator of collective identity but a product to be marketed to well-defined "target groups."

But not all troupes or theatre workers rejected the possibility of collective action or collective identity. After totalizing assumptions of the homogeneity of larger units were rejected, some troupes still believed that collective theatrical action was possible and important, but that it had to be organized within smaller units. Two trends can be identified in the definition of these smaller units: on the one hand a corporatist concern with defining a new vision of professionalism, and on the other hand a move to work directly with smaller social units, generally identified in English Canada by the term "communities." One of the most interesting places to explore the tensions and convergences between these two trends is in the work of popular theatre movements. Unlike many other groups, who came to feel that they must choose either a "professional" or a "community" orientation, popular theatre groups have attempted to redefine both the notion of professionalism and the notion of community in order to profit from the best insights of both tendencies. In doing so popular theatre troupes have challenged one of the key binary oppositions that organizes Euroamerican theatre practice, the split between community-based and professional theatre.

1.3. Canadian Definitions of Popular Theatre

The key word in defining popular theatre in Canada is, without doubt, "community" but the use of this term has not been clear enough to ensure a problem-free consensus on the place or function of popular theatre in Canadian society. Alan Filewod's introduction to Canadian Theatre Review's special edition on popular theatre, published in 1987, defines popular theatre as a term that has "won acceptance in Canada to describe theatre for social action and community development." He goes on to situate popular theatre as a direct descendant of pioneering community intervention groups of the 1970s (Theatre Passe Muraille, the Mummers Troupe, the Grand Cirque Ordinaire, and the Théâtre Parminou, among others). He also notes its more recent debt to Ross Kidd, a Canadian educator based in Africa, who helped link Canadian practitioners to their counterparts in the Third World. But Filewod cannot talk about community involvement without also raising the challenges popular theatre poses to conventional notions of professional theatre practice in Canada:

> The paradigm of professional art is inscribed in the way we fund theatres and review performances. But it breaks down when confronted with the very different conditions of this new movement. A popular theatre might be a subsidized theatre company, a one-shot project on a social services contract or a group of volunteers in a church basement, but all are equally "professional" in that they find their substance and aesthetic standards in the audiences they serve. (3)

Filewod returns to this point in his essay "The Life and Death of the Mummers Troupe," where he discusses the problems one the first Canadian troupes to use theatre for community development had with theatre critics. "In later years," he notes, "mainland critics would blast the Mummers for their lack of 'professionalism' in performance -- not accepting that standards of performance are defined by audiences, not critics. A

performance that reflects the heart of the community and holds an audience entranced in a dusty outport schoolroom might well seem amateurish and awkward in a Toronto theatre" (129). It is worth noting how similar this criticism is to Jordan Wheeler's remarks about the reception of Native theatre by professional theatre critics.

This is not to say that issues of performance quality or "professional standards" are of no interest to community members who perform in popular theatre or who make up the audiences that support it. On the contrary, as can been seen in Rose Adams' report on the Popular Projects Society of Halifax, published in Theatre in Atlantic Canada, issues of form are often very important to these groups because their collective self-expression can be severely hampered if they lack theatrical skills. According to Adams, the PPS was founded as a group of amateurs who wanted to use theatre as a process that would allow them to reach an understanding of issues affecting their everyday lives and to express their concerns in a public forum. Adams reports the group's own evaluation that its first attempt at script writing, a brief to the Nova Scotia review of cultural policy, suffered from lack of skills and links to personal experiences. In Adams' words, "the writing would have benefited from greater use of metaphor; and greater visual impact through blocking or other techniques would have helped. . . . In the case of the Culture Conference project, research was carried out in depth, but the final script failed to relate well enough to our own experiences" ("The Popular" 149). In another case, issues of form became critical as a play about the off-shore oil industry met with violent debate between two audience members who both worked on the off-shore rigs. One worker was impressed with the metaphorical way in which the group had dealt with the effects of the off-shore drilling industry on their own lives, but the other was furious that the group's portrayal of life on the rigs betrayed minimal knowledge of rig workers' actual living and working conditions. Although, the debate turned largely around the style of presentation, but did lead to a sharing of stories between audience members about life on the rigs and the health and safety concerns of rig workers. Nonetheless, in their self-evaluation of the show the group asked itself a number

of questions "about the style of our presentations, about which class base we were appealing to and how we could have presented the play so that the worker would not have been insulted" ("The Popular" 153). Adams concludes that the amateur status of the group has been both a strength and a weakness:

> It has been a strength, because there has always been an emphasis on expressing issues and developing theatre through group dynamics, participatory research, and analysis. This emphasis on the learning process might have been more difficult to maintain in a professional setting. The weakness of our amateur status resides in our performance and dramatic skill which, like our research process, is in a state of constant development. ("The Popular" 145)

The PPS tried to solve this problem by bringing in a professional director, Linda Moore, to help the group learn theatrical skills like "timing, rhythm, and visual interpretation." It was a profitable experience but Adams credits this in part to Moore's openness to the group's collective process, an openness that allowed the "process of discovery and the process of the group claiming ownership, literally, of the means of production" ("The Popular" 152). In Adams' account, the PPS would seem to be both concerned with learning theatrical skills and wary of input from professional institutions that are perceived to exclude those who are unwilling to accept conventional wisdom simply because it is conventional.

A similar attitude towards dominant theatre institutions in Canada led to the founding of the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance (CPTA) in 1981. Ironically though, CPTA itself was originally intended to be an exclusive alliance of professional companies and was seen as a left-wing alternative to the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, which "at the time was perceived by these companies as primarily interested in the management problems of large theatres." Filewod describes the five original

principles of self-definition proposed at the founding meeting of CPTA as an example of a text intended by its presenters to convey the political engagement of professional companies, but accepted as an expression of their shared commitment to popular projects:

> a) . . . [sic] we believe that theatre is a means and not an end. We are theatres which work to effect social change.
>
> b) We see our task as an ongoing process in which art is actively involved in the changing nature of the communities in which we live and work.
>
> c) We particularly attempt to seek out, develop and serve audiences whose social reality is not normally reflected on the Canadian stage.
>
> d) Therefore our artistic practice grows out of a social rather than private definition of the individual.
>
> e) Therefore there is a fundamental difference of purpose, priorities and aesthetics which separates us from the dominant theatre ideology in Canada today. ("Marginalization" 204-205)

On the basis of these principles, rather than a purely institutional definition of professionalism, CPTA ultimately agreed to accept amateur companies as individual members but quickly discovered that "in popular theatre the distinctions between professional and amateur were problematic at best" (Filewod, "Marginalization" 204-205). Part of the "problem" was that CPTA, and popular theatre in general, was benefiting heavily from professionals whose institutional affiliations were other than theatrical. By 1987, six years after its founding, the CPTA "had evolved to include as well a broader network of community-based groups and individuals, many of whom were not theatre

professionals but popular theatre facilitators and development educators" (Filewod, "Marginalization" 203).

Both Judith Mastai's and David Barnet's articles in CTR's special issue on popular theatre suggest reasons for the multiple professional affiliations of those using the form. While Mastai pleads for popular theatres workers to have the courage "to be artists in a world of salesmen," she does not believe that their theatre work can be understood exclusively, or even primarily, in aesthetic terms. Instead she argues that "a popular theatre is one that emerges from people's direct experiences rather than an intellectualized, two-dimensional rendering of experiences derived from observing life through a television." She goes on to point out that, in the context of direct experiences, different theatres have different objectives. Some have social objectives; they intend to "raise awareness of and spark debate about societal and political issues." Some have educational objectives; they intend to "provoke problem definition and problem-solving." Some have therapeutic objectives; they intend to "promote understanding and healing on the part of those developing the work." And some have escapist or celebratory objectives; their work helps people to "to 'get away'" or "to experience communion, ritual . . . respite from the traditional alienation of living in a post-industrial society" (7-10).

David Barnet emphasizes the role of theatre professionals in this community-based work, arguing that the popular theatre movement in Canada "evolved out of the collective creations of the 1970s, sharing the objective of reflecting the lives and issues of specific communities," but suggests that their role has changed. "As the need developed to animate groups to take action for change," he says "so popular theatre narrowed its focus and applied a more rigorous social and political analysis" (5). The suggestion one might derive from this is again that the presence of professionals with other-than-theatrical skills could only help such a movement. This vision is reinforced when Barnet closes his article by asserting that "popular theatre will become stronger, with more effective training for its

participants, if the acting and dramaturgical strengths of the collective approach can be consistently linked to a well informed political analysis" (6). In face of the multiplicity of non-aesthetically defined objectives Mastai and Barnet raise for it, it is hardly surprising that the skills of many different professionals might be brought to bear to create popular theatre.

Jan Selman, in her description of her work on family violence plays with two communities in the North West Territories, puts the point more plainly: "Community Outreach is not a skill one learns at theatre school, but it is a vital one for a popular theatre director" ("Three" 16). Clearly, the issue of professionalism in popular theatre cannot be separated from an understanding of the particular objectives of popular theatre work and the skills needed to carry them out. Selman further emphasizes this point when she argues that it is the needs of the audience and not the needs of the professional institution that come first in popular theatre projects. "By definition," she says, "a popular theatre project starts from a community need, the theatre being a response to the need for change" (11). But even this is not simple. In the case of the projects Selman was involved in, it quickly became evident that the needs being expressed were contradictory. "On the one hand, then," she explains, "a community-based theatre is asked to create a play that is culturally true; on the other hand, contractual stipulations [from the project funder, the North West Territories Task Force on Spousal Assault] clash with that cultural view" (12). Perhaps even more difficult to deal with is the perceived contradiction between being part of a community and being part of a theatre troupe. In Selman's words: "As a theatre company forms, its focus moves away from community and towards the production of theatre. In the very act of defining themselves as a theatre group, the individuals separate themselves from the issues of the community" (19). In other words, theatre work by its very nature, seems to separate the "professional" from the community she or he serves.

In Québec this separation, or special status of the theatre troupe, has not generally been seen as a problem but as an important prerequisite for artistic work. In a special issue of Jeu devoted to new directions taken by the jeune théâtre between 1980 and 1985 the Théâtre Parminou defends its choice to create largely on the basis of commissions from community organizations by emphasizing its autonomy from the sponsoring groups. "Dans notre rapport avec l'organisme commandeur," they say, "nous gardons notre entière autonomie car nous vivons cet échange comme une collaboration ponctuelle à une stratégie, et non comme une adhésion à cet organisme." But it quickly becomes clear that the Parminou does not see itself as outside the social world of the sponsoring organization. They go on to argue that their relationship with sponsoring groups both allows them to explore innovations in theatrical style and to be part of larger solidarity movements ("Au coeur" 40). Their vision of themselves as a popular theatre troupe is that of a specialized partner in a larger social movement, a partner intimately involved in the issues of the larger community, but one whose involvement is carried out in a specialized way that requires the development of special skills. Perhaps because of the structuring influence of the earlier nationalist cultural movements whose aim, the political autonomy of Québec as a nation-state, could only be conceived in terms of a broad-based social coalition, the Parminou does not look at communities as self-enclosed entities, as most English Canadian popular theatre troupes seem to. Instead they describe each intervention as part of a larger, politically organizable movement for social change. This sense of a potentially larger movement may also affect the way the Parminou approaches the question of touring, defining their theatre as popular in part because it functions as part of a network outside traditional theatre institutions and large metropolitan centres.

Writing in the same issue of Jeu, the Théâtre du Quartier also raises the question of alternate distribution networks in its self-definition as a popular theatre. "Accessibility" seems to be the keyword in the Quartier's definition of popular theatre and this accessibility has two aspects: first the theatre must deal with themes that preoccupy the majority of the

population, and second it must go to its audiences in the places where they live and work. But alongside this, the Théâtre du Quartier again raises the question of professionalization, and particularly the question of the increasing specialization within the troupe. From a collective in which all members rotated through all tasks, the Quartier had become, by 1985, a troupe in which members had specialized duties (writing, design, booking, etc.). In the decision-making structure however, all members had an equal say in the choice of themes and the criticism of playwrights' texts and of directors' mises en scène. In its description of its work in 1985, this troupe seems to take for granted its place in a larger social movement and to be focusing its energies internally, despite the fact that it had gradually changed its audience by concentrating almost exclusively on a school-based touring and sponsorship pattern in the preceding period. In defining its goal for the last half of the 1980s as "produire des oeuvres artistiques de qualité à l'intérieur d'un fonctionnement démocratique efficace," the Quartier seems less preoccupied with defining its relationship to the community it serves than with its internal functioning as a collective of professional theatre workers (159-60).

This preoccupation was typical of Montréal theatre troupes, who were under tremendous pressure from both the laboratory troupes and from those members of the AQJT who wanted to use the organization as a stepping-stone to acceptance in the larger institutional theatres (cf. Jeu 36). But the inward-looking concern with professionalism was not simply a response to outside pressures. It also expressed the need, felt by many popular theatre workers at the time, to explore the potential of the theatrical medium itself, and so to develop a kind of specialized knowledge that would be truly useful to popular movements in thinking through their problems. A more general questioning of the role of the artist in promoting social change, undoubtedly made more acute both by the referendum loss for sovereignists and the collapse of the large Marxist-Leninist parties in the early

1980s[4], was at work here. Many troupes looked to models outside Québec and English Canada for guidance in their efforts to resolve these questions. Among these was Québec city's Théâtre sans Détour who worked with Brazilian director Augusto Boal's techniques of "Theatre of the Oppressed" in an attempt to create a new relationship between actors and audiences. Rather than defining links with social movements and artistic exploration are contradictory demands, the Théâtre sans Détour chose to take an experimental approach to playwrighting, acting, and design in shows that dealt with burning social issues and asked members of the public to come onto the stage to improvise solutions to them ("Entre" 232). In this process the Théâtre sans Détour was deliberately searching for a method that would allow theatre to be used to analyze the recent defeats of the Left, rather than proposing a utopian vision in a way that implied that the actors had answers for a passive and uninformed audience. But in discussing this work to involve the audience in the analysis and problem-solving process, the artistic directors Paula Barsetti and Gilles-Philippe Pelletier, like the members of the Théâtre Parminou, felt the need to answer potential objections about the artistic quality of their work. "Jusqu'où," they ask, "pouvons-nous développer la théâtralité, dans un théâtre forum, sans perdre de vue l'intervention du public peu habitué à la scène? Nous pensons avoir poussé plus loin notre recherche dans nos derniers spectacles forum, où la théâtralité a pris une plus large place" ("Entre" 234). The

4 The influence of these parties on left-wing politics, and on community and cultural organizations in the Québec of the late 1970s cannot be underestimated. En Lutte and the Parti Communiste Ouvrier were able to draw 2,000-3,000 people to public meetings in Montréal in the late 1970s and claimed to distribute close to 10,000 newspapers each per week. (Given the secretive nature of these organizations, these facts are difficult to document; I draw them from personal memory and from discussions with former members and sympathizers.) More importantly the high degree of organization and commitment among their supporters allowed them to develop immense influence in popular organizations, but frequent takeovers, dogmatism, and bitter ideological battles left many disillusioned with the organized Left in general and vanguard parties in particular. By 1983 both organizations had collapsed, as had most of the Marxist-Leninist parties around the world that were founded in the wake of the events of 1968.

tone of their answer points to the widespread suspicion, especially strong in Québec at that time, that a theatre that links itself to social movements risks losing its artistic integrity and falling short of its full aesthetic potential. The Théâtre sans Détour's emphasis on the formal qualities of their theatrical contribution points to the way in which Québécois troupes typically reacted to these suspicions in defining their work as popular theatre.

Generally speaking then, while popular theatres in both English Canada and Québec have all been concerned with building new relationships with new audiences, the emphasis in English Canadian definitions of popular theatre has been on the social construction and function of popular theatre, while Québécois practitioners have spent more time exploring the aesthetics of the performances themselves. The entry of Native artists into the field has added yet another dimension to the discussion. While virtually all Native cultures in Canada have a strong performance tradition of story-telling, dancing and ceremonies, they do not have a tradition of spoken drama in the form that European-rooted cultures do and so Native theatre workers often put into question Euroamerican assumptions about the nature of theatre itself. More importantly for popular theatre, the traditional view of the artist in Native communities is already much closer to the socially-committed collective action of what is known as popular theatre in the French and English-speaking settler cultures of Canada, and much Native theatre could be considered to fall into the category of popular theatre even when it does not overtly identify itself as such. It is not surprising then that several of the most established popular theatre companies in Canada and Québec (ex. Headlines Theatre, Catalyst Theatre, Popular Theatre Alliance of Manitoba, the Théâtre Parminou) have chosen to work with Native artists and audiences, or that this work has sometimes led to radical questioning of the premises on which these companies were working.

1.4. Definitions of Popular Theatre in Europe, Africa and Latin America

How do these Canadian debates about popular theatre correspond to debates in other countries around the world? An emphasis on working from community needs rather than imposing a point of view on the community is characteristic of the contemporary popular theatre movement around the world. Well-known Italian theatre worker Dario Fo suggests that, following Gramsci, popular theatre workers should view themselves as "an organ of the masses," but should be careful, to borrow Joris Ivens' words, not to "swoop down vertically like a parachutist onto a political issue, like a 'thing' from outside" (Fo 134). Instead, he says, productions should start from the needs of the movement and the masses. He cites his own work with *La Comune* in this regard, claiming that the plays this troupe produced were "placed at the service of the movement" and developed not in an effort to produce an artistic masterpiece but to "to clarify the movement's position and all its contradictions" (Fo 132). In a similar vein Michael White of Britain's Welfare State International says that their "celebrations and ceremonies" are most effective when they "are not imposed upon a community but proceed from the creation of a common culture and shared belief." When this is the case, he claims, "it is possible on occasion for a necessary, relevant, and accessible art to touch upon sacred things" (M. White 198). In an interview with Ross Kidd, Nidia Bustos, coordinator of MECATE, the Nicaraguan Farmworkers' Theatre Movement, emphasizes the same point, though she is not speaking of the role of professional theatre workers but of *campesinos* who produce plays for their own communities and other communities like them. The *campesinos'* work is particularly effective, she says, because the theatre workers are "part of the community and working for the same goals" and so when audiences become involved with issues being presented on-stage, it is in part because they know that the discussion on-stage is "really happening" and not just being represented as mark of authenticity (Kidd 199). In this light, Bustos emphasizes the importance of MECATE members remaining farmers. "If the *campesinos* become full-time actors, " she says, "they'll lose their connection to the land and be viewed

as privileged in the eyes of their fellow *campesinos*. We don't want to create that kind of inequality. There's been too much of that in the past" (Kidd 196).

Penina Muhando Mlama emphasizes the importance of community participation in creating popular theatre throughout her Culture and Development: The Popular Theatre Approach in Africa. She describes four steps in creating popular theatre that involve community members from the beginning to the end of the process. These include analysis of problems through individual and group discussions, community members concretizing problems into theoretical performances (as opposed to imitative reflections), public performances that present problems and suggest solutions, and post-performance discussions where performers and audience members chart out action to be taken by the community to solve its problems (5). She furthers clarifies her vision of the relationship of professional facilitators and community members by approving of Carl Gaspar's description of Philippino popular theatre, which is rooted in the community and incorporates realities of life as felt by members of the community, while outsiders act only as facilitators, stimulators and agents for the promotion of social change (43). She distinguishes this kind of theatre from what she calls "populist theatre," in which popular theatre forms are used to carry messages to an audience who must translate them into action. This form of theatre, she says, functions as an "invasion from above in which villagers are treated as repositories" (68-69).

Judith Weiss et al. deal with the same problem in their Latin American Popular Theatre: The First Five Centuries when they discuss the differences between mass and popular culture. Mass culture, they suggest, is often mislabeled as popular culture but the differences between the two can be traced by an "examination of processes of gestation and control of cultural production (i.e. by whom and for whom culture is produced)" and by "analyzing the nature of the relationship established with the audience (as passive consumer versus active participant)" (7). They further suggest that the difference between a

performance created for consumption by a passive audience and one created through extensive research with those involved in the issue can be seen in the performance text itself. Basing its work on knowledge and understanding achieved through intensive research into "the community's priorities and the points of view that inform them" as well as "the character of the community as expressed in verbal and nonverbal expression . . . . a group is more likely to transcend both the paternalism evident in less-informed productions and in much of the earlier extension or educational theatre and the populism that characterizes some theatre that, while calling itself 'popular,' indulges in stereotyping and demgoguery" (Weiss et al. 169). The distinct attitude that Latin American Nuevo Teatro Popular takes towards its audience can perhaps function as an exemplar of the new popular theatre movements throughout the world. In Weiss' words:

> The clearest relationship of the Nuevo Teatro Popular is with its audience, which is both an assembly of spectators and a constituency. Audiences are not there merely to be played to, or talked at, but to be engaged in a dialogue that goes well beyond the limits of a single performance. The group establishes the basis for the dialogue by reaching out to learn about the community and understand it. (163)

Like Mlama, Weiss et al. emphasize the role of performers as "participant observers in the communities in which they spend most of their time" and note that performers encourage audience feedback through post-show discussion, surveys and interviews (168). They do not, however, insist that performers must always come from the communities their theatres serve. They acknowledge that many theatre workers in Latin America alternate between professional and community work and that theatre of conscientization or community development is often considered paratheatre, even within the movement itself (139).

Formal changes in the audience/performer relationship are an obvious offshoot of such a change in the social relationship between theatre and the community it appeals to,

and these changes are especially emphasized in European discussions of popular theatre. Michael White suggests that a Welfare State International celebration, unlike the commercial tourist-oriented activities encouraged by Britain's Heritage Industry, "is a living theatre created not for an audience but for a community -- and if no community exists it may be necessary to invent one" (198). Fo suggests that the theatre experience itself may build such a sense of community if properly organized. "There is a community dimension in performing theatre," he says, "and the characters are a pretext to make the people 'speak'. This means that the characters aren't acted but represented, and, since they are familiar, the actor can't talk about himself, but to others about particular situations which the character indicates." In Fo's view this kind of theatre needs to be written "to contain moments, interruptions, that grab the audience's attention, destroying the fourth wall, and using intermediary characters." It should also employ "the totality of theatre in the sense of gestures, sounds, song, words, colours, and dance" (135-36). Thomas Donahue's discussion of the Théâtre du Soleil's attempts to create a new popular theatre in the 1970s shows how they emphasized similar elements in order to create a new relationship with the audience. Emphasis was placed on involving the audience during both the development and the staging of the Soleil's early shows; participation of outside groups was considered an essential part of the company's exercises in the preparation of L'Âge d'Or, for instance. For performances, the Cartoucherie itself was completely remodeled to break down the dichotomy between "salle" and "scène." A story-telling approach, combined with the inclusion of contemporary events in thematic material, established the kind of interruptions of action that Fo suggests help build a sense of communal understanding instead of commercial consumption (35).

Before embracing Fo's notions of the communal nature of theatre, we should, however, be clear about the potential problems with the notion of community as a basis for defining popular theatre. Graham Woodruff, in an article entitled "Community, Class and Control: A View of Community Plays" takes issue with the notion that the movement from

"class" to "community" in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s has changed the processes and objectives of creativity for the better. He particularly attacks Ann Jellicoe's method of creating community plays, a method which is based on the view that community is defined by geography and so avoids "politics" in order to draw everyone within the geographical region into the production. In commissioning David Edgar to write Entertaining Strangers, for instance, Jellicoe didn't object to all class analysis, but insisted that the villains must come from outside the town in which the play was set and in which it was to be performed. In fact, says Woodruff, this method doesn't avoid politics at all, but strongly espouses a particular political view that "reinforces an idealized notion of community as an unchanging unity" by using a professional playwright and director beforehand "to avoid those very issues that divide people" (371-72). He proposes instead the class-defined approach of the No More Cream Buns theatre workshop at Telford Community Arts Centre, in which a group came together around common experience of working class life in Britain in late 1980s. In this case the politics of the method dictated that the "workshop remained in control of the creative process, determining both the form and the content of the play" and that "professional artists worked as part of group and to instructions of group" rather than running the show in such a way as to mask difficulties and disagreements (Woodruff 372). In a move reminiscent of Weiss' description of tracing the difference between mass and popular culture, Woodruff insists that "community" is not a magic word that makes a project truly reflective of the concerns of the people. His definition of the form of community play practiced in the No More Cream Buns theatre workshop reminds us to ask how and by whom the play is produced before accepting the assertion that it is truly representative of the concerns of a particular community. In the class-conscious form of community play proposed in this workshop, "a group of workers, employed and unemployed, come together to create theatre which expresses their values, their experiences and their views of the world around them. In each case, control of the creative process is

retained by the group. In each case the plays are performed for working-class audiences. Of, by and for" (373).

Other critics suggest that real community participation is not always sabotaged by deliberate policy as much as by inadequate working conditions. David Kerr, in an article provocatively entitled "Participatory Popular Theatre: The Highest Stage of Cultural Underdevelopment?", suggests that in Africa even well-meaning popular theatre workers sometimes fell prey to something he calls the "project syndrome." Induced by short-term workshops in unfamiliar communities, this creative malady "resulted in a superficial understanding of community problems and a failure to become engaged with the organizations which might be empowered to change them" (Kerr 55). The real danger in such a situation, according to Kerr, is that the popular theatre worker, like the professional writer brought into Jellicoe-style community plays to distract attention from divisions within the producing community, may find her or himself "becoming embroiled in new forms of cultural mystification." The consequences of such mystification, as Kerr describes them, can be disastrous for an emancipatory project:

> External manifestations of theatrical participation (local language and culture, close contact between drama worker and community, formal techniques for involving the audience in discussions and dramatic creativity) might create such a convincing impression of popular activism that the people will be blinded to the fact that the real goals of popular communication -- the empowerment of communities at the cultural, political, and economic levels -- are being withheld. (71)

Such a warning serves as a reminder that the mere fact of working at the grass-roots level is not enough to establish a project as one of popular emancipation, just as a review of international literature on popular theatre reminds us that there is no single view of how theatre workers should organize or evaluate community participation. As in the Canadian

case, the notion of community involvement is seen in most countries as central to a definition of popular theatre, but the way in which that involvement is understood and structured depends as much on the immediate historical circumstances of particular movements as on the cultural traditions out of which they come.

This brings us to another important aim of most popular theatre movements around the world: the preservation and integration of popular performance traditions. Some of the most famous playwrights and directors of twentieth century Europe have taken this preservation of popular cultural history as their watchword. Perhaps the best known of these is Bertolt Brecht, who much admired the work of the music-hall comedian Karl Valentin, in whose shows he had performed as a young man, and whose stage groupings he claimed to have copied in some of his own work (Brecht, Brecht 224 & 226). The influence, direct or indirect, of such popular forms has continued to the present day. Writing about the Théâtre du Soleil, for instance, Donahue claims a line of filiation from the early twentieth-century French director Jacques Copeau to Ariane Mnouchkine based on a "fervent desire to renew old popular forms for a contemporary theater audience" (40). The Théâtre du Soleil, in Donahue's description, relied heavily on techniques drawn from the European tradition of popular theatre in their attempts to "create a new popular theatre by using performance elements that transcend the language based traditional theater in France." Its distinctive performing style was marked by an emphasis on physical expression rather than spoken language, and the use of such popular performance traditions as masks, clowning, fairground entertainment, and the commedia dell'arte method of character development (Donahue 35). While the Théâtre du Soleil's recent performances have moved away from some of the more plebeian elements included in their productions of the 1970s, Mnouchkine still remains extremely concerned about the preservation of such popular performance elements as the use of the mask and the chorus.

This perception of a potential loss of ancient performance techniques in a world of individualist identity is also typical of Dario Fo's writings about popular theatre. Whereas practitioners in English Canada often see popular theatre as a new phenomenon requiring the invention of new technique, Fo, like Mnouchkine, traces some of the structural characteristics of popular theatre back to the Ancient Greeks. In discussing popular theatre's use of a narrative technique he refers to as "backtracking," Fo asserts that it "comes from a popular tradition of telling a story from its end point" and cites Homer's Ulysses as a primary example (132). Popular theatre, in Fo's view, is defined as much by its formal characteristics as by its relationship to an audience. So for instance, he believes, following Meyerhold and Brecht, that "all popular theatre is a theatre of situation" and that this formal characteristic is in fact a particular popular way of understanding the world:

> In this type of theatre it is the situation which determines the development of the action, by way of the interplay and clash between the characters. But it isn't just the characters, with their stories, their concerns, their faces, or their *vis* [sic], as the French say, who determine this development. . . . the contradictions, humour, anger, and delight of the characters, the ferment and the stage business, are determined by events and clashes which involve class conflict, and thus political struggle. (132)

This is not to say, of course, that all popular theatre shares exactly the same performance structures. As with questions of community participation, different ways of interpreting reality issue from different historical circumstances and cultural traditions. Writing about the influence of popular traditions on the alternative theatre in Britain, for instance, Baz Kershaw traces not one, but two traditional strands of protest performance. One tradition is that of carnival and the carnivalesque, marked by "the symbolic overthrow of the hierarchic sociopolitical order in a wild frenzy of excessive anti-structural celebration," and the other is agit-prop, whose *modus operandi* is the "use of satire as a weapon against the

powers that be, in an effort to agitate the body politic by injecting unwelcome and disruptive propaganda into its main ideological arteries" (Kershaw 68). The 7:84 troupe was one of the leaders in Britain in adapting these popular traditions for contemporary performance in working class venues and community centres. In an article entitled "Mediating Contemporary Reality," John McGrath, 7:84's founder, identifies the characteristics of his company's trademark style as directness, comedy, music, emotion, variety, effect, immediacy, and localism (McGrath, A Good 54-58). In other articles in the same book, McGrath explains at length both the pragmatic and the aesthetic reasons for these choices, which range from the difficulty of getting and holding audience attention in a non-theatre venue like a miner's club (73-75), to the fact that working class audiences raised on pantomime have the "sophistication of the audience of the folk tales, [and are] able to shift ground with ease if given secure guidance" (29).

In the former colonies of Africa and Latin America the struggle to preserve popular forms is also emphasized as an important task of popular theatre, but this work is performed in a radically different historical context than in Europe. In discussing the goals of MECATE for instance, Bustos refers to the need for "rescuing and reviving popular culture repressed by centuries of domination and swamped by the penetration of North American culture" (Kidd 194). Weiss et al. point out that some of these traditional cultural practices are important for the popular theatre movement not simply because they are traditional but because they are "expressions of an inclusive and participatory society" (21). Mlama makes a similar point about African popular theatre, calling attention to the particular historical situation in which the work of cultural preservation must be done as a "conscious effort to assert the culture of the dominated classes" (67). This work has not, in Mlama's view, been helped by analyses by European expatriates active in the popular theatre movement (she seems here to be reacting mainly to Michael Etherton and company) who view African theatre as a university-based phenomenon. The contemporary popular theatre movement in Africa "is not, as is often claimed," says Mlama, "an innovation of the 1960s

when the university-based theatre artists embarked on a search for a mass-based theatre practice. Instead, it is an attempt to bring to the fore a long tradition that has constantly been overshadowed by the dominant classes" (63). The mistaken claim is rooted, in Mlama's view, on a narrow Eurocentric definition of theatre based on a particular kind of dramatic text, and this definition has the unfortunate effect of making some theatre scholars blind to the theatrical nature of indigenous African performance practices. Mlama makes the counter-claim that "Africa has a distinct theatre based on her own cultural traditions" and defines theatre in African terms as including "any performing art that represents life through symbolic images or artistic expressions that are in the form of action. The action can be in the form of dance, drama, mime, narration or a combination of any of these" (55). She goes on to suggest that the neglect of these performance traditions is not accidental but the result of a conscious political decision arising from the fear that promotion of ethnic cultures jeopardizes national integration in newly independent states (61). In this vein, Mlama criticizes the implicit founding assumption of the university-based traveling theatre movement of the 1970s. By "taking theatre to the people," she says, the traveling theatre movement was playing into the colonialist belief that the common people didn't already have a performance tradition of their own. The task of influencing the peasantry to start similar theatre groups based on middle-class urban models was, in Mlama's estimation, futile, due to both the alien nature of that theatre and the lack of any real social base for its development. In her words: "Theatre emerges out of a people's way of life and not from a one day show by a visiting group" (65).

Weiss et al. echo this view in their discussion of Latin American popular theatre. In Latin America it was not ignorance of popular traditions that posed the greatest threat to their survival, but their recuperation by newly formed political and intellectual elites. According to Weiss, in many newly-independent Latin American states, programs of national consolidation led only to a superficial assimilation of decontextualized popular forms. In her estimation:

> These forms served as "unifying" value systems for projecting and reinforcing dominant national and class ideologies. Populist elements were cultivated so that the point of view of the popular or marginalized classes and their very dignity as subjects were often trampled or ridiculed in crass stereotypes. This was frequently done within the framework of apparent criticism that, upon closer analysis, seems to have been designed to defuse potential conflict rather than to analyze the issues -- a product that one might call farce disguised as satire. (Weiss et al. 6)

The Nuevo Teatro Popular took a different approach to popular performance. While NTP workers were concerned with the "reaffirmation of the integrity of marginalized cultures and of significant cultural forms," they accomplished this reaffirmation by using "traditional forms and styles while questioning the validity of messages and themes shaped by an integrational propaganda aimed at reinforcing the existing hegemony" (Weiss et al. 22 and 138). Most of these groups, according to Weiss, do not settle for simple assimilation of traditional popular forms, but critically appropriate and transform them into revisionist readings (170).

This emphasis on critical appropriation and transformation points to what seems to be the crucial element in definitions of popular theatre throughout the world: the use of theatre as a tool of collective thought and not as a product for individual consumption. Describing the characteristics of the Nuevo Teatro Popular, Weiss et al. do not restrict their discussion to a description of the rich variety of expression of marginal social groups or to the conscious internationalism of a movement based on collective processes and non-hierarchical internal organization. They also point to the importance of the analysis of art and society the Nuevo Teatro Popular groups share, and to its role in building a movement whose goal is to "expose mechanisms and dynamics determining general and specific social phenomena and the class character of economic relations" and to "demystify various

strategies for manufacturing consensus among different social classes" (Weiss et al. 136-37). While these theatres do see themselves as helping build the national identities of post-colonial states whose cultures came into being through confrontations between distinct social groups, they do not simply act as a celebratory mirror or an authoritative model. Instead they encourage a particular kind of thought process around culture, one that makes the "important assumption that historical and class analysis lend a sharper focus to the critical examination of what is meant by cultural and national identity" (Weiss et al. 164).

Mlama argues that this role of performance as a thought process and medium of social criticism is typical of most traditional African performance forms. In fact, she says, when popular theatre has not been accepted in rural Africa, it has most often been because university-trained popular theatre workers made little effort to use the potential of theatre to analyze problems and to offer criticism. This, she says, "was contrary to the character of the popular forms in the villages which normally combine entertainment with education and critical analysis" (65). She gives a particularly moving example of her own experiences with this approach when she discusses the problem of choosing appropriate animateurs for popular theatre projects. "The Kumba workshop," in her description, "offered one good example of the contradictions that can be faced in the personal behaviour of the animateur in relation to the objectives of the Popular Theatre cause." During this workshop the female participants, who were students at a community education college in Kumba town, were consistently impolite to their village hosts and generally "insensitive . . . to the fact that their behaviour and personal appearance could widen the gap between them and the people they were supposed to work with in order to bring out their problems and analyze them together with a view to solving them." After a particularly disastrous evening during which the students had refused to eat food prepared for them by the local women and had then disappeared during the dancing that followed, one of the young women thoughtlessly interrupted the closing ceremony of the ritual, ignoring the assembled women and taking a

glass being used in the ceremony into her bedroom. Mlama describes the village women's response as follows:

> There were a few seconds of shocked silence. Then one woman broke into a spontaneous song that was immediately picked up by the other women and a skit was improvised to accompany the song. It was a song of anger at the ill treatment they received from the city women. . . . There followed a half hour of song, dance and improvisation where the village women vented their anger at the humiliation they had been subjected to. They decided to make Eyoh, the local liaison for the workshop, the target for their improvisations. One of the songs was about Eyoh, who had gone to the city and, ignoring the warning against city women, had brought to Konye village not only one woman, but many city women (the workshop girls). These city women had no respect for the village women and now they had even spoilt their ritual. Another song demanded that Eyoh pay a a fine on behalf of his city women.
>
> In the end, Eyoh had to placate the anger of the women by apologizing through dance and song and offering a full bottle of liquor as a sign of repentance. This bottle was shared among the women and the last of its liquor used for the closing ceremony. (89-90)

In the danced and sung improvisation Mlama describes the women are clearly not simply expressing their anger and frustration, but working through an analysis of the problem (Eyoh has brought to the village "city women [who] had no respect for the village women") and a collectively acceptable means for solving it. Whether or not we agree with this analysis or with the solution proposed, both of which only address the immediate offense and don't explore the underlying reasons for it, we must admit that what is going on here is a collective thinking process. Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that this problem-

solving process demands a response in the same medium. Eyoh must apologize through dance and song as well as supplying the bottle of liquour that will allow the closing ceremony to be completed.

It is not difficult to see how the move is made from the kind of traditional cultural practices Mlama describes in this passage to the definition of popular theatre she proposes. "Popular Theatre," she says, "refers to the employment of a variety of theatrical expressions at the grassroots level to research and analyse development problems and to create a critical awareness and potential for action to solve those problems" (66). In both cases the aim of performance is not simply entertainment, but the development of a clearer understanding of the situation participants (both performers and audience members) find themselves in. As Mlama points out, this type of theatre is a two-way communication process in which the participatory nature of the performance is the prerequisite necessary for active debate of the issues the community is facing (71). In a description of a workshop with farmers David Kerr shows, for instance, how acting the role of characters from dominant classes can be more than a caricatural mode of venting anger. "When landless farmers and small marketsellers acted out the roles of privileged individuals such as the Sarkhin Masawa (chief of the market) or a police inspector," he says, "they themselves thought their way into the strategies of the dominant class" (61). Clearly, we are not dealing here with simple self-expression or emotional venting, but with a social construction of knowledge based on participation in the creation of a fictional world in which analyses and solutions can be tested.

While much European popular theatre doesn't involve the same direct participation of community members in performance that the African experiments feature, it does share the concentration on theatre as a thinking process. Ariane Mnouchkine, for example, doesn't discuss the Théâtre du Soleil's two shows about the French revolution, 1789 and 1793, as an attempt to teach history, but as an attempt to understand it. "Notre objectif, she

says, "était de faire comprendre au spectateur et de comprendre nous-mêmes d'où vient le monde actuel et pourquoi il est tel que nous le voyons" (Mnouchkine, quoted in Donahue 33). Dario Fo views his theatre, which he has described as in service of a movement, not as simple propaganda in favour of particular political positions but as a form of counter-information designed to provoke thinking about the events that occur in the everyday world of players and audiences. In Fo's words, "the comedian's [actor's] distorting lens enables the public to experience a synthesizing, didactic vision, which means giving them alternatives or moments of critical reflection" (136). John McGrath of Britain's 7:84 makes a similar point in responding to questions about the ideological underpinnings of his popular theatre work. "If a writer is committed to an overrigid set of political principles," he says, "the end would have been written before the play, and I think that negates the whole purpose of creating the work . . . a political method of looking at the world is what I'm interested in rather than direct political message conclusions" ("Popular" 396).

In discussing popular theatre as a thinking process, we must not overlook the fact that it is a thinking process rooted in a particular standpoint. Most popular theatre organizations around the world, like the CPTA in Canada, insist that part of the aim of their theatre work is to create a public forum for marginalized social groups whose voices are excluded from the most important decision-making structures in their own countries. In Mlama's words: "The Popular Theatre movement in Africa is a response to a history that has undermined people's genuine participation in the development process" (5). In Nicaragua MECATE was founded to promote popular expression and encourage farmworkers to express themselves in building the new people's state after the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship (Kidd 194). In Italy, Dario Fo argues that this means supporting working class institutions and "refusing to have our plays organized by public institutions or by the various state-subsidized structures. We believe it is essential," he says, "to 'transplant' our plays to political spaces run by comrades of the rank and file" (137).

But, as many popular theatre workers have discovered, making room for the peoples' voice is not as simple as it might initially appear to be, and participation does not automatically lead to liberating analyses. In practice, it is not even clear that it is always the peoples' voice that is heard in participatory popular theatre. As David Kerr points out, in discussions after popular theatre performances there is often a tendency for local elites to assume the role of spokespersons and defend existing power structures (60). In other cases, community members create plays designed more to please those who are funding them than to solve the problems occurring at the grass-roots level. Kerr was particularly disturbed, for instance, when he saw Village Health Committees creating plays based on the "Mr.-Wise-and-Mr.-Foolish stereotypes" of colonial education. "The problem with turning on the popular voice," he concludes, "is that what rushes out may well be contaminated by the perverted clichés of a repressive ideology or by the fear of thinking freely. If the popular voice that results from such a process merely echoes the received wisdom of political despots or developmental gurus, then people are participating in their own mystification" (66-69).

1.5. Purpose and Scope of this Dissertation

Looking at Canadian popular theatre through the lens of Latin American, African and European experiences, it becomes clear that much analytical work remains to be done. While Canadian popular theatre workers generally agree with their international counterparts about the importance of starting from community needs and concentrating on giving voice to the concerns of those excluded from dominant social discourse, little critical work has been done on the processes by which Canadian popular theatres attempt to achieve these ends. There are no book-length studies of the movement as a whole, and to date no articles have been published that compare English Canadian, Québécois, and Native approaches to the problem of creating performances that come out of the social concerns and cultural traditions of these particular constituencies. Most of the articles that have been

published have concentrated on the history of particular projects or the opinions and contributions of individual groups and artists. This is especially true of the period since 1985, when the movement underwent important changes, as discussed in Section 1.2 of this chapter.

If we accept that popular theatre is characterized, not only by its base in local communities but by its attempts to use elements of popular culture to think through the problems faced by marginalized groups in Canadian society, we need to ask (and answer, however tentatively) questions about how the form itself functions, and how differences in cultural background and social circumstance affect that functioning. My hypothesis in this dissertation is that popular theatre cannot be defined only in institutional terms. Instead I propose that popular theatre is most usefully viewed as a series of practices that intervene in social discourse to make new problems "thinkable" by changing the cultural frames with which we think. At their best, I believe, these interventions contribute to building social communities by inducing a sense of collective subjectivity among participants (performers and spectators) in the theatre experience. I attempt to prove this hypothesis through a comparative analysis of dramaturgic strategies used to structure community participation in the work of some English-Canadian, Québécois, and Native performances which emphasize a high degree of community involvement and a concern with issues affecting non-dominant social groups.

My discussion focuses on the relationship between the standpoints of community activists and the specific dramaturgic choices made by theatre workers to encourage community participation. In the debates within the Canadian popular movement, theatre workers themselves identify three main dramaturgic strategies for community development. The first strategy emphasizes the creation of a public forum for marginalized groups by encouraging non-professionals to take control of the stage through mastery of basic techniques of theatricalization and collective self-expression. Because participation is

defined here in terms of allowing those who are generally confined to the role of observers to become performers, the theatre professional is viewed as simply a facilitator of the creative process. Critics of the strategy point out that it sometimes leads to little more than an unreflective repetition of dominant thinking in a local context. A second strategy concentrates on the critical potential of theatricality itself. Community participation is here mediated by the intervention of skilled professional theatre workers, with content determined through an interactive process between the commissioning community group and the theatre company. Proponents of this strategy argue that it allows for a higher quality of collective thought by using a combination of professional skills and community insight to question stereotyped or ineffective thought structures. However, critics of this strategy believe that by using "experts" to bring community-generated material to the stage, this type of theatre discourages direct action for social change, even where it produces a clearer expression of community concerns than is possible in hastily prepared amateur performances. A third strategy combines the first two, with professional theatre workers presenting a play they have created based on research in the community, and then inviting non-experts to break the audience/stage barrier by either suggesting or themselves performing solutions to problems portrayed on the stage. Critics agree that this technique encourages direct action by showing how performers and observers can work together at the moment of performance. They are, however, concerned that the necessarily brief performances and the lack of time for reflection on the part of audience members who intervene in the action often leads to the presentation of simplistic solutions to complex problems. Community members who intervene in this process have, they fear, only an illusion of control in the face of professionals who have a much greater mastery of the medium, and have spent weeks or months preparing their presentation.

There are a number of unexamined assumptions operating in the discussion of these strategies and before a cross-cultural analysis of their usefulness in a Canadian context can be undertaken, some of the key terms with which the debate is conducted must be

problematized. The term "community," for instance, may itself mean different things to different people. As Raymond Willliams points out in Resources for Hope, "[c]ommunity is unusual among the terms of political vocabulary in being . . . the one term which is never used in a negative sense. . . . A term which is agreed among so many people, a term which everybody likes, a notion which everybody is in favour of -- if this reflected reality then we'd be living in a world very different from this one" (113). "Professionalism" is another loaded notion, used sometimes to describe institutional status and sometimes to denote mastery of the craft of theatre. The latter use of the term is itself prone to problems, especially when evaluating performance traditions that are not based on written dramatic texts. In all cases, attempts to combine notions like "community participation" and "professionalism" in an art form like theatre that, by definition, establishes a strict division between performer and audience, lead to serious problems in evaluating artistic choices. Evaluating the role of community participation in professional work is further complicated by the fact that different theatrical traditions lead not only to different kinds of skills in professional theatre workers, but to different dramaturgic choices in organizing community-generated (and generating) material. What is more, recent theoretical work contesting the view of theatre-goers as passive spectators raises the question of the cultural training audiences themselves bring to the theatre. In the theatre, as in the political arena, Canadians of different cultural backgrounds clearly use different sense-making strategies to organize their particular visions of both community and of theatre.

This would suggest that a comparative analytical approach to the dramaturgy of popular theatre demands a theoretical framework that can account for the formal qualities of theatre as both a social institution and as an aesthetic medium. I start to develop such a framework by looking at discussions of the role of performance in building epistemological models that can reframe social problems and at theories of the role of cultural activity in social change. The analytical model I develop allows me to formulate a description of popular theatre practices as interventions in social discourse that contribute to the

development of new ways of knowing, and this in turn grounds my discussion of how we evaluate the social impact of community-based theatre practices. To do this, I follow the process of play creation through three distinct temporal stages: contact with the community activists, gathering material, and theatricalization of the material for public presentation. At all these stages I concentrate on the nature and results of professional mediation of community members' stories and on the visions of community implicit in professional approaches to stories.

In Chapter two I concentrate on developing a theoretical framework and on problematizing some of the keywords in the popular theatre movement: "community," "participation," "professionalism," and "theatricality." Chapters three, four , and five each cover one of the stages of play creation. In these chapters I discuss the work of a number of different theatre groups but, since my concern is with the analytical tools necessary to understand particular dramaturgies, I do not attempt to give a comprehensive overview, historical or geographical, of the Canadian popular theatre movement. My choice of texts is conditioned first by their usefulness for illustrating different approaches to professional mediation in community-building, especially as they are conditioned by cultural tradition, but availability of documentation has also been a consideration. Only one of the texts I discuss, Linda Griffiths and Maria Campbell's The Story of Jessica, has been published. Because I found the work of Headlines Theatre in Vancouver, the Popular Theatre Alliance of Manitoba and Red Roots Theatre in Winnipeg, and the Théâtre Parminou in Victoriaville, Québec to be representative and because they were able to provide me with extensive documentation on their creation processes, including videotapes of workshops and final productions, much of my discussion turns around their work. By concentrating here on an analytical methodology that can account for popular theatre practices in these different cultural milieus, I hope to contribute to the development of more generally appropriate criteria for evaluating the role of popular theatre can play in helping Canadians understand each others' attempts to build community. Approaching the problem in this

way allows me to demonstrate how a definition of participation that takes into account the importance of observer evaluation of action must measure the effectiveness of popular theatre techniques not in terms of a simple transfer of information, but in terms of changes in the collective approaches to knowing that structure community.

Chapter 2: Towards a Body-Centered Analysis of "Community," "Professionalism," and Participatory Public Thought

Baz Kershaw, in The Politics of Performance; Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention, introduces his discussion of the critical reception of the British alternative theatre movement with the observation that many critics underestimate the impact of this theatre because they approach it from "an analytical perspective which insists on treating performance solely in terms of its theatrical significance" (43). The review of popular theatre practices in the previous chapter of this dissertation would suggest that an exclusively theatrical approach to the popular theatre movement, in Canada or elsewhere, would be equally unproductive for an evaluation of its importance. As we have seen, popular theatre workers themselves insist that to evaluate popular theatre practices only in terms of their impact on theatre institutions is to miss the point. However, a purely instrumental approach to popular theatre as a tool for community development is equally problematic as it does nothing to answer those questions about the formal qualities of popular theatre that practitioners must regularly confront in creating performance texts. How then are we to develop an analytical approach to popular theatre that can account for both the formal qualities and the social impact of different popular theatre practices?

I would suggest that the first step in answering this question is, as Kershaw suggests, a step outside of the theatre institution itself to a vantage point in the larger social arena where new questions about theatre demand our attention. From this new vantage point we might, for instance, find it more important to ask "what is it about theatre that attracts community activists to it?" than "what is the relationship of popular theatre to other theatrical forms?" Put simply, in the context of social action, "why theatre?" often seems a more pressing question than the more theatre-centered "why popular?" Surprisingly perhaps, such a step out of the theatre institution quickly leads us

back into it through another door, as attempts to answer questions about the social usefulness of theatre push us past instrumental and even sociological concerns towards a reconsideration of theatricality as such.

This said, there can be little doubt that the attraction of popular theatre for community activists lies less in its aesthetic value than in its potential for broadening the range of participation in public debate. My point here, however, is that this broadening of participation cannot be fully achieved without paying attention to the formal structures and models of thought that allow it to take place. As Morris Berman argues convincingly in The Reenchantment of the World, a scientific way of knowing based on the strict separation of "man" (as we shall see, this use of gender is not neutral) from "his" environment may be an important cause of the problems of participation in modern societies. It was the scientific revolution, in Berman's view, that organized the conception of nature as a lifeless mechanism, completely separate from the knower "in here" who surveyed it as a thing "out there" to be mastered and used. Ultimately this revolution led to the insistence, in Newtonian positivism, that phenomena that could not be measured, or described in mathematical terms, were not worthy of scientific attention at all (31–43). The danger of such an approach, Berman contends, is that it results in the alienation of individuals that is directly responsible for diminished participation in public life:

> Subject and object are always seen in opposition to each other. I am not my experiences, and thus not really a part of the world around me. The logical end point of this world view is a feeling of total reification: everything is an object, alien, not-me; and I am ultimately an object too, an alienated "thing" in a world of other, equally meaningless things. This world is not of my own making; the cosmos cares nothing for me, and I do not really feel a sense of belonging to it. (Berman 17)

Darko Suvin makes a similar point when he argues against the "Cartesian and Baconian epistemological individualism which split up the world into the exemplary or allegorical individual (Crusoe) and an objective reality 'out there' facing his understanding" ("On Cognitive" 155). He finds it especially difficult to believe that "even the few highly specialized pursuits, with specially invented sociolects, which claim pure conceptuality -- such as philosophy and (together with the mathematical sociolect) theoretical sciences -- do not necessarily include also such non-conceptual modes of understanding as, e.g. intuition or passion" (153). While specific social groups in specific historical periods privilege certain types of knowledge-building activities, Suvin argues, there does not seem to be any reason why any particular activity or faculty should be considered inherently superior to others. Instead, he posits that anything can be counted as cognition or knowledge if it satisfies two conditions: "First, that it can help us in coping with our personal and collective existence. Second, that it can be validated by feedback with its application in the existence, modifying it and being modified by it" (153-54).

I agree with Suvin's definition in a general sense, but believe, as he suggests elsewhere, that particular ways of knowing need to be privileged in particular circumstances in order to compensate for the blind spots generated by the dominant ways of knowing of the societies in which the circumstances occur. This is, I think, the strategy of the many thinkers (including Suvin) who, concerned with the weaknesses of purely conceptual reason, have focused attention in recent years on the cognitive roles of those supposed antipodes of reason, the body and emotion. A Cartesian-type model of pure reason is invalid, they argue, because its insistence on ignoring the body, while it can "draw upon a considerable tradition of 'high' power vs. 'base' matter, apparently a *longue durée* class-society constant" (Suvin "On Cognitive" 155), is not borne out by practical experience. In Berman's words: "the Cartesian paradigm is actually a fraud: there is no such thing as purely discursive knowing, and the sickness of our time is not

the absence of participation but the stubborn denial that it exists -- the denial of the body and its role in our cognition of reality" (180).

Why then has Cartesian thought so insistently refused to recognize the legitimacy of knowledge developed by other than discursive or mathematical means? Susan Bordo, in The Flight from the Feminine, argues convincingly that, in practice, Descartes' insistence on the separation of mind and body constituted an attempt to exclude certain groups of people from the enterprise of reason and so, in the end, from public discourse. She points to both the prevalence of feminine imagery in the description of the nature that the new science of the period sought to conquer and control, and to the conscious and explicit proclamation of the masculinity of their enterprise by the founders of that science. Bordo concludes that the fantasy of "rebirthing the self" through the purification of the mind (from the influence of the body) in Descartes "Meditations" is really an attempt to create a world without any intervention of the feminine (107).

Dorothy Smith, in The Everyday World as Problematic, shows how this exclusion of the feminine from authoritative discourse has led to a disjuncture or "line of fault" between the frames of reference with which modern social institutions understand the world and the world as women experience it (49-50). "In their work at the point of rupture between experience and the ideological modes of interpreting and reading it," says Smith, "women have had to resort to their experience unmade [sic], because there has been no alternative" (59). It is worth noting that the alternative Smith proposes to dominant frames of reference is taken from the Fresno Women's Program, which used art to express women's experience and thereby created new cognitive frameworks developed by and for women. Numerous other thinkers concerned with the role of the body in cognition place a similar emphasis on artistic activity in their attempts to explain both the nature of the body itself and the ways in which artistic activity gives privileged access to its workings. Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests, for instance, that we can best

understand the body through a comparison to the work of art which is "un noeud de significations vivantes et non pas la loi d'un certain nombre de termes covariants" (177). Ernest Becker, insisting that "neurosis is *par excellence* the danger of a symbolic animal whose body is a problem to him," suggests that art can effect a partial cure of this disorder of consciousness because "some kind of objective creativity is the only answer man has to the problem of life" (183 and 85). Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, asserting that "theoretical reflection need not be mindless and disembodied," associate the "precision and grace [of] a gesture that is animated by full awareness . . . with the actions of an expert such as an athlete or musician" whose body and mind are fully coordinated (28).

If we look at popular theatre in the context of this broader tendency to focus on the body and performance in arguing for the legitimacy of modes of thought that do not posit a strict separation of the knower and the known, a new analytical approach suggests itself. This approach starts from the position that popular theatre's social importance is linked to its ability to undo the false dichotomy between mind and body, knower and known, that plagues modern social thought. On the simplest level, it is easy to see how the material nature of theatrical performance has distinct advantages for groups who want to call attention to material conditions that are not always considered worthy of public scrutiny and for which the discourses necessary for broad public discussion may not exist.[1] But when popular theatre is viewed as a way of knowing rather than a simple mimetic device, it becomes clear that its social role can extend far beyond the creation of "authentic" reflections of those communities whose concerns have not been heard in the

1 Sexual harassment springs immediately to mind as an example of a set of discriminatory practices that, while they were pragmatically identifiable (by some people at least) as an abuse of power, were not discursively identified or identifiable as anything other than (sometimes distasteful) flirtation until the mid 1970s.

public arena. It is here that we return to the question of theatricality itself, a question that cannot be considered without considering the cognitive role of the body.

The question of the role of the body in human knowing is not a new one in theatre studies. Every serious discussion of theatricality since the beginning of the modern period has had to deal with it, simply because the central medium of communication in the theatre is the human body. Phillip Stubbes' proposal to abolish the theatre of Elizabethan England was based on the argument that the actors' use of the body to impersonate both nobility and the feminine was morally unacceptable. Diderot in his Paradoxe sur le comédien, wrestled with the problem of the actor who must appear to feel real emotion while maintaining complete control of his body. Lessing asserted that "a crucial factor in supporting the efficacy of dialogue is the silent but persuasive eloquence of body language" (Burwick 43 and 103). Craig proposed the replacement of the human body on the stage by the more controllable *Übermarionnette*. Even Stanislavski, who is most renowned for creating an acting technique based on "affective memory," gave significant instruction to actors about the training of the body. As Timothy Wiles underlines, Stanislavski's revisions of his technique towards the end of his career put even more emphasis on the body, moving away from "affective memory" to propose "physical activities which would stimulate the desired feelings reflexively." This approach to the body/emotion relationship was further expanded by one of Stanislavski's most brilliant but rebellious pupils, Vsevolod Meyerhold, who proposed a system of "biomechanics" based on the notion that the correct physical action would itself induce emotional states (Wiles 34-36).

Meyerhold's work is especially interesting in this context because it indicates a new attitude towards the theatrical body in twentieth century theatres of opposition. Starting from a distrust of, or outright hostility to, dominant discourses in Europe and North America, many modernist theatres of the earlier twentieth century looked to the

body as a means of putting the unquestionable "rightness" of these discourses into question. In surrealist theatres, like that of Alfred Jarry in Paris, an exaggerated and deformed body was used to recontextualize, and so denaturalize, dominant social institutions. In working class performances like Karl Valentin's burlesque shows and those of various socialist theatre movements, the body was used to expose the areas of social life occulted by dominant social discourse. Bertolt Brecht's contribution to this trend is perhaps best recognized in the continued use of such notions as *Gestus* and the *Verfremdungeffect*, just as Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski's continuation of the surrealist trend is still felt in much performance art that emphasizes transformations of the performer's body. In our own day, many feminist and queer theatres are known for their use of body-based techniques to emphasize the gap between performers' "natural" gender roles and the gendered roles they play on the stage. All these oppositional theatres make a more important claim than those previous theatrical discourses that emphasized the body's ability to express meaning: they go so far as to suggest that the performer can generate meaning through the use of the body.

It is the basis for this claim and its importance for a new understanding of popular theatre's emphasis on the key notions of "community," "participation," and "professionalism" that I want to explore in this chapter. Ultimately, this exploration will lead me to propose an analytical method that accounts for the relationship between social goals and formal dramaturgic choices in popular theatre practice by drawing attention to the ways in which the manipulation of bodies that constitutes performance can create new frameworks for thinking about the organization of social life. But before discussing how theatre uses body-centered knowledge, I must deal with a more basic question: how does a body know?

2.1. Knowing with the Body

What is this thing we call "the body"? On a superficial level the answer to this question seems quite simple: the body is the flesh of which we are constituted. But a Rousseauist vision of the body as instinct-driven flesh waiting to be released from the confines of social convention is not especially useful for the study of an art form like theatre that creates meaning through the deliberate manipulation and even transformation of bodies. What is more, a vision of the body as regulated by pure instinct ignores what is most distinctive about the physical constitution of the human species: our relative lack of instinct and consequent need to learn different ways of organizing the body. In biologist Norbert Elias' words, "Human beings not only can learn far more than any other species, they also must learn more. . . . Without acquiring a fairly large social fund of knowledge they cannot survive nor simply become human. They are in fact constituted in a way which makes it possible as well as necessary for them to orientate themselves by means of learned knowledge" (109-10). Read in this light, both Romantic views of the body as instinct-driven flesh offering a refuge from social convention, and behaviourist models of the body as a mechanism that has only to meet the right stimulus to be triggered into action are found wanting, since they make nonsense of the notion of knowing itself.

As we saw earlier in this chapter, the Cartesian notion of the body as completely separate from consciousness, while more elaborate than the Rousseauist version, is also highly suspect. Merleau-Ponty believes that even Descartes knew this, and cites as evidence one of the letters to Elisabeth where Descartes makes the distinction between the body as we know it through usage and the body as we know it through speech (231). Merleau-Ponty tries to bridge this gap by describing the body as the medium through which we organize our perceptions of and actions in a world. Learning to see colours, for instance, is not simply a question of acquiring new knowledge, but a reorganization and enrichment of our corporeal schema. On this view the body is not just an object of consciousness but "un ensemble de significations vécues qui va vers son équilibre"

(179). Rudolf Arnheim, discussing the complex interaction between the creation of categories and direct perception, makes a similar argument. Human beings (and perhaps other mammals), according to Arnheim, not only understand but perceive largely through the creation and refinement of models based on direct personal experience of space, movement and intention. "Man [sic]," he says, "sees in the things around him the actions that brought them about, and that they are able to perform. . . . Modern physics goes so far as to assert that material shape is nothing but man's way of seeing the effects of actions of forces" (276). This reference to scientific reason is important, as it makes clear that the body, as conceived of by Arnheim and Merleau-Ponty, is not only the organizing medium of aesthetic experience, but of all human knowledge. Arnheim shows that despite his pretensions, even Newton, the leading advocate of an abstract mathematical empiricism divorced from (implicitly deceptive) bodily experience, did not escape the realm of personal physical awareness in describing the circular revolution of the earth around the sun in terms of two rectilinear impulses. "By no means," he says, "can Newton's conception be described as an emancipation from the senses. All that happened was that an elementary perceptual model had to be replaced with a more complex one" (278). Based on these arguments, we may conclude that the body can best be understood as a medium of knowing that both structures and is structured by our personal experience of action and perception. How then are we to understand how such a body knows?

Varela, Thompson, and Rosch propose that any adequate understanding of the role of the body in knowing must recognize that "cognition is not the representation of a pregiven world by a pregiven mind but is rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs" (9). On this view, the body as thinking system is not an externally controlled input/output mechanism, but a system "defined by internal mechanisms of self-organization (autonomy)" that "[i]nstead of representing an independent world . . . enact a world as a

domain of distinctions that is inseparable from the structure embodied by the cognitive system" (140). Perhaps more importantly, if we view cognition this way "intelligence shifts from being the capacity to solve a problem to the capacity to enter into a shared world of significance" -- a task that demands bodily engagement in the form of organized actions (207). This ability to "negotiate our way through a world that is not fixed or pregiven but that is continually shaped by the types of actions in which we engage" is what we often identify as "common sense" (144). Varela, Thompson, and Rosch go on to say:

> If we are forced to admit that cognition cannot be properly understood without common sense, and that common sense is none other than our bodily and social history, then the inevitable conclusion is that the knower and known, mind and world, stand in relation to each other through mutual specification or dependent coorigination. (150)

Following this logic, we can conclude that the body knows by incorporating into its very structures of perception and action distinctions derived from its interactions with a world which those very interactions have helped to create. In other words, the body's structure and structuring capacities are formed by an organization of experience that allows us to enact worlds.

Yet clearly human bodies, because they derive experience from worlds that are not exclusively of their own making, do not have unlimited possibilities of self-definition. As Arthur Frank explains it, "people construct and use their bodies, though they do not use them in conditions of their own choosing, and their constructions are overlaid with ideologies. But these ideologies are not fixed; as they are reproduced in body techniques and practices, so they are modified" (47). Pierre Bourdieu explains the mechanism of

this interaction between the ideologically controlled construction of bodies and the bodily reproduction of ideologies through the notion of "habitus." Habitus[2], says Bourdieu are "systèmes de dispositions durables, structures structurées prédisposées à fonctionner comme structures structurantes". They function in ways similar to conscious strategies, in the sense that they are organized and deployed in such a way as to induce others to carry out desired actions, but they cannot really be considered strategies because the bodies that carry them out never consciously choose them as one possible strategy among others (175). This apparent lack of strategy in the enactment of moves that are intended to obtain particular results can be attributed, in Bourdieu's view, to the embodiment and consequent "naturalization" for a particular culture or social group of socially-defined narratives. "Produit de l'histoire, l'habitus produit des pratiques, individuelles et collectives, donc de l'histoire, conformément aux schèmes engendrés par l'histoire," (Bourdieu 185).

In contrast to those psychoanalysts who view the unconscious largely in symbolic terms, Bourdieu suggests that the unconscious is composed of these narratives transformed into automatized actions. "[L]'inconscient'," he says, "n'est jamais en effet que l'oubli de l'histoire que l'histoire elle-même produit en incorporant les structures objectives qu'elle produit dans ces quasi-natures que sont les habitus" (179). While different habitus feel "natural" to those educated in the culture that created them, they are not inherent biological structures but histories (or stories) that have been incorporated into individual bodies as ways of enacting worlds. Bourdieu considers these incorporated stories the primary form of knowledge in any given culture and goes so far as to warn against the tendency to make abstract rules primary in intellectual descriptions of complex

2 I follow Richard Nice, who in his translation of Bourdieu's Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, appears to use the same form for the singular and the plural of the word "habitus."

social practices. "La règle," he says, "n'est jamais qu'un pis-aller destiné à régler les ratés de l'habitus, c'est-à-dire à réparer les ratés de l'entreprise d'inculcation destinée à produire des habitus capables d'engendrer des pratiques réglées en dehors de toute réglementation expresse et de tout rappel institutionalisé à la règle" (205).

The worst danger of this intellectual recourse to rules, according to Bourdieu, is that it can lead to a reification of theory in which the consecutive time of the founding narrative is replaced by the reversible time of formulaic thought. This makes it impossible for such analyses to account for the actual functioning of practice in which moves, to be effective, must be played out by particular individuals in particular orders. To return a gift at the same moment at which one is offered, for instance, constructs the activity as simple exchange of goods. Allowing time to elapse between the receipt of one gift and the offering of another allows the activity to be configured as a practice of honour, with very different consequences for the social identity and social world of the participants (222-27). As we can see from this example, the temporal order of social narratives is critical to the development of individual styles of physical interaction. These styles in turn tend to reenact the narratives that act as frames for the moves and counter (or collaborative) moves to be carried out by the individual bodies of a given culture.

Arthur W. Frank, summing up his analytical review of sociological notions of the body in The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory, shows how theories like Bourdieu's refocus attention on the body as a central locus of social knowing. "The sociology of the body understands embodiment not as residual to social organization," he says, "but rather understands social organization as being about the reproduction of embodiment" (42). He goes on to suggest that the bodily practices that social organization is designed to reproduce may most usefully be described in terms of four dimensions of body consciousness: control, desire, relation to others, and self-relatedness. While Frank does not pretend that these are the only categories necessary for

understanding body organization (in his own words, "the truth is a mess"), they do have the advantage of bringing to light certain relationships between individual physical attributes and actions, and the discourses and institutions within which they are chosen. This allows Frank to define the body as "constituted in the intersection of an equilateral triangle the points of which are *institutions*, *discourse* and *corporeality* " (49). Frank uses this definition to show how our experience of the body is the result of a complex interaction of pre-existing notions of the body's possibilities/limitations, institutions that create the conditions for certain kinds of behaviour, and our bodies' actual physical potential.

To sum up then: not only do minds not think separately from bodies, neither bodies nor minds are separate from the worlds in which thinking is done. On the contrary, they help create these worlds even as they are created by them, both structuring and being structured by individual experiences of action and perception. These experiences are not, however, only the result of the individual's actions and perceptions, since bodies and minds cannot help but incorporate into their very structures the enacted narratives that make up a given culture and that come to seem "natural" as their social history and the learning process itself are forgotten. The net result of this socialized body-learning is what we usually call common sense, that is, the organization of experience into structures of perception and action that allow us to enact worlds as domains of distinctions "inseparable from the structure embodied by the cognitive system" (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 140). But when we use the term "common sense," we do well to remember the lessons taught us by those feminist standpoint theorists who maintain that our notion of what constitutes "common sense" varies according to the socially situated position from which we construct it. Borrowing a term from Lukacs' History and Class Consciousness, these theorists refer to the socially situated ways of knowing that constitute common sense as "standpoints," which they view neither as static "points of view" nor as unmediated modes of participation in the

world. Sandra Harding, for instance, insists in "Starting From Women's Lives: Eight Resources for Maximizing Objectivity," that feminist standpoint cannot be understood as only an articulation of women's experiences or as the discursive legitimation of those experiences. It should instead be viewed, she says, as "the subsequently articulated observations of and theory about the rest of nature and social relations -- observations and theory that start out from, that look at the world from the perspective of, women's lives" (9). It is these "standpoints," the ever changing structures of perception and action based in socially positioned everyday experience, that a body-centered analytical method must try to trace.

How might such a method help us deal with one of the most vexed questions of popular theatre practice in Canada, the relationship between "communities" and "professionals" in popular theatre practice? Recognizing the importance of experience in the creation of such notions, I would suggest that we enter this debate by looking first at the social experiences that give rise to the distinctions denoted by these terms.

2.2. "Communities" and Communitarianism

While "community" is one of the key terms in discussions of popular theatre, its meaning is often fuzzy and seems to vary according to the context in which it is used. Sometimes it seems to denote an identity, referring to the inhabitants of a particular geographical region or the members of a group who share a common interest. At other times it seems to denote simply the pregiven world that the popular theatre worker is expected to come to know in the course of her or his work, as in those many instances when it functions simply as an antonym to the term "professional." However, in common with what Raymond Williams has identified as its usual use in communitarian politics, the use of the term "community" in the popular theatre movement almost always seems to "represent an emphasis on certain kinds of direct and directly responsible relationships, as against a centre of power and display" ("Importance" 112).

Elizabeth Frazer and Nicola Lacey, in The Politics of Community: A Feminist Critique of the Liberal - Communitarian Debate, make a move similar to Williams' in shifting discussion from "community" as a term denoting a fixed collective identity to discussion of "community" as a marker of that political position known as "communitarianism." They contend that in recent political debates "community" has most frequently been defined in opposition to other ways of constructing relationships of power. Communitarianism, as a social and political movement, they observe, most easily names itself by underlining that it is "not liberalism or anarchism, nor state socialism, nor social democracy; not atomistic individualism, nor structural determinism" (2). Although communitarian writers have no distinct political platform or organizational structure, say Frazer and Lacey, they do come together around such core positive themes as the "social nature of life, identity, relationships and institutions," the "embedded and embodied status of the individual person," an emphasis on the "value of specifically communal practices," and the "centrality of the real, historical individual person" (2). The basic message of communitarianism is that "unless we can revive the idea of a substantial common life, unless we can design political (state and non-state) institutions which enable each of us to feel empowered and involved as citizens, our society may disintegrate, either literally or in the sense that it will be governable only by authoritarian means" (105). Feminist philosopher Seyla Benhabib shares this opinion and argues that renewed interest in the notion of community represents a concern for the lessening participation in public decision-making that follows from the loss of a coherent sense of community in liberal societies (69-70).

The prediction that the loss of a coherent sense of community may lead liberal societies to disintegrate is an important one, not least because, were it to come true, it would signal the failure of an important element of the social and political project of the new middle class that arose in the modern period. As Raymond Williams explains it, both communitarian thinking and the liberal political thought it opposes can be considered

part of the contribution of that new middle class, which attempted "to find a term which was alternative to state, which should nevertheless express something which was not a private construction but a public one . . . to insist that there was a whole area of lived relationships which was other than that centre of power and display" ("Importance" 112). Jürgen Habermas defines this new sociopolitical arena as the bourgeois or classic public sphere, and, as paraphrased by Rita Felski in Beyond Feminist Aesthetics, describes it as "a historically determined formation which emerges from the specific conditions of the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century society, its participants male property owners and the enlightened aristocracy" (165). This bourgeois public sphere, says Felski, "represents the first emergence of a critical and independent public domain that perceives itself as distinct from state interests" but is no longer the only arbiter of public interests in late modern societies. In a description that easily applies to much of the work of popular theatre movements around the world, Felski points to the rise in recent years of numerous counter-public spheres that "seek to define themselves against the homogenizing and universalizing logic of the global megaculture of modern mass communication as a debased pseudopublic sphere, and to voice needs and articulate oppositional values which the 'culture industry' fails to address" (165-66). Felski's discussion of the counter-public sphere is largely restricted to the role of feminist literature in contributing to the development of a feminist public sphere that has "obvious parallels to the bourgeois public sphere" (168). The ideal of a free discursive space in which all participants are equal is, she says, for the feminist movement as for other movements attempting to develop counter-public spheres, "an enabling fiction which engenders a sense of collective identity but is achieved only by obscuring actual material inequalities and political antagonisms among participants" (168). Felski suggests that the solution to the erasures that arise from such fictions is to recognize that "it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of coalitions of overlapping subcommunities which share a common interest in combating gender oppression but which are differentiated not only by class and race

positions but often by institutional locations and professional allegiances, and which draw upon a varied range of discursive frameworks" (171).

Feminist writers, like Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Hartsock, Elizabeth Frazer and Nicola Lacey, who concern themselves with the notion of community certainly agree with Felski's identification of material conditions as an important factor in determining both strategic identities and forums for public life. They are, however, more dubious than Felski seems to be about the adaptability of the bourgeois vision of the public sphere, even if access to it should be greatly enlarged, and their objections run parallel to the objections of those writers who criticize the notion that the knower can ever be separate from what s/he seeks to know. The very categories of modern political thought, they argue, reflect distinctions arising from the experiences of a particular and relatively small group of people, and it is these distinctions themselves (especially as they imply a lack of other more important distinctions) that weaken the social bond that has to exist for the kind of public life modernism prizes to continue. Seyla Benhabib, for instance, insists in Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics, that the epistemic standpoint of the Enlightenment, in claiming to stake out a non-state public space for discourse and decision-making, demands individualism by presuming an incoherent and impoverished concept of the human self in that space. Expressed as a Kantian "view from nowhere," this standpoint can only be achieved if the liberal thinker conceives of himself or herself (in practice, most often himself) as a self unencumbered by either physical or emotional bonds to other human beings (71). In Money Sex and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism, Hartsock links this "unencumbered self" to exchange and market models of political life. Theorization of community in the form of market, she says, results in the conclusion that community is fragile, instrumental and false, and that humans are profoundly separate and isolated, lacking common preferences and needs. Having accepted the central role of the commodity in organizing social life, proponents of the market model must view rational economic men as unable to

associate directly with each other and forced to organize relationships as a passing back and forth of things (50). According to Benhabib, this inability to see the nature or meaning of the social bond, combined as it must be with the loss of an individual sense of agency and efficacy, is but one of several factors leading to the fundamental irrationalities of modern societies in their attempts to construct public space. With Felski, she underlines the fact that access to the public sphere, which is theoretically universal in liberal thought, is in practice limited by particularistic considerations of class, race, gender, and religion. In the same vein, she asserts that money and power, not the consensual generation of norms described in liberal theory, are the dominant modes of definition of the public bond and distribution of social goods in the modern world. These factors, she argues, when combined with the constant critique of tradition, lessen the coherent sense of self and community necessary for the public sphere to exist in the form modernism demands (Benhabib 80-81).

Hartsock describes similar ways in which the market model of social life simply ignores the problems that undermine its explanatory power. Proponents of the market model acknowledge that competition leads to domination, she says, but refuse to grapple with this problem, either denying domination or describing it as inevitable but unimportant. The market model itself, which like all models is called upon to clarify relations between people, instead operates to conceal them by presenting systematic inequality as equality and coercion as choice. As a result, accounts of power based on exchange redefine power in more consensual terms than real social situations demonstrate, insisting on the superficially voluntary nature of power relations, the reciprocal and non-exploitative character of exchange, and the positive benefits accruing to those over whom power is exercised (19-20). But the problem does not stop there: the market's need to compare fundamentally different objects and relationships not only obscures real relationships of power, it also leads to a false view of rationality.

In an argument reminiscent of Bourdieu's warning against the reification of theory into formulaic thinking, Frazer and Lacey agree with Hartsock. The form of rationality prized by liberal exchange-based societies is, they contend, both reductive in its assumption that "all objects of moral thought are susceptible of reduction to a common measure" and impossible to achieve in its demand for an impoverished and dangerous form of reason untouched by emotional considerations. Ultimately, they say, "the unified, transcendent, reasoning moral subject is not only an intellectual construct but a political one: the objectivity and impartiality attributed to his reasoning stance is in fact a mark of his political power, constituted and conferred in a concrete social situation" (62-64). But proponents of liberalism have difficulty seeing this power, say Frazer and Lacey. The ideal society of liberalism is power-free and recent liberal philosophy has too often conflated this ideal with reality, depriving liberal theorists of conceptual and methodological tools to analyze power. In a move similar to the one the market model uses both to acknowledge the domination that results from competition and to discount its importance, many proponents of liberalism, when faced with evident abuses of power, simply avoid confronting the problem by labeling the society in which they occur "illiberal" (76).

Of all the distinctions that define the liberal notion of the public sphere, the one of which feminist communitarians are most critical is undoubtedly the highly gendered split between public and private spheres in liberal thinking. In the name of moral neutrality, liberal political theory insists that only issues of justice are suitable for discussion in the public sphere and proposes restricting discussion about the nature of the good life to private contexts and personal conscience. But, as Benhabib points out, the basis for this restriction, whether Kant's "veil of ignorance," or Bruce Ackerman's more pragmatic "conversational restraint," or "dialogic neutrality," cannot really be considered morally neutral, as liberals like to claim. As with all other distinctions, accepted distinctions between the good and the just, the private and the public, are the result of situated

experiences in specific worlds. What is more, the distinctions on which broad collective structures are based usually result from social and historical struggles, and "contain within them the result of historical power comprises" (100). Against this background, Benhabib argues that public dialogue is not about what different social groups already know they agree to even before the dialogue begins. On the contrary, "public dialogue means challenging and redefining the collective good, and one's sense of justice, as a result of the public foray" (100). The risk of accepting the liberal doctrine of dialogic neutrality is that it would "restrict the scope of the public conversation in a way which would be inimical to the interests of oppressed groups" (100). The history of modern societies would be a very different one if we accepted such a risk. In Benhabib's words:

> All struggles against oppression in the modern world begin by redefining what had previously been considered "private," non-public and non-political issues as matters of public concern, as issues of justice, as sites of power which need discursive legitimation. In this respect, the women's movement, the peace movement, the ecology movement, and new ethnic identity movements follow a similar logic. (100)

When liberal theory conceives of political relations in terms of a narrow juridical model that maintains a strict separation between the good and the just, between moral and legal issues, and between private and public concerns, it tends, says Benhabib, to diminish the importance of public space. In such a system, community input is restricted to the constitutional assembly that legitimizes certain decision-making structures, only to leave them in the hands of professional politicians (99-101). What is more, a false distinction between justice and care leads to an emphasis on moral subjectivity, and the repression of knowledge of the inevitable dependency on others inherent in our existence as bodily selves. In Benhabib's view this is an extremely dangerous position because the standpoints through which we think our relationship with the world can only be

established in feedback with that world. In her own words: "The web of human affairs in which we are immersed are not simply like clothes which we outgrow or like shoes which we leave behind. They are ties that bind; ties that shape our moral identities, our needs, and our visions of the good life" (189).

Frazer and Lacey follow a similar line of argument when they point out that liberalism's focus on the disembodied individual leads it to consider certain areas of "private" life, like bodily processes, as simply below the threshold of significance (54). The most fundamental problem with this is that the liberal model of personhood that defines the individual as a disembodied subject, with no significant knowledge of the social context in which s/he functions, is of limited usefulness in understanding how human beings actually make decisions in the course of their everyday lives. In Frazer and Lacey's view, the notion of "meaningful choice" itself becomes insignificant if we insist that it must be governed by a stringent refusal to take context into account. In the life world, they say, choice always implies a concrete context of options, perceptions and norms of understanding, as well as individual understanding of each of these (55). This echoes Benhabib's argument about the exercise of moral judgment, which in her view "is pervasive and unavoidable" precisely because it is "coextensive with relations of social interaction in the life world in general." Moral judgment, she says, is "so deeply enmeshed with those interactions that constitute our lifeworld that to withdraw from moral judgment is tantamount to ceasing to interact, to talk and act in the human community" (126). In an extension of this argument, Frazer and Lacey point out that the negative freedom of liberalism, freedom defined as the absence of constraint, is worth little if it is not accompanied by positive conditions for self-determination, conditions that must inevitably be concerned with the care of the body and the social relations within which this is accomplished (73). The real political argument here, in their view, is not about state intervention or the lack of it, but about a vision of social change that

recognizes "the political significance of aspects of life lived in what have been culturally constructed as private spheres" (75).

Nancy Hartsock suggests that the denial of the significance of these "private" aspects of life is not simply a question of political structures, but is a profoundly anchored way of knowing, structured by commodity exchange. In Hartsock's view, the social character of exchange itself results from the fact that exchange and use can't take place at the same time, and that the division between these two activities mirrors the division between the public and private spheres. From this follows the separation of mind and body in Eurocentric thought. This separation, in turn, leads to a kind of "false consciousness that denies the importance of the bodily, that gives great weight to purely quantitative differences, and that, basing itself on the experience of exchange, treats the private activities of mind or imagination as profoundly different entities than those engaged in by means of overt (sensible) activities" (98-99). The result is a structure of power, a community, "established by the network of exchange rather than use" that inevitably conceives of itself in abstract terms because "producers do not come into social contact with each other except by means of the exchange of their products" (99). In Hartsock's assessment, not only are certain critical human activities (like the production of goods and care of dependents) hidden from view by relegating them to the private sphere, that private sphere itself is defined in such a way as to make its structures and activities "unthinkable" within the terms of the dominant discourse of exchange-based societies.

2.3. Communitarian Visions of Social Life

Opposing the liberal vision of a neutral public sphere marked by a strict division between the public discussion of justice and "private" beliefs about the good life, communitarian thinkers extend the argumentation of those epistemologists concerned to overcome the mind/body split to the discussion of political power and social life. Nancy Hartsock, for

instance, argues that "relocating the theorization of power to the epistemological level of reproduction would put *eros* and its various aspects at the center of an understanding of power" (255). According to Frazer and Lacey, most communitarians, using terms very reminiscent of Varela, Thompson and Rosch's argument about the true nature of cognition, "claim that social reality is contingent rather than given" and subscribe to a "commitment to collective values, public culture and a concern with the public aspects of human life" (3 and 121).

The first of these claims, that social reality is contingent and so changeable, is essential to any liberatory project. If we do not believe that such categories as gender and social privilege are constructed and contingent, if we accept them as the god-given attributes of certain types of human beings, or even as the inevitable consequences of structurally-determined collective forms, feminist (and many other communitarian) projects no longer make sense. Frazer and Lacey add a *caveat* to this argument in favour of change, however. While individuals can change both themselves and the sociopolitical situations in which they live, they say, "purely rational argument will be inadequate, on its own, to bring about political change" (118). Sociopolitical reality is constituted by much more than political debate, the creation of laws and their enforcement, and this, according to Frazer and Lacey, explains why the complex power relationships of the modern world "are not susceptible of easy alteration or reform. They are rooted in taken-for-granted definitions and norms, in settled social identities, maintained in ingrained habits and in the routine exercise of power." Yet this is cause for new strategies, not despair: "it is the essence of feminist politics that these practices might be altered" (122). The claim that popular theatre makes for its own interventions in public life corresponds directly to this element in communitarian beliefs. One of the most basic beliefs underlying popular theatre work is the contention that the body-centered mode of thinking that is theatre can expose the ingrained habits and routine exercises of power to which Frazer and Lacey refer, and find alternatives to them.

The second characteristic of the communitarian movement, the "commitment to collective values, public culture and a concern with the public aspects of human life" (Frazer and Lacey 121) is equally a characteristic of popular theatre, as of most theatre practice, which is, by its very nature, collective and public. But Frazer and Lacey's description of this aspect of the movement underlines how the collective public life valued by communitarians extends far beyond the creation of occasions for public debate or collective celebration. In this version of communitarianism, they say, especially within feminism, "'community' conjures up a vision of secure and committed networks of people, to an extent like-minded, rooted in a geographical area, offering fluidity and flexibility, unconstrained by biological kinship or marriage" (120-21). This is the version of community Hartsock foregrounds when she speaks approvingly of Arendt's assertion that "power springs up when people come together and act, and its legitimacy comes from the act of creating community," even as she objects to Arendt's emphasis on "greatness" and her neglect of the erotic dimension of power (220). Benhabib, in her phenomenology of moral judgment, underlines a similar vision of collective life, and stresses its importance in allowing individual subjects to establish a capacity to make moral judgments. She argues that moral action "entails the exercise of moral imagination which activates our capacity for thinking of possible narratives and act descriptions in light of which our actions can be understood by others" (129). Moral judgment, she contends, can only adequately be established by viewing it from a standpoint other than the strictly personal. "The assessment of the maxim of one's intentions," she says, "as these embody moral principles, requires understanding the narrative history of the self who is the actor; this understanding discloses both self-knowledge and knowledge of oneself as viewed by others" (129). To achieve this ability:

> 'to think from the standpoint of everyone else' entails sharing a public culture such that everyone else can articulate indeed what they think and what their perspectives are. The cultivation of one's moral imagination

> flourishes in such a culture in which the self-centered perspective of the individual is constantly challenged by the multiplicity and diversity of perspectives that constitute public life. (141)

The value of the public culture Benhabib describes here does not lie simply in its quantitative multiplication of individual perspectives, but in the qualitatively different thought process it brings to bear on the individual's sense of morality. In a direct appeal to the cognitive power of fiction, Benhabib further argues that a sense of coherent individual identity constructed in relation to a collective is better thought of in terms of narrative unity than in terms of the sameness of physical objects. Ultimately, she says, a "coherent sense of self is attained with the successful integration of autonomy and solidarity, or with the right mix of justice and care" (198).

Given their commitment to bridging the gap between private (individual) and public (collective) concerns, it is not surprising to find that communitarians are generally convinced of the "social construction of both the self and of social reality -- culture, values, institutions and relations" (102) and so insist, like the epistemologists we discussed earlier, on a view of the self as both "situated and embodied" (108). This view of the constructed and contingent nature of social structure leads to conclusions like Benhabib's about constructed and contingent nature of ethical and political values (109). With Benhabib, most feminist communitarians insist that "affective ties and embodied experience feed into our ethical and rational decisions" (123) to the point where emotion must be recognized, not as an impediment to social knowledge or moral action, but as "an indispensable factor in ethical life" (126). This belief that "knowledge of reality is contingent upon our point of view" (109) leads feminist communitarians to insist that "producers of knowledge should be reflexive and honest about the standpoint from which their knowledge is produced" (128). Such honesty about the thinker's personal standpoint can have profound effects on the public sphere; by combining social

constructionism with value communitarianism, it can lay the groundwork for "a broader conception of politics as involving the selection of values. This leads in turn to an enriched conception of active citizenship as a basic component of the human good, ideally realized through public dialogue and participation" (111).

Communitarian actions are not, however, always organized from such a clear commitment to dialogue and participation, because, as all the theorists we have so far considered point out, communitarianism contains within itself conflicting strands. Benhabib describes the two most important of these as integrationist and participatory strains of political thought and underlines the profound ambivalence towards them that marks much communitarian thinking. Interestingly, her examination of these two tendencies does much to clarify the basic ambivalence about the use of the term "community" in the popular theatre movement in Canada. On one side, Benhabib contends, an integrationist view of community starts from a definition that sees the problems of modernity as resulting from the loss of the coherent value scheme and sense of belonging that would provide a solid foundation for public life. On the other side, proponents of participatory communitarianism argue that the problems of modernity lie, not in the loss of "shared understandings entertained by members of such a community," as the integrationists would have it, but in a loss of political agency and efficacy in public decision-making processes. From the participatory point of view, social differentiation doesn't need to be overcome because "modern societies are not communities integrated around a single conception of the human good or even a shared understanding of the value of belonging to community itself" (77-79). According to Benhabib, the dominant public sentiment in participatory communitarianism is not the reconciliation and harmony of a unique and coherent value scheme. Participatory communitarianism is instead marked by sentiments of political agency and efficacy, "namely the sense that we have a say in the economic, political and civic arrangements which define our lives together, and that what one does makes a difference" (81).

Needless to say, this kind of efficacy doesn't require value homogeneity among individuals, or the erasure of the individual sense of self in favour of a group identity, as some critics of communitarianism fear. On the contrary, in Benhabib's view, vibrant participatory life can be central to the formation and flourishing of self-identity (81). By rejecting a substitutionalist universalism based on the identification of the experiences of a specific group as paradigmatic of human experience as such, participatory communities can open the way for an interactive universalism that acknowledges a plurality of modes of moral being, without endorsing all moralities as valid (153). In doing so, it moves from the standpoint of the "generalized other" to a standpoint of the "particular other," with whom one must constantly negotiate to recreate the bonds of community. Rejecting relationships of formal equality and reciprocity, where value comes from similarity and where the moral categories of "right," "obligation," and "entitlement" are given pride of place, the standpoint of the particular other embraces relationships based on equity and complementary reciprocity. From the standpoint of the particular other, every human being is seen as an individual with a concrete history, identity and affective-emotional constitution and the primary moral categories of "responsibility," "bonding," and "sharing" lead to relationships marked by love, care, sympathy and solidarity (159).

Hartsock describes a similar vision of participatory community, which she believes is distinguished by the kind of actions that construct it. It is, she concludes, characterized by complementary sharing to meet each other's needs (255) and by action in connection with others with whom one shares common life and concerns (217). Within it, relations with another may take a variety of forms structured not by simple alterity, but by distinction and plurality (259). This is a world where necessity and freedom, public and private not only coexist, but depend on one another (217). The point of power over another in such a "web of relationships" is not to dominate, but to liberate the other into autonomy and mutual respect, as a parent might a child. The richness of the form itself comes not from a sense of the radical alterity of the unified group (as would tend to be the

case in integrationist models), but from the variety of relations constructed by a plurality of people (257-58).

Most of the discussions of popular theatre practice in Canada, as elsewhere in the world, make clear that it is participatory communitarianism that this movement aims to encourage. In fact, popular theatre might be distinguished from the Jellicoe-style "community plays" (see page 33) by its emphasis on participatory, as opposed to integrationist, forms of community. Popular theatre workers generally resist a sense of community based on the reconciliation and harmony of a unique and coherent value scheme, as this operates in most integrationist models of community. They aim instead to encourage a sense of community based on an appreciation of plurality in a context where maximum participation in public life makes each participant feel "that what one does makes a difference" (Benhabib 81). But popular theatre does emphasize a certain notion of common experience and values, because, together with other communitarians, popular theatre workers are preoccupied with the significance of traditions and practices in building up cultures (Frazer and Lacey 122). As Raymond Williams underlines in his description of the community that arose during the Welsh miners' strikes of the early 1980s, this emphasis on traditions and practices need not be a move towards integrationism: it is possible to use traditions without defining one's community as completely unified in the way it values them. The community formed by the Welsh miners' strikes, says Williams, was a collective one based on common struggle, and on notions of mutuality, brotherhood, and collective structures that drew on, but were different from the other more integrationist view of Welsh community based on a sense of social identity conferred by common situation of "seeming to live in the same place" ("Importance" 115).

In light of experiences like these, the ambiguity that Benhabib notes between integrationist and participatory visions of community is to be expected. While a

participatory vision may insist on the development of a new culture based on a recognition of the value of plurality, the participation itself could hardly be organized outside already developed cultural structures. In Jean-Luc Nancy's words, community:

> is constituted not only by a fair distribution of tasks and goods, or by a happy equilibrium of forces and authorities: it is made up principally of the sharing, diffusion, or impregnation of an identity by a plurality wherein each member identifies himself only through the supplementary mediation of his identification with the living body of the community. (9)

Such identification can hardly be conceived in any way other than as a common cultural baggage that feeds and is fed by the actions of those who share it, and who, thanks to these common beliefs and approaches, feel themselves to have collective values and narratives. Yet what most threatens community, in Nancy's view, is the will to absolute immanence, the desire for communal fusion that constitutes the suicide of the community governed by it (12). To understand the relationship of individuals and community in a way that will truly allow for participation in the ongoing process of enacting community, Nancy believes that we must first come to terms with the finitude of individual human lives and of the communities they build. This is perhaps his most interesting criticism of an integrationist mode of community: that an over-rigid belief in its immanent and so presumably absolute existence outside history is a form of conceptualization which will lead to the death of community. Contrary to what both Bakhtin and Arendt argue, Nancy believes that communities cannot exist only as a way of overcoming the finitude of their individual members, in the sense that community allows individuals to die knowing that the community (or "the people" in Bakhtin's terminology) will go on and thus assure their immortality. Nor can community be described simply as a "communion of singularities in a totality superior to them and immanent in their common being" (28). In Nancy's view, while communitarians must acknowledge the important role a sense of collective

identity can play in establishing individual identities, they must also recognize not only the finite nature of the individual bodies that compose communities, but the finite nature of communities themselves.

Nancy provides an important reminder that in attempting to escape an epistemology of fixed objects, we must not allow ourselves to idealize or reify the communities we are trying to create. Raymond Williams offers a similar warning in another register when he points out that communitarian thinking can fall into a naive and voluntarist version of social constructionism that assumes that the affirming local version of community can easily be enlarged to a more generalized social movement ("Importance" 115). The very real problems of developing participatory communities in industrialized societies has been one of Williams' chief interests since his early work. He is particularly concerned with the role of those media of mass communications through which "public opinion has been observably molded and directed, often by questionable means, often for questionable ends" (Culture 298). Yet Williams goes on to argue that "a real theory of communication is a theory of community" (Culture 313) because only "an effective community of experience" can ensure active reception and living response. Not surprisingly, he believes that the inequalities within communities and the lack of "genuinely common experience" make communication difficult, if not impossible, across highly complex industrial societies (Culture 316-17). In terms reminiscent of the debates in many popular theatre troupes, Williams poses the major problem in modern community-building as turning around the need to envision a form of compatibility between the increasing variety of highly specialized skills and a genuinely common culture in complex societies. This, combined with the difficulties involved in achieving the degree of internal diversity necessary to ensure growth and change without simply creating separation, leads him to argue that "the making of a community is always an exploration, for consciousness cannot precede creation, and there is no formula for unknown experience" (Culture 333-34). Such an argument raises for social theory a

problem very similar to the one faced by popular theatre workers who want to define their work as both arising from particular communities and marked by professional standards. It is to this problem of professionalism, and of its combination with participatory communitarianism, that I shall turn my attention next.

2.4. Professionalism, Specialization, and the Value of Everyday Life

Joseph Bensman, in his introduction to Performers and Performances: The Social Organization of Artistic Work, defines professionalism in the performing arts as "the possession of high levels of technical skill by performing artists who are oriented toward a full-time career in an art" (20). Bensman's definition reflects the same form of thinking that characterizes liberal social thought. In this definition, "technical skill" is considered as value-free and multipurpose as the democratic institutions of liberal politics, and this without any consideration of the uses to which particular skills are intended to be put. Significantly, the second part of Bensman's definition points to a market-oriented determination of social identity: a "professional" performer is someone who makes (or tries to make) his or her living by performing.

There is nothing wrong with this definition, if the term "professional" is clearly understood by all who use it to mean nothing more than "one who makes money through a particular activity." Many popular theatre troupes seem to use the term in this way. The Popular Theatre Alliance of Manitoba, for instance, divides their programming into "community" and "professional" productions according to whether or not performers are paid. A problem arises, however, when the two parts of Bensman's definition are conflated, as they frequently are in a market-driven society. In this case, the work of performers who practice their art for their own pleasure, or as part of a contribution to their community, is judged not simply less professional in a narrow monetary sense, but *apriori* less aesthetically valuable than that done within the context of market-driven "cultural industries."

It is difficult, in an exchange-based society, to avoid the reality that, in many people's minds, the determination of skill, and even of artistic value, is best made in the marketplace. But while many of us might agree that any performer in any network television series is categorically more "professional" (in the narrow sense) than the most dedicated and experienced pow-wow dancer[3], would we want to judge the former performance as more skilled or socially important simply because it is available for sale? The general usage of the term "professional" forces such confusions on us by associating the sale of one's services with the quality of one's work, even when we don't want to explicitly argue that a fee or salary is the most valid marker of aesthetic quality. When we praise performers (especially amateurs) for their "professionalism," we are generally referring to skill levels and dedication to a craft, but our praise is frequently understood as a positive comparison to performers who are paid regularly for their work. The situation is further confused by the fact that the use of the term "professional" as a word of praise can be contradicted by the equally common suspicion that artists who are "bought and paid for" have somehow betrayed art itself. How then have we come, in using the term "professionalism," to conflate the quality of the performer's art with his or her choice of career?

To understand the roots of the confusion around the term "professional," it is perhaps useful to look at the historical situation that gave rise to the possibility of being a "professional performer" in the modern period. Bensman points out, for instance, that the very notion of the "professional" is linked to attempts to free artists from the

3 It should be clear that the issue here is not the amount of money the performer gains from performing. Some pow-wow dancers do win considerable sums of prize money as a result of their dancing. It is important to note though, that in awarding a prize, the donor is not purchasing a service, but rewarding superior performance in a specific event. The social relationship constructed by these two activities is quite different.

constraints imposed on pre-modern performers by the religious orders and aristocratic courts of which they were members or retainers. As early as the Renaissance, he notes, composers and musicians "attempted to enlarge their areas of freedom by moving from court to court, seeking better conditions of pay, work, and artistic freedom, especially when their past successes produced rising reputations" (20). In the same period, theatrical troupes like the commedia dell'arte players, traveling opera players, Shakespeare's and Molière's companies, all started producing theatre on a commercial basis and apparently provided their own training and support outside of religious and aristocratic institutions. The increased artistic freedom that resulted from the dissolution of the patronage system in favour of the new commercial production of cultural goods in the early modern period has led to a persistent belief in modern culture, perhaps most thoroughly expressed in our century by Theodor Adorno, that the most important guarantee of artistic insight is the autonomy of the artist from collective structures. But as Michael D. Bristol points out in Big Time Shakespeare, the new-found "freedom" of the freelance artist in the modern period "amounts to the outright sale of the artist's skills to the market -driven needs of a managerial class" (113).

The setting for the theatre experiments of the Elizabethan period is telling in this regard. While the Court was enjoying plays presented by troupes sponsored (at least nominally) by various noblemen in the Great Hall, the common people sought similar entertainment from the same people (alongside bear-baiting, musical acts, clowning, freak shows, food, drink, and assorted sexual assignations) in the yards of the City inns (Bradbrook 98-99). Two of the most prominent figures of the early commercial theatre in England, Tarleton and Alleyn, were associated with these inns, the first as an owner and the second as an owner's son. The players who worked for and with these men seem to have had as ambiguous a relationship to the common people as to their nominal patrons. According to Weimann, the Bankside area, in which the Rose, Swan, and Globe theatres were all built, was an area associated with participatory popular pastimes like May games,

Morris and sword dances, and one where the people of London already congregated to act as audiences for more commercial activities like bear-baiting, bull fights, wrestling, fencing, juggling. The theatres themselves, Weimann underlines, far from being politically motivated movements in favour of free speech or the daring expression of artistic vision:

> were private commercial enterprises, erected only after projected profits had been carefully calculated. It is especially clear from the history of the Theatre that business and not communal spirit urged these particular theatrical ventures. Alleyn, the Theatre's owner, and Burbage and Brayne fought bitterly for the profits to be made in their playhouse. (170)

The reality of such commercial enterprises is that, while they free the artist from the constraints of patronage, they also militate against wide community participation in the creation of performances. As Bristol demonstrates in Big Time Shakespeare, this sale of artistic skill not only affected the relationship of the artist to the high art of patronage systems, but to the more popular pleasures organized as games and pastimes. To make such art saleable in a commodity market, not only is the patronage of the nobility rejected, "[p]opular culture as the spontaneous activity of peasants and artisans is expropriated in the form of standardized, mass-produced entertainment" (Bristol, Big 113). Max W. Thomas' discussion of Will Kemp's nine day dance to Norwich in "Kemp's Nine Daies Wonder: Dancing Carnival into Market" is an excellent demonstration of this process at work, especially the passages where he discusses Kemp's insistence on excluding participation by the amateur dancers who would have followed Kemp had the dance been performed as part of the carnivalesque activities of medieval festivals. Bristol sums up the problems inherent in these new commercial relationships with reference to the exclusion of questions of the good life that is typical of the modern public sphere. Speaking of the material conditions that make possible the new autonomy the modern

period offers the artist from "the pastoral mission of the church, patronage by wealthy collectors, the instrumental requirements of the state or party apparatus," Bristol contends that:

> [t]he ethical indifference of commodity exchange creates the material conditions that emancipate artistic work from its socially embedded character and make the practice of art a self-financing specialization within a segmented labor force. Artists are autonomous only in the sense that they can exercise discretion in calculating their response to the exigencies of commodity exchange. (Big 113)

Viewed as a specific historically situated phenomenon, the development of the social role of the professional performer and the development of commodity-based social structures would appear too tightly linked to be ignored.

Arguing from this point of view, Jean-Christophe Agnew contends that the historical importance of the Elizabethan theatres depends not simply on their new institutional status or the beauty of their performance texts, but on their development of conventions that reproduced the representational strategies of the growing commodity market. The theatres, he argues, flourished because they served as a laboratory for working through the difficulties of living in a commodity-based world (12). Chief among these was a new strategy of social relations based on negotiation of short-term contractual relationships between individuals. Whereas the older feudal order depended on the belief that social roles should be carried out by people who were "naturally" predisposed to do so, and that change should follow the repeating patterns of the seasons, the new commodity market demanded the possibility of rapid and non-iterated change, much like that exercised by the player in portraying different characters. Both Agnew and Barish point out that the major attacks on the theatre in the period concentrate precisely on this point, the espousal of situation-determined changeability inherent in

players' craft as opposed to questions of content in the plays themselves. In Barish's words, "players are (considered) evil because they try to substitute a self of their own contriving for the one given them by God" (93), and the fact that these substitutions were not simply the expression of submission to natural urges, but a planned activity demanding sustained imagination and collusion with the events portrayed, only worsened their case (81).

These objections to the new professionalism of actors in Elizabethan England are of interest for a discussion of contemporary popular theatre because they point to new social roles whose availability extended well beyond the theatres that were the focus of debate. Such a historical approach to the question of professionalism points to the need to look at its definition not only in terms of skill levels and performance texts, but in terms of the broader social role that professionals are called upon to play. In our day, as Bensman underlines, professionalism is not only a question of skill but of institutional practices "rooted in full-time training, systematic instruction, practice and rehearsal, and guided entry into performance" (20). As such, professionalism is more an institutional than an aesthetic category and the development of professionalism depends not only on artistic skills but on guided entry into particular institutional applications of those skills. Bensman goes on to argue that artistic disciplines are following the same path as most other institutions in twentieth century society in demanding ever higher levels of technical proficiency and, as a result, stricter specialization. This in turn leads, in artistic as in other professional institutions, to the "occupational psychoses" of specialists who "develop loyalties and the trained incapacity and occupational blinders of their own field" (25). It is these two questions, the increasing specialization of skilled work in the industrialized world and the deliberate and ideologically-driven separation of professional knowledge from the everyday experience of the general population, that are of most interest for a discussion of the relationship between professionalism and community participation in popular theatre.

Albert Borgmann, in Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life, suggests that the strict professional specialization of the type Bensman underlines is not simply a result of the need for high levels of proficiency in dealing with increasingly complex knowledge systems. While it may now be impossible for any individual to be technically proficient in all the complex aspects of modern life, this is not enough to explain the drive to narrowly defined professional responses to social problems, even in situations where broader knowledge is readily available. Borgmann blames this aspect of the drive to specialization on what he calls the "device paradigm." A device, in Borgmann's definition, is characterized by a "sharp internal division into a machinery and a commodity procured by that machinery" (33) where the "concomitance of radical variability of means and relative stability of ends is the first distinguishing feature" (43). The second distinguishing feature is perhaps more important: "the concealment and unfamiliarity of the means and the simultaneous prominence and availability of the ends" (44). Specialization, then, is not always a response to the need for complex skills. It can also be a response to the ideologically induced desire to hide the burdensome machinery necessary to make a desired result easily available to large numbers of people. The device, in this view, is a technology designed to do one and only one thing, and, in response to the demands of the commodity-based society within which it functions, to freely circulate as an object that requires little or no maintenance of a type that would require ongoing human relationships.

When the device becomes a paradigm for social thought, when it serves "as an implicit guiding pattern for the transformation of human existence and the world," the result is a move away from the social engagement necessary for participatory social life (77). In this sense, the device paradigm is as much the product of liberal social thought, which defines freedom as an absence of constraints and throwing off of burdens, as it is of scientific advances. In liberal terms, the device paradigm functions as a promise both that technology will furnish neutral opportunities while leaving the question of the good

life open, and that "an opportunity never turns into a destiny but merely into a site one is free to leave for the sake of one of the many opportunities that have remained open" (92-93). The danger of such a thought system is, in Borgmann's words, that "liberation by way of disburdenment yields to disengagement, enrichment by way of diversion is overtaken by distraction, and conquest makes way first to domination and then to loneliness" (76). Applied to the political arena, the device paradigm reduces government itself to a kind of metadevice. A typical example of this occurs when:

> government solves a crisis by creating a government agency that becomes a device for the procurement of a definite social benefit. The citizen participates in the solution of such a crisis as the beneficiary of the social commodity and as the supporter of the governmental machinery. But his relation to the machinery is narrowed to the payment of taxes. Otherwise the machinery has its paradigmatic inaccessibility. The citizens normally do not understand it; and if they did, engagement would still be impossible. There are islands and overlays of social engagement in bureaucracies . . . [but] the commodities are finally allocated mechanically. In fact, the intrusion of humane and personal considerations into the central mechanics of a government agency would invite corruption. (107)

In the artistic arena, Borgmann's device corresponds perfectly to Brecht's notion of the entertainment "apparatus" that encourages intellectuals and artists to function according to a fodder system within which they supply raw materials to a machine that churns out a homogenized and predictable form of entertainment night after night. Brecht warned against the dangers of complicity with this apparatus not only in political but in formal aesthetic terms:

> This muddled thinking which overtakes musicians, writers and critics as soon as they consider their own situation has tremendous consequences to which far too little attention is paid. For by imagining that they have got hold of an apparatus which has in fact got hold of them they are supporting an apparatus that is out of control, which is no longer (as they believe) a means of furthering output but has become an obstacle to output, and specifically to their own output as soon as it follows a new and original course which the apparatus finds awkward or opposed to its own aims. Their output then becomes a matter of delivering the goods. Values evolve which are based on the fodder principle. And this leads to a general habit of judging works of art by their suitability for the apparatus without ever judging the apparatus by its suitability for the work. (Brecht 34)

Within a device-like system, whether governmental or artistic, professionals make up the essential and paradigmatically inaccessible machinery of the device. Their specialization is not only a result of the demands of particular complex knowledge systems but of the demands of the device paradigm itself. Knowing that this can be the case, we must ask careful questions about the role of specialized skills in the construction of professionalism. Within what paradigm is this notion of professionalism constructed? Are the specialized skills demanded of professionals called upon as a vehicle for engagement or as the elements of a machinery designed to produce easily-accessible commodities for disburdened consumption by isolated buyers?

Raymond Williams attempts to deal with this problem by distinguishing between what he calls agents and sources of communication. Agents, as Williams describes them in this context, function as simple intermediaries, transmitting a message for which they take no ethical responsibility. Such intermediaries, he says, are probably a necessary

feature of complex administrations where it is impossible, whether for reasons of specialized knowledge or of logistics, to have everyone participate in all activities. But the role of the intermediary is, in Williams view, "always dangerous unless its function and intention are not only openly declared but commonly approved and controlled" (Culture 304). It is this question of the intention behind communication that is critical in evaluating the professional's role. In cases where the group that originates the intention both knows and controls the function of the transmitting intermediary, the person playing this role should properly be viewed as acting as a *de facto* collective source. The test here, in William's view, is whether the intermediary acting for a collective can "wholly acknowledge and accept [what he or she is required to transmit] -- re-create it in his own person." "Where he [sic] cannot thus accept it for himself," Williams says, "but allows himself to be persuaded that it is in a fit form for others -- presumably inferiors-- and that it is his business merely to see that it reaches them effectively, then he is in the bad sense an agent, and what he is doing is inferior to that done by the poorest kind of source" (Culture 304).

On this view, the professional is not to be evaluated only on the kind or level of specialized skills he or she is able to deploy in a complex labour market, but also on the social consequences of the deployment of those skills. Williams makes the case that "any practical denial of the relation between conviction and communication, between experience and expression, is morally damaging alike to the individual and to the common language" (Culture 304). Why then, do so many people seem to equate professionalism with a willingness to carry out procedures without regard for personal opinions or desires? Williams links this tendency in Britain to a form of middle-class education that emphasizes the notion of service and the maintenance of order by good management (Culture 329). The notion of service, as Williams describes it, clearly links professionalism to liberal social thought in its emphasis on a separation of means and ends. The professional, who is trained as an upper-level servant (whether public, civil or

personal), is not to ask questions about the good life, but about the best means of carrying out procedures or techniques. In this sense, Williams believes, "the idea of service not only fails to provide, but, in its limitation of our minds, actively harms" our ability to think about "what together we want to make of our lives" (Culture 330).

Williams description of the ideal of professional service stands in direct opposition to Borgmann's definition of engaging work as work that has qualities that "tangibly gather and embody the capacities of the worker, the aspirations of the recipient, the natural features and cultural tradition of the local setting" (239). A comparison of the service ethic in professionalism with such a notion of engaged work might lead us to define professionalism as involving the capacity for highly skilled but socially disengaged work. As we saw in the previous chapter, this is certainly what Lorraine Hébert believed she saw happening with the rise of the "idéologie du métier" in Québécois theatre in the early 1980s. Such disengagement is hardly unique to Québécois theatre of that period: it is, in fact, a quality that is actively fostered by most professional institutions in the modern world.

Dorothy Smith, in her studies of the relationship between the institutional knowledge and everyday life, demonstrates that a crucial element in the definition of professional competence is the deliberate separation of the professional world from the world of everyday life. She describes the experience of a graduate student learning to become a sociologist as follows:

> We learn that some topics are relevant and others are not. We learn to discard our personal experience as a source of reliable information about the character of the world and to confine and focus our insights within the conceptual frameworks and relevances of the discipline. Should we think other kinds of thoughts or experience the world in a different way or with horizons that pass beyond the conceptual, we must discard them or find

> some way to sneak them in. We learn a way of thinking about the world that is recognizable to its practitioners as a sociological way of thinking. . . . We find out how to treat the world as instances of a sociological body of knowledge. (Conceptual 15)

What Smith is describing is the construction of the machinery for "the ethic of objectivity," an ethic that demands "the separation of knowers from what they know and in particular . . . the separation of what is known from knowers' interests, 'biases,' and so forth, that are not authorized by the discipline" (Conceptual 16).

Knowledge and procedures authorized by the discipline ensure both the uniformity of the commodity produced by a discipline and the separation of those practicing the discipline (the machinery) from those who consume, or are consumed by its results. Smith argues that the various procedures and abstract concepts used by professional institutions have as their object the constitution of a "virtual reality vested in texts" that ensures its efficacy by "cutting social science off from the actual relations and organization of people's lives" (Conceptual 45). The proof of professionalism in such a system is not only the adherence to authorized procedures and concepts, but the separation of the professional from the environment on which s/he is exercising her profession. "As professionals," she says, "we know how to practice and preserve the rupture between the actual, local, historically situated experience of subjects and a systematically developed consciousness of society. If we are to claim full and proper membership in our discipline, we must be competent performers of this severance" (Conceptual 52). This kind of thinking seems to be typical, not only of sociology, but of all "professionalized" disciplines.[4]

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[4] Lest the reader assume that such thinking is restricted to the social sciences, let me share my own experience with a graduate student in English, whom I shall not name

Smith goes on to discuss at some length the deliberate erasure of the source of knowledge, the subject who knows, in the objectification of knowledge as fact. "Facts," she says, "are neither the statements themselves, nor the actualities those statements refer to. They are an organization of practices of inscribing an actuality into a text, of reading, hearing, or talking about what is there, what actually happened, and so forth" (Conceptual 71). It is the organization of these practices that concerns the professional institution. In order to maintain control over these practices, the institution must not only carefully initiate newcomers into the intricacies of its particular machinery, but must vigilantly exclude all those who can't be counted on to know in a way that is guaranteed to produce the appropriate facts.

The injustice that can result from such exclusion is eloquently described in a paper presented by community activist Dorothy O'Connell at the "Rethinking Community Developing in a Changing Societal Context" Conference in Lake Couchiching, Ontario, in 1982. Entitled "Low Income Women and Community Development Projects: Self-Help and the Experts," O'Connell's paper outlines the ways in which community activists from the Tenant's Council of Ottawa saw several projects initiated by community members taken over by experts, who then went on to physically exclude the activists from decision-making processes. In the case of a legal clinic started by the Council, plans to hire paralegals and a secretary from the clientele the clinic was to serve were vetoed by a hiring committee convinced that it would be better to hire students for these positions. The situation then went from bad to worse. Once moved into the first floor of the

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in the interests of protecting the guilty. After exchanging papers in preparation for a graduate student conference, this man suggested to me that the problem with my writing was that it was too accessible to people outside the profession and that I should write more complex sentences! "After all," he said, " if you're going to spend as much time in school as we have, you don't want just anybody to be able to understand what you write!"

Council's building, the new legal staff immediately padlocked their door to separate themselves from members of the organization who had hired them; they then refused to go into the public housing communities to do education, as their job descriptions specified, because they were afraid of the people they were supposed to be working for! Similar incidents occurred in the organization of both a Credit Union and a Rest Camp for poor single mothers and their children. Summing up her experience with experts, O'Connell paints a devastating picture of the relationship between professionals and community activists in a fictional transposition where she describes, not a relation between knowledge systems, but between people. "It reminded us strongly," she says, "of the situation where the charlady sends her son to college to become a doctor on her pitiful savings and he asks her not to come to his graduation and embarrass him" (91).

The fiction is a telling one. In Smith's words: "The organization of work in managerial and professional circles depends upon the alienation of subjects from their bodily and local existence. The structure of work and the structure of career take for granted that these matters have been provided for in such a way that they will not interfere with a man's action and participation in that world" (Conceptual 18). According to this logic, a young doctor who shows up at his graduation with his charlady in tow (whatever her relationship to him) risks not only embarrassment, but career difficulties. His inability to keep his everyday life, and especially that part of it related to the care of his body, completely separate from his professional life may be judged to indicate a lack of aptitude for, or commitment to, the way of knowing demanded of professionals. I am quite consciously using the masculine pronoun "he" here, since the exclusion of bodily life, of the material conditions on which conceptual action depends and within which it must be performed is, historically, highly gendered in both personal and public realms. In the ideal professional world, it is expected not only that women will provide for the logistics of individual bodily existence, but that it will mainly be women who, in the more public spheres of work "[mediate] between the abstracted and conceptual and the material

form in which it must travel to communicate" through clerical work, interviewing, taking messages, making appointments and actually caring for patients" (Smith, Conceptual 19).

The exclusion of everyday experience and the occulting of the material conditions in which knowledge claims are made in professional work, especially when combined with the kind of disengaged vision of professional skill exemplified by the device paradigm, would seem to make for an uneasy partnership between professionalism and participatory communitarianism. But here is where a crucial difference potentially distinguishes professionalism in the performing arts from professionalism in science-based institutions: performers cannot occult the body in their professional work, because the training and use of the body are central to the way performers carry out their professional tasks.

Given that one of the chief ways in which the concerns of non-dominant groups are kept out of discussions of justice in the public arena is by automatically relegating any activities related to the body to the private sphere, this specialized public use of the body to encourage public discussion of what are often considered private problems is of particular interest to many community activists. In the organizing efforts of groups whose concerns and experiences are not usually admitted to the public sphere, performance-based activities can be used to challenge the boundaries of dominant public discourse by forcing it to deal with information that it generally occults. For example, Shirley Tervo, a Winnipeg feminist counselor with extensive experience dealing with adult survivors of sexual abuse, described to me the important role performance can play in persuading those who have not experienced such abuse that it does exist and is, in fact, a widespread social problem. Speaking about her reasons for working as a consultant on an NFB film, Sandra's Garden, which deals with the way women support each other in the healing process after such abuse, Tervo said:

> People sometimes say about abuse: "Women are making up stories about abuse histories. They're being helped by counselors etc. who are leading them into these things." On the inside we say: "If people could really look at these survivors, if they could see their struggle, their pain, if they could see their hopelessness, helplessness, and just the vastness of it, they would know that nobody needs to make up anything here. It doesn't take a big leap of imagination to see that something pretty traumatic has happened to this person."
>
> When you do something like this, the visual helps. Everyone who is willing to perceive that this is how painful, this is the kind of impact that certain things can have on the lives of men and women, will get a much better understanding. It goes beyond the intellectual. We (therapists) talk all over the place, we write articles, but we can never convey to the public just how traumatic this is. So when people say "Oh, they're just making this up. It's a fantasy . . . ." Well you can't sit and listen to survivors struggle to tell what this has done to their lives and maintain that position. (Personal Interview)

It is important to note the emphasis Tervo places on both the emotional charge the teller brings to the tale and the role of the body in transmitting this charge. She proposes that observers are more likely to believe stories of the devastating impact of abuse when they are told by survivors, not because the survivors have privileged access to the "facts," but because the survivor's physical expression of emotional pain is a phenomenon that must be accounted for in ordinary human contact. Seeing a survivor struggle to tell a story that is clearly causing her great emotional distress forces the observer to create a sense-making frame that can account not only for the content of the story, but also for its effects on the teller and the listeners. On this view, the great advantage of performance techniques is

that they do not concentrate on talking about a situation but on re-presenting it as a series of embodied practices. The criterion for judging such a representation is not only discursive (is this what people usually say about this?), but pragmatic (is this how this event usually unfolds?), with pragmatic considerations taking priority .

It is often by playing on the tension between discursive and pragmatic criteria of evaluation that popular theatre workers lead community activists to a new understanding of their situation. Pauline Riley and Monica Marx are popular theatre facilitators who spent two years using theatre to help Winnipeg secondary school students confront racism in their peer groups. In an interview conducted in Winnipeg in November 1992, they explained that while students may verbally deny that a category of relationships that could be described as "racist" exists in their schools, they are much quicker to agree that certain types of events take place. This in turn prepares the ground for a discussion of whether a given incident should be considered racist and what should be done about it. Such a shift of attention constitutes an important modification of knowledge-building strategies. Instead of asking students to evaluate a particular situation in terms of what is generally said about a given issue, it forces them to evaluate the dominant discourse (and their own category systems) against the actual social practices of their institution. The theatre piece is developed by pushing students to deal with both the stories that are told and the events that are observed. As Marx noted: "What often happens is that they tell you something and they show you something completely different or vice versa. Then you can say: 'wait a minute . . .'" (Personal Interview).

Popular theatre facilitators who work this way are developing a new vision of professionalism by bridging the separation between experience and ways of describing that experience that Dorothy Smith, in her critique of mainstream sociological practice, argues is typical of the form of professionalism taught in the social sciences. Rather than relegating experience to the personal realm and trying to construct a professional life

exclusively governed by the discursive rules of a particular discipline, these popular theatre workers encourage community participants to test all discursive propositions against their own experience of everyday life. Does this mean that popular theatre techniques, like the forms of populist theatre Mlama describes, will never be used just to transmit already existing knowledge to popular groups who are considered incapable of absorbing it in higher forms? The answer to this question can only be that it depends on how the professional skills developed in popular theatre are used. If a popular theatre technique, like any other technique, is used in a device-like way, popular theatre can become just another apparatus, though it may be more closely associated with training institutions than with the entertainment industry. On the other hand, if performance is used as a mode of participatory public thought, it can make a particular contribution to the development of participatory community. It is the nature of this potential contribution that I will next explore.

2.5. Popular Theatre as a Participatory Public Thinking

As will have become clear in the preceding section, an attempt to understand popular theatre as a participatory mode of public thought is not well served by the categories of thinking about performance that have come into being in response to the apparati of the entertainment industry. The popular theatre worker is not (consciously at least) trying to provide fodder for a device-like entertainment apparatus, nor is s/he using the conventions of high art as a means of marking a superior social standing or intellectual status. Instead, s/he is trying to use a body-based performance mode to destabilize existing standpoints and habitus enough to allow for the development of those other standpoints and habitus that would allow particular groups of people, who do not necessarily share all the same beliefs and values, to form participatory communities. Where is s/he to find models that might help her/him understand how this process might take place? An interesting starting point is the work of theatre anthropologist Victor

Turner because Turner approaches the rituals and ceremonies of traditional societies not as commodities or as purely conceptual systems, but as ways of knowing that operate directly on the body to change social roles.

In Turner's analysis, the kind of social narratives described by Bourdieu in his discussion of habitus are not stable over long periods of time and are in fact characterized by frequent episodes of "social drama." According to Turner, social drama is a constant and universal process that generally moves through four distinct stages: breach, crisis, redressive action, and restoration of peace or recognition of irremediable schism. In the first or breach stage "a person or subgroup breaks a rule deliberately or by inward compulsion, in a public setting." In the second, or crisis, stage "conflicts between individuals, sections, and factions follow the original breach, revealing hidden clashes of character, interest, and ambition." The third stage is marked by attempts at redressive action and this "is often ritualized, and may be undertaken in the name of law or religion." Through this redressive action the society ideally resolves the problem brought to a head by the breach, either through a restoration of peace or through the recognition of irremediable schism. Turner also makes clear that movement from one stage to another is not automatic: the process can stall at several points along the way or loop back on itself to repeat earlier stages without coming to any long-standing resolution (Turner, "Are There" 8).

While Turner's insistence on the universality of a fixed form of social drama smacks of the kind of structuralist arguments about culture that both Bourdieu and Smith want to avoid, his discussion of the role of performance in the redressive phase of the drama is worth paying attention to. According to Turner, this phase is not simply a blind reassertion of the community's founding narrative, but a period of reflection in which the society can use performance to think through its social behavior patterns. The modes of redress in traditional society, he says, "always contained at least the germ of self-

reflexivity, a public way of assessing . . . social behavior" that framed "an endeavor to rearticulate a social group broken by sectional or self-serving interests" and "to rearticulate opposing values and goals in a meaningful structure, the plot of which makes cultural sense" (Turner, From Ritual 11and87).[5] In The Anthropology of Performance, Turner goes out of his way to point out that the reworking of the narrative is not a simple automatic reaction to given stimuli, but a complex and contrived physical adjustment of the tools with which that society thinks:

> Performative reflexivity is a condition in which a sociocultural group, or its most perceptive members acting representatively, turn, bend or reflect back upon themselves, upon the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other sociocultural components that make up their public "selves." (22)

Such a reflexive form of thought requires, however, a special mode of performance that functions in much the same way the subjunctive mode functions in language "to express supposition, desire, hypothesis, or possibility, rather than stating actual facts." If such a mode were not available, any attempt to redress wrong thinking through bodily action would not be performance, but battle, punishment, etc. because without the subjunctive mode the actions would simply retrigger and reinforce the everyday habitus that had caused the breach, rather than putting the habitus itself into question. Gregory Bateson, in his discussion of ritual, points out that this danger is always present. "[T]he ritual blows of peace-making are always liable to be mistaken for the 'real' blows of combat" he says and, when this happens, "the peace-making ceremony becomes a battle" (182).

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5 Compare this abstract description to the more concrete narrative in Mlama's discussion of her experience with young women from a university town who did not respect the social rituals of their rural host community, as cited on pages 40-42.

While Turner emphasizes that the subjunctive mode is a crucial marker of habitus-challenging performance, he also underlines that it does not function the same way in all circumstances. Turner refers to the subjunctive mode of ritual as a state of "liminality" that dissolves "all factual and commonsense systems into their components and 'play[s]' with them in ways never found in nature or in custom, at least at the level of direct perception" (Turner, Anthropology 25 [my emphasis]). The last section of this sentence is crucial to our understanding of performative thinking. In describing how such a process works in initiation rituals that isolate boys from their community in order to bring them back as men Turner states: "The novices are taught that they did not know what they thought they knew. Beneath the surface structure of custom was a deep structure, whose rules they had to learn, through paradox and shock" (Turner, From Ritual 42). In other words, the boys must, in the betwixt-and-between world of the initiation period, give up their usual style of bodily behaviour through confrontation with situations this behaviour cannot accommodate. But they cannot simply give up. They must continue to physically respond to the demands of the elders and by so doing they learn to structure a new style of corporeality.

It is worth noting here that Turner's description of the ritual initiation process is remarkably similar to Varela, Thompson and Rosch's description of meditation processes used to encourage a fuller awareness of the integration of body and mind. Like this process, the initiation does not function in terms of building virtuosity in particular skill areas, but "as the letting go of habits of mindlessness, as an unlearning rather than a learning" (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 29). While marked by novelty for the individual initiate, the new body organization that develops through this process of unlearning is nonetheless intimately linked to the stability of the institutions and discourses within which it is structured. In Varela, Thompson and Rosch's terminology, the ritual leads the boys to "enact a world as a domain of distinctions that is inseparable from the structure embodied by the cognitive system" (140), here the initiates' body organization as

members of that society. It is this "domain of distinctions" that is normally invisible, "at least at the level of direct perception," precisely because it is "inseparable from the structure embodied by the cognitive system" and so can only be seen by the system in the fleeting and subjunctive mood of performative reflexivity.

Turner's identification of the processes in ritual that make accessible the normally invisible distinctions that structure thinking is a useful one, but can it be equally applied to theatre? While recognizing that some theatre performances may exercise a similar function to ritual, Turner insists that there are major differences between the ritual liminality of traditional societies and the liminoid artistic "time-out" of the modern theatre. While performance forms may be related by their use of the body as a medium of knowing, all performance is not liminal; performative reflexivity can only really take liminal forms in situations where "one's membership in some highly corporate group" is at stake (Turner, From Ritual 55). We can presume that the homogeneity of body styles, which ritual is intended to create, is most typical of integrationist communities, where membership is based on a strong sense of shared values and structures that are different from those of other communities. Turner has coined the term "liminoid" to differentiate between situations like integrationist ritual, where group performance directly effects changes in the cognitive system of the participating group, and those situations that have similar forms but do not automatically effect cognitive change. He cautions that there are important differences between the liminal and the liminoid that must not be ignored if one is to understand the true cognitive functioning of each. For instance, "optation pervades the liminoid phenomenon, obligation the liminal," and while "one works at the liminal, one plays with the liminoid" (Turner, From Ritual 43 and 55). Liminal phenomena are centrally integrated into the total social process of the participating group and elicit loyalty to it by enforcing notions of sociocultural necessity and reflecting the collective experience of the group over time. The liminoid phenomenon, on the other hand, "is

more like a commodity -- indeed, it often is a commodity, which one selects and pays for . . ." (Turner, From Ritual 53-55).

The liminoid phenomenon does still demand a subjunctive "time out," but it is one of a different kind. Gregory Bateson, in his study of "play," provides some clues to how this might work on a cognitive level, when he argues that the distinguishing characteristic of play is the way it is bracketed and set off from everyday life. Bateson argues that the bracketed activities of play have a particular cognitive status in which the players are functioning on two levels of signification simultaneously. "In primary process," he says, "map and territory are equated; in secondary process, they can be discriminated. In play, they are both equated and discriminated" (185). Bateson's primary process corresponds to the foundational categories and narratives established through body learning, while his secondary process refers more to those activities of the mind that are based on concepts and abstract reason. In play, he asserts, foundational categories and abstract reason are both equated and discriminated. He explains this process of double signification as resulting from metacommunication, or the communication not only of a message but of a frame of understanding which assists in the interpretation of the message.

Theories of games and play in the works of Huizinga and Caillois help clarify the procedures by which this frame is established. In describing the conditions which characterize play, these two writers emphasize the presence of strict physical and temporal limitations, of rules particular to the play activity, and of a limitation of consequences to the sphere of play. All of these characteristics can be seen in the creation of the liminoid cognitive space of the theatre. As Ubersfeld underlines in L'École du Spectateur, theatre is an art which is characterized by strict spatial distinctions, such as that between stage space and audience space. Further, rules of interpretation are specified in various ways, in traditional theatres generally by indirect convention, but in popular theatre just as often

by an "epically" direct chorus or narrator. Finally the physical consequences of actions within the performance frame are strictly limited to the performance area.

We cannot, however, reduce the difference between ritual and theatre, liminal and liminoid activity, to strictly formal questions. Following on Turner's suggestions about liminal and liminoid forms, William Morgan and Per Brask suggest a conceptual model that explains the relationship of ritual to theatre by investigating the social context and functions of both forms. In "Towards a Conceptual Understanding of the Transformation From Ritual to Theatre," they argue that "the emergence of theatre in state level societies may be understood by viewing the functions of theatre as adaptive transformations of the social control and integration functions characteristic of communal rituals in non-state societies" (175). The core of their argument is that ritual is best adapted to small scale and relatively homogeneous communities, while theatre arises in societies grown too complex to rely on ritual as a communal thought mechanism . They go on to suggest that in more complex state societies "[t]heatre may be seen as a mode of communication between groups" rather than as a mechanism through which a relatively homogeneous group reasserts its basic narratives in face of the crises of Turner's social dramas (185-190). In this sense, theatre would seem better adapted for building participatory communities than ritual.

The changed role of the non-actors is especially important in evaluating the usefulness of this new mechanism for building community, for as Morgan and Brask note, in the theatre the performing group enacts a world with little or no bodily interference from the assembled audience (192). Rather than participants in a process that will form and test their own bodily organization, theatre audiences are observers whose role is to participate in creating meaning from the world enacted on the stage, but never to physically intervene in its enactment. Where theatrical representation may influence audience members, it, unlike ritual, cannot change their thought patterns by direct

manipulation of their bodies and the stories those bodies tell. While audiences may later choose to alter their ways of intervening in the world because of their evaluation of what they have seen in the theatre, this is a choice to enact a new narrative after evaluation of the performance of an Other. This choice may, in the best of cases, be heavily influenced by changes that take place in the observers' habitus as they try to follow the action on the stage. Faced with unexpected action in a public space, spectators might be helped to develop the kind of moral imagination that Benhabib describes as a key to the establishment of the "multiplicity and diversity of perspectives that constitute public life" in a participatory community (141).

The notions of "pre-interpretivity" and "pre-expressivity" as described by Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese in their Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology, can help explain how apparently non-participatory theatre can directly affect the habitus of both actors and observers. Barba is especially concerned with those traditions and techniques that allow the performer to establish "presence," a state directly related to the recognition that what happens on the stage is not simply a mirror of daily life but a moment of "extra-daily" reflection. Barba explains that "the body's daily techniques can be replaced by extra-daily techniques, that is, techniques which do not respect the habitual conditionings of the body." Daily techniques, he says, "generally follow the principle of less effort," and the techniques of the virtuoso "aim for amazement and a transformation of the body. The purpose of extra-daily techniques, on the other hand, is information: they literally *put the body in-form*" (Barba and Savarese 9-10 [emphasis in original]). This description of the performer's art bears a distinct resemblance to the liminal stage of ritual described by Victor Turner, where a new body organization is induced in the initiands in order to enable them to enact a new kind of world, in their case one where they are adult members of their community. Barba's "bits of good advice" (as he likes to call them) about achieving the extra-daily state necessary for performative reflexivity underline a similar

strategy of changing worlds by directly producing in the actor the forms of embodiment necessary to transform an ordinary human being into a performer with presence.

Barba looks at both Asian theatre disciplines and European forms like commedia dell'arte and mime to see how they use the body to mark the one thing that does seem to be a universal of performance: the consciousness of performance as separate from everyday life (cf. Blau, "Universals" 259). Barba concludes that traditions that use the body to mark this performance consciousness do so by a *mise en opposition* of physical tensions that put the performer into a temporary state of disequilibrium and "oblige the body to find a new point of balance" (Barba and Savarese 11). In this state of active opposition "[t]he body becomes charged with energy because within it is established a series of differences of potential" as "actions are isolated from their contexts, and thereby revealed" (Barba and Savarese 13). This state of "pre-expressivity,"[6] does not describe the particular world the performer is representing, but signals to spectators that this is an "as if," or reflexive, moment in which to think through performance about the bodily organization necessary for the creation of such a world. In Barba's description of the pre-expressive state, the actor creates the subjunctive moment by organizing his body in such a way as to de-automatize habitus by overloading it with the preliminaries to more than one possible action and relationship.

6 The use of the prefix "pre" is problematic here, as it can be taken to mean that the "pre-expressive" state ends when the "expressive" state begins. Barba, in his article on pre-expressivity in A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology, makes clear his belief that, while the "pre-expressive" state can exist before any attempt to express particular meaning, it should normally continue throughout the performance. The chronological order refers only to the training process, where performers may work on "stage presence" independent of a particular narrative. I would take issue with this assertion. It seems to me that all bodily organizations (or habitus) imply narratives to be enacted, and thus carry meaning. It is not for nothing that the Asian performance training most noted for creating presence teaches, from the beginning, not simply actions, but roles. Ultimately, a better term will need to be found to describe this state.

Brecht's *Gestus* functions in a similar way but concentrates more on situations than on individual bodies to create a different form of performative reflexivity. According to Walter Benjamin, Brecht's work is characterized "by the forceful impact on one another of separate, sharply distinct situations" and it is this juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory situations that creates a subjunctive moment in which the audience cannot just use automatized reactions to respond to events on the stage. "The songs, the captions, the gestural conventions differentiate the scenes," says Benjamin. "As a result, intervals occur which tend to destroy illusion. These intervals paralyze the audience's readiness for empathy" (Understanding 21). Where habitus function in everyday life by calling forth unconscious physical responses to construct the performed narratives of generational, class, and gender relations, in the dialectical theatre Brecht championed, they are mobilized only to be shut down and restarted. The spectators are thus thrown into a state of disequilibrium precisely because of their ability to respond to these habitus. It is this ability to respond, which is usually unconscious, that makes noticeable the shifting of the narrative ground on which one bases everyday responses. The disequilibrium associated with reflection is here introduced by bringing to consciousness the unconscious body organization that Bourdieu identified as none other than "l'oubli de l'histoire que l'histoire elle-même produit en incorporant les structures objectives qu'elle produit dans ces quasi-natures que sont les habitus" (179).

Faced with an actor in a pre-expressive state, whether created by physical imbalance or sudden juxtapositions of habitus, audience members enter a pre-interpretive state in which they too are particularly alert since they can no longer rely on the automatisms of habitus to follow the action. I mean "follow the action" in the most literal way here; spectators cannot possibly comprehend thematic material in theatrical performance if they do not know who did and said what to whom. In this sense, spectators communicate with their bodies as much as do actors in the theatre, though their particular physical roles are strictly separated. To know where to look, what gesture to

notice, what reaction to anticipate, the spectator must use those categories of perception and action that s/he has learned in everyday life, even as s/he puts them into question when the theatrical action proves them inadequate for the interpretation of the world presented on the stage. Pre-interpretivity then amounts to the imbalance created in the spectator's body when the performers' actions trigger habitus but the spectator's institutional situation within the theatrical frame prevents her or him from carrying out the habitus. In such a situation the spectator can come to recognize her or his own habitual body organization precisely because s/he is held in a state of disequilibrium composed of a tension between normally automatic reactions and the theatrical injunction not to carry them out. Thus the spectator, like the performer, though on a different level, is put in situations that oblige the body, as repository of social knowledge, to find a new point of balance. When we view theatrical performance in these terms, we recognize that although "the capacity to enter into a shared world of significance" (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 207) has different physical manifestations in different performance modes, it always depends on the tension created by the unbalancing of the body and the necessary rebalancing[7] that results.

2.6. Performance as the Enactment of a Public Sphere

While the notions of pre-expressivity and pre-interpretivity can help us to understand how the habitus of everyday life can be de-automatized and so put into question, they offer little help in exploring how popular theatre might constitute the space in which a vision of the mechanics of participatory community might be generated. Clearly, popular theatres dedicated to developing participatory community structures need a method that will allow

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7 It is perhaps worth noting, and we can verify this in the movement of our own bodies, that just as "nature abhors a vacuum," the body abhors imbalance and cannot maintain disequilibrium (physical or social) for any significant length of time.

them to do more than simply reflect already existing relationships; participatory communitarianism demands the collective ability to generate models based on new knowledge and new relationships. Suvin, in his essay "On Cognitive Emotions and Topological Imagination," offers some clues as to how such new knowledge might come into being in the theatre. Discussing metaphor, which he defines as "a unitary meaning arising out of the interaction of disparate semantic units from different category domains," he suggest that "complex cognition" can be generated "not by literal or analytic statement, but by sudden confrontation. Whether verbal or visual (e.g. on the stage . . .)," he says, "metaphor results in the perception of a possible relationship with a new norm of its own, and it always embodies a value-judgment correlative to an integral, i.e. also emotional, involvement" (174).

The theatrical medium, as we shall see, is particularly well-adapted for this mode of cognition simply by virtue of the number of categories and sign-systems it simultaneously employs. Roland Barthes goes so far as to pose the problem of theatricality in terms of this density of categories: "c'est cela, la théâtralité: une épaisseur de signes. . . . Quels rapports ces signes disposés en contre-point (c'est-à-dire à la fois épais et étendus, simultanés et successifs), quels rapports ces signes ont-ils entre eux?" (Barthes 258). I would suggest that the presentation on the stage of two categories that are normally conflicting or mutually exclusive in everyday life (e.g. a female body playing a traditionally masculine role or an exotic habitus in response to a common trigger) forces the audience to take a new approach to the action. An audience member faced with a theatrical metaphor of this type has two choices: either s/he decides that the two categories being presented are absolutely mutually exclusive, in which case the presentation is so incoherent as to be meaningless, or s/he strives to create the frame that will make the presentation meaningful. As Suvin also notes, narrative will add to the richness of the knowledge generated by the creation of a new meaning-making frame by allowing its verification over time. In his words:

> In comparison to the "propositional metaphor," narrative permits much more detailed and articulated exploration of its key hypothesis -- which is also its founding metaphor -- as to its properties, most prominently the relationships between people it implies. Such evaluation of its thought-experiment is always in feedback with the reader's vision of empirical reality. The intense flash of metaphor is too brief to be judged by anything except its fruits, the "thick" and immediate shock-effect of a "category-earthquake." In any story or tale, however, it ought to be possible to verify examined aspects of the central propositions which have by means of coherence, plenitude, and novelty created the narrative universe of that tale. In so doing, both metaphor and narrative redescribe the known world and open up new possibilities of intervention into it . . . ("On Cognitive" 177)

Theatrical presentation has the advantage of being able to create models that employ both the shock effect of simultaneous sign systems and the narrative verification of the interaction of normally incompatible categories.

Another important tool for the study of theatrical forms that aim to generate the new norms and forms of relationship necessary for the development of participatory community is the theory of Possible Worlds. Possible Worlds theory has recently been "repatriated" to the study of fiction, and particularly to the semiology of theatre, from the philosophy of logic, where "fiction [has begun] to serve as a means of checking the explanatory power of logical hypotheses and models" (Pavel 2). The key word here is "possible," for the theory of Possible Worlds concentrates not on the truth or falsehood of a particular statement, nor on the values it embodies, but on the conditions that would have to obtain for the statement to be true. For example, Possible World theory does not ask if the two different social groups should or will develop a common public sphere in

which to resolve differences and enact a common world. Instead it explores the conditions that would have to prevail in order for this to happen. Whether or not the harmonious co-existence of two distinct social groups is theoretically POSSIBLE is determined by our ability to describe a set of conditions, or "world," in which these two groups do co-exist. In Van Dijk's words: "we say that p is possible, if there is AT LEAST ONE IMAGINABLE SITUATION in which p is true" (29 [emphasis in the original]).

In this light, fiction is neither a "mere diversion," nor a delusion, but an important tool for exploring possible alternative social arrangements. We must note here that while this approach may be new to philosophers, it is hardly new to practitioners of popular culture. As Walter Benjamin points out in "The Storyteller," "orientation toward practical interests is characteristic of many born storytellers," of whom it must be asked "whether it is not his very task to fashion the raw material of experience, his own and that of others , in a solid, useful, and unique way"? (86 and 108). It seems clear that this fashioning of experience corresponds to the formulation of new Possible Worlds: the storyteller is describing the situation in which a particular conflict could be resolved, and is thus verifying possibility by defining the conditions under which it would become truth. This is certainly how the Philosopher of Brecht's Messingkauf Dialogues proposes to use the theatre, and it is on this point that Benjamin distinguishes Brecht's epic theatre from Aristotelian catharsis: "instead of identifying itself with the hero, the audience is called upon to learn to be astonished at the circumstances within which he has his being" (Understanding 18).

Possible World theory is especially useful for the study of the role popular theatre can play in the development of participatory community because it allows us to ask questions whose answers are not pre-determined by the naturalized and automatic histories of habitus. Such a positive attitude towards the role of fiction in developing

public life depends, of course, on a pluralist vision of epistemology such as that promoted by Pavel's "tolerant epistemologists," who by "replacing the classical idea of a reality unique and undivided with a multiplicity of equally valid world versions, have come to look at fiction as just another of these numerous versions, by no means less worthy than its competitors" (2). This is the approach taken by Teun van Dijk in Text and Context; Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse where he describes a Possible World as the situation in which a set of propositions is satisfied, or as a state of affairs that might have been. He emphasizes, however, that we are dealing here not with an actual physical state, but with a structure of meaning: "Note that the notion of a possible world should not be identified with our intuitive ideas of (our) "world," "reality," etc. but as an abstract construct of semantic theory (model theory). Thus our actual world is just one element of a set of possible worlds" (29).

This is an important distinction for a theory of Possible Worlds in the theatre, where the physical presence of human beings who act out a narrative before a live audience could lead one to intuitively assert that the Possible World is actually physically present on the stage. In fact, as numerous semioticians have pointed out, even when endowed with three-dimensional presence, the map is not the territory, and stage activity must be taken as a map which serves to induce the Possible World in the minds and bodies of the spectators. Eco provides a particularly valuable description of this process of meaning-creation in his discussion of theatrical signification as ostension. He points out that the theatrical sign is not actively produced in the way a word or drawn image is produced, but is instead picked up from existing physical bodies, then de-realized or de-semanticized by showing it to an audience in a manner which reduces it to those of its features which are pertinent to the signification of a whole class of objects. It is the showing of this de-realized object to an audience which constitutes ostension, the most important theatrical form of signification (110-11). In this light the agents, objects, and relationships on the stage must be seen as signs, chosen for their ability to evoke a reality

other than the actual physical reality of their presence. In their capacity as signs they cannot, by definition, have the same ontological status as agents, objects, and relationships in the empirical world of automatized habitus. This is why the theatrical Possible World must be approached as a playful or liminoid sphere constructed by the public interaction of performers and spectators, and not simply as the "world" enclosed in the physical space of the stage.

In heterogeneous modern societies, it is to be expected that different groups of spectators will compare the fictional world of the stage to different empirical worlds, worlds established by the enactment in real time of different sets of habitus. The question of how this affects the creation of fictional Possible Worlds is an important one, for it opens the door to the possibility that many different Possible Worlds can be created from one performance text, depending on the information the audience brings to the task. Suvin underlines this point in his article "The Performance Text as Audience-Stage Dialog Inducing a Possible World," where he describes the creation of a "specific Possible World" in terms of "the interaction between the existents, events, and relationships being ostended and the audience for which they are ostended" (15). The term "interaction" indicates that not only will the stage information condition the spectators' creation of a Possible World, but that spectator reaction will also affect the information about the Possible World which is ostended from the stage. Examples abound in theatre circles of audiences who have not reacted as expected to a performance. Anyone who has seen a performer attempt a dramatic scene only to be met with laughter from the spectators has witnessed a conflict in the creation of the dramatic Possible World. The discomfort we often feel in these situations is, I think, largely due to the conflict that ensues as the performer struggles to define the Possible World as one in which a given combination of signs means "cool-headed saviour," while the audience tries to define it as one in which this same combination means "stuck-up professional." One of three things generally happens in such cases: either the performer wins out by ostending a series of signs which

negate the spectators' initial framing, or the performer seeks to please the audience by "hamming it up" and thus confirming their frame, or some new frame is created between the two in which this set of signs can mean "cool-headed saviour as stuck-up professional" (or vice versa). One way or another, if the performance is to have any meaning at all, performers and spectators must project a common Possible World, however skeletal, on the basis of some coherent (though not necessarily completely so) narrative which they come to share.

It is important to note to that the interaction we are discussing does not take place between individuals on a one-to-one basis, but as a rule between groups of performers and spectators. By their very choice to gather in a particular space to participate in the enactment of a Possible World, both performers and spectators are already starting to constitute a public sphere where the individual participates in creating the assumptions and values according to which s/he will affect and be affected by other members of the assembled community. The performer cannot maintain the "cool-headed saviour" Possible World if other performers start reacting within a "stuck-up professional" Possible World. On the other side of the equation, as both Suvin and Ubersfeld point out, spectator reaction in theatre is a group reaction in which the individual spectator is aware of the reaction of other spectators and must frame her/his reaction in relation to it. (cf. Suvin, "Performance" and Ubersfeld École). The theatrical Possible World then is neither the world of the stage nor the sole creation of individual spectators, but a "meaning-bestowing frame of relations" (Suvin, "Performance" 5) created by an interaction between performers and spectators.

This vision of the construction of a fictional Possible World by interaction between performers and spectators has an important implication for critical work: the critic needs to know not only the dramatic and performance texts but also to know something about the audience. While it is clearly impractical to follow every audience

through every performance in order to discuss the creation of theatrical Possible Worlds, one can identify the audience for whom a given performance text is intended, for as Bakhtin/Volosinov points out in Marxism and Philosophy of Language, utterance, and in fact any form of communication, "is constructed between two socially organized persons," and "word is oriented toward an addressee, toward who that addressee might be." Further, "expression-utterance is determined by the actual conditions of the given utterance - above all, by its immediate social situation" (Volosinov 85). So we cannot describe the "meaning-bestowing frame of relations" that constitutes the theatrical Possible World by looking only at the signs emanating from the stage. Completeness demands that we look also at least at the kinds of audience implied in the performance text and in such social conditions of performance as national territory, institutional venue, and organization of theatre space. We must also look carefully at the kind of frames that are used to establish the separation of this theatrical world from the everyday world. Is this separation a playful one, or does it more resemble the kind of separation that divides the professionalism of those who are socially authorized to adjudicate meaning from those who are not? Do the conventions used to establish the frame simply separate this event from other events, or do they separate groups of people who are "in the know" from groups who are not? How responsive are performers to audience reaction, for instance? To what extent does the performance confirm the habitus of audience members? Are some groups of audience members pushed more than others to "unlearn" automatized habits? Only by asking questions such as these can we do justice to the possibility that popular theatre is participating in the enactment, not simply of an entertaining or celebratory fiction, but of a concrete and situated public sphere in which both audience members and performers participate in creating the conditions for the meaningful collective expression and adjudication of right and wrong.

2.7. Some Preliminary Conclusions about Methodology

The understanding of theatre as a body-centered way of knowing that can play a role in undoing the mind/body split typical of modern societies suggests a particular way of looking at popular theatre and its claims to help us rethink the notions of "community" and "professionalism." Rather than trying to identify the already existing communities the popular theatre movement represents and then evaluating the authenticity of its portrayals, this approach suggests that we ask: how might Canadian popular theatre's espousal of "community" as a basic organizing principle give rise to new forms of Canadian theatre and thus new visions of what it means to be a professional theatre worker? If we are especially concerned about issues of public life in modern societies, we must also ask: do these theatrical forms make a particular contribution, one that could not be made by other forms of public discourse, to building a sense of community among participants in the popular theatre process? Further, can this sense of community help us think through the public/private split characteristic of liberal democracies and so help solve the problem of diminishing participation in the public decision-making processes of modern societies? A body-centered approach further suggests that to answer these questions we must start, not by enunciating principles or explicating performance texts, but by looking at the ways in which popular theatre troupes organize their creative work. This will be the task of the next three chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter 3: Popular Theatre as Community Activism

One of the most striking differences between the creation processes of popular theatre troupes and those of mainstream theatres is a difference in the way artistic relationships are organized. This difference has most often been discussed in terms of the ways in which performance texts are created, and much has been written in the last fifteen years about the importance of various forms of collective and collaborative creation in building distinctly Canadian theatrical forms. But is the collective creation of a performance text enough to ensure that a particular theatre project will encourage a participatory approach to building community?

Certainly, collective creation must be credited with putting into question both commercial and romantic views of the artist as an ideal liberal thinker, unencumbered by ongoing physical or emotional bonds to other human beings. In the collective creation process the artist cannot function as an atomistic, disburdened individual whose theatrical relationships are restricted to a passing back and forth of artistic objects in the form of playtexts, stage designs, soundscapes, character portrayals, etc. But, as we saw in Chapter One, several critics of African and Latin American popular theatre suggest that collectively created works can simply mobilize the worst clichés of a populist culture or reinforce stereotypes that ultimately serve the dominant groups of a given society. More generally, those involved in collectively creating performance texts do not always encourage wide collective participation in the creation of public meaning and values on the basis of these texts. In its more avant-garde forms, the collective creation of small integrationist groups can, and too frequently does, lead to the development of theatrical languages so esoteric as to be incomprehensible to all but the most thoroughly initiated of audiences. This raises for theatre the same issue that communitarian thinkers raise for social theory: who really has access to the public arenas in which decisions about meaning and quality are made? In the theatre, as in other public arenas, access, while theoretically

universal, is in practice restricted by considerations including financial resources and a wide range of cultural expectations about the proper social role of people from different class, gender, ethnic and geographic backgrounds, to name but a few.

3.1. Theatre Workers as Activists

It is around the question of audience access to the public sphere, of the role of the audience in the creation process itself, that popular theatre can first be distinguished from both commercial and avant-garde theatres. Where both the latter groups tend to structure their relationships with audiences around the presentation of a finished text in (however restricted) a marketplace, popular theatre companies start to develop their relationship to audiences long before a performance text is even in the early stages of creation. Maureen Martineau, co-artistic director of Québec's Théâtre Parminou, describes this as the key to her company's theatrical style. "Nous, notre théâtre commence toujours par la question du public. Notre théâtre part d'une question de thématique et presque tout de suite, en même temps, par une question du public" (Personal Interview, June 1992). This is not, she points out, simply a question of "marketing the arts" by identifying target audiences to whom the Parminou's artistic product might later be sold, nor is it an attempt to legitimize representations of community as in the simple commissioning of a dramatic text. The Parminou conceives of its work as a collaboration with other groups who are trying to stimulate public debate around issues that affect the society in which they all live. In this sense they function as what Raymond Williams' calls a collective source, whose "function and intention [is] not only openly declared but commonly approved and controlled" (Culture 304).

Themes for Parminou performance texts are sometimes suggested by organizations who approach them for help, but in other cases projects start from issues that personally concern the members. These concerns stem both from life experiences and from work on short pieces for specific events that end up raising larger questions that troupe members

want to explore further. This was the case, for instance, with the L'Effet secondaire ("The Secondary [School] Effect"), a play about the situation of Québécois youth inspired by research done for a short made-to-order intervention with educators on Québec's high school drop-out rate. Once the troupe has identified an issue it would like to work on, it sets out to find organizations who are working in the community on this issue and who are interested in exploring it through theatre. Their aim in this process is to encourage public debate and in this sense the organizations that collaborate with the Parminou act as an early link to the audiences the theatre will later meet. In Martineau's words:

> On veut collaborer, parce que, comme notre théâtre porte sur le social, on ne veut pas organiser des actions tout seuls dans notre coin. On sait que le théâtre ne va pas changer le monde, mais on cherche à s'associer au moins à tous ceux qui interviennent avec la population actuellement au niveau social là-dessus, pour voir comment le théâtre peut collaborer. Quand c'est possible, le projet se bâtit avec les groupes intéressés: des fois il y en a un, des fois il y en a quatre organismes, des fois il y en a trois . . . Ce ne sont pas eux-autres qui nous donnent de l'argent, mais avec eux autres nous sommes capables d'aller chercher de l'argent, parce qu'eux autres ils ont le même intérêt.
>
> C'est là où l'objectif du spectacle se définit, autour des intérêts communs. Des fois la première réunion peut prendre trois heures pour trouver la bonne phrase, le verbe exacte, pour exprimer qui nous voulons rejoindre et quel est le but du spectacle. La contribution la plus importante du groupe c'est au niveau de l'analyse de la thématique, au niveau de la documentation, de nous dire quoi regarder, quoi aller voir, quoi lire. Ils sont devenus nos premiers documentalistes, nos premières personnes ressources. Nous cherchons des partenaires sociales, parce que nous, nous

> nous considérons spécialistes du théâtre, mais pas nécessairement de la thématique. (Personal Interview, June 1992)

The Théâtre Parminou's efforts to build relationships with audiences at an early stage of the creative process perhaps helps explain why it was among the rare Québécois popular theatre troupes to survive through the 1980s and into the 1990s. Where many of the other troupes that practiced collective creation in the early and prolific period of the popular theatre movement in Québec concentrated their energies on building absolutely equal relationships within troupes, the Parminou opted in the early 1980s to pay more attention to structuring a form of relationship with audiences that did not presume that everyone involved in a project had to be involved in all aspects of it. The approach Martineau describes above marks a shift from the integrationist notions of community underlying the structures of the early collective creation troupes to the more participatory notion of community which was the structuring principle of collaborative theatre.

As in the forms of participatory community Benhabib describes, the Parminou's work with sponsoring groups representative of potential audience members is based on a variety of relations constructed by a plurality of people. To paraphrase Benhabib, we might say that the form of community described here is based on the belief that everyone involved in a project has a say in the decision-making structures and practical arrangements that define their collective action and that what each one does makes a difference. This stands in sharp contrast to the structuring principle of most of the early collective creation that refused any specialization of tasks and insisted (in principle, at least!) that all members participate equally in all activities. This earlier method was based on a form of substitutionalist universalism within the troupe, which assumed that equality meant such a high degree of similarity that any community member could be replaced at any time by any other. Ironically, the search for the reconciliation and harmony of a unique and coherent value scheme implied in this form of communitarianism too often led to small closed

groups who refused to let other people join them in their newly created spaces of public discourse.[1] As in most examples of integrationist community these troupes established their sense of community identity largely in terms of alterity: WE are a community because THEY are not like us. The result of this attitude was sometimes a simplistic aesthetic based on an almost contemptuous attitude towards audiences who were not considered enlightened enough to understand anything but the simplest of images. The Parminou, in contrast, established a more interactive form of community by acknowledging a plurality of modes of moral being and public intervention, without endorsing all of them as valid or falling into the relativism of a purely marketing approach.

For such an interactive approach to audiences to work, popular theatre workers, however skilled they are in their particular craft, cannot afford to define their identities and community affiliations only in terms of work in the theatre. It is not surprising then that most members of popular theatre troupes maintain strong links with non-theatrical groups and consider these links extremely important to the development of their theatrical work. Headlines Theatre of Vancouver, for instance, started work on their play about domestic violence in Native families as a result of discussions with Ron George, President of the United Native Nations, who had known Headlines work for years as a result of productions on land claims and on issues of racism. The concern at the time of initial discussions between George and Headlines' Artistic Director David Diamond (1989) was

1 Michel Brais, theatre facilitator at CEGEP Rosemont gave a striking example of this in an interview with Christian Dutil in 1981 where he cited the case of a troupe made up of older women who, after they had done one show together, refused to let anyone else enter their group, even when some of those people went through a theatre workshop to meet one of the criteria the group had set for membership. In Brais' estimation the women's resistance to newcomers was the result of life experiences that had led them to fear that someone would try to take things away from them. Unfortunately, the result of their attitude was the slow death of the troupe, since it had no new energies to draw on. (Brais in Dutil Appendix C)

that "with all the activity throughout Canada on land claims and self-government, the issues of the urban Aboriginal sector were getting left out of the discussion" (Diamond, "Out of the Silence Final Report" 2). Diamond and George's discussions ultimately lead to a meeting between Headlines and the Urban Representative Body of Aboriginal Nations (URBAN) during which it was agreed that a co-production between the two groups would be mounted on an issue of URBAN's choice. Diamond notes that this corresponded to Headlines' desire to expand their six day Power Play process for developing community plays and to test its community work in a larger arena. Following the decision to collaborate, an infrastructure was set up that included an URBAN volunteer who sought out Native community members willing to participate in the creation of the piece, a Native choreographer, facilitators from Headlines, a design team composed of members of both Headlines theatre and artists from the Aboriginal community, and two full-time counsellors (Diamond, "Out of the Silence Final Report" 2-3).

But while Headlines Theatre is best known for its Power Play community projects, it does not create all its plays as direct collaborations with pre-existing community organizations. In the case of Mamu: the Currency of Life, a play about the problems of environmental protection in areas of B.C. controlled by logging companies, Diamond and a British partner, Kevin Finnan, wrote the play themselves after doing research on the issue in the community. According to Diamond's account in an interview I conducted with him in May 1994, he had had the idea for a play about the interconnectedness of life for several years before he and Finnan discussed it at length and developed the basic structure during a hike in the Rockies in 1992. Diamond then started seriously collecting all the written material he could on the subject and in May of 1993, Finnan came from Britain for a 10 week writing period. During this time Diamond and Finnan toured the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island talking to environmentalists, loggers, government people, corporate executives and journalists. One of these meetings, a chance encounter on Vancouver Island with a woman doing an environmental study on the Marbled Murlet, a small bird facing

extinction because clear-cut logging is destroying its breeding habitat, led to the central image of the play. Perhaps more importantly, it led to a project-long collaboration with the environmental activist who shared the playwrights' concern about how certain human attitudes were destroying the possibility of life on earth for other species (Personal Interview).

The Popular Theatre Alliance of Manitoba (PTAM) also has a variety of experiences using a play project to build community relationships. In the case of one of PTAM's first community plays, Under the Line, PTAM's original work in the community was not even intended to produce a formal playtext for public presentation. This project resulted from PTAM's work using theatre games to help adult learners express their views, during a conference on adult literacy training, on how a literacy project was run. Unlike the Headlines or the Theatre Parminou projects, in this case the play itself did not result from a pre-determined theme. In the course of working with the theatre games, it became clear that the participants' major concern was not so much literacy, as the organizers had expected, but problems with life on welfare. In Artistic Director Margo Charlton's estimation, the literacy program the women were in was giving them a forum in which to deal with literacy-related problems, but they had no outlet to work through their problems with being on welfare. "Their big hassles," said Charlton, "were dealing with their welfare workers. That's what most of the sharing was about. The very immediate problems -- 'I have to walk because I couldn't get a bus pass ' -- quickly became the focus of the workshop" (Personal Interview). At a wrap-up meeting on the literacy project participants felt they'd learned a lot about dealing with welfare workers and wanted to share it with other people. In Charlton's words: "They'd discovered they had some rights and could speak up. People suggested a variety of things including writing an article for the Inner City Voice [a community newspaper] and doing a play about it: 'You guys are a theatre company, you could help us do a play about it!'" (Personal Interview). Interestingly, one of the women I interviewed, Isabel Hall, who participated in the project from beginning to

end, expressed the reasons for her continued involvement more in terms of the desire to maintain the sense of community that had developed among the women than in terms of the desire to convey information. The group, she said, had at first just wanted to learn more about the welfare system, about what their rights were, but ultimately they wanted to keep working together a little longer rather than each going their separate ways to deal with what they'd figured out. (Personal Interview) Charlton apparently shared this view, for she explained PTAM's continuing involvement in what was then an unfunded project in similar terms: "It just didn't seem right to leave them there" (Personal Interview).

The source of the initiative for some of PTAM's other projects is less clear. In introductions to the video versions of Beyond the Punchline, about violence against women, and Some of My Best Friends Are . . . , about racism, PTAM claims these projects resulted from discussions after mainstage professional productions of David Demchuk's If Betty Should Rise, about incest, and Bruce McManus' Selkirk Avenue, about Winnipeg's racially mixed North End. But Pauline Riley, who worked as PTAM's community liaison person on both these projects, remembers discussions happening around these issues long before the mainstage productions were mounted. This discrepancy can in part be accounted for by PTAM's method of organizing mainstage productions in conjunction with community groups concerned with particular issues. Another element in the difficulties around tracing the exact history of the projects is, however, the more general activism of the theatre workers who do this kind of work. Susan Seagrove makes this point about performer/activists in discussing Company of Sirens' creation of their play, Shelter from Assault. During the creation of that piece, company members relied heavily on the knowledge of one of the performers, Diana Braithwaite, who developed the role of the shelter worker in the play by referring to her own experiences working in a shelter. Sirens' members could also draw information from a board member, Rita Cooley, who was heavily involved in the Shelter movement. In an interview with Maria DiCenzo in 1991, Siren's founder Cynthia Grant underlined how this

history of community activism had influenced the very structure of Sirens' work and sensitized them to the importance of including a representative cross-section of the groups for whom they perform in the troupe itself. Grant explained that before even founding the troupe "a number of us had been involved in highly conflictual scenarios in the socialist-feminist community in Toronto around organizing International Women's Day in terms of who had the power, who had the say. As a result, we were quite sensitized to the issue of representation in a group on stage" (DiCenzo and Bennett 79).

Jackie Crossland, Headlines' manager, believes this broad community activism on the part of popular theatre workers constitutes an important, but not always visible, element in all their work. "We keep our ear to the ground," she says of Headlines theatre workers:

> I relate very strongly to people in the women's community, in the lesbian community, to people in the trade union movement, to some extent to various political groups around various issues. So we're sort of *au courant*. It's good that Headlines has a manager that knows what the issues are out there. I don't know a whole hell of a lot about a lot of them, but I know what people are talking about and I know how things are falling in the community. I pay attention to my community and I know where I sit in various communities, so that information is very useful when we're thinking about projects. Similarly David [Diamond] has access to communities in different ways. Generally speaking, people who work here have to be tied to something. You can't come in here as a sort of generalized middle-manager person. That kind of person wouldn't know who that audience is really and they wouldn't know how to talk to them. (Personal Interview)

The sense of community Crossland is discussing here is not as abstract as that evoked by the"interpretive community" of Stanley Fish's reader response theory, or by the meaning-

determining "horizon of expectations" that Jauss suggests readers to bring to a text (cf. Bennett, Theatre 36-58). While the communities that popular theatre companies refer to may fulfill these functions when faced with a performance text, it is not this function that defines them, as is the case in Fish's and Jauss' discussions of community. The *raison d'être* of these communities, both outside and inside the theatre, is to work together to solve the material problems of everyday life and in this sense they correspond much more to the sociopolitical notion of community put forward by feminist communitarians. To use Hartsock's definition, as cited in the previous chapter of this dissertation, these are communities characterized by complementary sharing to meet each other's needs (255) and by action in connection with others with whom community members share common life and concerns (217). It is in this light that Crossland's insistence on the artist having a sense of her or himself as a social being takes on its full importance. Crossland contends that popular theatre work must be based on both a willingness on the part of the theatre worker to learn from her or his surroundings and an understanding of how s/he connects to particular communities. "This is a very different attitude than assuming that what springs out of your unique soul is of interest to everyone around you," she says. "Perhaps it is, perhaps it's not" (Personal Interview). PTAM's Charlton makes a similar point when she asserts that:

> professionals must always acknowledge that they are part of communities too and ask what is their relationship to this issue, this group, this community. Sometimes it might be a very strong tie and in other cases there might be a feeling of being an outsider and needing to learn from the group, of being heard mainly in terms of information and expertise. But if you don't ask yourself at some point why are you there, "what's in it for me"... It's not wrong to ask that question, because if you don't, you're lying to yourself or the group. You're there for a reason, not just a pay cheque -- well hopefully that's not the case! You have to care in some kind of way.

> There has to be some kind of caring, otherwise it's just not going to work. (Personal Interview)

Crossland and Charlton, like Martineau, Seagrove and Grant, are drawing attention not only to a non-commercial relationship between popular theatre troupes and their audiences, but to the importance of the theatre worker acknowledging her or his particular standpoint in that process. This standpoint is not simply a point of view on an issue, but a sense of oneself as an embodied and historically situated person whose life experience has created the categories of thought and action within which one enacts worlds.

3.2. Theatre Workers as Facilitators

Jan Selman, former Artistic Director of Catalyst Theatre, found that her attempts to define her place in the broader social picture led to a certain dissatisfaction with working in communities in which her only role was that of facilitator. She decided to found the Women's Circle out of a desire to more fully explore her own particular standpoint and to break with the service role she found herself playing in some of the work she did in Northern and Native communities. She told me in 1992:

> I certainly came back from my work with Native groups and my work in the North saying, "I believe those projects were important and valuable and all those things, but at the same time I must, in those projects, play a role either of the 'drama expert' or a very careful role of trying to reflect all the decisions back to them." So you're there and not there. You're part of the group and not part of the group and what happens is suddenly you are in fact one of the group and you're in coalition with, if not <u>of</u>, a group of people. For instance if you're working with a group of survivors of violence, if you're not <u>of</u> that group, you're working with them as a woman who has issues and concerns about violence, so you're at least a step closer,

> if not entirely of that group. That was one key moment for me. I felt as a woman that I had issues and concerns that are shared with many other women who I didn't have a forum to speak with. (Personal Interview)

Selman's work in the North was, of course, particular, in the sense that she was flying in for short periods of time to communities to which she had no ongoing attachment. The simple fact of concentrating her work with the Women's Circle in the Edmonton area, where she lived at the time, allowed her to link her professional activity much more closely to her life experience. This decision cannot be reduced to a choice of personal lifestyle that had professional consequences. Selman's discussion of her choice to step out of the facilitator role points to some of the problems with the role itself.

In English-Canadian popular theatre practice, the role of facilitator is generally conceived in terms that draw heavily on the kind of service tradition that Raymond Williams describes as the typical result of a British middle-class education. While popular theatre facilitators may choose the communities they wish to support, once the choice is made they are expected to provide the means of theatrical exploration and expression without attempting to influence the political or social ends to which they are put. This form of professionalism in popular theatre practice is apparently quite different from the kind of disinterested "objective" professionalism Dorothy Smith describes as typical of the social sciences, where adherence to the norms of the discipline is more important than reference to personal experience. Nonetheless, the conception of facilitation prevalent in English-Canadian popular theatre does frequently end up demanding a form of "objectivity" without which the work is seen to have been "contaminated" by the facilitators' input. David Diamond, in discussing his work as a popular theatre facilitator during an interview in 1994, used exactly this terminology. "When you're doing a play that generates out of workshop participants' lives, the material that you're working with is them," he said. "It's not you, it's them, and in order to do it well, you've got to be true to them and you can't

insert a lot of yourself into it, because it becomes contaminated with something that it shouldn't contain" (Personal Interview).

While Diamond's attitude looks quite normal in many English-Canadian contexts, it sounds very odd from a Québécois point of view. In Québec, the theatre worker is much more likely to be expected to bring not only skills but an artistic vision to a popular theatre project. Théâtre Parminou's Maureen Martineau, for instance, insists that without bringing something of her own concerns to an issue she cannot fulfill her role as a popular theatre worker: "Le but aussi c'est de nous toucher. Parce qu'après ça, comme auteur, si tu veux fonctionner, il faut que t'aie été touché. On doit rejoindre un noeud sensible. T'es dans ta propre conviction après, dans ce que tu vas écrire." She admits that this is not always self-evident and that she has sometimes gone into projects harbouring some resistance, only to find herself caught up by the emotion of the people who tell her their stories and put their trust in her. This was the case, she says, for the initial workshops for Le Silence des Autres, a piece about the role of witnesses in the fight against sexual harassment in the workplace:

> Je partais peut-être avec l'idée que, bon, l'harcèlement sexuel, ce n'est pas que ça n'existe plus, mais on a fait le tour. Le monde en a entendu parler. L'atelier m'a comme resensibilisée. Quand t'es le premier public et toi t'es resensibilisé(e), t'es touché(e), tu peux, après ça, retransmettre cette expérience-là dans ton écriture et ta mise-en-scène pour un autre public. (Personal Interview)

While Martineau is concerned to transmit the group's concerns, she does not see her role in doing this as simply technical. In many ways the approach she proposes is diametrically opposed to Diamond's. She will not just give community members the tools to tell a story; she will also tell the story of her reaction, of the meeting of worlds that took place when the stories were first told. This approach suggests that, in practice, it is impossible for

facilitators to structure theatrical projects without adding something of themselves and their standpoint to the work. Jan Selman takes a similar position when she argues that, in the best instances of popular theatre, the facilitator functions as a collaborator who works with other community members to bring issues that concern all parties into the public sphere.

Viewed from this angle, attempts to keep the facilitator's means completely separate from the ends of the community can only be seen as proceeding from the positivist assumption that "community" is a pre-existing closed entity that the facilitator can affect without being affected by. This underlying positivism behind English-Canadian popular theatre practice functions in the opposite way to the integrationist communitarianism against which Québec popular theatres have had to construct their visions of participatory community. The collective creation of the Jeune Théâtre movement in Québec was marked by a belief in the necessary similarity of all members of a community and of the "otherness" of those who were not members. To move towards a more participatory sense of community, troupes like the Théâtre Parminou and the Théâtre Sans Détour had to emphasize the possibilities of plurality and the interaction between partners with very real differences. In English-Canadian popular theatre, an integrationist desire for similarity within troupes has not been the biggest obstacle to the formation of participatory community. Much stronger is the liberal notion of the theatre worker as a free and unencumbered service provider whose "method" or "process" is paradigmatic of human experience as a whole and not the expression of the culturally-conditioned experience of a particular social group. Where integrationist communities react to visions of the "good life" different from their own as threatening to community itself, a liberal emphasis on "process" concentrates on procedure in order to avoid discussing the good life at all.

Linda Griffiths and Maria Campbell's account of their difficulties working together under the direction of Passe Muraille director Paul Thompson to bring Campbell's life history to the stage is a vivid description of the problems that can arise when "process"

takes on a life of its own and directly responsible relationships between people with different visions of the "good life" are neglected. The Book of Jessica; A Theatrical Transformation starts with a dedication from Campbell to her son, another from Griffiths to "the sisters who have helped me through," and a third from both authors to Paul Thompson "for the process." Yet the book itself would seem to imply that Thompson's emphasis on allegiance to, without full discussion of, "the process" played an important role in causing, or at least preventing the solution of, the problems between the professional Toronto actress and the Métis community worker. Interestingly, however, it is not so much because of "the process" that Thompson is directly called to account as because of a contract he presented to Campbell after the first production of the Jessica in Saskatoon. According to Campbell, the contract didn't fairly represent the agreements that she and Griffiths had come to in the course of working on the production, like that the next actress to play Jessica should be Native. More importantly, Campbell describes the contract as having been presented to her in a way that reminded her of the historical situation in which Native peoples were asked to sign treaties without ever being consulted about their contents. She had hoped that Thompson would explain "the process" to her at this final meeting and was hurt and furious when he presented her with a contract limiting her rights to future use of material generated on the basis her life story (56 and 105-106). In a response that the book identifies as coming from "The Voice in the Middle of the Room," a speaker who appears to be Thompson argues that this method of making plays is often painful and that if the problem of the contract hadn't arisen, "another would have been found." The response ends with the assertion: "The final version of Jessica is the richer for all of our experiences and the story of Linda's and Maria's journey has become a fabulous tale of its own. In fact, it would make an interesting play. If anyone is interested in working on that venture, I'm still sitting in the middle of the room and available. The process works" (108-10).

The most interesting thing about this comment is the criterion it uses to determine that "the process works." For the Voice in the Middle of the Room the unstated purpose of "the process" is to create a theatrical commodity, whether a better version of Jessica or a new story that could be put into circulation as a saleable performance text. While the tone of the statement is slightly ironic and Paul Thompson, one of the leading lights of the Toronto alternate theatre scene, can hardly be accused of promoting crass commercialism, his thinking is clearly portrayed here as structured by the same process of commodity exchange that characterizes liberal social thought. While his approach to the process seems somewhat mystical, as evidenced by his reluctance to analyze it and by frequent references throughout the text to the "theatre gods," it is also marked by a sharp separation of means and ends. In fact, such an emphasis on a mystical view of the creative process (which is not unique to Thompson) may simply be another incarnation of the device paradigm Borgmann has identified as typical of late industrial societies. Thompson's process, like Borgmann's device, would seem to be characterized by a "sharp internal division into a machinery and a commodity procured by that machinery" (Borgmann 33) where the "concomitance of radical variability of means and relative stability of ends is the first distinguishing feature" (Borgmann 43). Campbell initially approached Thompson because she wanted to learn to use the process but expresses constant frustration with never having it clearly explained to her. Thompson seemed satisfied because the process was able to deal with unusual material in a new environment and still reliably produce a performance text. From Campbell's point of view it would seem that the process very much corresponded to the second distinguishing feature of the device: "the concealment and unfamiliarity of the means and the simultaneous prominence and availability of the ends" (44). While Thompson and Griffiths can hardly be accused of keeping from her a method they could not themselves explain, the method is, in all probability, not unexplainable. The question that then arises is, why were all of Thompson and Campbell's discussions about the material that was produced and not about the mechanism that produced it ? The answer

is undoubtedly that both Thompson and Griffiths saw themselves as facilitators of a process that would "naturally" produce an end product and that it was this product of which Campbell must ultimately approve. As such, the two theatre professionals seem to have fallen into the trap of creating a process that was simply an alternate entertainment apparatus of the type Brecht tried so hard to avoid.

This stands in sharp contrast to Campbell's approach, which is based on a more activist stance. She insists, throughout her discussions with Griffiths, that Griffiths acknowledge that both she and Thompson did not simply facilitate a process but stole precious material without sufficient concern for the needs of the community from which it came and the ways in which both product and process might be useful to it. Campbell underlines again and again the importance of creating art that can be given back to specific, historically constituted communities and rejects Griffiths universalist assertion that her community is "a global thing." But when Griffiths concedes the point, saying of herself as a theatre worker "I'm a professional thief," Campbell responds: "That's what art is Linda." She then goes on to explain the difference between art as commodity and the role she sees art playing in an ideal community:

> Today, most art is ugly, because it's not responsible to the people it steals from. Real, honest-to-God true art steals from the people. It's a thief. It comes in. It's non-obstructive. You don't feel it. It comes in, and you don't even notice that it's there, and it walks off with all your stuff, but then it gives it back to you and heals you, empowers you, and it's beautiful. Seventy-five percent of the art that's out there steals, but it doesn't give anything back. It doesn't bring you joy. It doesn't heal you. It doesn't ask you questions. It doesn't do anything. It takes your stuff and it hangs it up on the wall and it says, "Look what I've done. Isn't that wonderful. I'm an artist." It's all pure ego, and when you say that maybe I'm the healer

> and you're the artist, that's bullshit. If you're an artist and you're not a healer, then you're not an artist -- not in my sense of what art is. Art is the most powerful . . . it's the main healing tool. The artist in the old communities was the most sacred person of all. (83-84)

Campbell explains to Griffiths at length in the last section of the book that this view of art is based on a traditional Native view of community in which "the very sharing of those things is a contract, and there has to be respect for the sharing" (91). She sees Griffiths, and wants Griffiths to see her, as a "particular other," with whom she must constantly negotiate to recreate bonds of community based on equity and complementary reciprocity. Her arguments with Griffiths almost all turn around Griffiths' inability to recognize the concrete history, identity and affective-emotional constitution that has led to Griffiths' own standpoint. She urges Griffiths to acknowledge the oppression that drove her own ancestors out of Scotland and underlines that some of Griffiths' desires and methods of work are formulated from the standpoint of a colonialist culture whose vision of the good life has limited appeal for colonized peoples. At one point, for instance, Griffiths argues that without her skill and determination Campbell's story might never have become a successful play. Campbell answers that this is an expression of the colonialist mentality that justifies domination by saying "I built high-rises all over the place. I put wheat fields out there. I produced it and if it wasn't for me, you would have let this land die. So I came along and I took what you were wasting and I made something productive out of it, because you weren't doing it" (79-80). Griffiths, she seems to be saying, is judging her fellow citizens' actions on the basis of a notion of productivity that may not be valued by those with whom she shares public space.

Campbell's description of how her own community functioned to sustain her, even at moments when she isolated herself because she feared that she would be denounced by that community for allowing material traditionally restricted to ceremonial use to be

presented in a theatre setting, helps us understand her standpoint. "I'd go home after rehearsals, wasted," she says, "and just lock myself in my room. I'd come out, and there would be three or four Native women, making pots of tea, cleaning up, cooking for me. They gave me back some of what I was putting out, they were the community, but my fear blinded me to that" (50). Campbell tells of her sense of responsibility for Griffiths as the white actress moved into a "dark-side" of spiritual territory that contained dangers of which she didn't seem to be aware. Throughout her discussions with Griffiths, Campbell emphasizes these forms of active sharing as the key to her vision of the good life, though she does not claim that she is unfailingly able to carry them out. She explains to Griffiths that her Native culture is not one of ownership. "Our culture believes in giving, potlatches and give-aways are all a part of the sacred circle. To grow spiritually, to be healthy physically, you have to let go, give away," she says (91). It is worth noting in reading Campbell's words that the Canadian state, in the first years of its existence, took the trouble to legally ban the potlatch and the Sun Dance, both ceremonies involving large community-based give-aways.

In the context of an attempt to build a sense of community between two women raised in these opposing historical traditions, it is perhaps most appropriate that the section of the book before the playtext itself ends with Campbell's story of a difficult childhood experience with a "give-away" at an annual Sun Dance. Her grandmother had given her a special piece of red cloth for a dress some time before the ceremony was to take place. She knew that she must give away her most prized possession during the ceremony but tried to trick her grandmother into believing that it was something other than the prized red cloth. Finally Campbell put the cloth on the blanket to be taken to the give-away ceremony and started to cry. Her grandmother, who had been watching the struggle unfold in silence, waited for her to stop crying and said simply: "The give-away should hurt, that's your sacrifice." But Campbell's story does not end there. She admits that for years afterward when she saw the woman who had received the cloth, all she could think of was her own

loss and that she doesn't feel especially proud of that sentiment. Griffiths responds that Jessica is her red cloth, and the women finally seem to come to some understanding of the struggle that has locked them together for the previous seven years, even as they admit that the wound between them may not be completely healed (110-11).

The sharing and recycling of this story might serve as an example of the kind of moral imagination on which Benhabib argues participatory communities must be based. Through telling their stories to each other, and learning to work together on the basis of these stories, the two women have developed some degree of the public culture that allows people from different backgrounds to articulate "what they think and what their perspectives are" and "in which the self-centered perspective of the individual is constantly challenged by the multiplicity and diversity of perspectives that constitute public life" (141). The search for a sense of coherent individual identity, which is also the theme of the play they together created, is here constructed in terms of narrative unity and not of physical sameness as Benhabib suggests is likely to be the case in participatory communities (198). Once Griffiths learns to tell stories with Campbell and no longer tries to use Campbell's stories as fodder for a device-like creative process, the image Campbell offers becomes the basis for negotiating a living relationship and not just a commodity whose exchange stands in for a relationship between atomistic individuals. The result is not only a personal relationship, but a new playtext. Where the original version of Jessica was structured only by relationships between the totem animals of Campbell's native heritage, the new version introduces Unicorn, who represents Griffiths' highly mediated link to her own culture's communitarian traditions, into the world of the play. In the end, Griffiths does not simply facilitate a process that brings Campbell's truths to light, but uses Campbell's way of knowing to better understand her own place in the world.

It is striking, in reading the playtext that resulted from this troubled collaboration, to note the degree to which the exercises used to research the play seem to have influenced its

ultimate form. This observation leads me to believe that an exploration of the exercises used by popular theatre troupes in researching their plays may yield important clues about the ways in which the *mise en oeuvre* of communitarian principles can lead to the creation of particular theatrical forms.

3.3. Theatre Games as Means of Building Community

Most popular theatre troupes do not research their shows only through written documentation or interviews with people who have experienced the situations they will portray. Given the nature of their medium, troupes must also carefully observe the ways in which the worlds they will portray are put into action by the interaction of human bodies. To do this, most popular theatre troupes use theatre games as a part of their play-preparation process. These games serve a number of purposes. In cases where troupes mount plays with non-professionals, as is the case with Headlines Theatre's Power Play work, they serve in part to introduce future actors to the basic skills they will need to perform their play. But games are also used to accelerate the process through which a group of people who barely know each other learn to function as a unit. The circle game recorded in the video stills on the following pages was used by PTAM in the development of Some of My Best Friends Are . . . and is typical of the exercises used as warm-up and skill-building games. As we shall see, these games not only help participants relax and get used to working with each other, they also encourage the development of some of the specific physical skills and modes of relationship that are necessary to put participatory community into action.

The circle game illustrated below is one of many variants of musical chairs. In the version called Fruit Basket Turnover, described in Sticks and Stones handbook Neighbourhood Action • Recipes for Change, all but one of the participants start by sitting in chairs around the circle. Each participant picks a fruit (or some other object or attribute, like a colour people are wearing, depending on the variant) but does not tell anyone what

s/he has chosen. The person in the middle calls out the names of 3-4 fruits. All those who have chosen those fruits must then change places and in the mêlée that ensues the person in the middle tries to take one of the newly freed chairs. The person in the middle can also call out the words "fruit basket," which means that everyone has to change places. In either case, the last person left without a chair becomes the new person in the middle (21). The game, like most theatre games, is a simple one, but it does much more than break the ice and get people physically warmed-up. Its most important role is, in fact, to structure the forms of individual and collective subjectivity necessary for participatory community to exist by inducing temporary changes in participants body styles.

Fig. 1. Circle Game (Some of My Best Friends Are. . . video)

The use of games like this at an early stage of a workshop clearly establishes the activities that will follow as taking place within a ludic framework. In keeping with the conditions described by Huizinga and Caillois, the game establishes strict physical and temporal limitations, with rules particular to the play activity. More importantly, the consequences of short-term "failure," that is of not finding a chair in any given round, are clearly limited to the sphere of play and each player is given many chances to succeed. But

in order to both succeed in the task of finding a chair and keep the game going, players must start paying attention to what Bateson defines as "metacommunication," as discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis. They must not only deploy their own habitual body knowledge, but must simultaneously observe (in both senses of the word) the unstated rules without which the game itself cannot function. If, for instance, players choose to be untruthful about their choice of fruit, claiming never to have chosen the ones named by the person in the middle, the game will grind to a halt as all the seated players remain in their chairs except when the words "fruit basket" are called out. If one player moves much more slowly than the rest, there is also the danger that play will become monotonous unless other players allow that player to reach a chair. More generally, in order to spot a free chair and get to it before other players do, each player must learn to pay attention to a complex and (literally) ever-moving set of relationships. Habitual strategies for outdistancing fellow participants may not work in this setting and players who co-operate with each other may do better than players who are extremely competitive. Like the initiates Turner describes, though without facing the kind of stakes that mark initiation rituals, participants in such a game must sometimes learn that they do not "know what they thought they knew" and that even in complex modern societies, "beneath the surface structure of custom [is] a deep structure , whose rules they [have] to learn, through paradox and shock" (From Ritual 42). In some cases popular theatre participants must simply learn to recognize the deeper structures underpinning surface structures. They are never in the position of the initiates of traditional societies who must permanently give up their usual style of bodily behaviour to develop a new style of corporeality prescribed by their elders. They are sometimes, though, in the similar position of having to notice and change behaviours they take for granted when confronted with situations these behaviours cannot easily accommodate.

In looking at the illustrations, we see how in this simple game of spatial relations, where players are put into a situation of apparent scarcity of resources (chairs) of the type generally held to trigger the fiercest competition, the surface structure of individualist

thinking so highly prized in liberal societies does not guarantee success. The game induces a new form of subjectivity because, in order to succeed at the tasks it sets, players must adjust their body style to take into account not only individual goals but the movement of the other members of the group.

Fig. 2. Circle Game (Some of My Best Friends Are. . . video)

In Figure 2, for instance, we see that the young woman in the foreground is out of her chair before any of the other players has had a chance to move. But this does not do her any good until the other players move because, while she is moving quickly, she has nowhere to go until someone else vacates a chair. She could, in fact, find herself at a disadvantage because other players can see that there will be an empty space where she has been and can set their direction accordingly while she is still searching for a free space from a vantage point in the middle of the circle where half the chairs are behind her. Interestingly, neither of the women directly beside her take advantage of this situation, both heading directly forward across the circle and ending up being the two last people standing in this round.

In Figures 3 and 4 we see how the combination of personal goals and group relations becomes further complicated when the centre of the circle becomes crowded and several players have to find ways around other players who have become obstacles in their paths. The only two players to avoid this problem are the two facilitators, who presumably have more experience of the game and who move sideways around the circle.

Fig. 3. Circle Game (Some of My Best Friends Are. . . video)

Fig. 4. Circle Game (Some of My Best Friends Are. . . video)

In Figure 5 we see the woman in the centre effectively concede defeat rather than rushing to try to beat the woman in the upper left hand corner to the last available chair.

Fig. 5. Circle Game (Some of My Best Friends Are. . . video)

It is important to note here that the sequence I am describing in this relatively leisurely linear fashion lasts for a mere 8 seconds of a real time. This temporal restriction is a critical element in pushing the players into a metacommunicational mode. There is no time in the actual course of play to deductively analyze all possible moves and their consequences or to discuss strategy with fellow players. Players must rely on movement patterns their bodies learn both before and during the game to guide their moves, and on the rules of the game situation and their experience of the other players to interpret the meaning of moves. In the course of playing the game they learn to spontaneously reevaluate, and sometimes restructure, not only their ways of moving but their ways of perceiving a situation and interacting with others. To fully participate in a game like the one illustrated above, players must learn to pay attention to the desires of other group members, to the relationship between individuals and the whole group, and to the ways these relationships are acted out as a movement of bodies through space. They must also learn to quickly

make decisions about their own place in the group, to act quickly on these decisions, and to adjust their actions as they are confronted with the actions of others and the evolution of the group itself.

When the game takes place in the context of broader discussions of communitarian ideals, these too may be taken into account in interpreting actions and facilitators will sometimes call attention to this point. A question that is frequently asked after an activity or series of activities is "How did you feel participating in that activity?" As participants are encouraged to pay attention to personal emotional responses and to consider them valuable sources of knowledge about the group and its functioning, people will sometimes start to notice social habitus that are structuring relationships within the group in a way that is inimical to its stated goals. Pauline Riley told me that using a combination of games and discussions to point out aspects of internal group dynamics in anti-racist activities that included both Native and non-Native students helped everyone recognize certain behaviour patterns within their own groups that were helping perpetuate the problem:

> The fact that the Native students didn't participate and white students jumped in and never even thought about it and that the teacher had an assumption that Native students wouldn't speak actually assisted us in pointing out racism that was built right in. The exercise was difficult but it actually served another purpose by showing everybody what was going on in that group. That the Native students do hold back and that they also had a responsibility to speak and that the white students didn't think about the fact that half the group wasn't even participating. (Personal Interview)

Monica Marx, Riley's co-facilitator in these exercises, went on to point out that the fact that an activity is presented as play is not enough to make all participants feel that the situation is a safe one. Often previous experience has taught them to be extremely cautious around members of dominant cultural or social groups, and this is only reinforced if actions within

the group are similar, or even identical, to the habitus that maintain domination in a broader context. Since, as Bourdieu points out, habitus is by definition a history that forgets itself even as it becomes a structuring pattern of interaction between dominant and non-dominant groups, it is difficult to identify, much less transform. This in itself poses problems for certain kinds of exercises.

A particular point of dispute in the Canadian context have been sensory development exercises, largely popularized by practitioners of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, that involve touching, especially in cases where one or more of the people involved have their eyes closed. The apparent purpose of these exercises is to expand participants' repertoires of physical means for enacting worlds by removing the input of what is probably our most dominant sense, sight. Participants are asked to do things like moving around the room with their eyes closed and finding their way around other bodies without seeing or speaking, to be driven like a car by a seeing but non-speaking partner, or to hug a partner then back away only to come together and hug again, always with eyes closed. The last stage of these exercises in David Diamond's Joker's Guide to Power Plays, a compilation of Boal exercises he has adapted to a Canadian context, is blind sculpture, which Diamond describes as follows:

> Two lines of partners (A and B) stand facing each other separated by about 10 or 15 feet. "A"s have their eyes closed. "B"s make frozen images with their own bodies. Images that are not too difficult to hold for a long period. The "A"s make their way over to their partners. (The "B"s call them by name until they have reached their destination.) The "A"s then feel the bodies of the "B"s until they feel they can reproduce a mirror image of the original. The "A"s make their way back, still with closed eyes, to their original place and reproduce the "B"s' images. Open eyes. Compare. Repeat switching process. (18)

Marx told me that she had found it difficult to get some people to take part in these games because they found them threatening. Explaining why she was hesitant to even attempt them with a group she did not know well, Marx said: "It's too intimate. You don't know anything about their background. They could be victims of sexual abuse as a child and touching by a complete stranger would be really not appropriate" (Personal Interview). Berenice Fisher, in her feminist critique of Boal's techniques "Feminist Acts," makes a similar comment. "Because women frequently experience violation of their physical boundaries by being touched, activities involving touching cannot be viewed as gender neutral," she says. "Regardless of how safe a given context may seem, women may still bring strong feelings about having their bodies manipulated" (193).

Diamond acknowledges that these exercises can be difficult for some people and encourages Jokers, or workshop facilitators, to be flexible in their demands on participants. But at the same time he insists that the Joker allow individuals to make their own choices and not become "overprotective":

> There may very well be games or exercises that individuals in the group find too extended or challenging for their current emotional or psychological states. If the Joker sets up the mechanism very early on that no one in the group needs to feel obliged to do anything s/he does not want to do, and reinforces this throughout the workshop, then individuals in the group will take the responsibility for themselves. Some people will push themselves further than they thought they would go -- they will use the workshop as a vehicle for personal exploration. Others will only go as far as they feel comfortable. The Joker must be confident enough to allow this self-regulation to happen and set clear understandings that each person extend their own boundaries, not push or pressure each other. Forcing people to

> do things or trying to convince them to do things against their will only build distrust in the group. (Joker's 8)

The most obvious problem with this approach based on individual rights arises when all or many of the individuals belonging to one social group refuse to take part, or take part reluctantly, in the exercises. Following on Fisher's comments about gendered responses to touching we might question what a workshop might look like in which many of the female participants chose to sit out the blind sculpting exercise Diamond describes, while male participants chose to carry it out. I would suggest that such a situation, especially if interpreted through a lens that encourages participants to "push themselves further" would tend to encourage a sense that the ideal community is one in which the women act more like the men. More generally, since the very nature of domination makes public expression safer for dominant than for non-dominant groups, an approach that puts the onus for dealing with safety issues on individuals is likely to repeat the exclusions from public arenas that are typical of the society in which it is used.

It is in this sense that even the most apparently formal acting exercises cannot be considered ideologically neutral. In participating in them, we are inevitably developing structures of action and interaction that put into place particular forms of community. In games like the Fruit Basket, participants are faced with a situation that pushes them to develop an interactive body style consistent with participatory community: they must find their own place in a communal space in which other actors are also seeking places. At the same time, to keep the game going, they must take up the standpoint of the "particular other" who embraces relationships based on equity and complementary reciprocity and not only on common desires. In the blind sculpting game participants seem more likely to learn the standpoint of the "generalized other," where relationships and the continuity of the game are guaranteed by the formal equality and reciprocity of substitutionalist universalism. Fairness is presumably guaranteed here by the fact that participants, whether those who

form the sculpture or those who touch without seeing, will not do anything intended to embarrass or hurt their partner because the situation will be reversed and the activity repeated. Significantly, the activity itself centers around the reproduction of a pre-established corporeal model, a skill more important to integrationist forms of communitarianism than to participatory models. Diamond's invitation to participants who feel uncomfortable to exercise their right not to take part in an activity only reinforces the impression that the community either exists separately from those who make it up or that it consists only of those who hold the same values and act in the same ways. The danger of this approach is that ultimately it takes the continued existence of community for granted, assuming that when individual community members feel isolated from or unhappy with community activities, the community can simply continue to function without paying much attention to their concerns. But numerous experiences in workshops across the country show that this is not always true. Popular theatre workshops can and do break down when groups of people refuse to work together.

Julie Salverson, in her article "Masks of Solidarity," proposes an interesting explanation for some of the breakdowns she has seen in Canadian popular theatre workshops, including a two week Power Play training session she co-facilitated with Diamond and two others. She highlights the ways in which, in the workshops in question, "categories of identity were challenged, forcing participants to deal with unresolved questions about self and community" (164). The focus of her analysis of the tensions that ensued is on those participants she labels "enablers," that is people who "spoke of communities they 'served' rather than belonged to" (160). She posits that "enablers, from whatever community, are fighting their own oppression through someone else's struggle" and that the problems in the workshops stemmed largely from their inability to really see and hear the people they were ostensibly trying to help. She goes on to state her own belief that "it is charity, not solidarity, when identification with the other, however unconsciously, becomes a substitute for our own identity -- solidarity is about equal

partnership" and concludes that real partnership can only be based on a willingness to recognize difference (166-69). In the terms of feminist communitarianism, Salverson's statement might be read as a description of the dangers of attempting to escape a liberal notion of service by embracing an integrationist notion of community. What Salverson implies but doesn't say is that solidarity cannot be based on simple substitution. In attempts to build community on the basis of the false solidarity she describes, the substitutionalist universalism underlying liberal notions of fairness seems to be carried over into a integrationist conception of community that proposes not only identity of values and action, but the possibility that one can jettison the personal history embodied in one's body organization by a simple declaration of allegiance to someone else's. This notion may be particularly appealing to actors, whose craft consists largely of transforming the body organization developed through the course of a particular set of historically situated experiences. Inversely, an emphasis on this particular characteristic of the theatre medium suggests that popular theatre may especially appeal to those activists who want to substitute someone else's identity for their own. Either way, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that exercises based on simple substitution may encourage a mode of enacting worlds that is not conducive to the development of participatory community.

What kind of exercises might then be more conducive to this task? While games like Fruit Basket are useful for developing the sensory habits necessary for an interactive version of community, they are not enough to deal with the problem of how actions come to have social meaning. As we saw in the previous chapter, Seyla Benhabib suggests that one of the key skills for negotiating meaning in participatory community is the "capacity for thinking of possible narratives and act descriptions in light of which our actions can be understood by others" (129). But another criterion must be met for these narratives and descriptions to contribute to the broad-based political agency that Benhabib describes as characterized by " the sense that we have a say in the economic, political and civic arrangements which define our lives together, and that what one does makes a difference"

(81). To put it plainly, participants in the public arena, as in popular theatre workshops, must not only tell stories in ways that can be understood by others, they must also listen to stories with a willingness to understand others and interact with them in mutually satisfying ways. One of the techniques that most Native and many English-Canadian popular theatre groups are using to encourage this active listening is the Talking Circle. These circles, learned from Native cultures, and in many cases heavily influenced by feminist consciousness-raising, are generally used to open and close each workshop session. A "talking object" is passed around the circle and the person who holds it has the right to speak about anything s/he likes, for as long as s/he likes. A participant also may choose not to speak at all, since the object of the circle is to ensure that everyone is heard and not that everyone speak. When a person is ready to listen to another participant, s/he passes the object to the next person. Everyone in the circle listens to each story without comment or discussion and no-one leaves the circle until all members have had a chance to speak.

The emphasis on listening in these circles cannot be sufficiently stressed, and a story Monica Marx and Pauline Riley told me about their use of such a circle in a situation of conflict helped me to understand why. During a workshop on racism Marx and Riley were doing in a Winnipeg high school, three girls refused to accurately act out the roles others asked them to take in stories about racist incidents in the school. In Marx' description, when asked to act out a situation in which one student had her hand raised to strike another, the girl playing the character about to strike a fellow student wanted to say things like "Please don't do that. Why can't we just be friends?" The three girls consistently refused to use the language that was really being used in the school or to demonstrate the violence that was taking place between students of different racial origins. The girls ultimately demanded a change in the workshop process because they saw it as promoting swearing, violence and racism that weren't really happening in the school, despite what other workshop participants said. Finally, after saying everything they had to say, the girls got very angry and left the room in tears without giving the other members of

the group an opportunity to respond to their concerns. Marx and Riley went after the girls and persuaded them that they had a moral responsibility to come back into the circle long enough to give the other participants a chance to express their perspectives. In Marx's words, from that point on "the group took care of it themselves." Some of the other students pointed out that it was their stories that the girls were refusing to see. One Black student went so far as to say: "Try being my colour and going to school here. These things happen." Ultimately, most of the other participants said they wanted to continue to tell the kinds of stories they were telling about their experiences of racism in the school and that, while they would like the three girls to stay, if they decided to go group members would respect that decision. The girls did decide to leave. One returned a day later and asked to come back into the group, but as Marx explained it: "It was too late by then. After that incident the rest of the group took a huge leap forward and she just couldn't catch up" (Personal Interview).

The way in which these girls left the group is fundamentally different from the situation Diamond describes in which an individual decides to exercise their right not to take part in particular exercises. When the girls returned to the circle and other students expressed their emotional responses to not having their stories told and their perceptions respected, the problem of participation became a public not a private one. Rather than declaring that unpleasant emotional responses to particular actions are private problems which are below the level of public significance and should be dealt with by individuals, Marx and Riley insisted that the problem be dealt with by the group as a whole. In doing so they brought the problem into the public sphere and gave the group the opportunity to redefine its sense of itself as a community by putting different visions of the good life on the table. Instead of limiting participants' options to the negative liberal freedom of self-exclusion from particular activities, Marx and Riley emphasized a more positive vision of freedom in which all members of the group were held responsible for creating the conditions necessary for self-determination and enactment of the good life. One of the

conditions was to create a situation in which members of non-dominant groups, whose personal histories often lead them to believe that their visions of the good life will not be considered significant enough to merit discussion in the public sphere, could be heard. The test of whether or not they had been heard was the reaction of other members of the group. In this sense the choice made by the three dissenting girls to leave the group was more useful in building participatory community (albeit community to which they chose not to belong) than a decision to stay in the group while refusing to act on other students' stories might have been. By leaving, the girls acknowledged that they had heard the other students' stories and that these students had a vision of the good life which the departing students could not or would not share.

Activities like the talking circle described here are important in building participatory community not only because they allow private concerns to be made public, but also because they construct social reality as contingent and so changeable. The community implied in this circle is not a fixed one; members can decide to go in different directions and even to leave and form new groups. The important thing is that the exercise provides a process through which decisions can be made overtly about the direction the group wants to take and change can be negotiated on the basis of an understanding of the contingent nature of any form of community. Jan Selman emphasizes the indispensable nature of such discussion in popular theatre practice in complex societies. "Starting actual dialogue is an absolute necessity in the process of change," she says. "If together we can look at an issue and start to see ways to address it -- I mean life is so complicated! How do you change anything? I don't know! But if we can at least start to communicate across some boundaries, we have a hope in heck of changing it" (Personal Interview). Saideh Nessar Ali, one of Headlines' Power Play facilitators, subscribes to a similar approach and uses direct dialogue to deal with the tricky problem of physical touch and personal boundaries. "I get permission," she told me. "I say 'I'm about to touch you as soon as you feel comfortable. The moment you're ready, I'm going to take off my hand. If you feel

uncomfortable, just let me know.' And sometimes they say, 'Saideh, you can do it,' because they know I'm not there to harm them" (Personal Interview). Such an intervention is important because it both acknowledges the importance of respecting individual boundaries and suggests that boundaries are changeable. In Nessar Ali's word's: "It is the boundary that we have made. We have set it."

Nessar Ali freely admits that her attitude on this question is much influenced by her own personal history. Born in Pakistan, Nessar Ali spent much of her life in Iran until she was forced to flee that country and spend 8 years in Italy before being accepted as a refugee in Canada. In her early life she developed a much different attitude to touch than most North Americans. She describes her reaction to these differences of perception as follows:

> In North America people carry an 18" bubble around them, which cannot be broken. A small population is one of the reasons for this. They don't understand that. It comes due to a reason. In our country, you cannot have this bubble. There are so many people on the footpaths that you hit them, just when you're walking. There are so many people on the bus that, whether you like it or not, you are touched. So you do not carry the bubble.
>
> It's taken me time to understand that and it's very hard for me. Sometimes I don't understand why people should be that way. "Oh you've invaded my territory." Well for me that was nonsense. That was something that I couldn't understand because my boundaries are internal and nobody can get past them 'til I give them permission. But touching is not a problem. (Personal Interview)

I do not believe that Nessar Ali has given up her deep-seated feelings about touching, but in the context of North American popular theatre practices she has learned to negotiate new

kinds of relationships with people who do not share her framework for interpreting touch. This points to the critical role of reflection in building and maintaining participatory communities. If people from different backgrounds are to make decisions in a collective manner about issues that affect them, they must have means for comparing the meaning-making frames they are using to interpret action or they are likely to get into disputes based on simple misinterpretation of each others aims. Without collective discussion of the frameworks that allow action to become meaningful, participants face the danger of either wrongly assuming that everyone in the group shares the same framework for interpreting actions or that actions will remain forever incomprehensible to people who do not share the meaning-making frames of the actors. Unfortunately, these are precisely the attitudes members of dominant groups often take in face of the meaning-making frames of non-dominant groups. Their social domination is often carried out by physical reactions that either attempt to force others to enter into their enacted narrative or that simply bypass narratives proposed by non-dominant groups without engaging in physical or verbal dialogue. It is not surprising then that it is often members of non-dominant groups, and particularly women and people from minority cultures, who are most aware of the contingent nature of meaning-making frames and most concerned to change them. As we shall see, the question of conflicting frameworks is often important enough to their efforts at community-building that it becomes the structuring principle of the plays they create.

By including community activists representative of the audiences they work with in the development of new forms of community within the theatre institution, popular theatre workers create the conditions that make such new forms of dramaturgy possible. But to reduce our view of this collaboration to the level of themes and performance texts would be a mistake. It is especially important to note how popular theatre workers use community-building processes such as those discussed in this chapter to move outside of the mainstream entertainment apparatus Brecht describes. In doing so, they create new forms of relationship that structure both the creative work and the relationship between theatre

workers and their audiences. These new relationships, in turn, raise the possibility of broader changes in the meaning-making strategies and social worlds of those who participate in them, whether onstage or off.

Chapter 4: Workshops as Dramaturgical Models of Alternate Public Spheres

Having established a sense of community within troupes, popular theatre workers move on to activities intended to elicit information about the situations and issues community members want to bring into broader public arenas using theatrical means. These information-gathering activities are especially important in determining the form the public presentation will take and are heavily influenced by the analysis the troupe makes of the failures and blind spots of the public sphere in which they work. The question these activities seem to ask is: "Why does the form of community we are able to build within our group not exist in the larger public sphere?"

Almost all popular theatre activities try to answer this question by using specifically theatrical means to organize knowledge generated through workshop participants' direct personal experience of community. The aim of this knowledge-generating strategy is clearly to avoid the "alienation of subjects from their bodily and local existence" that Dorothy Smith argues is typical of intellectual work in our society (Conceptual 18). By proposing activities that ask how social relationships are embodied in everyday life, and not how they are discussed in official public arenas, popular theatre workers implicitly put into question such fundamental liberal notions as the distinction between private and public concerns and the ideal status of a morally neutral self unencumbered by either physical or emotional bonds to other human beings. An emphasis on everyday life during the information-gathering process supports a communitarian social stance by pointing to the connectedness of individual human beings and raising the possibility that many of the concerns that are generally considered so "private" or banal as to be below the level of public significance can be opened to collective scrutiny.

It must be admitted, however, that the exercises popular theatre facilitators use, like the activities of the liberal public sphere, are not and cannot be (despite what popular theatre practitioners sometimes claim) open to anything and everything participants might bring up. Each of them carries its own biases, declared and undeclared, and is inevitably more successful in eliciting and organizing some kinds of information than others. In this regard, three basic approaches to the information-gathering phase of popular theatre work can be identified: exercises that concentrate on exposing unknown facts, exercises that demonstrate the validity of non-dominant standpoints, and exercises that emphasize the individual's direct responsibility for the enactment of standpoints. Most popular theatre troupes use a combination of these approaches, but in all cases, the choice to emphasize one or the other seems to depend mainly on the troupe's sense of what is blocking broader participation in public decision-making processes. Ultimately, in using particular sets of exercises, troupes establish dramaturgic models that, by their very functioning, create new visions of the public sphere and the kinds of discussions that should take place within it. Because of their structuring properties, these exercises not only invite participation in workshop discussions, but determine the basic structure of the performance texts they are used to create.

Three examples of the kinds of dramaturgy that can result from an emphasis on one or another of these information-gathering approaches follow. In these cases, the major difference between the troupes is the national culture within which they function, but a similar analysis might be applied to other categories such as gender or class. The terms I have chosen to identify these dramaturgic models are my own.

4.1. The Dramaturgy of Documentation

Headlines Theatre of Vancouver, in common with many English-Canadian popular theatre troupes, uses information-gathering methods that emphasize the expression of information that is not generally taken into account in broad public discussions. The aim

of popular theatre, as they practice it, seems to be to give means of expression to groups who are excluded from the dominant public sphere and whose real life dilemmas are rarely addressed in public discussion. For instance, in the Joker's Guide to Power Plays, a manual based on Headlines Theatre's adaptation of Augusto Boal's "Theatre of the Oppressed" techniques to an English Canadian context, David Diamond argues for a theatre practice directed at the open expression of suppressed information. "When individuals don't express themselves emotionally for long periods of time they get sick," he says. "Communities, I believe, are the same." He insists, however, that his concern is to popularize theatre, not to engage in psychodrama. If the work he does sometimes looks like therapy to outsiders, this is because, in his opinion "good theatre is about truth" and the journey to reach truth may be a difficult one, filled with hard work (6).

Diamond does not define his sense of "truth", but his information-gathering methods would seem to suggest that he works in the English-Canadian tradition of documentary theatre Filewod describes in Collective Encounters. Describing this tradition Filewod argues that "Canadian drama has from its beginnings been partial towards what might be called the authority of factual evidence" and quotes Rick Salutin's assertion that: "The documentary style -- in film, theatre, prose, whatever -- says: count on this, we've got it down in pictures, quotes, documentation, in the speech rhythms of daily life and all kinds of tiny corroborative details. This (story, movie, play) feels like fact because it has the texture of the news in your daily paper" (Filewod, Collective 4-5). The nature of the "truth" Diamond seeks through his participation in this tradition becomes clearer as we look at the dramaturgic model on which his workshops are based and the degree to which it is reproduced in performance texts.

Headlines' Power Play process is designed to create a Forum event, where audience members are asked to act out their own solutions to the dilemmas presented on the stage. Paraphrasing Boal's vision of Forum Theatre as a "rehearsal for revolution,"

Diamond suggests that the Forum event provides a community with the opportunity to use the theatre to express its concerns and explore different options for dealing with them. Like Boal, Diamond believes that inviting audience members to intervene in a short play created by their peers prepares them to "return to the outside world and alter reality" ("Joker's" 7). This description of a particular popular theatre practice demonstrates both the strength and the weakness of the documention approach. Diamond's emphasis on the way social relations are embodied in everyday life makes possible public discussion of practices that are often considered below the level of social significance or for which the common discursive categories necessary for public discussion do not exist. By allowing participants in popular theatre workshops simply to show what happens in their lives, without demanding explanation or analysis, this method allows groups to get concerns on the table that they might not otherwise have been able to discuss, either for lack of discursive means or lack of confidence in using them.

That the use of non-discursive means of expression is an important aspect of popular theatre for non-intellectual participants is underlined regularly by participants themselves. For instance, in a letter thanking Headlines for a workshop conducted in Kelowna B.C., Peggy Ness, Assistant Director of the Central Okanagan Indian Friendship Society, states her belief that "the effect of seeking initial disclosure using non-verbal theatrical methods is low risk for the participants and because of this more easily achieved" (Headlines, "Out of the Silence Training Sessions Final Report," unnumbered page). Isabel Hall, who participated in three of the Popular Theatre Alliance of Manitoba's projects, explained what she perceived the risk of verbal disclosure to be when she said that "middle class people know how to argue verbally." She went on to explain that when this kind of arguing started in one workshop she participated in, she simply pulled out of the discussion, not wanting to get involved in arguments with people who use language in ways that make her feel that they don't care whether she joins the conversation or not. This is not to say that Hall never uses verbal means to make a point.

"I've lobbied and I've signed petitions," she told me. "We've done that. But it doesn't seem enough. In theatre the audience can see for themselves. There's the issue, it's right there, right in front of you. . . ." (Personal Interview). The shift Hall is describing is one from justification on the basis of the preset conceptual categories that Dorothy Smith describes, to the practice of interpersonal communication that Shirley Tervo demands when she underlines the need, in listening to stories of sexual assault, to account not only for the narrative but for the emotional distress it evokes in the teller and sometimes in listeners (see Chapter 2). The test of cognition in such a circumstance is not whether or not one can use conceptual categories to analyze a story, but whether or not one can successfully engage with the teller of the tale. It is this call for engagement that effectively privileges practice over discourse in popular theatre work.

The weakness with the documentation method lies, ironically, in its tendency to assume the transparency of its own information gathering tools, and in its assumption that groups who participate in the popular theatre process are relatively homogeneous. For example, the process Diamond proposes for creating the play that will be the centre of the Forum event uses tableaux-building activities and memory and emotion-triggering exercises that all center around describing relationships between oppressors and oppressed and depend on an undefined notion of what is "real". Diamond describes oppression as

> any time that a person has been made to think feel or do something other than he or she wanted. It can be from the person's personal relationships, from the community, provincial, national or global realm. (Depending on the focus of the workshop.) The important thing is that the person can place him/herself at the centre of the oppression and that s/he is not making it up. It must be real. (Joker's 24n)

On Day Four of the six day Power Play process, Diamond uses an exercise called Song of the Mermaid to divide workshop participants into smaller groups on the basis of their feelings about experiences of oppression. In this exercise, each participant makes a sound that evokes the strongest emotion they have felt during a moment of oppression in their lives. The facilitator asks a few people (who are making sounds different from one another's) to go to different corners of the room, then asks other workshop participants to move towards the sound that resonates with them the most. Within these groups, participants make a tableau of either what is similar in their stories or of the story that interests them most. At this stage Diamond specifies that it is "very important in either case that the improvisation contain the oppressor and the oppressed and that they be real characters and not symbols of 'the system'." He goes on to say that "once they have the core image of oppression they have the core moment of the play" (Joker's 30). In keeping with the documentation approach, the test of cognition here is practical not discursive, yet the conceptual categories of "oppressor" and "oppressed" that are so crucial to the organization of the exercises must be used uncritically. Further, the process of determining what information will be included in the play depends on the same kind of substitutionalist universalism as the one evident in the blind sculpture game discussed earlier, and so assumes a high degree of homogeneity in the performing group. The question participants are asked is "how are you similar?" and the rules of the activity prescribe that this similarity first be described, not in terms of a narrative sequence, but in terms of reactions to an outside force, the "oppressor."

To his credit, Diamond has made one important change to the oppressor versus oppressed structure of Boal's dramaturgy in order to bring it into line with Canadian participants' expressions of their own experiences of oppression. Diamond added the category of Powerless Observer to the Power Play's basic scheme after a number of workshops on race relations where Caucasian participants spoke of situations where they had witnessed oppression involving race and done nothing, though they knew the

situation was wrong. He specifies in the Joker's Guide that in these situations the Caucasian students "became 'powerless observers' and we allow this status as oppressed in the Power Play work" (31-32). The choice to make this change to Boal's basic schema and to "allow this status as oppressed" points to a basic tension in the Power Play process between an openness to representing a broad range of practices and a relatively rigid dramaturgic structure. While Diamond does make the change, he feels he can only do so within the pre-existing categories borrowed from Boal and so insists, in a rather authoritarian manner, that this status will be "allowed" to belong to the oppressed category that existed before the participants explained their view of the situation. While this change of structure does make Headlines' method more open to information that the original exercises did not anticipate, it also raises the disturbing possibility that there may be other categories of relationship that have not been allowed and so cannot be documented by Headlines' work. In this sense, Diamond's documentation method suffers from the same problems as the construction of "facts" in the social sciences, which Dorothy Smith describes as "neither the statements themselves, nor the actualities those statements refer to" but "an organization of practices of inscribing an actuality into a text" (Conceptual 71).

A brief look at one of the frozen tableaux that opened Out of the Silence, Headlines' play on domestic violence in Native communities, shows how an openness to unexpected information, like the role of the Powerless Observer, allows Headlines to develop a fuller picture of a situation of oppression. Reading this tableau in the context of the overall performance text, however, demonstrates how the basic dramaturgic structure of a piece can downgrade the importance of the very information the documentation process is designed to bring out.

Fig. 6. Tableau of sexual abuse in a Dormitory (Out of the Silence video)

Diamond describes this image, which came directly out of a tableau-making exercise in the Power Play workshops, as portraying "a church figure sexually abusing a child in a dormitory while the 'state' shushes the other waking children" (Diamond in Schutzman 42). In comparing the "state" (a figure whose symbolic status is not at all clear in the image) with the waking children, we can clearly see the difference Diamond wants to establish between collaboration with either oppressor or oppressed and the category he calls Powerless Observer. In the first case, the "state" collaborates actively with the oppressor to allow him to maintain the oppression. In the case of the male performer who has raised himself up and points to the act of abuse, one might talk about an ally of the oppressed. But in the case of the two children who hide their eyes, we cannot really talk about active collaboration with either side. These are what Diamond identifies as Powerless Observers, and their stance may perhaps best be understood, not in terms of intentional participation in oppressive relationships, but in terms of knowledge. These characters seem not to know how to physically react because they are unable to make sense out of the situation they find themselves in. Neither of them, to use Diamond's

description of oppression, is being directly "made to think, feel, or do something other than he or she wanted" (Joker's 24n), largely because they do not portray any distinct desire to which feeling or action in this brief scene might be "other than." One can imagine that they were added to the tableau in response to questions about who else was present when the oppression took place. It is in elements like these that we see the strength of the Power Play work: because it starts from description of situations rather than analyses, it is more successful than most purely discursive techniques in keeping the concrete local conditions in which abuse occurs in the picture.

An examination of this image in the context of Diamond's description of his work and of the rest of the final performance text demonstrates, however, the tension that arises from Diamond's insistence on maintaining a fairly rigid dramatic structure constructed as a realist conflict between oppressor and oppressed. It is worth noting that, in the image itself, the direct oppressor/oppressed relationship, which is at the centre of the generation of the tableau, is not the visual centre of the tableau as it is played on stage. The vertical lines formed by the bodies of the shushing figure and the child raising himself to point become the centre of visual attention because of their contrast to the more horizontal plane on which both sexual abuse and sleep take place. Visually, the major opposition in this tableau is between those who observe the assault and those who experience it, not between oppressor and oppressed. The motor of the scene is certainly the image of the sexual assault itself, and especially the attitude of the victim who pushes on the oppressor's shoulders and turns her head away. But the visual composition of the tableau draws the spectators' attention to a quite different set of relationships, specifically to the conflict between two witnesses to oppression who have opposing positions and attitudes in face of the central incident. In this sense the tableau presents an interesting point of view on the action and, in its role as a framing device at the beginning of the performance text, could point audience attention to the importance of the characters who witness abuse, as is the case in the Théâtre Parminou's Le Silence des Autres, a play

about sexual harassment to which I shall return. However this does not seem to be Diamond's intention in placing this scene before the main action of the play. He describes the purpose of this tableau, like the three others at the beginning of the piece, as a contextualizing element that indicates that "abuse in the modern, urban Aboriginal home is rooted in historical elements" (Diamond in Schutzman 42).

While Diamond uses the framing device to contextualize, the context he constructs is the historical "actuality" of the documentary tradition and not the focus on standpoint that Brecht and Benjamin suggest allows audiences to see how unequal relations of power are perpetuated. Where performing the play brings the "private" issue of sexual abuse into the public sphere, the realist dramaturgic structure tends to make the action appear natural and private rather than emphasizing its contingent and publicly significant nature. As a result of the demands of this structure, for instance, the contextual frame gets linked to the main action as an account of a private history, and the actor playing the child who denounces abuse in this tableau goes on to play the abuser who tells the story of witnessing the sexual abuse of his cousin in a residential school. Further, workshop elements, like the talking circle, that encourage discussion of the meaning-making frame of performance are virtually eliminated from the final presentation, though they do come back to a limited extent through discussions with actors and audience members after Forum intervention.

The influence of information-gathering techniques, and of the analyses of public discourse that underpin them, on the structure of performance texts cannot be underestimated in the work of the popular theatre movement. In Out of the Silence, for instance, the opening segment of the main playtext itself starts with a series of tableau-like "moments" in which character identities and relationships are established. On the premise that it is the sexually abused daughter's thirteenth birthday, each character gives Sylvia a gift and, through the attitudes towards these gifts, we see how the characters relate to

each other. In the initial tableau her brother gives her a dictionary, because she is doing well in school, but their stepfather immediately tells him that this is "a stupid present." Evan is however, the only character who gives Sylvia a gift with which she seems comfortable, and as the play progresses we recognize that he is the only character she completely trusts.

Fig. 7. Evan gives his sister a dictionary for her Birthday (Out of the Silence video)

Her aunt Sophie, seen in the figure above, gives her a G-string to mark her passage into womanhood, and insists that the girl model it over her clothes, much to Sylvia's embarrassment. When she realizes how uncomfortable Sylvia is with this gift, Sophie takes it back and offers her instead the sunglasses she herself has been wearing. Sylvia is much happier with the glasses and the relationship between the two is established as a changeable one in which Sophie can both unwittingly contribute to Sylvia's problems and intervene to help her. This is followed by her father's present of a diamond ring, and the intervention of her mother, Dolores, who asks to see the ring and comments on how expensive it looks, only to have Sam, the father, snatch it back and get on his knees before Sylvia to place the ring on the third finger of her left hand, as one

might an engagement ring. This segment finishes as Sylvia turns her back on her father to pull the ring off and put it on the second finger of her right hand. The moment is clearly set up to invite an audience intervention, with Evan looking pointedly at his mother and Sophie asking to see the ring in a worried tone.

Fig. 8. Confrontation over Father's Gift of a Diamond Ring (Out of the Silence video)

Since the initial playtext avoids solving problems in order to let the audience do this in the intervention segment which follows, the conflict is not brought to a head in the main text. Instead, Dolores calls Sylvia to the other side of the room and presents her with the bearclaw necklace passed down from her Grandmother and given to a girl of each new generation when she became a woman. This segment functions to introduce a distinct new standpoint into the piece, encouraging Sylvia to look to her traditional heritage to find her definition of what it means to be a woman. But, like the other gift-giving segments, this one is completely integrated into the storyline of the fictional stage world. In keeping with Diamond's realist aesthetic, through which he claims to "discover" and not construct story elements like the Powerless Observer and to encourage

actors who have personal experience of the issues not to act but to "be," this difference in standpoint is not highlighted in the performance text (Personal Interview).

An unwillingness to highlight standpoint would seem to be a mark of documentation approaches to creating popular theatre, and this often has the unfortunate effect of failing to draw audience attention to those elements that might explain why the information they discover in the workshop process is not available in other public arenas. An interesting example of this arises in No Name Brand Clan's Under the Line, directed by Margo Charlton. Charlton, unlike Diamond, did not go into the project with a pre-set dramaturgic structure of the oppressor/oppressed variety. Instead, she started the work of developing a script by asking about the places these women spent time, what kind of activity went on there and their feelings about it. One of the most important structuring elements of the performance text came out of these discussions. In Charlton's words: "A big issue about welfare is waiting, having to wait for people to make decisions about your life. So we identified all the frustrating places where they have to wait. If you're on welfare you have to wait for buses, and you have to wait in doctor's offices, and you have to wait in the welfare office, and you have to wait in the check-out lines" (Personal Interview).

In the performance text this shows up as an interesting contrast between the women's activity levels in the scenes where they deal with authority figures and the scenes where they are among themselves. In scenes with authority figures there is relatively little movement and it is clear that waiting is exactly what the women are expected to do. By contrast, in scenes where they are among themselves, the women are almost always working on something, preparing food, folding laundry or picking up after children.

Fig. 9. Waiting at the Welfare Office (Under the Line video)

Fig. 10. Folding Laundry (Under the Line video)

It is interesting to note, however, that this change of activity was not included in the script so much to demonstrate standpoint as to deal with the inexperienced performers' nervousness on stage; Charlton explained to me that the idea of folding

laundry was added to the scene in which the protagonist chats with her adult daughter mainly because it gave the performer something to do with her hands. The choice of activity was, significantly, made as a result of a documentation question: what might you be doing in that situation in real life? In keeping with the documentation approach, the resulting information about the different physical enactment of worlds when authority figures are not present was presented on stage, but its potential importance seems to have gone unrecognized by informants and director alike. As a result, this change in standpoint, like the one in Out of the Silence, is not highlighted in performance and so audience attention is not drawn to the way the habitus that marks charitable actions demands a passive attitude in welfare recipients, even as charitable discourses emphasize the need for them to become more active in their attempts to support themselves.

4.2. The Dramaturgy of Alterity

In contrast to the documentary approach so common in English-Canadian theatre, the Théâtre Parminou's approach to information-gathering indicates that one of their main concerns is to highlight the standpoints from which different groups approach similar information and events. This approach would seem to be a response to the integrationist notion of community that marks the dominant political discourse in Québec, where a history of colonial conquest has forced active efforts to protect a French-language culture on a predominantly English-speaking continent. Unfortunately, this struggle has led in some quarters to a belief that maintaining Québécois distinctness requires constant vigilance in defending the unique and coherent value system of integrationist community and avoiding contamination by the Other. Applied within Québec, this translates into the resistance to the Other and reluctance to negotiate difference that still plays an important role in structuring the dominant discourse of Québec's public sphere. In this context, the Parminou's research methods suggest that the problem they are concerned to remedy in the public sphere is not simply inadequate access to facts about others, but a lack of interest in, and understanding of, meaning-making stances different from those of the

dominant culture within Québec. It is this lack of interest and understanding that the Parminou's dramaturgy of alterity seems designed to correct. Maureen Martineau explained to me in an April 1996 interview, for instance, that the Parminou takes a flexible approach to workshops because one of its main objectives is to get a sense of the way the group they are working with tells its own stories. "On ne sait pas d'avance ce qu'on va nous dire," she said. "mais on sait qu'on va aller chercher de l'émotion, du vécu, des témoignages et aussi une imagerie qui est reliée à la thématique et qui est reliée à la culture des gens qui vont l'exprimer. Ça, c'est bien important. Mais après ça, le moyen d'y arriver -- on ne tient pas absolument à nos exercises" (Personal Interview, April 96).

By using a workshop model designed to trigger the everyday performance practices of the community group, instead of bringing a preset dramaturgic structure of the oppressor/oppressed variety to information gathering process, the Parminou elicits not only "facts" but standpoints and ways of performing those standpoints. This creates the conditions that allow the Parminou's animators to gain insight into the cultures of groups it works with and to use this insight in structuring performance texts. Martineau explained to me that in research workshops Parminou animators generally start with some games that get people moving and laughing together because this destabilizes automatized interactions and moves the group towards a playful attitude to the material. "C'est le principle ludique: quand on s'amuse on a moins de barrières, on se défoule un peu plus vite," she says. The animators then usually suggest some form of role-playing exercise related to the theme they have come to research. An exercise they frequently use is to place a chair slightly away from the group then ask participants to demonstrate prevalent attitudes by addressing comments to the chair. In researching Le Silence des Autres, for instance, animators asked participants first to imagine they had just heard that someone in their workplace had made a complaint about sexual harassment and then to approach the chair and make the kind of comment that might be heard in the workplace in reaction to

this news. In another exercise two people were asked to come forward; one was asked to tell the other about an incident she had just witnessed, then the other was asked to reply. In a third instance, women were asked to walk past the chair as if it were someone who harassed them everyday and to react only after they were on the other side of the room. These kinds of exercises often trigger conversations as the participants tell stories that provide the context for the attitudes they have displayed in the workshops and, when this happens, the Parminou animators intervene mainly to clarify questions of context or to steer the conversation back to experiences from everyday life if the discussion becomes too conceptual or too concerned with the one-upmanship of rhetorical prowess. These interventions, Martineau argues, are necessary simply because the theatrical medium demands that the animators collect the kind of information that can used in theatrical form (Personal Interview, April 96).

A Parminou working video, made during a series of workshops in 1993 to prepare a performance for a community event called "La Nuit des Sans Abris," provides an interesting example of how this technique works in practice. Shot during a workshop in which animators Michel Cormier and Maureen Martineau collected stories from a group of young people living on the streets of Montréal, the video shows three young women describing a wide variety of situations they face while begging. The women tell of their problems dealing with contemptuous bourgeois and with men who want sex, then go on to compare the difficulty they sometimes have getting money when they are really hungry with the lucrative donations they receive from people who reward their "honesty" when they ask for money to buy drugs. At the beginning of the workshop, Cormier intervenes only to ask the women to describe more clearly some of the people they meet while begging, and Martineau encourages them to share the mini-performances they create on the streets, underlining how the begging routines are already tightly scripted dialogues that could easily be made into a play. As the women get into telling their stories, however, the tone changes and the lack of intervention by the animators is striking.

Suddenly, the stories move from confrontational tales about people who won't give them money to stories of co-operation between people who meet on the street: the lonely sailor who at first seems to want cheap sex but ultimately takes a whole group of young people to a bar and buys several rounds of drinks, the young student in a troubled relationship who has just found out she's pregnant and who buys one of the women a meal because she herself needs someone to talk to, the man with multiple sclerosis whom the women feed and roll joints for. As the women tell these stories, a new picture emerges of a kind of participatory community that, while apparently lacking long term commitments, nonetheless values directly responsible relationships among those who find themselves on the margins of a cash economy. Recognizing this element of the cultural values of the group changes our response to the other stories the women tell. When they return, for instance, to discussing the problems they have begging when hungry or cold, these stories must be interpreted against the horizon of the women's own sense of responsibility for people in need and their perception that people with money are more reluctant to help when times are hard. Unlike the fixed oppressor/oppressed structure of Headlines' Power Play process, the Parminou's emphasis on standpoint allows the women to structure the storytelling process themselves and thus brings out their unspoken demands of their audiences. The way the women tell their story in itself makes clear that they want audiences not only to become better informed about the facts of life on the street, but to recognize the particular set of values and practices that organizes the community, however unstable, in which these women want to live.

It becomes evident later in the workshop that it is by doing just this that animators Cormier and Martineau win the trust of the group, even as they guide their work towards final performance. In response to a question about how long they beg in one place, the conversation turns to problems with police harassment. One of the women then indignantly tells how she and her friends had been given tickets carrying fines of $115 for such misdemeanors as asking someone for the time, shouting to a friend across the street,

and taking up too much space on a public bench by putting a jacket down beside them. Animator Cormier asks the young woman if she paid the fine. "Ben non!" she replies, laughing. "Où-ce que tu veux que je poigne 115 piastres -- j'ai des misères à m'acheter un hot-dog à 50 cennes, 'stie!" They both laugh, and it is clear that an important level of trust has been established, not through the more formal trust-building games so often used in popular theatre practice, but through the everyday process of listening to what Benhabib describes as "possible narratives and act descriptions in light of which our actions can be understood by others" (129). When Cormier laughs with the women about the absurdity of a police officer expecting a homeless woman who can't buy food when she is hungry to pay a $115 fine, he is viewing the world from the standpoint of this particular group of homeless youth, for whom abstract rules have much less meaning than the hard realities of survival. This interchange is not an isolated one in the workshop: an acute sense of absurdity and a drive to destabilize the automatized reasoning of dominant discourses is a common element in many of the begging routines the women demonstrate. One woman, for example, performs a rhyming patter in which she asks passersby for contributions to turn a steep hill on a major cross-town artery into a ski trail. "Ça va vous faire économiser du gaz dans votre char," she explains, completing ignoring the practical reasons people have for driving down the hill, "vous n'allez pas être obligé d'aller à St.-Sauveur!" In another begging performance, one of the women shows how she offers tours of the street then explains in a mock-serious tone of voice that the building on the corner is a store and the one beside that an apartment block, etc., etc. The animators don't underline the style of storytelling at this point in the workshop, but allow the talk to continue for several minutes during which the women themselves demonstrate real rhetorical skill in pointing out how many of the police actions against them are based on an abstract logic of rules that has nothing to do with the real consequences of their actions.

It is only at this point, with trust clearly established, and the workshop moving towards an escalating demonstration of rhetorical flourish, that Cormier intervenes to ask the participants if they would choose one of the stories they have told and develop it theatrically. The participants themselves then put on a tape of their favorite music for inspiration and, in an animated discussion, decide to structure their piece as a "day in the life" story because this will allow them to link together a number of the stories they have already told in conversation with each other and the animators. In the course of this discussion, the women spontaneously act out some of the ideas that later find their way into the show. Interestingly, these include not only information about their situations but structuring elements, like the idea of a model carrying a handwritten sign across the stage to indicate changes of time or locale.

Fig. 11. The Idea for a Poster Girl in Workshop ("Atelier Montréal et Nuits des Sans Abri" video.)

Fig. 12. The Poster-Girl in Performance ("Atelier Montréal et Nuits des Sans Abri" video.)

Cormier ultimately intervenes to ask which of the three participants might simply tell the story. This, he suggests, would be a way to start, and the others could then join in to act out the story that has been told. There is some resistance to this suggestion, and Cormier responds to this by reminding the participants that they had agreed to come up with a five minute sketch by the end of the session and asking how they want to go about doing it. Discussion ensues about how they might write the skeleton of a text and then act it out, but before they can start doing this one of the participants suggests that they just improvise it and lies down to act out waking up in a "squat." Cormier then moves out of the stage area and lets the action go, stopping only to ask if he can turn off the music in order to hear the dialogue better.

The sketch the women develop contains all the basic elements they will present in performance during "La Nuit des Sans Abri". These same elements form the basis of the Parminou's later production Mon Paradis d'Enfer, based on stories from street kids in a number of different cities and performed by professional actors. The plot follows the major events of a day: waking up in a "squat," making a plan for where to beg and where

to meet each other when the day is over, a series of encounters in the course of begging, meeting in the evening to recount the day and discussing where to get beer, finding a new "squat" and settling down to share their beer only to be chased away by the police. But in keeping with the culture the women had demonstrated in the workshop process, the style of presentation of this information is not realist. Instead, the performance, like the workshop, is composed of a juxtaposition of stories whose combination paints a picture of a way of life and the standpoint that develops out of it.

Interestingly, the piece starts with a framing sequence, just as does Headlines' Out of the Silence. In this case, however, the frame doesn't give information about historical precedents. Instead, it transposes the style of storytelling the women had used in the workshop to call attention to standpoint by demonstrating how many of the reactions of passersby to beggars are attempts to impose dominant cultural values. The process used to do this is the classic carnivalesque method of reversal of categories, with the beggars portrayed as wealthy bourgeois and the passersby as punks.

Fig. 13. Punks Comment on Bourgeois Beggars: "Il faut être rendu bas en maudit pour être propre de même!" ("Atelier Montréal et Nuits des Sans Abri" video.)

The verbal text of the sequence takes many of the responses the women have said they commonly get from passersby when they ask for money and simply inverses the terms of the argumentation. In the first segment, the bourgeois woman, dressed in a mink stole and veiled hat, politely asks if she could have some money to pay her boss. The first punk's response is "Lâche ta job!" and the second's is "T'avais juste à lâcher l'école quand c'était le temps!" A cop then enters to tell the bourgeois that they can't stay there to beg. "Tu vois pas que t'écoeures le peuple?" he asks them in an aggressive tone. Leaving the stage, he turns to the the audience to denounce the beggars as "Maudits snobs trop propres!" This is followed by the scene illustrated above, where two punks inspect the beggars and announce "Il n'y a même pas de trous dans ses jeans. Il faut vraiment être rendu bas pour être propre de même!" The performers then leave the stage with no further comment, the poster girl comes on to announce a change of time, and the main section of the play starts with a scene of a homeless young woman waking up her friend who has been sleeping in a park. Unlike Headlines' use of opening tableaus in Out of the Silence, there is no attempt in this piece to link these short scenes to the narrative line of the play. Instead, these tableaus are explicitly presented as a frame that is intended to guide the audience's meaning-making work as they watch the rest of the piece.

This kind of framing sequence is much more typical of Parminou productions than are linear stories of the "day in the life" variety; the "day in the life" plot in this performance would seem to reflect the young people's desire to tell the story that way more than the Parminou's own aesthetic choice. In respecting this choice, as in developing the framing sequence at the beginning of the performance, the Parminou animators are developing what I call a dramaturgy of alterity, where both workshop and performance structure aim at understanding the world from the point of view of the Other. The danger of this form of dramaturgy is, of course, that it can function in the same way as the substitutionalist universalism Julie Salverson describes, in which facilitators and audience members from the dominant society try to take on the identity of the group they

see as Other. To do this would in no way question the premise of integrationist communitarianism, it would simply substitute a new set of values for the one to which the dominant group in a given society demands allegiance. This danger is evident in the performance prepared by the homeless youth for their peers, a performance that functions largely as a celebration of street culture and derives much of its impact from ridiculing the dominant system simply because it is Other. It is around the cognitive test of appreciating alterity that the importance of the Parminou's emphasis on organizing audiences and involving them in the project from an early stage becomes most apparent. When presented to an audience that is more likely to be made up of passersby than homeless beggars, the strong presentation of this alternative standpoint is most likely to have a destabilizing effect. In the case of the framing scene, being asked to imagine what it might be to be constantly insulted because one doesn't share the values of the majority should, in ideal performance conditions, prepare the audience to watch the scenes that follow with a more open-minded attitude than is generally the case. In fact, some of the homeless might even be able to watch the framing sequence in a critical way and so come to imagine how they too should try to understand other people's values before condemning them out of hand simply because they are different. Still, the emphasis has to be on reinforcing the significance of the standpoint that is not generally accepted in the dominant public sphere if the Parminou's productions are to push Québec society towards a more participatory notion of community.

A Temps Pour Indian Time, a production designed to increase understanding between Québécois and Native peoples living on the same territory, is one of the best examples of the Parminou's work to raise the issue of alternate standpoints in the public arena. According to notes in the Parminou archives, workshops for this production were again conducted largely as storytelling sessions and used exercises in which participants, both Native and non-Native, were asked to perform the answers to questions like: "What is the worst thing anyone has said to you?", "What would you say to a young person

who wanted to move off the reserve to get an education?", and "What is the greatest reproach Natives have for Whites?" At the end of the workshops the animators asked participants what they would want to see in a performance about the relationship between Natives and non-Natives in Québec. A note in the margins of a handwritten record of responses to these questions shows how the animators themselves were trying to come to terms with what they heard by comparing it to other situations with which they were already familiar. "Culture familiale comme dans les villages québécois et les cultures minoritaires," it says, in a logic based on the search for similarity typical of integrationist approaches to community. In an interesting contrast to Headlines' work with Native participants to produce a play about abuse in Native communities, the Parminou animators don't simply assume that the stories they are told will mean in the same way Québécois stories might. Instead they start from the point of view that they must pay attention to standpoint and to the particular ways in which stories are told to them. The marginal note about similarities between this community and others they have lived in and worked with seems almost to express a certain surprise at how similar they are and how easy it might be to come to some common understanding should the two groups actually listen to each other. The point is one that is made by the workshop structure itself, which brings together Natives and non-Natives, some of whom have lived in close proximity (several of the workshop participants are married to or work with people of the other culture) to tell a story of how they learn to get along and what kind of attitudes it takes to achieve this.

The performance that results from these workshops again carries the dramaturgic model proposed in workshop exercises into the performance text, which is structured as a series of incidents through which a Québécois surveyor and a Montagnais helper test their prejudices about the other and come to understand that though they are from different cultural backgrounds, they can work together. In keeping with the Parminou's apparent interest in expanding the horizons of the dominant public sphere in Québec, the emphasis

in the piece is on destabilizing the assumptions that the dominant culture makes about Native peoples. The performance itself calls attention to specific attitudes, and the standpoints on which they are based, largely by asking the audience to look at the action from the point of view of the Montagnais helper, even when it is the Québécois surveyor who dominates discursively. In the opening scenes we see the two, watched by an on-stage animator, working on a surveying project that keeps them some distance apart in the fictional world. In the performance space the actors work from opposite sides of the audience/stage divide.

Fig. 14. Surveying Scene (A Temps pour Indian Time video)

Significantly, Pierre, the Québécois surveyor, is on stage, and so in a position that normally indicates that it is his performance that is to be observed by the audience. Marc, the Montagnais helper, moves through the audience carrying surveying equipment and implicitly indicating the standpoint from which the audience should view the action. The two performers communicate with each other through static-filled walkie-talkies, with Pierre giving instructions and Marc telling him when he has carried them out or asking questions to clarify what he is expected to do.

While Marc speaks very little, Pierre spends a lot of time talking to himself about what he perceives as Marc's incompetence, claiming that Marc was probably hired "juste parce qu'il est Indian" and that affirmative action programs mean that Québécois "de souche" like himself can't get jobs. He is especially frustrated because Marc is new to the job and he thinks that it is because he himself has just arrived in the region that he got stuck with the trainee. Marc's reactions however make it clear that the problems between the two are most often caused by Pierre's inability to communicate clearly with someone who doesn't share all of his own assumptions about the world. In the central incident in this opening scene, Pierre tells Marc to move to the right then moves his surveying instrument to look towards the audience's left. Marc has, in what seems an obvious move from the audience point of view, moved to the audience's right. Not seeing him, Pierre becomes frustrated, accusing him of slacking off to pick blueberries, repeating his instruction in English and asking himself if he'll have to send smoke signals to make his point. A dialogue filled with word play ensues when Pierre asks angrily through the walkie-talkie: "La droite, tu sais pas ce que c'est? Tu sais, là, le bord où le soleil se lève . . ." Marc replies calmly: "Qu'est-ce que tu veux au juste? Ma droite ou la tienne?" to which Pierre answers: "Mais, la mienne, c't'affaire." Marc then points out that Pierre had said in English "To your right." Pierre replies with an unintentional pun that demonstrates his limited grasp of English: " J'ai dit: 'Your ('re) right'." As Marc moves to Pierre's right, Pierre announces "Bon. Il a enfin compris." Ironically, from the audience's point of view it is clear that Marc has understood, but that what he has understood is that he is expected to compensate for Pierre's inefficient communication by carefully observing the standpoint from which he speaks. Since Marc is in the audience, audience members themselves are clearly called on to do the same: to understand this play they must take an attitude of Brechtian estrangement, in which the normally dominant discourse Pierre embodies becomes Other and must be approached as a culturally-constructed code that represents a particular standpoint. However, the scene that follows

this one immediately places constraints on how this is to be achieved by ridiculing an approach that attempts to problematize the dominant standpoint by acting out that standpoint's own vision of the Other.

The scene starts as the two men get their lunch boxes and prepare to eat lunch. Pierre returns first from the backstage area where the lunch box is stored and seats himself cross-legged, in a position known in Québécois French as "assis en Indien," or "sitting Indian-style." The actor's attitude as he performs this "act of understanding" underlines that this is ostension: he is taking this position only to be seen doing so.

Fig. 15. "Assis en Indien" (À Temps pour Indian Time video)

The point is further underlined when Marc returns to the stage and seats himself with his legs extended in front of him and his lunch box between his knees, taking no notice of Pierre's demonstration of what he thinks is the correct sitting technique under the circumstances. Pierre, clearly upset that his effort to act like an Indian is not adequately appreciated by Marc, turns to him and says "Tu t'assis pas en Indien?" Marc's laconic reply is only: "Je suis un Indien assis" (À Temps pour Indian Time video)

It is through the creation of scenes like this that the Théâtre Parminou demonstrates the potential of a dramaturgy of alterity. By bringing different standpoints into contact with each other, both in workshops and in performance settings, the Parminou constructs performance events that ask audience members to try to imagine what the world looks like from a point of view other than that promoted by the dominant public discourse. I would suggest that the animators' self-presentation in workshops as outside artists who are concerned about an issue, but who are not necessarily part of the group that most frequently has to deal with it in everyday life, encourages workshop participants to present stories in ways compatible with this agenda, even when it is not overtly stated. The animators own flexibility in the workshop setting helps create the belief that it is possible to change attitudes, and the kinds of questions they ask encourage a concentration on the material situation that makes different attitudes possible or even desirable. Instead of playing the role of the detached professional who observes the group, Théâtre Parminou animators seem to interact with workshops participants in order to work through the problems of building participatory community between two cultures within the workshop itself. The interactions in which they engage to do this allow them to experiment with the kinds of interactions that are necessary to form a public sphere based on the principles of participatory community. The performance text that results from this process is structured in a similar way, confronting the standpoint of the dominant group with the standpoint of a group that is generally excluded from public discussion of important issues. In almost all cases the performance texts make it clear that some or all of the characters would have to change their attitudes in order for this to happen, but audiences are initially asked only to try to understand the standpoint on which the characters' actions are based. The effort they must make to do this in itself underlines the changes of attitude that are necessary to create a public arena where all those living on Québec territory might enter into the decision-making process necessary to create a truly participatory community.

4.3. The Dramaturgy of Direct Responsibility

Red Roots Community Theatre of Winnipeg took a similar approach to the Parminou's in their development of "Whatever Happened to the AJI Report?"[1], a short play about the experience of urban Natives with the Justice system in Manitoba. Like the Théâtre Parminou, whose dramaturgy demonstrates the validity of minority standpoints, Red Roots has developed a dramaturgy that explores conflicts in the interpretation of generally available information. But Red Roots' emphasis is slightly different than is the Théâtre Parminou's. Instead of asking audience members simply to accept the validity of the standpoint of the excluded culture, Red Roots looks closely at the everyday social practices that lead to the exclusion of minority standpoints from the public sphere. As a theatre composed mainly of young urban Natives, Red Roots works from the standpoint of peoples who have faced violent attempts to destroy the material basis of their cultures through everything from the dissemination of smallpox-infected blankets and the destruction of food supplies, to the more recent forcible seizure and re-education of small children in residential schools and non-Native homes. More importantly, the group's members are part of a developing urban pan-Native community that, while it is still racked by poverty and violence, is succeeding in building social structures and relationships that support its members in everyday life. This new community, based not on a single value system, but on a refunctioning of ancient traditions in response to immediate needs, is posing more and more of a challenge to the dominant discourse in

1 The AJI Report referred to in the title was the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report, prepared as a result of an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the police shooting of J.J. Harper, a prominent Native leader, on a Winnipeg street. The incident occured in the course of a robbery investigation to which Harper was connected only by the tenuous description of the suspect as a "Native male." The report made numerous recommendations about fighting racism towards Natives in the Justice system as a whole, but three years after its submission only two minor recommendations had been acted on.

many Canadian urban centres. In such a context it is hardly surprising that a theatre company like Red Roots would develop research methods that emphasize efforts to expose and eliminate social practices that make certain standpoints unavailable in the dominant public sphere.

Red Roots members, led by Monica Marx, Louis Ogemah and Pauline Riley (the only non-Native member of the troupe), prepared their collective creation on the basis of media reports about the incidents that led to the calling of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the report of the inquiry itself and their own personal experiences with the Justice system. During creation workshops in which I participated in the summer of 1993, the talking circle was given particular importance because two workshop participants were going through periods of personal crisis directly related to the Justice system. These circles were generally opened by passing around an abalone shell in which sage was burned. Every member of the group passed the sage smoke over themselves as part of a traditional smudging ceremony intended to purify participants by helping them let go of whatever distractions might take their energy away from the work the group had to do. This was followed by one or several rounds, in which participants spoke about the issues that concerned them. A large dossier of press clippings had been put together by the leaders, and group members were encouraged to consult it as a source of information and reminder of how mainstream media report on Natives and the Justice system. Spontaneous comparisons of participants' personal experiences and the perceptions of the Justice system portrayed in the media often resulted from this approach. This clearly influenced the dramaturgic structure of the final performance piece, which alternates between mainstream and personal views of the treatment of Natives in the Justice system, and calls on the audience to think about the standpoint from which they view the Justice system.

Like Headlines' Out of the Silence, and the Théâtre Parminou's À Temps pour Indian Time, "Whatever Happened to the AJI Report?" opens with a framing sequence that points to the horizon against which the material that follows should be interpreted. Before the performers enter the playing area, the audience hears the tune "Bad Boys," which was chosen because it is used as the theme song of an American television "reality show," aired in Winnipeg, for which actual police raids are captured on film. A police officer (played by Monica Marx) enters the stage with gun drawn and, pointing it at different audience members, intones the children's rhyme "One little Indian, two little Indians, three, and four little Indians."

Fig. 16. "One little Indian, two little Indians, three, and four little Indians." ("Whatever Happened to the AJI Report ?" at the Mennonite Bible College video)

The sequence ends as the officer announces, in typical American TV cop-hero fashion, "They better watch it tonight 'cause they don't know who's on duty!" and exits through the audience.

A Native man (Louis Ogemah) then enters the stage and asks the audience if anyone has heard of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report. Three other performers,

seated in the audience, immediately take to the stage and answer that they've heard of it, but never seen it. The first man then says, angrily: "I think it's high time we started talking about it!"

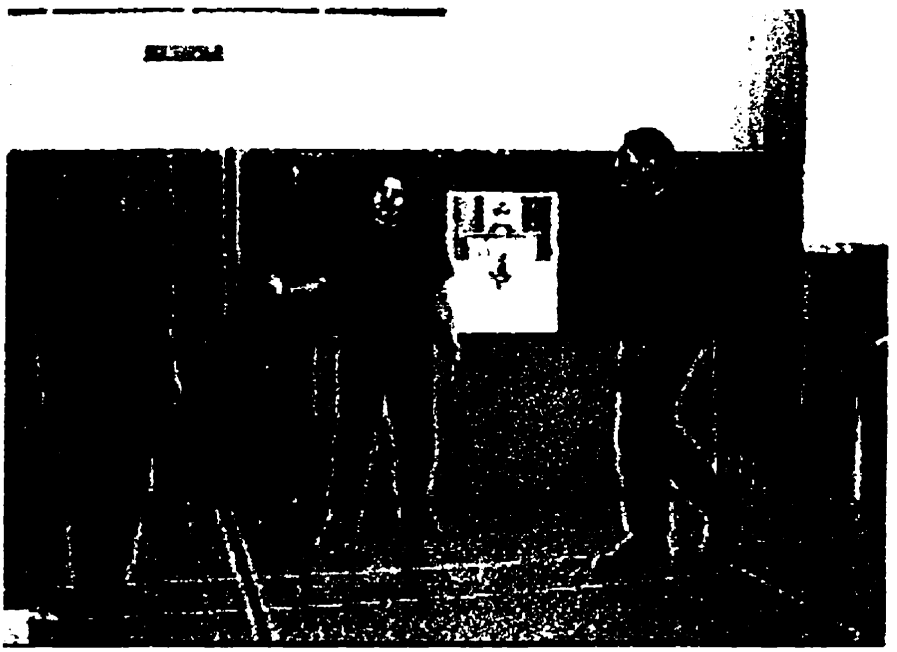

Fig. 17. "Have you ever heard of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report?" ("Whatever Happened to the AJI Report ?" at Mennonite Bible College video)

The talk is immediately stopped and the newly assembled group is scattered to the four corners of the stage by the re-entry of the police officer, through the audience, with a line that can only be interpreted as a warning: "Hey! I hear there's an Indian causing trouble around here. Anybody seen him? He's got long hair and dark eyes." On this line, he stops to stare at a Native audience member, who turns out to be one of the performers. The young man (Lawrence Angeconeb) looks up carefully, trying to see the police officer without drawing attention to himself. The police officer then grabs him, demanding to see ID. When the Native man protests that he has no obligation to show ID under the circumstances, the officer yells: "I want to see some ID! Don't get mouthy with me! We're going downtown!" and drags him onto the stage. On stage the two struggle over the gun, in a scene reminiscent of reports of the J.J. Harper shooting. Finally, the Native man shouts "Don't shoot!" as he loses his balance and falls to the ground, where the

police officer shoots him at point blank range while the other four performers say in chorus "There once was a man named J.J. Harper."

Fig. 18. Frozen tableau of J.J. Harper killing with performers' commentary. ("Whatever Happened to the AJI Report ?" at the Mennonite Bible College video)

The segment that follows is especially interesting and sets the tone for the rest of the performance text. As the cop and the dead man maintain a frozen tableau in the centre of the playing area, the four other characters circulate around the four corners. As each reaches the Down Right corner, he or she speaks directly to the audience about his or her personal reaction to the situation. "Where's the truth?" asks the first woman (Susan McKenzie). The first man (Bob Hoek) directs his answer to the audience: "There's two sets of laws in this country; one for Indians and one for whites." The second man (Louis Ogemah), who first suggested that it was "high time to talk about" the AJI report, then asks: "Why do you think I'm so angry?" The second woman (Dawn Roach) adds new information in a distressed tone of voice: "He was killed by a white cop." The cop answers this assertion, but he does not speak directly to the audience. Addressing his victim he shouts: "It was your own fault anyway." The first woman then returns Down Right and changes the horizon against which the information is to be interpreted. "J.J.

Harper had a family too," she tells the audience. The first man adds to this, smiling cynically: "The media? Well, they played their part." This is quickly put into the context of Native concerns by the second man's angry question to the audience: "Is there a bullet out there for me?" The second woman follows, describing the response the Native community receives when it questions the mainstream Justice system: "What do we as First Nations people get?" she asks, and then answers her own question: "Another report to shut us up." The cop then moves downstage from the central tableau to approach the audience and, maintaining a menacing physical attitude, announces: "I guess I'll just have to cover it up." The second man, now speaking from the back of the stage, reminds the audience that the incident they have just seen is not an isolated one. "There are others like him;" he says, "Donald Marshall . . ." The others then list both the better known and the more personally striking cases of Native victimization at the hands of a colonialist Justice system: "Crazy Horse," "Anna Mae Acquash," "Helen Betty Osborne," "My brother," "My sister," "Leonard Pelletier." Finally the first man asks again: "What ever happened to the AJI Report?" The shifting balance of power comes to a climax as the Native shooting victim rises and joins the others in taking over the stage space with a discussion of what might have happened to the "lost" AJI Report, and the cop who had interrupted the first attempt at discussion is forced to the far right side of the playing area.

As an opening scene, this sequence plays a framing role similar to those that open the Headlines' and Parminou's pieces and has a similar relationship to the exploratory exercises used in the workshops in which the script was created. In "Whatever Happened to the AJI Report ?", where the performance text was created through a comparison of media reports and the personal experiences of performers, the opening sequence is constructed as a contest between two different versions of a similar story. Audience members are thus directly called upon to account for the personal experiences of the performers and, implicitly, to construct their own visions of the Justice system in dialogue with the performers. Unlike Headlines Theatre's tableaux series at the opening

of Out of the Silence, the opening scene of "Whatever Happened to the AJI Report?" uses direct address to defend a particular standpoint and to put the audience in a position where it cannot simply observe "facts." or even different versions of the "facts." Instead, audience members' attention is drawn to the ways in which the standpoints they have developed in the course of everyday life condition their expectations of a narrative of racism. Watching a live performance at Winnipeg's Mennonite Bible College, for instance, I could not help but be aware of my privileged position as a non-Native audience member when the cop in the initial sequence announced that he was looking for an Indian who was making trouble and who could be recognized by his "dark hair and dark eyes." I knew the performer would not confront me, as did most of the members of the 95% non-Native audience. I also suddenly found myself aware of the whereabouts of the approximately 12 dark-haired Native people in the room. In a similar situation, the first time I saw the piece in front of a mixed-race audience in an outdoor performance, Native audience members seemed acutely aware that the performer might stop in front of them, while non-Native audience members could no longer see their own position as that of "neutral" or "objective" observers. Clearly, we non-Native audience members were unlikely to be embarrassed by being dragged into the action against our will unless the fictional police officer enlisted our aid in finding the suspect. This in itself helped make the play's point about systemic racism in the Justice system.

More importantly perhaps, the initial framing sequence forced us non-Native audience members to consider our position in this performance situation, rather than simply observing the events portrayed in the play as problems on which we might comment but in which we were unlikely to be implicated without active consent. By doing this, it made the classic "professional" standpoint of mainstream sociopolitical discourse unavailable to audience members. And, while it demanded that we engage with the performers, it did not demand that we act out, or even approve of, the standpoint they espoused. "Whatever Happened to the AJI Report?" ridicules such a demand with a

portrayal of a huckster politician, who enters preceded by a cheerleader and accompanied by a female aide who instruct the audience to applaud his empty promises. Instead the play ends with a circle similar to the one that had ended each of the creation workshops. After the last sequence, in which two Native women waiting at a bus stop discuss their fear of being attacked by one of the men who sometimes drive by and call them "squaws," while three other performers portray the brutal rape of Helen Betty Osborne on the other side of the stage, all the performers sit in a circle around the playing area. Bob Hoek, the actor who played the politician, lights some sage in an abalone shell at the center of the semi-circle and carries it around to each performer, who smudges with the smoke. One by one, each performer then rises and, holding an eagle feather, the symbol of a promise to tell truth, greets the audience in a Native language (Cree, Saulteaux, and Ojibway), introduces her or himself, and gives a brief account of a personal experience with the Justice system.

Fig. 19. Monica Marx and Susan McKenzie Tell Their Stories in the Closing Circle ("Whatever Happened to the AJI Report ?" at Mennonite Bible College video)

The troupe ends its performance by dedicating theplay to the memories of J.J. Harper, Helen Betty Osborne, and all the other Native people who have suffered at the hands of the Justice system.

Like the opening sequence, the closing circle provides a frame that pushes the audience into a particular relationship with both the performers and the performance text. By ending the performance with a half circle, of which the audience forms the other half,

and in which each of the actors makes a personal statement about the concerns that conditioned her or his participation in the play project, the performers encourage audience members to think about their own personal positions in face of the Justice system, the social order it represents, and the particular performance they have just witnessed. For Native audience members, or others who are racialized[2] by the Justice system, this may bring a sense of confirmation of the public significance of their own experience. This in itself is a major challenge to the dominant discourse that most frequently describes the kind of events that occur in the play as isolated incidents that are unworthy of public debate and can be written off as aberrations in an otherwise fair and rational system. On the other side of the coin, the performance forces audience members from the dominant social group to account for a world of which they are not likely to have direct experience and for a Justice system that functions on a day-to-day basis in ways that directly contradict the formal neutrality on which it is supposed to be based. By directly addressing the audience on these questions from a number of different individual positions, the performers effectively call on audience members to take up the standpoint of the talking circle that was so critical in the workshop process.

It is worth remembering here that the premise of the talking circle standpoint is that each group member enters the communication process with needs and desires whose validity can only be judged from the point of view of that person, but for which the whole group must take responsibility to maintain its existence as a group. Circle participants are then valued for the contribution they make from their <u>particular</u> point of view. While there is clearly no point in assessing their contributions in terms of "right" or "wrong"

2 I take the term "racialized" from the Preface to Paula J. Caplan's <u>Lifting A Ton of Feathers: A Woman's Guide to Surviving in the Academic World</u>. In an endnote on her use of this term Dr. Caplan says: "Nayyar Javed drew my attention to the term 'racialized women,' which reflects the fact that the division of people into races is a sociopolitical act that is wrongly assumed to be scientifically justified."

answers, the effects of individual actions are witnessed by the group as a whole. Attention is always drawn back to the situation of the group as a group, and it quickly becomes clear that to get a full and coherent vision of the group situation, as of the context in which the group's activities take place, each member must not cling to her or his own position. Instead s/he must explore and understand the view from each of at least four directions. There are two ways in which this can be done. If group members are trying to get maximum information about the context, they can simply move systematically around the circle to see the surroundings from different points of view. But if the group is trying to see itself, such a procedure will not work, since each time the group members move, the structure of the group itself, and its relation to its surroundings, changes. Here, each member must try to imagine the situation of other members based on similar experiences s/he has had her or himself, reevaluate her or his initial position, and formulate an abstract vision of the situation of the whole group, based on what s/he has learned by occupying, literally or in imagination, all the available positions. As the final scene makes clear, this is exactly what Red Roots is asking audience members to do. By facing the audience and addressing them directly, not as dramatic personae, but in their own names as performers and members of the community, Red Roots performers ask the audience not only to account for the Justice system they describe, but for their relationship to the performers themselves. This demand for direct responsibility in and to the group that comes together around the performance effectively makes the talking circle standpoint an important focus of the performance text. By focusing not only on information but on the way in which that information is deployed and evaluated, Red Roots effectively underlines and promotes the importance of the way-of-knowing that has allowed their group to come together and function as a participatory community. This way-of-knowing challenges the dominant discourse by insisting that it be called to account not only on the level of formal logic but in reference to the social practices that allow it to maintain its dominance. In its presentation in a performance

setting, this standpoint both demonstrates and demands a socially responsible stance in face of a discourse that promotes the domination of one group over others.

4.4. Provisional Conclusions about the Dramaturgic Apparati of Popular Theatres

Clearly, Canadian popular theatres make conscious efforts to avoid the traps into which Brecht describes avant-garde theatre artists falling when they view the dominant theatre apparatus as a neutral tool for the dissemination of their work. By paying attention to the social role of theatre, these troupes are able to develop new kinds of theatre practices that allow them to bring into the public sphere information that the production methods of the dominant cultural apparati occult. They do not do this, however, by developing more "neutral" modes of production, as some liberal theorists might suggest should be the case. The modes of production chosen by different theatre workers and theatre companies are historically constituted responses to both the previous experience of the theatre workers themselves and the problems they perceive in the dominant public sphere of their own communities. So, while the three approaches to dramaturgy described in this chapter cannot be considered mutually exclusive, their privileging by different troupes does correspond to particular sociohistorical situations. As the examples in this chapter attest, in attempting to correct similar problems of exclusion from the public sphere, theatre workers from different cultural backgrounds are both analyzing the reasons for those problems differently and trying to solve them through the use of different cultural tools. These differences in cultural background and approach provide a clue to the way in which the troupes' organization of information-gathering workshops already predetermines a cognitive structure that shapes the dramaturgic structure of the performance text itself. In this light it is particularly interesting to note how the English-Canadian troupes, which function within the dominant culture of the country, are more convinced than their Québécois and Native counterparts that their process, when well

applied, can be a neutral information-gathering technique. It is no coincidence, I think, that it is the troupes from cultures that have had to struggle to maintain their existence, and that to this day have difficulty making themselves understood even when they make themselves heard, that are most concerned with issues of context. On the basis of these examples I would argue that any evaluation of popular theatre must proceed from an understanding of the sociocultural background in which it is created and which it tries to affect. As we saw in Chapter 2, our cultural histories are too deeply embedded in our body organization, and the modes of interaction that our cultures presuppose are too influential in structuring our enactment of worlds, to allow us to expand our horizons and the horizons of our communities without reference to such background. The question that then arises for theatre workers is: how can we become more conscious of the underlying structures of our own thought patterns? As we shall see in the next chapter, it is here that the resources that make up the craft of theatre and that allow performers to focus attention on the enabling conditions of social action really come into play.

Chapter 5: Going Public: Theatricality and the Craft of Focusing

In the third stage of popular theatre production, the basic material developed in workshops is fashioned into a performance text for presentation to a larger public. It is at this point that the issue of professional intervention in the telling of community-generated stories is most often debated in popular theatre troupes. The recurring question in these debates is how professional writers, directors, performers, designers and facilitators should apply specifically theatrical skills to the task of focusing audience attention on the problems of community-building raised in workshops. Should the material simply be turned over to the professionals, or should the professionals be called on to help amateurs develop the theatrical skills necessary to communicate their own concerns?

The problem with turning the work over to theatre professionals lies in the institutional training those professionals have received, whose purpose is too often to integrate them into a theatrical institution with values that are contrary to those popular theatre workers espouse. These professionals often believe, because this is what they have been taught, that their skills will allow them to do justice to any material with which they are presented. Many popular theatre workers argue that, on the contrary, to turn community-generated material over to professionals trained in the dominant theatre institution is to feed that material into an institutionalized apparatus that, like the device Borgmann describes or the sociological training Dorothy Smith warns against, turns all events to its own purposes. In their caution they are heeding the warning Brecht gave as early as 1930 that:

> Great apparati like the opera, the stage, the press, etc., impose their views as it were incognito. For a long time now they have taken the handwork (music, writing, criticism, etc.) of intellectuals who share in their profits -- that is, of men who are economically committed to the prevailing

> system but are socially near-proletarian -- and processed it to make fodder for their public entertainment machine, judging it by their own standards and guiding it into their own channels. . . . (Brecht, Brecht 34)

The popular theatre workers who resist the dominant institutional apparatus are trying to avoid the mistake that Brecht saw in so many of his contemporaries, of assuming that this *mise en apparatus* (if I may coin a phrase) "is a secondary process which has no influence over their work but merely wins influence for it" (Brecht, Brecht 34).

5.1. Acting Techniques as Institutional Markers

One important area of concern for those concerned with the institutional demands of the dominant theatre institution is, for instance, the ways in which its assumptions slip into performance texts through the application of acting techniques that are not designed to encourage active audience participation. By way of example, David Diamond underlines the subtle ways in which the theatre apparatus can control the creation of a performance text when he discusses problems he has had working with professional actors in popular theatre projects. Professionally trained actors, in Diamond's experience, can have a desire to manipulate improvisations to make them "come out in pleasing manner" or "feel good." "They want to make it have a beginning, a middle and an end," he says. "They want to make it structured somehow. They want it to be theatrical. They have a preset notion of what works theatrically and that leads to not really being in the moment" (Diamond Personal Interview).

Margo Charlton argues in a similar vein that it is not just actors' institutional training, but their lack of everyday experience of the lifeworld out of which the texts come that sometimes makes work with professionals more difficult:

> With professionals the first few days of rehearsal are spent doing script analysis, because actors come in cold and have to get their head around the

> character, the motivations. Community actors don't need to discuss what's motivating the character, they come more personally connected to the material, but professionals are often playing people so totally unlike them in life that you have to spend a lot more time coaxing or explaining or giving resource material. (Charlton Personal Interview)

In cases where this process is not successful, the danger is that the professionals will simply refuse to act the world that community members have described because they themselves don't think this world is believable. There is also the danger that audiences themselves expect professionals to turn stories into a kind of fictional script that is little more than fodder for the entertainment machine. As a result, the mediation of professional performers can lead audiences to take stories less seriously than they might if they were presented directly by their peers, because they don't expect these stories to have anything to do with their everyday lives. Monica Marx argues that this can be the case when professional actors present plays in schools: students view the works as fictions that, while they may be interesting, are not directly relevant to their situations. If, on the other hand, "their peers go up on stage and tell them, 'This is what goes on in our school,' then they're forced to look at the situation and accept and acknowledge that this goes on" (Marx and Riley, Personal Interview).

In an obverse instance, non-professional actors will often censor their own storytelling to conform to norms borrowed from the dominant entertainment apparatus, simply because this constitutes the only performance medium with which they are familiar. As Margo Charlton put it:

> People in community groups are heavily influenced by popular media, films and T.V. -- action things, and that's why they don't think they have anything to say, because their lives are kind of boring by those standards. They also bring in fairly grand ideas about what it is possible

> to stage and it takes them awhile to get their heads around the fact that a conversation between two people is actually quite interesting, that they don't have to have all of the action thing. (Personal Interview)

Charlton's concern is all too similar to that expressed by David Kerr in his discussion of African health workers who use the "Mr.-Wise-and-Mr.-Foolish stereotypes" of colonial education (see page 44): what seems to be the voice of community participants may simply be an echo of received wisdom and a sign that "people are participating in their own mystification" (Kerr 66-69).

But the solution to this dilemma cannot be the elimination of theatrical training. As Rose Adam's report on the Popular Projects Society of Halifax attests (see page 21), the collective self-expression of community groups can be severely hampered if they lack theatrical skills. On the simplest level, popular theatre workers who choose to stage plays with inexperienced performers must often dedicate a lot of rehearsal time to the most basic skills: learning to speak loudly enough to be heard, to do basically the same thing each time, to keep sight-lines clear by avoiding standing in front of each other, to respond quickly to cues, etc. These basic skills are essential to focus audience attention, but they are not enough to bring into play the full cognitive potential of the theatrical medium.

It is to this cognitive potential that Brecht appealed when he argued:

> Our working-class theatres need careful education and strict training if they are to master the tasks proposed and the possibilities which are here offered to them. They in turn have to carry out a certain training of their public. It is very important to keep the productive apparatus of the working-class theatre well clear of the general drug traffic conducted by bourgeois show business. (Brecht, Brecht 88-89)

Walter Benjamin, in his discussions of Brecht's "epic" theatre, makes clear that Brecht's main strategy for avoiding the narcotizing effect of bourgeois show business is to highlight the conditions that must exist for the action to take place. Benjamin insists that "this uncovering (making strange or alienating) of conditions is brought about by processes being interrupted" ("What is Epic Theatre?" [Second Version] 18). As we saw in Chapter 2 (pages 50-52) this interruption can be achieved in a number of different ways. In all cases its aim is to de-automatize spectators' everyday habitus so as to push them into a subjunctive moment in which the body, as a repository of social knowledge, must find a new point of balance, and so, ultimately, develop a new standpoint with which to enact worlds. However, as Marco De Marinis points out in his article, "The Dramaturgy of the Spectator," a performance strategy that relies exclusively on disruption can itself easily fall into the kind of formalist error that Brecht criticizes in the early avant-garde theatres. A more effective strategy for maintaining audience interest, De Marinis argues, is one that recognizes that "theatrical pleasure arises and is maintained in an unbroken dialectic between the frustration and satisfaction of expectations. The fragile balance is kept between the pleasure of discovery, the unexpected, and the unusual, on one hand, and the pleasure of recognition, *déjà vu*, and the anticipated on the other" (112).

Baz Kershaw looks to Elizabeth Burns' definition of authenticating conventions to link this pleasure of recognition to the ideological impact and social efficacy of alternative theatre. According to Burns, authenticating conventions "'model' social conventions in use at a specific time and in a specific place and milieu" (qtd. in Kershaw 26). Kershaw argues that these conventions, "determine the audience's reading of performance by establishing the more or less transparent relationships between the fictionality of performance, the 'possible worlds' created by performance, and the 'real world' of the audience's sociopolitical experience outside theatre" (26). The insistence on the part of many popular theatre workers that only people who have direct personal experience of the

issues should act in public presentations would seem to be, in part, conditioned by an emphasis on the importance of these authenticating conventions. It is difficult to argue against this priorization when one has seen the pleasure audiences take in recognizing their worlds on stage, especially when those audiences come from social groups who rarely see their lives considered in the public sphere. As Margo Charlton suggests, recognizing that one's own life is not too boring to be worthy of social consideration is itself a step in the direction of the political efficacy of participatory community. Rose Adam's account of the rig worker who was furious with a presentation that he felt betrayed minimal knowledge of rig workers' actual living and working conditions (see page 21) is an interesting example of the political importance audiences themselves place on authentication in popular theatre pieces. It does not, however, prove that authenticating conventions alone will ensure a successful popular theatre performance.

The criticism Adam cites may well be a valid one, not because good theatre must present a fully detailed reproduction of the world it wants to discuss, but because errors of detail may signal a lack of understanding of (or attention to) the standpoint of the people with whom the theatre is trying to engage. On the other hand, as Charlton's comments illustrate, audience members do sometimes object to a performance only because it doesn't conform to the rhetorical conventions that dominant cultures have led audiences to expect of both entertainment and political debate. It is not unusual for popular audiences to expect that "good" theatre must look like everything else the entertainment apparatus produces and that the use of other conventions indicates only that their lives are not worthy of proper treatment by the machine.

Looking at such examples, we must acknowledge that popular theatre troupes take a significant risk when they evoke a naturalized habitus through Kershaw's authenticating conventions, only to question it through the deployment of the rhetorical conventions of performance. Without a doubt, however, the risk of evoking familiar narratives only to

denaturalize them is one popular theatre troupes must take if their performances are to have any real cognitive value. It is the centrality of this risk that leads me to follow Brecht and Benjamin in suggesting that, in evaluating the usefulness of professional interventions in popular theatre, we must look beyond questions of authenticity to ask how performances induce audiences not only to recognize, but to question habitual narratives. Ultimately, I believe, we cannot understand the social role of popular theatre unless we ask how the particular cognitive qualities of performance can induce an audience to imagine the conditions that might define a world where participation, not alienation, is the norm.

The first step in answering this question is to recognize that community informants often have difficulty imagining such a world. In order to do so, they must first be able to identify the conditions that give rise to the alienation they are trying to overcome. This process of identification is not easy, but this is not because the enabling conditions of alienation are not present in the stories community members tell. On the contrary, these conditions are often so much a part of the community's habitual mode of enacting worlds that community members portray them without ever really seeing them. This is, in practice, one of the main reasons popular theatre is called upon by community groups: through its simultaneous use of multiple sign systems it can make visible that which seems so "natural" as to be unavailable as an object of public discussion in a particular community. In this light, to exclude professional participation in popular theatre solely on the basis of restricting the use of material that is not explicitly raised by workshop participants would seem counterproductive. On the contrary, as Brecht suggests, the job of the well-trained theatre worker is precisely to bring to light those elements of a world that participants in it cannot normally explicitly describe. To take up Eco's terminology for a moment, the theatre worker, by ostending a world rather than simply enacting it, can induce audiences to notice the conditions that make that world possible and to imagine the conditions necessary for a new world to come into being.

5.2. Attitude as a Means of Exposing Habitus and Standpoint

Discussing her work with Catalyst Women's Circle, Jan Selman suggested to me that the process of demonstrating the conditions underlying particular narratives is what distinguishes public from private storytelling. Speaking of stories collected in the process of preparing the Women's Circle script, Selman said:

> Some stories are so private, and I don't mean confidential, that the coding is not comprehensible to people who haven't lived that. So the stories ultimately, once they are in theatrical language, have to be possible to accept and understand. I use 'accept' very carefully here. You have to believe it's possible that they're true, but also acceptable in the sense of manageable for people who haven't lived that to recognize and understand. Surely, that's one of the functions of theatre: to show how something that is private has public meaning or a wider, more universal meaning. (Personal Interview.)

Later in the discussion, Selman went on to underline the importance of calling attention both to the conditions that allow an unsatisfactory situation to exist and to the conditions that would have to obtain for a more satisfactory situation to come into being. In some cases, she noted, when trying to use the theatre event as a public arena for the development of participatory community, theatre professionals must create scenes that illustrate situations that are not likely to come up in information-gathering workshops:

> Because one of our aims is to put people together who don't normally talk to one another, therefore in the piece you want to put characters together who don't normally talk to one another. That's quite hard to do and the stories people tell you don't tend to give you those scenes. So we're asking: "What new story could pull together that story and that story and that story?" Some of them are very fictional but drawn more out of some

> of the themes, if you will, and some of them are more a melding of different stories. (Personal Interview)

An excellent example of this kind of scene is the "Red Dress" episode of the Women's Circle text Selman animated and directed. In keeping with the project's long term aim of creating opportunities "for groups of people from different walks of life to be in the same place at the same time and start to talk about issues," the scene brings together two women who portray different standpoints based on both their class origins and their relationships with men (Personal Interview). The story that brings them together involves the everyday practice of shopping for a dress, a practice that allows the Women's Circle to demonstrate how the women's different standpoints are enacted as attitudes that make it difficult for them to understand and support each other.

The scene opens with Eleanor announcing that she knows she'll never find a dress before she has to go home to prepare supper for her husband, Dick. Jackie immediately reminds her that they haven't yet been to every store in the West Edmonton Mall and suggests that they go into a section of expensive dress shops. Eleanor's reaction illustrates the limits she sets on her own behaviour without even thinking: "I can't go in a shop here," she says, "He only gave me $150." Jackie immediately points out that "[t]hey have sale racks," and adds in a tone that clearly evokes her expectation that she will lead this shopping expedition: "Now come on." The difference of standpoint becomes especially clear as the two women enter the shop and Jackie casually picks up a dress and asks Eleanor if she likes the colour. The stage directions for Eleanor then specify: "Touches it gingerly. Looks at the price tag and jumps back." The verbal response that follows, "Its $650!" only serves to confirm the reason for the attitude the audience has presumably already noted before Eleanor speaks.

The difference in the two women's standpoints is further illustrated by the attitude Jackie's ostends when she finds a red dress in the appropriate price range and holds it up,

saying: "Now here we have your classic red tarty number." Stage directions then specify that Jackie "laughs and puts it back but Eleanor is obviously drawn to it. Jackie moves on." The next dress Jackie finds meets with her approval. "Now this is really a classic," she says. "With this smoky grey colour your could really accessorize. You know, dress it up or down. It's real silk! You could go anywhere in this." Eleanor's reply underlines her disinterest: "You could be buried in it," she says, then goes on to explain that her husband's instructions were to pick "something a bit flashy." In the scene that ensues, Eleanor makes it clear that she likes the red dress, even as she asks for Jackie's approval. Jackie does not approve of the purchase, but she makes this point only through less-than-enthusiastic responses to Eleanor's requests for approval. As the saleslady pushes Eleanor to try the dress, Eleanor justifies the purchase to herself by underlining that the dress only costs $125 and that this will leave her $25 to take Jackie out "for a few beers," if she "loses the bill" and lets her husband think she paid the full $150.

This leads to Eleanor's description of the last time she tricked her husband this way and used the money to go with a girlfriend to a male strip joint, only to rush back to the house before her husband got back from his hockey game. As Eleanor models the dress in front of the mirror, Jackie asks her why she did this and Eleanor answers: "Maybe because Dick's like you," then explains: "He wouldn't approve. But he wouldn't be so polite about it." Eleanor then turns the conversation back to the subject of buying a dress and, after one last effort to push the gray silk on her friend, who talks only of what her husband wants her to look like, Jackie finally asks: "How do <u>you</u> want to look?" Eleanor replies that she wants "to look good for him" and goes on to imply that the reason that Jackie is single is that she doesn't understand this quintessentially feminine attitude of "to-be-looked-at-ness". The scene ends as Jackie asks the audience for help in dealing with Eleanor, underlining that Eleanor's angry attitude tells her that there is something wrong with her own approach. Directions in the script specify that

"the issue of the dress is used to investigate the variance of power in this relationship and attitudes towards our sexuality" (Barrie and Company 46-50).

The scene that follows takes place after Eleanor has worn the red dress to her husband's awards banquet. Here, the real stakes of the earlier discussion of power and sexuality become clear as Eleanor tells the story of her husband's reaction to the red dress. At home, she says, he was really pleased with it and told her "Now that's the way I like to see you look," but Eleanor is not sure she made the right choice. Significantly, before Eleanor can tell the rest of the story, Jackie rudely rebuffs a waitress who interrupts the conversation to try and serve the women cinnamon buns, thus reminding the audience of her sometimes judgmental attitude and willingness to make choices for others. When Jackie turns back to Eleanor, who is silent, and asks her what happened at the banquet, the stage directions specify that Eleanor "decides to tell it as a funny story." She tells how she "was feeling like a million dollars" when she walked into the banquet and saw "heads sort of turn to look at me." But Eleanor then recounts how her husband was displeased with this reaction and finally told her: "You're making a real spectacle of yourself . . . And your ass looks enormous in that dress." Eleanor excuses this abusive behaviour by concluding that it was her own stupidity that caused it: "I was so pleased that the dress made me look like I had a bust, I didn't even think about what it looked like from behind." Jackie assures her that the dress looked fine, but Eleanor doesn't take up the comment. Instead, she ends the story by telling how she spent most of the evening sitting at the table with Dick's jacket on and how he was "really pissed off," but would get over it. When Jackie reacts to this by telling Eleanor that she is really concerned about her, Eleanor cuts off the conversation by chasing after the waitress to get one of the cinnamon buns that Jackie had earlier angrily refused (Barrie and Company 50-53).

In both these scenes the performers' ability to verbally and physically ostend or demonstrate attitudes is crucial to the audience's understanding of the conditions that

make communication difficult between women who approach the world with different standpoints. In acting the scene, it is not enough that the performers illustrate the process of buying a dress or tell the story of the strip club visit or the banquet. Their physical interaction must also demonstrate the relationship between them, the way each of them organizes her own body, and the social position that that body organization makes possible. Through observing these physical interactions, especially as they take place in the ludic space of a theatrical Possible World, we can learn to recognize "attitude" itself as one of the basic conditions that structures the enactment of community. In order for us to do this, though, performers must have the technical skill to draw attention to attitude and it is here that a particular kind of professional training can increase the effectiveness of the performance text.

It is worth noting here that the ability to portray *Haltung* or "attitude" (which current colloquial usage reminds us is as much physical stance and social positioning as a frame of mind) was one of the chief qualities that Brecht believed performers must develop in order to take advantage of the opportunities offered by a working class theatre. Darko Suvin goes so far as to argue that *Haltung*, which he translates as "bearing" and defines as "a union of a subject's body-orientation in spacetime and of that body's insertion into major societal 'flows of things'," was one of Brecht's constant preoccupations. In Suvin's view, Brecht's thinking on this subject is intimately linked to his view of the pedagogical role of the theatre. This thinking first crystallized during the political crisis of 1929 to 1933, when Brecht focused on the idea that a theatrical vanguard might "teach others the proper ways of such a union of personal orientation and collective location." In later years, Suvin says, notes on The Caucasian Chalk Circle and the "dialectical drama" indicate that Brecht's attention to Haltung was a critical element of a directing technique based on "detailed elucidation of the stage actions as bearings determined by specific sociohistorical presuppositions rather than by monolithic 'character'" ("Brecht" 12-13).

The Théâtre Parminou, in the introductory scenes of a Forum theatre piece entitled L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde, provides one of the best demonstrations I have seen of the tremendous impact that a change in ostended attitude can have on a performed narrative. L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde starts with three series of three short sketches describing each of three different forms of discrimination in the workplace; in this case sexual harassment, over-protection of the physically disabled, and racism. After each sketch in a series the animator, or meneur-du-jeu, here played by Michel Cormier, asks the audience if what they have seen reflects the way discrimination is played out in their workplace. Given that the first two sketches in each series of three are highly caricatured, the audience always asks the professional performers to be a bit more subtle, which they obligingly do in the next segment. As the following stills from a video of a performance in St.-Boniface, Manitoba, demonstrate, changes in performers' attitudes are the critical element in demonstrating changes in the relationship of power within each sketch and in changing our overall impression of the worlds in which each of the sketches takes place.

In all three sketches about sexual harassment, the woman's attempts to avoid her harasser's insulting behaviour fail and she only regains control of the situation when she moves from a defensive to an attacking attitude. What is more, when performers Paul-Auguste Quentin and Valérie Gasse are told that the first two sketches do not reflect the subtlety with which discrimination is enacted in everyday life, it is mainly through changes in attitude that they effect the change of focus that makes the situations more believable for their audience. The storyline remains essentially the same throughout: the man notices the woman and invades her personal territory (both verbally and physically in the first two sketches), the woman tries to regain control by putting space between them, the man moves into the space the woman creates, then the woman ends the complementary action dynamic of sexism by invading the man's space. In all three cases the sketch starts with a presentation of attitudes that demonstrates the kind of body

organization that is at stake and ends with a direct appeal, on the part of the woman, to the audience as witness. The most striking thing in the series is the extent to which the performers' changes of attitude give us a new story each time, even though the basic sequence of actions stays the same from sketch to sketch.

Fig. 20. Opening Attitude in First Sexual Harassment Sketch.
(L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video)

In the first sketch the stakes turn around physical contact and the safety of the body. The man is presented as a caricature of the disco era: he wears a shirt open to the waist and shows his body to the audience in an attitude designed to demonstrate his "charm". Significantly, while the man dances across the stage, singing "J'aime les femmes," the woman is perched in a precarious position on a ladder reaching above her head to put files away (Fig.20).

Fig. 21. Man's Harassing Attitude in First Sexual Harassment Sketch
(L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video).

The man's harassing attitude consists of verbal comments to the audience about the woman's body, followed by physical attempts to destabilize the woman by climbing up the other side of the ladder while leering and making comments to her about her breasts. The woman's defensive attitude consists of trying to regain her balance by moving out of the territory the man has taken control of. When

the man climbs the other side of the ladder, for instance, she quickly hides her breasts with a file folder. climbs down the ladder and returns to her desk on the other side of the stage (Fig.21).

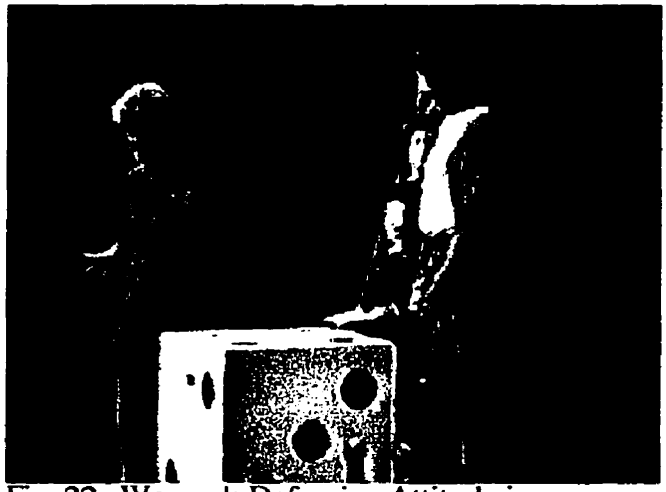

Fig. 22. Woman's Defensive Attitude in First Sexual Harassment Sketch (L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video).

The relationship between his assured attitude and her defensiveness is further accentuated as he pursues her and she tries to ignore him, turning her back and bending over to put away more files. When he moves in behind the desk and takes advantage of her position to pinch her, she again flees the territory he has invaded, dodging around the desk to get away from him, as he shows surprise at her reaction to his attentions (Fig.22). "Voyons, Francine," he says, putting his arm around her shoulder, "Toutes les femmes aiment ça!"

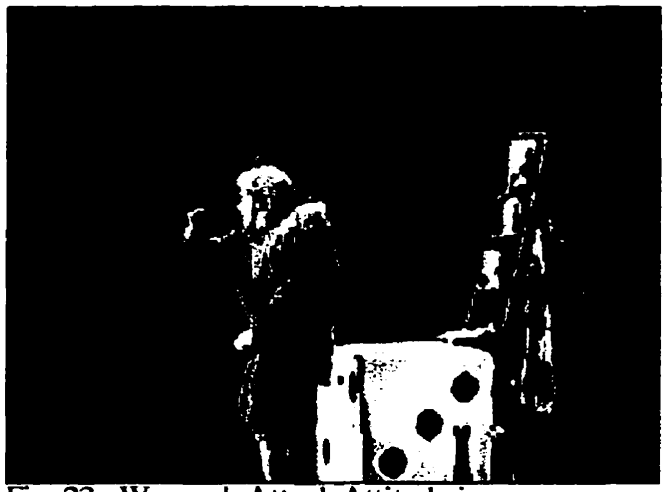

Fig. 23. Woman's Attack Attitude in First Sexual Harassment Sketch (L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video).

Her reaction is at first just to turn away from him. One of the striking features of this sketch is, in fact, that the woman never directly confronts the man. Even when she changes her attitude from one of defense to one of attack at the end of the sketch, she doesn't face her aggressor, but strikes at him in a backwards motion without looking directly at him (Fig.23).

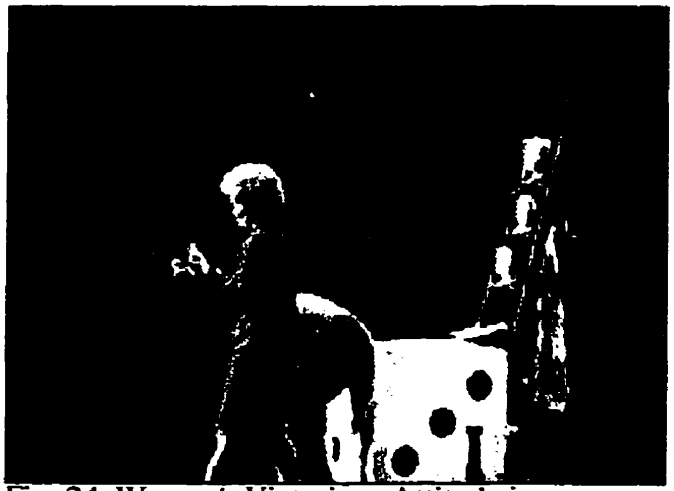

Fig. 24. Woman's Victorious Attitude in First Sexual Harassment Sketch (L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video).

The move to attack is nonetheless a significant change of attitude, and this is further accentuated at the end of the sketch when the woman looks directly at the audience with a gesture indicating her willingness to take on anyone else who wants to move into her space. The man, who is doubled over in pain, for the first time turns away from the woman on-stage (Fig. 24). As in the two following sketches, the man's final attitude is a physical ostension of the woman's more subtly portrayed psychological reaction to the type of aggression portrayed in the sketch. This careful ostention of an attitude that is often enacted in an almost invisible manner in everyday life, especially as performed by a representative of a group that would not normally be associated with it, demonstrates the concern with alterity typical of so much of the Parminou's dramaturgy.

Fig. 25. Introductory Attitudes in Second Sexual Harassment Sketch (L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video)

In the second sketch in the series, a change in the performers' attitudes signals that the conflict is more about comfort than safety. The woman has more control of the space than in the first sketch and never puts herself in so precarious a position as that on the ladder. Instead she is at her desk, where she hums a catchy tune as she organizes files to give to the man. He enters with a spring in his step, but his attire is now more in

keeping with a work setting and he doesn't directly address the audience about his intentions towards the woman (Fig. 25).

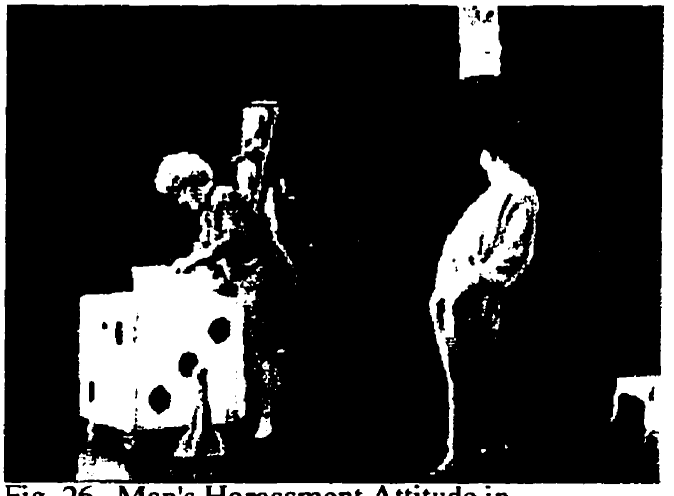

Fig. 26. Man's Harassment Attitude in Second Sexual Harassment Sketch (L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video).

While he still looks at the woman with a sexualizing gaze, his attitude is more relaxed and he does not show off his own body as much as the man in the first sketch did. The man's gestures are still overblown, but he is careful not to let the woman see them (Fig. 26). His first joke depends on the audience noticing what the woman does not. After leering at her, he addresses her in a friendly tone: "T'as l'air d'aller bien, ce matin, toi."

Fig. 27. Woman's Defensive Attitude in Second Sexual Harassment Sketch (L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video).

This friendly banter quickly degenerates into dirty jokes about the woman's possible sexual behaviour, but this time the man walks away from her and looks to the audience as he waits for her reaction. The aim of the harassment in this scene would seem to be to make the woman uncomfortable by forcing her to follow him onto territory he controls. She, however, succeeds in maintaining some degree of mastery by refusing to follow him onto the discursive territory of the sexual jokes and by restricting her movement to the very small space behind her desk. She also looks directly at the man

when she tells him his jokes aren't funny, though her less-than-solid balance betrays nervousness (Fig. 27).

Fig. 28. Woman's Attack Attitude in Second Sexual Harassment Sketch (L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video).

In this sketch the woman's change from a defensive to an attack attitude is again accomplished in a way that puts the man in the position of ostending what we might presume are her unseen feelings in face of this type of harassment. When the man comes back into her territory to tell another dirty joke and exclaim: "Ris-la, Francine. Elle est drôle," she grabs his tie and staples it to the desk, then repeats his words back to him (Fig. 28). Needless to say, he doesn't find her joke funny (though the audience certainly does) and her action effectively leaves him as trapped as she had been when he insisted on telling her jokes she didn't want to hear.

Fig. 29. Woman's Victory Attitude in Second Sexual Harassment Sketch (L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video).

Unlike the woman in the first sketch, this woman does end the scene by directly confronting the harasser. This is again underlined in the final moments of the sketch, when she looks him directly in the eye as he tries to pull his tie off the desk, then raises her stapler in the air in the victorious gesture of an athlete (Fig. 29).

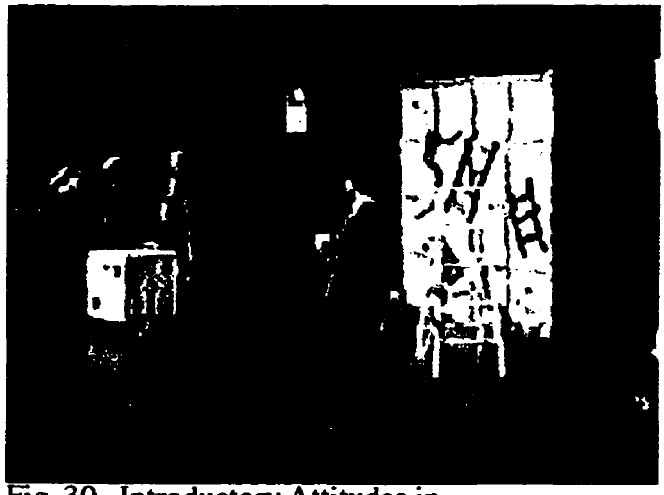

Fig. 30. Introductory Attitudes in Third Sexual Harassment Sketch (L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video)

In the third sketch of the series, the use of attitude to establish the woman's control of the situation is even more marked. In this scene there is no verbal text at all and the relationship is portrayed only through the two characters' use of stage space. This time, the man enters and crosses the stage slowly and with the clumsiness of someone who is still half asleep (Fig. 30). Once he reaches the desk, beside which the woman is looking at some files, he stretches and yawns, then finally sits down.

Fig. 31. Man's Harassment Attitude in Third Sexual Harassment Sketch (L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video)

The animator then asks the audience to take note of what will happen when a woman is added to the scene and the woman starts to move. The man remains seated and follows her with his eyes (Fig. 31). His broad smile, which he drops as soon as she looks at him, invites the audience to witness his attitude towards her.

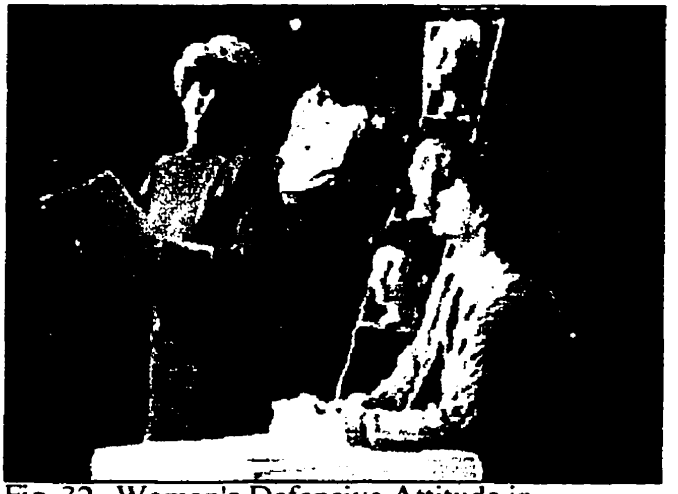

Fig. 32. Woman's Defensive Attitude in Third Sexual Harassment Sketch (L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video)

This time, however, it is the woman who controls the stage space. Though she clearly notices his gaze following her, she asserts her right to freedom of movement by crossing the stage in front of the desk where he sits and staring back at the man when she suspects he is staring at her (Fig. 32). The sketch ends with an even more aggressive use of space when the woman's takes an attitude of attack by making a sudden move in the man's direction. The move signals that the woman knows both that the man is staring at her and that he thinks she doesn't notice, but in this case the man is not immobilized by the woman's action, as he was in the other two sketches.

Fig. 33. Woman's Attack Attitude in Third Sexual Harassment Sketch (L'Égalité Brille pour Tout le Monde video)

Instead, he jumps in surprise and spills coffee on himself in a Gestus that demonstrates in physical terms the self-attacking attitude into which many women fall when faced with sexist abuse (Fig. 33). In the final analysis, this response is another version of the attitude that Eleanor acts out in the Women's Circle play when she explains away her husband's reaction to her red dress by attributing the problem to her own stupidity. The theatricality of the gesture in L'Egalite Brille Pour Tout le Monde, especially as acted

by a man, has the advantage of drawing attention to a socially dangerous, but all too frequently enacted, reaction to abuse.

In the context of a Forum theatre presentation, in which audience members will themselves later be asked to come onto the stage and try to change an unsatisfactory relationship, a framing series such as this may be considered a four minute acting lesson. But, like the warm-up games used in community workshops, its potential impact goes far beyond the theatre setting. In teaching audience members how they might intervene to change the dynamic of power of the fictional scenes in which they will later be asked to participate, the Théâtre Parminou is proposing not only an acting technique for the stage, but a more generally applicable technique for evaluating the enactment of worlds. By calling attention to attitude as a basic condition of social relationships, they provide a concrete method of taking up Frazer and Lacey's communitarian call to recognize that "purely rational argument will be inadequate, on its own, to bring about political change" in a social world constituted by much more than political debate, the creation of laws and their enforcement (118). The professional skill of the Parminou performers in focusing attention on attitude thus provides a means of opening public discussion of those elements of community "rooted in taken-for-granted definitions and norms, in settled social identities, maintained in ingrained habits and in the routine exercise of power" (Frazer and Lacey 122).

When audience members do intervene in the Forum that follows, the video shows that those who integrated the lesson of changing attitude had much more success in changing the situation than those who relied mainly on verbal argument. Those audience members who try to reason with the masculine character, but who do nothing to change their physical attitude, are easily defeated. Those who change the attitude, even by mistake, tend to succeed in changing the situation. But the video also demonstrates how difficult it is for untrained performers to demobilize their own habitual stances enough to

intentionally manipulate attitude. In a particularly striking instance in the St.-Boniface performance, a tall man takes to the stage to replace a woman performer who was seated precariously on a low rung of the ladder, looking up at her intimidating boss. The long-legged man sits on a higher rung than that on which the female performer had been sitting and so finds himself looking down at the boss who is trying to intimidate him. The game is won before he has said a word, and the audience laughs at the rapid change of status. But instead of accepting the happy results of his apparently unintentional change of attitude, the audience member becomes flustered. He seems to suddenly remember that he must play a woman and so moves to sit in an uncomfortable, but presumably more feminine, position lower on the ladder and then to verbally confront the boss from below! Needless to say, this intervention does not succeed in changing the situation in the employee's favour. It does, however, succeed in making the audience aware that, whatever the power of verbal arguments, as long as anyone, man or woman, plays out the prescribed feminine position in this scene, the power dynamic will remain essentially the same.

This kind of unintentional change of attitude is more rare in situations where amateur performers have had a chance to rehearse their performance before taking to the stage. A look at a similar use of repetition in the Krayola's Some of My Best Friends Are. . . . demonstrates, however, the difficulty amateur performers have in focusing attention on attitude, even when it is crucial to the change of relationships they are trying to present. Professional writer/director Yvette Nolan, following discussions about the prevalence of racism in everyday life during workshop sessions, suggested to performers that their anti-racist play be structured around a series of racist jokes in which each scene in the series has the oppressed of the previous scene become the new oppressor (Personal Interview). The play starts with one of the scenes.

Fig. 34. Telling Attitude of First Racist Joke (Some of My Best Friends Are . . . . video).

Ted and Rose laugh hilariously, then Ted proposes to tell another joke. "So this squaw walks into the vendor, see, and buys a case of Blue," he starts. Part way through the telling of the joke, Donna, a Native woman, enters the scene and there is a moment of silence as Ted and Rose register her presence.

Fig. 35. Interruption Attitude of First Racist Joke (Some of My Best Friends Are . . . . video).

Donna has noticed their laughter and asks what is so funny. "Do you have a joke, Ted?" "No, not a joke. Just something stupid really," says Ted. Rose agrees: "Yeah, real stupid!" before Ted proposes that they all go play video games and they abruptly leave the stage.

Fig. 36. Telling Attitude of First Racist Joke (Some of My Best Friends Are . . . . video).

Fig. 37. Interruption Attitude of First Racist Joke (Some of My Best Friends Are . . . . video).

In the next joke sequence, which follows several scenes that demonstrate racism in everyday life, it is Donna who is telling the racist joke. "Wait, a second," she says to Rose, "I heard this one at work. There are these two black guys standing at the corner. They're obviously pimps, right. . . ." Again, the telling isn't finished, this time because Lorraine, an African-Canadian woman, enters and announces that she has been looking all over for the two other women. As in the first joke segment, the scene ends when Donna, the joke teller, changes the subject in response to Lorraine's question about what the other two are doing. Three similar segments occur at intervals later in the play. Each time, the person who has been the butt of the previous joke becomes the teller of a racist joke herself, and stops telling it only when a person of the cultural origin the joke targets comes into the room.

As can be seen in comparing these sequences to the sequences from the Théâtre Parminou's L'Egalité Brille Pour Tout le Monde, the amateur actors rely more on stage groupings than on attitude to indicate the changes that occur in the fictional universe when the teller of the racist joke is confronted by someone who might be offended by it. This is quite effective in demonstrating one of the conditions that make participatory

communitarianism a more useful mode of social organization than integrationism in contemporary Canadian society: the homogeneity and closure embodied in the dyad with which each joke scene opens can no longer be taken for granted. In each of the joke telling scenes, the members of the original dyad apparently share similar assumptions about how they are different from the generalized Other targeted by the joke. When a friend from that cultural group enters the scene, the dyad must open out to engage with what Benhabib describes as the "particular Other". This engagement then makes the joke tellers aware of the poor correspondence between the "generalized Other" of the joke and the real person with whom they deal in everyday life.

Unfortunately, the inability of the amateur actors to enter what Barba describes as a pre-expressive state (see page 105), and so to call attention to the mechanisms by which social habitus are enacted by individual bodies, can lessen the audience's sense of responsibility for changing the attitudes ostended in these scenes. When actors don't enter this pre-expressive state, individual audience members are less likely to enter that pre-interpretive state (see page 106) in which they might become more aware of the social habitus they themselves automatically enact when faced with racist narratives. This conclusion is borne out by performer Rose Edwards' comments about the reactions of some audience members to the joke scenes. "Some people don't realize that telling jokes like that is racism, because they laugh at them. We were hoping to put that point across," she said. Through their responses to the performers, it became clear, however, that not all audience members got the point. "Some people kept waiting for the punchline," says Edwards. "They said they kept waiting through the whole play and they thought that we would at least say the punchline to one of them." (Edwards and Hall, Personal Interview).

Edwards observations raise an important proviso for our consideration of Benjamin's arguments about the role of interruption in exposing the conditions that make

a world possible: they remind us to pay close attention to what must be interrupted. In the case of these joke scenes, interrupting the habitual narrative was clearly not enough to make audiences question their automatized reactions. While audience members noticed that the narrative had been interrupted, this was not enough to make them notice how automatized their own reactions were. As a result, they responded, not by observing their own behaviour, but by questioning why the play did not adjust to those reactions as they had expected it would. Something more was apparently needed for them to question the reaction itself, and I would suggest that this something was a way of ostending attitude that would make clear that the change in stage grouping was a result of individual performers taking a position to create a new world. It is this way of ostending attitude that Barba refers to when he talks about the pre-expressive state that he identifies as the mark of the performer's "presence". It is often this "presence" that the professional performer brings to the popular theatre project, but as the examples I have cited demonstrate, "presence" should not itself be taken as a natural attribute of certain personalities or even theatre traditions. As we saw in Chapter 2, this quality is more usefully viewed, especially in the context of popular theatre, as a cognitive strategy that any performer can learn, given enough time and enough attention to the mechanics of the automatized reactions that create the social structures in which the action of the play takes place. Much of what we refer to as the presence of the professional performer is, in fact, an ability to create a state of disequilibrium in which spectators are forced to notice their normally automatic reactions because their efforts to use them to follow the action are partially frustrated. The ability to consciously create this disequilibrium when ostending attitudes is often what distinguishes professional from amateur performers in popular theatre.

5.3 Establishing the Horizons of the Possible World

While the ostension of attitude plays an extremely important role in allowing popular theatre audiences to see normally automatized habitus, it is not the only tool at the professional theatre worker's disposal. In preparing popular theatre performances intended to call attention to normally invisible conditions, both directors and designers also work to establish the horizon against which performers and audience members must create the Possible Worlds (see pages 110-114) in which the actions on the stage make sense. Often this is done by evoking social history or cultural traditions that are not directly enacted in the playtext, but that have given rise (directly or indirectly) to some of the habitus that form the enabling conditions for the Possible Worlds the text is intended to induce.

On the simplest level, set design is often used to remind audiences of the history of the problems that the stage action tries to solve. In Headlines Theatre's Out of the Silence, for instance, the traditional Haida painting of a bird in the form of a throw rug on the living room floor constantly reminds the audience of the background of the working-class family whose life it observes. Four painted panels showing the historical tableaux that open the play, and a central image, surrounded by the Eagle feathers that symbolize truth-telling and showing "a bird image with a teardrop coming from one eye," further remind the audience of the history of oppression against which the contemporary action must be understood (Headlines Theatre Out of the Silence 3). This forces the audience to consider the problems of the play in the context of the historical use of assaults on children to destroy Native cultures and maintain Native peoples in an inferior position in Native societies.

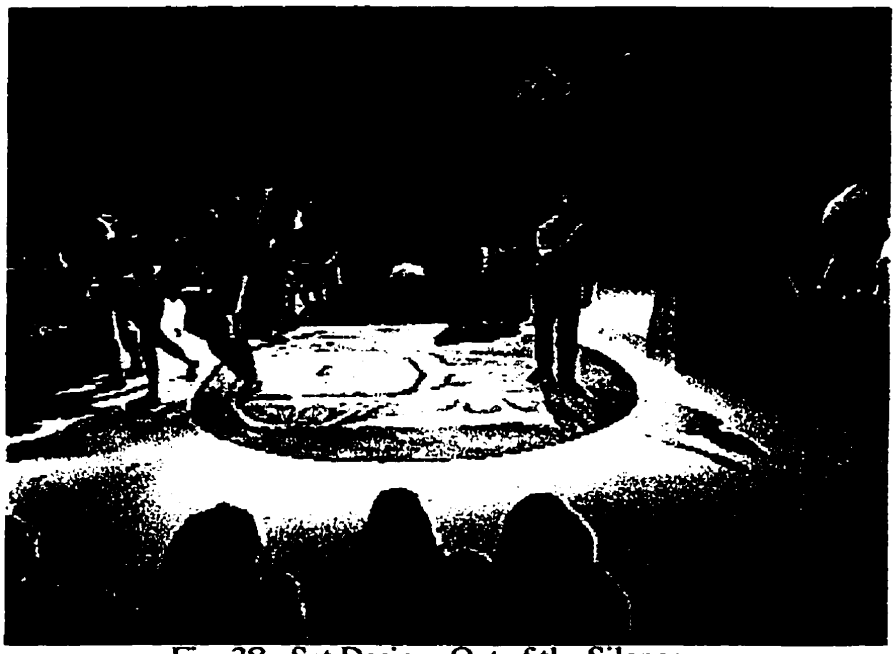

Fig. 38. Set Design: Out of the Silence
(Out of the Silence video).

The Théâtre Parminou uses a similar strategy in Le Silence des Autres, where Greek-like statues and a large drawing of a nude woman frame the playing area.

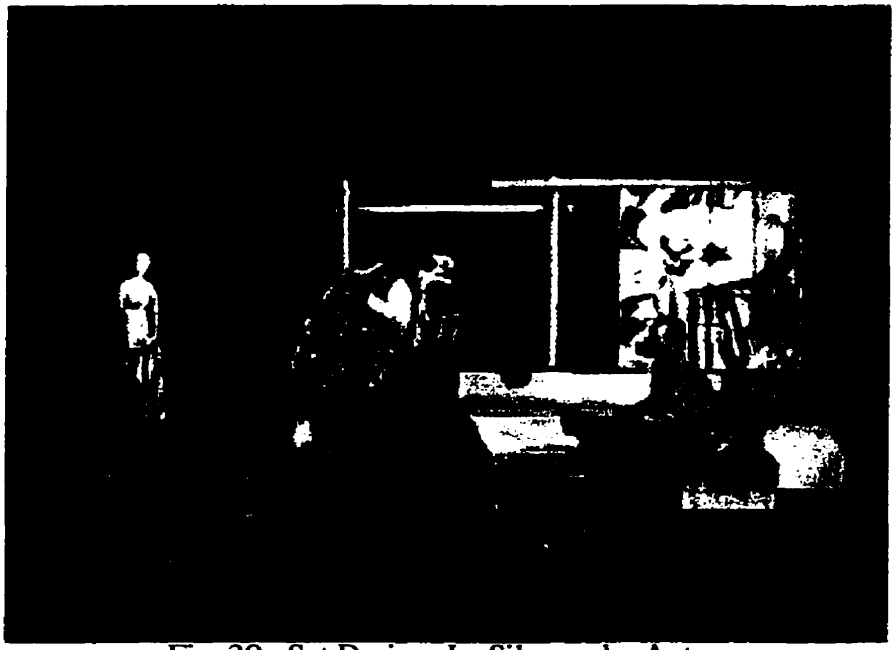

Fig. 39. Set Design: Le Silence des Autres
(Le Silence des Autres video).

Watching narratives of sexual harassment within the frame of these cultural artifacts, audiences are encouraged to view the sexist actions of the play's characters as instances of a broader history of viewing women as sex-objects in Euroamerican cultures. This is especially important for Le Silence des Autres, because this piece is designed to induce audiences to consider their own responsibility as witnesses of sexist actions. By placing the problem in the broader context of cultural history, the Parminou makes it more difficult for audience members to reduce the meaning of the piece to an attempt to understand particular situations of sexual harassment. Within the frame of cultural artifacts, they are instead induced to consider the attitudes and habitus that inscribe such behaviours as "private" problems and so make them inaccessible for public debate.

Sometimes design elements are directly integrated into the action, as in the Parminou's À Temps pour Indian Time, when the Québécois and Native character are portrayed trying to settle their differences as they sit in a canoe that threatens to tip over each time one of the characters makes an abrupt move. The Théâtre Sans Détour provides an even more interesting use of integrated design in Jusqu'au Fond du Rêve, a forum theatre piece about drug abuse. The play opens as Michel creates a playing area by closing a series of high wrought-iron gates, reminiscent of a graveyard. Once behind the gates, he pulls a paper bag to his face, starts sniffing its contents, and staggers about the stage. At this point, the lights come up on a statue, which the audience sees through the graveyard gates. As Michel gets more and more stoned from the effects of what he's sniffing, the statue comes to life to encourage his drug use.

Fig. 40. Drug Statue in Jusqu'au Fond du Rêve
(Jusqu'au Fond du Rêve video)

The principle here is similar to that invoked by the tableaux in Out of the Silence or the artifacts in Le Silence des Autres: the immediate situation of the individual is to be read against a much more long-standing cultural tradition. The drug-pushing statue is very reminiscent of the devil figures in both European traditions of carnivalesque inversion and Québécois folklore, where pacts with the Devil generally end badly. In keeping with the inversion tradition, which features inappropriate combinations of categories, the statue combines a funereal appearance (constituted by grey make-up and back-lighting and reinforced with musical effects) with an avuncular attitude. The Statue laughs constantly and claims his only purpose is to encourage young people to live life to the fullest by bringing them pleasure. Throughout the play he provides drugs to Michel and Frédérique, all the while encouraging the standpoint of the drug user who wants to go "jusqu'au fond du rêve" (all the way into the dream). His repeated interactions with the characters demonstrate the attitudes associated with this standpoint as he sets each of them a series of tests similar to the tests of a hero's quest in traditional folktales. In one scene for instance, he demands that Michel dance until he digs through the earth to arrive

in China. The drug users of the play are no heroes though, and the upshot of each of the tests is more similar to the devil tales of Québécois folklore, where the devil generally gets his way though the hero may at first appear to be benefiting. Throughout Jusqu'au Fond du Rêve for instance, Michel agrees with the Statue that he is having the time of his life even as his physical condition deteriorates when the Statue removes first his ability to speak, then his free will, then his memory, when Michel fails one test after another.

The way the Théâtre Sans Détour uses such a horizon-defining figure in the context of a Forum theatre piece is worth noting. As is the case of the statues in Le Silence des Autres, the statue in Jusqu'au Fond du Rêve pushes the audience to create a Possible World in which the problems they see on the stage cannot be reduced to an individual's problem with illicit substances. The use of the Statue, which refers back to well-known fictional narratives, sets the problem of drug addiction up as a broader contest between two well-known standpoints. The problem of drug use is here portrayed, not as an individual sickness as much as an expression of an individualist standpoint that wants maximum benefit with minimum attention to maintenance. In contrast to the individualist attitude typical of the drug culture, the response of the people who try to help the users meet their most basic physical and emotional needs demonstrates the communitarian attitude of concern for the physical conditions that make relationships possible. Bringing the Statue to life, rather than maintaining it as a set piece, allows the Théâtre Sans Détour to emphasize this point by playing on a combination of sign systems to point up the conflicts between these opposing standpoints. Verbally, the statue invokes a standpoint encoded as an attitude of maximal effort in stories in which a lone hero meets challenges to win a prize. At the same time, the Statue's physical attitudes towards the drug addicts, from whom he is constantly removing the cognitive skills necessary for interaction with other humans, remind the audience of those folk tales where the devil tricks the hero into a bad bargain by persuading him to accept challenges he cannot meet. Such a reference to popular culture

has the advantage of reminding the audience of those sources of wisdom that the apparati of mass-culture are rapidly leaving behind. This in itself encourages a broadening of the terms of public discussion to include ways of knowing that are not science-based and so are not the sole purview of experts. By setting up the narrative traditions of non-dominant cultures as horizons against which meaning is to be created, such uses of design in popular theatre encourage audiences to recognize the legitimate meaning-making potential of narrative traditions that the mind/body split of dominant thinking often excludes from the public sphere.

That the Statue's role is one of setting horizons rather than driving the action forward is made clear in the audience intervention segment that follows the initial presentation. Unlike Headlines Theatre, the Théâtre Sans Détour does not allow audience members to choose the points at which they will intervene in the performance. Instead, they suggest scenes where changing a character's action might shift the direction of the narrative. Significantly, the Statue is present in none of these scenes. Audience members who want to intervene cannot change his attitude or even confront it directly. In this sense the Statue forces them to deal with cultural traditions in much the way Arthur Frank argues people must deal with ideology in constructing their own body styles. In Frank's words, "people construct and use their bodies, though they do not use them in conditions of their own choosing, and their constructions are overlaid with ideologies" (Frank 47). Any reaction audience interveners get from the characters they choose to interact with will be partially determined by the Statue's influence but that influence cannot be countered directly. Instead, actors must change the meaning of the Statue's actions by interacting with each other differently in the everyday world of the more realist scenes.

It is important to emphasize here that by reading the narratives of the dominant culture in a particular milieu through the meaning-making traditions of popular culture,

popular theatre companies are not simply reversing the roles of dominant forms, as some descriptions of carnivalesque inversion might suggest. They are instead proposing a new horizon against which the meaning-making strategies of the dominant culture should be evaluated. Many feminist companies have made an interesting use of music in performing this shift of horizons. Toronto's Company of Sirens, for instance, started Shelter from Assault, a play on domestic violence, with a tune that became something of a signature piece for the company. Entitled "Conditioning", this rap song tells the story of Plain Jane, who was brought up to believe that girls should be submissive and then sent out to meet to world. The song tells us that: "Jane grew up and went out well armed/ With her perfume, her lipstick and her charm/ She had heels for this and a dress for that/ She batted her eyes like a Cheshire cat." Her charms won her very little, however: a job where the boss "was always putting her down," and telling her "Massage my neck and make me feel better/ Bring me a coffee, answer the phone/ I know it's late but you can't go home/ There's filing and typing and all these papers." Finally Jane gives up on the job and tosses away her shoe "Figuring that her life was through." To her surprise she finds that she feels much better without the uncomfortable shoes and the other accoutrements of femininity and the song ends as the rapper declares

> I'm gonna set my own rules and set my own goals
> I'm gonna find me a way to take control
> Of my own life, not the toil and strife
> Of being somebody's worker and another man's wife
> Gonna get it together with the mothers and the daughters
> Gonna find a way to help each other

The other company members then join in to sing in chorus

> We're the Plain Janes and we're tired of the games
> Things are never gonna be the same

We're the Plain Janes and we're tired of the games

Things are never gonna be the same

Things are never gonna

Things are never gonna

Things are never gonna be the same (Company of Sirens 2-4)

The opening song is immediately followed by a scene called "Fairytales" in which the performers recite nursery rhymes and sing bits of popular songs that encourage women's dependence on men. This is intercut with statistics about violence against women in Canada and a woman's voice saying "Cinderella was rescued by her prince and they lived happily ever after. . . . Sleeping Beauty was rescued by her prince and they lived happily ever after. . . . Snow White was rescued by her prince and they lived happily ever after. . . . So here I'll wait." Heard directly after the "Conditioning" song, whose performance as a rap tune underlines its protest function, the fairytales and popular tunes, which are normally so familiar as to be unquestionable, can be recognized as part of a conditioning process that teaches girls to behave in submissive ways. This use of music is carried on throughout the play, with both protest songs and lyrics from popular music used to call attention to the social conditioning that underpins particular incidents of violence. The musical patterns of the different types of music point to the ways different interventions should be interpreted. By starting with the rap tune, following with the melodies of feminist folk protest, and using a parodic tone on the more familiar music, Company of Sirens pushes audiences to listen critically to the negative lessons of much of the commercial music that presents itself as being nothing more than entertainment.

Red Roots Community Theatre uses music in a similar way in their feminist piece, Those Damn Squaws, created for International Women's Day Celebrations at Winnipeg's Aboriginal Cultural Centre in 1996. The play opens with a drum song, sung in Ojibway. This is itself a transgressive move within the Aboriginal community, both because this is

not the kind of song that would traditionally be sung by women and because the lyrics refer to "Women Warriors."

Fig. 41. Drum Song in Those Damn Squaws
(Those Damn Squaws video)

This song and the scene that follows, like the opening of Shelter from Assault, underline the ways in which an individual identity must be constructed within a set of conditions not of the individual's own making.

The four performers have barely entered the stage and begun to sing when performer Monica Marx appears to notice something in the audience and whispers to the woman next to her. Finally she interrupts the song to approach the audience and say, apparently to an individual audience member: "Excuse me, have you got a problem? Yeah, well, it doesn't all sound the same to me!" The other performers then drag her back to the stage and the scene switches to another performer, Tracey McCorrister, who counts Smarties and sings the well-known commercial jingle: "When you eat your Smarties do you eat the red ones last?" The jingle sounds different here though, because McCorrister has changed the melody to make it sound much more like the songs of the Aboriginal heritage referred to in the opening drum song. She finishes by reciting the

children's rhyme "Eenie, Meanie, Minie, Moe, Catch a Nigger by the Toe. . ." then selecting one of the Smarties. As she pops it in her mouth she tells the audience, "Brown's an ugly colour anyway."

At this point the other performer's voices intervene from the darkness with phrases against which the girl McCorrister plays would have had to define her identity as a Native woman. They refer to playing "cowboys and Indians," tell her she "got her cheque already," call her "easy Indian squaw," and announce: "My Mom says I can't play with Indians." McCorrister tells the voices to "Go away!" but they only come closer. "Here fill out this form," says the first. "Two beers and she's mine," announces the second. The third sings in the tone of children's taunts: "I have a college fund!" McCorrister can only reply: "You don't know me!" but the voices rise as the other performers come forward and turn their insults into a chant. Finally, McCorrister succeeds in chasing them away by screaming "Stop that!" She then returns to the box of Smarties in an attempt to understand her problems. At first she draws the conclusion that, since all the Smarties prove to be white inside once the candy-coating is sucked off, perhaps she might get along better if she just stopped "acting Red". Following on the drum song and the Aboriginal-style singing of the Smarties song, this response must seem to the audience like a serious restriction of her lifeworld, and McCorrister herself soon concludes that if she did this she "would have nothing left." This is followed by a long monologue in which McCorrister denounces the residential school experience as one that was designed to make Native people hate themselves because they are Native, and ends with her announcement that she will no longer try to please people who think that way but will instead demand respect. She then turns her back on the audience and walks to the back of the stage as the other three performers enter to the sound of Aretha Franklin singing "Respect", and the performers lip-synch and dance their way through a verse.

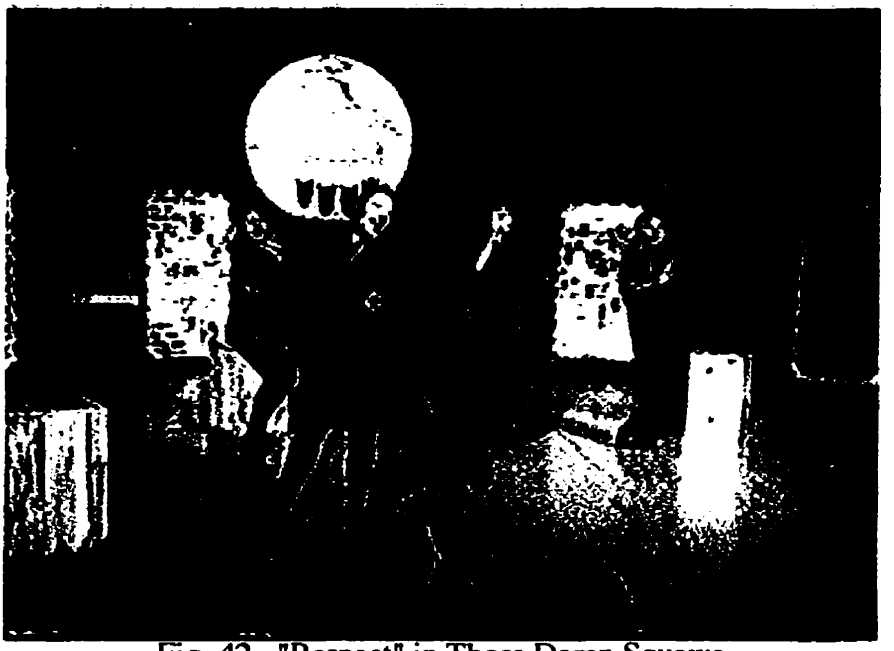

Fig. 42. "Respect" in Those Damn Squaws
(Those Damn Squaws video)

The scene shift that follows is signaled by a recorded version of Handel's Hallelujah chorus that leads into a sketch about a phone-in television show entitled "1-800-I-Wanna-Be-An-Indian". The parody in this scene again involves music, as McCorrister plays a medium who promises to help callers shift their identity by finding their "Indian name". The fake nature of the T.V. medium's claims is underlined both by opening the scene with Christian music and by McCorrister off-key performance of what she tries to make pass for a Native chant. The real interests involved in her performance are simultaneously underlined by her demand that the caller offer the one marker of identity that must remain stable in a commercial world: her credit card number.

The use of music in Those Damn Squaws is especially interesting because of the way it works through the connection between attitude and horizon. The opening drum song clearly establishes the performers' standpoint on the actions that will follow, but they do not hesitate to borrow from other cultures when this suits their purposes. Each of their demonstrations of borrowing is, however, done in a slightly different way. In the first borrowing, the Smarties song, McCorrister performs the music in a way that takes it

into her own tradition, even as she repeats the racist ideology that asserts that "Brown is an ugly colour." Her use of the well-known African-American song of women's protest, "Respect", points to her willingness to take on the attitudes of another culture when these are useful for her own life. In this sense, Those Damn Squaws is clearly not a play about cultural purism. It does, however, demand an understanding of the other culture's basic attitudes and not just a superficial imitation of its forms. This is emphasized in the T.V. medium scene, where McCorrister plays a white woman whose basic musical attitude demonstrates that she has no real interest in adopting the standpoint of the cultural she imitates. Instead, she holds firm to a commercial attitude and so succeeds in performing nothing more than a poor imitation of the culture she claims to disseminate. Watching this series of changes of attitudes, we recognize that the establishment of attitude is in part a result of a choice of horizons, and that the same set of gestures can take on different meanings in different contexts. Still, as McCorrister's performance illustrates, a simple change of horizon is not enough to change the meaning of a particular attitude; commercialism is commercialism, whatever the occasion or the costume. In the end, it is the attitude that is performed, and not simply the horizon against which it is chosen, that determines the kind of Possible World that can account for the action of the play.

5.4. Positioning the Performance in Relation to the Everyday World

An important task remains for popular theatre troupes who want to focus audience attention on the ways in which their current community life is structured and on the ways in which it could be changed. They must give some indication to the audience of the relationship they want them to establish between the Possible Worlds of theatrical performance and the world of everyday life. Many troupes, especially if their performance will involve audience participation, use an intermediary character or animator to give the audience direct instructions about how to position the theatre event in relation to their everyday lives. The way in which this character functions is largely determined

by the context in which the performance itself takes place. Since popular theatre performances are often presented in community venues or as part of conferences where participants expect to be thinking about the problems of community-building and their role in them, it is not always necessary to emphasize the educational aims of the presentation as much as would be the case in commercial venues. Susan Seagrove, discussing Company of Sirens performances of Shelter from Assault in an interview with me, described the difference between audiences expectations in such venues and in commercial theatres as follows:

> A lot of the time you're in a place where the energy is already there and it's established. People may know each other. Some ground work may have been done, though that was not always the case when we went somewhere. Often we'd be used as a conference kick-off, to get people starting to feel comfortable about the public debate that was going to happen. People understand that they're not just going to see entertainment. They know that they're maybe going to hear stories. (Personal Interview.)

In cases like these, troupes often emphasize the ludic nature of theatrical cognition, as the Company of Sirens did in the comic opening scenes discussed above. By doing so, they both inform audiences about the standpoint with which the performance understands the problem at hand, and encourage them to break away from their usual methods of approaching the problem that is about to be discussed.

The Théâtre Parminou often takes a similar ludic approach to opening performances that take place in the context of conferences or education sessions. In Le Silence des Autres, for instance, animator Michel Cormier directly addresses the audience to explain the purpose of the theatre presentation and to introduce both performers and characters. Cormier's status as a representative of a ludic world is established by the use

of a theatrical costume and he reinforces this by interrupting his straight-forward presentation of the theatre event with a joke that destabilizes audience expectations in face of a serious subject. After explaining that the Parminou has done several plays about sexual harassment already, he tells the audience that they had thought that, given all the activity on this subject, the problem had pretty much been solved. To verify the truth of this assumption, he tells the audience, he would like to ask them a question. "Quel(le)s sont ceux et celles dans la salle qui ont déja fait de l'harcèlement sexuel?" The audience bursts out laughing, unsettled by Cormier's playful transgression but knowing that he is unlikely to expect the guilty parties to confess in such a situation. In a videotape of the dress rehearsal, however, a woman's voice can clearly be heard saying in a light-hearted tone: "Lève ta main, Marcel!", suggesting a possible audience reaction in workplaces. Cormier smiles himself, then says: "OK. Je recommence, je vais poser la question différément. Juste pour voir si ç'a changé un peu à travers des années. . . . J'aimerais demander que vous levez la main, ceux et celles qui ont déjà été temoin d'harcèlement sexuel en milieu de travail. Levez la main, juste pour voir, comme ça. . ." He then announces that about 25% of the audience has witnessed sexual harassment in the workplace and tells the other 75% that they are in the right place to become witnesses, because they will see sexual harassment in the play that is about to be presented. This is followed by a direct instruction to pay particular attention to the characters who witness sexual harassment in the play.

The focus of Cormier's presentation then moves to an introduction of the performers and the characters they will play. Cormier introduces the first performer by name, and asks the audience to applaud. "C'est mieux de faire ça au début, parce qu'après on n'est jamais certain," he says, again reinforcing the ludic relationship. He goes on to explain that this performer, Odette Caron, will play two characters and that the first of them, Gabrielle, wears glasses. Caron puts the glasses on and "becomes" Gabrielle by changing her attitude.

Fig. 43. Performer Odette Caron becomes "Gabrielle" in Le Silence des Autres (Le Silence des Autres video).

Cormier then moves on to the next performer, Réjean Bédard, and goes through the same operation, but this character, Gabrielle's boss, will not stop explaining his story and telling the audience how much he wants their advice. Finally Cormier rolls his eyes towards the ceiling and explains to the character that this is a very competent audience who will certainly be able to help him, but only after they have seen the play. The boss agrees, but it takes two more such interventions on Cormier's part before he stops talking and leaves the stage.

Cormier then introduces Caron's second character, Danielle, and her co-worker, René, who work in a hospital kitchen. Both performers put on kitchen worker's caps as they are introduced and again "become" the characters as soon as they are costumed. Cormier asks the audience to pay particular attention to how René reacts to the sexual harassment of Danielle by another worker and René moves forward to announce: "Heh, j'ai rien fait, moi!" This starts an argument with Danielle, who answers that he laughs at all the jokes his co-worker, Marco, tells and accuses him of being afraid of Marco. René responds angrily and Cormier moves across the stage to stop the argument by taking off

René's cap, a move which causes the performer to freeze in place. Cormier introduces the performer as Yves Séguin, and tells the audience that he too will play a second character, a woman who witnesses scenes of harassment in the same hospital kitchen. While Séguin finishes his costume change to become Françoise, an older woman working in the same kitchen, Cormier asks the audience to pay special attention to this character and to think about whether or not she could have done something differently when she witnessed the harassment of Danielle. Françoise comes to life to answer this question with a definitive "Non!" and snatch the cap Cormier still holds. "Ça, ce n'est pas à toi! Ça, c'est à l'hôpital!" she announces in a strident tone. Turning towards the audience she adds, in a double-entendre that might extend to the costs of the sexual harassment the audience is about to see: "C'est vos taxes qui paient ça!" Danielle then hurries her off the stage as Cormier tells the audience that, while Françoise may seem close-minded, she really does have a good heart under her tough exterior and that they should pay special attention to her situation. He then announces that the play will start but that he will come back afterwards to try, with the help of the audience, to find ways to encourage those who witness sexual harassment in the scenes that follow to act differently.

This scene, like the Sirens' comic opening, serves a number of purposes. First it allows Cormier to establish a relationship with the audience that is based on a clear exposition of the rules of the game. Unlike performances in most mainstream commercial venues, this performance does not depend on the audience already knowing the conventions within which the play will take place before it starts. In fact, the denial of the conventions of realist theatre, in which the audience is supposed to view the stage action not as an inducement to create an imaginary Possible World, but as an extension of their own "real" world, encourages the suspension of other cognitive conventions. Audience members are, in effect, asked to check at the door their habitual responses to both the problem the play exposes and to the theatre institution in which it is presented. Further,

by treating the demand for a confession of sexual harassment in a playful manner. Cormier discourages the audience from watching the play in a confessional mode. This does not mean, however, that the performance doesn't take a position. The ridiculing of the boss who will not cede the floor to other speakers indicates the Parminou's willingness to entertain criticism of employers, even when those employers sponsor performances in workplace settings. The quick changes between the performers' self-presentations and their presentations of their characters encourage the audience to view the performance that follows as a contingent model of a reality that can be changed by changing the way it is enacted. Most importantly, perhaps, Cormier's direct instruction to the audience to pay attention to the role of those who witness sexual harassment focuses attention on the specific aspect of the problem this particular performance wants to treat.

Contrast this to David Diamond and Jackie George's presentation of Headlines Theatre's production Out of the Silence, which was designed for presentation as a stand-alone event in community halls and theatres. In the introduction to the video version, which was filmed during an experimental interactive broadcast with a live in-studio audience on a community television station, the two start by explaining that they are the Jokers or facilitators for the event in which the audience will participate. They go on to give a brief history of the production process and to explain that the play will be performed all the way through once. "We ask that you watch through critical eyes," says Diamond, "for characters who are being oppressed, or treated badly, who are struggling against the problem, and see if you can find ways to deal with the situation differently, to break that oppression, or solve the problem." He then explains how audience members will be able to intervene in the action in the second part of the program. George goes on to advise the audience that they may find some of the content of the play disturbing and that if they feel the need to talk to somebody they should phone the crisis line whose number she proceeds to give. The facilitators then leave the stage and the play is

performed as it would be in a mainstream theatre and without interruption by the facilitators (Out of the Silence video).

The whole tone of this presentation is much more serious than is the Parminou's presentation of Le Silence des Autres or the Company of Siren's Shelter from Assault. The play's subject matter, the sexual assault of children in family settings, perhaps demands such an approach. Audience members who are survivors of this kind of abuse are, unfortunately, quite likely to experience post-traumatic stress reactions (flashbacks or dissociative episodes) that make it difficult or impossible for them to interact with others. Headlines' care in dealing with this possibility indicates the importance they place on including survivors in public discussions of sexual abuse, even if those survivors' reactions are not as predictable as those theatre companies usually expect of audience members in mainstream settings. In this sense, the serious tone of Headlines' presentation has a similar effect to the Parminou's ridicule of the boss who won't stop talking long enough to listen to the people he says he wants to hear: it clearly establishes the theatre company's desire to include those who are usually excluded from the public sphere in the discussion that will take place. The need for such an approach is, however, also partly determined by the fact that the performance takes place as an independent event and, in its first presentation to the audience, has the form of a mainstream play. Given the expectations such a performance situation is likely to arouse, the problem for Headlines is to establish the cognitive potential of a medium associated with mere entertainment, rather than to establish the possibility that cognition can take a ludic form, as tends to be the case in educational settings. A third factor in the style of the presentation is undoubtedly Headlines' faith in the ability of realist staging to make audiences aware of unknown facts about taboo subjects, as we discussed in Chapter 3. But another factor is at play here, and this comes out most clearly when facilitators George and Diamond again take to the stage after the initial performance of the play.

George starts by acknowledging that the material the audience has just seen is difficult and that people may be experiencing some "very heavy feelings." "It's important that you know it's OK to have those feelings," she tells the audience. "You're going to see the play again, and you're going to have an opportunity to process some of those feelings." Diamond then intervenes to explain that this event is a piece of Forum theatre, which he hopes the audience will accept as "an invitation to have a conversation with us here in the theatre. . . a conversation through action." He explains how audience members can stop the action in the presentation that will follow and, in the case of the live studio audience, come on-stage to try a new action in place of one of the characters. George takes over at this point to explain that: "This family has rules that they're following, patterns that they have fallen into. You'll now have an opportunity to experiment with ways to break those patterns, to break those unspoken rules of this family, so that we can all learn ways to deal with this in real life." Diamond follows up on this by spelling out the rules for interventions in Forum theatre and assuring the audience that "there is no way to come up here and do the wrong thing." "This isn't some kind of test here tonight," he explains. He goes on to make clear that even unsuccessful interventions are useful because they can show what not to do or give other audience members ideas that might work out better. His purpose in saying this is apparently to invite a wide enough range of interventions that the Possible Worlds audience members create in collaboration with the performers will be really useful in thinking through events in audience members' everyday lives. Unfortunately, the way the facilitators later handle those interventions would seem sometimes to work against this aim.

After each intervention, either Diamond or George ask both the person who intervened and the actor who responded to the intervention how they feel about what just happened. Personal emotional reaction seems to be the criteria they consider the most reliable indicator of the value of a particular kind of interaction. This is especially

important in face of such subjects as domestic abuse, where validating emotion as a useful indicator of knowledge pushes witnesses to account not only for the actions they see but for the different ways they impact on particular individuals. It is worth noting however, that, in contrast to the Parminou's careful delineation of the difference between performer and character, Headlines' approach to the question of emotion makes it impossible to discern a difference between performers' and characters' emotions. This lack of distinction between performer and character, whether in the case of the original professional performers or the audience members who come onto the stage, would seem to indicate that Headlines' is proposing that the theatrical world and the everyday worlds in which audience members experience similar problems can be linked by a kind of substitutionalist universalism. Once audience members learn to change their automatized reactions to abuse within the relative safety of the theatre setting, Headlines' seems to say, they can simply carry these new reactions into the everyday world when they leave the theatre.

In order to facilitate this transfer, Headlines' animators often follow up on their on-stage discussion of emotion by either approving of the intervention in some way, or by verbally drawing out the lesson that they think the intervention teaches. In doing so they apply professional techniques that are more likely to be associated with a psychological institution than a theatrical one. This sometimes has the unfortunate effect that Dorothy Smith describes as typical of professional ways of knowing, in which the intervener must explain her or his actions in terms that the theatre company seems to have predetermined (cf. Conceptual Practices of Power). So, for instance, when a woman comes on-stage to replace the daughter and refuse the father's gift of a diamond ring, Diamond insists she continue to explain her intervention. The woman at first tells Diamond that she refused the ring because "I wanted a ghetto blaster. I didn't want a diamond ring. I'm too young for a diamond ring. I don't really care about those things." Diamond responds by asking the actor playing the father to explain why the gift of the

ring is important to him, then returns his attention to the woman. "We know from putting this play together," he says, "that there's a lot more attached to this ring, and I think you know that too somehow." The woman responds: "Oh, yeah!" and Diamond tells her: "I want you to talk about that, about why this ring is threatening to you." She obliges saying: "Well, because I don't want to be his wife and I'm trying to say to him: 'That's not important to me. I don't want to be your wife.'" Diamond then turns to explain to the audience:

> That's what's at the centre of this moment, of course, is that this ring is a purchase of Kelley. And she's in a very difficult position, of course, because, first of all, it's difficult for our Kelley to say and do what you do. But we can see something here, which is that if she does, she opens up an opportunity for other members of her family, her mother in particular, to try to help her. And maybe if they work together on something like this, if we open that doorway, then they can work together on other things as well, down the line. It's a very important intervention. Thank you.

The kind of approval Diamond expresses in this intervention is undoubtedly useful in encouraging other audience members to take to the stage. They learn, watching Diamond's discussion of the intervention, that they will be taken seriously and will even be praised for intervening in this discussion. Further, Diamond's approving intervention also serves to help clarify any points that audience members' lack of acting technique might have left unclear.

Diamond's intervention, however effective in encouraging audience members to come onto the stage to test their ideas, does have problematic side-effects. In drawing out the lesson he believes the intervention teaches, he effectively narrows the range of possible meanings audiences can construct from the scene and his insistence that the

theatre experience can function as a simple substitute for everyday life, if taken seriously by audience members, can lead to dangerous situations outside the theatre. The difficulty here is that the relatively safe atmosphere of the theatre may itself narrow the range of emotion audience members will feel in face of violence and abuse. Since the basic convention of the theatre is that nothing that takes place on the stage should have physical effects outside the fictional spacetime, survivors of abuse can confidently use the stage as an arena in which to carry out actions that improve their position in a situation where threats of violence are unlikely to be carried out. To suggest, however, that they should repeat these same actions in the everyday world, as Diamond seems to do when, following Boal, he refers to the theatre event as a "rehearsal for life," is to ask them to ignore other emotions (i.e. fear) that might be more valid indicators of the probable sequence of events their self-expression will trigger outside the theatre.

This problem in the relationship between the theatrical and the everyday worlds seems to be caused largely by the attempt to bridge the gap between audience and stage, spectator and actor, instead of keeping them rigidly separate, as is usually the case in mainstream theatre production. Ironically, even as Forum theatre apparently allows the spectator a more active role in the meaning-creating process, it ends up privileging the position of the actor by suggesting that this is position to which everyone in the theatre should aspire. When this privileging of stage activity is extended to the relationship between the theatre and the everyday world, the danger is that it unconsciously repeats the privileging of institutionalized professional knowledge over knowledge derived from everyday life that it is trying to overcome. Theatre workers, for instance, tend to privilege confrontations in highly charged dramatic situations because our profoundly hero-centered Euroamerican tradition has taught us that drama is conflict. People working with survivors of domestic abuse, however, tend to discourage these kinds of confrontations because to encourage them often just keeps the cycle of violence going. My own thinking about this problem has, I must admit, been much influenced by

conversations with a woman who wants to remain anonymous because it is her own history of living with domestic abuse that causes her to react angrily to Forum theatre performances on domestic violence. The position of intervener, in which an audience member must react quickly to a situation she has not instigated and cannot control, is, she says, just too similar to what she had experienced as a battered wife. While she agrees that such presentations have helped educate audiences about the nature of domestic violence, she objects strongly to the notion that audience members are learning good ways of dealing with domestic abuse by intervening in such a performance. Looking at Forum theatre through the everyday knowledge of violence she had had the misfortune to accumulate, this woman sees an unconscious privileging of the needs of a theatre institution founded on the belief that drama is conflict over the everyday needs of the victims that theatre is trying to help. To really be helpful to victims, she believes, the theatre needs to demonstrate situations in which problems between people are not automatically assumed to be conflicts. In her view, the conflict model of communication (on which most Euroamerican drama is based)is itself one of the conditions that allows domestic violence to seem like a reasonable reaction to differing desires.

A number of troupes have tried to solve this kind of problem with the relationship of theatrical and everyday worlds by asking for audience interventions in ways that recognize that the audience has a particular role to play in creating meaning in the theatre. In these cases, audiences are asked to make suggestions to performers based on their own everyday knowledge, but are not asked to come on-stage and attempt to put these suggestions into action themselves. In Le Silence des Autres, for example, animator Cormier takes the stage after the initial presentation and explains to the audience that they will not be expected to act in order to enter the discussion. Instead he proposes that he himself will act as a link between the audience's world and the world of the actors. Cormier starts by inviting the character René onto the stage and asking the audience if there is anything they would like to say to him, or any changes of behaviour they would

like to suggest. René immediately adds that he likes jokes, and invites the audience to tell him some. An audience member then speaks up to suggest that René is more of an accomplice in the harassment of Danielle than a witness precisely because he laughs so much at Marco's vulgar jokes and goes along when Marco makes crude remarks about women to Danielle. René immediately objects to this assertion, but when another audience member asks if he really finds Marco's jokes funny, he admits that he doesn't always, even though he always laughs at them, then assures the audience that he is only trying to lighten the atmosphere in a kitchen characterized by hard work and uncomfortable conditions. At this point Cormier suggests that they try the scene in the hospital kitchen again, but that this time René shouldn't laugh at any of Marco's jokes. He tells the audience that this will just be an experiment to see what happens, then leaves the stage to the performers who replay the scene. This time though, René does nothing to cooperate with Marco's vulgarity and the audience laughs as joke after joke falls flat and even Marco has to admit that the situation is boring. When Marco eventually decides to go and tell his jokes to the guys in the furnace room and leaves the stage, the audience applauds warmly and Cormier returns to the stage to ask René how he feels about this. He replies enthusiastically: "Très bien!" When he shyly explains that Danielle actually speaks to him now, and that they might even go for a beer together, Cormier tells him that he can thank the audience for suggesting the new attitude that has changed his situation for the better.

As René leaves the stage, Cormier suggests that he will next call on the character Françoise, to see what the audience might suggest to her to help her decide whether she should act as a witness for Danielle. He proposes to first have them run through the scene where Danielle asks Françoise to do this for her. As the request turns into the argument, Cormier stops the scene and asks the audience to act as Françoise' mind, suggesting to her both the reasons why she should act as a witness and the reasons she shouldn't. He then moves to the back of the audience area with Françoise and leads her

through the audience towards the stage, collecting ideas on the way. Françoise reacts from time to time, acknowledging her interest in certain ideas, her fear of others, and making comments like "Mon Dieu, la conscience est raide a soir!" When she reaches the stage, Cormier asks her to re-enter the scene with all the thoughts she has heard from the audience in her mind. After a brief discussion in which Françoise asks Danielle to put herself in her place, she finally agrees to testify -- not apparently because of any logical argumentation but because of her feelings for the young woman and her dislike of Marco. "Ah, de la merde!" she says, "Envoie! On y va!" The audience again applauds warmly and Cormier returns to the stage saying: "Ah, si dans la vie ça pouvait se passer comme au théâtre! C'est une histoire extraordinaire!"

The reader will notice a number of differences between this approach and Headlines' more empathetic animation style. While emotion is an important element in both the audience interventions and the characters' reactions, there is no assumption here that one person's emotions can be substituted for another's. Character and performer are kept strictly separate as are audience and stage. This is reinforced by the fact that the first two characters Cormier invites onto the stage are played by the same performer. The fact that this is not "natural" action is further underlined by characters' questions about what exactly Cormier wants them to do and by their own comments on the action. Cormier's comment after the scene with Françoise openly acknowledges that the kind of "happy end" the audience has seen in this scene may well not happen in everyday life. The comment is especially interesting because it both proposes the theatre as a model for life and underlines that it cannot provide a formulaic response for dealing with life's problems. In the context of the conferences and workplace education sessions in which this piece was designed to be played, it would suggest that the Théâtre Parminou does not aim to directly change audience behaviour in everyday life, as Headlines Theatre claims to do. Instead, this production seems designed to focus audience attention on enough different aspects of the problem of sexual harassment to give those who see the

performance the common set of discursive categories that can allow them to continue discussing the problem outside the theatre.

This is perhaps the most important role of popular theatre productions and it suggests a way of evaluating professional intervention in them. If what we expect of these productions is an effort to bring to light, to defamiliarize, those reactions that are normally so ingrained in our ways of enacting worlds that we cannot ourselves see them, then the professional's role is mainly to provide the focusing techniques that allow the audience to do its job in recognizing them. Beyond this, however, the theatre company must be willing to recognize the role of audience in controlling the meaning-making process that makes popular theatre presentations relevant to their own attempts at community-building. When they acknowledge this, I would suggest that most professional popular theatre workers must also give up the search for techniques that will work in all circumstances and start trying to build a repertoire of focusing elements through ongoing negotiation with the people who will form their audiences and join with them in building new forms of community.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

As we have seen, the Canadian popular theatre movement's refusal to accept one of the key binary oppositions that organizes Euroamerican theatre practice, the split between community-based and professional theatre, makes it a particularly interesting subject of inquiry for theatre scholars. This refusal of the professional versus community binary on the part of the creators of popular theatre demands a similar attitude on the part of critics and theorists. The need to develop an appropriate methodology for evaluating the work of a theatre movement that strives to develop a new form of professionalism in conjunction with, not in opposition to, community-based theatre is the driving force behind this dissertation. I have tried to develop such a methodology by approaching theatre, not as a unified institution or a series of texts, but as a mode of cognition that can overcome another of the basic binary oppositions of modern Euroamerican thought, the opposition between mind and body. This, I argue, makes popular theatre a particularly appropriate tool for building participatory community.

6.1. Analyzing Theatre as a Mode of Cognition

Challenging the mind-body opposition in Euroamerican thought implies, as I argue in Chapter 2, challenging modes of knowledge that posit a strict separation between the knower and the known. In the theatre this translates into a challenge to those methods of criticism that concentrate on formal elements of staging without attention to the everyday world of the audience or, in the opposite case, that discuss the theatre's relation to the everyday world of the audience without any consideration of the formal qualities of theatrical presentation. When we approach theatre as a mode of cognition we must look at both these elements and, what is more important, at the ways they interact. In this context, a concern with the social usefulness of theatre in no way diminishes the attention we must pay to the formal specificity of the theatre medium, or even of particular theatre events. To answer questions about the use-value of theatre in society, we must start by identifying

those ways of organizing knowledge that are specific to the theatre medium. This, in turn, leads us to pay special attention to the formal qualities of different theatre events and, in doing so, to reflect on the everyday modes of knowing that audiences both deploy and put into question in the course of creating meaning from a specific theatre event. The feedback loop that is thus established creates a dialogical method of criticism that, while it sometimes focuses more on one pole of an opposition than on another, ultimately constructs these poles as complementary, not contradictory, elements of a whole experience.

This methodology is not only useful for an examination of Canadian popular theatre. It suggests more generally that, when we look at both the formal and the social elements of the theatre event as aspects of an integrated whole, we must acknowledge that theatre techniques can only be fairly evaluated after considering the particularities of the larger community the event is trying to engage with. This leads me to be suspicious of attempts to develop a universally applicable formula for creating any form of theatre. If we view theatre as a particular mode of cognition, we must above all avoid the mechanical transfer of formal innovations from one context to another without careful reflection on how and why a particular technique was useful in its original context. Recent appeals, in North America and other parts of the world, to the authority of the Theatre of the Oppressed techniques of Augusto Boal strike me as dangerous in this regard. While Boal himself warns against a mechanical application of the techniques he teaches, as do Canadian troupes like Headlines Theatre and the Théâtre Sans Détour who have adapted these techniques to local contexts, a tendency to rely on Boal's authority to justify particular theatrical choices is an evident temptation in many discussions of popular theatre work. This can have unfortunate consequences, especially since some of Boal's own justifications of his aesthetic come to appear highly questionable when theatre is viewed as a mode of cognition. Applying the methodology suggested in this dissertation to Boal's prescription of a dramaturgy that breaks down the barrier between performers and spectators to create a

"spectactor," we must recognize that the positive effects of such an important innovation in its original context may not be repeated in another situation or at another moment.

A close examination of Boal's argument in favour of a "poetics of the oppressed," cannot but lead to the conclusion that Boal's system is based on the belief that spectators in the theatre are necessarily passive and must be helped to become more capable of action and thus, more fully human (Théâtre 47). This is a surprising assertion in face of the discussions of the cognitive value of theatrical performance we reviewed in Chapter 2, in which the spectator is clearly identified as an essential player in the creation of meaning that surrounds the theatre event. There are certainly many situations, as we saw in Chapters 3 and 4, in which it is advantageous to encourage people who are not accustomed to expressing their points of view publicly to do so. Performance forms that encourage direct input from spectators can play an important role in attacking the construction of the political realm as the kind of metadevice Borgmann describes in which citizens' involvement in public life is reduced to electing the public officials who will run the political machinery of the state (107). The danger of Boal's insistence that spectators' involvement in the theatre is not complete unless it includes performing is that it downplays the importance of the meaning-making activity in which spectators are normally called upon to engage. By implying that the only people who are active in the theatre experience are the performers, Boal himself seems to unwittingly enact the standpoint that Smith describes as privileging the role of the professional by starting narratives at the point at which they can be seen from the professional's position (Conceptual 91-92). In practice, making everyone an actor can simply reinforce the preoccupation with personal self-expression that is typical of the kind of liberal society in which, to paraphrase Andy Warhol, everyone is entitled to fifteen minutes of fame, but few people have any real influence over the course of public events. On the other hand, the apparently open form of dramaturgy Boal espouses in fact demands a high degree of homogeneity among spectators and performers who, in order to be able to exchange roles with ease, must share similar ways of enacting worlds in the first place.

Viewed as a particular mode of cognition then, Boal's proposal to provide a bridge across the barrier that normally separates performers and spectators appears most useful in circumstances where an integrationist form of community is well established. I would suggest that applying the cognition-based methodology suggested in this dissertation to other, more mainstream theatre programs might yield similar insights into the conditions that make them possible to carry out and the social impact they are likely to have, independently of the claims their supporters make for them.

6.2. The Problem of Professionalism

Having rejected the binary opposition that poses professionalism and community input as contradictory categories in theatre practice, we must still deal with the relationship in the creation process of people who have specifically theatrical skills and people who do not. In the Canadian popular theatre movement, the discussion of the role of professionals is often restricted to the use of professional performers to mount scripts generated in community workshops, but as we have seen throughout this dissertation, the range of professional input in the popular theatre process is much wider than this. Whether it be through the choice of warm-up exercises, the development of performance texts, or the creation of design elements, professional theatre workers have enormous influence on the form in which community-generated stories make their way into particular counter-public spheres.

Faced with this reality, popular theatre workers cannot deal with the problem of professionalism by simply denying, as they sometimes did in the early stages of the movement, that making theatre requires some specialized skills. Technical skills like voice projection and movement are, of course, indispensable to successful theatrical performance, but for maximum effectiveness popular theatre also requires more properly artistic skills like those involved in ostending attitude or creating the frameworks within which Possible Worlds are developed. Popular theatre workers can and do, however, question how and where such skills are developed, as well as for what and for whom they

might be considered useful. In many cases, this leads to a rejection by popular theatre groups of theatre workers who have been trained to work in mainstream theatre institutions and who have not reflected on the nature and purpose of their training. Theatre workers whose aim is to reproduce the dominant apparatus with community workshop participants are of very little use to this movement, because the apparatus they seek to reproduce is not designed to encourage significant community participation.

This points to one of the greatest problems in defining professionalism in a theatre form that aims to create the conditions for participatory community: the social role of the theatre medium puts popular theatre workers in the difficult position of both having to remain close to the everyday life of the communities they want to think with and having to step outside that life in order to create the ludic space in which community members can themselves contemplate their choices. Professionalism in popular theatre must be defined in terms of the theatre worker's ability to maintain a balance between these two activities, and this is largely determined by the way in which they establish a ludic space. If, like the professional sociologists Dorothy Smith describes, they treat the model of theatrical presentation characteristic of the dominant theatre institution as an ideal of which all particular presentations are only instances, the form their professionalism takes will inevitably be that of the outside observer. As such, they cannot but replicate the division between knower and known that participatory community must reject to survive.

Once theatre workers start viewing themselves as knowers whose own ways of knowing can be kept separate from community members' concerns, they almost inevitably fall into the role of the facilitator who molds theatrical presentations to meet the demands of an unquestioned apparatus. Whether the apparatus is that of commercial theatre, new age self-help groups, or formulaic animation techniques is irrelevant here. As soon as the professional method takes precedence over the everyday narratives of the people participating in the process, the form of professionalism that is enacted is that of exchange-

based liberal societies, which promise liberation through disburdenment from the toil of everyday life. The theatre workers who participate in such a process, whatever their intentions, soon find themselves fulfilling the same function as the internal machinery of one of the device-like structures that Borgmann describes as typical of modern societies. The entertainment apparatus Brecht denounces, which is but one example of an institution modeled on a device, is not designed to encourage collective thought, but to provide a uniform product that demands only a minimum of effort on the part of its consumer.

On the other hand, popular theatre workers who use their ability to manipulate the body to question automatized habits of relationship can move all participants in the theatre event into a ludic space which is separate from everyday life but still dependent on it. As we have seen throughout this dissertation, one of the hallmarks of this approach to the use of professional skill is the fact that everything doesn't run according to a preset plan. When thinking takes place in this kind of ludic space, the unpredictable happens, and both professionals and non-professionals must put out more effort to make the process work than is the case when theatre participation is organized as an exchange of commodities. For ludic thinking to work, all parties to the discussion must play a role in controlling the meaning-making process. This means that community participants must be willing to make the effort to participate in collective activities like exploring differences in workshop settings, imagining the worlds in which new forms of relationship make sense, and discussing those worlds either during or after performances. Whatever form the effort takes, it demands that both the professionals who bring particular skills to the task of community-building and the non-professionals who engage with them must be willing to notice their usually automatized reactions as well as to let go of them long enough to explore other possibilities. In the long run, they must also be willing to consider enacting these new possibilities in their everyday worlds.

When we define professionalism this way, issues like choice of venue become important to our definition of professionalism. Their importance is, however, defined in a way diametrically opposed to that espoused by the dominant theatre institution, which places more value on performances that are sold to individual consumers in buildings constructed only for the purpose of seeing theatre than on interventions in larger community events. Witness, for instance, the Canada Council's recent suggestion to the Théâtre Parminou that their work might be considered more aesthetically valuable if they presented it more often in major Montréal theatre buildings and less frequently in those gathering places where community members regularly congregate to reinforce their links with each other or to make decisions about their common future (cf. Graham, "The Disowned Collective"). For popular theatre troupes who define their professionalism in terms of their ability to create a ludic spacetime in which community members can contemplate their everyday situation, the community venues the Parminou favours have their own aesthetic value. By providing a constant reminder of that everyday situation, the space in which the performance is presented itself forms part of the framework against which the Possible Worlds of performance are to be constructed. This, again, requires more effort on the part of spectators than does an escapist approach that promises that the theatre experience will be a respite from the everyday world, but it also offers more significant rewards in the form of insights into the life of the communities in which they live their everyday lives.

My approach to the problem of professionalism in this dissertation has been largely an attempt to understand the notion itself. I believe this approach is important because, as I explained in Chapter 2, the ways in which we define professionalism within the theatre cannot help but be influenced by our more general social notions of what it means to be a professional. Looking at the problem in this way has led me to concentrate on the ways in which popular theatre workers ideally conceive of the role of the professional in the process of creating theatre. I cannot, however, leave this question without raising the issue of what

remains to be done. Watching popular theatre troupes create performance pieces, it becomes clear that many decisions are made, not as a result of a particular notion of the role of the theatre professional, but as a result of access, or lack of access, to the resources (spaces, time, materials, information, money, etc.) that popular theatre workers need to make a living. Much work remains to be done to understand how the ways in which theatre workers gain access to these resources affect the aesthetic choices they make, and ultimately, how these choices affect our notions of what professionalism in the theatre is. I look forward to seeing the results of research currently being carried out on this topic by Maria DiCenzo, Richard Paul Knowles, and Hélène Beauchamp, among others.

6.3. Theatre as a Tool of Cross-Cultural Community Building

Finally, I want to underline my belief that the contributions of popular theatre to Canadian public life can, and in the best cases do, extend well beyond its theatrical institutions. If we consider theatre as a mode of cognition, as I have argued we must, our attention is immediately drawn to the ways in which popular theatre applies this mode of cognition to social problems whose effects extend well beyond the theatre. One of the most significant problems the Canadian popular theatre movement has tackled is the difficulty of building a sense of community among people who approach the world with standpoints born of different social experiences and different national cultures. In this context, the social goals of the Canadian popular theatre movement are best understood as attempts to build participatory community by creating dramaturgic models of alternative public spheres in which broad participation is really possible. One of the key elements in making participation possible for many of those whose voices are not now heard in public discourse is the refusal of the private/public: body/mind split characteristic of those liberal visions of public life that communitarian thinkers criticize. Because the theatre is a body-centered medium, it is especially well-placed to confront this dichotomy and move past it. In doing so it inevitably brings into public discussion those material conditions and

practices that make certain forms of community possible, and draws special attention to the ways in which communities are enacted as relationships between bodies with important sensual and material needs.

As we saw in Chapter 2, bodies both structure and are structured by the presupposed narratives that make up worlds and that allow for the creation of meaning on the basis of events. Popular theatre, at its best, uses this quality of bodies to call attention to the presuppositions that structure many other forms of discourse in the public sphere. In a country like Canada, which owes its existence as a state to the belief that people from different national cultures can build common institutions in which to make decisions about public life, the value of a mode of cognition that can make available for public discussion the presuppositions embedded in different national cultures is inestimable. I have tried, in my discussions of the creation process in popular theatre, to underline some of the differences between the presuppositions English Canadian, Québécois and Native popular theatre workers make about how such public life should be structured and new forms of community constituted within and between these different national groups. A more systematic history of the Canadian popular theatre movement might, I believe, draw on these insights to explore more thoroughly the reasons for some of these differences and the ways in which they affect the aesthetics of popular theatre production.

The work of some of the troupes discussed in this dissertation has, I hope, demonstrated how popular theatre can contribute to building truly participatory communities, communities that create a sense of effective public life among people with different values and customs. First, by using the body as a medium for communication, theatre makes it possible to open up for public debate areas of practice for which common discursive categories do not necessarily exist. This is itself an important contribution to the public life of modern societies. As Marc Angenot points out in 1889: Un État du Discours Social, practices and discourses often evolve in quite different directions in modern

societies, despite the hegemonic belief that all the aspects of modern life that are worthy of public attention are treated in the discourses of those societies (34-37). Feminist communitarians argue that one of the reasons for this divergence is the definitional exclusion from public discourse of certain categories of people, like women and those from non-Enlightenment cultures, and of certain practices, like those related to the care of the body. The Canadian popular theatre movement has learned from community participants, like those cited in Chapter 4, that the possibility of acting out problems, rather than having to use rhetorical techniques associated with a particular social class, is often enough to ensure participation in the public debate by people who are usually excluded from it. In including these people in public discussions, popular theatre also casts light on the (sometimes unjust) everyday conditions that construct our division of social life into private and public realms.

Second, and perhaps most importantly, popular theatre can draw attention to the standpoints with which different discourses are constructed. This is a critical task because participatory public life can only function if members of the community that engages in it are able to exercise the kind of moral imagination that expresses itself in narratives and act descriptions that can be understood by others (Benhabib 129). One of the keys to this understanding is a grasp of the different presuppositions against which members of a culturally heterogeneous community are trying to construct meaning when faced with these narratives and act descriptions. The presuppositions of our own culture are, however, among the hardest things for us to see. As Bourdieu argues, they are embedded in our bodies in the form of automatized habitus, that, when enacted in the empirical world, recreate the kind of social relations characteristic of the world in which we unconsciously learned them. The combination of these automatized habitus form the standpoints, or sets of categories and action patterns, through which we both understand and enact worlds. Popular theatre, through its particular uses of the body, can make these standpoints, and the narrative expectations they both presume and carry out, available for public debate. De-

automatizing standpoint, either by triggering a habitus in a situation where the theatrical injunction against audience participation in the fictional world of the stage prevents it from be carried out, or by provoking the sudden confrontation of two apparently mutually exclusive habitus, forces the creation of new norms of social behaviour. In the best cases, these forms of ostention create the kind of embodied metaphor that "results in the perception of a possible relationship with a new norm of its own" (Suvin, "On Cognitive" 174). It is these possible new relationships that I think we see in plays like the Théâtre Parminou's À Temps pour Indian Time, the Krayola's Some of My Best Friends Are . . . or Red Roots Community Theatre's "Whatever Happened to the AJI Report?".

I believe popular theatre events should ultimately be evaluated in terms of their contributions to the creation of the new categories through which we might publicly talk about and enact truly participatory community. This is not to say that particular popular theatre events should immediately change the world in which they are presented. To demand such a direct and short-term relationship between cause and effect is to underestimate the complexity of our cognitive patterns and of the combination of factors that affect them. However frustrating this may be for the managers among us, we must probably accept that, in evaluating popular theatre, we can neither precisely measure the long-term effects of a change of cognitive categories, nor accurately predict the influence of any particular event in precipitating social change. We can, however, ask careful questions about the relationship between the community-structuring categories particular events take for granted and the kinds of community these events claim to foster. We can go on from there to question the ways in which particular aesthetic choices might create category-quakes of a type that could make effective participation in public life by a broader range of people more possible than it is now. It is my hope that this dissertation has contributed both to demonstrating the importance of these questions, and to developing effective ways of asking them.

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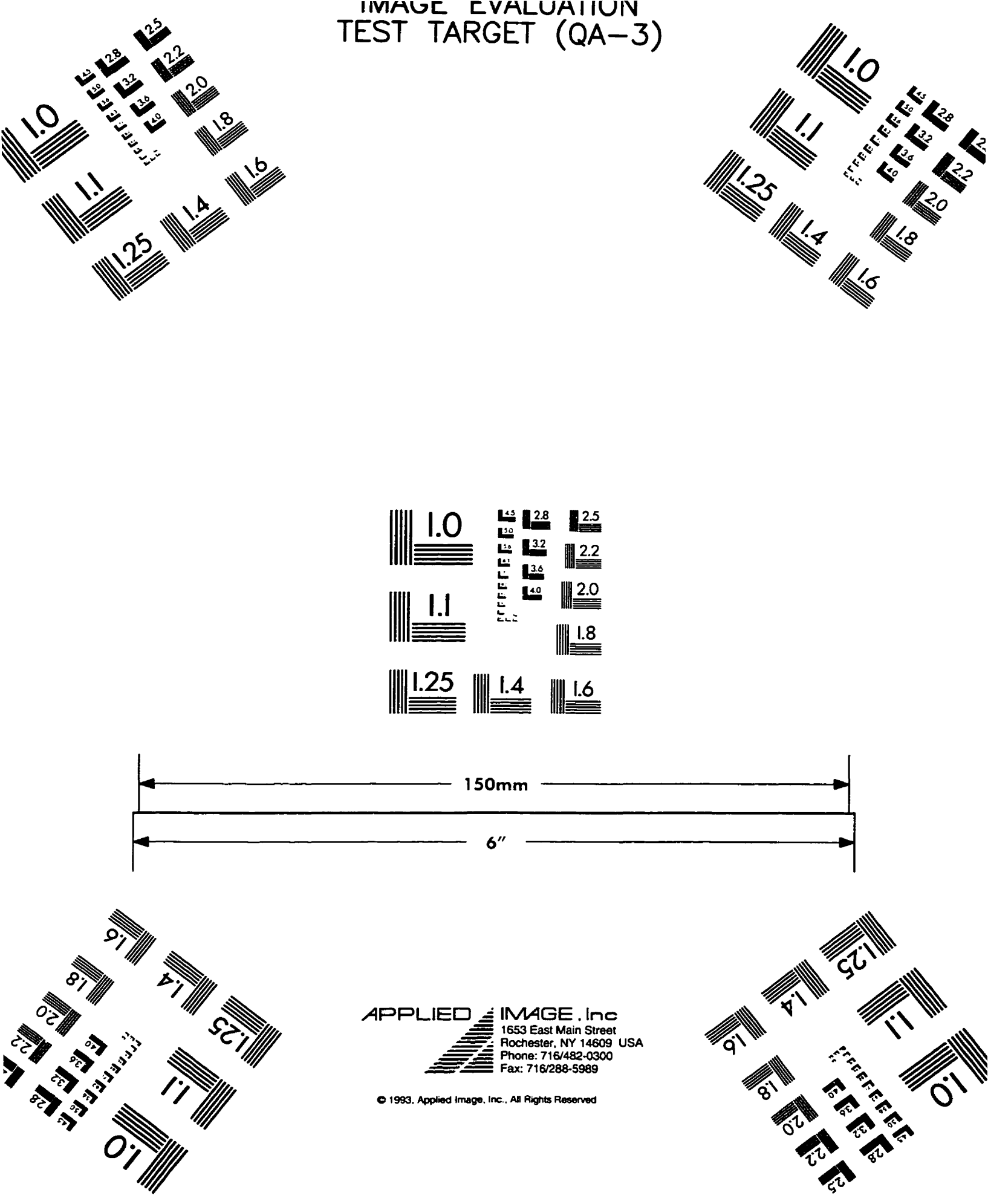
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