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UPCOMING in alt.theatre

Sonja Linden on the challenges of writing a fictionalized drama on the theme of acknowledging the narrative of the "other" within a highly contentious geo-political conflict;

Louise Forsyth, *Stripping Off Patriarchal Trappings—What Tools Remain for Making Theatre?;*

Dispatch: **Rahul Varma** on Wajdi Mouawad's *Scorched / Incendies*;

Heather Macfarlane reviews *Drew Hayden Taylor: Essays on His Works*, edited by Robert Nunn;

and more . . .

ERRATUM

alt.theatre wishes to apologize for the layout errors that occurred on pages 15 and 16 of our last issue. A corrected electronic version of the article is available on the *alt.theatre* website as our sample article for Volume 6.1.

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Nadine Villasin as Empress Dowager and Shannon Kook-Chun as Laosan in the Citadel Theatre production of *The Forbidden Phoenix*.

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Colette Stoeber

alt.theatre:cultural diversity and the stage is Canada's only professional journal examining intersections between politics, cultural plurality, social activism, and the stage. Our readership includes theatre practitioners, academics, plus others interested in issues pertaining to arts and cultural diversity.

alt.theatre welcomes suggestions or proposals for interviews, news, pieces of self-reflection, analytical articles, and reviews of books, plays, and performances.

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Canada

CULTURAL MEDIATION

by Edward Little

There's a new kid in town and his name is Cultural Mediation. He was born in France in the 1990s. Word has it that his father was the then French Minister of Social Affairs who gained a reputation for dalliance with *animateurs culturelles*—the affair carries a hint of scandal.

Cultural Mediation arrived in Montreal just over two years ago, and he has made some well-placed friends since then. On December 4th and 5th, he was feted at an International Forum organized by *Culture pour tous* —an independent, non-profit organization with a mission to renew the relationship between art, artists, and their fellow citizens and thus "contribute to the democratization of culture in Quebec."[1] The guest list numbered 334, and included artists; representatives from local, regional, and national arts councils; libraries, museums, and galleries; academics, including several sociologists; and municipal and provincial government officials with a substantial contingent from Quebec's Ministry of Culture, Communications, and the Status of Women. The purpose of the party was to establish Cultural Mediation as a professional field in the hope that substantial government funding and resources would follow.

In attempting to confer professional standing, the Forum also charged itself with defining Cultural Mediation—charting the activities, role, and "best practices" encompassed by the field. In less than three years, Cultural Mediation appears to have acquired an almost God-like aura in Montreal's francophone sector—risking a reputation of becoming "all things to all people." Some want the Messiah to address supply and demand problems—to generate new and more appreciative audiences for an excess of "cultural products." Several provided testimony to the miracle of participation in culture as a means of countering "social exclusion"—proselytizing "access" to existing arts institutions and "cultural artifacts" for those who are disenfranchised through poverty or language barriers. Others emphasized the gospel of education and cultural literacy as a means of facilitating the integration of new immigrants into the dominant francophone culture. A believer from the floor demanded to know why the Ministry of Education was not present at the forum. Most from the English-language sector had not previously heard of Cultural Mediation; however, they thought they knew of his work by other names—participatory and community-engaged arts, for example, in Quebec, Ontario, the US, the UK, and Australia. Those with a more bureaucratic orientation pressed for recognition of a formal typology of practice. The Lyon-based Association for Cultural Mediation advocated for the adoption of their Charter formalizing ethical practices in the field.[2]

The Forum generally agreed that Cultural Mediation, however it is to be defined, involves partnership and exchange between artists and citizens—a sense of two or more gathered in his name. There was general consensus that "culture" refers to the complex of language, custom, values, belief systems, *and* artistic expression; however, there was less clarity about *the politics of mediation*—about how responsibility, authority, and power might be shared in artist/citizen/institutional relationships. In speaking about the "challenges" presented by cultural diversity, Paul Langois, Head of Cultural Action and Partnerships for the City of Montreal, claimed culture as "a fundamental right for all citizens" but noted that many "still don't feel invited." Not surprisingly, those who internalize culture as a kind of "sacred trust," tend to privilege "cultural literacy"—the internalization of a dominant culture—at the expense of "cultural competency"—the ability to recognize and interact with people whose point of view has been influenced by other cultural traditions. Sociologist Louis Jacob characterized Cultural Mediation as an effective bridge between cultural democracy (a grass-roots up artist/community partnership approach to the creation of new artistic works) and the democratization of culture (promoting greater access to existing "cultural products").

From artists who were present, we heard about a substantial amount of good work done in "his" name. Some of the highlights relevant to *alt.theatre* included the work of choreographer Bill Coleman of Lemieux and Company, the work of William Cleveland at the Seattle-based Centre for the Study of Art and Community, and the community cultural development initiatives of Melanie Fernandez at Toronto's Harbourfront Centre.

Coleman and his wife have created environmentally staged dance performances in collaboration with local communities in National Parks (Grasslands Saskatchewan 2004, Gros Morne Newfoundland 2006). Their 2007 work, *Point Shoes and Pow Wow*, was created through collaborative residencies with First Nations communities and performed in the Manitoba Legislature. The company is current working on a multi-year project with youth and immigrant residents of Toronto's troubled Regent's Park Housing Development.[3]

Cleveland's Centre for the Study of Art and Community is "an association of creative leaders from business, government and the arts who have succeeded in building bridges between the arts and a wide range of community, public and private sector interests."[4] Cleveland's latest book, *Art and Upheaval: Artists on the World's Frontlines*, looks at projects in Australia, Cambodia, Northern Ireland, Serbia, South Africa, and the US in which artists have "dared to speak truth to power."

Fernandez spent six years as Community Arts Officer at the Ontario Arts Council. Since her arrival at Harbourfront, the Centre has launched

program initiatives including Planet IndigenUs (an international exploration of contemporary aboriginal arts), Culture Shock: Voices of an Emerging Generation Youth Arts Festival, and in 2007 an event commemorating the Rwandan Genocide.[5]

Fernandez was the only person of colour invited to speak on a panel, and in an audience of some three hundred, members of visible minorities could be counted on one hand. Yet a search for the genealogy of "cultural mediation among the branches of the English-language family tree" reveals roots deeply intertwined with notions of mediation across ethnic and culturally diverse lines. The relative absence of culturally diverse communities at the forum—the elephant in the room emitting a whiff of scandal—hints at Cultural Mediation's genetic links to politics of exclusion. Jean Caune of the Université Stendhal de Grenoble implicitly addressed the elephant when he spoke of the ongoing crisis surrounding cultural diversity in France. Caune traces the problems to France's failure to adequately address its colonialist past, and the country's insistence on remaining tied to the "rhythm of history" as it refuses to adapt to the "rhythm of life." He spoke of historical resistance to the word "community"—that in France's conception of a "civil society," the word carries no meaning. Orthodoxy dictates that there be only one collective—the state. Immigrants are expected to forget their past, to leave behind the clothes of their home countries and "dress in French colours." Caune sees in Cultural Mediation a promise of how we might live together with different values and sensibilities.

While the Forum was conducted in English and French with simultaneous translation, there are clearly more than two solitudes to reconcile in effecting mediation between the ideologies and values inherent in language. The language of the marketplace abets exclusion when overly concerned with creating a corrective "demand" for the existing artistic "supply"—the types of artistic works, venues, and dissemination networks created in the wake of Quebec government policy beginning in the 1960s. Orthodox curators speak of promoting "encounters between people and cultural artifacts" while the more radical of their colleagues call for cultural objects to be seen as merely an excuse for encounters between people. To those who will accept only *quantitative* proof of efficacy, sociologists and progressive bureaucrats speak an incomprehensible language of *qualitative* analysis. Artists speak of creative inspiration, art making as meaning making, visceral experience and awakened passions, transcendence and a return to the sacred through re-examination of

fundamental values. For many, this language is either incomprehensibly esoteric or impossibly presumptuous. The *citizen* feels isolated by the language of *culture*—"They are drinking wine, but they serve us pop." "The rich get shows, the poor get workshops." Artists are concerned about being cast in the roles and responsibilities inherent in the language of social workers.

The central challenge facing Cultural Mediation will be to effect meaningful inter-cultural, inter-sectoral, and diverse socio-economic participation and partnerships. This invites consideration of some truly radical actions. François

Matarasso, a regional member of the British Arts Council, would see every community given its own cultural budget. Bill Cleveland advocates art's role in connecting people to their "God-given right" to express imagination and to connect to the imaginations of others. Cleveland believes that to re-integrate arts into society, we must first re-integrate organizations and institutions. He believes that for society to achieve maximum social health, every Government Ministry needs a cultural policy, every organization needs an artist in residence—there must be artists or cultural mediators everywhere.

Clearly there is a banquet of opportunity promised by Cultural Mediation. The question remains, who will be invited to the table?

NOTES

1 The program for the International Forum on Cultural Mediation is available in English and French at www.culturepourtous.ca/forum

2 www.mediationculturelle.net

3 www.colemanlemieux.com

4 www.artandcommunity.com

5 www.harbourfrontcentre.com

FREEING THE PHOENIX

by Don Perkins

The Forbidden Phoenix, by playwright Marty Chan and lyricist/composer Robert Walsh, is a charming, magical, yet at times shockingly explosive allegory fusing Chinese and Canadian history, myth, Peking Opera styles, and Western musical theatre. The action finds its roots in the troubling history of Chinese workers who came to Canada to work for the railway, but the allegory avoids turning the performance into a lecture, while seeking to make an audience curious about the history behind it. Ron Jenkins, who directed the premier production for Edmonton's Citadel Theatre, observes that this work for young audiences is set in a world that "can move through time and place and not be fixed in historical time," and can therefore escape those notorious handcuffs of history that so often plague attempts at historical drama.

But it was not always such a work, and not always envisioned this way. Like the mythical bird in its title, it has come back more than once from the metaphorical ashes in its seven years of development. The process began with a largely documentary history play called *Best Left Buried*, written for Nanaimo's Theatre One in 2001. That piece told the story of the Chinese labourers who often took or were assigned the most dangerous tasks at lower wages than workers of European background, jobs taken out of necessity to support their families back in China. One estimate that Chan refers to is that there is a dead Chinese labourer for every mile of railway through the mountains.

Yet that is not necessarily the worst of the story. Once their work was no longer needed, the survivors were victimized by the *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1885, which imposed a high head tax to effectively end further immigration from China (until the *Chinese Immigration Act of* 1923 ended it altogether), and by a shortage of available work in Canada. As Chan none-too-delicately accuses, "They came thinking they were being accepted as immigrants, to build better lives for themselves and their families, and just got screwed." Unable to unite their families as true immigrants, and unable to afford to go back, the men often congregated in Chinatowns for companionship, and since they were never seen with families, they earned the nickname "bachelor men." When Nanaimo's Chinatown burned down in 1960, surviving bachelor men lost their second home and the only "families" they had known for many years.

Chan began to work on a remount of *Best Left Buried* in Edmonton in 2002, and discovered that without the local history as context, the whole project fell apart "in about four hours": ash pile number one, so to speak. As he thought about how to revive the dramatization of a story he felt Canadians needed to know more about, he was also researching a play for the "Sprouts Festival," an Edmonton children's theatre event. That piece was a play based on a figure Chan had himself first encountered as a child: Sun Wukong, the famous mythical Monkey King from classical Chinese literature, and a staple of the Peking Opera. Chan realized that the tale of Sun Wukong going through a waterfall to bring back food for his people was a fit parallel to the historical story he was trying to dramatize of men going to "Gold Mountain" to provide for their families back home (and eventually, they mistakenly assumed, in Canada). The realization left him, in his own word, "terrified," and began what he can now cheerfully call his "seven years of grief."

His plan was to bring the two stories together, to let the history provide the inspiration and anchor points to tell a tale about how greed consumes and destroys beauty. In effect, it began to turn from a story that Chan felt not enough people knew into a story too many people know too well, the story of how power abuses and chews up people and their dreams. The story of how greedy power turns people's dreams and needs against them, and exploits their desperation and ambition so they will serve something that is not in their best interests, even though it pretends to be.

The first draft of *The Forbidden Phoenix*, directed by Ben Henderson for Running with Scissors Theatre, was a "text" play with one song. Chan recalls how they arrived at the first rehearsals asking the actors, "Who can do a cartwheel? Who can do a back flip? Who knows anything about Peking Opera?" It was the beginning of a process that Chan admits at one point or another threw every member of the creative team into a "space of discomfort." It wasn't asking for much, Chan laughs, "Just actors who could sing, had fighting skills, were acrobatic—circus performers who could act or martial artists who could sing."

The surprise outcome of this production, which had some acrobatic elements ("as well as the actors could do") and Peking Opera make-up and style, was the popularity of the one song. "The Phoenix Song" voices the relationship of the phoenix with nature, as she invokes spring out of winter. Walsh recalls that people would come asking where they could get a copy, and a limited CD single version rushed through production sold out quickly. The song, and the atmosphere it created, formed the template and set the style for the larger musical version that followed, a version that gained ten songs but lost, by Walsh's recollection, about ten others along the way: "But Marty and I had this agreement. At any time, the best idea won." Even if it meant discarding permanently to the ash heap countless hours of effort.

Shannon Kook-Chun as Laosan (foreground) and John Ulyatt as Sun Wukong, from *The Forbidden Phoenix*.

Chan and Walsh began to develop a more complex meshing of the physically presentational Peking Opera style with Western musical theatre traditions to tell a story that would bridge and evoke two cultures, but create a unified theatrical world that was a hybrid, or "fusion," of both. This fused theatrical style would bring Chinese and Canadian history together as one story. To succeed, the fused story had to "land in its own world," as Jenkins insisted when he joined the creative team in 2004. It had to work both for those who knew or grasped the historical connections and for those who did not. To that end, he encouraged Chan to incorporate more Chinese terms within the dialogue. So, for example, the country the men come from is "Jung Guo" and the son misses his "Ba Ba."

The desire to develop a style and a cast fluent enough in the presentational styles of Peking Opera raised the bar even higher. In this highly specialized art form, actors practice their whole careers to play one role. This would not be an option in Canada. One fear, Chan acknowledges, was the possible accusation of cultural misappropriation: "Here we were, this group of Canadians, saying `We're going to make this Peking Opera.' They were going to string us up."

The solution arrived in the form of advice and encouragement from William Lau, a trained actor and director in Peking Opera. His objective was not to train the Western-based actors to become professional Jing Ju actors. (Jing Ju—"Theatre of the Capital"—is the transliteration of the Chinese for what we in the West call Peking or Beijing Opera. Actors are called "Children of the Pear Garden," acknowledging the history of the theatre, which had its first school in the Emperor's pear orchard.) Instead, he wanted to ensure that "the essence of the movement vocabulary and aesthetic were being used in the fusion or cross-over process. For example, the ribbon and fan technique, the use of eyes and hand position, the make-up aesthetic. And because these are professionally trained actors, they were able to learn much faster than an average person without any theatrical training."

More importantly, notes Chan, Lau gave the creators and performers of *The Forbidden Phoenix* permission to adapt the style as needed. Lau explains, "I feel strongly that a traditional art form such as Jing Ju is never static. It evolves with time. Even the same 'classical repertoire' performed today looks very different from how it looked fifty years ago because each new generation of artists injects innovative artistic elements and pushes the envelope constantly. Being in Canada, we are very fortunate to have such a multicultural society and diverse artistic expressions. How Jing Ju is going to take root and develop in this maple leaf country is yet to be seen. This project provided an excellent opportunity to explore various options."

In the development of the musical world for *The Forbidden Phoenix*, an early attempt to mesh the Peking Opera visuals with a Western music style heavy on rock and the blues (with one rather heavy metal arrangement) "was spectacular in its failure," Chan laughs now. "But we had to go there to realize we had to have this fusion. You can't have just one world and call it a fusion. We had to have a foot in the East and the West." The Empress's song, "Changing of the Guard," is the closest to "Peking Opera," as she is the defining power figure of Jung Guo. However, the vocal style has been adapted to be accessible to Western performers and audiences.

Out of these adaptations and "best ideas" has emerged the tale of two parent-child relationships under attack by powerfully greedy overlords. Sun Wukong needs to provide for his son, Laosan, in a corrupt Jung Guo dominated by the Empress Dowager and her insatiable demands for personal loyalty. In the west, the Phoenix has lost her daughter to Horne, the rapacious developer of the towers of Terminal City. Horne has imprisoned the daughter and drains her vitality to provide energy for the city. Horne wants to open up "Forbidden Mountain" and free the iron dragon who lies beneath (a dragon who represents huge resource wealth, as well as the railway that will bring it to Terminal City). Neither the Empress nor Horne has or respects family, and the two faces of their greed undermine family bonds and nature, "the units that we are supposed to hold our civilization together, "observes Chan.

The parallel stories come together when Sun Wukong leaves Laosan behind to go through the salt waterfall of tears to find a better life for his son. He hears the daughter's terrible cries of pain and separation, but assumes such noise can come only from a monster. Horne, recognizing Sun Wukong's ignorant vulnerability to a lie, sends him to destroy the Phoenix. Once he learns of their mutual separation from their children, Sun Wukong joins forces to rescue the daughter and help restore the natural order—an act that puts his son's life at risk back home. The lonely, heartsick, and wounded son (wounded by his father's attempt to rescue the Phoenix's daughter as Horne shuts the waterfall access point between the two worlds) falls victim to another lie, the Empress's "third law": "Our parents may love us, but not as much as Empress Dowager."

Back in the west, spectacular stage battles in stylized martial arts dance ensue. The battle scenes and several explosions demonstrate that Canadian history has not been a peaceful and

Lori Nancy Kalamanski as the Phoenix, in *The Forbidden Phoenix*

gentle progress, and that the forces of greed cannot be beaten back with mere kindness and good intentions. After Horne has succeeded in blowing open the mountain to free the iron dragon (killing the Phoenix in the process), Sun Wukong turns the zha yao, the dynamite, against Horne and his greed, destroying the iron dragon. He then reopens the waterfall and returns to save his son from the Empress and to release the Phoenix's daughter to take her mother's place and take up her song.

This clearly is not a plot restricted to the details of history but one seeking to demonstrate that other options were and are possible—that the iron dragon might find "a master who understands how to share her gifts." Though Chan has not written a Sun Wukong with all the magical and supernatural gifts of the original, he retains a sense of the trickster element embodied by the Monkey King. Sun Wukong and the Phoenix are shape-

changers, in the sense described by Lewis Hyde in *Trickster Makes This World,* forces who demonstrate that events are shaped by human choice and actions and can as a result be reshaped. Things did not have to be that way then, do not have to be that way now, and can be changed for the future.

The theatrical version is only one form of the story. As the piece was in final rehearsal for its premier at the Citadel Theatre, Chan adapted the

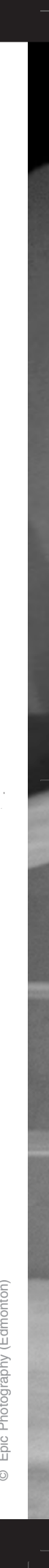
script into a prose story version serialized in the *Edmonton Journal*, a version making more of the Monkey King story. He hopes eventually to turn it all into a graphic novel, with a more overt historical component.

However, it is as a new piece of the ongoing puzzle that is Canadian theatre that *The Forbidden Phoenix* exhibits one more level of fusion, a level that connects with Chan's perception of the nature of Canada at the start of the twenty-first century, and perhaps establishes a new genre for a changing Canadian audience. Chan observes that at this time many "immigrant" populations are now in their second or third generations, and the younger members are not as concerned about ties to the old world as were the first. Indeed, intermarriage is growing more common: "We have to discard the idea that this country is a mosaic. The lines have been blurred so much."

As a work of art that also blurs the lines, "*The Forbidden Phoenix*," Chan continues, "is representative of what Canadian theatre will be in the next generation. I hope the next generation of Canadian theatre artists sees a play like this and sees what is possible. In twenty years I'll sit in a theatre and say 'Wow! I can't believe this is how far Canadian theatre has come.'" He pauses, shrugs, "God, that sounds pretentious."

But then he considers how the Citadel might have handled this play—how they might have turned it into a little project for maybe a few nights around the Chinese New Year. "But, no, they said this was going to be a main stage production, investing in an important topic as a major event." Or, as he concludes, "The gatekeepers are opening the doors just a little wider"

Unlike the drafters of the Chinese Immigration Acts, and other exclusionist legislation that deserves to be consigned to the ash heaps of the past, never to rise again.



Michael Dufays as Horne and Allen Keng, Chorus, in *The Forbidden Phoenix*
© Epic Photography (Edmonton)

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BIO

Don Perkins HAS BEEN WRITING ABOUT THEATRE IN ALBERTA AND SASKATCHEWAN FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS. HIS DOCTORAL THESIS, *REVISIONARY DRAMA* (ALBERTA 1993), WAS ON THE CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN HISTORY PLAY. HE IS CURRENTLY FACULTY LECTURER FOR ENGLISH AND FILM STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA, MOST RECENTLY TEACHING MAINLY CREATIVE NON-FICTION WRITING AND NATIVE LITERATURE, BUT WITH AMBITIONS TO GET BACK TO TEACHING MODERN CANADIAN DRAMA.

Reihana Haronga as Jerry Tahihi in *Wairi Tū* / Rangimoana Taylor as Black Jack

bi-cultural

CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN CULTURES: ASPECTS OF BICULTURAL THEATRE PRACTICE IN AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

by Hilary Halba

The group moves slowly forward. *Māori*, the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, and non-*Māori* move side by side, women at the front, men at the rear and flanking the sides of the group. Ahead of them and alongside a carved wooden figure is a woman, dressed in black, bare feet, leaves in her hand. She's wearing *moko kauae*, the traditional chin tattoo, and giving the *karanga*, the unique high-pitched wail that is the *Māori* call of welcome. An elder woman at the front of the approaching group issues a call in response. For many New Zealanders, this is not an uncommon image: the operations of the *pōwhiri* or ritual of encounter on a *marae*, the traditional *Māori* ceremonial space, enacted between visitors and *tāngata whenua*, the home people. The *marae* is the enclosed space in front of a ceremonial house. Now the term is generally colloquially taken to mean an entire complex of meeting house (dining hall, kitchen, and ablution blocks, etc.) as well as the ground in front of the meeting house. However, this is not a *marae*, it is a theatre space, and the advancing group is an audience being welcomed into a theatre event. Nevertheless, in accordance with *Māori* custom, the visitors are being welcomed with the appropriate traditional protocols for one group of people encountering another.

Although intercultural theatre in Aotearoa/New Zealand takes place in a wide range of contexts, this paper focuses upon my practice-led research in the area of bicultural theatre:[1] that is, theatre between *Māori* and non-*Māori* contexts. Even in making this statement, I am entering into contested territory. Indeed, the first people of Aotearoa did not even describe themselves as "*Māori*" before settler contact. They spoke, and still speak, of their tribal and ancestral *whakapapa* or genealogy, as well as geographic landforms and the *waka* (ancestral canoe of arrival) to which they are affiliated, referring to themselves simply as "*ngā tāngata*," the people, or "*tāngata whenua*," the people of the land. The term "*Māori*" translates as "normal" or "ordinary," a term the people of the land used after European contact to differentiate themselves from the newcomers. Furthermore, there is not a single *Māori* language but several dialects, most bearing close similarities to each other, especially in the North Island. However, some dialects show marked differences. Certain letters, for example, such as "v," "l," and "b" are used in some dialects from the south but are absent in most other *Māori* dialects. I point this out because language is important; people describe themselves and their way of knowing the world through their language and syntax.

The specificity of terminology and nomenclature in the collocation "bicultural theatre" is not merely an exercise in semantics, but serves to connote precisely how this form of theatre can be seen as situating itself both within and between *Māori* and non-*Māori* worlds. Why do we use the particular term "bicultural"? The answer is because the Treaty of Waitangi, the foundation document of Aotearoa/New Zealand after colonial contact, was signed between representatives of the British Crown and *Māori* chiefs, and the "biness" of this document still strongly resonates in the politics and social organizations of our country. We have two official languages—*Māori* and English—and the Treaty of Waitangi is written in both. This document still provides a template for both debate and mediation, and the meanings of its *Māori* and English versions are hotly debated. Having said that, it should be stressed that Aotearoa/New Zealand is an increasingly multicultural nation, and hence biculturalism is constantly re-evaluating its core voices in that medley.

Although the designation "bicultural" suggests a bifurcated structure, I propose that bicultural theatre practices in our country play out in a complex, polysemous, plurally positioned, and constantly shifting site of interplay, dialogue, negotiation, and dynamic interaction. A range of Western theatre practices are placed in conversation with *Māori* protocols, rituals, lifeworld practices, knowledge, and conceptual frameworks in a range of theatrical situations. Greenwood characterizes bicultural theatre as "explorations into the complex artistic and spiritual territories between Maori and Pakeha cultures" (12).[2] The bicultural theatre site is an interstitial location, conceiving of its performance space as physically liminal. Neither theatre nor *marae*, it is a site that responds to tangible and intangible symbols from both codes.

Nevertheless, bicultural theatre resists reductionist ideas of "us" and "them." This is a site in which knowledge is shared, histories retold, power redistributed, and *Māori* sovereignty over *Māori* intellectual and cultural properties is re-affirmed, a site whose "minimum prerequisite is [...] that each party perceives the other as an agent of knowledge" (Parry 67). Each individual entering this site, *Māori* or non-*Māori*, brings a plurality of cultural and intercultural experiences unique to them and possibly contesting with each other (even within themselves). Performances take place on *marae*, in community halls, in museums, and in art galleries, as well as in traditional theatre spaces. The bicultural theatre site privileges interconnection, thereby foregrounding the idea, described so elegantly by New Zealand historian the late Michael King, that the *Māori* world is an "environment in which art, religion, war, foodgathering, lovemaking and death were an integral part of the fabric of life," and in which "[t]he symbols of art [are related to these] [...] relate [them] to one another" (n.p.).

Originary positions are never lost in the *Māori* world. Keeping sight of the past is central to *Māori* cultural beliefs. Indeed, the concept of past is often phrased in *Māori* as "*i nga wa o mua*," literally "the time at the front"; in other words, the past is conceived of as being in front of us. To not take account of the past is to be cast adrift and blinded. For that reason, it is important to acknowledge past bicultural and intercultural theatre practice before I discuss my own work.

From the 1960s onwards, a range of theatre companies and groups in Aotearoa/New Zealand sought ways in which interculturality between *Māori* and non-*Māori* contexts might be enacted in theatre. These include the *Māori* Theatre Trust; playwright Rore Hapipi's Te Ika a Maui Players; He Ara Hou from Wellington; and *Pākehā* director Paul Maunder's intercultural experiments with his group, Theatre of the Eighth Day. However Wellington's Taki Rua Productions—making *Māori* and Pacific Island theatre—is by far Aotearoa/New Zealand's longest-standing *Māori* theatre company. The name Taki Rua is derived from a traditional flax weaving pattern translated as "to go by twos," and this sense of equivalence was Taki Rua's founding principle. The group began operations in the 1980s in a small theatre in Alpha

Street, Wellington, on the top floor of a building that also housed a candle factory. In the years since, Taki Rua has achieved considerable artistic and commercial success but not relinquished its quest for the Treaty of Waitangi's core principle, *"tino rangatiratanga"* ("self-determination", or, literally, "highest chieftainship").

In *Ōtepoti/Dunedin*, Kilimogo Productions, the theatre group with whom I work, considers ways to make theatre biculturally, but seeks to build this work on a *Māori kauapapa* or platform. Kilimogo Productions began in my living room in the spring of 1995. A group of four theatre practitioners gathered: Rangimoana Taylor (director, teacher, and actor) from the *Māori Ngāti Porou iwi* (tribal group) on the East Coast of the North Island; southern *Māori* director and actor Cindy Diver; the multi-skilled Awatea Edwin, also from the southern tribes (who is a teacher of *Māori* combat, a writer, a carver, and a *tā moko*[3] artist); and me.

The core question here is whether navigating territories between and including *Māori* lifeworld practice and theatre generates a new thing or a blended hybrid.

Most importantly, the initiative for the company's formation originated from Rangimoana. Knowledge and power are interlinked, hence intercultural theatre initiatives that have been seeded by *Pākehā* in Aotearoa/New Zealand have run the risk, outlined by *Māori* theatre commentator Roma Potiki, of placing *Māori* in the position of being "plundered for content" (Balme 174). Kilimogo's work is not about borrowing or appropriating of forms, but about understanding that "forms cannot be separated from the meanings they hold for their people, without doing violence to both the forms and the people" (Greenwood 8). Rangimoana had been living in Te Waipounamu/ the South Island for over three years and, in keeping with the *Māori* notion of *utu* (reciprocity), expressed the need to give something back to the people of that island—and in particular to the local *Kāi Tahu* people, the major tribal group of South Island of New Zealand—before returning to the north. He wanted to use theatre as the vehicle for that reciprocity and *Māori tikanga* (that is, the customs, or the right and correct way of doing things according to *Māori* custom) as a core guiding principle. Hence, from its inception, Kilimogo's foundation was built on a *Māori* ethos but accounted for non-*Māori* knowledge and sensibilities. We agreed that adherence to *Māori tikanga* talks back to and balances notions of superiority that are often attached to non-*Māori* knowledge in theatre.

Here, too, was theatre making that was deliberately local, as opposed to pan-*Māori*, speaking back to a reductionist "one size fits all" model of *"Māori."* Southern *Māori* customary practices were posited as a guiding principle. A number of protocols and rituals are unique to the southern *Māori* tribes. For instance, according to traditional, learning in the south, especially esoteric learning, sometimes takes place not in an indoor house of instruction but outdoors, walking the ancient trails, with the landscape used as a mnemonic (Edwin 1999). Although in some instances the protocols enacted were only subtly different from those practiced in the north, Kilimogo's aim was to develop a working method utilizing the southern *tikanga*, thereby bringing them into the sphere of everyday behaviour. We also sought to adhere to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, according *Māori* cultural knowledge, or *tino rangatiratanga*. This knowledge and protocol frames all Kilimogo events, but we seek to work in a negotiatory and reciprocal way. *Māori* scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith discusses this concept of negotiation as a decolonizing strategy:

> Negotiations are [. . .] about respect, self-respect and respect for the opposition. Indigenous rules for negotiation usually contain both rituals of respect and protocols for discussion. [. . .] Many indigenous societies are socialized into some forms of negotiation because they are part of trading practices or basic communication styles. (159)

It could be argued that theatre is the contextual frame in which these cultural negotiations are realized. However, I propose that *Māori* customs, protocols, and rituals are the broader frame, into which theatre practice is interpolated. This happens in two ways. First, the event-frame is re-imagined. The Kilimogo theatre event is framed by a southern *Māori* ethos and enacted through rituals of encounter and other protocols undertaken in such a way that the original meaning of the ritual is acknowledged and retained. For example, Kilimogo's post-performance *mihimihi* (greeting, acknowledgement), in which audience members are given the opportunity to "speak back" to and reflect upon the performance in speech or song, not only provides a reflective but also a productive space for forging knowledge. Audience members may express a personal, social, or political stake in the dramatic action in

keeping with ideas to do with *mana*a*ki* (to show respect or kindness) and *utu* in a *hui* (gathering of people) situation. Second, the phenomenology of theatre practice and actorship are similarly re-imagined when they are filtered through the lens of *Māori* customs and lifeworld practices, resulting in a theatre performance that signifies from moment to moment through either theatrical or ritual and lifeworld "languages."

The core question here is whether navigating territories between and including *Māori* lifeworld practice and theatre generates a new thing or a blended hybrid. However a theory of hybridity does not always account for ways in which this theatrical conversation plays out in practice. For example, Kilimogo *kaitiaki* ("guardian") Rua McCallum discusses her process when preparing a *karanga*, or call of welcome, which represented the first encounter between audience and performers in Kilimogo's 1999 production of *Whaea Kairau: Mother Hundred-Eater* by Apirana Taylor. The piece was performed in a museum space amidst *Māori* artifacts. McCallum cites the "mental, emotional, and spiritual preparation" she undertook before doing the *karanga*.[4] She further states, "[I] went through all of the [...] personal preparation that I would if I was doing *karanga* for real on the *marae* or in a real situation; [however], I did see the *karanga* as being part of the performance as well." McCallum's ambivalent self-placement suggests that although she approaches *karanga* for the theatre as "not-performing," she also ameliorates this position by hinting that she is also "not-not-performing." However her actions in preparing for and undertaking the *karanga* attest to the fact that she nevertheless viewed it as a lifeworld behaviour as opposed to "acting." McCallum confirms this by stating that she "did it for real" when executing the *karanga* to the theatre's visitors (McCallum 2005).

Kilimogo sought to recuperate specifically southern *Māori* customs by honouring the traditional hierarchy of advisorship, so we positioned the *kaitiaki* as a central member of the company. The word *kaitiaki* also translates as a "means of communication between the spirit realm and the human world" (Barlow 1991: 34), and has particular resonances for southern *Māori*. Traditionally, the southern *Māori* tribes were seasonally nomadic, travelling long distances on foot, often through mountain passes from the east to the west coast and back in order to trade for highly treasured *pounamu* or greenstone. The elders, who would advise and guide the people, were unable to make these sometimes treacherous journeys, so a younger person, sufficiently fit to make the trip, would be entrusted with the role of *Māori* over the travellers. The person who related this narrative to me, Awatea Edwin of *Kāti Huirapa* from Arowhenua, characterizes these *kaitiaki* as "becoming wise beyond their years" (Edwin 2008). Everyone on such a journey had a purpose: it was the responsibility of the *ariki* or chief to keep the focus on the journey and the role of the *kaitiaki* to keep the journeyers safe.

A similar concept is at play in the theatre event. The *kaitiaki* is a trustee, presiding over the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of the company of travellers. It was this concept of trusteeship, stemming not simply from temporal or laical concerns but from an engagement and obligation that has its roots in *wairua,* or spiritual identity—a core concept in the *Māori* world—that figured in our inclusion of the *kaitiaki* in our theatre making. If a dialogue is to be set up, there must be two voices present. Subsuming the spiritual and physical well-being of the participants into the apparently more important task of making theatre is therefore re-imagined in the bicultural instance. The *kaitiaki* and the director traverse the journey side by side, equalizing a power and knowledge relationship. This strategy ameliorates problems of a non-*Māori* director in charge of, or even colonizing, the bicultural image, content, and practice. Once again, the *Māori* world provides the positioning frame.

This guiding hand of the *kaitiaki* came into play on the final night of my 2003 production of Hone Kouka's monodrama, *Mauri Tū*. The group's *kaitiaki* and *kaumātua* (respected elder), Huata Holmes, presided over an important ritual event. On several occasions during the play's two-week season, audience members remarked that although during the performance actor Reihana Haronga was alone on stage, he appeared to be accompanied by shadow figures. Two interpretive readings of this phenomenon were presented. The first offered that the placement and intensity of the theatre lights gave this optical illusion; the second held that, in keeping with *Māori* world views, one's ancestors are omnipresent with one and this manifestation confirmed the concept.

During the final performance of *Mauri Tū*, several audience members became upset and anxious, with one woman in tears, at the manifestation of this phenomenon. As Huata Holmes performed a post-event *whakawātea* (cleansing, or clearing) and concluding *karakia* (incantations, sometimes translated as "prayers") he also incorporated mention of the phenomenon, focusing upon releasing the audience members' anxieties. Through the chanted recitation of genealogy and through the re-telling of narratives from *te ao tawhito* (the ancient world), Mr. Holmes made connections between people, landforms, and specific areas in the south (including from settler narratives) and Reihana's tribal ancestors from the central North Island. Thus, through inclusivity, by focusing upon local knowledge and enacting pro-

tocols that were considered balancing and correct in the *Māori* world, connections were made and concerns allayed. I offer this not as a quaint or exotic example of *Māori* customs, but to point to ways in which the lifeworld frame of *Māori tikanga* is given primacy in Kilimogo's work.

The colonizer and the colonized cannot unmix themselves any more than cooked food can uncook itself.

In our work with Kilimogo, we sought to keep questions alive that addressed ways that we might reframe theatre practice away from a Eurocentric ethos. We were always led back to the same place, the same answer: look to *Māori tikanga*. And this is how we always proceeded. Nevertheless potential pitfalls come into play. Given that the authorizing voices in New Zealand theatre up to the late twentieth century have been mainly non-*Māori*, it is useful to question whether bicultural theatre provides yet another form of oppression whereby *Māori* culture might only speak through the western (theatre) forum and self-articulate only as that forum articulates. In the entangled post-colonized moment, this tension is fundamentally present. The colonizer and the colonized cannot unmix themselves any more than cooked food can uncook itself. Although it is impossible to reverse processes of colonization, a contingent model for decolonizing theatre praxis is possible with the aim, instead, of configuring a site where negotiation gives rise to practice that is in a moment-by-moment state of dialogue with *Māori tikanga* as the ever-present guiding principle.

As the concluding step in my discussion, I quote New Zealand historian Anne Salmond, specifically from her book *Between Worlds: Early Exchanges between Maori and Europeans 1773-1815*. Although numerous scholarly writings have emerged about these encounters, and oral histories have passed down especially in the *Māori* world, Salmond's book re-imagines this historical period, taking into account both European and *Māori* viewpoints and stepping from moment to moment from one cultural position and way of seeing the world to the other. Hence a complex bicultural rendering ensues. I have sought to employ a similar strategy in my account of bicultural theatre practice. Like Salmond, I am a *Pākehā*, like her I am privileged to be entrusted with *Māori* knowledge from respected elders and experts, and, like hers, my work locates itself between worlds. Salmond, at the conclusion of *Between Worlds*, compares aspects of Western thinking with the *Māori* concept of relatedness, and of the entanglements of all living and non-living things with each other. She describes Western Enlightenment-based thinking as being defined by "Separated 'cultures' and autonomous 'selves', spirit split from mind and the senses, and religion split from science and the arts [. . .]. In this style of reflection, the processes and patterns of interconnection are elusive" (512).

However, she notes that this thinking does not correspond to the model of the pulsing, interconnected spirals of *Māori* cosmology, and the diverse narratives of life, meaning, and creation, all of which held their own sense of a truth in the *Māori* world. In *Māori* terms, the universe's delicate balance is predicated upon reciprocities, responsibilities, and balances that exist in all things and between all things. In our bicultural theatre work, we have sought to give primacy to this sense of reciprocity and to frame our encounters through a respect for *tikanga*. This strategy provides the opportunity for multiple knowledges to exist without loss of *mana* (prestige, selfhood), *mauri* (life force), or roots. Salmond writes,

> The "wind of life" still blows through the world, with its memories of cosmic connection. According to this philosophy, one form of life studying all others is *"hau whitia"*, fundamentally out of kilter. Human understanding [. . .] requires reciprocal exchange, for all its hazards—your wisdom for mine (*waananga atu, waananga mai*), as we cross our thoughts together (*whakawhitiwhiti whakaaro*). (513)

Nāu te rourou,	Your contribution,
Nāku te rourou,	And my contribution
Ka mākona te iwi.	Will provide sufficient for all.

aotearoa

Reihana Haronga as Jerry Tahihi in *Mauri Tū*
© Hilary Halba

NOTES

[1] The claims I make in this paper are based on productions I have directed or produced for Kilimogo Productions from 1998 to 2003 and are, therefore, open to further investigation. Indeed, I propose that bicultural theatre praxis is a construct with as many strategies and definitions as there are instances of theatre enacted between cultural contexts.
[2] *Pākehā* translates loosely as non-*Māori*, usually of British, Irish, Scottish, or Western European cultural and ethnic descent.
[3] Traditional permanent skin patterning or tattoo.
[4] The fact that the play was performed inside, and that it took place after dark, were mitigating factors, as *karanga* are customarily not performed at night and usually not inside.

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BIO

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CREATING A CANADIAN ODYSSEY: GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE'S GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE IN *TRUDEAU: LONG MARCH/SHINING PATH*

by Lydia Wilkinson

odyssey

The K.C. Irving Hall at Acadia University, Wolfville, NS during the *Trudeau* preview performance

The cast of *Trudeau: Long March/Shining Path* saw their workshop production at the Harbourfront Centre's Enwave Theatre open to a packed house. The sizable audience was transported on a trip around the world, as D.D. Jackson's score and George Elliott Clarke's libretto accompanied Trudeau's travels, moving from the soulful strings of Chinese folk, to the dance beats of the Cuban rumba, to the jazz piano of a Montreal bar. Clarke's narrative called for such a transcultural score, following Trudeau through his tours of 1949 and 1960, and Trudeaumania of 1968, before revisiting the Prime Minister in Montreal on his death in 2000.

Focusing on Trudeau's world travels and meetings with international leaders, Clarke and Jackson sketch a picture of him as global traveller, adventurer, cosmopolitan, and worldly sage—or, to borrow Clarke's more lyrical description, a "romantic, chevalier, feisty, swashbuckling, Napoleonic, Caesarian, Ulyssean, Maoist character" (Clarke, 2007). Clarke's excess of descriptors here denotes a character that even in a single representation is complicated and multifaceted, offering up any number of interpretations for other biographies and biographical performances. Thus the Trudeau of *Long March/Shining Path* differs from Brooke Johnson's pensive intellect in *Trudeau Stories*, from the obscenely sexualized Trudeau of the Shameless Dames Burlesque Troupe, from the coldly rational Pierre of Griffiths' *Maggie & Pierre*, and from his parodic depiction in the *VideoCab* cycles.

Characterizations of Trudeau reflect the individual concerns of their authors, and in Clarke's case his interest lies in multiculturalism, as he provides an alternative view to a historical record that often recalls Trudeau's policies on culture and diversity as simplistic, exclusionary, and ultimately unrealized. Trudeau's 1971 Multicultural Policy responded, as did his cultural policies more generally, to Canada's social and political scene, as well as to his personal politics. Trudeau's public career, spanning the 1960s and 1970s, coincided with a period of increased independence within Canada, a coming of age marked on one side by the country's one-hundredth anniversary and on the other by the patriation of the Constitution. Yet this same period was also a time of instability. Provinces were divided over regional interests and often vied for greater freedom from federal intervention. Separatists in Quebec, especially, fought for an independent French nation; a struggle later legitimized with the ascent of the PQ and the 1980 referendum.

Whether the intent was to declaim regional individuality or federal commonalities, this time was an important one for the founding of Canadian culture. The solution to the country's identity crisis seemed to lie in the nurturing of a shared national character; yet Trudeau was a leader who refused to subscribe to a project that insisted solely on cultural similarities. In *The Teeth of Time*, Ramsay Cook cites two of Trudeau's major political influences as being Lord Acton and Elie Kedourie, both of whom argue that a nation should not be defined by a homogeneous culture; rather, it is a unit constituted of multiple intersecting and sometimes overlapping identities. Trudeau attempted to navigate the potentially divergent interests of encouraging multiculturalism and building national character, laying out the importance of acknowledging cultural difference within the nation while maintaining its territorial boundaries.

Trudeau: Long March/Shining Path sees Trudeau's multiculturalism realized in its ideal form, as a culturally diverse Canada is literally embodied on the stage through a staging that dispenses with traditional colour-conscious and colour-blind casting to enact the overlapping ethnic-cultural identities posited by Acton, Kedourie, and later Trudeau. The Prime Minister's tenor "may be [an] Aboriginal/First Nations (or Métis) person." Margaret "should be Indian (out of Kashmir or Bihar) with a command of Indian vocal/musical traditions. Or she could be Italian. Let her identity be as indeterminate as Canadian actress Rae Dawn Chong in Jean Jacques Annaud's film *Quest for Fire*." Mao Zedong's baritone "may also play Fidel Castro and Jaques Fanon, and may be Chinese or Cuban or Quebecois" (Clarke 27-28). The potential of a single performer to embody multiculturalism mirrors Trudeau's ideal Canada, in which distinct cultures are acknowledged and included within one national space. By rejecting ethnic-cultural divides and emphasizing the importance of global influences on Trudeau's political growth, Clarke and composer D.D. Jackson create a Trudeau who can testify to the advantages of multiculturalism while simultaneously personifying it in Trudeau's ideal form.

I met Clarke's PET on five different occasions last year. The first was in the early publication of the libretto in *Canadian Theatre Review*. New to the subject of Trudeau biographies, I glossed over Clarke's introduction and notes, all but missing the complex characterizations and their symbolic meaning. I mistakenly imagined a Maggie whose pale skin and chestnut hair resembled that of the "real" Margaret, and a Trudeau whose voice resonated with his recognizable Quebec-Anglais lilt. My second encounter was in the Hart House reading room, where Clarke rushed in between two commitments to embody a Trudeau who was, despite his frenetic pace, thoroughly engaging. This Trudeau shared physical, visual, and aural space with his author, beginning to enact the lay-

ered characterizations suggested by Clarke's directions, in which the human body becomes a palimpsest for multiple identities and experiences. The third occasion was in Harbourfront's Enwave theatre, where the musical score accompanied the melding and mixing of physical identities upon the stage. The fourth was in a noisy diner, where Clarke riffed for myself and my co-interviewer on subjects ranging from adaptation, to a Canadian multicultural geography, to the Kennedy assassination, and finally to his Trudeau. The fifth and final meeting was in the published version of the libretto, where Clarke's script is joined by an extensive paratext—what Robert Stam, citing Gérard Genette, describes as "titles, prefaces, postfaces, epigraphs, dedications, illustrations, and even book jackets and signed autographs, in short all the accessory messages and commentaries which come to surround the text and which at times become virtually indistinguishable from it" (Stam 28).

Clarke's presence grew with each of my meetings with Trudeau; by the time I reached the published text, Trudeau was equally sharing his space with Clarke as creator.

Clarke's presence grew with each of my meetings with Trudeau; by the time I reached the published text, Trudeau was equally sharing his space with Clarke as creator, who acknowledged his authorial intervention into the narrative of Trudeau by redefining his subject as his own and writing a Trudeau who could embody the Prime Minister while also embodying a multicultural Canada. At the same time, Clarke's own commentary—provided through interviews, essays, prefaces, and endnotes—highlights the inevitable limitations of the work as one individual's rendering of the Prime Minister. While I may have left the Enwave theatre praising the legacy of Trudeau, I left my interview with Clarke and completed my reading of the published text reminded of the subjectivity of any portrayal of any public figure. Rather than simply asking how Clarke constructed his Trudeau as a citizen of the world, then, I would like to complicate things a little and consider how he concomitantly undermines the "truth" of this telling, and his political purpose for using this strategy.

In his re-imagining of Trudeau, Clarke complicated his subject's ethno-cultural identity. In our interview Clarke recalled, "I did want to produce a 'black' version of Trudeau (no sense doing what others will do): so he's a wanderer, a fighter, and a skirt-chaser, who speaks in Hip Hop rhythms" (Clarke, 2007). Trudeau's importance as a representative public figure to Canadian minorities, despite his privileged, white, upper middle class French and Scottish origins, is an important point for Clarke, and is taken up in greater detail in his preface to the published libretto entitled "Vrai: Un Essai." He writes,

> As a "visible minority" person (my official identity in white-majority Canada), I seize the right to "write what I like" including this libretto about a wealthy, European male; one canonized —and demonized—by hordes of white Canuck lawyers and social scientists, but also by poets, artists, journalists, and historians.
> Trudeau was, is, though, a cult figure for many Canadians *de couleur* [...]
> Considerations of Trudeau by "Third World" Canadians are absent, however, from media celebrations or interrogations of the man and his legacy. In line with the precept that Canada is a white country, "multicultural" Canadians are expected to limit their political expression to raucous, ghettoized, candidate-nomination meetings. Yet, our vision of Trudeau would be enhanced were we to appreciate that he really was un *citoyen du monde*, the first Prime Minister who was comfortable with a Canada that looked more like Expo '67 and less like the grand Ole Opry. (Clarke 21-22)

While positioning Trudeau as inclusive and internationalist here, Clarke concurrently articulates his motivation, as a visible minority Canadian, for writing and righting Trudeau: he is inserting a "multicultural" voice into Trudeau's story and, by extension, offering an alternative to the demonizing and canonizing tales told by his "white" biographers. He is also appropriating the theatrical and political stage as a place for multiple voices and identities, allowing a politician who is representative of multicultural Canada to play out his ideal in a space where the objections of his detractors can be controlled and contained. Through this process, Clarke performs a type of dramaturgical reification on the late Prime Minister, using his play to turn Trudeau into a symbol of multiculturalism that can exist outside of and even in contradiction to the established historical record.

The most extended discussion of Trudeau's shortcomings occurs quite late in the libretto. It is 1970 and Trudeau is met in the lobby of the House of Commons by Simone Cixous, a Québécoise reporter. She voices the complaints of the people, arguing that the PM panders to big business, destroys First Nations culture, and has instituted a bilingualism policy that is alienating both the English and French electorate. The scene is

framed by two asides by jazz musician Roscoe Robertson. His first reads,

> An empty mirror,
> A naked emp'ror,
> A hackneyed athlete,
> An acne'd aesthete,
> An old news story,
> He's rusted glory:
> A yesterday craze
> In a purple haze! (Clarke 88)

This scene recalls three earlier scenes. In 1960, Cixous and Robertson spy the young Trudeau in a Montreal jazz bar and proceed to sing his praises, noting his trip to China, his handling of the Asbestos strike, and his scenester status in French Canada. Eight years later, they join him first for a leadership speech in Ottawa and second for the Jean-Baptiste parade in Quebec. Both venues provide a space to record and participate in Trudeaumania, as he whips up an English-Canadian frenzy in Ottawa and shows his strength by stoically sitting through a whipping by beer bottles in Quebec. Cixous and Robertson, disenchanted by 1970, articulate Canada's changing response to Trudeau over the course of his leadership, but these exchanges take place within just twenty pages of Clarke's text and fifteen or so minutes of the performed opera.

In fact, Canada's own response to the Prime Minister is only explored towards the end of Clarke's libretto, and seems to move at a more heightened pace than the proceeding fifty pages of travel. This structure serves a number of purposes. First, it contains and diminishes the oppositional voices in a small controllable space, just twenty pages of text, recalling the containment of minority voices to "raucous, ghettoized, candidate-nomination meetings." Second, while quelling this opposition, it also calls attention to the potential for a rapid loss of support within political spheres, pointing to the fickleness of Canada's voting public. Third, the manipulation of time and pace, as a convention, reminds us of Clarke's authorial intervention as subjective biographer.

Clarke's active intervention is first introduced in his disclaimer, which reads, "This literary work offers an interpretation of the lives of several historical personages, all rendered fictitiously. The author has distorted known facts, altered dates, imagined dialogues, and invented situations. His characters should not be confused with actual individuals, either living or dead. This dramatic poem is purely a theatre of imagination" (Clarke 15). While Clarke can reasonably insist on the fiction of his characters' lines and behaviour they take on a more complicated meaning when read in conjunction with the playwright's preface, in which he clearly sketches out his "reading" of the Prime Minister, and supports his personal beliefs with hefty footnotes linking observations to real, factual events.

For example, Clarke's claim in the essay that "study and travel transformed the erstwhile provincial fascist into a cosmo, anti-nationalist liberal" (Clarke 22) is supported by a page-length footnote detailing the global political environment of the 1960s and its effect on Trudeau as a young traveller. A correlation between the PM's experiences and ascent to Canadian power can be read onto Clarke's libretto, but it is only in the preface that the link is explicitly stated and supported with evidence. Conversely, while Clarke's preface may reference Trudeau's travels as central to his political development, it is only through the play proper that we get a sense of their novelty and danger to a young intellectual. Read in tandem, then, the essay and libretto serve a dialogic function; the content of one exposes the gaps of the other, and these gaps make clear the limitations of both monolithic historic narratives and imagined, subjective histories to accurately represent the complexities of a lived subject.

Clarke similarly exposes the self-conscious construction of his particular Trudeau by dispensing with a "real" or accurate chronology to allow for a Trudeau whose growth in response to particular meetings and relationships with world leaders reflects and supports Clarke's own understanding of the public figure. Trudeau's first meeting with Chairman Mao is staged during the People's Liberation Army's capture of Nanjing in 1949, eleven years prior to their first meeting on historical record and fourteen before they spoke at any length in an official capacity. During this fictionalized meeting, Trudeau recollects a favourite anecdote, recalling an encounter with three threatening locals on a trip to Ur:

> In Palestine,
> Two bandits, to seize what was mine,
> Brandished daggers at my visage,
> But I astonished each savage
> By seizing one of their daggers,
> Then stabbed the air and staggered,
> Cried out poems, spewed mad madrigals,
> Alexandrines, octosyllables,
> So the bandits feared me insane—
> Or a saint—and so fled the terrain...(Clarke 38)

The possibility of Mao being a captive audience to this story is impossible given Trudeau's non-existent political position, and even more problematically, Mao's commitment to the war being raged around them at the time.

Having accused Trudeau of plagiarizing *Cyrano de Bergerac* in his tale, Mao returns with some political advice:

> Firing squads accomplish more than bureaucrats:
> I trust devils more than I trust diplomats
> The State must mandate counterweights
> And balance artists and elites. (Clarke 38-39)

Trudeau subscribed to Mao's counterweights throughout his political career, and thus Clarke has provided an exchange that on the one hand is entirely probable in a different context, but on the other is entirely untrue within the "real" history of Trudeau's life. While his around-the-world journey in 1948-1949 certainly contributed to Trudeau's growing social consciousness, it was more likely due to his voyeuristic participation in decolonization movements rather than any political mentoring by other world leaders.

In our interview, Clarke suggested that Trudeau's interest in experiencing violent upheavals in China and the Middle East may have been motivated by a need to compensate for his non-action in the most focal Western conflict of his generation: World War II. While Trudeau's writings do not directly suggest that he regretted his lack of participation, they do tend to focus quite heavily on the role of these travels in forming his political position. It follows, then, that his witnessing of conflicts encouraged him to reflect upon strategies for political unification and cultural tolerance over divisive political action. By beginning his political dialogue in 1949, Clarke purposefully eliminates a time in which Trudeau was politically disengaged with global conflicts.

Clarke's interest in uncovering and learning from Trudeau's political interests is discussed further in a section entitled "Hansard," in which Clarke lists his various sources, including *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Mao Zedong's *Little Red Book*, and the Prime Minister's own writing in *Against the Current* and *Two Innocents in Red China*. Yet Clarke also catalogues many of his own influences; they include, but are not limited to, Thulani Davis's *The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, Ian Fleming's *You Only Live Twice*, and Mandela and Castro's *How Far We Slaves Have Come*. Clarke, then, seems to be acknowledging the plurality of voices and literary works that shape both his writing strategy and his understanding of his subject. As the structuring principle for Clarke's influences, the Hansard reminds us of the politicization of any and every source, while underscoring the varied influences inherent in any one work or any one cultural figure. Clarke has chosen to animate his own Trudeau, but this Trudeau is informed and interpreted by multiple authorial voices.

For a country made up of distinct, strong, and varied identities, the empty mirror offers a space to be filled by each individual—and often, this individual is not reducible to a single cultural identity.

Similarly, the characters on the stage are animated by a single performer who enacts several identities. The script calls for actors who can represent varied characters. It is worth returning here to Roscoe Robertson's jazz aside. He claims that Trudeau offers up "an empty mirror." For a country searching for its identity, this empty mirror is a negative; but for a country made up of distinct, strong, and varied identities, the empty mirror offers a space to be filled by each individual—and often, this individual is not reducible to a single cultural identity. Clarke creates a portrait of the Prime Minister as a multicultural and global leader who is as self-consciously constructed as any other rendering of the public figure. In turn, he provides Canadians with an imagined narrative that reifies Canada's evolving multiculturalism in the person of Trudeau. Clarke seems to be suggesting, then, that Trudeau provides Canadians with a slate that is limitless and rewritable, allowing every Clarke, Griffiths, and Johnson to cover it with their image of a Canadian culture.

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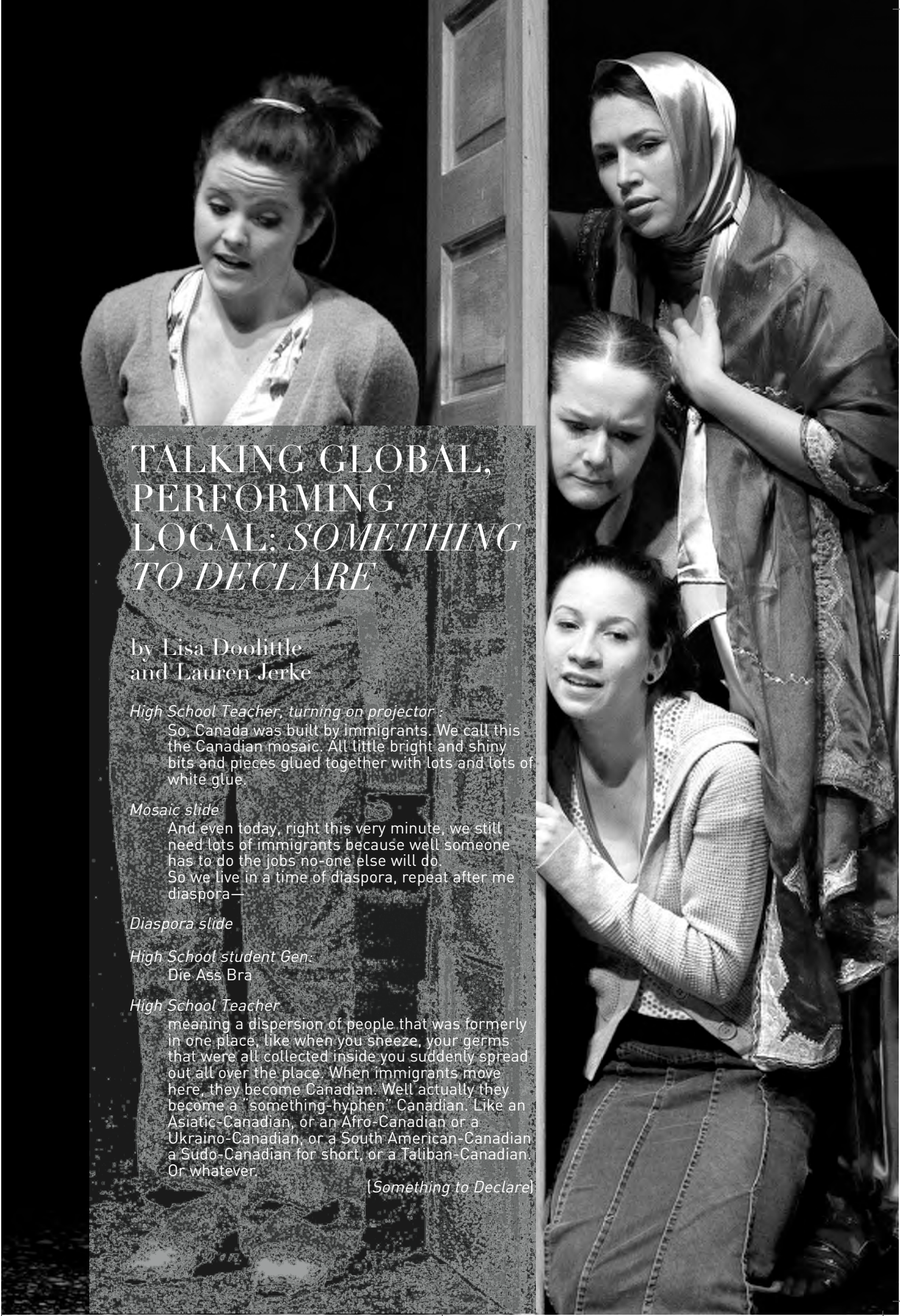
BIO

Lydia Wilkinson IS A PH. D. CANDIDATE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO'S GRADUATE CENTRE FOR STUDY OF DRAMA, WHERE SHE IS WORKING TOWARDS THE COMPLETION OF HER THESIS, ENTITLED *TRUDEAU AND THE PERFORMANCE OF CANADIAN IDENTITIES*. SHE IS CURRENTLY CO-EDITING AN UPCOMING BOOK, *PERFORMING ADAPTATIONS: ESSAYS AND CONVERSATIONS ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF ADAPTATION*, AS WELL AS A FUTURE ISSUE OF *CANADIAN THEATRE REVIEW* ON THE THEME OF AUDIENCES.



TALKING GLOBAL, PERFORMING LOCAL: *SOMETHING TO DECLARE*

by Lisa Doolittle and Lauren Jerke

High School Teacher, turning on projector :
So, Canada was built by immigrants. We call this the Canadian mosaic. All little bright and shiny bits and pieces glued together with lots and lots of white glue.

Mosaic slide
And even today, right this very minute, we still need lots of immigrants because well someone has to do the jobs no-one else will do.
So we live in a time of diaspora, repeat after me diaspora—

Diaspora slide

High School student Gen:
Die Ass Bra

High School Teacher
meaning a dispersion of people that was formerly in one place, like when you sneeze, your germs that were all collected inside you suddenly spread out all over the place. When immigrants move here, they become Canadian. Well actually they become a "something-hyphen" Canadian. Like an Asiatic-Canadian, or an Afro-Canadian or a Ukraino-Canadian, or a South American-Canadian a Sudo-Canadian for short, or a Taliban-Canadian. Or whatever.

(*Something to Declare*)

"What the map cuts up, the story cuts across." (Michel de Certeau 1984:128; qtd. in Conquergood 145)

In 2007, Lauren Jerke and I were at the University of Lethbridge—a student and a professor at a university of 8,000 students in a city of 85,000 with an immigrant population of 10,200 and neighbour to one of Canada's largest First Nations (Kainai) reserves. Working with students from a special topics "Theatre in Community" course, Lauren and I set out set out to use local stories to create a performance and a conversation between our disconnected communities of "Town" (the local and the popular) and "Gown" (the elite and the academic). We hoped that the stories generated in our participatory community-based theatre process would cut across the "map" of our region.

Lethbridge sits dramatically on the edge of the coulees—the prairie badlands that shelter ancient dinosaur bones and echo with intertribal warfare. Formed over centuries by the meanderings of the Old Man River, these massive landforms separate the university and western suburbs from the downtown and industrial areas. Traffic zips back and forth constantly on the two major bridges that link Town and Gown, but you don't have to live here long to realize that these geographical rifts also constitute a major mode of social organization.

Conquergood has stated, "The local is at best a leaky, contingent construction, and [...] global forces are taken up, struggled over, and refracted for site-specific purposes" (145). Lethbridge is smaller than many cities, but not immune to the forces of diaspora and the changing ethnoscapes of our transnational world. These dynamic forces are redeployed here, as everywhere else, in tactical struggles. In nearby Fort McLeod, near the boundary of the Kainai reserve, the owner and chef at Johnny's Chinese café speaks fluent Blackfoot, English, and Chinese.

Yet for the most part, the separations between our communities—university, white collar, blue collar, immigrant, aboriginal—create lives that are often mutually incomprehensible. When we leave our personal spheres and look around our community in the here and now, it is clear that many new immigrants are still facing the pointless prejudices and life consuming struggles that have faced immigrants historically. Of the 12 percent of the total immigrant population, 13.6 percent (or 1,075 people) arrived between 1991 and 2001. Despite the university's goal of increasing internationalization on campus, Canada's "multicultural mosaic" is missing in action from our university's drama studios. The majority of students are white, young, and female. Most have lived in this region all their lives. This culture of separateness seemed to demand a performance of connection. This place, we thought, could use some other kinds of bridges.

THE PROCESS

From January to April 2007, Lisa trained eight senior students from the Theatre in Community class in community-based theatre and oral history methods. Sarah Amies, managing director of Immigrant Services for Lethbridge Family Services, spoke to the class about migration into Lethbridge. She connected students to recent immigrants, provided space and translation services, and, importantly, encouraged participation and trust from immigrants and students through her enthusiasm and faith in the potential of shared stories to cut across perceptual divides to the mutual benefit of all concerned. International students enrolled in the university's advanced writing class came to the drama studio for a day, sharing stories, games, and laughs. The drama students followed personal connections, interviewed relatives, neighbours, and friends from Lethbridge and across the world. Friends at federally sponsored settlement and language programs at the Lethbridge College invited us to their classes to talk to students—some agreed to let their words be part of our project, others refused to participate and scoffed at our goal to produce a play that could create a more tolerant community. Yet, gradually, the power of true stories—heroic, humourous, outlandish, and ordinary—began to take hold. By the end of the class, the students staged the interviewees' stories along with their own emotional, analytical, and imagistic reactions.

Gradually, the power of true stories—heroic, humourous, outlandish, and ordinary—began to take hold.

Capturing the energy from this initial creative encounter, from May to September Lauren, Lisa, and student Megan Tollesdorf compiled a script from interview transcripts, from immigration statistics, from theoretical articles on whiteness, migration, and diaspora, and from poems and images. We organized these diverse elements into a post-modern narrative collage—a jagged compilation of eighteen individual journeys from countries of origin to arrival and settlement in Lethbridge.

By September 2007, we were ready to stage *Something to Declare* as a drama department production with Lisa directing a cast of thirteen students. Portraying the stories of real people is, of

course, fraught with the potential for misunderstandings. Only one of the cast members had been involved in the first interview phase. We worried about not being able to include interviewees in the process, and we were concerned that we not appropriate anyone's stories to their detriment.

We did recognize that many verbatim theatrical practitioners ranging from therapeutically oriented performances in Playback Theatre to the searing solo dramas of Anna Deveare Smith demonstrate the advantages of an "outsider" interpretation, and we worked hard to make connections in other ways. The script was workshopped using "viewpoints" and physical theatre techniques. Students had to stage brief segments of their own lives in order to experience first-hand the invasive power of using personal material for public performance. What do you display, what do you hide? How do you translate experiences from real life to the stage? We worked to bridge the potentially problematic gap between those who gathered and those who performed the stories by bringing even more participants and interviewees into the project—thus opening new and multiple possibilities for interpretation and allowing stories more room to breathe.

Lauren (performer, assistant director, and community liaison) organized a meet and greet with interviewees and cast members with the help of a small grant from the Lethbridge Public Interest Research group—a terrific on-campus organization devoted to funding student projects that connect campus and community. Several interviewees attended rehearsals. At one of these, Abdul, formerly a teacher in Afghanistan, spoke with great feeling about the excerpts of his story in the play. For the students, this brought home the depth of emotional upheaval experienced by some of their characters, and taught them to have more patience for people who struggled with English as a second language.

We accepted an invitation from the Women's Studies Department to perform stories of female immigrants for a "Persons Day" conference about women and rights at the public library. These performed stories of local women enlivened the practical discussions between various agencies attending the conference. The off-campus setting helped to bring the meaning of the material home to the actors, the audience, and the production team.

Lo and Gilbert claim,

> If intercultural theatre means to address potential inequities involved in Western appropriations of other cultural traditions, then its adherents must conceive of a theatre that somehow engages with its own established "looking" relations. Interventionary frameworks and other metatheatrical devices—these might range from direct audience address to self-conscious role-playing [...]—can be used to problematize imperialist object-relations model of cross-cultural spectatorship. (48)

We attempted to foreground our position as outsiders and to embed metatheatrical devices of all kinds into our performance. All cast members played multiple roles. Performers wore white masks when playing Caucasian characters and went barefaced and spoke in dialects when interpreting interviewees. These strategies functioned to emphasize the constructedness of race. A white-masked woman articulated and questioned "whiteness" theories of unearned privilege while literally walking on the upheld hands of immigrant characters:

> I wear an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear and blank cheques. The invisibility of these assets is part and parcel of the sense that whiteness is nothing in particular, that white culture and identity have, as it were, no content.[...] It is intolerable to realize that I may get a job or a nice house or a helpful response at schools or hospitals, because of my skin colour, not because of the unique, achieving individual I must believe myself to be.
>
> (*Something to Declare*)[1]

Troubling links between power, access, and race became more visible in moments like this, when our embodiment of academic concepts (like whiteness) bumped up against the brutal reality of the true stories.

In the scene immediately following this performance of invisible systemic white privilege, immigrant characters recounted the frustrations of applying for Canadian jobs. Troubling links between power, access, and race became more visible in moments like this, when our embodiment of academic concepts (like whiteness) bumped up against the brutal reality of the true stories.

About half way through our creation and rehearsal process, we realized that staging only the "immigrant's" reactions to "Lethbridge" was just half the story. What about "Lethbridge's" reactions to the immigrants? In order to get accu-

rate local reactions, the cast members interviewed locals, asking for their opinions on the city's immigrants. The resulting scene, staged in collaboration with master mask performer John Poulsen, comically emphasized stereotypes and exaggerated the discomfort of first encounters as the actors in white mask spoke to the audience as locals, then in a natural, unmasked state as interviewees:

Ki Jin: When I came it was a culture shock. Where is the people?! What the heck? What happened here? In department store, not even people there and Hutterites walking around! Who are they? I even asked bus driver, "Is this downtown?" It was like a city in a western movie, literally, tumbleweed you know, fly. That was a shock. Where is the people I can talk with? Everyday when I get up, I have to arm myself...mentally.

(*Something to Declare*)

We searched for a staging that did not hide cultural tensions or naturalize differences and that delicately balanced parody and truth. In performance, uncomfortable silences and uproarious laughter indicated that the audience critically recognized both themselves and the "others" in what was arguably the show's most dynamic moment—where the performance elicited simultaneous self-reflection and self-alienation.

THE PRODUCTION

Migration is occurring on a massive scale across the globe. We wanted to communicate that sense of scale and the fragmentation and alienation that many of the stories revealed. Our production budget enabled our designers Lily Visser (set and costume) and Simon Reeve (lighting) to create spectacular elements like floating doors, giant rolling cages, and nightclub-style kinetic lighting evoking through motion the emotions of displacement. Whirling headlines on a large slit screen allowed the actors to emerge directly out of current events. Disembodied noodles and giant chopsticks (comically animated by black robed actor-puppeteers) attacked a fast food "boss" in a scene set in a "McFast Noodle" shop, exaggerating the fears and anger of underemployed immigrant workers while expressing the resilience of laughter in the face of life's twists of fate. In between major scenes, to break up the flow and to give a sense of the relentless displacement of migration, we staged "people on the move"—nonsequitur bridging sections where characters caught at various phases of their journeys travelled alone or in groups across the downstage apron of the stage in an isolating shaft of light.

Choreographers Landon Waters and Lise-Ann Talhami created show-stopping Hip Hop and Bollywood dance numbers. In the Prologue, the local students' hip hop moves at first excluded a newcomer and then created common ground. In the epilogue, newcomer characters studying ESL seemed awkward and isolated until swept up in the corny energy and glitzy costumes of an Asian romantic fantasy, while in Brechtian fashion the lyrics of the accompanying song told a grimmer story. The clashing tropes carried in global pop cultures' hottest dance forms evoked the exuberance of youth and its promise of change, the force of ethnic stereotypes (and their intractability), the drive of consumer capitalism (and who it lets in and leaves out), expressing where words fail the uncontrollable dynamic of contemporary cultures. By the time it was over, around 1200 people had attended our 6 presentations in the university's 450-seat proscenium theatre.

The newcomers' stories, vividly embodied with movement, music, and characterization and followed by intense nightly talkback sessions, "cut across" our map in a number of different ways.

Activism met acting as students negotiated ethical issues of representation and advocacy. For all cast members, this was their first experience of performance creation from oral histories and it was transformative for many. When students care, they take care. They felt obliged to "do the stories justice" with excellent acting, knowing that the person whose story they were telling would likely be in the audience.

Students commented that the act of performing an understanding of unjust situations can motivate the "doing of socially just actions." One experienced actor commented that *Something to Declare* provided her with a larger understanding of immigration issues and a more strongly felt connection to people of other cultures—she felt more comfortable when talking with visible minorities and curious to discover their stories. The youngest cast member found that working on the show connected her to Lethbridge and its various communities. She realized how easily racial slurs and jokes can affect others. Meeting with and learning the story of her character first hand made her realize that many people have gone through really hard things—even if they don't seem to have. She was awakened to a significant amount of apathy concerning immigrants in Lethbridge and the problems they face within her social circle at the university. Several actors found themselves more tolerant when listening to those who struggle with their English, and that beyond spoken language, emotion and gesture could convey a theme or an idea both on stage and off. Another actor was surprised by the cultural diversity of the community she lived in.

TALKBACK

Almost all of the interviewees attended a performance and stayed for the talkbacks after the show, where dialogue was animated and deepened by their perspectives. Many audience members focused on the nonfictional aspects of the production, commenting on the power of true stories—that stories from residents in the same community as the audience validated the show's inherent messages about tolerance and difference. As creators we had struggled hard to identify common and unhelpful stereotypes that emerged in the interviews and in our creative process. Yet, the trope of the heroic/tragic immigrant, so 'lucky' to have ended up in such a great country persisted:

Abdul: If I lost my country, I find new country.
If I lost my friends, I find new friends.
New idea, new life, new everything.
If I lose some things, my house. I find new house new things.
If I lost, I find in here (points to heart).
I think we are lucky.

(*Something to Declare*)

Persistent stereotypes often indicate areas where resistance to change is most entrenched. We felt it important to dedicate analytical and performative attention to these areas.

Audience members were often eager to understand what the student actors had learned regarding immigration. One spectator asked the cast, "If you had the chance to advise government bureaucrats or politicians on changes to Canadian immigration policies, what would you suggest?" Students proposed changes to ease family reunification, to grant equivalencies for job skills and training gained abroad, and for the government to have a basic understanding of the real hardships experienced beyond the initial uprooting of migration—recognizing that the "back story" is just beginning once people arrive in their new home.

Aleksandra: You don't choose by choice to come here, you choose because you don't have choice.

(*Something to Declare*)

BRIDGES

To the "Town," the "Gown" can be literally inaccessible or laughably out of touch with reality. *Something to Declare* explored bridges that could link research, performance, ethics, and advocacy in the process and production. Community-based theatre offers powerful ways for students and colleagues to engage with global development issues, and bring nontraditional populations as audiences and co-creators into direct contact with high art and academia. Some of our strategies worked, others required more time or a different approach altogether. For interviewees, the university was difficult to access, and they had a basic lack of understanding of our process. In spite of many initiatives (free taxi service, home visits, free tickets) some participants and their relatives were not able to attend rehearsals, or even to see the show, because of work conflicts or transportation issues. The intersecting true stories of local newcomers and local long-time residents raised drama students' awareness of the proximity of global issues to their own lives. The actor-audience relationship was strengthened by the power of the local, verbatim testimony. Most importantly, we opened productive dialogue between universities, artists, and the surrounding communities.

We also modeled a different way of creating and disseminating knowledge. As Conquergood explains,

> de Certeau's aphorism "what the map cuts up the story cuts across" also points to transgressive travel between two different domains of knowledge: one official, objective and abstract—"the map"; the other one practical, embodied, and popular—"the story" [...]. This embrace of different ways of knowing is radical because it cuts to the root of how knowledge is organized in the academy. (145)

Educators and artists in universities can and should engage in this type of performance creation precisely because it is a radical engagement that can teach a great deal about how society works, how social action can be initiated, what it can accomplish, and how the personal is always political. Considerable power is bestowed on universities. If we do not deploy this power conscientiously—enacting our promises of integrating diversity on our campuses, and connecting to our surrounding communities—we reinforce a social order that many of the scripted plays we produce denounce. More importantly, we ignore the richness of the communities around us that have something to declare.

talking global

© Bernie Wirzba

NOTE

[1] The source for this passage is Peggy McIntosh (1988), qtd. in Dyer 5-9

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BIOS

Lisa Doolittle IS A CHOREOGRAPHER, WRITER, AND PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE, WHERE SHE TEACHES MOVEMENT AND PHYSICAL AND COMMUNITY-BASED THEATRE CREATION. HER CURRENT SSHRC-FUNDED RESEARCH EXPLORES INSTANCES WHERE HUMAN RIGHTS, RACE, AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF CANADA INTERSECT IN DANCE EVENTS AND PRACTICES IN ABORIGINAL AND IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN CANADA'S WEST—INCLUDING LETHBRIDGE—IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

Lauren Jerke HAS RECENTLY COMPLETED HER BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS DEGREE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE. SHE HAS MANY CONNECTIONS TO LOCAL IMMIGRANT FAMILIES BECAUSE HER OWN FAMILY HAS TRAVELLED TO CENTRAL AMERICA WORKING ON VARIOUS HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS. SHE IS INTERESTED IN PURSUING FURTHER STUDIES IN COMMUNITY THEATRE WORK.

DISPATCH

Why Not?

In the fall of 2006, my director, Thomas Morgan Jones, and I spoke about our interests in theatre over a sushi dinner. I shared with him a very private incident that had sparked a heated conversation which had resulted in my writing *Pyaasa*. The incident happened approximately five years previously, during a trip back to India. Before moving to Canada in 1999, I was raised in an upper-class household in Calcutta, India, with every luxury in the world and many servants who worked for minimum wage. One of these was a sixty-year-old man. Laxman Da (Laxman Brother), as we called him, was an "untouchable."

Despite the fact that the caste system was constitutionally abolished by the Indian government in the 1950s, it remains to this day a discriminatory form of social stratification into which every Hindu person is born. At the bottom of this discriminatory hierarchy are "untouchables" like Laxman Da, who are seen as sub-human by members of this system, and therefore they face immense discrimination. I had the opportunity to converse with Laxman Da during my trip back to India, and when I realized the serious discrimination he faced, I apologized to him for my own caste-based discrimination against him when I lived in India, and I then offered him money. He refused to forgive me and left me with these words:

"You think you can come here and ask for forgiveness and all will be okay? You think you can come here and ask for forgiveness and give me some money and all will be okay? It does not work that way."

That moment stayed with me for a long while before I spoke about it over the sushi dinner with Jones. That moment with Laxman Da inspired me to write *Pyaasa,* the story of an eleven-year-old "untouchable" girl named Chaya and her journey from "childhood" to "adulthood"—a journey that occurs in just ten days.

In writing and producing this play with Jones, I realized the serious need for such marginalized voices to be heard in the theatre. I was repeatedly asked, "Why do you want to hang your dirty laundry out for the entire world to see?" My answer is "Why not?" We need to create theatre for social change, theatre that affects people, and theatre that allows dialogue to be created.

On 24 October 2008, the day *Pyaasa* opened at Theatre Passe Muraille, a headline in the *Times of India* read, "Thirteen-year-old Dragged around Village for Holding Girl's Hand." Of course the victim was an "untouchable" boy in India who was brutally physically tortured for touching a girl's hand. Many such incidents happen every day, and it is appalling to note that little is being done about it. I urge theatre makers to bring such issues to light and to speak the truth that needs to be heard.

Anusree Roy

BIO

ANUSREE RECENTLY COMPLETED HER M.A. AT UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO'S GRADUATE CENTRE FOR STUDY OF DRAMA. SHE IS THE PLAYWRIGHT AND PERFORMER OF TWO-TIME DORA MAVOR MOORE AWARD WINNING *PYAASA* AT THE 2008 THEATRE PASSE MURAILLE, AND IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON HER NEW PLAY, *BROTHEL # 9*, AS A PLAYWRIGHT-IN-RESIDENCE AT THE CANADIAN STAGE COMPANY.

DISPATCH

Presumptuous Political Playwright

What is absorbing me lately is the question of the power of politics in the theatre; not the power to proselytize, not the power of propaganda, but the power to awaken, by a sudden shock of recognition or by a slow washing away of comforting denial, that may take weeks, months, or years.

Just as a psychoanalyst must be analyzed before seeing patients, we playwrights must experience that same shock, and washing away of denial, if we expect the same of an audience.

Is that why I avoid moving on to my next play? I am embarrassed when people call me "prolific" because the gestation of each play is like an elephant's.

Here are some of the political reasons I avoid writing:

Who wants to find oneself complicit in the oppression of others?

Who wants to admit to benefitting from an unjust system? From the "grant" of whiteness and education?

Another major drawback is that when writing, I must reside far out in the margins, watching, absorbing what others cannot afford to see. And I don't like it there. I have an ordinary human longing just to jump into the middle, and dance wildly, to lose the crippling consciousness that powers the writing and the self-flagellation that comes with recognition of privilege.

And, if art is earned through suffering, it means that with every play I must return to my own suffering; and who wants to go there? It's safely buried deep in my semi-conscious box of secrets.

But art is always earned through a combination of suffering and a sense of entitlement; we playwrights presume to take on the voices of others—the voices of the oppressed, the invisible, the unheard. In *Palace of the End*, my most recent play, I boldly took the voice of Lynndie England, the U.S. private convicted of torturing detainees in Abu Ghraib, as well as the voice of David Kelly, the U.K. scientist who apparently killed himself after being punished for breaching confidentiality by telling the truth about weapons of mass destruction to a BBC reporter, and finally the voice of Nehrjas al saffarah, an Iraqi woman whose child was tortured to death by Saddam's thugs.

I probably should have had the humility to ask myself what right I had to write these characters. What the hell did I know beyond a bit of Internet research . . . but I do have a kind of "into the breach" mentality when I write . . . I just let the voices speak, and let some of my own treasures flow in, plus a touch of lyricism—and hope for the best. In the case of *Palace of the End*, it was clearly meant to be. I will never again tell my students "write only what you know." This play reaches people deeply, and it is being widely produced. It is the first time I have written actual people as characters, and I think I will continue in that mode. I was, previously, afraid of lawsuits, etc., but the risk has been well worth it.

So now, I cannot NOT write political theatre. The personal is political, yes, but we must ask big, provocative, and impossible questions of ourselves, and of the audience, with every play, with every performance. We must straddle the margins and the reckless dance. We must let our raw experience flow into the real events we choose to theatricalize, and our personal memories, as well as our lyrical reveries enter the lives of real historical characters we re-create; we must be brash and gentle, bold and respectful, and always always shatter complacency.

Judith Thompson

BIO

JUDITH THOMPSON IS ONE OF CANADA'S MOST DISTINGUISHED PLAYWRIGHTS. SHE WAS BORN IN MONTREAL, GRADUATED FROM QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, AND WENT ON TO TRAIN AS AN ACTOR AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE SCHOOL. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF ELEVEN FULL-LENGTH PLAYS, TWO ONE ACTS, TWO FEATURE FILMS, AND MANY RADIO PLAYS. HER WRITING IS CHARACTERIZED BY VISCERAL INTENSITY AND PROFOUND HUMANITY.

REVIEW-ESSAY

WHAT IS LEFT FOR ME TO WRITE

by Evelyne de la Chenelière
Translated by Stéphanie Roesler

LOUISE H. FORSYTH, ed.
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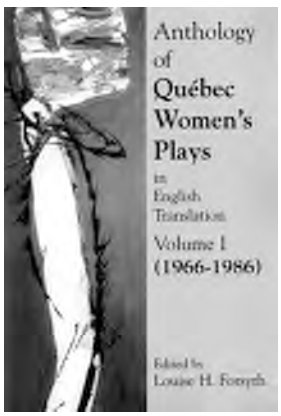

...Yes, yes, some day I will read these women gathered in anthologies.

An anthology is a collection, a gathering of several elements that seemed right and relevant to assemble. I have often wondered how the writers, who are part of the same anthology, experience this proximity, this community, this fusion, or even this potential confusion among their respective works. Does not the determination of writers, whether conscious or not, consist of distinguishing themselves, in making their writing so singular that it will shine in the literary landscape?

Some day, I will have to ask the women writers how they experience their being gathered with other women writers. Do they not fear that their "feminitude" may swallow their unique identity? Are they secretly hostile to the fact that the anthologist, without consulting them, establishes a connivance—nay, even a simple *connection*—with other women under the pretext that they write? Have they ever thought, perhaps, that dedicating a book exclusively to the words and works of women could suggest to readers that if they are thinking of buying this book, they should be interested in women in particular rather than in human beings in general?

These questions, I realize, now lead me to make an awful confession: until late in my life as a reader and as a woman of theatre, a book gathering *theatre* plays written by *Québécoises* would have immediately aroused in me an aversion that I could not have explained. I have to say that such a collection awakens three complexes at the same time: theatre, women, and Quebec.

> Can we, as playwrights, aspire to *real* literature?
> Can we, as women who write, aspire to *real* literature?
> And finally, can we, as Quebecers, aspire to *real* literature?

In order to become a woman from Quebec who writes theatre, I first had to acknowledge the existence of, then try to understand, and finally fight this trio of complexes that were blinding me.

When I started writing, which was long before I devoted myself to theatre in particular, I had the impression that the women from *before* had settled what had to be settled in this global issue of equality between sexes, and from then on feminism seemed to me to be a uselessly aggressive and slightly paranoid movement.

I wanted my writing to be tinged with gentleness, restraint, humility, and gratitude. I did not feel threatened by men; on the contrary, I would

have done my best to please them and not to scare them, and at that time, perhaps, they regarded me as one of them.

This is where I came up against a terrible paradox: on the one hand, I wished to get men's approbation, as I thought they were superior to women in the realm of literature; but, on the other hand, I remained convinced that long before I was born, women had acquired the esteem they had asked for.

Before my time, women had to write in order to claim our right to pleasure, to knowledge, to speech. They had had to assert Québec identity, to invent a wild and pure life for us, away from priests and institutions. They succeeded in making the political private and the private political. Their theatre explored language, form, and smashed some conventions. Their theatre staged women baying at freedom. Their theatre gave an opportunity to speak to "my mother, my mother, my mother, my neighbour [...]" (Gagnon et al.). One often forgets that their theatre was also meant to address the entire world.

I actually envied the struggle, as I did not know what mine would be, and, worse, I was afraid of not finding one. I knew only that I would never be able to legitimate my need to write if I could not transcend a banal desire for introspection. What is the use of writing about one's doubts, one's pains, one's hopes; what is the use of looking into one's little chaos when the earth quakes? What I had learned, what I had seemingly understood, was that women had seized writing as if it were a weapon. And even though this gesture appeared to me as truly noble, I could not do so myself without feeling dishonest, improper, ridiculous.

How can we compete with women who had so many *enemies*? Writing without dissidence was impossible for them. How can speech take root when the soil of adversity cannot be found? These women had the strength to question the moral and intellectual authority of their time, I agree, but to whom does this authority belong nowadays? Is it in better hands since it has been *democratically* attributed to an entire community (a community in which individuals who dedicate any time to thinking are in a minority)? And now that we have cast away all the current models, that we have refused "globally" (Borduas), how can we question an authority that we have equally shared and that we each proudly brandish a piece of during those fifteen minutes of glory?

As the public sphere has become a vast platform that everyone claims and obtains in turn, without taking into consideration the reflection, the pertinence of words, the power or the necessity of the work, it is almost impossible to be on the fringe. The overexposure of all things banal and of the slightest opinion of the media, without any order of importance, makes a dissident positioning more difficult to claim, less visible, one might say. Is the only struggle left for the artist a struggle against the feeling that in this flood of public manifestations in which everything is worth the same, any creation is vain?

So, standing in front of this dead-end, which petrified me and for which I held partly responsible these women who had—as it seemed to me—written everything there was to say, these women who made these men that I so loved flee, these women whose respective words appeared to me as being one single choir by dint of being one and the same fight, I happened to say without conviction,

> *Yes, yes, some day I will read these women gathered in anthologies.*

It thus took me a while before I was ready to read and tackle the works of *Québécoises* with all the intellectual and emotional honesty required to truly access their great and beautiful literature. And now I think that it is my duty to name what hindered this access, as I believe that nowadays our literature (be it Québec, women, or theatre literature) still suffers from prejudices similar to mine. Luckily, my curiosity was victorious and I thus had the opportunity to discover the works of Anne Hébert, Denise Boucher, Françoise Loranger, and the privilege to see the theatre of Lise Vaillancourt, Pol Pelletier, and Emma Haché staged.

Since then, I often think back to Agnès Joncas, the almighty mother of *Le temps sauvage* by Anne Hébert. By wanting to free her children, she made them her prisoners. By wanting to protect them from everything she held to be some kind of perversion of their primitive beauty, she locked them in silence and ignorance. By proclaiming herself the guardian of their essence, she reproduced the very model she so wanted to reject.

I dare to make a parallel between this filiation and the intergenerational relationship that binds all the women writers to one another: as women writers, we owe our lives to all these women who wrote before us. However, we must challenge their authority to survive.

I never wrote. I wrote *nevertheless*.

I had to find a way to free myself from these liberated women who all had more or less the same face as my mother. My writing would never

be utilitarian. Never mind if it were never to be useful; this was the risk I had to take. My writing would never be the result of voluntary non-conformism. Never mind if it were to be conventional; this was the risk I had to take. My writing would never be based on the hope for change. Never mind if it were not to change anything; this was the risk I had to take. I do not know what my writing has become, by dint of *not being*, but it is the only way I found to have the feeling that it was becoming, slowly but surely, necessary.

If, as we like to say, we live in an era of disenchantment, I am the disenchanted woman of a disenchanted generation: what is left for me to write? What is this disenchantment that paralyzes, that ridicules the most beautiful dreams, that makes everyone lonelier and lonelier? The echo of our failures is perhaps so deafening that we do not hear anything else. In response to questions that were too complex and too painful, our generation perhaps chose to snigger. It's too bad that disenchantment does not give creators a fighting spirit; it makes us bitter and tired.

And weariness does not lead you to write. It makes you prostrate and indecisive. Even worse, this sluggishness of ours does not make us harmless human beings for all that. We still have as much difficulty living together: our nature remains cruel and predatory; and when we are miraculously moved by *finer feelings*, the results turn out to be mediocre. Is it this that is left for me to write? I would need breath and I am out-of-breath; I would need a battle but there's only the void to fight against, and it is a feature of the void to elude us even as it smothers us.

Are they going to mock me, the women who will write next? Of course! It is necessary to somewhat despise what precedes in order to aspire to something. These women will arrive puffed up with themselves, but how can we hold it against them, we who have been told so often that youth is the only weapon against time?

But if time devours everything, even the most intimate convictions, it nonetheless inscribes words on our desolate landscapes, on our inner deserts. And even if it is the sole motive, I forgive time for all things. I forgive time as it will make me a real woman who really writes—I am confident of this despite everything.

left for me

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BIOS

Evelyne de la Chenelière, AUTHOR AND ACTRESS, HAS WRITTEN MANY PLAYS PRESENTED IN QUEBEC AND ABROAD AND TRANSLATED INTO MANY LANGUAGES. *DES FRAISES EN JANVIER*, *AU BOUT DU FIL*, *HENRI & MARGAUX*, *APHRODITE EN 04*, *L'HÉRITAGE DE DARWIN*, *BASHIR LAZHAR*, AND *LE PLAN AMÉRICAIN* ALL DEMONSTRATE A METICULOUS OBSERVATION OF HUMAN NATURE. IN 2006, SHE RECEIVED THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S LITERARY AWARD FOR FRENCH DRAMA FOR HER PLAY *DÉSORDRE PUBLIC*. WHILE WORKING WITH THE NOUVEAU THÉÂTRE EXPÉRIMENTAL, SHE OFTEN COLLABORATED WITH JEAN-PIERRE RONFARD, AND SHE REGULARLY WORKS WITH DANIEL BRIÈRE.

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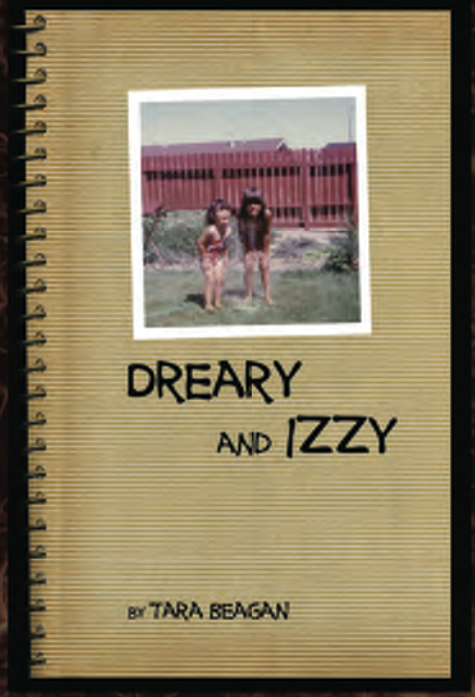

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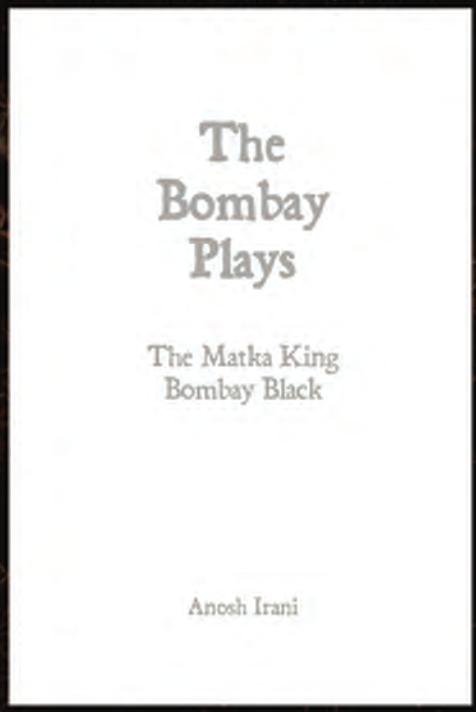

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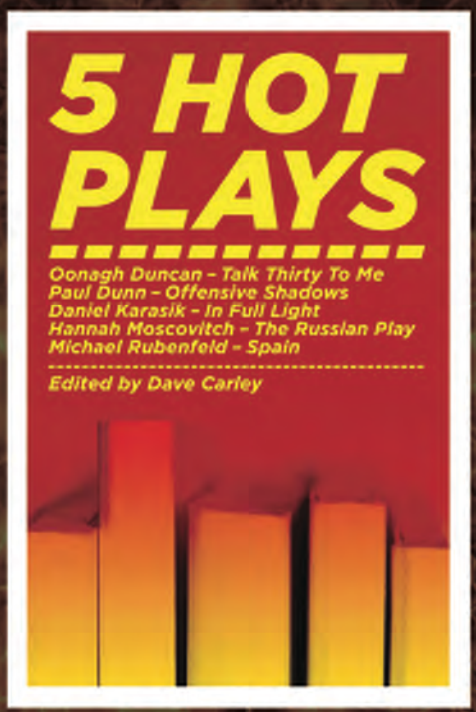

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