Natural Clowning as Inquiry: An Ecology and Performance Towards a Scholarship of Feeling

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ABSTRACT

Natural Clowning as Inquiry: An Ecology and Performance Towards a Scholarship of Feeling

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Concordia University, 2019

This study consists of the practice and research of theatrical clowning and nature as a world view towards a scholarship of feeling. The assumption of this study is that clowning and land relationship connect through their potential to catalyze and support personal inquiry and growth. The goal of this doctoral research is to articulate a theory and practice of Natural Clowning as inquiry. This study uses arts-based research and more particularly, clowning and nature as a world view as techniques to connect to feelings through play, humour, story, sensory connection, dramatic reality, physicality, and authentic impulse, to thus access parts of the unconscious, and to integrate these parts of self into awareness. I believe these parts, when allowed to express or communicate in their own right, may offer not "right" answers per se but honest answers with the potential for great wisdom.

Although this doctoral study began as a question as to how clowning could inform ecological activism, it became a healing journey for me towards wholeness and what it means to be in relation with self and others, both human and other-than-human, as a settler of British ancestry living in Mi'kma'ki. I documented and artistically expressed experiences in clown trainings, performances, and experimental workshops, as well as mentorship and practice in land communication for three years (2014-2017) through reflective analytic memos, field notes, song, and storybook writing. I reference literature in diverse fields such as theatrical clowning, drama therapy, nature as a world view, child development, humour, and play. These references share space with stories that I hope will bring the literature to life. They are my own stories, and while they are personal to me, I believe they will have applicability to other Euro-settlers who are on a similar journey towards growth and wholeness.

Acknowledgements

I would like to start with this place and culture, Mi'kma'ki, this land that magnetized me and continues to teach me so much. Wela'lin.

Thank you to the brave souls who came to my experimental workshops as I sought to define my research questions and those who shared their experiences once I had crystalized my main points of inquiry. It was a joy to explore and play with you.

Thank you to my main supervisor, Dr. Louis Patrick Leroux. Dr. Leroux helped me to verbalize some key concepts in this dissertation with his detailed analysis. He held both a calm compassion when the project felt like more than I could stomach and an incredible capacity for openness and trust as I followed some substantial tangents… including the one that relocated me to Nova Scotia before I had even finished my first year. I had the privilege to work with Dr. Warren Linds in both my master's and my doctoral project. He threw my mind down all kinds of interesting rabbit holes, and I emerged more flexible and resilient in my thinking and imagining. He was also the purveyor of conference and article suggestions, several research assistantships that resonated with both my research and my heart, and general encouragement to get myself and my work out there. Dr. Karl Hele came on board in my second year, and now I can't imagine this project without him. He shared stories of blue herons who fly amongst the sky scrapers of Concordia's downtown campus and seemed to know where I was going with my work long before I did. I have enjoyed the jokes, the talks, and the open questions which had me thinking and feeling for weeks at a time. I was blessed to have the guidance of these three people. Although our research interests diverged in my second year, Dr. Natasha Blanchet-Cohen lent her endorsement and support as an initial committee member. Dr. Jason Butler, Dr. Warren Linds, and Dr. Patrick Leroux also agreed to directed studies in applied theatre, play, and clown with me, which helped to advance my knowledge immeasurably. Anna-Karyna Barlati, the librarian at the National Circus School, dug up documents in my proposal preparation and made herself available even after I was no longer living in Montréal. Debrae Firehawk is a Euro-settler healer mentioned several times in this document and provided deep holistic guidance from

both an earth-bound and spiritual place. Many of her teachings are offerings from her powerful ability to channel one's personal guides.

I might have thrown in the towel on multiple occasions if not for my fellow INDI doctoral student Erika Licón. Through our weekly meetings, texts, emails, and (during my visits to Montreal) tacos, I found inspiration, solace, and steady support. She is a brilliant scholar, a fervent community activist, and a warm hearted and generous soul. I am lucky to call her my colleague and friend. The early mentorship of Dr. Andy Trull, another INDI student, was also invaluable as I faced my fears of embarking on such a project and learned to navigate the complexities of scholarship, creation, comps, committees, and relocation. His Hermit Lab allowed me to dream, experiment, question, falter, and play. Nicole Macoretta was a bright light and friend as we hashed through the adventure of our first year of study, art, and philosophy together. She and her partner did more than their fair share of driving in a moving road trip east in a bursting Chloe the car with a weary first year doctoral student on board. Dr. Patricia Vickers has been a model for me in doctoral work that blends art, personal story and path, spirituality, land, healing, and community service. When I could not see a path ahead, I held the leadership of her work and her guidance dear. Thank you, Auntie.

Other friends, relatives, and roommates were there for me with patience, understanding, meals, walks, laughs, kitchen karaoke, much listening, and hugs during the ups and downs of this endeavour, tolerating my many absences, writing holes, and occasional melt down: Andres Livov, Nadia Cicurel, Andres Abril, Lina Moreno, Jane Nicholls, Kevin, and Owen, Stephen Fuller, Kyra Shaughnessy, Gabrielle Nolan, Nikola Brabenec, Carol Layton and James Lewis, the Tegridy Farm crew, Steph and family, my Rock Shop family, Leslie Milne, Guy Tipton, and Kathy France. I left my family when I was seventeen and "family-swapped" for six months to live and learn another way of being in the world in northern Mexico. Since that time, as I moved about in search of the various experiences and puzzle pieces of the grounds of this dissertation, they have often been physically far away but are strongly and always present in my heart. I am truly blessed with a family who has encouraged me to follow the road to my Self. Eternal compassion via skype and phone from my parents and their partners (Pam and Terry, Mark and Margaret), editing brilliance from my mother, midwifing initial drafts from my father,

canoe adventures with my niece Saffron and nephew Loden, silly videos, power chats, and backyard visits with my sisters Jenny and Carla and brother Tim, and all the ways I was held in BC, Montréal, or Maritime visits reminded me throughout this study of what really matters.

Paula Platter-Galloway was my second introduction to clowning one magical afternoon at MUCS in Montréal, gifted me research into my family tree, and continues to inspire me on a quarterly basis with her genius. As the clown nose began to unfurl in my heart, other brilliant, creative clowns came forward to encourage me. Nadia Cicurel, Sue Proctor, Blondine Maurice, Elise Deguire, and Vivian Gladwell gave me deeper tastes of this love and magic. Francis Lovett came to visit me at the farm as I was writing the proposal and gave me a much needed infusion of Natural Clowning. Zeno Levy helped me find my courage during Boot Camp and offered feedback via Skype on initial clown turn ideas. John Turner introduced me to the pedagogy of Clown and Mask and helped me to find my rage. He was complete in his witnessing of anything I ever performed or saw others share on stage and modeled the committed richness and comedy of this kind of clowning. He and clown partner Mike Kennard also tuned me into the stage dynamic of Joey and Auguste and helped open another petal of the mystery and wonder of Clown and Mask.

I am indebted to the generosity of Nose to Nose for reduced tuition for The Courage to Be, ArtsPlace for a travel grant to Manitoulin Island, and particularly the Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance for full scholarships to Boot Camp and Joey and Auguste. Concordia School of Graduate Studies granted me four Conference and Exhibition Awards to allow me to attend conferences and the Carolyn and Brian Neysmith Graduate Scholarship that supported my fourth year of study. I also received from Concordia University the Concordia Merit Scholarship and the Campaign for a New Millennium Graduate Scholarship which helped to ease my loan load, a partial bursary remission from the government of Québec, and several research assistantships with Dr. Warren Linds. I am grateful for this support.

Clarification of Terminology

In the course of this research, I explored several terms to refer to a concept that includes humans as well as elements, plants, animals, and other "communities of expressive presences" (Abram, 2010, p. 173). I have seen the term non-human used, but as my advisor Warren Linds pointed out, this sets up a binary relationship between humans and other aspects of life (personal communication, December 2018). I researched Celtic or British terms that might imply such a concept of a greater sphere of life that includes humans as an equal part but came up empty handed. Euro-American philosopher David Abram (1997) uses the term more-than-human to indicate both a sense of humanity as imbedded within and permeated by cultures of other elements and beings and also to indicate an entity "that contains, yet exceeds, all of our human designs" (Iovino & Oppermann, 2014, p.16). He is said to have come to this term after frustration with a feeling of schism between human culture and additional earth cultures in the environmental movement. However, a common trait of Indigenous cultures is the view that humans are neither above *nor below* other beings on the earth (Nolan, 2015) (own emphasis).

Another of my advisors, Karl Hele, points out to me that if the world view is that one and all are part of the same process, the words 'more' and 'less' become problematic. Additionally, the inherent unknown qualities of spirit-beings make them hard to quantify as 'more' or 'less' than human. A term he suggested during this dissertation process is other-than-human, for it can encapsulate a conceptualization that beings can be 'more' or 'less' as well as either neither 'more' or 'less' than humans. We only learn of their relationship to us through experience, knowledge, and ongoing relationality. This is "in terms of responsibilities and powers as well as the notion that all are relatives in terms of relations and actions on Turtle Island." Relatives in the sense that "we are all connected by some means whether it is 'relationships,' 'friendships,' 'peace,' 'love,' or 'enmity'" – the journey is to understand all our relations with humans and other-than-humans (personal communication, March 4, 2019). He has also suggested "all our relations" or the more personal "all my relations". In Mi'kmaw, this concept is expressed through the term *msit no'kmaq*. These terms incorporate not just the natural / physical world. They also encompass spirits and beings, often seen from a settler perspective as mythological,

inexplicable, or superstitious, that are not necessarily bad or good but sometimes both, neither, or more one than the other. “All our relations” and “all my relations” give me a clear, warm feeling in my heart. Arts-based research includes a deliberate semantic shift from speaking of “the” body to living experiences in my body, in our bodies (Leavy, 2015). For this reason, I have also chosen at times to refer to all our relations, or even closer to my skin, all my relations, in this dissertation.

Invitation to the Reader

In this piece of writing of stories and theory, you will meet scholars, life experiences, readings, and ideas. I wrote my experiences of theatrical clown and land communication immersions as best I could express them from my heart and found inspiration and articulation in the ideas and theories of the literature studies and reviews. One reader likened *Natural Clowning as Inquiry: An Ecology and Performance Towards a Scholarship of Feeling* to a ride on the wagon of cartoon characters Calvin and Hobbes – down a bumpy hill into a water-filled ditch. She recommended bringing a thermos of tea and rubber boots! I include a storybook for adults, written by me and illustrated by Paula Platter-Galloway, throughout the written text that is brought to life in a story in one of the clowning sections.

At the beginning of the dissertation, I present my initial research questions and the lead lines and curiosities that took me through to a secondary formation of questions. These secondary questions are large, perhaps too large. I am sometimes told that I get easily ahead of myself! I enjoyed wading through my central inquiries regardless. I hope that the theories will help to frame your own experiences and that the mistrials and joys of these stories of Natural Clowning might bring you meaning and a chance to laugh at the foibles of being a human on this beautiful planet.

In peace and light,

Megan

Table of Contents

Initial and Central Research Questions for

Natural Clowning as Inquiry: An Ecology and Performance Towards a Scholarship of Feeling

In the fall of 2013, I wrote my doctoral entrance proposal, Thinking with Hearts and Feet: The Role of Clown in Ecological Engagement, in the National Circus School library. I sat beside the large window that looked onto the acrobats' training gym and read through stacks of articles and books as students below stood on shoulders, jumped from high heights down onto trampolines, and hung from brightly coloured silks. I wanted to imagine how clowning might be of service to environmentalism, and vice versa, as well as a way to explain the inner clowning that I had experienced with Nose to Nose the previous summer. My original proposal questions were:

1) *How can clown and earth connection contribute to a new culture of what it means to be human, what it means to be a part of the ecological movement and not separate from?*

2) *How can clown allow us to recognize, cultivate, and offer our gifts in service to the earth (ecological leadership)?*

3) *How can clown and earth connection help us live our current environmental situation from a place of presence, courage, and laughter?*

4) *How can transformational theatre (clown, playback) offer a forgiving forum to try out behaviours and express feelings in a supportive context?*

I wrote about clowning as wholeness, where everything is important and of value (good and bad, order and chaos, comedy and tragedy, heaven and earth) (Coburn & Morrison, 2013). I wrote that in this light, clown could offer a mirror for holistic humanity as part of the ecological movement, neither saviour nor destroyer of the earth but rather a part of the earth with space and place therein for fallibility and flaws. If clowns "become through their bodies, they think

with their hearts and feet" (CIRCA, n.d.), I imagined that to move from clown "beingness" to empathy with other-than-human entities (animals, trees, wind, river, waves, spirit beings) through observation, instinctive response, and imitation could perhaps be an easy progression.

I wrote that clowning is the ultimate non-conformist "being-ness" and bursts what is "proper" to go to the heart and truth of a matter (Kury & Delisle, 1999; Bonange, 2000). I proposed that this kind of gentle rebellion could be key in courageous, strong, and joyous environmental/ecological perception and response in the years to come (Mallgreen, 2007). I wrote that clowning could offer tools of resilience, equanimity, internal power and a sense of both the sacred and the ridiculous in everyday life (Coburn & Morrison, 2013; Miller, 2006; Velasquez Angel, 2005; Geilen, n.d.). I proposed that to have long lasting effects, societal/environmental transformation must move in parallel with spiritual/emotional transformation (CIRCA, n.d.). I saw that clowning could nurture and balance the right (emotional, intuitive) brain with the more rational, analytical brain as we move from Industrial Growth Society to a life sustaining society (CIRCA, n.d.; Seeley, n.d.; Macy, 2006). As I was researching and writing, I was also talking to clowns in Montréal, Winnipeg, and Vancouver for ideas and inspiration. I handed in my proposal the following January and continued to play with terms with my boyfriend at the time. During one February walk in the botanical gardens, the name Natural Clowning popped into my head. To me the term was a way to distinguish birthday clowning or circus acts from the kind of clowning I wanted to explore – an art form that connects with all aspects of a person's nature, and a person as part of nature

In the second year of my doctorate, after my move to rural Nova Scotia and mid-way through an online course called Learning from Knowledge Keepers of Mi'kma'ki (Augustine & Consolo, 2016), I felt my research shift to a deeper investigation into land, into nature as a world view and land communication. Natasha Blanchet-Cohen and I decided amicably that my research was no longer a fit for her, and Karl Hele came on board. My comprehensive exams were then based on clown and fool, nature as a world view, and methodology. My central research question became:

1) *How do I come to know Natural Clowning?*

With subquestions that asked

2) *What have been my embodied experiences*

    a. *of Clown and Mask and other movement and feeling-based theatrical practices?*

    b. *Of land as a dynamic, relational, animate concept?*

3) *What can this teach me about my own ongoing psychological development? How is this impacted by my sociocultural identity, especially as a Euro-Canadian woman raised and living on Indigenous lands?*

4) *What are the implications for other Euro-Canadians in the realms of psychological wellness, identity, and connection to land in our current Canadian social, political, ecological, and spiritual context?*

Warm Up

October 4, 2018, Wilmot, NS

From my earliest memory, I wanted to be a storyteller. At age two, I would dictate stories of bicycle monsters and flower princesses to my father, who would dutifully write them down in a heart-patterned notebook. I learned to read at age four and sat down anyone I could wrangle to listen to me. In university, I began with what seemed like an employable plan to become a teacher of English as a Second Language only to fall head over heels in love with the poetry and literature of Latin America as the new major of my heart. When I continued to follow this tangent, I spent a semester in Costa Rica, fell in love with a fellow volunteer, and moved two years later to the roiling tropical jungles to live with him and his family. I remember one day when my fellow Costa Rican employee at a rafting company asked me, confused, why I was so… serious. I was immersed in a culture where dancing, joking, singing, laughing, and togetherness seemed to be as important as breathing. I began to ask myself the same thing. A few years back, I had participated in an afternoon clown workshop as part of a university theatre course and felt a week long high from the exuberant emotional expression and absurdity… but only in the safety of a nose behind closed doors. When I moved to Montréal six years later in 2008, I soon came upon a group that offered barefoot salsa classes. They mixed Theatre of the Oppressed, salsa dance, and a lot of clowny silliness, and I began to attend religiously.

From my earliest memory, I also wanted to be a healer. Throughout my childhood, I was determined to become a veterinarian until a "real life" one came to visit my grade six class with enormous horse worms in a bottle. As graduation from my undergraduate degree in Latin American Literature approached, I still held a deep yearning to be of service to the world. I decided to become a doctor like my physician parents. However, my body became more and more tense the more I forwarded this idea until the night I dreamed I was carrying large stacks of medical charts as my bus was about to leave. In the dream, I stood up tall and yelled, "I'm a student, not a doctor!" Instead, I spent a transition year working as an office assistant at a medical clinic. Chart preparation was one of my duties, and I was surprised and concerned to see the number of patients seeking support for anxiety and depression. Had this always been

the way? I remember writing all of the factors I had heard that contribute to depression on the back of a Smarties box one night. I looked at the list in my apartment on Princess Street in Victoria, feeling like there was more to the puzzle than what I knew. A few years later, from 2006-2008, I spent three joyful seasons as a food and herb gardener at a yoga center on a rural island. As the months passed, I found that the shackles of an anxiety disorder that had been with me since my early teens were softening, as was the sting of my recent divorce. I ate outside, slept in my tent in the big leaf maple forest, bathed in the cedar shower house, peed on the earth, and worked 30-40 hours outside with communities both human and other-than-human. I watched waves of volunteers and seekers, many from busy urban lives, pass through. Their time in the garden with me, the other garden yogis, and loving community seemed as healing as the yoga practices and philosophy. I decided to return to school to study psychology and found one of a handful of programs that explicitly included earth relationship and community relationship as core elements of wellness. I signed up for two prerequisite psychology courses at the closest university only to watch as my soul took me by the hand, withdrew me from the courses, and dragged my introverted self over to a community commedia dell'arte drama class. I played Il Dottore, the pompous, rich medical doctor, and to my surprise and delight, I was… *funny.*

The consistent backdrop for all of this was and has always been my deep love of the other-than-human world. As a settler of English heritage, this relationship was not explicitly part of my cultural and cosmological upbringing, but I did have parents and grandparents who loved the earth and introduced me to gardening, a rural lifestyle, and walks by the Athabasca River in Northern Alberta. When I look back on this element of my life, I see how I was spiraling deeper and deeper into my relationship with all my relations until the years that I was living and gardening at the yoga center. During this time, I also took an interest in the local tree species, particularly hawthorne. I learned later that its haws and leaves are a gentle heart tonic. When I asked my garden mentor, he told me there were none on the property. One day, on a plant walk in Burgoyne Bay, we approached a certain tree, and I felt an up swell in my heart. *I've been waiting for you,* I heard the tree say. Shocked, I looked around at the group. Everyone else was listening intently to the herbalist as she explained the medicinal benefits of the hawthorne tree.

The next day, I told my garden mentor what had happened as we picked dry beans for seed. He seemed unfazed. *Yup, that happens when you open to the earth energies.* As I went on in my plant work and study, I experienced other moments of deep listening and sentience from the plant and other earth beings. I began to learn about this tradition in my own cultural heritage and that of the cultures of this continent where my ancestors had arrived so many years ago. My convictions grew that a relationship with the other-than-human world was a mighty and non-negotiable factor in wellness.

As I look back over the trajectory of my life, I see that I was seeking an expansion of my sense of self into wholeness, a reclamation of parts relegated to the shadows and deemed unworthy. I felt sure that there was a deeper gift in anxiety, and that I could both honour and grow through a family history of addiction and depression into resilient emotional capacities. As well as engaging in settler psychological concepts and supports, I fed my inner child the archetypal images of poetry and stories. I immersed her in sensory experiences such as gardening, in body practices such as energy massage, dance, and song, and in creative expression through the myriad of artistic exploratory practices available in Montréal. I created a master's in community ecopsychology at Concordia where I helped to start a green alley project in Verdun. I sought elements that seemed to be parsed as separate from settler psychology and self-inquiry, namely land connection and communication and the archetypal role of clowns and tricksters (Bala, 2010; Kanner, Gomes, & Roszak, 1995). These concepts and practices, however, are common in earth-based cultures, including those of old England. I started this study with the theory that clowning could bring more compassion and levity to the world of environmental activism and the fears and anger I have heard in my experiences in primarily settler ecological circles. However, the study became more and more personalized as I went along. I came to believe that true societal change begins with individual healing, but not towards goals of self-determination (Rheault Bizhiw, 1999) or of happiness and perfection but rather continual growth and wholeness, particularly when practiced in community and in spirit (Cajete, 1994). Theatre, and art in general, had become for me an integral part of this impulse towards "psychological growth and integration" and because of this deep journey, I came to believe I could then play a role in supporting the integration and liberation of others (Favel, 2014, pg.

96). I learned about arts-based research and research-creation as process and emergence, as thought and creation, as risk, emotion and relation (Manning, 2015). The study brought me to places, both inside and outside me, that I never could have predicted in my original doctoral proposal. I have been blessed with a committee that supported these adjustments with encouragement and grace, as well as articulate suggestions and the occasional reining in when required. In a talk by Concordia dance and philosophy professor Erin Manning in 2014, she recommended making a research-creation doctoral research question "ten times smaller" than the initial idea. For this reason, I decided to make myself the object of study for this project. However, while the self is a separate, defined entity, it is also inextricably in relation. I think back to one of my advisor's comment that sweetgrass could be modifying me as I modify her, or my clown teacher's proposal that clowning with an audience is a mutually transformative, reciprocal experience. I have been the site of my research, and at the same time, I believe my story is also tied to my culture, my social circles, and my chosen place, and for this reason will be relevant to others in such conversations as nature as a world view, the ecology and psychology of place, Indigenous / settler relations, applied theatre, humour as a healer, the archetypal role of clowns, and child development.

This fall we have had three days of rain, rain, rain. After a dry, hot summer, it's surely welcome for the beings of the forest. I sit on the back porch of the little hunting cabin that has been my office for much of the writing of this dissertation. The sensitive ferns are golden brown, and the maple leaves are turning. A blue jay squawks in the bushes, and the oak leaves still shine resolutely green… they will be the last ones to fall. Although this prologue appears at the beginning of my dissertation, it is the last piece to write. I have loved this doctoral adventure into clowndom, attunement, place, and home. Although I carry the lessons with me, the next step beyond is not clear. I think of the clown journey: as different from a hero's journey of triumph, it is circular, one of destruction and creation (Bouissac, 2015; Zinga & Styres, 2011), in process and in relation (Gross, 2014) with great effort only to begin again once more (Bergson, 1911). So let's begin.

Backstage

Natural Clowning as Inquiry: A Research-Creation Study

Currently, the paradigms of academic research are opening to more varied and personalized interpretations (Four Arrows, 2008; Leggo, Bickel, & Walsh, 2015; McNiff, 1998). My particular interest in Natural Clowning, or land communication entwined with a particular approach to theatrical clowning, is a way to find out about the world. Natural Clowning as inquiry is research-creation, a kind of arts-based research and different from quantitative and qualitative research. While all methods aim to contribute to knowledge, quantitative methods take a positivist approach to research that is tangible and repeatable in controlled studies. Qualitative research seeks "common qualities of phenomena in order to achieve a deeper and contextualized understanding of them" (Pentassuglia, 2017, pg. 3) through methods such as interviews and coding. Arts-based research, on the other hand, includes "all practices that use artistic processes as a way of investigation and knowing" and is a research paradigm "where new forms and research methods appear."

Natural Clowning draws inspiration from the felt sense, co-creation, affect, and beauty. It asks what it means to "be in the room"[1] and/or be with the earth and engaged with all parts of self; these ways of being are innate to children and can be reclaimed as adults. I use the term Natural Clowning because it fits with the kind of clowning that interests me: an honest return to the natural self as was known in childhood. Natural Clowning also refers to land communication and our natural human ability to connect and dialogue with the earth. While I focus on research-creation in this chapter, I also drew on literature from performance ethnography and autoethnography, transpersonal research, and arts-based research, and was influenced and inspired by certain Indigenous research practices. At one point one of my advisors, Warren Linds, suggested that maybe one of the primary outcomes of this study was Natural Clowning as an embodied method of inquiry (see McNiff 2008; Four Arrows, 2008).

Coming to Natural Clowning as Inquiry

[1] John Turner, Clown and Mask teacher, Manitoulin Island, Ontario, July 2017

October 2013, Montréal, QC.

I am dreaming of clowns in a healing context; I am receiving words as if whispered into my ear in strange combinations: *clowning, theatre, environment; clowning, storytelling, nature*, with a growing feeling that I am being guided to explore this puzzle. I find my sage, pass the burning end around myself, and sit on my pillow[2]. I imagine entering a forest. The walk in my mind is a peaceful one, and at the end a feather falls with the word SPEAK. I feel baffled, perhaps hoping for something more concrete. Later I return to meditate, to the forest of my imagination, and ask again. My second message comes: SPEAK LOUDER!

As a Euro-Canadian settler living on Indigenous lands, involved in earth work, and slowly recovering my own earth-based cultural heritage, I began to receive guidance five years ago in the form of these night dreams and daydream messages. My doctoral journey is an exploration of these (at times mysterious) connections through research-creation. Research-creation, a kind of arts-based research, relies deeply on the researcher's capacities for creativity, intuition, and play (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012) and engages in three multidisciplinary activities: theorizing, artistic practice, and experiential research in an "emergent, experimental practice that cannot be predicted or determined in advance" (Springgay, n.d.). Stephanie Springgay offers six verb-based suggestions for engaging in research-creation:

1) *maintain* a future-driven orientation,

2) *adhere* to a cultural of affirmation[3],

3) *make* experiences that inspire emerging abstract ideas that unsettle and question in their complexity,

4) *improvise*,

5) *update* ethico-political concerns that arise from emerging abstract ideas, and

6) *engage* experiences and creations to propel further thought and create again, as different from representing or reporting.

Clowning, however, contradicts the first suggestion in its attendance to the here and now.

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2 I am thankful to my Auntie, Patricia Vickers, for suggesting this practice to me.

3 Erin Manning, Practice as Process course in research-creation at Concordia University, January 2015.

Shaun McNiff (1998) suggests that in arts-based research, each artist/researcher must find a practice or practices of inquiry that have personal resonance and meaning. Practice as the foundation and framework of the study gives focus and an ability to delete. He suggests beginning with a narrative account of how students choose their practices of inquiry and themes: how, what, why, where, and usefulness to others. *Clowning*, as one of my chosen practices, is relational research that intends both to see the other as animate, autonomous, and co-existing (Spry, 2016; Buber, 1996) as well as to know myself through my own body sense and imagination before words and actions (Bacon, 2006; Heron, 1999). I look particularly to the pedagogy and theatrical practice of Clown and Mask, a theatrical clowning genre that blends European clowning with certain North American Indigenous philosophies and some Jungian psychology. It helps to uncover and illuminate disenfranchised parts of self and humble other more power-hungry parts of self in our personal mythology to increase access of expression to all facets of a person's being. Richard Pochinko, the creator of Clown and Mask, is reported to have said that "if we ever faced all directions of ourselves at once we could only laugh at the beauty of our own ridiculousness" (Coburn & Morrison, 2013). Clown and Mask has as a fundamental practice an allowing, honest portrayal of the self in all of its cycles and manifestations (Coburn & Morrison, 2013) in a two-way dialogue that transforms (John Turner, class communication, July 2017). This kind of clowning is not a reflection of society "because a reflection bounces off. Clown is not about something bouncing off. It's about connection. It's about recognition. It's about something being shared" (Coburn & Morrison, 2013, p. 83). This connection or dialogue has nothing to do with being "likable" on stage. John Wright (2007) reports that really, we are all clowns but have spent most of our lives trying to hide under "intelligence, sensibility, sophistication, and social nicety" (p. 184). Clown and Mask teacher Sue Morrison (2013) suggests that in Clown and Mask performance,

> don't look to anyone for approval because that's giving your power away. If you want to please us, if you want us to like you, if you look to us for the answer, you give your power away. If you have the strength of character to stand as you are and deal with what is happening then you stand in your power. What I want you to do is to give way to your power. Sometimes it feels as though there'll be no end to a feeling but there is always an end. It can start again but it will always end. The route to the end is through, with, in accepting, going with what is happening. It is not in denial or refusal. And there is satisfaction in reaching the end. There is

> release and there must always be a release for transformation to happen. And clown is about transformation. You begin in one place and end up in another but that's a story, right? And how can an audience experience transformation if the clown doesn't understand that? (p. 93).

Clown and Mask offers an embodied method of inquiry to know multiple aspects of the self to then openly share self to the audience. Through a primarily non-verbal, highly physical artistic practice, always open to unexpected happenings on stage or in the surroundings, the practice of Clown and Mask dialogues with the audience and asks practitioners to develop their own emotional literacy and fluidity. Clowning as a practice of inquiry is driven by traditions of trickster stories. It sees the gifts in failure that prioritize relationships and presence before success (Salverson, 2008). Clowning offers the levity of humour, which Ardley (1967) describes as the ability "to pass through the world without succumbing to the prevailing mood of alternating agitation and hopelessness (Ardley, 1967, pg. 226), as a way of cultivating "playful serenity and lightness of heart" (p. 236). In clowning, I practice the flexibility of play with others (Schutzman, 2006) in dramatic realities (Schaefer, 2003).

Through the use of physicality over words, Clown and Mask clowns encourage audience members to relate via an emotional connection. Veronica Coburn and Sue Morrison (2013) define clowns as a unit of humanity who bear their humanity for the physical and metaphysical survival of the group. Today's clowns offer visions of survival through "emotional intelligence, psychological endurance, and spiritual wellbeing" (pg. 17). Daniel Goleman, in his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (1995), defines emotional intelligence as marked by four capacities.

The first is self awareness, which includes knowing one's own emotions.

The second is self-management, which includes acknowledging and learning from more challenging emotions and channeling enthusiastic emotions in alignment with our passions.

The third is empathy, or recognizing others' emotions.

The fourth is combining the first three capacities as social skills to negotiate relationships.

In light of our current mental health challenges in Canada (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2018) and the connections of emotional intelligence and psychological resilience to mental well being (Goleman, 1995; Snyder & Lopez, 2005), I agree with Veronica Coburn and Sue Morrison's (2013) claim of the power of clown vision for survival as mentioned above. It is interesting to note that Daniel Goleman's more recent work in emotional intelligence includes the other-than-human into the concept of relationships, as well as the two pillars of empathy and systems thinking for ecological intelligence (Goleman, Bennett, & Barlow, 2012).

Leading up to and during my doctorate, I experienced techniques of clowning which opened and moved me to a depth that shocked me: Clown and Mask with John Turner and Mike Kennard at the Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance, European clowning with Vivian Gladwell and Blondine Maurice of Nose to Nose, Elise Deguire with Caserne 18-30, and Sue Proctor and Nadia Cicurel at various Montréal locations. These experiences built upon my past experiences of energy healing work as well as upon acting classes, musical performance, a degree in Spanish poetry, and a lifelong devotion to story. In addition to a clown literature review, this culmination of image, emotion, relation, creativity, and humour confirmed for me the playful power of this art form. How then has clowning impacted my own personal inquiry, connection, and learning? How could it impact others?

Land communication as practice looks to world views of Indigenous cultures, including the old European ones of my ancestors and early Christianity. Recently theorized by Indigenous scholars of various nations (Geniusz, 2015; Geniusz, 2009; Sheridan & Longboat, 2006), it acknowledges the dynamic relational nature of the human and earth connection. It means direct communication with the earth (this includes elements, animals, plants, spirits of the land) through listening and perceiving through my senses, mind, and body as well as through my heart field (Buhner, 2004; Abram, 2010). Land communication asks me to receive the pain-speech of the earth, to differentiate between projection and plant communication through

diligent shadow work (see later in this chapter), to re-learn our childhood capacity of trust with "innate feelings and intuitions, our capacity for sacred experience" (Buhner, 2004, p. 53), and to make relationships with plants, just three or four, and how these plants are connected to all other beings and elements.

Vanessa Watts (2013), a Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe scholar, uses the term place-thought to speak of human and other-than-human agency that comes from land - to listen and then to act. I first discovered this reference at an outdoor education conference in Cape Breton and found myself tearing up. Place-thought gives me a feeling of humility and clarity. I had played with this practice during my time as a gardener at Salt Spring Center, and it may have been instrumental in opening me to land communications as my time there went on. In later times when I had felt stymied as to my best course of ecological action, I had forgotten to ask the land itself.

As part of my research, I experienced the literal grounding, presence, and compassion of land communication practices. On several occasions, it inspired relocation, in particular returning and returning to a piece of land that ignited my heart from the moment I heard the spring peepers sing. Although I did not understand the urges as land communication at the time, as the normalcy of this modality had been dropped from my Euro-Canadian cultural conditioning, Stephen Buhner (2004) writes that land communication is innate to the human capacity of heart field perception. Sometimes my perception and response of land speaking through me took the form of song creation and storybook writing. Later my conversation with land meant participatory learning with six others on a land-art project on 87 acres of forest, orchard, stream, and gardens[4]. During this time, I unexpectedly encountered old and buried aspects of myself that surfaced for healing (see chapter III.). Land communication included mentorship with Brian Mertins of the Tom Brown Wilderness school training (mixed lineage of Apache tracker Stalking Wolf, Euro-Americans Tom Brown and Jon Young, Iroquois sub-chief

[4] Horticulture is "gardeners tending the wild's diversity", as different to "farmers sweating in dominated monocultures" (Hemenway, 2015, n.p.). While I strive for the former rather than the latter, in Mi'kma'ki, they traditionally rejected farming. The Iroquois/Haudenosaunee saw/see proper land use as a mix of farming, hunting, and gathering, while for the Anishinaabeg it is "living in balance with the environment and respecting all animate and inanimate things, visible and invisible, natural and preternatural." Western-centric land use involves "shaping and manipulating the land to develop it according to the will of man." (K. Hele, personal communication, Feb. 24, 2017).

Jake Swamp, Euro-Kenya Ingwe raised by the Akamba tribe, and Gilbert Walking Bull, a Lakota holy man) and a daily outdoor sensory meditation. As well as a literature review on nature as a world view, these experiences confirmed my seventeen years of ecological work that have shown me the tender power of a sensory and attuned relationship with the earth. At the same time, my relation to land is complex: my cultural identity as historically oppressive (and, in some of my lineage, coming from oppression), my feet in Mi'kma'ki. What are the lessons still to be learned, again about my own movement towards wholeness, in this context? How could this be shared with other settlers during this current Canadian / Indigenous context of decolonization and reconciliation?

Tami Spry (2011) suggests that performance autoethnography is not persuasive but engages "in collective meaning-making with the audience" (p. 126). She calls the act of reflection and connection of my story to my wider sociocultural (and perhaps, I would add, ecological) nexus a strengthening act to allow me to perform from an honest and whole place; this process is a vehicle to liberate self and others. Julie Salverson (1994, 2001) makes the suggestion that if I, as a white person, can use theatre to understand my identity, fears, issues, and desires, both through my body and through structural and institutional analysis, I am better able to free myself from power entanglements as well as act more authentically in solidarity. Augusto Boal (1995) proposes that the intention, and part of the therapeutics, of theatre is to expand from individual stories to the general, from the mind to the body and soul. The aesthetic space is what we can perceive with the senses and stimulates learning by experience. As children of the invaders, says a healer I know, white people are learning to be with our bodies, our emotions, unlearning the oppressor patterns towards more interconnection and affective expression. Through listening, responding, playing, moving, crying, and laughing, what have I learned about myself and all my relations along the way?

Arts-Based Research, Research-Creation, and Natural Clowning

Arts-based Research: A Category of its Own
November 2015, Fall River, NS

I'm in a tracking session with my nature mentor. It's a bright fall day in a forest of spruce, balsam fir, tamarack, maple, oak. Bunchberry, goldenthread underfoot. He's encouraged me to feel my senses expanding out in all directions, how far my ears can hear, the feeling of moisture in my nose. We've just identified a squirrel nut-hiding cache, and now we're on our knees poking at a small piece of what we think is coyote scat at the base of a hemlock tree. Somehow this scrabbling on knees, face near the dirt, and the close examination of what the coyote has left behind is pure heaven to me.

"Let's keep following this deer trail," he suggests. He's walking ahead of me. The trail is a faint indentation in the forest floor with occasional piles of deer scat or hoof prints that scuff up the moss – kind of easy to lose if you aren't paying attention.

"Ok, now it's your turn," he says.

I start walking downhill along what is my best guess of the trail. At one point I look up and don't see a visible path in the ground. I stop and look around, uncertain as to the location of the main trail. I feel my muscles tense again, my heart beating a little faster. I don't know where I'm going, and the sun is setting. I turn around, reassured by Brian's presence behind me.

"It's a vulnerable feeling sometimes, this work," I say to him under the hemlocks. "Wandering without a specific goal."

I have often felt vulnerable in this research process, on a path that seemed faintly etched with vague intuition as to the next step, or sometimes without any visible path at all. Yet this has been an integral part of the journey. Francisco Varela's (1992) work on self-organization and enaction uses lines from a poem by Spanish poet Antonio Machado (1999) to illustrate this: *caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar*[5]. Shaun McNiff (1998) in his primer on arts-based research writes that investigators must master three tasks:

One, to embrace qualities inherent in artistic knowing: mystery, faith, emotional precariousness, open-endedness, transformation, and to accept these differences from scientific knowing.

[5] Pilgrim, there is no path; we make the path by walking (own translation).

Two, to cultivate curiosity as to which research practices and questions might richly reflect the artistic experience. A clear and structured framework of practice gives focus to a study and supports the ability to edit; practice of inquiry may in fact be a primary research finding (McNiff, 2008). Arts-based research differs in not the style of inquiry used "but the disposition" (Norris, Fels, and Kandil, p. 97), the willingness to take risk, to fail, to play, and to surrender. A willingness to breathe through ambiguity in open spaces, vulnerability, breaking, and remaking. They encourage arts-based researchers to keep up to date with current arts-based research developments that can bring in new perspectives to existing known forms. It is a form of research that can powerfully show, although sometimes uses telling to consolidate and explain, with as much or more focus on process as on product. They write that "being present takes getting used to" (p. 99).

As I wrote earlier, arts-based research, particularly dance, movement, and performance, involves a conscious shift from speaking of "the" body to *my* body's ongoing experience in response to the world. Patricia Leavy (2015) gives the example of dance as a traditional subject of inquiry. However, dance is also a "methodological device" (p. 185), a data collection practice, and a representational form. The purpose is discovery, "a way of adding depth to our understanding of a particular subject" (p. 185) as well as to "the public-private dialectic" (p. 185), since dance connects to the felt sense in a specific environment. Arts-based research slows me enough to listen and lend trust to my body as a wise and reliable source of wisdom. Dance, movement, and other research practices that respect communications from my body "allow for a deep authentic voice within to emerge" (Snowber, 2012). Therefore I generally refer to my body rather than other more generalized options: the body, one's body, our bodies, etc, in this dissertation. Similarly, in Susan Stinson's (2004) research, she sees her body as "a microcosm of the world" (p. 160) and that while researching abstract concepts, she "had to find my framework in my own body" (p. 161) in order for her to form a deep knowing.

Finally, after attention to the process of artistic knowing combined with a practice of craft to determine practice, task three is to then evaluate the relevancy of other conventional

research practices of inquiry. There may be ways to layer empirical data with introspective, subjective data.

Artist-researchers develop both diverse research capacities and an ongoing artistic practice (Four Arrows, 2008). Value in arts-based research comes from "an overriding commitment to inquiries which are useful to others" (McNiff, 1998, p. 60). John Law (2004), in his book *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research,* proposes additional ways to think, practice, relate, and know "the ephemeral, the indefinite, and the irregular" (p. 4): embodiment, emotionality, "deliberate imprecision" (p. 3), "situated inquiry", and relations with what we know. His concern is the often Euro-American "normativities" attached to standard practicess after a century of social science which assumes the world as structured and predictable. Complexities "necessarily exceed our capacity to know" (p. 6). He imagines practices of inquiry with fewer guarantees and more generosity and quiet. He writes that in opening up what is accepted as research, artist-researchers can look to the particular: "particular conclusions in particular locations for particular studies" (p. 154) and to connection between disciplines. Artist-researchers can assess aesthetic determinates by cultivating a personal trust of subjectivity and by recording audience responses (Four Arrows, 2008; Knowles & Promislow, 2008). As an arts-based researcher, I can question the relevance and resonance of a study and track the insights and learning that arises (L. Fels, April 16, 2016).Jane Bacon (2005), through her take on performance autoethnography, emphasizes the therapeutic liberation of the self and a curious conversation between outcome and accepted theory/practice as additional ways to validate a study. For her, performance autoethnography can express itself in writing, speaking, singing, or performing. In this way, I see my choice of writing style in this dissertation as an extension of performance autoethnography, as well as life writing, which draws stories from our individual lives to imagine forward into the open road ahead, into "hope and seeking health" (Leggo, 2000, p. 1) and poetic inquiry, or use of language to evoke meaning, emotion, and nuances of humanity (Vincent, 2018).

As I am a living system, as are the humans and other-than-humans around me, arts-based research is also organic: fluid, flexible, and interconnected (Koch & Fischman, 2011).

Sean Park and Shahar Rabi (2015) say that this kind of artistic inquiry works at our edges, connects us to our core, opens us to feel strong emotions, allows us to examine judgments and personal boundaries, and cultivates the ability to express and connect. They write that the mindful play of arts-based research

> helps us recognize how we cover up our distress, shut down our own vulnerability in shame, and reenact this on others. Play encourages us to work with the energy and emotion to which we may have limited access and sometimes have trouble allowing ourselves to feel fully (n.p.)

Arts-based research also means a deeper trust in my own steps, intuitions, and voice as to what is truly most engaging and meaningful for me in body, mind, heart, and spirit along this research journey. It means trust in this faint forest research trail I willingly entered, that my curiosity, playfulness, and love for my topic will bring me not to a dead end but to wellness, abundance, and service. I remember that the gift in shame is humility, humus, of the earth; it points us to our simple humanity (Vickers, 2017) and perhaps, creative capacity.

Back in Fall River, when my nature mentor Brian Mertins asks me what it is about the vulnerable feeling as we are tracking amongst the hemlocks, I say half-jokingly that I worry about getting lost and dying.

"So you're anticipating," he suggests. "What if you knew you wouldn't get lost."

"I'd… feel like what I'm doing is pointless, just the pleasure and enjoyment of exploring, adventuring, discovering."

"Which does have a point," he says, pointedly.

Research-Creation: Emergence as Different from Plan

> A maze is designed to trip you up and trick you into dead ends. A labyrinth has a path, and once you choose to start on the path it will take you where you need to go. (Weigler, 2015, pg. 38)

May 2014, Halifax, NS.

When my farmer friend picks me up to take me to Tegridy for the first time, the land that will later become my home and literal learning ground, a rope-strung labyrinth in a community garden presents itself to us on the way to the car. It is casually built with rope and leaning

stakes and an old Persian carpet flopped onto the grass underneath, not like others I have seen made of stone or shrubs. Although I am a little bleary eyed after an all-night bus ride from Montréal, and he has worked a busy market day, we agree to enter. When I have walked other labyrinths in the past alone or as part of spiritual retreats, it was with solemn feelings or even anxiety. Although the context is surely influential, this time feels relaxed, just-for-the-fun-of-it, and the joke's on us. Amble amble we walk along, until we reach the heart of this whimsical magic carpet ride. My friend and I look at each other; he pauses and lifts the rope to duck out. I follow, and we continue our journey to the car.

I began my studies with the view of research as more of a straight-line race with a defined end-goal. My father is a retired quarter-century emergency room physician: move fast and do it right, or you might lose one. My mother is a family doctor: fifteen minutes in the medical system to move through all layers of a person to figure it out, objectively and right quick. (Don't forget to leave time for charting.) The linear model of study can serve well in qualitative or quantitative studies. However, in research-creation, Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuck (2012) encourage artist-investigators to playfully and creatively engage in their topic to find the right process for the question and an "enthusiasm of practice" (p. 10). It challenges argumentative, logical, and scientific academic models of knowing. To stand up to peer review, and ask how the project contributes to knowledge, they write that we can ask how deeply a project intervenes or influences. To do this rigourously, we can give great detail and attention to the process of the research and offer transparency rather than focus on end deliverables. Criteria include traditional markers such as socio-cultural-enviro-economic benefits, clear questions, and theoretical contexts as well as newer categories of aesthetics, audience role/impact, and creative dissemination. Acknowledging and investigating personal "choices, style, training, influences, collaborators" also brings rigour. Researchers work and play with persistent and complex questions "through personal, spiritual, and theoretical engagement and a messy grappling" (Four Arrows, 2008, p. 87). Shaun McNiff (2008) explains that arts-based research starts with questions, allows practices to emerge from a research situation, and encourages an open mind throughout the process. Rather than standard steps, a researcher

undertakes an "immersion in the uncertainties of experience", uncovers a personally meaningful way to conduct the research, and moves through the mystery of the exploration process until there is an "emergence of understanding" (p. 15). Rather than coding, it requires

> open-ended interplay amongst different areas of knowledge with the researcher returning again and again to the images and the process of expression as the foundation of inquiry (p. 47).

This complex dance sometimes felt like a lot to hold. Perhaps the irony was my (conditioned?) response to attempt to hold onto process. The wind, the sun, and the soil come together and create in their own rhythm.

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines process as progress; something going on, a preceeding; a natural phenomenon marked by gradual changes that lead toward a particular result; a continuing natural or biological activity or function; a series of actions or operations conducing to an end.[6] Process as an unfolding journey feels both active and receptive, patient and passionate, engaged and restful, like a heart emptying and filling with blood. A "faith-full" attitude about a body/mind/heart/spirit, personal-cultural, interactive approach to knowing "means I try not to codify, fix or label but to wait to see what comes, or how that feels" (Bacon, 2005, p. 223). Jane Bacon writes that if I notice and listen to my body, we "often find new ways of saying something about our experiences in the world" (p. 225) which can help to explain "the creative unknown'". Periods of incubation (Hunter, Lusardi, Zucker, Jacelon, & Chandler, 2002) and slowing and quieting practices for the bodymind (Anderson & Braud, 2011) help connections and insights surface from the unconscious and help researchers to persevere and relax while learnings congeal in their own time. I took periodic weeks off to do creative work unrelated to the doctorate and kept up a yoga, running, and walking practice and found I returned fresh to my thinking. Sometimes the creation in my doctorate served as incubation for the thinking and vice versa.

Both authentic, creative artistic work and research are alight in their liberatory potential and frightening in the shuffle-feeling-forward in the disorientation of darkness and through blocks of uncomfortable emotions (Laird, 2001). Erin Manning (2015) envisions research-

[6] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/process

creation as thinking and making, engagement in relationships, the felt sense, emotions, and risk. These practices of inquiry might lead nowhere; however, the journey values feelings and desires and their expansive, healthful, enlivened expression (McCarthy, 2007). A curious approach to what arrives can help intuitive researchers connect to learnings and information. I remember a phone conversation I had with Clown and Mask teacher Jan Henderson[7] when I first began my doctorate, lamenting a clown turn (performance) that had, in my view, flopped.

"It just didn't go the way you thought it would!" she said. A clown doesn't care, she reminded me. She's just living and playing her own game.

Research-creation will always lead *somewhere,* it seems – at the least, I would hope, back to my very own heart and center. A healer I know once remarked that to walk the labyrinth of a life challenge does not necessarily render a pot of gold at the end (although in this case, it would be nice); rather, I gain the experience of sitting with the earth and with myself in difficult moments, the self-trust that comes from a journey completed, and hey, maybe a t-shirt, *I walked the labyrinth of 2017*.

"And then for the next time," she says, "you won't feel so scared."

While moving through the labyrinth of this research, I would notice a spike of excitement in my heart, a low clear feeling in my belly, a leaning in, a feeling of my antennae perking up. Maybe research-creation is a wandering[8] with and unveiling[9] the self. Joseph Campbell (2004) calls this process of feeling our way forward in the dark the only pathway to bliss, or our most truthful present way of engagement, "what you absolutely must to do to be yourself" (xxiii). If I see my investigative journey as more of a labyrinth, there is time to dead end, circle back, feel the sun, feel my steps, lend empathy to my fearful parts, drop back into experience to stop, circle back, feel the sun... and then duck out like a good clown if I've had enough for the day.

Influences on Natural Clowning as Inquiry

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7 October 2014

8 etymology of search http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=search

9 etymology of discover http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=discover

Affect

After two years of creating with clown trainings and mini performances in low-stakes contexts and a year of playing with land in Nova Scotia, I discovered Jane Bacon's article, "It Ain't What You Do, It's the Way You Do It" and her use of the term *felt sense.* She writes that the felt sense, or "the sensation that comes in the body in relation to a particular experience" (p. 225) is a way to both "use myself as a source for the creative process" (p. 224) and explain the creative unknown. In another article, "The Feeling of the Experience: A Methodology for Performance Ethnography" (Bacon, 2006), she writes that the "aha, yes, that's right" (p. 140) sensation of discovery can be a bodily source of selection and representation of data. The felt sense is most easily accessed through the physical (Koch & Fischman, 2011; Barker, 1977) and communicates through a subjective, emotional language. The felt sense gives other avenues to expression and response beyond spoken communication, such as metacommunication and body language that signals ongoing dialogue in the form of play (Bateson, 1976; Nachmanovitch, 1990). In my energy work training, I practiced extensively to access and listen to my felt sense and to support others to do the same. I was pleased and encouraged to find a frame that uses the felt sense in academic inquiry.

For Jane Bacon (2005), the felt sense includes what we feel even before we can name it. In a later article, she references the International Focusing Institute (2017) that outlines the procedure of developing the felt sense: 1) clearing mental space, 2) noticing a moment of felt sense, 3) finding a handle word to articulate the quality, 4) resonating, or going back and forth between the felt sense and the handle, 5) asking, for example, "what is in *this* sense", until there is a subtle body release, and 6) receiving, or welcoming any new insights that come with the shift (2006, n.p.). The Institute emphasizes that any time sensing and touching an "unclear holistic body sense of the problem" (n.p.) is a connection with the felt sense. Nathalie Depraz, Francisco Varela, and Pierre Vermersch (2003) expand on this work to include an intersubjective phase – expressing and validating, and a temporal one– the preliminary and after effects of an intuitive act as well as the longitudinal process of becoming aware. In November 2016, I discovered Karla McLaren (2010)'s book, *The Language of Emotions: What Your Feelings are*

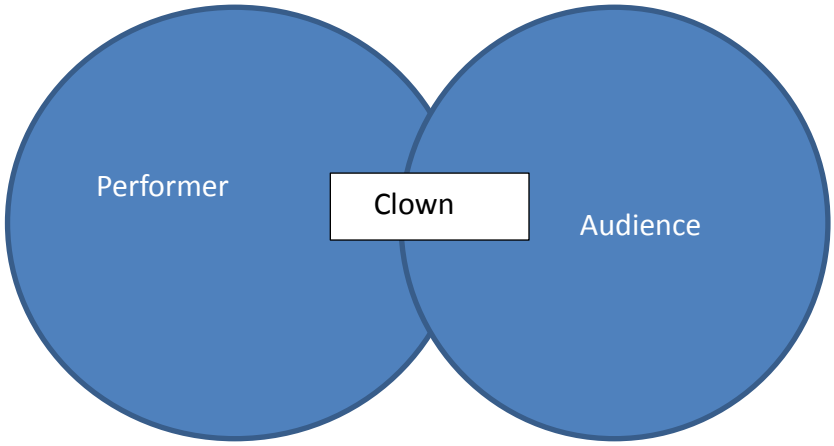
Trying to Tell You, which has helped me immensely in my clowning practice of navigating emotions (Jara, 2004). Her process is similar to that of the Focusing Institute: clearing a space, setting a psychic boundary, identifying an emotion, asking specific questions which decode the needs behind the emotion, channeling it into my psychic boundary, and releasing through a rejuvenating practice.

Nature and my body speak, although they bear "no claim to truth, originating from nothing but the genius of the speaker" (Carse, 1986, p. 108). Erin Manning (2015) reminds me that "non-linguistic practices are forms of knowledge in their own right" (p. 66); the investigation then becomes the *way* I co-create knowledge with all that is around me. As the medieval definition of art is "a way", she proposes that this means "it is not yet about an object, about a form, or content" (p. 53). Similarly, research-creation "is not about objects. It is a mode of activity that is at its most interesting when it is constitutive of new processes" (p. 54). Like grape stomping to make wine, here

> the process is directly felt, if not quite understood in its minutiae, and to push the image further, will no doubt leave stains. Reading or making are messy, as uneasy-making, as exciting as pounding the grapes, provided that we take this situatedness seriously, for it is in the midst of the field of relations they call forth that practices are at their most inventive, at their most intense. This is also, of course, the place of risk (p. 63).

Performative inquiry suggests that our bodies and our lives offer meaningful information (Leggo, Bickel, & Walsh, 2015); it asks us to feel and be with many things, including the mysterious and the emerging, what disturbs and frightens us, what inspires us. Lynn Fels (2012) explains that performative inquiry "does not offer a method but rather a way of being in embodied inquiry with others through the arts… through dialogue, reflection, new choice of action, further inquiry, and creative inquiry" (p. 55). This kind of writing works when readers respond. Embodied performance is a way of knowing, framing, understanding; my body shares cognitive, emotional, and intuitive information during a performance (Pelias, 2008). Peter O' Connor and Michael Anderson (2015) say that arts-based research, the researcher's body is her primary practice for discovery, understanding, and representation. My empathic body

communicates and listens with all my relations. In *Clown Through Mask: The Pioneering Work of Richard Pochinko as Practiced by Sue Morrison*, Sue Morrison (2013) references Richard Pochinko's clown Venn diagram to explain that



> the conversation between performer and audience happens where these two circles overlap and the first thing that must happen for the conversation to commence is the performer must see the audience. Actually see them…And when these two points of connection, when these two channels, are open and live, when the clown and the audience see each other and can affect each other, then conversation, Clown Conversation, can occur (p. 83).

In *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices* (2012), editors Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason write that kinesthetic empathy and intersubjectivity can be seen as political practices as we become more connected and more complex as a global society. Empathy and relationality could support intuitive and spontaneous self-organizing in people and in art as we evolve. They write that "we are never whole and final as subjects but always porous, through kinesthetic empathy, to the impact and implications of other subjective expressions around us" (p. 13). The authors point out that practices of empathy must be done with "negotiation across difference, respecting otherness, rather than eliding the other in the self-same" (p. 19). If through my body, I propose feeling and freeing alternatives (Reynolds & Reason, 2012), it seems that the first task then in the inquiry practice of Natural Clowning is to know and free my own body, so that I am conscious of the information I am sharing.

I have applied both an opening to the felt sense and Karla McLaren's emotional navigation in "stop moments," a concept that originates with David Appelbaum (1995) and that Lynn Fels (2012) expands as a tug on the sleeve, as if the child we are now is calling us fully into the room. I experience stop moments as pedagogical openings to positive risk and opportunity that I feel in my body-mind and heart and that ask me to respond in a fresh and new way through choice. Francisco Varela (1992) writes that moments of breakdowns give rise to emergence and show autonomy "of a cognitive agent" (p. 52) "as a purposeful and integrated whole, without the need for central supervision" (p. 52). I notice that in moments when I sense something with my heart-consciousness (Buhner, 2004), which often appears as numinous body feelings, I will still go to my mind's reason to "figure it out". This often leads to frustration and a looping, dead-end kind of mind-thought. When I take the time to drop into my body and apply the practice, a surprising clarity or release can come. In these stop moments when my body feels something new, how do I respond? What new responses do I create?

Effect to Beauty

In his book *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect (2011),* James Thompson proposes that while a focus on interpretation and meaning might bring more awareness of problems or knowledge, it is affect that can bring people together in a playful egalitarian capacity or in a new way to relate to pain or grief. In the academy, opening to practices of affect as inquiry will ask "a broadening of artistic practice but also requires a debate about how to register bodily response to material presence in writing and teaching" (p. 181). *Affect* is an egalitarian "mesh of felt responses" (p. 130) when experiencing beauty; it moves from solutions and interpretations to locate consciousness "in gestures and sounds" (p. 131). He writes that we can never really know the impact an artistic work can offer in the moment, "but we will always feel the affect that propels people's engagement with the artistic process and will in turn ripple through our body" (p. 134). He defines affect as "the bodily sensation that is sustained and provoked particularly by aesthetic experiences"; in community theatre, beauty is *strong affect* coupled with *interconnection*. Beauty can

> articulate a place where the actual work of social change is bound up in how we create, who creates, and when we create art. Dancing, and other forms of aesthetic expressions may be places of respite, but… they are also integral and necessary parts of change itself… acts of resistance and redistribution made in an intimate and sensory key (p. 11).

It has been my experience that acts of beauty can offer the emotional release required for transformation mentioned by Veronica Coburn and Sue Morrison (2013), cited earlier. Beauty inspires replication, comes from the particular, and increases connection to a world wider than oneself (Scarry, 1999; Dolan, 2006). Beauty looks beyond the dichotomy of shame or reassurance and instead asks "respect and response" (Spry, 2016, p. 124).

An academic acceptance of a shift "from effect to affect" (Thompson, 2011, p. 181), or the non-interpretive, asks an expansion of artistic skills and conversations about a rigorous practice of the felt sense. I would like to further imagine a shift from effect to beauty. If beauty is strong affect dancing with interconnection, this, it seems, also asks for conversations about relationality. James Thompson (2011) suggests that affect in theatre, or feelings, aesthetics, and sensory engagement, opens us to the archetypal realms of imagination, interconnection, and both/and possibilities. It calms the need for understanding or so-called certainty. While the settler concept of imagination is a separate, people-centered "quality of mind" (p. 365), in Haudenosaunee/Mohawk tradition, imagination is a rich spiritual and intellectual connection between people, clans, and land, a "living communication within a sentient landscape" (Sheridan & Longboat, 2006, p. 369). An ecological imagination perceives the stories told by the land; it can "integrate nature's realities and ensure the perpetuation of those realities and so all of life" (p. 369). Without connection with land, imagination can wreak havoc; it "neglects the salmon's mythological lesson of the journey to become Grizzly, mountain rain, and finally Douglas Fir" (p. 371). Cree scholar Shaun Wilson (2009) shares that in Indigenous ontology, it is not about the thing, for example, naming and defining the thing, but rather the relationships that connect to the thing.

I notice this impulse in myself often to want to "know" or "imagine" with my mind the effect of my choices and my actions: where my research is going, if I'll return to the farm next spring after a break at a quieter spot this winter, how my latest love story will unfold. Trying to

predict my life has equated to many nights of fretting for a wanderer whose home is, in a broad and big-picture sense, the open road, the living day, the voyage, and the journeying itself[10] and all the richness and complexity this entails. James Carse (1986) writes that

> in infinite play one chooses to be mortal inasmuch as one always plays dramatically, that is, toward the open, toward the horizon, toward surprise, where nothing can be scripted. It is a kind of play that requires complete vulnerability. To the degree that one is protected against the future, one has established a boundary and no longer plays with but against others (pg. 25).

Through an orientation of the heart (Wheatley, 2009), I can turn my focus and flow from outcome to relationship and (at least the intention of!) enjoyment in the present (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). It seems that an ontology that is relational asks me to feel and appreciate my new writing group with three fabulous women in Wolfville and the satisfaction I feel in pulling together the threads of readings into this essay on a fresh snowfall day. Love for my friends at the Rock Shop who served me moose meat soup for lunch and the soft *yankyankyank* of white breasted nuthatches in the woodland back forty, curiosity and gratitude for a romantic getaway in Cape Breton last week and the shaky and effervescent feeling of growth as I open to new patterns of response and rest. Effectively beautiful happenings unfurling inside and around me.

Co-creation

> It finally dawned on me that white people cannot see two of anything without immediately assuming that one of them must be the deadly enemy of the other… it is in profound conflict with the cooperative binaries of North American culture (Mann, 2008, p. 42).

I find this quote funny, as I recognize this tendency in myself. Yet in mock battles in old Celtic tradition, the opposing side/demon/fire breathing dragon is resurrected afterwards, as "the older spirituality honored the dark as a necessary player in the drama of creation" (Cowan, 1993, p. 61). It seems that paradigms of dualities typify a later kind of Christian cosmology (MacEowen, 2007). Somewhere, the co-creative dance also breathes in my own cells. In

[10] Basho. http://www.bopsecrets.org/gateway/passages/basho-oku.htm

Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods, Shaun Wilson (2009) explains that in an Indigenous world view and research paradigm, "there is no one definite reality but rather, different sets of relationships that make up an Indigenous ontology. Therefore, reality is not an object but a process of relationships" (p. 73). Thomas King (2008), in his article on the art of Indigenous knowledge, writes that co-creation finds way to imagine the world more as whole and in co-operation and less in oppositions. Yet even inside me I feel different parts and pieces in argument, sometimes not even on speaking terms! Have I internalized an external cultural point of view? Would an internal process of unification impact my external world view and vice versa? If so, what are some paths to connect these schisms?

It seems that world view that imagines life in co-creation is made possible through several practices. Buddhist Chogyam Trungpa (1973) suggests that a *sense of humour* gives the perspective to see both sides of a situation and shows the absurdity of clinging to one reality (see also this dissertation's section on humour in chapter IV). In their dance/movement therapy article, Sabine Koch and Diana Fischman (2011) write that an *embodied approach*, from a cognitive sciences background, deals with individual cognition/feeling as beginning from our body/senses and replaces the computer model of the mind. (See chapters III and V). Embodied perspectives bring together dual concepts, or "opposite dimensions of the human experience which strive for complementarity" (p. 65) in play, which in turn offers "creative, unexpected resolutions" (p. 66). A paradigm of *wholeness* (see later in this chapter) also lends itself to life as co-creation. A clowning view of reality evades any semblances of control of other and releases me into presence and improvisation with the players and pieces at hand (Nachmanovitch, 1990). Mady Schutzman (2006) writes about *playfulness* as co-creative. She references Augusto Boal's use of the joker figure in his Theatre of the Oppressed work, that "instead of being stuck on a resolution of contradictions, jokers are bent on a playfulness amongst the irresolute" (p. 22) as "an alternative approach to oppositional politics" (p. 3). (See chapter IV).

A part of me, raised non-Indigenous in predominantly white schools and cultural milieux, with wonderful doctor parents, teacher and lawyer aunts and uncles, and engineer grandparents, yearns for the safety-illusion of a nice packaged object or subject to hold in my

hand and tuck away in my pocket. Done. Yet the slippery thing keeps changing, shifting, dancing, won't stay still, stay put. Opening to the numinous nature of multiple meanings, grounded in the concreteness of relationships, has been more of a retraining of my mind. Another part of me, perhaps my spirit and heart, raised under open prairie skies, with friends embodying many varieties of humanity, with artistic parents, siblings, and relatives, is already on board. Brayant Alexander (2005) calls performance ethnography a "dialectical theatre" (p. 420) that observes and connects to the vast possibilities of the human condition, and it seems to me, the vast possibilities inside myself.

Jayne Pitard (2017) calls the dialectical process the ability to move between apparent paradoxes while negotiating subjective truth with an articulation of context. These puzzles, writes David Johnson, tell me I am close to Source "which presumably lies within each of us, within the universe, and therefore out of which everything has come" (n.d., pg. 4). They are designed to crack the mind and open the heart (Beck, 2012). Rather than resolve contrasting energies, control them, or parse them (Ardley, 1967), co-creation as eternal movement and change (or play) might ultimately soften my relationship to the "mutual and incessant modification" of life (Turner, 1982, p. 108). Kinesthetic consciousness (use of the felt sense, perception with the heart, cultivation of pure attention) is often different from articulation and expression through words. In this inquiry, what are the feelings in my body? What is its impulse? What are my senses telling me in this moment? What is happening with the people, the beings, the weather around me?

The Heart of Natural Clowning as Inquiry

Being in the Room[11]

In my years of earth work and activism, I still find myself in the thinking trap of how to get "them" to change "their" behavior, contrary to my ideals and feelings of what I "know" is right. John Wright (2007) quotes Jacques Lecoq when he says that clowns cannot be political because they do not have foresight and are more likely to play with a police officer's uniform.

[11] John Turner, Clown and Mask teacher, Manitoulin Island, Ontario, July 2017

However, my clown teacher John Turner points out that from his perspective, clowns as artists can do anything. Furthermore, he references various Indigenous cultural clowning traditions where clowns act to keep political leaders in check (personal communication, February 2019). Yet, I return back to something we discussed in class, that what matters to clowns is connection with the audience, a two-way conversation where neither side is in control that in itself is transformative (class communication, John Turner, 2017) (see chapter V). I ask myself if being in the room is in itself political. In *Teatro de la Caricia,* Facundo Ponce de León (2009) quotes clown Daniele Finzi Pasca:

> Un clown es un actor especializado en danzar en el proscenio, en la plaza, o en la pista del circo donde, por la naturaleza del espacio mismo, se necesita de ser, no de interpretar. Es un espacio presente, real; es el espacio donde la realidad y el sueño conviven et se mezcla (p. 15).[12]

Rather than seeking a revolution or ideal world outside myself and in the future, clowning as inquiry extends the invitation that the ideal world is right now, a kaleidoscope in my body in dialogue with all that surrounds me.

Part of me accepts this invitation to be in the room (or in the forest, park, garden, river, lake…). Another part of me resists. I have come away from nineteen inspiring and exhausting months participating in an ambitious land, art, and educational project with a changing group of others. I hear the peeved voice inside me – *so this whole time all I had to do was BE?* Most of the exhaustion came from fear, worry, attempts to control through ineffective "traffic directing" or frustrated pushing, wishing the cold were warmer, wishing the snow were lighter or the fire self-stoking, or that everyone would just damn well do what I wanted them to. The times that felt most joyful were filled with play and surrender to all that was flowing around me, with trust in our collective ability to cope with whatever might come in the future. The times that felt most powerful and connected were when I let down my guard and expressed how I was really feeling, what I really wanted and needed, without expectation of the outcome. Today when I think of those days spent in co-creation I ask myself, how deeply did I feel and how fully did I

[12] A clown is a specialized actor who dances in the proscenium, in the town square, or in the circus ring where, because of the nature of the space itself, what is needed is being, not interpreting. It is a present space, a truthful space; it is the space where reality and dreams live and dance together. (own translation).

live my heart's desire? I feel my body melt and a sweet pain in my heart. Yes, and yes, I did, and I did. I might add, from a clown perspective, how much did I play? Maybe not that much, thinking that the seeming oppositional dynamics of responsibility and play could not co-exist.

In Clown and Mask, the first training activity is to make contact: come out, stand on stage, open to the audience. What is here? Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) proposes that one precursor to flow in life is the ability to find enjoyment in the present rather than excess focus on outcomes. We can either strive to align external conditions with our own intentions or change "how we experience external conditions to make them fit our goals better" (p. 43). It is a "holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement" (p. 117), in spontaneous creativity. Francisco Varela (1992) talks about an already-complete journey in a world in the making, "with no warfare between self and other" (p. 62). Heather Marie Annis (2013) writes that clowning embraces beingness in all its fullness, with a need to

> allow this life to unfold on its own terms. Life is always changing and evolving, so clown must do the same, since it exists in direct relation to life…the clown relocates the idea of utopia from existing in the future to existing within ourselves, and in the present. The clown does not strive for something outside and beyond but is capable of finding all the answers and emotions within the self because clowns know how to access them and express them (p. 32).

I love this last quote, yet I so often look up and beyond myself, old habit of "anything but" a drop down into the messy churnings of my emotions and the words that can then come cleanly and unbidden. "Anything but" a willing transgression or subversion (Boal, 1995), not just outside myself as is often viewed as a purpose of clowning but also within the accepted and safe confines of my own psyche. In this practice and research, and particularly in the play space of dramatic reality, how do I surrender to *all* these emotions and the messages they contain?

Welcoming the Shadow

> The often scatological humour and sheer playfulness of North American discourse – and particularly the sacred clowning that deflates pomposity - is something else that Europeans and their descendants shaking disapproving fingers at (Mann, 2008, p. 42).

It is often said that clowns love being in the shit. In 2013, shortly after my dreams and "audio suggestions" of clowns began to trickle into my consciousness, I went to a small community in Lilloet territory in British Columbia on work exchange for a month. I found Tomson Highway's (1992) *The Rez Sisters* in the trailer I shared with a Kiwi from New Zealand and the occasional community member who travelled for work. I was fascinated by Highway's description of the trickster archetype in Cree culture as an important a figure as Jesus in Christianity. As someone raised mildly Protestant, my principal image of Jesus was the man nailed to a cross, although Joseph Martin (1990) includes him as a historical fool/sacred clown figure. I had only a scant inkling of Celtic and Germanic trickster traditions. It deeply impacted my inquiry to imagine a central cultural guiding figure as playful and whole. Clown and Mask teacher Sue Morrison and her co-writer Veronica Coburn (2013) write that wholeness has compassion for all parts of existence, as different to wholesomeness which places judgment on what is bad and good. In this clowning tradition, "opposites complete" (p. 13) and "belong together" (p. 190). I began to read about British fairies and little people, fox and rabbit (Cowan, 1993), and remember Scottish selkie tales that I knew. About part way through my research, one of my advisors suggested that I look into trickster stories both in my own heritage, in Anishinaabe territory (where my Clown and Mask training was offered), and in Mik'maw territory, where I am currently living, writing, and creating.

I learned that trickster in diverse cultures such as Anishinaabe, Mi'kmaq, and Celtic is a teacher, guide, and protector (Rand, 1894; Jones, 1974; Cowan, 1993), paradoxical, silly, sexy, and funny. He exaggerates *all* human qualities in a playful and indulgent way (Taylor, 2010; Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark, 2013; Simpson, 2014). He is with "a restless hunger, and that is where the humour, the horror, the comedic, the vulgar, the clown and the fool offer unspoken lessons" (K. Hele, personal communication, 2018). He reminds us that humans are utterly contradictory and worthy (Simpson, 2014), equal yet in a humble place (Williamson, 1998). The Celtic trickster,

> by embarrassing us… teaches us deeper truths about ourselves. Not only does the Trickster confront us with the multiple nature of the universe, he shows us the multiple nature of ourselves (Cowan, 1993, p. 60).

Clowns can be seen, from a psychological viewpoint, as a human representation of the trickster archetype (Bala, 2010). Heather Annis (2013) quotes Richard Pochinko, the creator of Clown and Mask, who teaches that the first lesson and much of the humour of clowning is one of radical and complete self-acceptance. In clowning, I turn towards what scares me. Images, archetypes, stories, and movement support the journey towards the embodiment of wholeness (McCarthy, 2007, 2012) and authentic Self (Johnson, n.d.). In clown philosophy we are born whole and unencumbered and as children slowly begin to stash away "unacceptable" parts of self. Poet Robert Bly (1988) calls the shadow the part of self or culture that is hidden from me. Play therapist Dennis McCarthy (2007) goes further to call the shadow the part or parts that I deny from fear of rejection. Clown teacher and clown documenter Sue Morrison and Veronica Coburn (2013) call the shadow the parts we know and don't like, the parts that carry shame but allow audience members to laugh at their own stashed and secret human parts. Algonquin/Irish artist Yvette Nolan (2015) writes that trickster teaches liberation by leading us through our unknown and unwanted; s/he leads us into difficult truths to live a particular strong experience about that truth and to then be able to progress in our lives; s/he shows us our own unique place in the world. In Jane Bacon (2006)'s work with performance autoethnography, there is a therapeutic emphasis on allowing full creativity, especially as it emerges from the hidden, denied, or forgotten places. She puts a focus on liberating self and creative expression, and in the process, finding glimpses of the archetypes that connect us all; performing is where "the issues emerge" and where it is possible to dance with our "socially informed imagination" (p. 226).

Whereas traditional/earth-based societies, including my ancestral Celtic and Germanic cultures, have unique cultures and languages, a commonality could be a concept of wholeness (Coburn & Morrison, 2013; Cowan, 1993). I wonder if this common ground is because the environment was and is the "context, the set of relationships, that connected everything" (Cajete, 1994, p. 88). Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete (1994) states that the European cultural shadow of land (dis)connection has been a "soul death" for encounters with Indigenous cultures. In the current Canadian / Indigenous context of reconciliation, I find it significant that Leanne Simpson (2011) and Wendy Makoons Geniusz (2009) write that, from an Anishinaabeg

perspective, true cultural transformation must start with ourselves. While I agree that it is too soon to speak for the other in this "car crash" that is the Canadian-Indigenous relationship[13], what kind of clown play might I find in my own identity, my own relationship to this collision?

Julia Lane (2016) acknowledges the sacred context of trickster stories and traditions, their deep roots in place, land, and culture, and the respect and caution needed when engaging with trickster. She chose to include trickster in her own dissertation on clowning and education because of the archetypal relation between clowning and trickster; academic inspiration from trickster descriptions; trickster cultural inspirations that fed the development of the Clown and Mask tradition; and possibilities for cross cultural connections through clowning and trickster. These reasons also resonate with me.

I feel curious about a practice of inquiry that is silly and funny, which finds worthiness in the contradictions and susceptibilities of humans, including myself. I feel hopeful when I imagine embodied inquiry with others that acknowledges my small place in the greater natural sphere, supported by the modeling of nature (Simpson, 2014). I imagine a research of radical connection: a research process as rooted in my body and what feels good, as appreciating galumphing tangents, as laughter and resilience when I risk something new and flop, as relaxation when a new set of seeming theoretical opposites present themselves to me, as consent that looks not just to a yes or no but to the foundations of relationship (Sebastian, 2018). I am not there yet; however, through this doctoral process I can increase my awareness of ways of being that I don't yet know inside of me as well as an alertness and openness to what is possible.

Land communication and theatrical sacred clowning, or Natural Clowning as inquiry, play with research breathing in the here and now, stumbling and fumbling towards individual and cultural wholeness. Natural Clowning builds practices of the felt sense, co-creation, and a shift from effect to beauty as both interconnection and strong emotion. It is a kind of research-creation that engages in artistic practice, theory, and experiential research; it holds a desire to expand studies to a greater sphere of influence and service. In the labyrinth of art-based research and specifically of Natural Clowning as inquiry, it is my body/mind who speaks and my

[13]Nicoll Yahgulanaas, M. October 22, 2016, Intersections Conference, University of Victoria.

body/mind who informs the path. What will I let go of on this journey? What parts of myself might I recover? As a member of a culture that has sometimes denied the shadow practices of land communication and sacred clowning, what could this study contribute to the greater research and artistic conversations of today?

Making Contact

Principle Sites of Learning

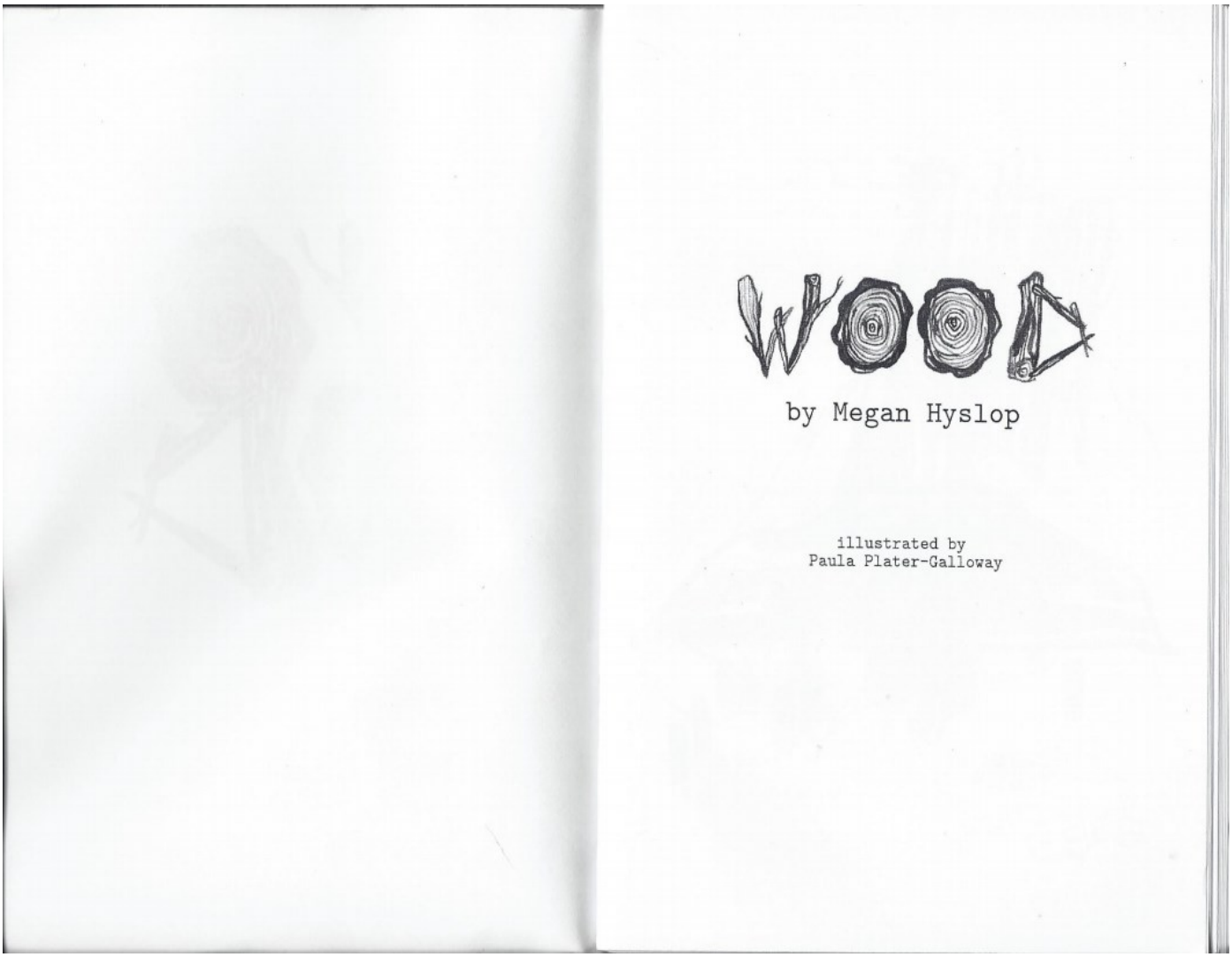
In the body of this dissertation, I reference a number of my nature as world view and theatrical clowning experiences. Two that were particularly influential on this study were the Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance and Tegridy Farm (a pseudonym). My time spent with the latter inspired a storybook that I clowned at the Manitoulin Conservatory. I share the first two pages in this section and the rest of the story throughout the dissertation.

The Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance.

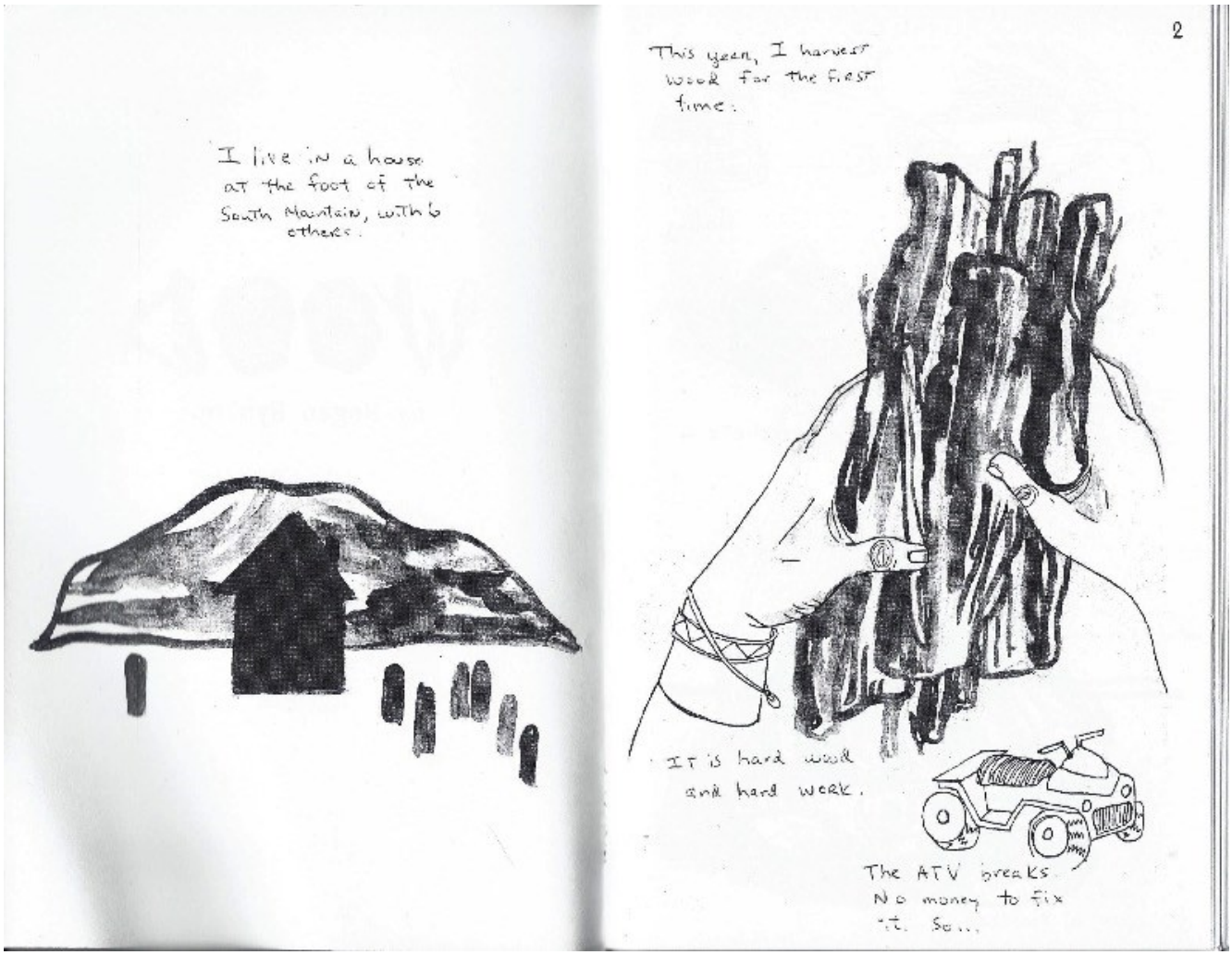
If you drive past the Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance, or the MCCP, on rural Manitoulin Island, Ontario, you will probably miss it. There is no sign to point to the long white studio plunked down amongst the spruce and fir, the chip trails that lead to the fire pit, solar showers, barbecues, or storage sheds which hold camper coolers and chest freezers. The land holds forest, fields, mosquitoes (bring your repellent), and a mythical swamp I have yet to discover. Most participants camp here, although some stay at privately owned cabins off site. Some bring their cars, and the Conservatory has bikes to cruise the country roads: purple vetch, white yarrow, milkweed in bloom, cows and horses, goats and kids. One morning, I pump along on a red twelve speed to pick up some eggs: a baby skunk in a driveway, a young buck and doe on the road. It's not surprising, as there are more deer than permanent residents on the island. Time at the Conservatory is play, but also work. We're expected to be on time, take care of the property and ourselves, be respectful with our peers while sharing creations, and do our homework, and when we don't, to 'fess up. Conversations and critiques are aesthetic and frank – clowns aren't nice, they're honest, and we are developing an art form. If things get too emotionally intense, we are encouraged to "lily dip", to paddle lightly in the waters of our unconscious, or to go for an actual swim in beautiful Lake Huron during free moments. John, the artistic director and teacher of Boot Camp, lives on the land. Comfortable in shorts, t-shirts, and walking shoes, he has been birthing baby clowns for the past 28 years. My clown wants to

hug him every time I see him. The website says you will be extremely challenged, and you will be. Warning: this work is not for the faint of heart.

I first attend in 2014 while still living in Montréal for the two-week Clown and Mask foundational course. Clown and Mask draws out six masks, or highly imaginative and personalized, often unconscious personas, from participants through movement, sound, imagery, costume, and intuitive mask creation. Each mask inspires a short turn, or clown performance, that is shared with other participants. Students then share their best turn in a collective performance night for friends and community members at the end of the course. Three seasons later, and based in rural Nova Scotia, I return for two weeks of Boot Camp and Joey and Auguste. Boot Camp (or *Boot Camp!* as John the teacher likes to say), is a deepening and extension of the masks and colours, or unique characters drawn out of oneself during Baby Clown. The Joey and Auguste course is a study and practice of the classic comedy pairing of a Joey, or the ultimate manipulator (elder brother, high status) and an Auguste, or the ultimate victim (younger brother, low status) and the relationship between the two. I reference stories, learnings, and creations from these experiences in chapters IV and V.



Wood, by Megan Hyslop. Illustrated by Paula Plater-Galloway



I live in a house at the foot of the South Mountain, with six others. This year, I harvest wood for the first time. It is hard wood and hard work. Tha ATV breaks. No money to fix it. So…

Tegridy Farm

I came to know Tegridy because the owner and I had the same gardening mentor, whom we were both visiting by chance while out west one autumn. I was looking to ground down into an earthy spot, having steeped myself in clowning, theatre, and other artistic exploration for the past seven years in Montréal, but I didn't yet know where that would be. I arrived on a Maritime Bus to Nova Scotia in May 2014; shivers filled my body when I first disembarked. I planned to stay for five weeks as a garden volunteer; however, as if a magnet had been planted

into my belly, I returned later that summer after two clown courses to the valley tucked between two ancient mountains of granite and basalt. I relocated to the general area in August 2015 after the first year of my doctorate and as a resident of Tegridy in May 2016 once the transition from family home to the son's sole proprietorship was complete. I lived as a full-time resident for nineteen months and still visit the place weekly to spend time with the honey bee hive I installed and to visit my other human and other-than-human friends.

Tegridy is a long narrow swath of forest: hemlock, sugar and red maple, white pine, red and white oak, and birch, that lends itself to firewood and maple sap harvest, building projects, and spiritual communion. The large, 1850s house has personal rooms and collective spaces. In the experimental phase of my residency, logistical and managerial techniques and proposals waxed and waned. A core group of eight people lived in the house as their permanent dwelling, while volunteers, interns, and auxiliary project members came and went. The friendly and anarchistic culture of the place both nourished and challenged me to grow. The land also hosts an apple, pear, and peach orchard, a nut tree grove, wild and cultivated blackberries, raspberries, and blueberries, food and seed gardens, a vernal pond, and non-human beings such as painted turtles, spring peeper frogs, eastern newts, white tailed deer, blue jays, barred owls, pileated woodpeckers, hummingbirds, and a springy springer spaniel. I expand on my learnings, experiences, and creations in chapter III and V.

Beginning

Finding My Way Home: Land Communication as Inquiry

Currently, relating with land is seen as part of a wider conversation about land and place in the Canadian-Indigenous context of reconciliation and transformation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Vickers, 2008). As a Euro-Canadian, these conversations and actions invokes questions around identity and belonging. What are practices of Nature as a World View in my historical traditions and those of various North American nations? What are the nuances of cultural appropriation and cultural inspiration? What are practices of land communication? Land communication, an ancient and perhaps universal human practice, is beginning to appear in academic writings by Indigenous and Euro-settler scholars such as Vanessa Watts (2013), Mary Siisip and Wendy Makoons Geniusz (2015), and David Abram (1996, 2010), and non-fiction writers Trevor Herriot (2004) and Sharon Butala (1994, 2017). I wish to acknowledge here the different approaches by and lived realities of settler and Indigenous writers and the use of such practices.

Finding My Way Home

December 10, 2016, Wolfville, NS.

I've just come away from tea and snacks with a friend who has a theatre company. Because of her husband's work, her company had become a mobile one – just her and her laptop, no auditions, local actors and citizens wherever she lands. After listening to me ramble about trainings and research, she mused that it seemed I had been immersed in academia for a long time. She and I have a lot in common, including the wandering paths of our lives. It makes me think of a singer-songwriter I saw once in Montréal who said, "My identity is made up of what I love," and proceeded to sing a folk song by Argentinean singer Facundo Cabral… *No soy de aquí, ni soy de allá, no tengo edad ni porvenir, y ser feliz es el color de mi identidad.*[14]

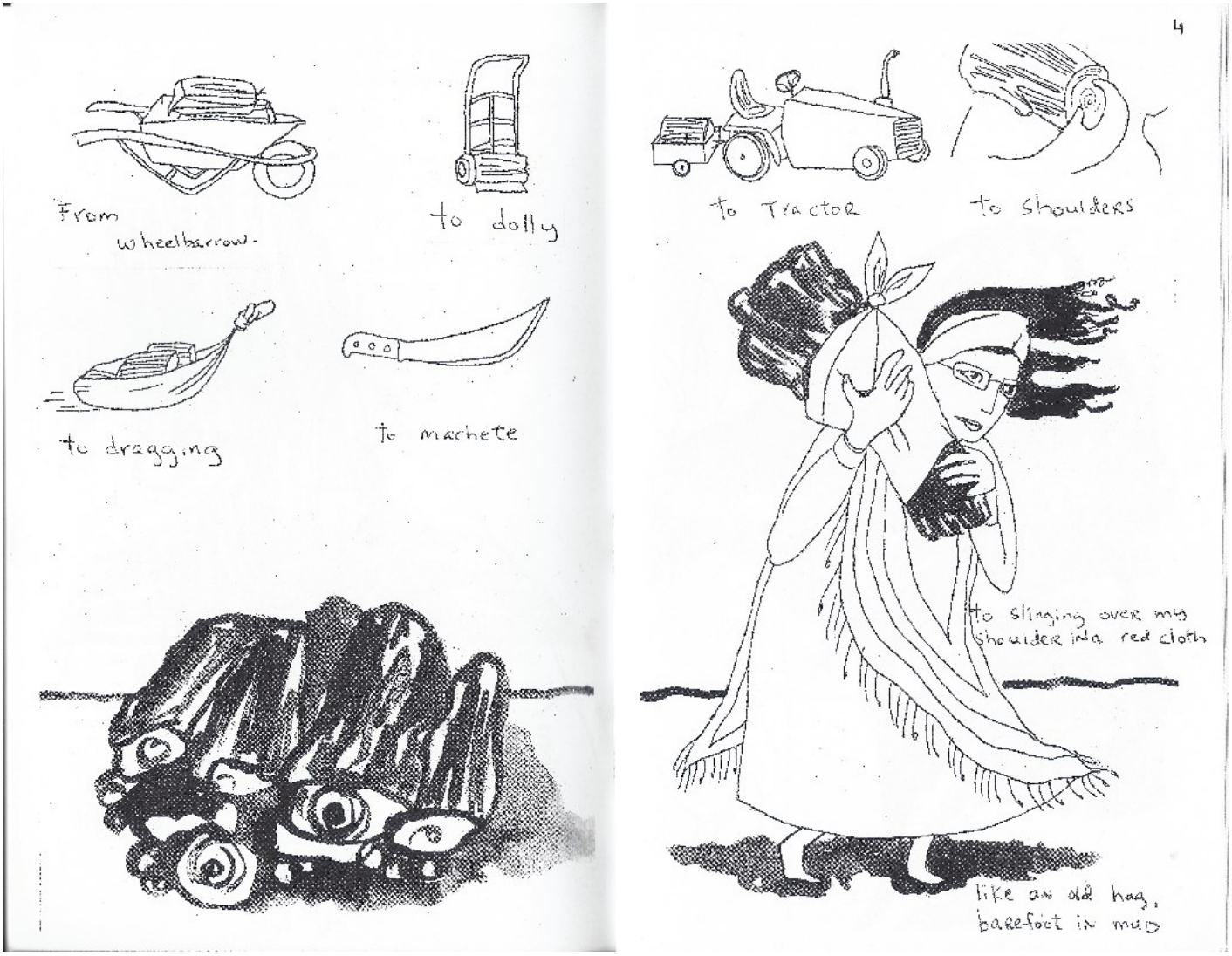
[14] I'm not from here, nor am I from there, I have no age with no future ahead, and to be happy is what colours who I am. (own translation).

Yet, I do live in a place, I was born and grew up in places where cultures were and are of the land in a very particular and related way. I was born, grew up, and live in places where my European ancestors, coming from their own historical residual traumas of displacement from land and the demonization of deep land and body relationships contributed to the imposition of a human-centric world view that places humans on top (Cowan, 1993; Ehrenreich, 2007; Fumagalli, 1994). A human-centric world view may have Biblical origins as I will explore later in this chapter. However, the dynamic, often-sentient, perceptive qualities of a world view that sees nature and humans as neither above nor below each other (Nolan, 2015) gives rise to values differing from those imposed during colonization, although some argue that a slow and careful blend of the strengths found within each culture can create something fruitful (Kimmerer, 2013; Augustine & Consolo, 2016). Scholars and authors from the Anishinaabe (Simpson, Doerfler, Sinclair, and Stark, W.M. Geniusz, M.S. Geniusz, Rheault, Borrows), Sto:lo (Archibald), Mi'kmaq (Augustine, Sable and Francis, Battiste, Lacey, Paul, Joudry, Meuse), Tewa (Cajete), Algonquin (Nolan), Dakota/Sioux (Deloria), Potawatomi (Kimmerer), Cherokee (Lee Brown), Haudenosaunee (Longboat, Watts, Styres), Blackfoot/Niitsítapi (Little Bear), Unangax (Tuck), Ktunaxa and Secwepemc (Manuel), Syilx/Okanagan (Derrickson), and Chickasaw and Cheyenne Nations (Youngblood), as well as Canadian and American/settler scholars offer their perspectives. Métis land practices, once based heavily on buffalo, currently face disputes such as the Interim Métis Harvesting Agreement where hunting rights were recognized and then revoked (Cardinal, 2002; Vowel, 2016). I want to remember, as I explore ideas from and inspired by these cultures, that there are distinct cultural and historical differences between and of viewpoints within these varied groups.

Jeff Ward explains that the Mi'kmaq are not necessarily nomadic but have several homes – a winter home, a summer home, sometimes a spring and fall home (Jala, 2015). Like many folks these days, I have had many homes – foothill spring crocuses for early morning dog walks, a crest of Saskatoon bushes, and lightning storms through the picture window during my childhood in what I now know to be Stoney-Nakoda land in Southern Alberta; the cold blue of pacific waves and camas until my mid-twenties in Lekwungen territory (Victoria and Salt Spring Island); the flame of sugar maples in my late twenties on Mohawk land in Montréal. As a shy

girl who grew up into an introspective and sensitive woman, the land was a steady source of solace and helped me feel at home inside of myself. The land was my confidant. It was during a rich nature immersion as a gardener from 2006-2008 with meals, bathing, and sleeping outdoors and a conscious effort to tune to the land devas that nature first began to speak back to me, to my gratitude and surprise.

I have also been in connection with the lands of Mi'kma'ki, in particular the wooded, streamed, and gardened land at Tegridy, since May of 2014. In a ceremony to honour the land I call in the quarters (welcoming the four directions) in the style of my Celtic ancestors and lead offerings and songs. I haul logs out of the forest but forget to leave offerings, feel a sudden sadness. Forgive me. Later, I go for a ceremonial walk and tell the plants, the trees, the birds, and the animals – bobcat, deer, rabbit, coyote – of the intentions of the group inhabiting the land. I forget fox, and a moment later, she pops out of the bush, flashes her white tail at me, and bounds off again. What are best land relationship practices in this context? How do I connect to the greater whole? What am I learning about myself and how am I healing? In particular, I am interested in land communication as a practice of listening and feeling.



From wheelbarrow, to dolly, to dragging, to machete, to tractor, to shoulders, to slinging over my shoulder in a red cloth, like an old hag, barefoot in mud.

I know I am overdoing it. Witches live ALONE, says my friend, except if it's for a reason. I know, I say, but I don't, really.

Nature as a World View: These Lands

Everything leaves a track, and in the track is the story. The state of being of each thing is in its interaction with everything else (Cajete, 1994, p. 56).

Niktaq[15]*, Sipekne'katik*[16] *- Mi'kmaw territory*

A Mi'kmaw world view, the world view that came from this land where I currently sleep, eat, study, and harvest, is flow and movement, not rush and stagnation (Sable & Francis, 2012). Colours in this language embody the process of becoming, family words are relational. They use the word *Weji-Sqalia'tiek* – "we arose from here" (p. 17). The term, they write, implies a "dynamic interrelationship" (p. 17) between land, winds, weather, elements, and humans. Plant person Laurie Lacey (1993) says in Mi'kmak'i, summers were traditionally spent by the rivers catching and preserving fish and gathering berries and wild plants for food, praying before harvesting medicine. When my roommate inherited a fly fishing rod this past summer, I sent my Dad an email about fly fishing, and he kindly sent back detailed instructions. But the shad in Nictaux creek were left to swim and feed on insects undisturbed, or perhaps to nibble on someone else's line. Maybe next summer. I pick wild nettles from the small gully by the converted school bus and rose petal medicine from the wild bush by the bridge where the peeper frogs sing each spring…and even in my eagerness I generally remember to ask for this bounty, or at least run my fingers through my hair to leave behind a strand or two.[17] These nitrogen-rich strands could perhaps be a welcome gift. Nettles, like sweet grass, branch out and grow more leaves in response to picking. I find joy in eating wild autumn olives from the bush chock-full; my body sings at this juicy, tart, fall offering. When I scan the internet, I find it is an introduced species and can be invasive. Yet it fixes nitrogen and can boost production of nearby fruit. My body tenses – my favourite fall fruit is an invader species. Perhaps sitting with the plant will offer some answers.

Clark Paul (Augustine & Consolo, 2016), in a course hosted by Cape Breton University and livestreamed around the world, talks about the Mi'kmaw view of "the respect for all of creation." He said that Europeans came with a different kind of respect, "respect to the one who had the most." Not real respect, he states. "It was fear." He goes on to explain that

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15 English name Nictaux, means the forks

16 One of seven districts or sacred fires, means Ground Nut area

17 Once upon a time when I gardened at a yoga center in BC, an Elder gave me this advice ("at the very least, leave a hair…")

> we as a people were part of all of Creation. We weren't trying to change creation to try to make it fit us. We instead aligned ourselves with Nature and lived with it as it should be… we're capable of that.

In the same course, in a story about entering his job as moose manager on Cape Breton/Unama'ki, Cliff Paul remarks that "What's missing is the spiritual connection with the land and the resource" (Augustine & Consolo, 2016). A colonizer culture, writes Euro-Canadian Trevor Herriot (2004), fills this spiritual void, the void of connection to the earth, with "consumption and pleasure…addictiveness and wealth-mongering" (p. 322), yet he shares his experience of the willingness of land itself in his home in southern Saskatchewan to open itself to those who wish to be in relationship. Similarly, Sharon Butala (2017) describes her opening to the land as a personal spiritual journey:

> as the years passed, slowly, one after the other, not with neat calendar breaks but seamlessly in an eternal round of being and doing… I began to feel my mind, my heart, my soul – all of them – being slowly opened so that the boundary between me and these things melted, dissolved. Through awe-inspiring dreams, eventually through small visions, the Great Mystery of our being became clearer to me. Not the answer, but the question - the eternal question (p. xiv).

On the 21st of October 2016, I attend the artist talk with Kwakwaka'wakw sculptor and painter Rande Cook at the Art Education conference hosted by the University of Victoria. His main message was, "Know who you are. Know your own creation story." I get on the internet, type in Celtic creation myths, my own predominant cultural background. There is no central Celtic creation myth, most sites say, with much lost in oral translation or mixed with Roman and Christian re-tellings. In one, humans are fashioned from the bark of the oak. In another, humans grow from seeds or acorns cast from the oak. I remember the story shards as I sit under a red oak; I feel strength in its trunk as I lean my back against it, the orange-brown leaves now a thick carpet beneath me. I stand up and watch the forest in the wind; in contrast to the more supple evergreens, the oaks are still, but wind moves through the sparse leaves still holding to branches.

We take the land and wrap it around ourselves.
(Stephen Augustine, M'ikmaw hereditary chief, March 14, 2016).

James (Sa'ke'j) Youngblood Henderson (2000) writes that land connection is beyond "mere ecological awareness; it is a living relationship with a specific environment" that is "eternal", in motion, with "endless renewals and realignments" (p. 260), creating "consensual relationships" (p. 261) and emphasizing similarities, not divisions. Gregory Cajete (1994) calls the living earth "the creative process of life as it unfolds on a moment-to-moment basis" (p. 90) with all its complexity, fluidity, mystery, renewal, and seeming contradictions (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark, 2013; Styres, 2011; Battiste, 2000). Land is an "open system filled with possibility, mutability, and ongoing interpretation based on personal and shared experience" (Sable & Francis, 2012, p. 57). Leanne Simpson (2011) reminds us that the "static state is never experienced in nature" (p. 89). She proposes that

> Nishnaabeg thought comes from the land and therefore, it embodies emergence. The Nishnaabeg were adept at viewing and aligning themselves with emergent properties of the natural world (p.91).

These processes and actions give meaning in a culture of "doing…of presence" (p. 93). Similarly, John Borrows (2016) explains that Nanabozhoo stories emphasize action, not "abstract principles or rigid behavioural codes" (p. 7). With all of this movement and rebirth, Leroy Littlebear (2000) writes that in this world view that "emphasizes process as opposed to product" (p. 79), we can notice the greater earth migrations, cycles, and patterns to find a form of constancy.

At the same time, for Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013), "restoring land without restoring relationship is an empty exercise. It is relationship that will endure and relationship that will sustain the restored land" (n.p.). In this manner, "living in a good way is an incredible disruption of the colonial metanarrative" (Simpson, 2011, p. 41). Anishinaabe stories were/are used in this way, often with humour, to indirectly showcase and correct proper behavior that ensured the safety of the individual and the group (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark, 2013). For example, John Borrows (2016) writes that in Nanaboozhoo stories, his freedom is illustrated by both constraint and openness through mutual interactive transformation. The terms *dibenjigaazowin* "he or she who owns or controls their associations" (p. 7), and *mino-bimaadiziwin*, or the good life, are

contextual and “help us form a living relationship with the world around us” (p. 9), both individually and collectively. The concept of noninterference (allowing), from a Blackfoot perspective, cultivates “the strength to be tolerant of the beauty of cognitive diversity” (Little Bear, 2000, p. 80) and the idea of many right ways, flow, movement, subjectivity. Social control is through kindness: “love, easy-goingness, praise, and gratefulness” (p. 80). In a general sense, one could say that rather than seeking permanence there is an emphasis on “temporary harmonies” among “all forms and forces” (Battiste, 2000, p. 265) through “the art of relationship” (Cajete, 1994, pg. 78).

D'Arcy Ishpeming'enzaabid Rheault Bizhiw (1999) talks about Anishinaabe philosophy and worldview where “goodness, value, and beauty are primary” (p. 139) as well as “wonder, mystery, and excitement” (p. 108). In this tradition, stories, particularly oral storytelling, embody relations, adaptation, emergence, and context; they provide guideposts for how to behave and not behave, how to be with others, how to find meaning and belonging (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark, 2013). These authors write that stories could be seen as a centralizing force in Anishinaabeg studies as a way to ensure “reflective, responsible, and empowering” (p. 361) scholarship. Sandra Styres (2011) writes that the trickster Coyote reflects the land as fluidity in her constant cycle of exploration, failure, change, and return to exploration. This teaches us “about how to be in relation both interpersonally and ecologically” (Zinga & Styres, 2011, p. 72) with land as the primary teacher, and that the paths of tricksters and clowns show “that we cannot fully predict or control the natural world because of the complexities of inter-relationships and inter-actions” (p. 72). Trickster fails and is redeemed through interconnection (Archibald 2008; Styres, 2011).

Nature as a World View – My Roots

According to British psychologist and mythologist Sharon Blackie (2016), “humans are narrative creatures…the cultural narrative *is* the culture” (p. 13). Nature as a world view was once part of my ancestral Celtic culture, although Tom Cowan (1993) writes that both the conversion of pagans to Christianity and the birth of the Scientific Revolution effectively

removed "any sense of spirit or divinity from nature" (p. 114). I look at the first book of the *Bible* (1661), the story of Genesis, through the suggestion of one of my advisors. This is my religious background, Protestant; although I consider myself pagan, a Catholic boyfriend once reminded me that there is no subtraction in life from our identities, experiences, and memories, only addition.

> And God blessed them, and God said unto them, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Gen 1:28).

As I sit with this passage, I feel my body tense, grow very still, the area between my eyebrows contracting.

I look up the definition of dominion: *Supreme authority. Absolute ownership.*[18] And then authority: *persons in command. Power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behaviour. Freedom granted by one in authority. Convincing force.*

> If God sees the holiness, the goodness, the godness of everything as He creates - "it was good" and "very good" (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31)

but then tells Man he has supreme authority and absolute ownership, through convincing force, is this then authorizing human authority even over God? My shoulders feel tight. I swallow and exhale.

In half of my lineage, I can trace my ancestors' presence on this continent for at least six generations, as they colonized in Mi'kmaw and Passamaquoddy/ Peskotomuhkat territory, or in some lines, back to the early 1600s. Wampanoag and Anishinaabe territory. Dene and Siksika territory. Before that strong currents of English with some Lowland Scot, Irish, German, Dutch, Welsh, and French Huguenot. (*A European mutt*, jokes a healer I know.) Today I wake up and instead of editing a chapter of this dissertation, I spend a few hours with my ancestry book: stories gifted to me, the family trees that a friend so generously researched for me in the fall of 2015. I highlight townships on maps I had photocopied from the atlas at my local library and trace the lines back: the Allens, Weekes, Nicholls, Maiers, Hansons, Guenons, Kiersteads,

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[18] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dominion

Woods, Bakers, names that mean little rock, little hill, baker, woodcutter. If land grows culture (Borrows, 2010), I wonder about territories in those spots and the earth cultures they nurtured.

Nation in English comes from the old French 'nacion', meaning birth, place of origin.[19] In 2011, I had the privilege of visiting Scotland during the time of Beltane, or Bright Fire, the ancient Gaelic fertility festival marking the beginning of summer still celebrated by the Beltane Fire Society[20]. A native Edinburgher took me for a walk to the top of King Arthur's Seat, a mountain in the middle of the city and the ancient site of Beltane celebrations; he told me that the earth beneath my feet and the west coast of Canada were once part of the same land mass, pointed out familiar-to-me nettles, wild mustard. On the night of Beltane, that seasonal and ancestral time of betwixt and between, on Calton Hill and a torch-lit parade: the Green Man and the May Queen; dancers to represent elements of earth, fire, air, and water; great bonfires and half naked red-clad fire-wielding wildlings; deep drumbeats vibrating through my body in the chill of a late April night. Later that week, I took a bus south to visit a friend in London. The hawthornes were in bloom, fat pink and white blossoms, trees associated with my birth month of May in the Gaelic tree calendar. I stood under one in solitude, let my energy drop down deep into the earth, shivers all through my body.

This week, I write to Jackie Queally, who gave a workshop on plant communication and Celtic tree archetypes at a nearby spiritual center that I missed while visiting family in BC. She tells me that the Irish believed in nature spirits in their daily lives, although this has now denigrated to fearful stories about the fairies.[21] Interconnectivity in myths and stories with certain birds, animals, fish, and plants were teaching aids for a "detailed spiritual path."[22] Here I think of selkie stories, Scottish seal people stories; male selkies will overturn boats that engage in overzealous hunting or lure humans to become part of their world in these gentle yet haunting tales. What were the lessons, what has been lost in the interpretations? Or the selkie story of the young woman who chooses a seal as a lover and is then lost to, or welcomed by, the

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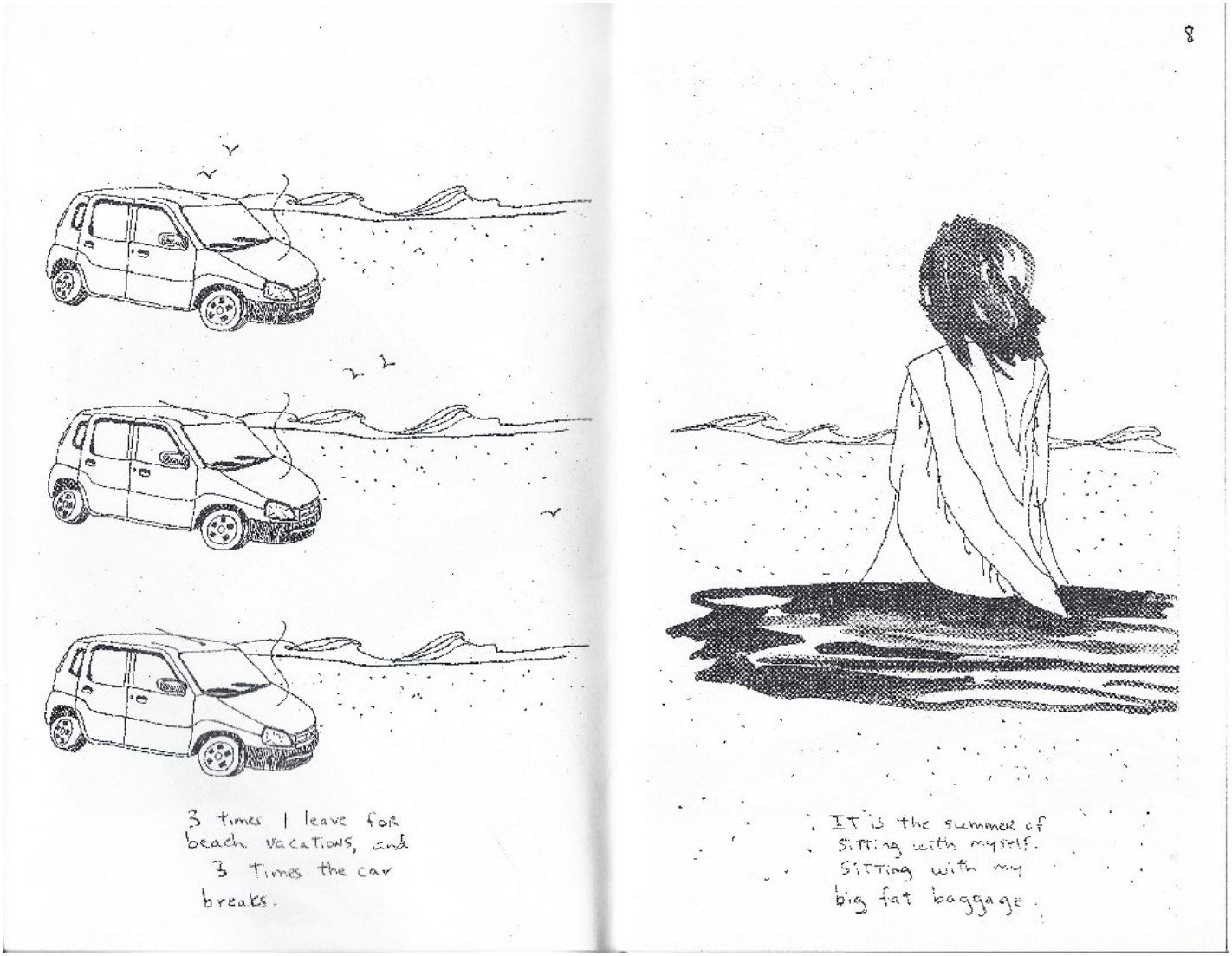
19 http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=nation

20 "not to recreate ancient practices but to continue in the spirit of our ancient forebears and create our own connection to the cycles of nature", Beltane Fire Society, 2017, https://beltane.org/about/about-beltane/

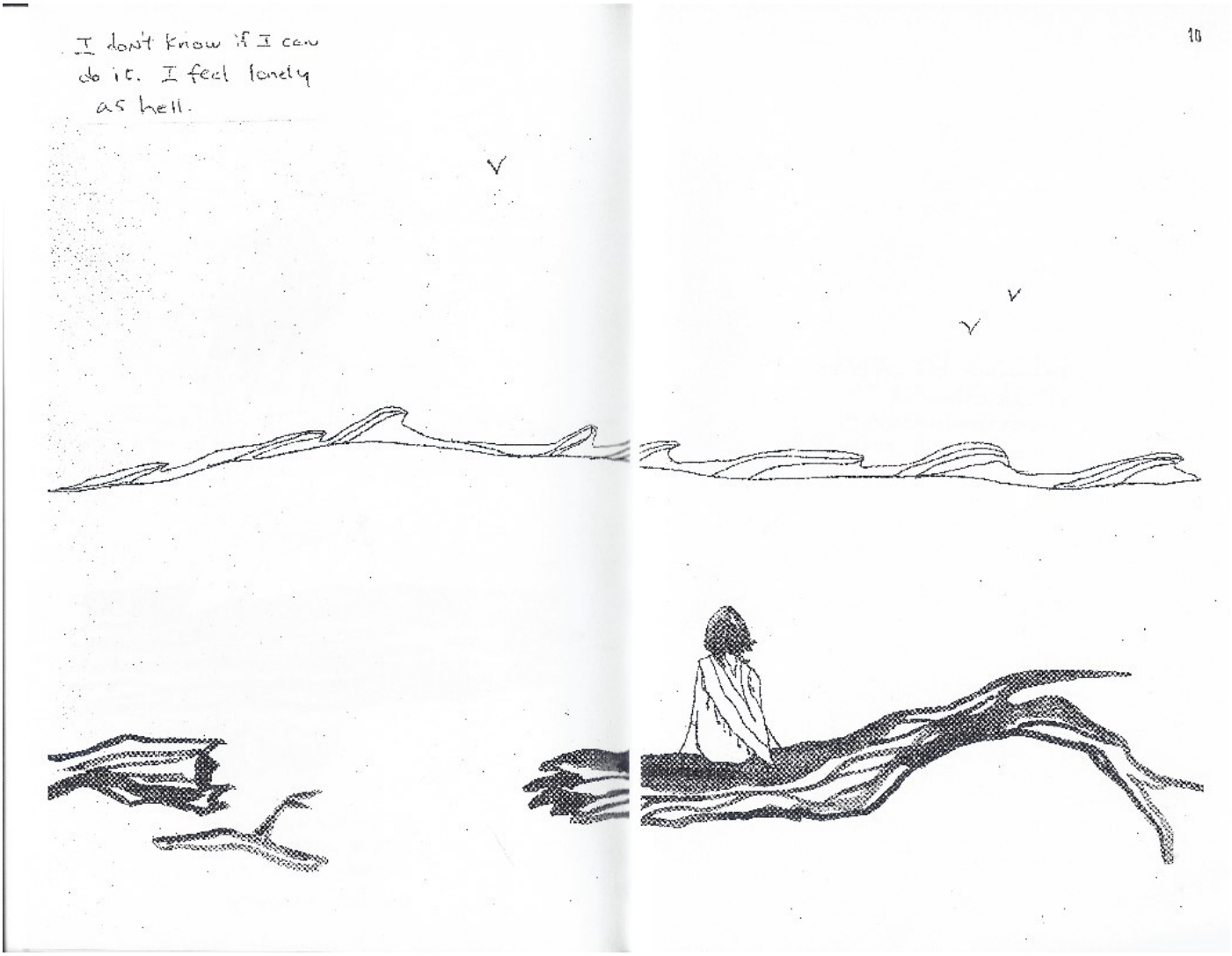
21 The original meaning of fairy is a creature of the wild, or all that is other-than-human; it shares its roots with fierce, feral, and ferocious (Bringhurst, 1995)

22 Personal email communication, November 11, 2016

sea (Williamson, 1998)? I remember the Inuit seal story of Sedna from a storytelling class, and I read more versions as I scroll through the internet. What are the layers of relations embedded in these stories? I have told the selkie seal lover story several times publicly. Was the young woman lost, or was she saved?



Three times I leave for beach vacation, and three times the car breaks. It's the summer of sitting with myself. Sitting with my big fat baggage.



I don't know if I can do it. I feel lonely as hell.

December 2016, Nictaux, NS.

First snowfall of the year. The walnut branches along the path are painted with a thick layer of white, the dusky morning light purple behind the spruce. My housemate and I pad along, leaving a set of double tracks behind us; Rosie the dog runs ahead, scooping snow into her mouth. The boughs of the pin cherries and chokecherries form a tunnel to pass through, and we each take a mouthful of snow from the pines. I know this

patch of land in spring, summer, and fall, but this is my first winter, all things transformed overnight.

A healer once remarked to me the absolute need for human energetic connection to the physical earth where one is planted. Stephen Buhner (2004) reminds me that to awaken to this connection that is always already alive and activated, I also must remember that "nature is not linear" (p. 4). He suggests that to regain the trust of perception of the heart and direct communication with nature is a form of decolonization and transformation. The goal is not to destroy the linear mind but to sense more rather than think, that "you are learning a new language" where "your body is your best friend and most important teacher" (p. 151). I look to Basho's (n.d.) framing of home as the journey and the open road as well as land as pedagogy which looks to sensory engagement with the other-than-human (amongst many other concepts) for literal grounding. David Abram (1996, 2010) writes that in the ever-changing natural reality, a constant direct-sense relationship is both communication and participation. He envisions that as a Euro-American, to be place-based means to connect with our senses and to bring abstract Christian spirituality of heaven and an inner world back to the animate, reciprocal world.

Although this scholarship helps somewhat, it doesn't expand this beautiful farm, 87 acres of forest, back into a complete ecosystem with flexible, dynamic, geographical boundaries (Sable & Francis, 2012). It doesn't stop the quarry down the road that digs into the mountainside, doesn't redress the truth of land as Mi'kma'ki. Vine Deloria (1973) states that settlers have the "psychological burden of establishing his or her right to the land in the deep emotional sense of knowing that he or she belongs there" (p. 60). He writes that while "many have discerned this need to become Indigenous", this requires a deep allegiance to the earth, plants, and animals, and that

> developing a sense of ourselves that would properly balance history and nature and space and time is a more difficult task than we would suspect and involves a radical reevaluation of the way we look at the world around us (p. 61).

Scholars Eve Tuck (Unangax) and K. Wayne Yang (settler) (2012) write that decolonization means both the repatriation of land and understanding land relationships as epistemic, cosmological,

ontological, and something that no-one can own. Anishinaabe scholar John Borrows (2016) acknowledges "the interdependence of peoples, ecosystems, and economies in the modern world" (p. 46) and calls for "appropriate harmonization and separation between governments" (46), or independence with interdependence, to address mutual fears and "facilitate greater freedom within Indigenous / nation state relationship" (p. 46). He points out that in Nanaboozhoo stories, he/she travels "the four directions in bringing knowledge to the world" (p. 24), indicating the possibility for cultural sharing and reciprocal enrichment.

October 20th, 2016, Victoria, BC

I attend the community mural project of Haida Manga artist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas at the University of Victoria Art Education conference. It's a traditional design, with thick black lines on thick white paper. I arrive early; he explains that his intention is to break some of the anxiety around indigeneity by inviting Canadians to colour any part, any way, as they feel. The invitation is to engage with the art and move from observation to participation in meaning creation, as a transformative experience. I take a sharp red pencil crayon, my favourite colour, from the bundles of greens, yellows, browns, oranges, and shade an open space. Others who arrived after his explanation hesitate, how are they supposed to, is it ok to, unsure.

Later, in his keynote address, Michael speaks especially to the many primarily white teachers there who are mandated to teach Indigenous views in Art Ed with little instruction as to how to do so. They are scared to appropriate: to take exclusive possession of, to take or make use of without authority or right[23]. He says, like Rande Cook, that the base is to know who you are, not trying to speak for the other.

"We're not there yet," he states. "We're at the traffic intersection, and this collision – it's a mess. It has damaged and affected every aspect of Indigenous life. I always pause to see if someone will correct me, but no-one ever does. But it may be time to send in the ambulances. Let the attention lie in the relational space between, the emotionality and the quality of this space."

[23] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/appropriate

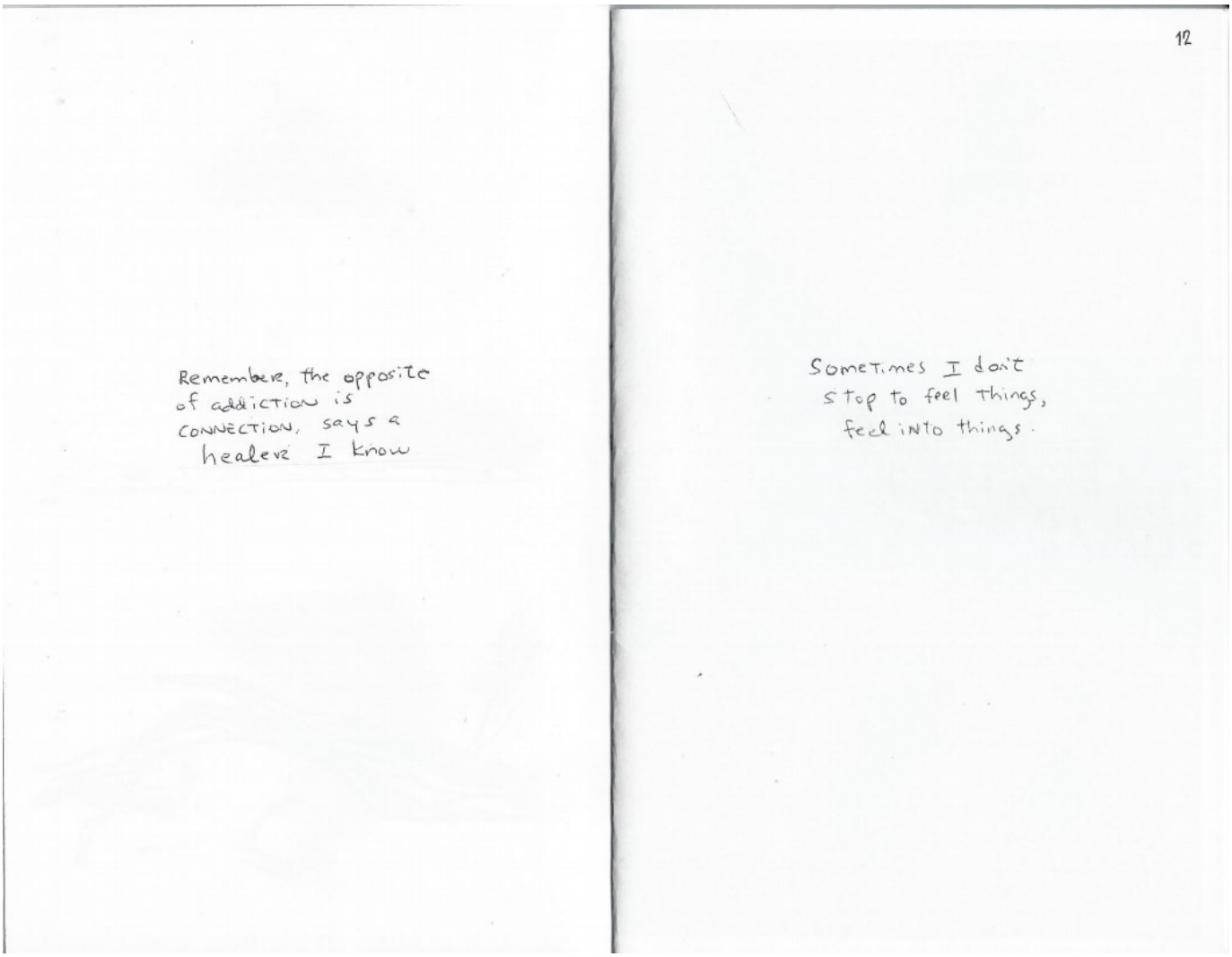
Cultural Appropriation, Cultural Inspiration

Given my deep interest in land and land stories as inquiry and connection coupled with my own sociocultural identity, what about the nuances of cultural appropriation as different from cultural inspiration? Settler scholar Celia Haig-Brown (2010) calls cultural appropriation a form of cultural theft that includes realms of commercial exploitation, unacknowledged art forms, stories, misunderstandings around land concepts, and, more subtly, quotations that appear with an absence of connection to context and roots. She explores and questions the differences and subtleties between appropriation and deep learning. From another perspective, appropriation can be seen as a "direct and purposeful rip off combined with a failure of recognition," while "inspiration is something different and involves acknowledgement and respect of that which inspired" (K. Hele, personal communication, May 12, 2018).

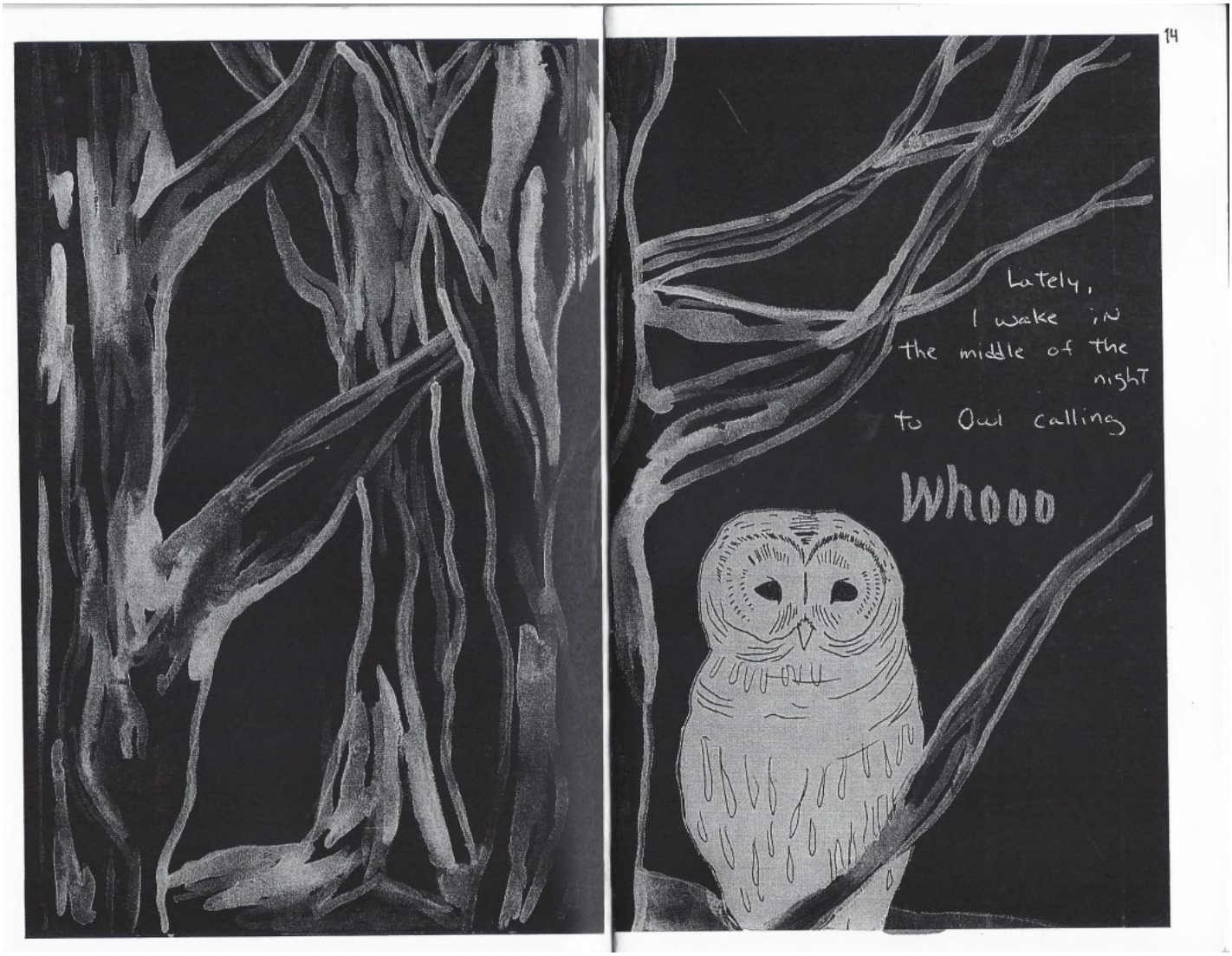
Lynne Davis et. al (2017) write that in the alliance and solidarity literature, there is an emphasis on "learning and self-education as part of the relationship process" (Davis et al., 2017, p. 400) and examining privilege and participation in ongoing colonial structures as well as systemic challenges (Ehrenreich, 2007). In May of 2018, I attended the National Indigenous Physical Activity and Wellness conference at the University of British Columbia. I noticed a similar theme from speakers and participants in workshops and sessions as I did at the Art Education conference at the University of Victoria: know who you are, know where you come from, for people of all cultural backgrounds, from all sides of the Indigenous – Canadian relational question. For Julie Salverson (2001), melancholy is narrative, without a sense of self in the story of loss, while mourning is embodied and imaginative and sometimes even humourous. In mourning, I maintain self and other as integral; if I understand my own relationship to trauma, loss, fears, and desires (Salverson, 1994, 2001) I am more likely to truly liberate myself. Then, as F. P. Favel (2014) suggests, I will be better able to support the same process in others. I am more able to sink into other complex stories and engage with others in full feeling capacity, knowing all the while the likelihood of failure to meet these stories with the presence they merit (Salverson, 2001, 2008). Here is where clowning can step in, to bring the relief, recognition, and release of laughter, to try and fail and try again. Identity comes from seeing, hearing, feeling, and playing in the moment, in spite of contradictions, strong emotions,

implications, and responsibilities (Salverson, 1994, 2009). I can both feel joy and lean into the grief as part of the complexity of my own personal and cultural story (Mark Silver, email communication, November 21, 2018).

In Anishinaabe stories, lessons are not obvious but require listening and reflection (K. Hele, personal communication, 2018). I have noticed this open quality in some of the Scottish selkie tales as well. On a similar note, Sto:lo educator Joanne Archibald (2008) recalls that her Elders say "we have three ears to listen with, two on the sides of our head and one in our heart" (p. 76) and that "often one was not explicitly told what the story's meanings were. Linking how we feel to what we know was an important pedagogy" (p. 76). Julie Pelletier of the Wesget Sipu Fish River Band of northern Maine (2013) suggests that story is not a noun but a verb "which reveals the dynamic characteristics of conveying and creating and re-creating identity" (p. 153). Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark (2013) write that in Anishinaabe culture, stories are a tangible representation of relations and adaptations, emergence and flux, context and practice; they provide a way to create the world we wish to see. Anishinaabe lawyer John Borrows (2017) talks about the end of an era of control in Canada, or the repression of Indigenous cultures, to an era of shared autonomy and responsibility. He calls on Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada to work together in attentiveness to "what the land has done and taught us as Indigenous peoples for thousands of years" (n.p.). Heiltsuk, Ts'msyen, Haida, and English scholar Patricia Vickers (2008) points out that it is not possible to de-colonize – that there is no undoing, just the possibility, and imperative, for transformation.



Remember, the opposite of addiction is connection, says a healer I know. Sometimes I don't stop to feel things, feel into things.



Lately, I wake in the middle of the night to Owl calling. Whooo.

Unsettling the Settler (K. Hele, personal conversation, October 2018).

December 2018, Wilmot, NS

Today I walk to town on the trail behind the house, thinking about a suggestion from one my advisors to expand my exploration of settler as foreign but trying to integrate with the land. The morning is crisp and bright. A herd of deer cross from field to forest ahead of me. A hairy woodpecker drums into a dead maple.

Settler scholar Eva MacKey (2016) writes that decolonization requires the unsettling of settler expectations and certainties and opening into this discomfort. Fantasies of entitlement are part of the national and structural narrative, "embedded in law, in material worlds, and in the emotions of citizens" (p. 18). Besides "serious structural, economic, and political change" (p. 12), a truly transformative decolonization would imagine and theorize relationality: perpetual uncertainty, diversity, plurality, response, in autonomy and interconnection. She proposes that to be Indigenous to place is to care for the land and to make epistemological shifts: questioning that land can be owned, that humans are separate from nature, that land value comes from improvement, control, and mastery. It asks for a shift in thinking to see multiple sovereign states co-existing, with attention to the spaces in between as what holds the two together. At the same time, these epistemological shifts ask for mindful reflection to avoid the trap of fetishizing or cultural appropriation.

The author explores a history of treaty as a verb that included regular, periodic gatherings of both European settlers and Indigenous groups to re-negotiate and renew; she conceptualizes treaty as "a vibrant, supple, responsive, ongoing, interactional process that requires regular injections of human creativity and relationality" (p. 140). She gives several current ethnographic attempts to unsettle Indigenous – settler relations: land rights cases of the Cayuga and Onondaga Nations in New York State and the Caldwell First Nation near Chatham-Kent, Ontario and corresponding anti-land rights and solidarity groups.

Arthur Manuel and Grand Chief Ronald M. Derrickson (2015) also speak of the resulting uncertainty of legal, constitutional, and political actions that challenge the status quo and the assumed colonial narrative. They point out that Europeans met with Indigenous peoples "at times within minutes of their arrival" (p. 3); Terra nullius was enforced by declaring the tenants as "non-human" (p. 3) and in a 'state of nature' (MacKey, 2016, p. 86) with "no form of sovereign government" (p. 48), this "helped colonizers to define the land as legally unowned, and legally vacant" (p. 86). Arthur Manuel and Grand Chief Ronald M. Derrickson (2015) go on to outline many of the important legal proceedings and activism in their lifetimes to garner official recognition of land rights and title for Indigenous economies based on land, as currently only .2 percent of Canadian lands are under Indigenous management. They imagine the

elimination of the department of Indian Affairs and the Indian Act and the implementation of Indigenous Economies based on a fair percentage of land wealth and property tax, with funds no longer diverted to multinationals, for a "net gain for the Canadian economy" (p. 233). The Delgamuukw Supreme Court decision recently ruled to "collective rights to the land" (p. 116), with title that could only be lost if "we engage in activity on the land that destroys our ecosystem economy for future generations" (p. 185). Here I acknowledge that this last statement is based again on a European narrative created about precontact Indigneous culture. The United Nations Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) also declared rights to the land (2009). However, this territory received much publicity in January 2019 when elected but not hereditary chiefs gave consent to federal and provincial governments and to Coastal Gasline's intention to carry forward a pipeline. This contradicts governmental promises to obtain the consent of traditional Indigenous governments in agreement with UNDRIP[24]. Arthur Manuel calls on Canadians and Indigenous peoples to "sit down to speak to each other as equals" (p. 12) for consent, not consultation. Says Grand Chief Ronald M. Derrickson, "the value of our land, as both our spiritual home and as what sustains us in our lives, is essential for our development as peoples" (p. 229).

Here in Mi'kma'ki, M'ikmaw historian Daniel Paul (2006) suggests that the radically different cultural concepts around collective rights to land and societal sharing, not to mention multiple layers of translation, may have meant that the true motives of the French and English were not obvious upon contact: resources, land, and power. Although France and England were both destructive world military powers, the English government had racist and violent practices; in 1652, the French and Mi'kmaq made a short alliance (during a long war, both by Mi'kmaw standards). Besides mutual protection and sometimes intermarriages, this alliance was "based on mutual admiration and respect" (p. 73). The original French settlers/invaders, although more inclusive and respectful in their governance, did not ask consent to make a home on these lands and unintentionally created dependency by altering trade practices. The English governing powers built relations with the Mi'kmaq through abuse, intimidation, and later, slow starvation via inaccessible land, food, fishing, clothing sources, overhunting and trapping, and

[24] https://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/gaslink-pipeline-1.4973825

even scorched earth which further weakened immune systems (Paul, 2006). Land set aside in 1821 for the Mi'kmaq was poor, a "tiny fraction of one percent of Nova Scotia's land base" (p. 193). He reports that there were movements of settlers that demanded reform of these conditions from one of the more prosperous governments at the time, but these were generally unheeded. Both the Acadians, descended from the French and sometimes Indigenous populations in present day Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, and the Mi'kmaq were scalped; the Acadians were later deported, although sometimes aided by the Mi'kmaq, when they declined to swear allegiance to the British. The dense and turbulent human history of these soils.

As I continue walking, I wonder about the *how* of such Canadian epistemological shifts around land. How to unsettle settler certainty, when land and life are inherently dynamic. The transformation of decolonization, the possible paths, outcomes, and forms it may take, is necessarily mysterious and unknown, as it rests in the future and in the possible (MacKey, 2016). I think of Alisan Funk (2017), who looks to a focus on embodied inquiry when circus students train to do things that coaches haven't yet imagined and the openness that this would require (see chapter IV). If the body / mind are one (Barker, 1977), I think of James Carse (1986) and his conceptualization of open games with no winner or loser that play infinitely towards the horizon; to repeat his quote that I used earlier, it is a kind of play that requires complete vulnerability. If inquiry is our destination and practice as how we get there, if epistemology and methodology are interrelated and lead to one another, and if epistemology and ontology depend on relationality and methodology on accountability to relationships, (Wilson, 2009), what are some practices that might bring about these shifts in land epistemology? I speculate the beginnings of future research here in chapter VII.

Land Communication

Sentience and Perception Through the Heart
October 9 2016, Georgian Bay, Ontario.

I walk walk walk back and forth in the shallow warm lake, water smooth against my legs, the sound of my feet in water walking walking, wet footsteps on warm rock, dark flocks of birds floating. I spend over an hour, just walking with the water. I am listening to the sound of my feet moving through the water, the birds, the waves. And when I turn with all attention to my center, with my heart I hear LIGHTEN UP, with such loving affection, from the Lady of the Lake. I feel instantly a deep calm and rootedness and walk back to the cabin, eat French toast, help my friend do dishes and clean before our departure, dance and sing along to the radio.

Many Indigenous languages, including Mi'kmaw language, are verb-based. This allows language to move with "life's shifting and unpredictable realities" (Sable & Francis, 2012, p. 30), to describe "'happenings' rather than objects" (Battiste, 2000, p. 78), to focus on relationships and not objects (Simpson, 2008). It seems that another kind of language, sensory and heart perception, allows an equally rich connection with Life. I see heart perception as part of the felt sense. In the Haudenosaunee world view, imagination is woven into connections with land, spirit, and with all beings. This involves "opening the heart and mind to the timeless, living ontology that lives on the very land" (Sheridan & Longboat, 2006, p. 367). D'Arcy Ishpeming'enzaabid Rheault Bizhiw (1999) writes that

> For the Anishinaabeg, the divinity of life is paramount. Nevertheless, the Anishinaabeg are not simply animistic. It is not a simple matter of saying that all is alive; that there is no inanimate. Rather, it must be understood that all is animate potentially, and that this life can be actualized in various fashions, but always by way of choice-making (p. 143).

Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Simpson (2011) suggests that gentle people have the strength to listen to heart perception as well as notice "potential threats against mino bimaadiziwin" (p. 58), which means a good life, a life in balance. David Abram (1996) calls this kind of sensory, bodily perception an opposition to words, but I feel it can be both, especially when, as Cliff Paul shares in his story about applying for Moose Manager position, we speak our words from the heart (Augustine & Consolo, 2016). When I ask myself what is to be balanced, I think of John Borrows (2016) and his view of an interplay between dependence, independence, and

interdependence, between individual and community, or the medicine wheels of Celtic (MacEowen, 2007) and Indigenous traditions of this continent (Four Directions Teachings, n.d.) between the four aspects of self (physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional), land, and community. I think about the dance between the focused type type typing and the unwinding with family, friends, or some of my favourite ways to play.

Balance. One of my advisors, Karl Hele, tells me that in the Ohio valley, First Nations would see honey bees and plantain and become fearful of meeting settlers. I think back to the autumn olives, a non-native plants. The taking over of species that can happen so easily. I go and visit one of the bushes I know with this question in mind and heart, breathe and feel its leathery leaves. *Strengthening my relationship to native plants to balance* is what floats into my consciousness. Later that day, I pick up Laurie Lacey's (1999) book *Medicine Walk: Reconnecting to Mother Earth.* I read his spiritual observations after sitting in relation with plants, red spruce and her ability to allay fears. I go exploring and find that this is the tree I walk past every morning on the way to my morning outdoor meditation spot. I notice that the line of evergreens to the right of this tree are beautiful balsam firs. *Oh my,* I think, feeling embarrassed, *walking past my tree neighbours every morning without seeing*. I remember a visit with fellow INDI student Andy Trull (2016) in Killaloe, Ontario during the winter of 2015, who observed that in natural human and ecological design (or permaculture, with its patterns based on natural ecosystems and of earth based cultures) the first rule is Observe and Interact. I walk into the woods behind my new home in Wilmot. The path is lined with red spruce as well as my already familiars white and red pine. Deciduous trees that I am not yet able to identify without foliage save the red oak who hold their leaves until the bitter end. An abundance of wintergreen, whose berries I have just learned, are edible. I see what might be the early leaves of mayflowers in the moss. Reams of wild blueberry stalks. Hello, hello, hello.

In the spring of 2017, I took a natural beekeeping course. At one point during the weekend, I expressed concern about the addition of honey bees to a landscape and how this impacted native bees. *It can be both*, the woman reminded me. Perhaps this is true, and yet there is something inside me that still feels unsettled. Perhaps, as in clowning, it is a matter of how. How and if both are honoured, how and if both are known, how and if both are given

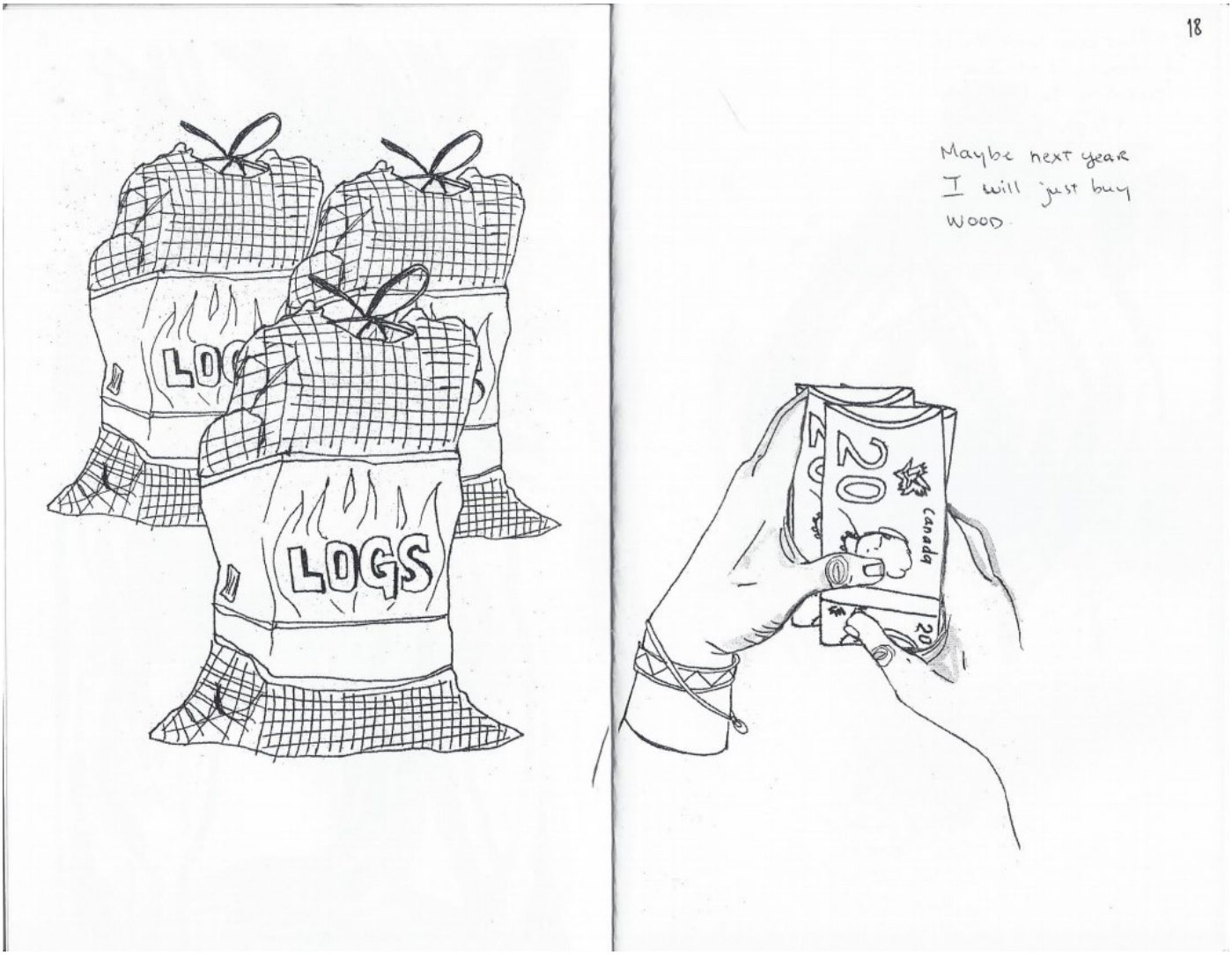
space to be. How and if I accept constrictions while intending mutually enriching interactions (Borrows, 2016).

Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) recounts an episode in which nearly all 200 of her science students opine that humans only destroy in their connection with nature. She offers a balancing perspective in stories where humans and the other-than-human live in healing, mutually loving and gifting relationships, such as sweet grass which thrives with respectful harvesting better than being left alone, or natural fires that are required to keep the forest healthy (W. Linds, personal communication, December 19, 2018). But I forget that the sweet grass also has will in this relationship. As different to the perspective of humans using agency to steward or protect a plant, what if humans cultivate sweet grass as the sweet grass cultivates humans in a balanced relationship (K. Hele, personal communication, February 27, 2018), in a conversation. I feel a wash of sadness – these plant beings of high creational vibration in some cosmologies (Geniusz, M. S. & Geniusz, W.M., 2015), spiritual teachers (Lacey, 1999) in their loving intentions, and I so often forget to listen, or to ask. Mary Siisip Geniusz and Wendy Makoons Geniusz (2015) write that their teacher would say that plant work is a beautiful way to guide others to life in the fullest sense, as "the plants have so much help to give us" (p. 5).

According to Robin Kimmerer (2013), the gift of sensory and heart-perceiving presence with all our relations is another way to cultivate this mutual exchange. Stephen Augustine (2016), Trudy Sable and Bernie Francis (2012), and Stephen Buhner (2004) also speak on the importance of sitting silently with the land and what this can teach about interculturalism, multiple realities, stories of the land, self-awareness, and relationships in general. For Vanessa Watts (2013), place-thought means that "land is alive and thinking and that humans and more-than-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts" (p. 21). As different from sustainability or stewardship, she calls for the necessity of communication: listening and then acting. In Judeo-Christian cosmology, place-thought was dangerous, taboo, and equated with witchcraft. Invader/conqueror mentality necessitated the crushing of place-thought and land-communication, with land as the primordial feminine, and that

> listening to what she tells us is not only about a philosophical understanding of life and the social realm; rather, it is about a tangible and tacit violence being done to her – and therefore to us (p. 32).

A lot of other birds have gone south, a midsummer sadness.



Maybe this year I will just buy wood.

Plants teach me about love.[25]

In the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee world view, write Mary Siisip Geniusz, Wendy Makoons Geniusz (2015), and Vanessa Watts (2013), humans were created last. In Anishinaabe culture, first came natural forces, rocks, winds, and weather as well as ceremonies, songs, and the *Aadizookaanag*, or spirits of characters in stories, spirits, plants, and animals. Then came plants, then animals, and then humans. The first can survive alone, all others are

[25] my own reflection post-ceremony with my nature mentor

interdependent. Work with plants is consensual (Geniusz & Geniusz, 2015; Simpson, 2014); Stephen Buhner (2004) writes that they are "the most caring of living beings" (p. 157). He encourages those interested in plant communication and deep connection to develop a dialogue and relationship with their naturally sensitive, playful, macrocosmically wise and embodied inner child; in Westernized society, members are often taught to repress this deep feeling, heart perceiving, and sensitive part of ourselves that is tuned to the "emotional nuances of the world" (p. 282). Sitting with different plants over the years, sometimes the same plant for a year and a day according to a European herbalist tradition, has also brought me unexpected depth and comfort of insight. D'Arcy Ishpeming'enzaabid Rheault Bizhiw (1999) shares that this kind of observing without questioning calms fears of the unknown and brings patience and humility.

Wholeness

May 2016-November 2017, Nictaux, NS.

Trevor Herriot (2004) calls nature the ability of all things to live autonomously through the heart. I take that to mean to be perceived and accepted in any given moment as they are, including humans. At Tegridy, the land with which I've been learning, I decide to fully face a few of my deeper maladaptive patterns, my favourite tricks and flips I routinely use to isolate myself from my own heart and from other humans. (Nowadays, it's more common than not.) Underneath, what a mess of feelings, so disruptive! Many days, or evenings, or nights when I cannot sleep, I walk to the vernal pond and the bridge, to the waters running fast with spring run-off or rainwater, quieting to river rocks and crickets in later months. I bawl in the bean fields, "drum kit"[26] in the barn loft, and laugh until I have to excuse myself from the kitchen, these emotions I have stashed in small and crooked places, wild in their fierce desire to flow through me. Maybe the earth told me it was time! She is steady in her cycles and seasons, and I am so thankful.

Sunshine through the maples gives the same light every dawn

[26] I bought a second hand drum kit with six toms and a double kick in the Spring of 2016 – nice and loud.

And at night the frogs and crickets fill the creek bed with their song
I feel all time and space inside
The smell of the earth and the heat of fireflies

And I am finding my way back home
Finding my way back home
(own song lyrics, summer 2014)

Karla McLaren (2010), a Euro-American healer and sociologist, writes about the balance of all four parts of a human being, spirit, body, emotions, and mind, similar to the concept of the medicine wheel in Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous cultures (Augustine & Consolo, 2016). She observes that earth-based, traditional cultural mythologies and spiritual practices are based on a quaternity of body, heart, mind, and spirit (McLaren, 2010). Healing that honours all four elements, conceptualized in her book as earth (body), heart (water), mind (air), and spirit (fire), is not neat and orderly but muddy, watery, blustery, and explosively fiery (p. 114). She writes, "When you're whole, you won't require everything around you to be unmoving and controllable, as perfectionists do, and you won't be happy only when conditions meet your exacting standards" (p. 73). Indeed, the Clown and Mask classes I have taken, with their blend of Indigenous and European clown philosophy, are seen to be largely based on techniques that help students access their shadow sides to become more balanced and whole inside themselves. For Stephen Buhner (2004), it is through the swallowing of our projections, or being with all aspects of ourselves in a whole and honest way, that we are increasingly able to listen and perceive clear communications with land and its elements, creatures, plants, waters. Gregory Cajete (1994) and Trudy Sable and Bernie Francis (2012) write that land is an extension of the human psyche. Wilderness practice facilitator Stephen Harper (1995) talks about a whole and honest experience, being with rain and mud, being with ourselves as nature, allowing emotions that emerge in response to experiences in nature rather than using logic or challenge to bypass them. When describing a wilderness experience, he explains that "we followed

exactly what was before us, and as the day wore on I found myself softening to and accepting whatever emerged inside" (p. 184).

Nature as a world view "cultivated ecological piety, based on letting the other be, and appreciating other entities for their unique being" (Cajete, 1994, p. 76), and "allowed the other to define itself to them, rather than imposing preconceived intellectual meanings" (p. 77). He writes about visionary psychologist Carl Jung's concept of Individuation as related to this idea of connecting and learning for the whole person. As different to settler psychological goals of achieving perfection and happiness through healing, the process of individuation looks to movement towards completeness and opening to growth – continuous movement and knowing/accessing all parts. However, in industrialized culture, individuation is seen to take place in the context of individual egos. He states that wholeness in an Indigenous context includes community and cultural spirituality, and that conversely, communities that were, and are viscerally connected to place (p. 87) provide a "fertile and supportive context" (p. 181) for this process.

Karla McLaren (2010), in *The Language of Emotions: What Your Feelings Are Trying to Tell You,* writes that in wholeness, it is possible to self-regulate by navigating our flows and inner turmoil and "compassionately restore balance to our psyches" (p. 77). However, without that centering,

> many of us turn to some kind of dissociative practice, whether it's avoidance of the trouble, distraction from the trouble, or addiction to a substance [or behaviour] that separates us from the trouble… avoidance, distraction, and addiction are absolutely commonplace in our culture because imbalance is absolutely common place in our psyches (p. 77).

She suggests that "right before we distract ourselves, there's always an emotion trying to come into consciousness" that carries truth and power. I also learned to stuff my unpleasant feelings away and thus have taught myself through this research to accept and feel many of these old, denied emotions and to develop new patterns of emotional recognition, acceptance, and navigation. "We only use the word addiction for behaviours to remind us that the antidote is *always* connection," says a healer I know. David Abram (1996) suggests that in the industrialized world, the root pain in human culture is the fracture or dismemberment of the

human and other-than-human connection, and human to human, too (K. Hele, 2018, personal communication). Following this argument, it seems that another root healer could be the re-membering of these connections, especially the human and other-than-human connection, one that is eternal and unbreakable (Rheault Bizhiw, 1999), where my body is my teacher (Buhner, 2004).

Yesterday, a snowdust fell after a warm spell, leaving paper-thin ice sheets over layers of oak and maple leaves. I take my computer with me to the old hunting cabin, scarcely visible, at the back of the property where I am spending the winter. Two squirrels give sharp territorial reprimands, the gurgle of raven confirms the diamond tail flash that flew past, pungent white lines of spruce pitch leave their scent on my fingers. I breathe in deeply, a slow exhale, and my mind clears. Nature as a world view sees life as ever changing with cyclical, complex, relational values, as an earth-based human cultural concept. As a European mutt transplanted centuries ago to North American lands and the cultures they grew, I continue to experiment with my local community with a mix of European ways of honouring land as well as slow slow learning of a few Mi'kmaq land ways. I continue to ask myself how to unsettle my settler narrative and expectations, especially around epistemologies of land, and how I might invite others to do the same. Land communication through perception through the heart, through earth-listening and feeling, and through a practice of allowing and wholeness teach me about love and connection, patience, flexibility, and humour, helping me find my way home.

Middle

A Whole and Open Ground: Theatrical Clowning as Inquiry

Clowning, a teacher of mine once said, is everything. Clowning is not so much a what but a *how*: the readiness to play from heart engagement and body presence (Lane, 2016), in relationality and full-sense perception (Bateson, 1976). In A Whole and Open Ground, I explore how I came to clowning and initial links I saw to my own self-inquiry and wellness. I then look at clowning traditions in Europe and non-Indigenous North America, as well as several clowning concepts that I believe have supported my own personal growth during this doctoral investigation: play, humour, and clowning in dramatic reality. At the end, I will look towards a teaching practice of wholeness and the marginal places within (Lane, 2016) that might similarly serve others.

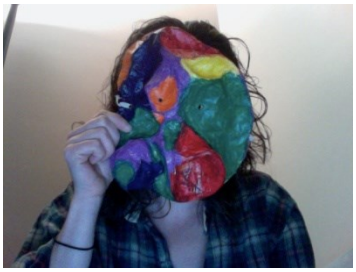
Clowning as inquiry

In the year 2000 at the University of Victoria, I took a year-long theatre course as part of my undergraduate degree in Latin American literature and poetry. A clown teacher named Shannan Calcutt came to us for an afternoon. We practiced what felt like emotional yoga, rapid changes between states at varying levels of intensity, and came out from behind a screen to showcase various clown-states. *I am a clown!* I wrote in my class journal. I felt as if someone had lit a magic candle inside my heart. I savoured the taste of the class for weeks, but if theatre was on my comfort edge, the pursuit of clowning was a galaxy far, far away. It stayed there until my night and day dreams began in late 2012: *I welcome a massage client to the door and see that I am wearing a tutu and lampshade on my head. Clowning, theatre, environment. Storytelling, ecology, sexuality,* like words pulled behind an airplane. I retold my night dream to my boyfriend at the time, dutifully wrote down these strange combinations of day dream

words. I asked around until I tracked down a teacher offering a class in Montréal the following summer, a week-long immersion course with Nose to Nose in the Bataclown tradition in 2013.

I was shocked to find that the art of clowning enacted on stage many of the inter and intrapersonal connections and learnings I had been laboring to integrate over the years, particularly as it pertained to shyness, anxiety, and situational depression. It allowed moments of deep emotional release when I walked and then danced blindfolded with a sighted partner during a year of utter life-path confusion, when I rode a suitcase down a rapid "river" and then "emerged" to dance with a red tulle cloth in the wake of romantic wreckage, when I merely showed up on stage and improvised to know what would happen next, when I accepted the stage invitation to show not the bravado of how I wanted to feel but how I was actually feeling. It offered the medicines of laughter and tenderness; it left me illuminated, star spangled, shook down, and blissed. My buzz lasted for a few days after the course and then slowly dissipated. I began to research clowning with the intent of writing a book and went away to British Columbia to volunteer with an interior community for a month. Moments stolen in my early morning readings about clown were a reliable hit of clarity, not to mention the medicine of teasing from the community, my saucy and silly roommate from New Zealand, and nights of drumming and eating by a fire. I committed to a doctoral application and was later accepted.

Leading up to entrance into my doctoral program, I attended the two-week immersion in the Clown and Mask tradition. This uncovered and dressed up six denied and sometimes contradictory parts of myself:

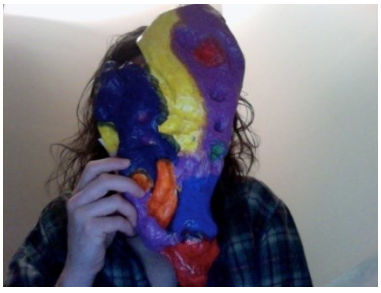


1) arrogant king with a chip on his shoulder whose left leg was stolen by fairies

2) bumbling baby eagle who cheerfully loves everyone and everything

3) hypersensitive alien who vomits up her heart in the presence of boys

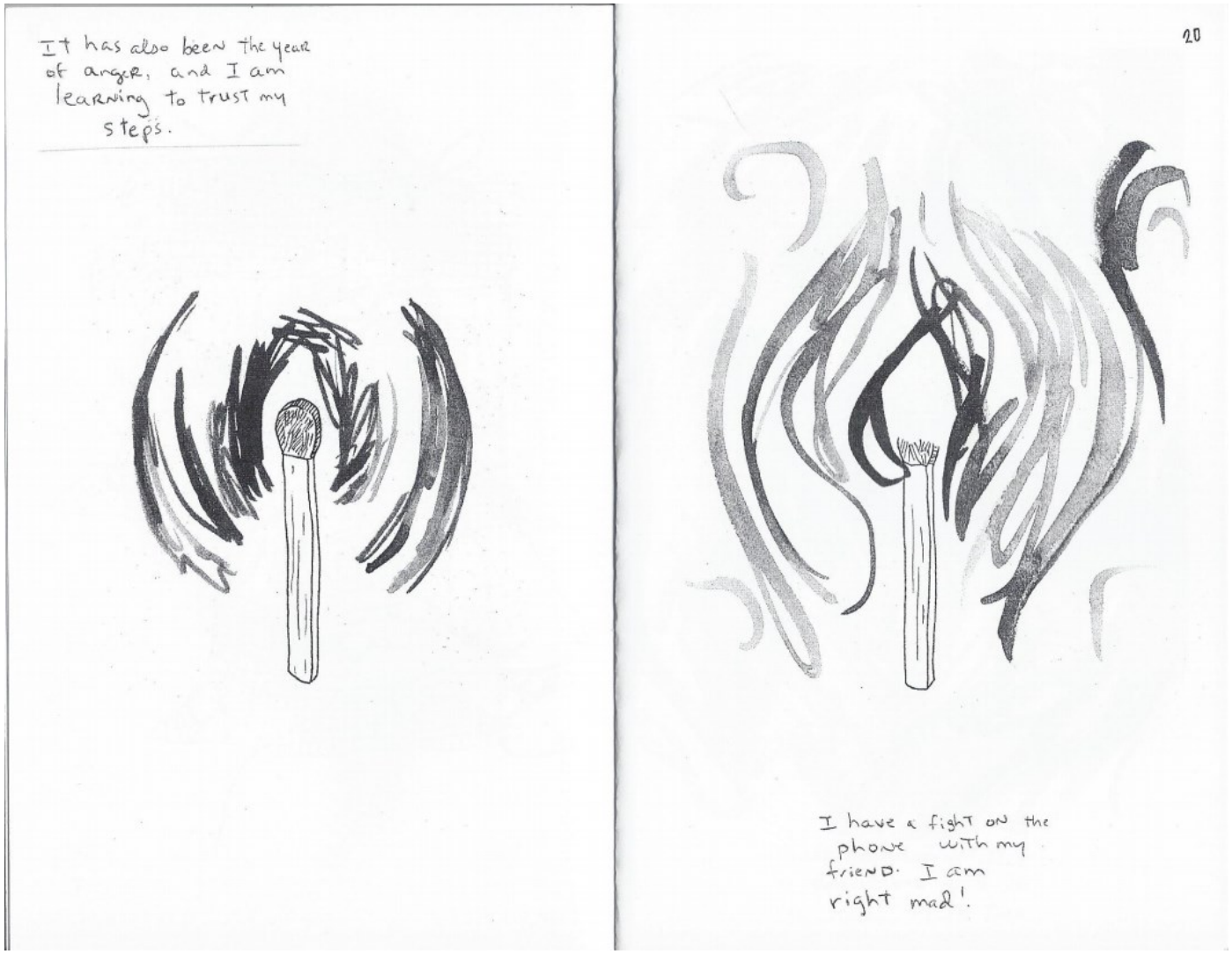
4) gruff troll king with a skin falling off disease who likes to break the rules and make people laugh



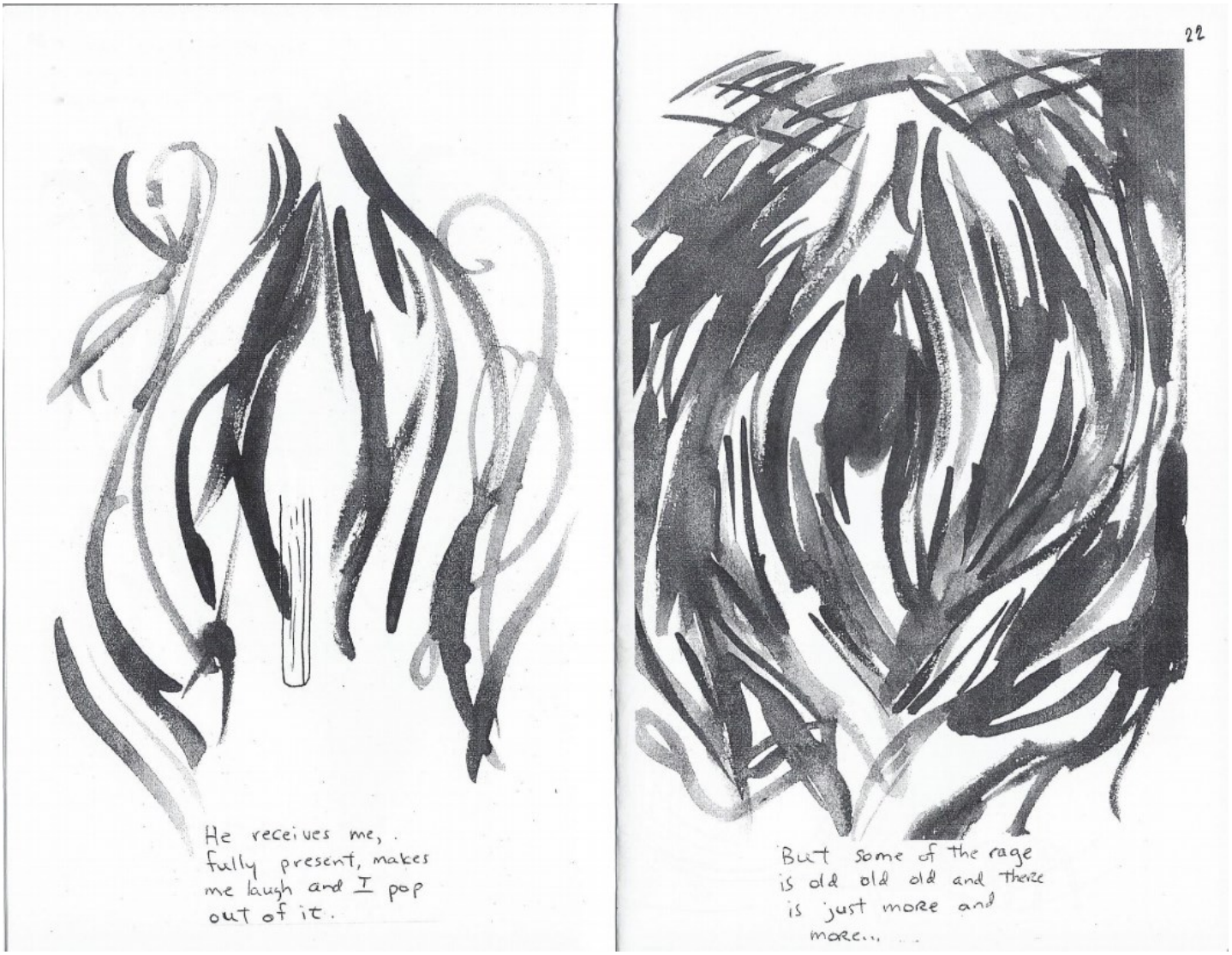
5) old old earth mother who gives birth to the world

6) smooth and orgiastic King of Jupiter who makes love to the Queen of the Stars until his heart floats away.

These “masks” are aspects of myself, or twisted mirrors of myself (John Turner, class communication, July 2014). “They” shared their costumes and gestures in six different turns, or clown performance pieces, on stage. I noticed this gave me an afterwave of creative courage as I plunked on public pianos without a hint of habitual hesitation, as well as the levity of humour during the first month of my doctoral research (Ardley, 1967). But again, this medicine soon faded and I was back to head decisions as well as body and emotional abandonment. How could I integrate this medicine into my life in a more steady, consistent, and integrated form? As a very young child who walked with one hand on the wall even after my own legs and balance would hold me, the slow realization, through clowning and other healing work, that my heart, body, and feelings could be my safety line, healing practice, and offering to the world has been revolutionary (Beck, 2012). I have taken numerous trainings and engaged with clown through dance and through other creative mediums (see appendix B). I have experienced stop moments in clown training, or moments of risk and opportunity that ask for presence, awareness, and fresh response (Fels, 2012). So, how does clowning help me to learn about and explore my world? How does this rich and deeply fascinating art form connect me to healing and wellness?



It has also been the year of anger, and I am learning to trust my steps. I have a fight on the phone with my friend. I am right mad!



He receives me, fully present, makes me laugh and I pop out of it. But some of the rage is old old old and there is just more and more…

Clowning Traditions: European and North American Settler

One of my clown teachers once told me that clowning is like music – an art form with a vast range of representations. Clown is in some ways indefinable, as she/he is responding openly to the cultural milieu in a dynamic world (Christen, 1998; Davidson, 2013), especially in a

loving way to the most difficult parts of life (Annis, 2013). Tom Cowan (1993) and Beryl Hugill (1980) write that European sacred clowning has deep roots in seasonal festivals as "the voice of the people, an expression of human feeling" (p. 19). In Anglo Saxon England before the Norman Conquest, glee-men and glee-maidens were humourous poet-musicians who offered songs of bravery and virtue, dancing, and sleight of hand and held a respected role in the community; after the Norman Conquest, these community figures lost status and were more connected with minstrels and buffoons (Hugill, 1980). I wonder if the loss of status had to do with their former roles as community historians (Moore, 1880) and a desire to establish a "new" history by the colonizers.

European clowns are now often represented by the classic Joey/Auguste pairing: white clown/red clown, elder/younger, high/low status, or manipulator/victim (Coburn & Morrison, 2013). According to Paul Bouissac (2010), this complex binary opposition of Joey and Auguste dates as far back as the beginning of the nineteenth century in Europe, perhaps representing "tension between earthy peasantry and abusive aristocracy or urban smugness" and can be seen as "the embodiments of 'culture' vs. 'nature'" (p. 104). The Joey and Auguste love each other and survive only in relation to the other. Joeys are characterized by mischief and elegance (Swortzell, 1978). They have "apparent status, wealth, and control" (Peacock, 2009, p. 20), while Augustes are simple, spontaneous, and eager, often with clothes that don't fit, awkward shoes, hat, and nose, with exaggerated make up.

To subvert is to overturn or overthrow from the foundation[27]. While not the focus of this dissertation, I will regardless touch on this important role of clowns. According to Sue Proctor (2013), clowns are

> able to penetrate to the human being underneath the oppressive role, whereupon the role loses power. Once the policeman finds himself laughing, he becomes confused and can no longer relate single-mindedly to the situation of conflict. He shifts perspective, laughs, and becomes confused (p. 71).

Street clowns play with contentious or political issues (Hugill, 1980); Louise Peacock (2009) and John Towsen (1976) mention various traditional societies where sacred clowns imitate priests, mock and support sacred ceremonies, or model playful ways to respond to authority. Lowell

[27] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/subvert

Swortzell (1978) writes that fools and jesters liberated royalty from the "stifling etiquette of their own courts" (p. 28). Interestingly, while Indigenous clowns have typically enjoyed a high degree of support from their communities, European clowns were more susceptible to the whims and reactions of the king to social skewering (Towsen, 1976). Louise Peacock (2009) writes that when a clown satirizes an established system, the audience is able to feel and release the emotions related to this convention and/or feel superior. Augusto Boal (1985) argues that this can actually be counteractive to systemic change, as the audience experiences catharsis without any need to act or make changes. Instead, he feels that real change happens when the audience becomes specactors, or involved in the acting and theatrics, as he practices with his Theatre of the Oppressed (1985) or Rainbow of Desires (1995) techniques. In the latter, subversion becomes within the confines of one's head and in play with an internalized oppressor, the Cops in the Head.

Julia Lane (2016) contends that while certain clown acts can be subversive, a clown her/himself is both conservative and subversive; a clown exists to expand possibilities and communication and has capacity to be both and all things at once. At the same time, "it is also possible for clowning to simply go over, across, past, or beyond the rules and boundaries that govern every day life without intending to either subvert or conserve them" (p. 80). In this way, clowns show that rules and boundaries are not necessarily so fixed, and

> thus, where people may see the rules and boundaries of their socio-cultural context as binding them, clowns see the power that they themselves have to create society and culture…clowns and tricksters do not transgress simply to violate or destroy; instead, their transgressions are creative and transformative" (p. 80).

Brian Sutton-Smith (1997) adds that tricksters do not act in opposition to power or authority but rather embody paradox and contrast, both order and rules and scrambled disorder in order to touch upon the truth in the oneness and both/and of pure experience. In this way, there is no opposition and no enemy because there is nothing concrete or stable to oppose. He reminds us that the physical world, human nature, and the whole of life is in eternal change and inversion. I touch on my experience of subversive clowning later in this chapter.

Yves Dagenais (2015), Jon Davidson (2013), and Paul Bouissac (2015) share many other types and practices of modern clown in the United States and Canada that include hospital

clowns, Clowns Without Borders, entertainment clowns, Tramps, Harlequins, traditional English lyrical jesters, rodeo clowns, stand-up comics, and political clowns. John Wright (2007) calls clown "the gift of being how you are instead of doing/being your best" (p. 193). He distinguishes between simple clowns, or a level of "unbridled theatrical play" (p. 180), pathetic clowns, or a practice of clowning linked with sadness or pity, and tragic clowns, or a character who lives through the "extremes of human misery" (p. 237) and engages the audience through determination and strength. Writers and scholars such as Enid Welsford (1935), John Towsen (1976), Lowell Swortzell (1978), Ron Jenkins (1988), Kimberly Christen (1998), Beryl Hugill (1980), Robert Bell (2010), David Robb (2007), Paul Bouissac (2010, 2015), Tim Prentki (2012) and Joseph Martin (1990) have also examined the societal and theatrical traditions and practices of clowning, while Barbara Babcock-Abrahams (1975), Lewis Hyde (1999), Michael Bala (2010), and Sallie Nichols (1974) have written on the archetypal function of clown and trickster.

The genre that has intrigued me most during my investigation and the technique I use to create short turns is the Clown and Mask tradition (also known as Pochinko Clowning or Canadian Clowning). It blends European clowning, Jungian psychology, and certain insights that Canadian theatre pioneer Richard Pochinko gained from his own spiritual practice and insights (Wallace, n.d.) that were influenced by Indigenous philosophy (Coburn & Morrison, 2013). Julia Lane (2016) offers a detailed and streamlined description of Clown and Mask in her doctoral dissertation from an educational point of view. Masks and colour characters emerge from walking the energy of seven colours into our bodies and wearing masks and moving to the energy of the six directions.

Each mask and colour character has a physical story to tell of an experience as both a younger and older version of the character, and each physical story is distilled down to a unique gesture. Gestures can be a way to drop back into the authentic impulse, physicality, and emotional flexibility of clowning if I pop into my head as my habitual persona of Megan (Jung, 1972). Says Clown and Mask teacher Sue Morrison (2013),

> the clown performer must make split second decisions throughout performance whether to stay on script or veer off, whether the story that should take precedence is the script or the clown's own story. And the tool of navigation is emotional

> impulse. In standard improvisation it could be argued that the intellect leads the way. It looks for opportunities, clever lines, segue ways to the next thing, the funny thing, the better thing. In clown the intellect is not abandoned, it is required to work alongside and in tandem with everything else, but it does not lead. Instead, the trainee clown learns to calm the intellect and be guided by an emotional compass. And to be led by emotion one must be aware of it and this emotional awareness is called being connected to self. [The activity] Return To Childhood offers an opportunity to reconnect with a time when listening to our impulses was natural (p. 182).

In this artistic form of clowning, mask work reveals aspects of our "unacceptable" shadow that our social masks are meant to hide. Techniques of Clown and Mask can work to humble personas or archetypes that are power hungry in our own personal mythology and to celebrate and embolden other characters who see themselves as less worthy of attention (J. Turner, personal conversation, September 2014). Clown and Mask allows me to experience, welcome, and honour multiple aspects of self (Coburn & Morrison, 2013). In turn, this opportunity to "express the full range of traits that are potentially present in the human repertoire but usually atrophy because we think that one or the other pole is 'good', whereas the other extreme is 'bad'" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 57) allows more possibilities of creative response. As I write later in this dissertation, nature also offers this kind of amoral ground and context (see chapter VII). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) writes that creative personalities live both extremes of seemingly polar and stable qualities and "bring together the entire range of human possibilities within themselves" (p 57). Carl Jung thought that by accepting our shadow parts, we cease to struggle against ourselves; creative people "experience both with equal intensity and without inner conflict" (p. 57) but rather "in a dialectical tension" (p. 58). Robert Landy (1996) states that one goal of healing is to accept and be with these different contradictory roles and feelings and to learn to move between them.

I drum kit it, scream it, cry it, speak it to my friends

It's maybe uncomfortable on the outside, but comfortable on the inside, says the healer. You're calling back your free will.

Clowning as Personal Inquiry

Play

July, 2014, Manitoulin Island, ON

I'm on the island for my first introduction to Clown and Mask. We've spent hours walking colours and directions into our bodies, finding movements and sounds, and putting

these energies into balls of clay to make masks. When I first open my eyes after I put the movement and sound energies of this (unconscious) part of myself into the mask-shaping, I laugh, embarrassed, at his long, protruding nose. When I further explore this mask, he appears as a bumbling young eagle who loves everyone and everything whole-heartedly. Exuberant, tender, and expressive, when I take Two South on stage, he pours imaginary water from a bucket to put out an imaginary fire.

"Can we put out a fire with air?" says John. He takes me backstage and fills up the bucket with water for me.

"Go again."

I come out on stage and promptly pour the contents of the bucket onto the ground. I spontaneously drop to my knees and slap my hands in the water over and over with all my force, laughing ecstatically and beaming at the amused audience like a two year old. I feel in an altered state, and watching my actions, also humiliated. *What a dumb mask,* is the thought that booms in my head after I have finished. *What a dumb, dumb, dumb mask!!* As I stand in front of the class after the turn as Megan, I have tears in my eyes.

John comes up to stand beside me. "Cool," he says, noticing my emotional response. "There is probably something in this mask for you." He explains that we may be tempted to avoid the masks that scare us, but that he encourages us to explore them to see what we might learn.

Play, says the literature, is intrinsic to human beings (Huizinga, 1950; Gordon, 2014; Bayliss, 1999; Callois, 1961) and supports connection (Carse, 1986) and problem solving (Nachmanovitch, 1990; Bateson & Martin, 2013). Play is constant change (Johnson, n.d.; Turner, 1982; Sutton-Smith, 1997); play is a deep and ongoing yes to life (Ackerman, 1999). John Wright (2007) calls clowning "a radical level of play" (p. 183) through games of possibility. Play prioritizes feelings and self-expression over proving worth or ability (Johnson, n.d.; Blatner, 2003), fueled by the archetypal energy of trickster (Annis, 2013). It is a way to stay in the heart of possibility, creativity, and inner Source, no matter what the exterior emotional temperature (Boven, 2014; Johnson, n.d.). Play is a precursor for creativity and essential for personal

development; English pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (1971) comments that in the search for the Self,

> certain conditions are necessary if success is to be achieved in this search. These conditions are associated with what is usually called creativity. It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self (pg. 54).

Drew Haydon Taylor (2010) comments that the Anishinaabe trickster Nanabozho, in his unfiltered, undomesticated form, can seem dangerous as he destroys and creates. I see this wild freedom in some of the selkie tales as well. Dennis McCarthy (2012) writes that true play is provocative, confrontational, and integrative. For children, the disintegration / reintegration aspects of play are part of the process that supports "normal growth and especially deep change" (McCarthy, 2007, p. 91). It "unearths what has been thwarted or negated in the child. At least momentarily there is the possibility of reconciliation of the various parts of the child, a momentary potential for wholeness" (p. 126). He states that since children have a lack of fixed identity, they can change, or fall apart, without much resistance. But for adults, my research-creation teacher Erin Manning suggests, change can be painful.

In March of 2016 I host an experimental playshop called theatre games for non-theatre people with a small group of adults. We do theatre warm ups and did some trust building and theatre games. While one participant comments that it helps to bring him out of his shell, and another shares that she feels much lighter afterwards, throughout the playshop, participants comment on how hard it is to engage in the games to play. Cecily O'Neill (1995) states that when we lose our usual roles and status through play, we engage in a process of "separation, transition, and transformation" (pg. 66). It can be a kind of death of the known self, a necessary part of the cycle of wholeness (Muller, 2005). This kind of transformation "dissolves the pattern I call *me* in some way, and in its place, puts new experiences that may feel truer, but may also feel more tender, vulnerable, and unfamiliar" (Caldwell, 2003, pg. 308). Gregory Cajete (1994) writes that in Indigenous communities, Elders knew/know that

> true learning causes change and at times may elicit a transformation of self at a person's very core. Transformation is a breaking apart to reform at a higher level of being and understanding. In its real expression in people, transformation is

> anything but peaceful and harmonious. Indigenous community recognized this aspect of true learning and provided for it through ritual preparation, rites of passage, and initiations

in order to support movement towards personal integration.

At the time, I thought my emotional and unexpected response to Two South the bumbling baby eagle had something to do with my desire to achieve. It occurs to me now that my body's communication was perhaps more deeply linked to my willingness to play. When Two South emerged, I felt both a sense of liberation and shame. He was so ridiculous in his play and spontaneity. Through him, I had shown my naked, messy little heart to my clown friends; I felt afraid of his transparency and laissez-faire tenderheartedness. Didn't this mask know it wasn't safe to just bumble around *loving* everyone and everything?

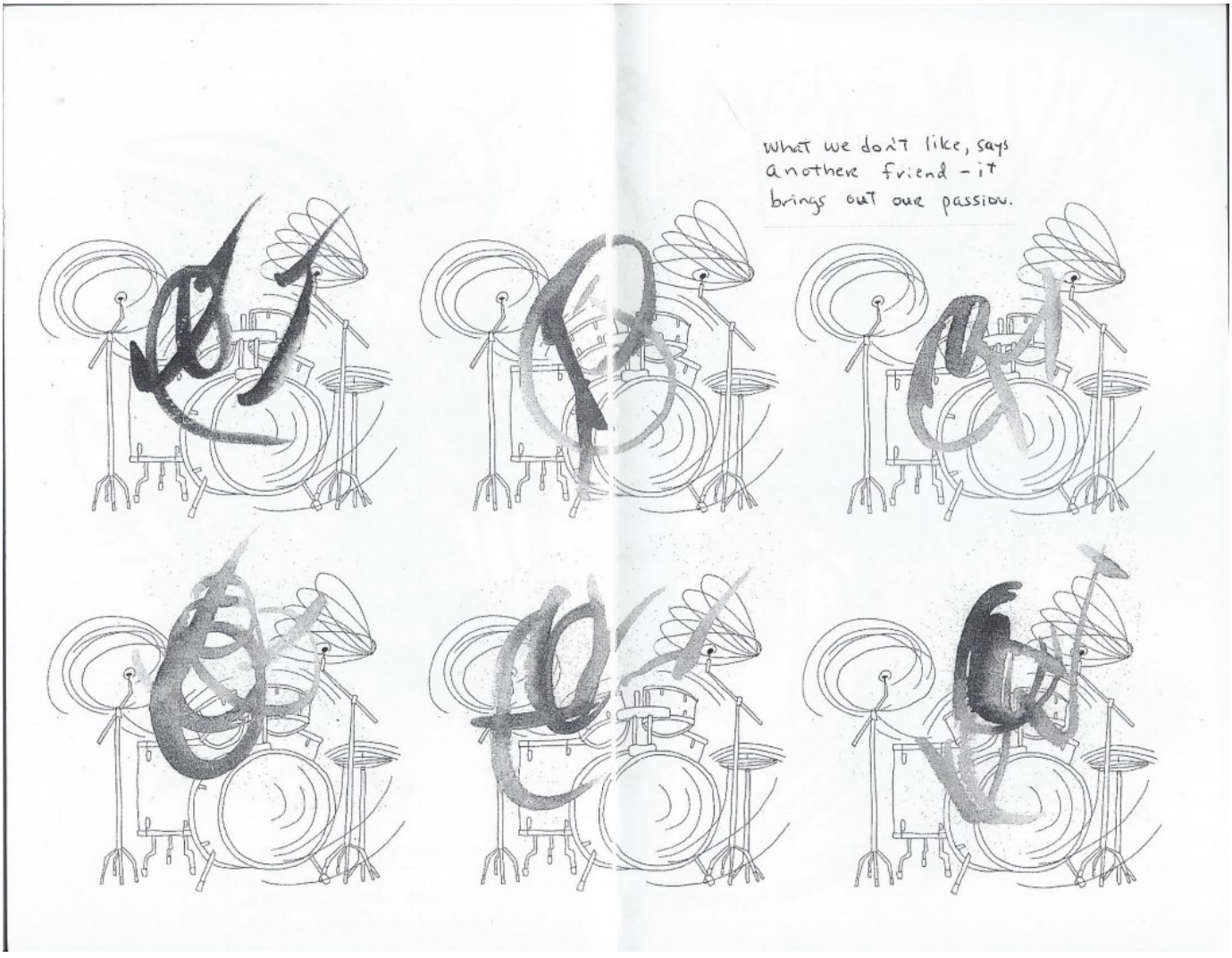
Barbara Ehrenreich (2007) documents the rise of the Industrial Revolution and Protestantism, a paralleled rise of "dread of collective joy" and the resulting "violent policies of cultural repression in various colonies" (p. 123). According to her research,

> Protestantism – especially in its ascetic Calvanist form – played a major role in convincing large numbers of people not only that unremitting, disciplined labor was good for their souls, but that festivities were positively sinful, along with mere idleness (p. 101).

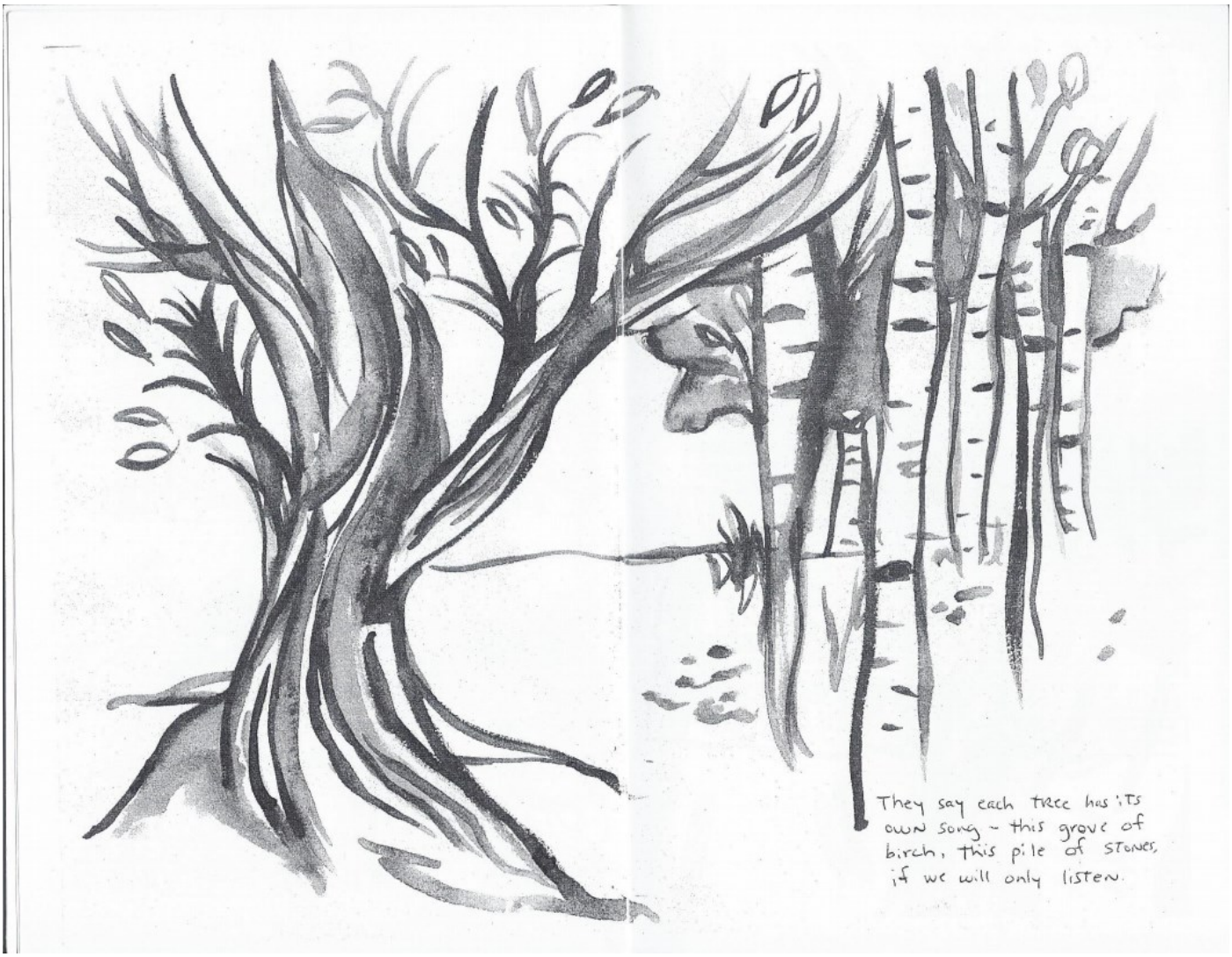
My lineage, as I have reported, is solidly Protestant as far back on all sides that I can trace; I gratefully acknowledge the tools that this has offered me. At the same time, James Thompson (2011) imagines that attention to affect, or emotions, senses, and beauty, can calm an overreliance on the rational and melt some of the less than life enhancing aspects of the effects of Protestantism. He suggests that affect opens to cultural ways of being that are more interconnected and rooted in the wildness of the world.

Similarly, Ashley Montagu (1989) writes that in Victorian Britain and Western Europe, the energy and qualities of childhood were discouraged, and that this child educational process is sometimes still rooted and encouraged in American systems. However, he argues that humans are meant to "retain the developmental directiveness of the traits of the child" (p. 94).

These include qualities such as “playfulness; open-mindedness; willingness to experiment; flexibility; humor; energy; receptiveness to new ideas; honesty; eagerness to learn…the need to love” (p. 2). He proposes that these innate traits, blended with maturity, are the basis for learning and growth. As Clown and Mask teacher Jan Henderson says, “I believe all creation comes from play. All of our problem solving comes from play…Our inner child is the ultimate source of all that” (n.p.). Stephen Nachmanovitch (1990) calls the energy of play of “supreme evolutionary value” (p.44). How has the playfulness of clown training helped me move towards self-inquiry and integration? As I look to my own strongly English and Protestant heritage, what cultural mores am I implicitly breaking within myself when I cultivate an enthusiasm of play? What is falling apart? How do I integrate transgressions for deep change?



What we don't like, says another friend – it brings out our passion.



They say each tree has its own song – this group of birch, this pile of stones, if we will only listen.

Humour

July 2017, Manitoulin Island, Ontario

It's three years later, in 2017, and it's time for more clown research / training from my own body / heart perspective. I've returned to this magical island in Ontario from the funny farm where I live in Nova Scotia with the hope that this immersion will unblock my clown creativity and garner me more insights. Today we're in the studio for *Boot Camp!*, a deepening course to follow Baby Clown, the initial Clown and Mask training I took in 2014. After three days of rain, this morning dawned with blue skies. We have reviewed our masks and colours and shared a turn each. As part of course preparation for Boot Camp, students have created personal lists of top ten fears and ecstasies, images, and stage dreams for turn fodder as well as the selection of an additional creative work that could incorporate clowning. I chose to bring a storybook that I wrote and that a friend illustrated six months back. In front of the class, I hold open the storybook and read the title.

"Wood." My legs shake; I read it straight the first time as Megan, clown nose around my neck. "I live in a house on the South Mountain with six others. This year I harvest wood for the first time. It is hard wood and hard work. This year the ATV breaks, no money to fix it, so from wheelbarrow to dolly to dragging to machete to tractor to shoulders, to slinging over my shoulder in a red cloth, like an old hag barefoot in mud."

It's a story that still holds feelings of shame for me, veins of exhaustion and frustration. I almost bailed on my intent to share it, but the taboo, risky, emotional and consequently hilarious stand up piece of another student inspired me to try. What is too serious in my own little world to laugh at? Can I clown a story about addictions?

"Three times I go on beach vacation. Three times the car breaks down. It is the summer of sitting with myself. Sitting with my big fat baggage. I don't know if I can do it. I feel lonely as hell."

The room is very quiet, save some relieved laughter: "Maybe next year I will just buy wood."

John sends me back stage with my storybook and asks which masks would and wouldn't harvest from the forest. My troll father mask, I reply, a resolute character, and my aggressive and bitter king. He suggests that I alternate between the two. I shuffle on stage and tap into my gruff troll father clown voice.

"I LIVE IN A HOUSE ON THE SOUTH MOUNTAIN WITH SIX OTHERS. THIS YEAR I HARVEST WOOD FOR THE FIRST TIME." Folks laugh, and my bitter king jumps in to glare and stab the air with his foot, as my hands are holding the book. More laughter. "ALL THE BIRDS HAVE GONE SOUTH, A MIDSUMMER SADNESS."

"Tweet tweet," John suggests.

"TWEET TWEET," I grunt. I'm starting to crack up, trying not to corpse (break character and laugh).

"GESTURE!" John yells.

I throw in a bunch of gestures to keep my composure. Bitter king grunts menacingly and stabs at the air again.

"SOMETIMES I DON'T STOP TO FEEL THINGS, FEEL INTO THINGS. REMEMBER, THE ANTIDOTE TO ADDICTION IS CONNECTION."

"There's no picture on the page," says John cheekily.

"*I KNOW*!!!" I roar. I feel my face growing pink, warm, a lightness in my shoulders. I see my joy reflected back in the faces of the audience. The hard year of hard wood is softening in my bones.

Mady Schuztman (2006), Gavin Ardley (1967), and Carmen Moran and Margaret Massam (1997) write that humour cultivates flexibility, resilience, and courage. Lewis Hyde (1999) calls laughter the third space in contradiction – rather than opposing the thing that usually ends up encircling you, it offers you a humourous passage out. It releases rigidity and unconscious desires (Bergson, 1911; Davidson, 2013; Schechner, 1988), brings about social balance and harmony (Bergson, 1911; Hillerman, 1993; Spielmann, 1998), and highlights and celebrates the stumblings of humanity (Wright, 2007; Proctor, 2013; Bouissac, 2015; Coburn & Morrison, 2013). Humour thrives on surprise (Taylor, 2006), although the Clown and Mask

tradition is less about the famous “flop” as a gag and more about honest emotional responses to what emerges in the surroundings, what this technique calls gifts from the gods (Coburn & Morrison, 2013). The stronger the felt response, the funnier or more impactful the performance.

I find inspiration in Kristina Fagan’s work (2009) and in Drew Hayden Taylor’s collection (2006) on humour, who write that from an Indigenous perspective, humour is also a way to access deep and painful emotions while honouring interconnection and community harmony. Roger Spielmann (1998) includes humour in an Ojibwe context as a way to be with sociocultural pain of “oppression and tragedy” (p. 109). Humour can allow digestion through repetition or silence but through a more distanced, self-aware perspective so that listeners can make their own inferences (Fagan, 2009). If I look to a clown exploration context, participants can find joy and laughter in the midst of pain and “become intimately familiar with and tolerant of this paradox” (Carp, 1998, p. 251). The etymology of paradox, I recently learned, means beyond thinking (Gordon, Shenar, & Pendzik, 2018). Veronica Coburn and Sue Morrison (2013) and Henri Bergson (1911) write that comedy, especially in clowning, can also come from always starting anew, “to make a great effort for a result that is nil” (p. 85). This cyclical and fractal clown pattern of disintegration/reintegration (Bouissac, 2015; Zinga & Styres, 2011) is different from comic triumph or tragic defeat (Bouissac, 2015). I feel my body tense as I write this; how will I ever get anywhere with this aggravating aspect of clown/life reality? Or, as I wrote in a love song two years back, is it that “we’ve got somewhere to go, and we’re already there”?

John stops me in the clown story and sends me backstage again; I’m wiping the laughter tears from my eyes, and I take off my nose.

“Is there a mask who would love to harvest wood?” he asks.

“Definitely my bumbling baby eagle mask,” I reply. This mask gushes and loves everyone and everything like a mad fool.

“Ok, and do it three times as fast this time.” He runs back to the audience.

I re-nose, I come on stage, I beam and wiggle.

"This year I harvest wood for the first time!!!! It is hard work and hard wood!!!! I feel as lonely as hell!!! Tweet tweet!!! Maybe next year I'll just BUY WOOD!!!!"

People are literally doubled over, tears in their eyes. I'm corpsing all over the place. Afterwards, I feel high, bright, washed clean and clear. Folks come up to ask if they can read the rest of the story or order their own copy. My skittishness with the group settles; I feel somehow more deeply resting in my own skin.

Clowning as Dramatic Reality

In the second course of the summer of 2017 on Manitoulin, Joey and Auguste, we play games, improvise scenarios, and create turns all based on the rule that in pair work, it's all about the relationship; if I do the "wrong" thing and everything goes sideways, I have the opportunity to play and problem solve. We play a number of rounds of a game called Assumptions, modified from another game from improvisational theatre pioneer Keith Johnstone. One participant leaves the room while the rest of the group decides on a series of precise actions that the on-stage actor will carry out. The actor follows her impulses and lets out genuine emotion when she gets stuck; the audience snaps when she gets warmer to the right action and remains silent when the actor gets colder.

The first time I play Assumptions, I'm alone on stage. As I find out later, my task is to take a classmate's personal notebook and throw it off the balcony of the studio to the gravel path below. (At least it wasn't raining that day). Although the group has taped arrows to the floor that point to the notebook and to the door leading to the balcony, it takes me a long time on stage to find my way to the actions they have chosen for me, particularly as I stand facing my classmate whose notebook is the chosen sacrificial object. I don't vent my true emotions on stage, I block my impulses, I loop back into a pattern of thinking it out, not feeling it out. I feel very uncomfortable. When I finally give in to the action and toss the book with gusto, the class cheers. Afterwards, I stand in front of the group, knees bent and hands on my thighs, panting slightly.

"How was that?"

I let my breath out in a huff of air and raise an eyebrow.

"Sometimes clowns are nasty," says Mike Kennard, the other teacher.

"I can be nasty!" I protest.

The class laughs.

I blush. "Can I go outside now?"

After class, I stand on the balcony. John joins me.

"How did it feel to throw that book off the balcony?" he asks.

"Fun," I say without hesitation.

The second time, I'm with my clown partner who, as the Joey, becomes privy to the audience instructions while I, as the Auguste, remain ignorant. This time, I'm determined as Megan to "do it right": follow impulses, listen to the audience's feedback, vent emotions as they arise to stay in my body, connect with my partner through breath and eye contact. However, once on stage, I find myself increasingly flustered as the teachers call out provocations and suggestions, and I retreat up into my head and out of my body again. I lose all sense of impulse. I hold back my feelings of anger, frustration, and embarrassment. The game seems to last an eternity. I swallow my feelings of panic and rage as my head babbles: *just a game, relax, what the hell? I hate this, I'm sucking at this, I'm really sucking at this, I can do this, impulse, impulse, I have no fucking impulse, I have no fucking idea.* Suddenly, I find myself melting in front of the class into chest sobs that are hard to stop. My partner hugs me. I want to die.

"Hey, this is BEAUTIFUL," says one of the teachers.

I'm enjoying myself during this second course, kind of… I have placed a good heavy block of pressure on my own shoulders to come back with some juicy jewels for my writing, although I fear that I have lost my research focus. I have been given a scholarship in exchange for a post course essay on whatever I want to write about, and my old friend insecurity is whispering all kinds of nasties in my ear – *it had better be good, Megan!* Meanwhile after a lonely year of dateless wonder in the wilds of rural Nova Scotia I am experiencing an unexpected rush of romantic attentions – *better choose right, Megan!* While I have plenty of gifts and talents, solid and trustful embodied decision-making evokes an inexplicable fear in me at the best of times, much less when I am facing some of my demons on the exposure of a stage.

Augusto Boal (1995) calls the 'as if' of theatre (Schechner, 2013, p. 89) metaxis, or being completely and simultaneously in two worlds. Meaning emerges when we are able to consciously feel our bodies, acting in this overlap of realities (Linds, 2006). We practice and maintain coherence without the urge for interpretation "in the second world (the aesthetic) in order to modify the first (the social)" (Boal, 1995, p.44), in rehearsal for real life. Richard Schechner (1988) writes that blocked impulses in humans go inward into fantasy, and that performance allows an acceptable display of these impulses. In this way, "performances have a restorative function" (p. 231) for the human psyche as a means of social modulation for aggression and inspiration for action. Things that "can't" happen in real life occur in a doubled version, with the insight and affective expansion (O'Neill, 1995; Morgan & Saxton, 1987) in the dialogue and playful experimentation between the two (Bolton, 1979; Butler, 2015). Some practitioners call this dramatic reality. This capacity for transformation, Richard Schechner (1988) argues, is "the root of theatre" (p. 248).

After Assumptions round two, my Joey puts her arm around me. We stand in front of the class. The teacher asks, as usual, how we found the exercise.

"Hell," I reply. I'm still wiping tears from my eyes; I feel like if I start crying again, I won't stop. My brain is yammering at me, frenetically computing a logical explanation at my complete dissolution while playing a low-stakes game in front of friendly adults. My body feels shaky and drained. The teachers remind us that now it's about the relationship between the two partners, that *it doesn't matter* if we stray from the script of finding our tasks as long as we stay in clown: breathing, gestures, venting honest emotional responses. These things keep us in the room, in risk, in spontaneity, in our impulses, in physicality. We're encouraged to evaluate how we feel about activities in terms of levels of risk and of feeling and showing emotion. I go to the porch and breathe in the spruce and fir of the Manitoulin forest. When I return to the class, I sit away from the teachers, unable to look them in the eyes. My body feels hot and tense.

Dramatic projection directs typically unconscious parts of ourselves or our emotions to a dramatic technique for expression and exploration. Jason Butler (2015) suggests that through

playing in dramatic reality and through using dramatic projection, it is possible to have both an emotional experience and the clarity to integrate the experience. Veronica Coburn and Sue Morrison (2013) in Clown and Mask call this mythic distance: "dressing up our 'shit' in the costume of archetype and pushing it away from ourselves, into an imaginary world, over there, allows us to see what we need to see clearly" (p. 153), that which is important and true. If Robert Landy (1996) writes that masks are less emotionally distancing than puppets or dolls, becoming a mask is even less so. As John said, we are actually experiencing these unconscious parts of ourselves.

Much of the provocation that John and later his creative partner Mike threw at me during my second summer at Clown and Mask was to "get it out", to go for it, more emotion, and particularly more anger and transgression. They encouraged me to tell them to shut the fuck up, to throw the notebook off the balcony, to give the audience the finger, to do the stabbing gesture of my bitter king mask. As I mention earlier, one historical role of clowns is to subvert and provoke – to break taboos and rules, behave amorally, get in trouble, transgress boundaries, enact fears to relieve audiences of their own (Davidson, 2013; Coburn & Morrison, 2013), and generally be bad. It has also been one of my blocks in this angle of clowning, and these emotional connoisseurs recognized it within the first day of class. Heck, they probably saw it within moments of meeting me. While uncomfortable, better that I try it all out on stage, as Italian clown Giovanni Fusetti (2018) warns that "the parts of ourselves that we don't play with, will play with us." Sociologist turned life coach Martha Beck (2009) puts it a little less ominously:

> By embracing your contrarian or bratty self, you actually calm down your inner child; repress your brat, and you act it out no matter how old you get. The calmer your inner child, the more joy and simplicity you'll bring to the process of following your bliss. Emotionally and behaviourally, you'll be aging backward into the healthy, innocent self-love of a happy child (p. 18).

As in my turn with Two South bumbling baby eagle, my reactions to these provocations my second summer on Manitoulin surprised me. I felt at times light and buoyant, heavy with shame, stripped-down raw with a tinge of panic, and bouncy-jubilant to perform these actions

in the dramatic reality of clown training. These actions would be unthinkable in my persona of Megan, but I believe they constitute parts of my denied psyche. Cheryl Carp (1998) explains that this cocktail of emotions is typical when individuals initially encounter their clown as unconscious material rises to awareness, seeks expression and clarification, and settles into integration.

Sure enough, in therapy in the months following my second return from the Conservatory, I stumbled upon yes, more anger, old anger, a seething vein of potent rage and waves and waves therein. As I stood confounded and afraid, the healer I work with reminded me that *Change doesn't start with softness. Rage is the energy of transformation, of change.* Anger is one of the emotions I would most like to "shadow" in myself – it rocks the boat, it changes the rhythm, it moves me closer to myself but sometimes away from others. At the same time, with an easeful relationship with anger,

> you won't even know it's there; it will simply help you maintain your boundaries, your inner convictions, and your healthy detachment. Free-flowing anger will allow you to laugh compassionately at yourself and set your boundary mercifully because both actions arise from the inner strength and honorable self-definition anger imparts (McLaren, 2010, p. 168).

While a certain holding back in drama can be used for effect or to relieve emotional overwhelm (Landy, 1996), drama teacher Clive Barker (1977) writes that blocking against the sensations of an "unwanted" feeling can be more stifling than the pure experience of the feeling itself. In clown, we pass these feelings through the nose by placing them in a metaphorical, representative space, since "as long as you can play with something, you start detaching from it" (Miller, 2006). Play tends to liberate creativity (Nachmanovitch, 1990), richness, and wisdom that "lies buried in the heart of the wound" (Laird, 2001, p. 87). The nose, said by some to be the smallest mask, lets me say and do things that come from my instinctual core. The clown nose, said John this summer, is also my heart. How can I pass this energy, this emotion through the nose of clown?

Teaching: A Whole and Open Ground

May 2006, Salt Spring Island, BC

It's a damp West Coast spring day. I'm weeding buttercups from strawberries on the first day of a six-month organic seed saving apprenticeship with Farmer Dan in my patchy overalls and my yellow jester toque that I knit the previous winter. He comes down to join me, and I ask him about the structure of our time together.

"You'll do a bit of everything in the garden," he tells me, "but it's more a matter of doing whatever interests you. We'll take it day by day."

Day by day? I think. Where is my itinerary and list of learning objectives? I am here to save the world, and this is serious business! As the season progresses, however, I experience the unfolding of a flexible itinerary between Dan, the other volunteers, the weather, the garden plants, the animals, and myself. I soften. I relax. In co-creation with all these beings I am amplified, clarified, humbled, beloved. I learn what I need to know, and a lot that I didn't know I needed, and six months turned into three years of mentorship and ongoing connections to place and loved ones.

Lawrence Gross (2014), in his book on *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being*, references John Morreall (1999) and his findings on tragic heroes and comic protagonists in different religions, cultures, and theatrical traditions. A tragic hero struggles in solitude, emotional overwhelm, and grave single mindedness against problems; the comic protagonist, or some would say the fool (Hinton, 1981; Bala, 2010), accepts the wholeness and perfect imperfection – the contradictions and complexities – of herself and thus of life and all her relations in the here and now. She practices emotional "surfing" (Ardley, 1967) and feels "at home in the world" (Gross, 2014, p. 129) through the incongruities, conflicts, deaths, sufferings, and failures. She sees process in relation as the practice and uses her creativity to persevere, to live in balance, and to have a good time. Facundo Ponce de Leon (2009) calls the very act of being for a clown heroic, in existence as a "singular unit of humanity" (Coburn & Morrison, 2013, p. 13), embodying the full spectrum of emotions and qualities that a human can possess. Similarly, in the original function, trickster "is a 'hero' for being who he is" (K. Hele, personal

communication, Feb. 24, 2017). By accepting our humanity and surrendering to the flow of life, we are better able to be in all of this unfolding (Hinton, 1981; Rogers & Stevens, 1967).

In my enthusiasm for my vision of Natural Clowning and its potential for wellness, I tried various workshops and activities with anyone I could coax into diverse experimentation with me to help me articulate my research questions. What did I learn about myself as a facilitator? What has been my implicit curriculum (Funk, 2017)? On one occasion the workshops at a community education weekend are running an hour and a half behind. I find myself stomping around angry until I remembered a story about a clown school in Europe; the student had rehearsed and rehearsed a turn with a rose only to find an empty stage for the performance night in front of a full audience. The test was how he would react to life not going as planned. (I believe he erupted into a royal rage.) I returned to the field where the workshops were to occur, poured my clown costumes onto the field, and sat in the shade with a friend, my bruised ego buoyed by a handful of participants of all ages parading around in magnificent garb.

In another instance, in October 2016, I'm teaching theatrical salsa dance to adults, inspired by the Barefoot Salsa collective I had so religiously followed in Montréal. I set down three guidelines at the beginning: participation in every element is always voluntary, no put downs allowed, and when we make mistakes, we say "ta dah!" (I garnered the first two suggestions for a safe space from creativity coach Paula Platter-Galloway and the last from a fellow student whose name I've since forgotten in my permaculture training back in 2010). I am enjoying the confidence of my teaching persona in class when two of the students point out that I am teaching them to turn inconsistently. I feel my face become very warm and my body freeze up as I am standing in front of the group.

"Ta dah!" says one of the students helpfully.

"Uh, ta dah," I say, but my hot face and stiffened body persist. I want to seem competent, I practiced the move break down at home, and I have done these turns a million times on the dance floor, I tell myself, frustrated.

"It really doesn't matter," she reminds me.

Of course it doesn't. Nonetheless, I asked a friend who frequently gives workshops what he does when he doesn't know the answer.

"I try not to speak in absolutes," he said. "You could do this, and this or this might happen."

Perhaps my teaching persona is more rooted in this concept of the tragic hero than I realized. How might teaching as comic protagonist proceed? Or enjoy failures and learnings in the role of so-called expert? If I can see myself in collaboration as both competent teacher and learning student, I might laugh at the beauty of my own ridiculousness (Coburn & Morrison, 2013) or stay in the room and in possibility and connection rather than a focus on success or failure.

I would like to teach clowning and earth connection in a way that empowers people with shyness, anxiety, or situational depression. What are some approaches that would support empowerment? The constant change of play, dramatic reality, humour, and the costuming of our "shit" for mythic distance could all encourage a loosening of the vise grips of these emotions, to play with them, to detach from them. I also believe that the dynamic, sensory mirror of nature helps to connect humans with our felt sense and emotions. Alisan Funk (2017) in her master's thesis on academic and kinesthetic learning, looks to a focus on methodology, "not prescribed outcomes" (p. 16) in a teaching practice of possibility, creativity, and knowledge, one that is rooted in place and in service. Cathy Sloan (2018) writes that indeterminacy is essential to the creative process, as well as openness, risk, and vulnerability. If embodiment is a cognition that senses and moves in context, acting *as* the action while empty and "just being there" (Varela, 1992, p. 18), this becomes "enormously dependent on contingency and improvisation, and is more flexible than any plan can be" (p. 55). Emergence, in this way of thinking/making, softens rules that could otherwise become "sterile, scholastic hindrances to compassionate action rather than conduits for its manifestation" (p. 74).

In jazz improvisation, surrender comes not by mastering, controlling, or being controlled by the instrument "but by playing with it as a living partner" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 144). The author reminds me that surrender is possible, even inevitable, because we are all part of a

living system, a process, in oneness at the root. The kind of emptiness that an abandonment to being in the room requires can be both terrifying and liberating. Viola Spolin (1963) writes that through play, we are able to access Self, that part of us which is capable of direct contact with the environment, the natural part of ourselves able to take in fresh information in the heart of the moment. For Chogyam Trungpa (1973), in his Tibetan Buddhist tradition,

> a sense of humour seems to come from all-pervading joy, joy which has room to expand into a completely open situation because it is not involved with the battle between 'this' and 'that'. Joy develops into the panoramic situation of seeing or feeling the whole ground, the open ground (p. 114).

Like the amorality of trickster, or the "everythingness" of clowning, he writes that in this way, spirituality, (or perhaps any other practice or process), ceases to be a battle. *It's a dance,* says the healer I work with.

An emphasis on the *how* (Lane, 2016), or on the embodied inquiry, the *how we do what we do* to find out more about reality (Wilson, 2009), on a mere willingness to engage in these concepts, in a reorientation from head to heart and body also has powerful potential. In this art form of clowning, through devotion to my body, my creativity, and my deepest sense of pleasure, I am invited

> to the 'marginal places' inside…and thereby become vulnerable. This vulnerability allows others to connect with us on a heart-to-heart level, which, in turn, creates the possibility that we may open a magic space between us (Lane, 2016, p. 88).

She continues that in this heart-to-heart place, based in vulnerability, not in the mind, lies the possibility for ethical, co-creative relations, the stretch of multiple meanings and the both/and generative logic of possibility.

Joey and Auguste training, July 2017, Manitoulin Island, ON

It's time number three for the Assumptions Game, and I'm on the porch with my partner. I'm feeling a little nervous and curious, the dread I felt over the last two rounds mostly pacified. After the last round, I figure I have nowhere to go but up. I desperately hope that I will not bawl again on stage. *It's about the relationship,* I remind myself. *Just play.*

"About the crying thing," John says when he comes out to the porch to fetch us. My co-clown dances around him in mock boxing defense, ever the good Joey.

"About your crying thing," he continues calmly. "I love crying on stage. It shows that you're emotionally available. Now pass that through your clown."

Relieved, I nod. Trying to contain my highly emotional self when it comes from the watery catacombs of my unconscious is like trying to stop a waterfall with my thumb. I wonder now if this is the first time in my life that I have been encouraged to cry… cry *MORE…*(*Go with your strengths, Megan*…).

The teacher calls us in; I breathe on my nose and step into the room. *Gesture gesture gesture, look at my partner, breathe.* Immediately I start picking up things on the shelves. I find a red Mr. Sketch marker in the felt bin. A flush of pleasure fills my chest – cherry, my favourite childhood scent! I take off the lid, inhale, run over and offer its scent to a classmate who has come in from a pee break, offer it to the teacher.

Brring! (This is my Auguste clown name). My Joey is calling me back to her side. *Gesture, gesture, gesture.* I feel light, expansive, grounded down to my toes.

"*Get aba schmooooz,"* she says.

Schmooz. I drop the feeling of the word into my body. *Schmoooz. Schmooooooz.*

"It feels how it sounds", one of the teachers says. I have an impulse to go to the shelving unit. *Snap snap snap* goes the encouragement from the audience. To grab a sleeping bag. *Snap snap snap.* I carry it back to a table in the middle of the room, put it on a low table, and take it out of the bag. *Snap snap snap.* It is held together by a *rainbow strap!!!* I feel a ripple of joy brighten my heart. I show the audience, dance around. My Joey keeps calling me back to task, directing me in gibberish. I continue to follow my impulses, the teachers call out directives when we get stuck. My Joey and I find our way to the end of the actions – both lying in the sleeping back under the table like two kids at summer camp. I roll into my partner, wrap my leg around her, and laugh.

In my curiosity about sustaining the mystery and magic of clowning on and off the training stage, particularly as it pertains to wellness and personal growth, I read widely into

various clowning traditions and literatures. I explored through clown training and stop moments, or unexpected embodied moments that invite me into new responses and insights, concepts such as clowning and dramatic reality, humour, and play. I experimented with teaching practices that support an openness to mystery, attention to heart and body spontaneity, creative expression, deep pleasure, and comic protagonism. Experiential exploration through the art of clowning can support the empowerment and liberation of others. In the next chapter, I will delve more richly into what I see as clown qualities of emotional navigation, physicality, and conversation.

End

We're Looking for a Feeling: Emotional Navigation, Physicality, and Conversation

So far in this dissertation, I have looked at the storied practices of clowning and land relationship through arts-based research and more specifically through research-creation. I explored deep land relationship as a non-Indigenous woman living in Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia as well as elements of clowning, particularly the genre of Clown and Mask, from a training and teaching perspective. The object of study in this section is the processes of "freeing myself" up sufficiently in emotional acrobatics, fluidity of physical impulse, and two-way audience conversation to feel confident enough to share turns and to in time coach others to do the same. In this chapter, I expand on a key element of the *how* of clowning (Lane, 2016) as a theatre and scholarship of feeling (P. Leroux, personal conversation, January 2017), housed in the physicality of our bodies, in a mutual dialogue with the audience. "We're looking for a feeling," John, one of my clown teachers, often said during my initial Clown and Mask training. "This is much more than seeing or thinking."

Emotional Navigation, Physicality, and Conversation

Emotional Navigation

September 2015, South Shore, NS

I've accepted a bursary to take part in an adult education sailing trip on the south shore of Nova Scotia. The boat, 30 feet long by 7 feet wide, is by turn kitchen, collective bedroom, and transportation vessel for nine people over the course of five days. Every morning we stuff sleeping bags into plastic bags and then into duffle bags, collect the oars from their temporary function of bedframe over top of the boat, stow rainproof overhead tarps and thin foam mattresses under the thwarts and hatches, and change into our bathing suits to jump into the Atlantic sea. Often one's duffle bag is under another's sleeping spot, so it is a slow, rambly process. The moment of standing on the edge of the boat in the fresh morning air, sunrise pink and ripe on the horizon, feels both invigorating and sharp.

"Good morning, water," I say on the first day and jump. The point of contact of skin and water stops my thoughts. Pure stillness, then fierce kicking to reach the surface and a great shout. *Yow!* To be alive! The cold, now kinder in my mind and spirit as I welcome it rather than struggle against it, keeps my limbs churning. I kick out to breaststroke around the boat, stretching my cramped body, then swim to the bow and climb up the rough rope ladder to towel dry.

Literally defined, the word emotion means 'moving outward or pushing out'…how my emotions "work to maintain health" (McCarthy, 2007, p. 50). Dennis McCarthy (2012) gives examples of children who resist the very "taboo" emotion they most need to viscerally and playfully express and that this separation from self is the root of panic. He suggests that the god Pan "is a symbol of our raw instincts that need to be reconciled rather than suppressed" (p. 133). Clowning is all about navigating and welcoming emotions (Jara, 2004; Coburn & Morrison, 2013). In Euro-Canadian society, clown Jan Henderson (n.d.) states that

> we're not supposed to be too sad or too loud or too happy…in clown you have permission to be yourself, and you only feel what you actually feel, not what you should feel. You don't repress your feelings (n.p.)

Child therapist Dennis McCarthy (2012) suggests that "to play is to wrestle with the demons within and the obstacles without and to find new ways of experiencing life in all its bigness" (p. 18). He explains that play (such as that encountered in clowning) evokes and prioritizes self-expression and strong emotions (Blatner, 2003). This is part of play's loosening power (McCarthy, 2012). Often one can only feel these emotions through symbols or images. In order to harvest the layers of personal meanings from an image, we must "leap into it" (p. 50) in order to experience "an unknown part of ourselves that is needed to move forward". I take this to mean immerse ourselves, make art from, go to a place that is saturated with the image or archetype, involve all our senses, our body, and/or our creativity rather than just contemplate an image or read about it. To me it often feels safer to do the latter, but I have found that "leaping in" brings infinitely more

clarity. Images have both multiple meanings evoked from the feelings and opinions of players (Boal, 2002) and a self-contained meaning that is "the image itself" (p. 175).

Children speak in the images of imagination and in their sophisticated cousins, archetypes (McCarthy, 2012). Is this also the language of the child that we are now as adults? Archetypes are "primordial images of the instincts" (p. 126) from the collective layer of the human psyche and contain information about how to be human (McCarthy, 2012). These "universal patterns" of human experiences are often expressed through religion, art, creativity, dreams, and visions (Edinger, 1994). Augusto Boal (1995) writes that the art and theatricality of images are a felt language with which to reach the unconscious. The unconscious is that part of a human being that is not capable of verbalization; however, it is connected to the pre or subconscious that speaks through emotions and sensations and is by some degree verbalizable. The conscious is then, by his definition, that which we are capable of putting into words. Images, by evoking feelings and sensations, allow us to access "this secret region" (p. 34). As I have said earlier in this dissertation, the unconscious can also be seen as parts of the psyche that are denied or deemed as unacceptable. Images then could aid in human movement towards wholeness.

During the sailing trip, my bodymind passed through a number of emotional "attacks" triggered by claustrophobia, sensory overwhelm, fear of underwater rocks while I "lept" into the image of sailing. At first, I experienced these emotional surges in the image of the tiger in the boat in the story of *Life of Pi* (Martel, 2001), as ferocious wild cats lurking in the corner of the boat, ready to pounce and devour me when I least expected it, something fearful and to fight against rather than a welcome informant. However, Peter Levine (1997), in his work around release of bodily tension and trauma, creates the image of tigers as our aliveness, our resilient nervous system in a state of health when our animal bodies respond to perceived threats in an authentic way. Trauma is a part of the human and animal experience as it acts to "cuts us off from our internal experience as a way of protecting our organisms from sensations and emotions that could be overwhelming" (Levine, p. 73). Animals then shake off the residual energy charge.

In humans, a return to our natural, flowing selves is made possible through an awareness of our felt sense as articulated by psychotherapist Eugene Gendlin: our non-linear internal body sensations, nebulous and beyond words, and like nature, complex and always changing. The felt sense comes in "words, pictures, insights, and emotions, which invariably will be accompanied by another layer of sensations" (p. 74), relaying "the overall experience of the organism" (p. 69) in its environment. Peter Levine (1997) explains that we access our felt sense (internal body sensations) when our animal bodies respond to perceived or real threats via authentic impulses. This connects us to "our instinctual voices" (p. 73) and how we "experience the self" (p. 72).

Stephen Buhner (2004) calls this sense heart perception as we receive information wholistically from all our relations. To experience and then release communications from this powerful sense takes gentleness, patience, and curiosity, in the intended absence of judgment, interpretation, or analysis (Bacon, 2005; Levine, 1997). Ecopsychologist Leslie Gray (1995) explains that while settler psychology seeks to heal through analysis, interpretation, understanding, and talk, shamanism, or earth-based-culture mind/body healing practices, aims to restore power to the troubled person "by putting them back in harmony with life. This idea that all things are connected, while a very ancient concept, is also a concept for the future" (p. 173).

It occurred to me that the memory of the morning dip might be an invigorating way to welcome those moments of emotional plunges and the deep opportunities for self-awareness that they were carrying. Adam Blatner (2003) writes that catharsis in theatrical play points us towards true Self beyond the protective defenses of a "false" or social self and "reveals the strength of currents of feeling that tend to be disowned by habits of the social façade" (pg. 225). In drama and other artistic / spiritual / psychological endeavors, I have often heard the term "safe space", or even safer space (Hunter, 2008); however, in my experience, there is risk in the challenging and sometimes unconscious (Bruner, 2000) sensations that these processes can evoke in myself and others, even a metaphorical death or laying to rest what no longer serves and the pain this can entail (Caldwell, 2003).

When I think about what might be a dangerous space, I think about violation of another's rights, devaluing, demoralizing. In applied theatre, a play space, as different from a safe space, is alert to change according to what is happening and encourages new experiences in a spacious way (Blatner, 2003). David Johnson (n.d.) calls it an agreement which entails discrepant communication, or open-mindedness; mutuality, or a shared experience; reversibility of status, or the possibility, for example, for teacher to become student; and restraint from harm[28]. In this sailing trip, the play space is a physical, actual container: the boat itself, with the water as what gives it movement and motion from moment to moment.

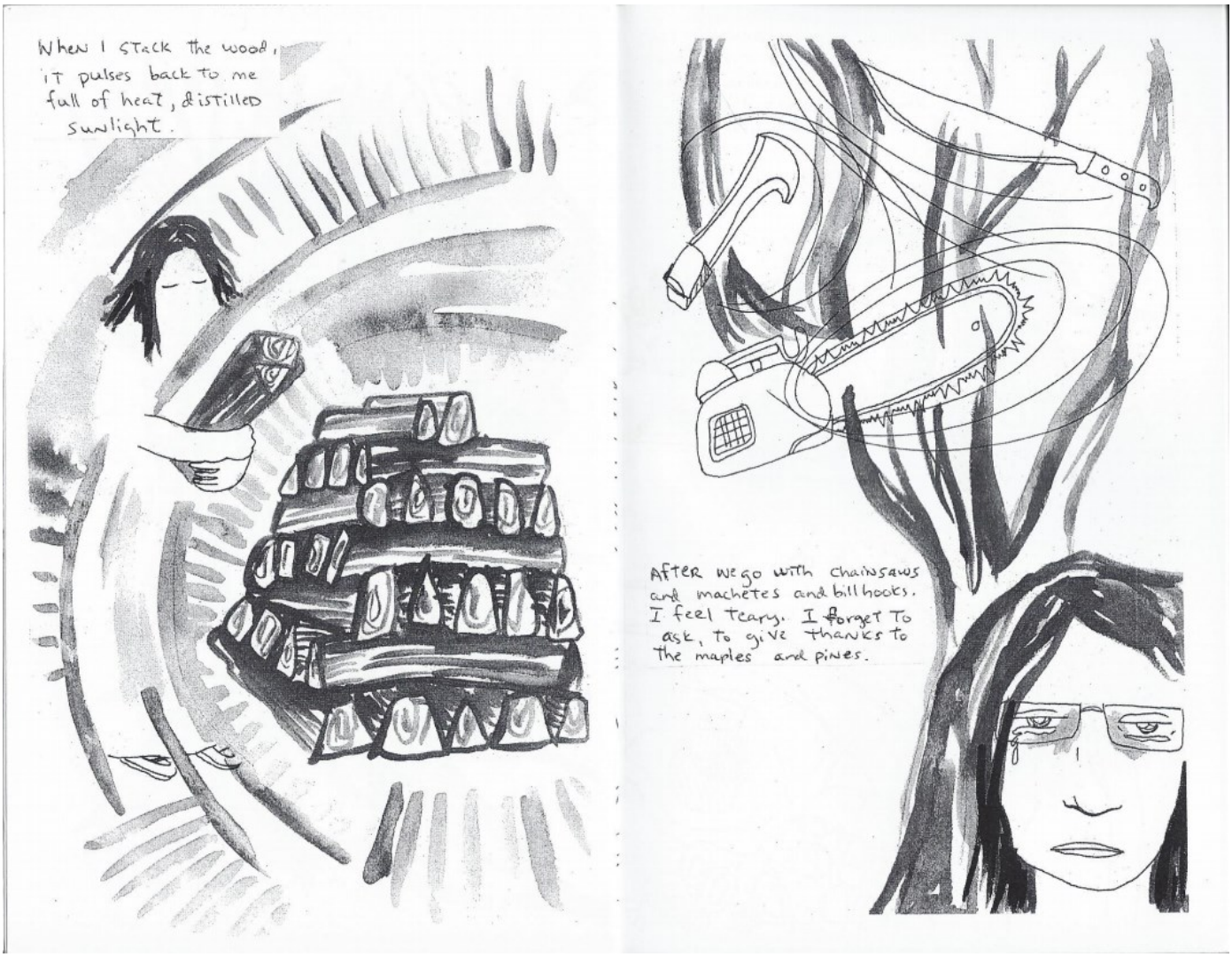
I'm carrying a big log up a hill. At the top, I throw the log down; a tiger rushes at me and starts to chew my arm. I raise my posture confidently; the big cat rolls over onto her back and lets me rub her belly. (Personal dream after deciding to return for further training in Clown and Mask, March 2017)

One dictionary definition of present is "constituting the one actually involved, at hand, or being considered."[29] In arts-based research, when we notice and listen to our bodies via the felt sense, we "often find new ways of saying something about our experiences in the world" (Bacon, 2005, p. 225) and find support to explain "the creative unknown'" (p. 225). Dan, my first gardening mentor, told me that the most important thing when gardening is just to spend time with the plants in observation and relaxation. Before becoming a gardener, he was a wild plant lover, lake swimmer, field spinner, driftwood shelter on the beach-er. Just spend time. James Thompson (2011) and Julie Salverson (2001) talk about the challenging, and I would add, exhilarating affect of presence, the attention of co-beingness with awareness and respect and without regulation or obligation. This makes me think of "being in the room" in clown pedagogy (or in the forest), as well as the invitation from Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas to attend to the spaces in between in relationality as mentioned in previous pages. New affective performance practices seek "an unconditional meeting between people not based on an

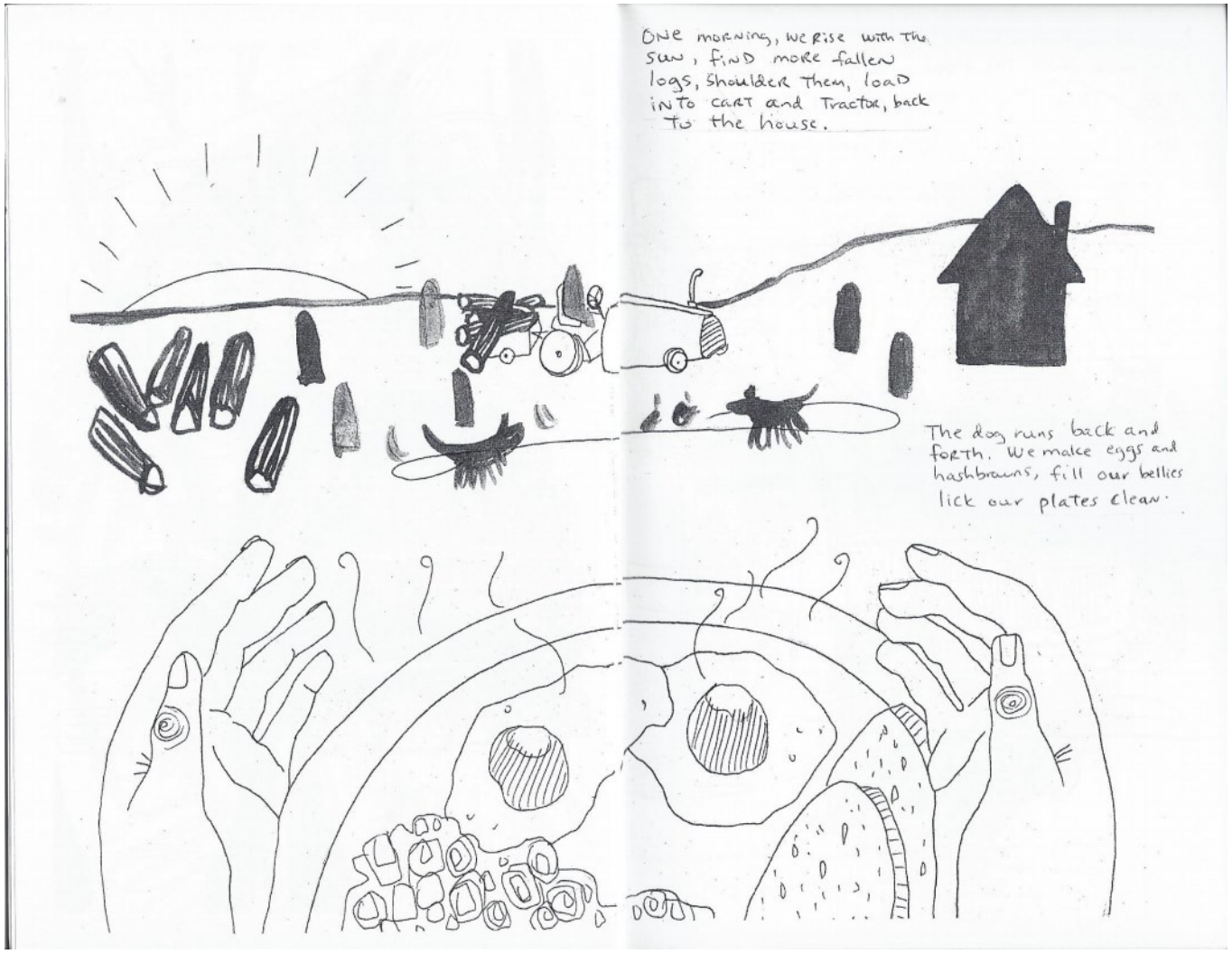
[28] J. Butler, personal communication, November 30, 2015

[29] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/present#h3

exercise of the power to forgive, reconcile, or heal. A meeting that is no longer part of the strategy of communication, but a holding onto the difficult affect of presence" (Thompson, 2011, p. 110). Presence, as different from interpretation, looks to "'systems of possibilities' rather than assertations of certainties" (p. 133). A healer I work with says that there is sometimes the need for appropriate protection in human situations and nearly always the need for the clarity and consent of boundary. When it comes to the challenge of presence, I think about surrender, a willingness for co-transformation (Bateson, 1976) and to feel many things, to be open yet defined, to risk, to relax, to engage in play.



When I stack the wood, it pulses back to me full of heat, distilled sunlight. After we go with chainsaws and machetes and billhooks, I feel teary. I forget to ask, to give thanks for the maples and pines.



One morning, we rise with the sun, find more fallen logs, shoulder them, load into cart and tractor, back to the house. The dog runs back and forth. We make eggs and hashbrowns, fill our bellies, lick our plates clean.

Clown Giovanni Fusetti (2018) extends the invitation that the *how* of clowning, the acceptance of everything from a place of body-heart play, can help to process "all sorts of emotions, including the hardest and scariest ones… being in the here and now is the first fundamental clown rule" (n.p.). A clown friend of mine once said that the present contains a potent amount of truth (P. Platter-Galloway, personal conversation, 2015). Social ecology researcher David Wright (2005) calls the emotions and feelings that accompany the creative process "the most powerful of perturbations" (p.4). In clowning, I take out all that I put in the forbidden box of my psyche so that I'm not afraid. I breathe so I can feel what I am feeling and be in the room (J. Turner, class teaching, 2015). I connect with the humour in something painful through play to loosen the hold around what feels scary so I can feel joy and delight, too, and perhaps transform the experience (J. Butler, personal conversation, November 23rd, 2014).

Later, on the boat, I talk to Jean about some of my experiences and reactions thus far.

"I've been all up in my thoughts, instead of just – "I pause, looking for the words.

"Surrendering?" says Jean. "Just diving into what's happening instead of thinking always to the next thing that's coming?"

Physicality

April 2015, Montreal, QC

Feeling cramped and grumpy from my work week, I go to the Tam Tams, the drumming and dancing jam at the angel statue at the base of Mont Royal here in Montréal. To my surprise, I stay almost three hours, shaking my hips and shaking off the winter. My movements at first feel stiff, like I am outside myself watching … *dance like no one's watching … yeah right! Everyone is watching!* After a time of bare feet on ground, drum vibration, cow bell *ting ti-ting ti-ti-ti ting,* and the warm sun on my face, I feel a shift to a kind of not-feeling-not-thinking-both-and, a kind of tap-in to the play instinct of movement, action, and body consciousness (Bayliss, 1999; Nachmanovitch, 1990). I start to goof around in my dance, arms wide up and around, flamenco moves, spinning around, my face gets into it, my hands, my knees. Minutes afterwards, an artist-activist friend of mine shows up beside me and gives me a hug.

"I'm so tired, but I love watching you dance!"

I invite her in with my face and eyes, and we start a spontaneous back and forth, make a move, share a move, kind of light-bright dance, facing the sunshine and the trees and the djembes. When it is time for her to go she says,

"I'm serious, you know, I'm serious all the time, but it felt so good to see my movements mirrored back to me with humour. It feels good to laugh."

I began this research with the thought that the link between environment and clown might be the balance of humour in contexts of fear, paralysis, anger, guilt, and shame I have witnessed and experienced in primarily settler environmental activism. I played with environmental activism-clowning one winter in a public clown turn at Concordia with two other clowns; from the limited audience response I consciously registered, it had the desired effect and was a lot of fun. But I began to feel there were also psychologically richer and more personal, embodied invitations and possibilities in my research. I think of a visit a few years back to a river site of Mi'kmaw community resistance in the face of corporate development; I looked into the fire during a sharing circle and silently asked what my place in this sociocultural and political scenario. The answer I received, *sing and make art,* surprised me. I think of *Daughters of Copper Woman* (Cameron, 1981). While controversial in the current Canadian-Indigenous socio-political context because of the settler identity of the author, the Nuu-chah-nulth clown stories moved me to a surprising upswell of tears. The clown creates playful, interactive images that embody her cultural truth while interfacing with European colonial impositions on the sexuality and agency of women (Borrows, 2016) and the ecological health of her territory. I think of a memoire I read by former Chilean political revolutionary Carmen Aguirre (2011), her new choice to become a theatre artist, and the self-reported challenge to learn to be vulnerable in body and soul. I think of my forays into singing performance at a community open stage in a nearby town and the difference in enthusiastic audience response when I consciously connected with my body and spirit beforehand in all my trepidation, excitement, and energetic charge, when I invited them into my world, and when I let the

audience affect me. When I steeled or distracted myself against any emotional discomfort beforehand, the audience knew and was not fooled; the performance and response fell flat. For writer Nathalie Goldberg (1986), we expose ourselves all the time, but more painful is to not expose anything.

May 2018, Wilmot, NS

I'm playing in my room with a new idea for a clown turn. I don a yellow safety vest, an old plastic whistle in the shape of a soccer ball, and my red plastic nose. I pick up the handles of two sticks with square flags of magenta satin hot glued onto them. The idea came to me a few weeks back when I was up into anxiety about another new love interest. At least I'm starting to find humour in my cyclical, great-striving-for-nil clown efforts in this realm of my life. Fabo, my solo clown, faces Teddy Bear and start to blow on the whistle and wave the flags, like she's directing an airplane that's waiting to land. When Teddy doesn't move, the flag waving and whistle blowing gets more frenetic, and as I move my arms, pulses of electricity start to wave down my legs. This happened last time I played with the idea. My clown breaks the flags in half and then over her thighs; I feel the energy now moving in my back and shimmering out.

Sabine Koch and Diana Fischman (2011) call a therapeutic activity one in which we touch on the unconscious. Through movement, I revisit a past story that might be expressing itself in painful behaviours to create a new story. Movement addresses the root of where images emerge – from the body. In this way we "move away from the primacy of determination and repetition" (pg. 67). As the saying goes in authentic movement, we move and are moved (pg. 67), at the same time that we continue on with uncertainty and challenge. Other deep emotionally cathartic moments through improvised free body movement such as Butoh, Authentic Movement, or Developmental Transformation, guided movement such as psychodrama in my Improvisation and Dramatherapy class, or unexpected vulnerability in clown training have shown me viscerally the softening power of expression in performative art. My belly is often activated and unsettled after I perform. What do I open and move around in my

energetic center? What are the possibilities of feeling and release through this kind of sacred play?

My energy teacher Monika Muller says that when I connect with my unconscious psychological emotions, I aid in loosening up physical energy-blockages (personal conversations, 2009-2014). My body is the home of my emotions and contributes about 70% of meaning in communication (Marshall, 2008). It is thus the core of conversation (Wright, 2007). The fluidity of expressive movement (Rijnbout, 1999) and discovery, pleasure, and play in my environment through movement and games (Barker, 1977; Koch & Fischman, 2011; Cajete, 1994) or dance (Barker, 1977) can allow a deeper emotional narration of wholeness through expressing physically all that I cannot express verbally. Mind changes are temporary unless my body energetics are addressed; conversely, addressing my body's capacity to breathe, feel, move, and express can evoke lasting shifts in mental outlooks (Lowen, 1995).

Cheryl Carp (1998), in clown therapy, talks about letting things happen with my body as different to doing them, as we are so used to thinking about bodies as objects. Physical play, as I illustrated in the last chapter, provokes psychological defenses (Lowen, 1995). Veronica Coburn and Sue Morrison (2013) call clowning a kind of surrender to the body impulses and to the creative process: "You need to just get out of your own way. Give in to what is happening" (pg. 165). While on the one hand blocking some physical impulses is necessary for socialization on a certain level, it also can act to freeze my connection to the felt sense, the way my body and unconscious want to communicate my feelings and needs to me (Rust, 2008), a simple and deep connection to health and wholeness.

September 2015, South Shore, NS

Day five and I've volunteered to take the tiller and navigate at the helm with the help of two other crew members who have plotted our route on the charts. The wind is in our favour again; I'm breathing, my body finally calm in its place in this play space, this container of the boat, salty sea air in my nose and mouth, sun on my face.

"Would you like to learn to sail by the luff?" Crane asks. Sailing by the luff means constantly adjusting the sail tension according to the winds so that the sail edge holds steady

instead of fluttering. Letting out the line on the mizzen sail a little, bringing it in. We're sailing through open sea, close to a lighthouse on port side (*Can we activate the sounder?),* and towards the multicoloured buildings and homes on the shores of Lunenburg. A little looser, a little tighter…

Sacred clowns, explains Tony Hillerman (1993) in his fictional account in a Navajo and Tano Pueblo context, show where we've drifted from The Way, from what we've been taught. Stephen Nachmanovitch (1990) writes that "as living beings, we are naturally self-regulating and self-balancing" (pg. 128), but that the conscious mind (linear, protective, selective, questioning) can bring in attachment to one "right" direction or another and resist the constant of change and movement. Like sailing by the luff, Sabine Koch and Diana Fischman (2011) write that in the embodied/enactive approach of dance movement therapy, individuals are part of this living system: flexible, fluid, and interconnected with their environment. Effective process drama has an open script without prescriptive or didactic goals; in other words, "the outcome of the journey is the journey itself. The experience is its own destination" (O'Neill, 1995, pg. 67).

As I hope to have illustrated in the stories in past chapters, I have been humbled by the way my body began to direct this research through sensations in relation to my experiences. I have been humbled by the way my life began to form itself and reform, what was destroyed and rebuilt, what fell apart, and what came together again. Humbled in the same way that this word shares its root with humus, or earth[30]. *Be careful* a friend teased me, (or was it a gentle warning?) when I began to look wholeheartedly into clowning in 2013. *That kind of energy will turn you inside out.* Cree artist F.P. Favel in *Theatres of Affect* (2014) writes that people come to theatre for different reasons, but that for him, "to do theatre or any art form is an impulse to psychological wholeness and integration" (p. 96). The process is unpredictable and "very personal; one begins with one's own life and family and immediate surroundings" (p. 98). The cathartic or freeing potential of theatre is activated most truly when the practitioner actively pursues a personal healing journey and then makes his or her way back to theatre with this

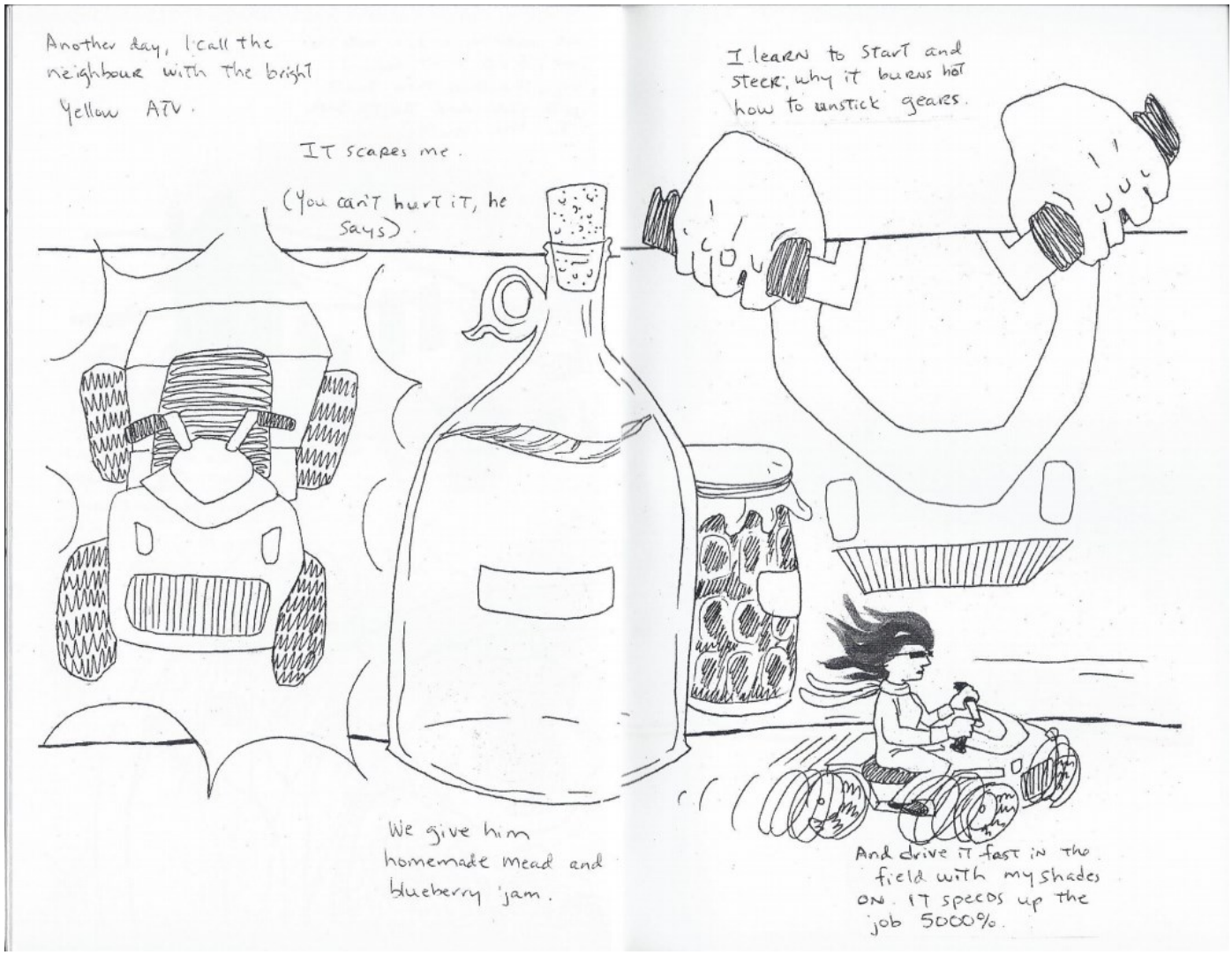
[30] https://www.etymonline.com/word/humble

integrated self-knowing; the artist can then return to theatre after such a healing journey better equipped to support the liberation of others (Favel, 2014).

"How was that for you," asks Jean, as we lower the sails to prepare to row the last leg of the trip into the dock at Lunenburg.

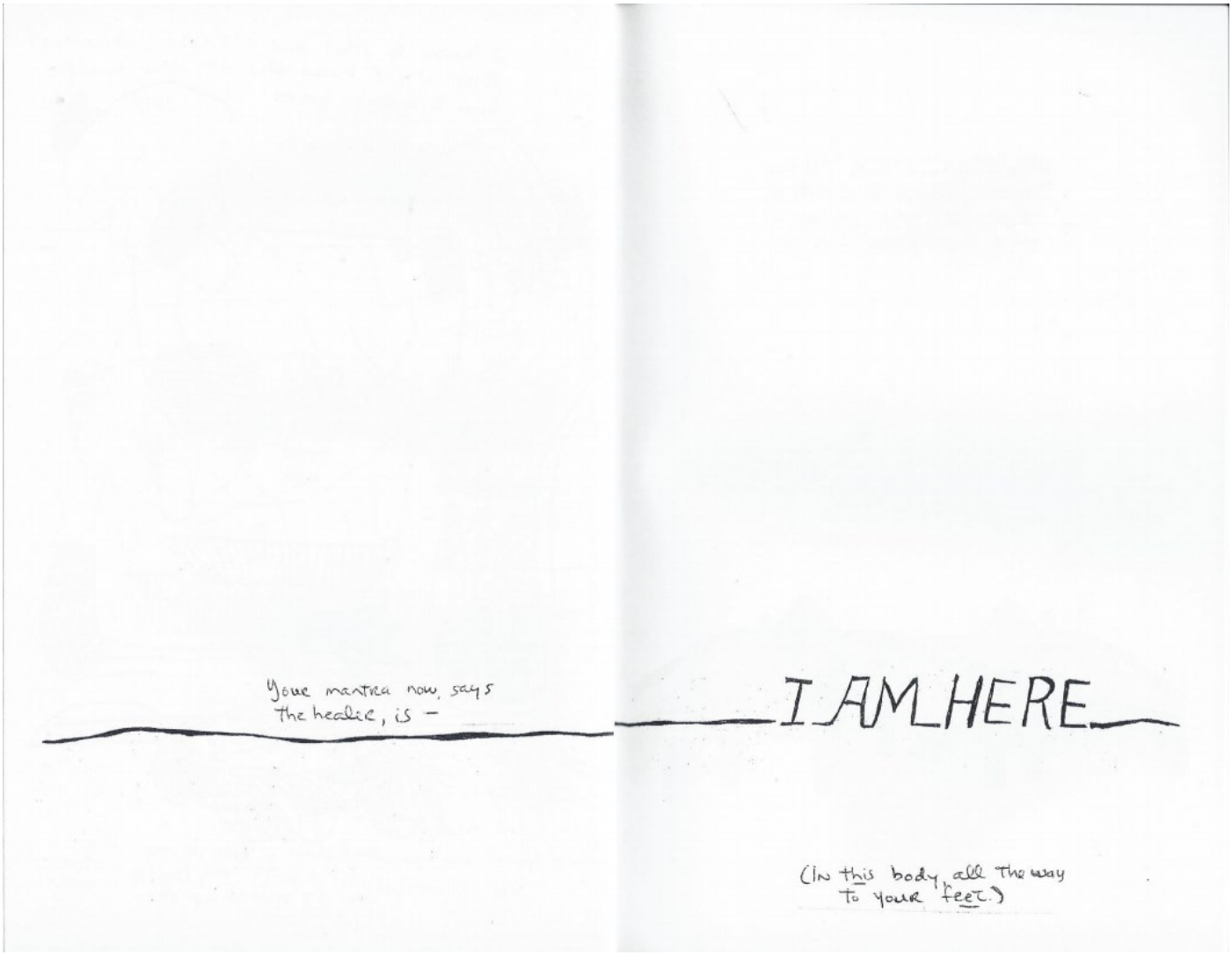
"Divine," I say.

"You were in the flow," says another crew member.

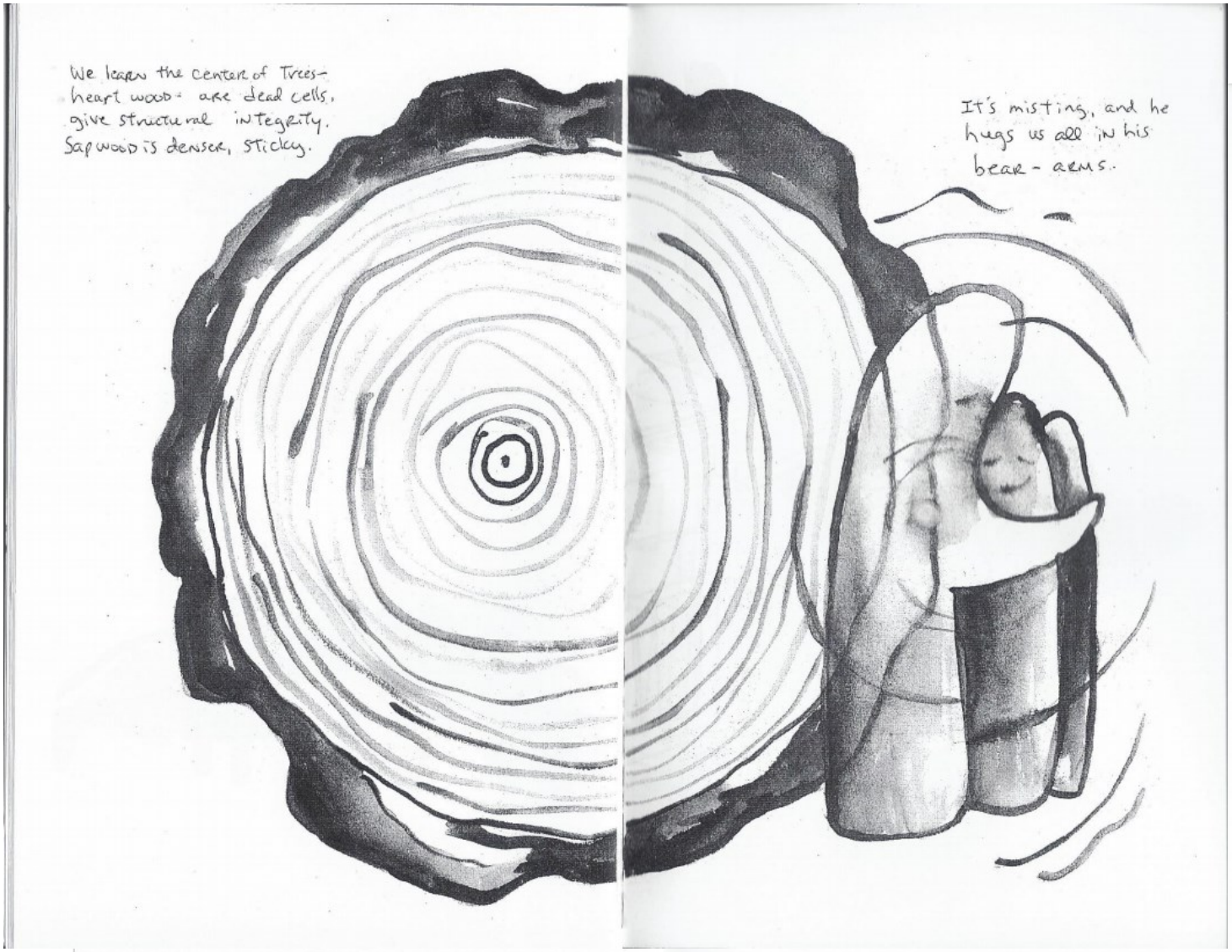


Another day, I call the neighbor with the bright yellow ATV. It scares me. (You can't hurt it, he says). We give him homemade mead and blueberry jam. I learn to start and steer, why it burns

hot, how to unstick gears, and drive it fast in the field with my shades on. It speeds up the job 5000%.



*Your mantra now, says the healer, is I AM HERE. (In **this** body, all the way to your **feet**.)*



We learn the centers of trees – heart wood – are dead cells, give structural integrity. Sap wood is denser, sticky. It's misting, and he hugs us all in his bear-arms.

A Two-Way Conversation that Transforms

July 2014, Manitoulin Island, ON

At Baby Clown, or the initial Clown and Mask training, one of the first activities we do is called Making Contact. It's a seemingly simple exercise: one by one, students come on stage, hands out of pockets and loose at their sides, mouths open and relaxed. The invitation is to

make contact, very briefly, with each person present. To affect and to be affected. Some people clench up on stage, cry, rush, linger. Some audience members tear up. The room becomes very still, charged, as folks emerge one by one from behind the screen that delineates backstage from onstage.

When it is my turn, I come out on stage, drop my shoulders, hands by my side, open my mouth, breathe. I look at each person one by one. Breathe. *Doesn't have to be long to make contact.* Breathe. *It was powerful…I didn't know what to do* – says a clown friend afterwards. We talk about my glasses, whether the physical barrier also acts as an energetic barrier. I go a second time bare faced. I feel a strong surge of warmth in my heart, and I tear up.

"How was that?" John the teacher asks.

"There's so much sweetness in the room," I sputter.

"Yeah, so much sweetness my teeth hurt," John quips.

In this baby step towards learning the language of two-way conversation on stage, Veronica Coburn and Sue Morrison (2013) write that the clown's role is to share his or her story in the most open way possible. The audience's role is their response, which then guides the clown. They explain, "You let it go where it's going to go…No play. No script. No plan. Narrative is a sequence of truthful moments" (p. 123). John Wright (2007) says that "clowns don't act, they play the audience" (p. 203). As one of my advisors pointed out, without this mutual rapport, there is no conversation. "Let them help you," suggest Sue Morrison and Veronica Coburn (2013, p. 96). They emphasize that

> it doesn't matter where the feeling starts, in the clown, in the person watching, it's just great that there is a feeling. Being in a feeling, being with an experience is a dialogue. Standing on a stage and doing something, just doing something with no purpose, no sense of connection, is a monologue (p. 92).

Later that week during the initial Clown and Mask training on Manitoulin, we are each asked to do something fantastic on stage, a kind of adult show and tell. I choose juggling because although my skill decreases significantly when others are watching, I am thrilled that I have learned to keep three balls in the air. Sure enough, when onstage I drop the balls, made of my old pink flannel pyjamas and stuffed with rice, after about two rounds. The expression on

my transparent face falls as well; then I shrug, pick up the balls, and leave the stage. When the teacher invites me back up, he asks the class for the most fantastic part of what I did.

"The look of complete disappointment on her face when she dropped the balls," says a student.

"Yes," says someone else. "You could tell she was really hoping to do better."

"Do we care what she's doing?" asks John. Folks shake their heads. "No. We care about how you feel about what you are doing. In this style, who you are on stage is more important than what you do."

In another moment during those two training weeks, I commented on a "heavy" feeling of yearning to be outside that I experienced during one of our exercises inside the studio; I was fighting it, and it was affecting my concentration on the task at hand. John, the teacher of Clown and Mask, encouraged me to play with this emotion and find the pleasure in it.

"Keep it light," he said.

For a long time, I didn't know what he meant. It seems that this is a key to keeping the authentic conversation going with the audience: if I am okay with my painful, strange, or embarrassing feelings and impulses, then the audience will be okay with it (Coburn & Morrison, 2013). Veronica Coburn and Sue Morrison (2013) explain that in clowning, "we never want the audience to feel they have to understand something. We want them to share an experience with the clown but for the audience to share an experience the clown must have one" (p. 121). This means "feeling real things in front of people… in a non-judgmental way, without embarrassment, without shame" (p. 96). They suggest that these authentic reactions on stage are rarely what one would expect.

> I feel angry so I'm going to jump up and down and close my eyes and bunch my fists and yell as loud as I can. If I did that in an office, I might find myself attending compulsory counselling sessions or worse, group classes, in anger management. Don't let that anger out. Keep it in. Squash it down, condense it, compact it so that it turns into a tumour with the ability to kill you. In a Clown Through Mask workshop the worst that will happen is that somebody will think your anger looks like a great game and join in. And then it will be a game. One that can be enjoyed and where is the anger then? In the words of the great Bob Dylan it is released (p. 296).

They suggest that in clowning, there is also pleasure in mistakes, and in feelings I would normally not allow myself to feel, that there is joy in allowing oneself to be on the edge of the room, to be the forlorn figure, the shy boy, the timid girl. I want to join in but I can't and there is pleasure in accepting that fact. I am miserable and I will sit here and be miserable – so there" (p. 240). I recall John at one point saying that you should never feel like yourself on stage when clowning. Indeed, I felt the most freedom to follow my feelings and impulses on the third round of the Assumptions game in chapter IV, when it seemed like several layers of the veneer of my Megan persona had been buffed away. I was no longer thinking, just playing in the room. So how do I find pleasure in all my feelings on stage?

The American physician and psychotherapist Alexander Lowen (1975) equates pleasure with embodied sensations, that pleasure is rarely derived from purely mental activities. He says that most adults see power as in opposition to pleasure and in this way both limit their creativity and increase their bodily tension, effectively armouring themselves against life. Lorna Marshall (2008) writes that

> we often fear being judged as 'self-indulgent' and believe that anything truly worthwhile must be bought at the price of pain. When this happens, the pleasure found when working well with the body seems almost irreprehensible, as if we are somehow cheating. Fine. In this work I want you to 'cheat', to see your body as a source of delight, not a burden to be carried, or as a problem to be solved (pg. 11).

John Wright (2007) says that this kind of surrender to pleasure, or to embodied experiences, opens actors to bolder actions and risk taking and allows the problematic to free itself to choice. Veronica Coburn and Sue Morrison (2013) suggest that playing the game with pleasure merely means that it is played in a spirit of willingness and generosity (p. 402). Willingness can be defined as inclined and favourably disposed, prompt to act, of or relating to the will or power to choose[31], and generosity as a generous act, abundance.[32] I interpret these takes on pleasure in performance to mean that the game of clowning is a big yes, leaning in, eyes up, ready to play.

July 2015, Northumberland Shore, NS

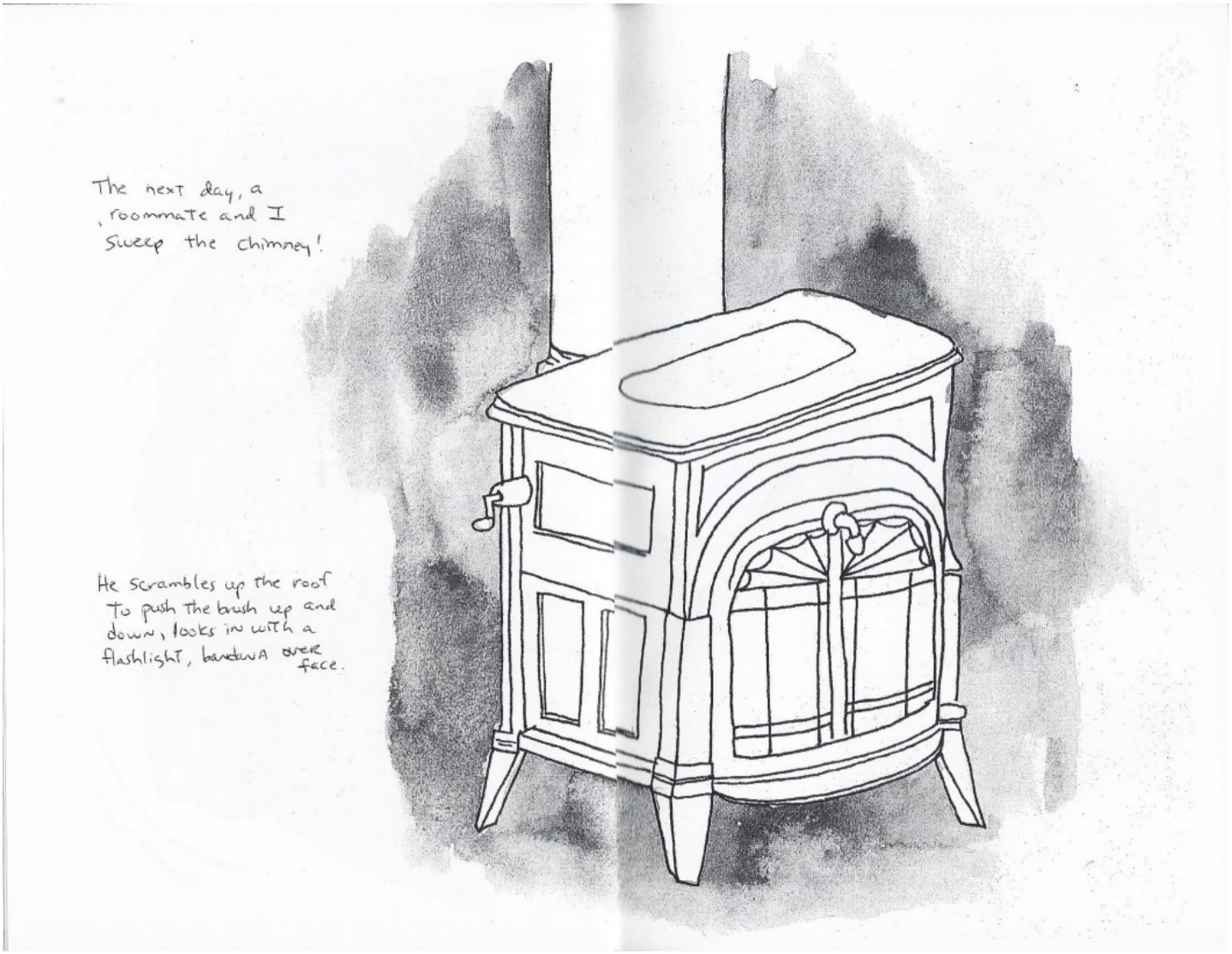
[31] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/willing
[32] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/generosity

Early upon my arrival in Nova Scotia, I was carrying quite an emotional cocktail: enthusiasm for my work and love for the land, grief from separation from my chosen and blood family in Montréal and a love relationship, and fear as to where I would live and how I would support myself. I thought that participation in a land-based collective creation intensive on the Northumberland Shore might help to ground and connect me. To my dismay and humiliation, I emotionally unravelled in a complete and gusty way soon after arriving. The more I resisted and denied my "taboo" emotions of grief and fear to cheery up my capacity to collaborate, the more they poured out my eyes at inopportune moments. The more I felt the need to prove my abilities in clowning as part of the show, the more my body and emotions seized up. I was afraid to let the group down, afraid to show the group of mostly strangers my authentic artistic impulses, afraid to show *myself* my authentic artistic impulses. I put the clown piece I had prepared in my back pocket and instead took on the role of forest decorator and silent fox performer, not without a great deal of self-judgment. I hadn't fully grasped the play and process-based prerogative, the allowing culture of the group, and the reflective, amoral ambiance held by the land and sea (Muller, 2005). Reflecting later, I understood that any creative and playful impulse could have become a small part of the show, that perhaps, as a clown, I could have taken "the space to feel something that is important to you" (Coburn & Morrison, 2013, p. 121), with whole hearted abandon.

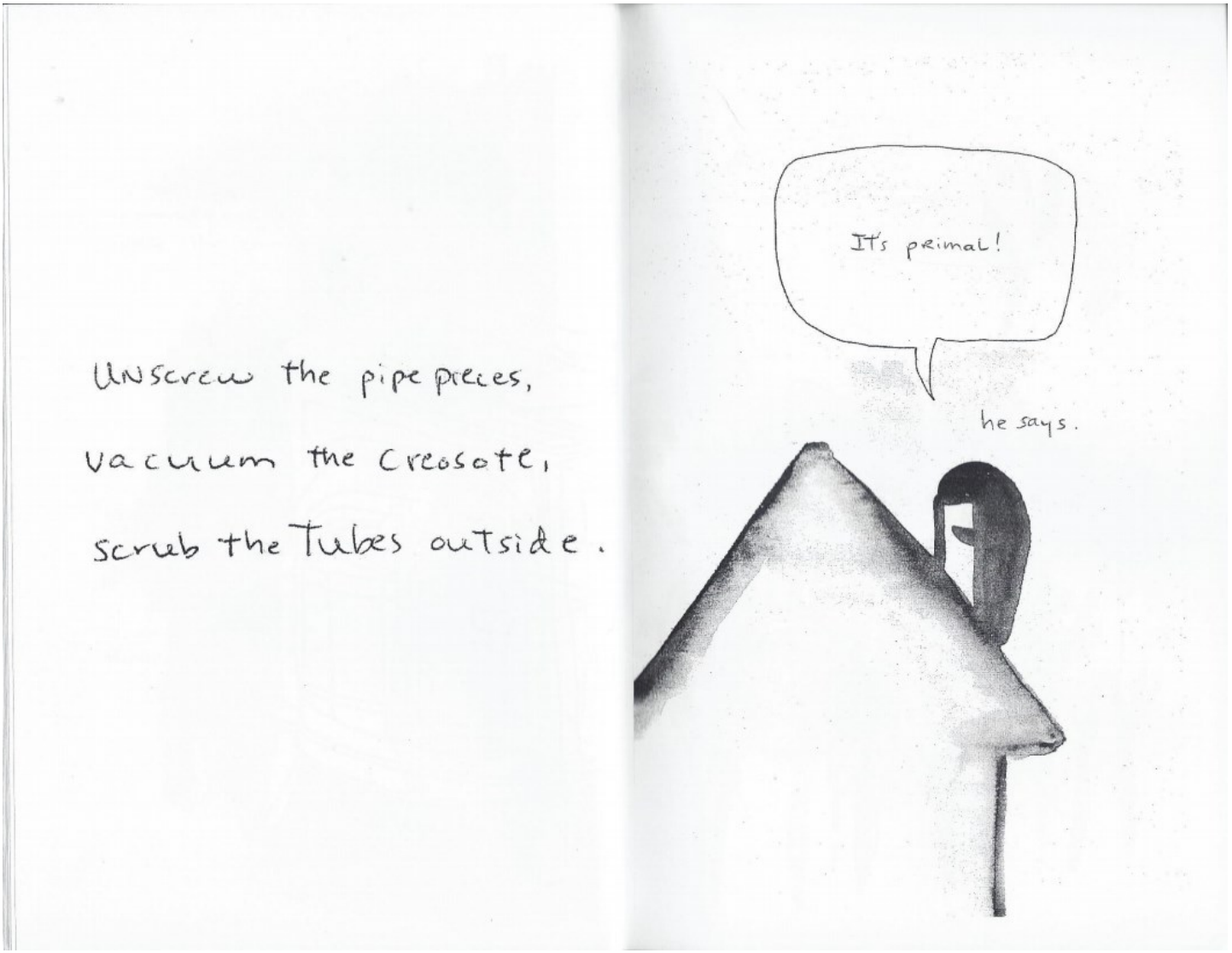
Cathy Sloan (2018) calls aliveness a potent mix of pain, pleasure, and desire, and that "change, or I might suggest growth, are features of being alive" (p. 585). Creating spaces of potentiality gives rise to new experiences and connections, which in turn open us to new potentialities. This gives the opportunity to reframe beingness, to "resist the entropy of active addiction by engaging in the aliveness of affective inter-relation with others in a liminal activity" (p. 595). A beautiful activity, a joyful encounter, or a "concrete" (achievable) utopia open us to a space to choose life. Stephen Nachmanovitch (1990) notes that much of play is the ability to enjoy the slowness and surrender of the new, to allow the role of inner critic to follow muse, and to get on with a full engagement in the process, regardless of success or failure. Play echoes the embodied inquiry of research-creation: says Erin Manning (2015), we lend attention

to *relationships*, as well as desires, impulses, felt sense, participation, the valuing of feeling, and an orientation towards the *how* of research (own emphasises).

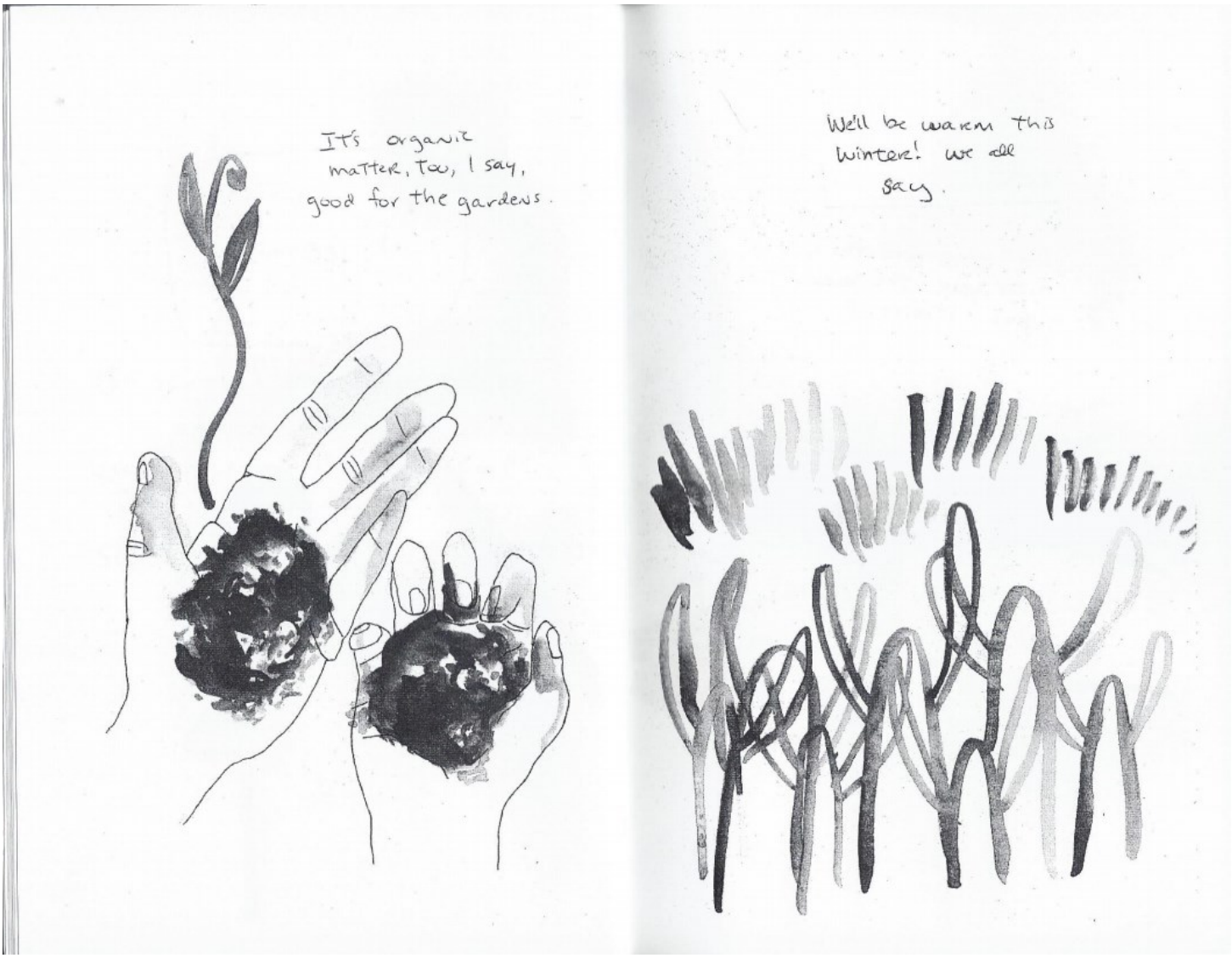
I wasn't cognizant at the beginning of my research that inquiry could be playful, body-directed, impulsive, galumphing, half-baked, failing, dissolving, breaking, imaginal, and *relational*. It seemed quite the opposite of what capital S, capital D Serious Doctoral Research should be. It felt like I had everything to prove, but all that particular collective creation space was asking for was an authentic expression of Self. Had I fully grasped this, my time with the group would have been gentler on my heart, more connective and dare I say, more pleasurable and fun.



The next day, a roommate and I sweep the chimney! He scrambles up the roof to push the brush up and down, looks in with a flashlight, bandana over face.



Unscrew the pipe pieces, vacuum the creosote, scrub the tubes outside. "It's primal", he says.



"It's organic matter, too", I say, "good for the gardens." "We'll be warm this winter!" we all say.

September 2017 – March 2018, Nictaux, NS

Part of my decision to return to Manitoulin in 2017 is to help me out of my clowning block. I haven't performed since my experience on the Northumberland Shore. To my delight, I receive some spontaneous and encouraging feedback from other folks during the two courses. *You're so funny up there – you're one of my favourites. You are funny just blinking.* Buoyed by the encouragement, I start to create iterations of clown turns and show different versions to farm friends back in Nova Scotia. I begin with an expanded turn based on the wood story book and perform it at a community open stage in Wolfville. There was some laughter, but a lack of spontaneous audience response afterwards that I had experienced singing at the same place at previous open mikes or on Manitoulin Island. At a weekend workshop in 2017 with a Clown and Mask-trained clown, the facilitator reminded me that clowns work with strong emotions, something that takes me to the edge of my comfort zone. Perhaps the wood story had, by and large, worked its way through me by that point.

The idea for my Doctora Doctora turn was collaborative and had several iterations. In December of 2017, I show the Wood-inspired turn to a clown friend of mine over Skype and then start to tell him a bit about my life in an animated way. He jokes that he could see me on a clown couch talking to a shrink in gestures and emotive sounds. The idea makes me laugh. The next day, I look at my list of potential clown names pre-written as part of our preparatory homework for *Boot Camp!* and Joey and Auguste and choose… FABO. With a new costume of a sequined black go-go dress (used in an experimental past turn), a red and white checkered plaid shirt, red tutu, rainbow socks, exaggerated lipstick and blush, a top pony tail, and dollar store hoop earrings, she certainly is Fabolous. My "shrink" is a large teddy bear on a chair, the couch is some old cushions on the floor with the red-wrapped box at the head of the couch. I play around with an initial version of this idea, practicing with some live musical improv with a visiting musician at Tegridy and then sharing the turn with some friends in the audience at an open mike in our hometown pub.

In Clown and Mask training, we drilled the twelve gestures of the six masks in innocence and experience, like one would with musical or sports practice or any skill that one would like to master. In my first iteration of Doctora Doctora, the song La Bomba by Azul Azul comes on spontaneously from my computer during the performance – a fantastic gift from the gods. To

my delight, Fabo does her “six innocence” gesture spontaneously, a kind of exaggerated hula hoop hip movement, with pleasure and gusto before the rest of me even knows what is happening, and keeps the play rolling.

In chapter VII, I imagine a more rigorous way to dialogue with audience responses as a lesson for me going forward. All the same, this performance garners some spontaneous feedback that I record in my field notes:

That was great! You’ve been holding out on me. You’re normally so reserved!

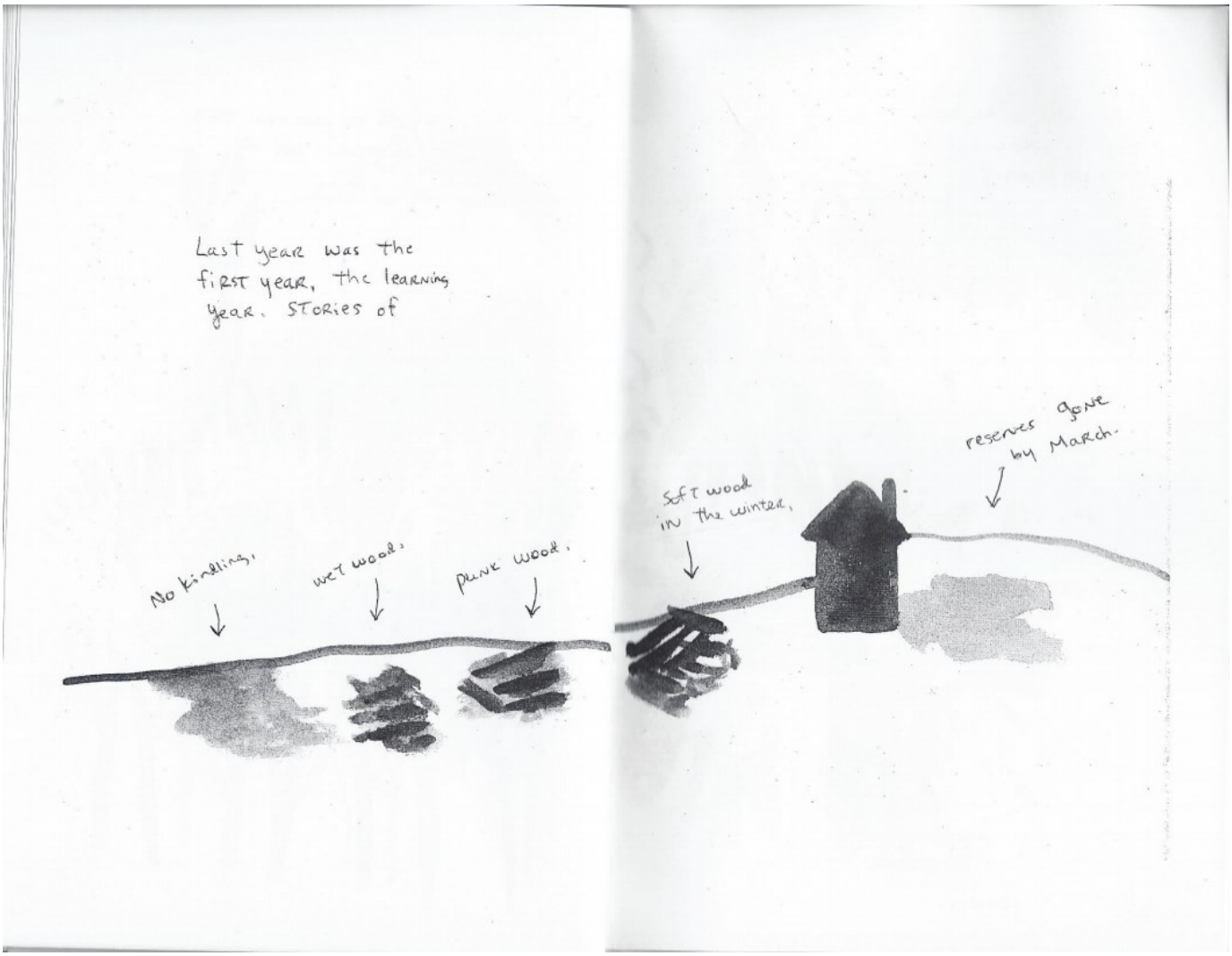
Great character, very solid.

It could have gone on for longer. To be vulnerable like that, that was great. That was the best thing the Capitol has ever and will ever see!

How did the audience affect me in these more public performance examples? I don’t know that I consciously registered their impact on me, their help or guidance. I think I felt afraid to abandon myself to playing with others onstage outside of the relative safety of a training classroom. What if I had slowed down the turn? Done less on stage so I had more time to improvise? What impulses would a deeper surrender to being in the room provoke in me? What would be exposed outside the relative safety of a clown class? I think of the work of Gregory Bateson (1976), how the clown nose could indicate that “this is play”, to show that any feelings and impulses are real (as embodied and acted out) but also simulated. As John said once in class, pass the feelings through the clown nose. I think of the work of Cathy Sloan (2018), who argues that beauty is what is powerful and affective in applied theatre, not liminality. Beauty, I recall, can be defined as strong sensations, emotions, and aesthetics coupled with interconnection (Thompson, 2011). Risking true conversation on stage it would seem is necessary for transformation, which, as a healer I know says, is always vulnerable and often painful. It mig.ht not be a safe space as I mention earlier, but perhaps a playful space that invites the breaking and remaking needed for such transformations.

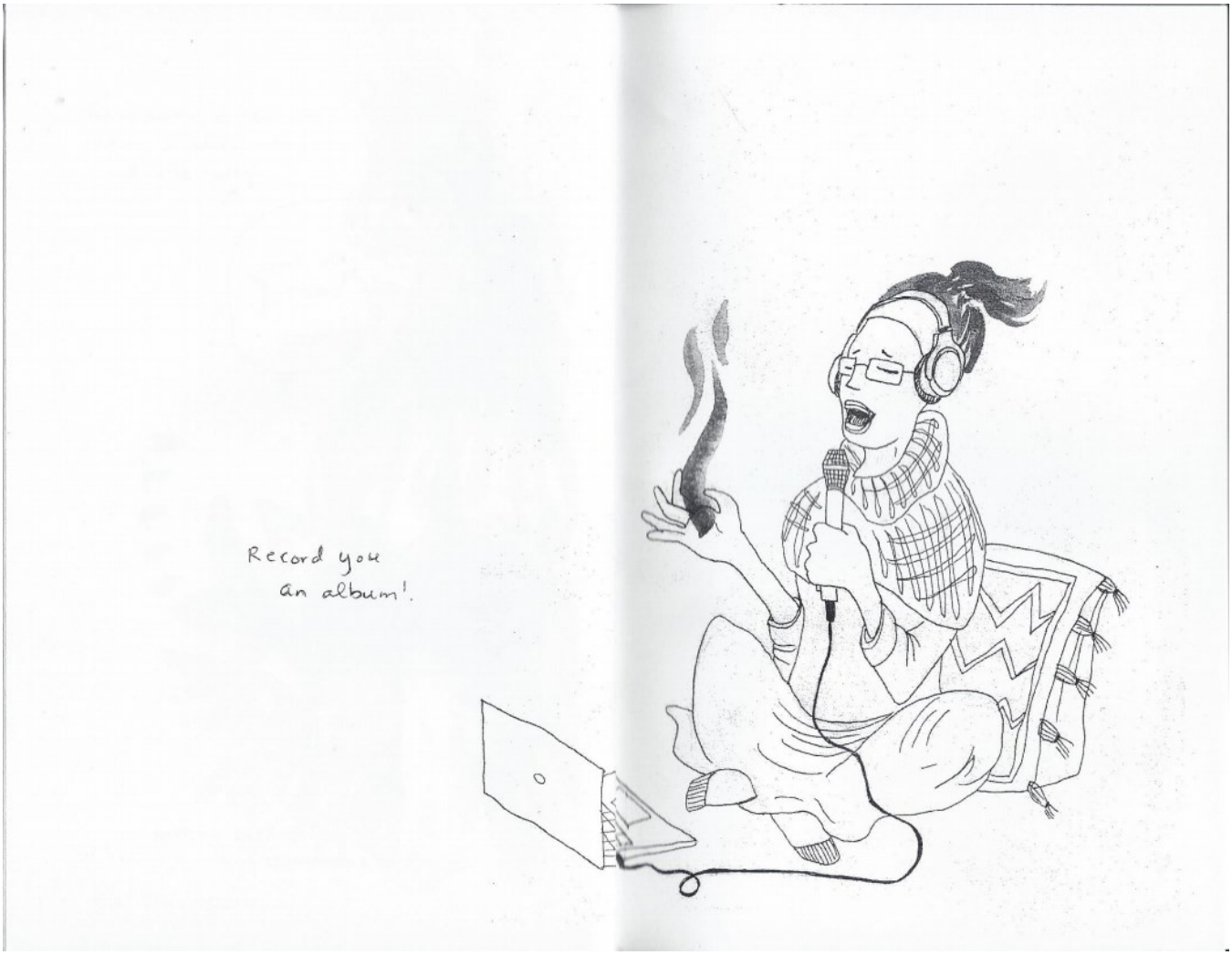
Veronica Coburn and Sue Morrison (2013) point out that in Indigenous views of wholeness, laughter can be a natural component to seriousness. Perhaps in this way, something scary could also be playful. If the movement towards wholeness can lessen the urge to control

(McLaren, 2010), perhaps clown inquiry as a two-way conversation that transforms will be a virtuous circle. I think of the message of trickster as one of no opposition and no enemy, or of oneness and both/and (Sutton-Smith, 1997), or the art of indigenous knowledge as co-creation operating in wholeness and cooperation (King, 2008). I imagine a room, or outdoor space for performance, with human and other-than-human participants not just in the absence of a fourth wall but in co-operation and wholeness, welcoming whatever presents itself.



Last year was the first year, the learning year. Stories of no kindling, wet wood, punk wood, soft wood in the winter, reserves gone by March.

Relearning a new way, which is also an old, old way. But this year… "We're going to have such a creative, cozy winter!" says another roommate.



Record you an album!

February 2018, Wilmot, NS

The initial sharings of Doctora Doctora leave me with a taste for more. In 2015, a healer had spontaneously channeled the vision of a performance piece for me about anger. In the vision, the center piece was a wrecking ball and different dancers moved around it in various approaches to anger: pushing it away, letting it crush, activity and distraction, stand and point before finally approaching the wrecking ball and standing atop of it, all with a back drop of loud

drumming and music. I decide to keep the Doctora theme and create a new rendition of the turn based on this vision.

I find an old milk crate at the hunting cabin in the back woods where I live, wrap it in a long length of red silk recovered from the barn wall at Tegridy, and download the death metal song Shall Rise / Shall Be Dead by George Kollias. I perform this several times for friends, family, as part of a conference presentation, and at an open mike…

"DOCTORA!!" I come in as Fabo, shake the hand of the stuffed bear who is sitting in a chair, and flop down on couch cushions spread on the floor. The box wrapped in red silk is arranged at the head of the cushions so the whole thing looks like a chaise lounge. I prop myself up on the box and look over at the bear.

"YA DOCTORA," I bellow. "IS VERY VERY." I gesture towards my innards and grasp my belly. "VERY VERY VERY."

I pour my Fabolous heart out to Doctora for a few minutes with plenty of gestures and gibberish, then stare at the box and laugh nervously. I get up and push the box behind me with a big smile, lie back down and fake a fantastic death as it crushes me, jump up and adjust this and that around the room while glancing over my shoulder, and stand pointing at it while looking back and forth between an unsympathetic Doctora and the box. Finally I start to pace around as the death metal song begins its ominous, chain-clanking deep bass build up. Just as I place one foot on the box, there is a jarring electric chord and the drumming begins. I do my bitter king stab GESTURE GESTURE GESTURE as I attempt to pick up the other foot still on the floor and drag it over to the box. Once I get both feet on the box, I start to gesture wildly and stick out my tongue in KISS-like rock star silent scream. At one rendition, I notice two of my friends doubled over laughing in the audience. I up the gesturing a notch, then jump off the box; the music stops. I adjust my tutu primly and shake Doctora's hand. Then looking out at the audience, I seize the box in my arms again, stick out my tongue as the music starts again, breathe out, and leave the stage.

Afterwards, at the bar rendition, I sit down beside one of the friends who had lost it when I was standing on the box, a talented musician friend with stage fright. He leans over. *You inspire me. I want to do that*.

You went for it, says the other friend who was doubled over laughing.

It's snowing heavily as my friends and I leave the bar, and we spontaneously gather in a group hug, while my musician friend jokingly kicks at my legs from the outside.

I receive a spontaneous message from one of the friends in the snow hug later that evening. *You are a soul healer*, he says.

In this chapter, I explore clowning as a theatre and scholarship of feeling through emotional navigation, physicality, authentic impulse, and a two-way conversation with the audience that transforms. These additional elements of clowning build on previous chapters that explore research-creation, clowning, and land relationship as practices of inquiry, clowning traditions, and clowning as play, humour, and dramatic reality. The felt sense, beauty, co-creation, being in the room, and welcoming the shadow have also been central to this study. I have explored teaching practices and land communication as sentience through the heart, both in cultures of this continent and in my own heritage, as well as nuances of cultural appropriation and inspiration and unsettling settler culture. For the most part I have attempted to look deeply at clowning and land connection as separate concepts with common denominators of sensory and physical presence, beauty, felt sense, co-creation, and wholeness / welcoming the shadow. In the next session I will look at some study imperfections and lessons learned.

Twist

Study Imperfections – Flops or Gifts from the Gods?

One of my advisors, Patrick Leroux, once said that learning is failure and success is just a pat on the back. I learned through failure in many ways during the course of this study. Sometimes a stuck moment asked for me to deepen my understanding through a return to the literature or through writing. Other answers were often waiting to emerge through artistic practice, images, and intuitive approaches and would not be coaxed out through reading or writing, and certainly not through the less effective techniques of tensing, freezing, or worrying that I sometimes, by default, employed. Another of my advisors, Karl Hele, asks me how trickster has guided or misguided my journey or research, and I include these reflections in this section as well. A case study playshop (playful workshop) held many gifts from the gods and many joyful moments as well.

June 2018, Nictaux, NS

I have come to another stop moment in my writing. Karl Hele, one of my advisors, suggests that I go fishing for the solitude and contemplation. I have wanted to try fishing ever since I arrived in the valley, so I buy a license from the gas station down the road while my neighbour James digs up a few worms. James throws my bike in the back of his truck, drives me down to the Nictaux river, and shows me how to cast and how to hook the worms (*may all beings be free*, I pray as I spear one of my favourite creatures – maybe I'll get some artificial flies next time). I practice casting and reeling in with both hands (the better to balance my yin and yang sides) until I find a flow, my feet in the cool water and sand. Sunlight ripples. Poplar leaves shimmy and purr. A light breeze keeps the bugs away. A small fish, maybe a shad, jumps off the hook as I reel in. I read about weirs, spears, and snares in my new government fishing manual and then lie down for a nap in the sand. This is where James finds me when he passes by to check up on my progress.

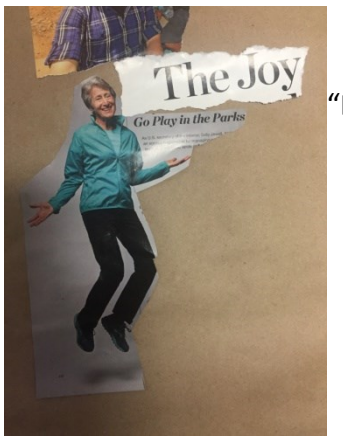
The intensity of the clown training stop moments, or embodied invitations into new insights and responses, I wrote about in the previous chapters did stop me in their full throttle autonomy and desire to command my attention. However, I then stopped myself as I looked first, and again, and again, to these moments through an analytical mind as I went through this research. I learned at Clown and Mask training that this practice is artistic, creative, and heart-expressive, not therapy; John, at the start of the course, said that the work is only therapeutic if we don't think of it as so. It took me a while to connect to the key word: *think.* While myth making is innate to the human psyche (McMurray Smith, n.d.), psychodramatist Adam Blatner (2003) proposes that narrating our lives, attempting to find a through-thread, can also be "one of the more common evasive maneuvers" (pg. 40) because of its verbal and past-or-future tendencies. I could feel the vestiges of these stop moment experiences dragging for months before integration and release. I wonder how they would have flowed through me if I had reenacted and re-searched them again in clown, in my body, in play through exaggerated feeling. It did not occur to me at the time that more clown experimentation and more time with land could open space and clarity in blocks and confusion. As I'm learning, this is the practice for arts-based research, a "returning again and again to the images and the process of expression as the foundation of inquiry" (McNiff, 1998, p. 47), with the ensuing focus that engaging with practice allows.

For those stuck moments, and as someone who easily dissociates from my body, I am also learning from Rosemarie Anderson and William Braud's (2011) intuitive approaches to research. They say that slowing, quieting, and directional practices can establish a base for other research techniques, to "help make subtle details and other forms of knowing accessible" (p. 176), to increase awareness, and to liberate the habitual bodymind so that it is more open to new realizations and creations. In data collection, full sensory awareness increases our capacity. In interpretation, these connective practices increase the likelihood of accessing "a bodily felt sense of what is most and least important as I work with my data" (p. 186) and calms in the writing and sharing. Similarly, I began to catch a felt sense, as my play of research, writing, and creation continued, of the power of Martha Beck's (2009, 2012) play-rest-play-rest pattern,

moving in an endless figure eight, as a way to peel away my conditioned layers to my inner child who can follow core Self with joy and bliss.

June 16, 2018, Annapolis Royal, NS

I plan a two hour workshop, partly in exchange for a $700.00 scholarship offered to me by the Annapolis Region Community Arts Council. I thought it could add another layer to my study. I invite, they invite; in the end the participants are the summer student hired to staff the front desk, a board member who had been asked to receive me, and one of my landlords, James, from "our" end of the valley. Although I test my recorder at home, it is not working by the time I reach the Council. James has agreed to film a five minute performance I have been playing with, but, although he films often, he presses the wrong button. In summary, the workshop is Clown Style; it might not be rigorous, but we all laugh a lot. Probably the most helpful research finding is a positive response to the clowning games and nature sits we do; "It's good for us," says one of the participants. I ask them to collage on a piece of brown paper in response, then pick an image that intrigues them and ask the chooser to explain it.



“Because adults can also play outside,” says James.

“Because it gave us permission to be silly,” says Kaylee.

“Because kids are natural, they let it all hang out,” says Niki.

Later, at home, when I ask myself if I should include the workshop at all, I look again to the overriding descriptions of arts-based research by Shaun McNiff (1998): that understanding process and using appropriate practices of inquiry and questions gives clarity as when to include other conventional research methods. I have explored process in this dissertation. My practices are learning theatrical clowning and engaging deeply with all my relations. My questions are around my own personal transformations and how this could be useful to others, particularly as it pertains to decolonization / reconciliation and / or personal development. I received a spontaneous testimony post-workshop from one of the participants, Niki Clark; she wrote that

> Megan was so disarming that it was easy to be comfortable with her participatory games which helped us all relax and enjoy the sensations she made us aware of - for me it was a shedding of that adult membrane that protects me from stupid people stuff, but also prevents me from experiencing the world as a child does.

I notice that trickster has been a neatly separate category in this dissertation – or I wanted him/her to be. Baubo, Isis, Puck, fairies – I wonder with whom to speak, the former two figures who connect with my imagination and the latter two to my heritage. Perhaps a mix, this current potential for co-creative identity (N. Dyrendom Graugaard, personal communication, 2014). I think of Drew Haydon Taylor's (2010) *Motorcycles and Sweetgrass* and the chief who learns from Nanabush that she

> could not control the things that happened in her community; she merely had to react… (he'd) taught her chaos was to be expected and nobody can really plan for it. Just prepare as best you can and deal with the situation when it arises. No more late nights worrying about "what if…?" Instead, more television or fishing with Virgil, thinking "whatever." She was sleeping better.

"Live in the question and embrace the journey rather than the destination" (p. 76) writes Amy Parent (2018). I have returned and returned to holding this idea in my research: forget, tense into the future, hang on to the past, pop my stress cap, start writing again. Living the question, embracing the journey: these are Indigenous values (Penak, 2018). Settler sociologist turned life coach Martha Beck (2012) frames the relaxation into feelings of disappointment in

moments of failure, around things not going the way we imagine or hope, as a crucial part of enjoying the journey.

In moments of "things not going the way I want", clowning gives me a dramatic reality to vent the truth of these feelings and then enjoy the "gift from the gods". In "real life", I notice a similar schism as trickster informing and disforming this work, how I try to pony up, the British stiff upper lip, when things go awry. Yet the sadness and anger in disappointment give the softness and strength to release and try again (McLaren, 2010), to improvise and play towards an unscripted destination (Carse, 1986). I'm writing this one December morning on the back porch, an unexpectedly warm day, and a brown creeper alights on the elm tree to my left. My typing stops.

Lewis Hyde (1999) writes that trickster became the devil and therefore evil in Christian traditions. Rather than a simple category of good or bad, trickster, however, "embodies and enacts that large portion of our experience where good and evil are hopelessly intertwined. He represents the paradoxical category of sacred amorality" (p. 10). Sue Proctor (2013) suggests that when something is not easily categorized, it gives the opportunity to open thought patterns. In the amorality of trickster, I can see the relations between. It brings me into the observational freshness of a child, to draw my own conclusions. I sink into my own subjective truth of how I feel, what I want, need, and like. Perhaps stories more easily hold these expansive cooperative binaries, a kind of mnemonic device to bring this archetypal energy to life so I can imagine, relax, enjoy. When I have the feeling of trickster with me and around me, my body is more spontaneous and playful, colours are brighter, sounds are fresher, my heart is more alert and alight. A doctor's office waiting room half an hour behind becomes a fascinating and entertaining set: the father reading a book to his toddler to my right, elders tut-tutting about the weather across the room from me, the terrible joke column in the free news and local ad flyer on the coffee table. *(Why do dogs like phones? Because they have collar IDs!)*

Nicole Penak (2018) reminds me that trickster reinforces relationality; she uses trickster to view a research problem as engaging with "an imbalance or disharmony" (p. 263). I think of the words that presented themselves to me before I began this research; they seemed to be incongruous in settler cosmology but, as I have learned, are deeply related in other

cosmologies. Amy Parent (2018) talks about research messages that are cryptic and require "patience and deeper listening" (p. 76); she writes that sharing certain Txeemsim (Raven trickster in Nisga'a culture) teachings are "my way of describing how I worked with feelings of doubt, familiarity, surprise, and uncertainty through the data gathering and analysis process" (p. 76). She explains that trickster also brings balance and harmony… but as I am learning, this is not always through quick or predictable or easeful means.

Trickster, as was communicated to me earlier in this dissertation, is always hungering after something. I think of British fairies who grew from a land that is primarily foreign to me, their instinctive energy that feels wild and uncontrollable, these things that "moveth" that will not be dominated or subdued (Bible, 1661, Gen 1:28). I think of moments when I let myself follow my hungers during this research. I was craving a wood stove and found my way to the spiritual center where I am living now, the source of so much joy and connection. I was yearning for a greenhouse, the very smell of it causing me to tear up one early March day, and found my way to an available room at Tegridy. Rather than fear these hungerings as something that could pull me off my logical mind's course, I saw how following my desires led me to soul enriching and liberating experiences (Beck, 2003). They weren't always easy, and sometimes felt downright dangerous as I let go of parts of me to create a new way of doing, but they were also far more exciting and nourishing and "true feeling" than anything my mind could have planned. I notice my yearnings to feel part of the earth's rhythms and cycles (the moon, water, leaf, and flower), to feel engaged in my love of learning and creativity in community, to feel deeply loved, seen, and respected by another, to belong. Writing slows me down enough to ask questions and notice or feel into the answers. I imagine yearning, hungering, or desire as a central cultural narrative for myself, centering in the sense of a narrative of the movement towards subjective wholeness, balance, and truth, an acknowledgement of the sacred amorality of my body impulse listening and the trials, misadventures, and learnings of a comic protagonist.

Stop moments in this research taught me the subtle dance between more structured practices of reading and writing and more intuitive practices of incubation periods, creation, image contemplation, and movement. A case study triangulated some of my own theories.

Trickster was a subject of study; although I didn't always recognize or even welcome them as such, perhaps the fairies were also (mis)guides of my research through interesting puzzles, through curiosity in always-opening to the mystery, through all the messiness, beauty, and absurdity of relationality (Penak, 2018; Parent, 2018). And so, onwards into the great unknown. In the following chapter I look at possible contributions to the field. I then imagine research directions going forward: primarily a more intentional combination of Natural Clowning as a practice of inter and intrapersonal connecting and learning via two research-creation practices.

Know When To Get Off the Stage![33]

Natural Clowning as Internal Child Awareness: Future Research Directions

How could the practices and theories of Clown and Mask and nature as a world view come together in a meaningful way for other settler Canadians? This section is necessarily speculative, and it is my intention to broaden this research to include others' experiences as I build my scholarship into action in the years to come. In this chapter, I will share the beginnings of a theory of Natural Clowning as a path of inquiry for adults. It looks to the Clown and Mask concept of connecting with the innocence of childhood in the maturity and experience of adulthood and what innocence after experience might imply. It suggests sensory, bodily, and creative play approaches as paths of awareness for adults, as ways to build self-trust and cultivate affect regulation capacities, or emotional fluidity. These qualities are said to build the foundations for healthy relations. Natural Clowning could be a way to face the Protestant cultural shadow of humans as nature and allow the unfolding, expression, and integration of the instinctive, unconscious self towards wholeness…foolishly. It could be a way for other Canadians to experience the smallest taste of the epistemologies of nature as a world view, to journey towards integrity and balance as settlers in Indigenous territories. In this section, I imagine how a theory of Natural Clowning might manifest into creative action in a larger sphere of investigation and impact.

Innocence After Experience

When I first began to study clowning, my mother shared a dream-message she received that woke her out of sleep: "Of course clowning makes sense. It takes a lot of wasted energy to act 'normal' and cover up the odd or vulnerable impulses we have."[34] Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992) writes

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[33] Class teaching, Clown and Mask, July 2014

[34] Personal correspondence, November 6th, 2014.

> Does a wolf know how beautiful she is when she leaps?...Is a bird awed by the sound it hears when it snaps open its wings? Learning from them, we just act in our own true way and do not draw back from or hide our natural beauty. Like the creatures, we just are, and it is right (p. 205).

Clown Through Mask is innocence *after* experience; it is not a return to childhood or the child I was but rather the child I am now (Henderson, n.p.). Veronica Coburn and Sue Morrison (2013) point out that "in Clown Through Mask, clown is not childlike. It's not soppy. Naïve. It is all things" (p. 94). What might it mean to be a maturing adult and connected to one's internal child at the same time? Alexander Lowen (1995) reminds me that play offers gentle yet powerful provocations of body defenses. He suggests that when I address my body's capacity to breathe, feel, move, and express, immediate and lasting changes to my mind are possible, as well as the cultivation of positive body feelings. Such sensations give rise to the capacity to feel joy, which is in turn connected with my internal child. My sensation of these play provocations is as the shining of a foggy mirror that helps me relax, perceive, and be more clearly inside and outside of me with all my relations.

In adults, this part of self manifests in qualities of innocence and freedom. Innocence can be defined as "freedom from guilt or sin through being unacquainted with evil; simplicity."[35] He suggests that the word freedom typically conjures the concept of outer freedom. The dictionary defines freedom as "the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action; liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another; the quality or state of being exempt or released; unrestricted use; ease and facility" amongst other meanings.[36] Alexander Lowen (1995) calls inner freedom the capacity "to express one's feelings openly" (n.p.), although this is often overshadowed by the monitoring superego. From a settler cultural point of view, he writes that no other animal judges its feelings, thoughts, and actions as good or bad; however, I have learned that in cultures from this continent (and perhaps in my ancient ancestral views as well), animals in sacred stories feel, think, and weigh their actions. An expansive perspective of all my relations reminds me again of the other-than-human as a deep teacher and all that remains necessarily in mystery and wonder.

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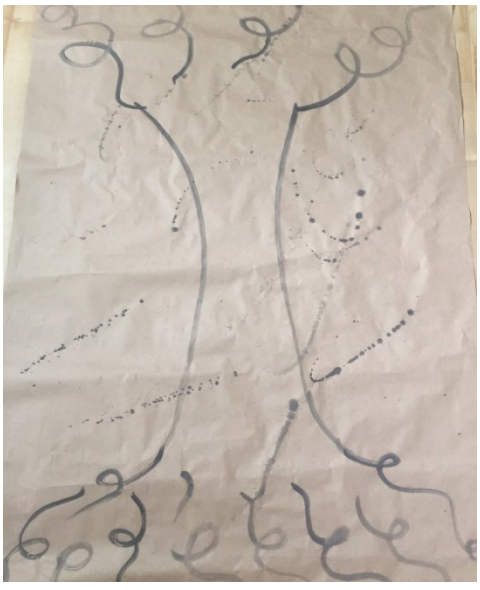
[35] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/innocence
[36] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/freedom

In *The Joy Diet: Ten Daily Practices for a Happier Life,* Martha Beck (2003) acknowledges that while *acting out* feelings, thoughts, and actions in real life is not always desirable or in some cases ethical (own emphasis), a curious exploration of these desires through art or other forms of expression can often give a voice to a deeper part of myself that is seeking expression and bring me closer to true heart-centered hungers and impulses. She suggests that heart-centered impulses differentiate themselves from destructive or dysfunctional impulses by the feelings of peace, openness, and expansion that accompany them, even and especially if they baffle the thinking mind.

In a later book, *Steering by Starlight: Find Your Right Life No Matter What!*, Martha Beck (2009) writes that in Judeo-Christian culture, building on the creation story of Genesis, we are taught that we are faulty and must have rules to correct and control us "if we are to become worthy. From a Western perspective, setting the original self free is shocking and dangerous" (p. 42). In contrast, most Asian cultures "see human beings as innately good, born perfect but then pulled off course by false beliefs, unfounded fears, and other delusions" (p. 42). The true self tastes of freedom and comes into being by noticing, trusting, and following our felt experience. When we move closer to our Self, we emotionally and behaviourally take on the "healthy, innocent self-love of a happy child" (p. 18). I experience this as a feeling of aliveness, with a strong felt assuredness of that which brings me joy and pleasure and a warm and relaxed sense of "this is play" with others.



I painted this tree spontaneously during the winter of 2017 and hung it on my wall for contemplation and revelation. One of my energy work teachers, Monika Muller, also uses the image of a tree for human connection in a healthy society. She writes that when our essential self is allowed to unfold naturally in a healthy society, like a seed to a tree, we grow strong. I imagine that welcoming emotions, authentic impulses, and 'gifts from the gods' in the 'naturalness' of nature and in a dramatic reality could provide possibilities for others to feel, access, express, and integrate aspects of their instinctive self in this way, and to experience with curiosity what might lie beneath. Poet and clinical psychologist Anita Barrows (1995) proposes that really, all psychology is child psychology: "the critical study of our inherent nature, how the gifts we are born with flourish or wither, what nourishes or starves the potentialities we bring to the world" (p. 101). She points out that late-20th century psychological theories evolved in "urban settings by urban theorists" (p. 102); Euro-settler developmental psychology tends to look at the growth of a child's psyche in relation to humans, whereas earth-based cultures conceive of human development in terms of relations with both other humans and the other-than-human.

Like Ashley Montagu's (1989) framework of neoteny and child-like qualities in adults for life-long learning, Euro-American wilderness practitioner Stephen Harper (1995) puts an emphasis on curiosity and exploration when nature is welcomed as a teacher and path. Nature as teacher asks for a trust in process, welcoming my body, emotion, and spirit communications while letting my ego and mind rest, and doing less and not more. He suggests that the wild part of self has been pushed into the collective industrialized cultural shadow, and with tremendous energy is frequently repressed, projected, or in the case of modern psychotherapy, analyzed and interpreted. Instead, he encourages participants to feel and welcome unexpected emotional experiences and physical reactions in wilderness settings as a manner to integrate their instinctual self and its qualities of spontaneity, creativity, strong emotions, and deep insight. He

gives an example of a participant who faces her fear of a snake that passes through her camp by embodying the animal through a spontaneously created mask and dance; the participant reports that through movement, creation, and physically and emotionally feeling her reactions to the experience, she finds the gifts in that denied part of herself.

I returned from my second round of training at the Manitoulin Conservatory of Creation and Performance in August of 2017. While I felt bewildered by the intensity of my emotional responses to class provocations, afterwards I also found myself responding to feelings and impulses in a fresh way. My actions took me to new experiences, which then opened up parts of my unconscious previously inaccessible to me. I work regularly with a healer who channels support from my spirit guides and occasionally my ancestors; I scheduled a session with her when I came back from my second round of training at the Manitoulin Conservatory to ask for help integrating all that had been shaken up in class. During this session, to my delight my guides also suggested that it was psychology that would be the bridge between clowning and land relationship: a practice of internal child connecting in adults to parts of self that didn't get the opportunity for expression at a younger age. I had to laugh. Psychology is a field that has fascinated me since my teens, in the sense of the study of the soul (psyche = soul, logos = knowledge or study), and as I wrote at the beginning, has inspired me to seek pieces and parts that I wanted to see included in settler psychology conversations and practice. Here the answer had been, in my heart and soul, all along. In this sense, I feel that much of the impetus for this research has come through me and appreciate the words of Cree scholar Shaun Wilson (2009) who explains that in an Indigenous paradigm, knowledge belongs "to the cosmos of which we are a part and where researchers are only the interpreters of this knowledge" (p. 38).

Interdisciplinary play researcher Gwen Gordon (2014) writes that the plasticity of the brain allows for development of emotional fluidity and inter and intra personal connection capacity into the adult years. Through her research, she looks at play theorists who suggest that dramatic reality play contexts with clear structure, low-stakes, and a basic sense of safety could be an excellent forum for adults to work out emotions and to retrain the brain into healthy affect regulation. She calls affect regulation emotional stability. Here I look to the work again of

Karla McLaren (2010) who suggests that emotional fluidity might be a more appropriate definition, given the temporary, dynamic quality of emotions and their association with water in many cultures. I think of the river near my house and the ripples and rushes that arise and subside, or the frozen patches that crack apart in the spring thaw to be dissolved downstream. Affect regulation is also what Judith and Allan Schore (2008) call a modern attachment theory, or how we learned and continue to bond with others. Gwen Gordon (2014) suggests that practices to connect with the emotion-based limbic brain and right brain (predominant in infants) is necessary when working with adults in personal inquiry work, and that cognitive/neocortex interventions only serve to mask the deeper pain. She echoes the work of such scholars and practitioners as Ashley Montagu (1989) and Stephen Harper (1995) when she suggests that playfulness is not a personality trait but an innate human characteristic that is possible to uncover, develop, and cultivate. Gwen Gordon (2014) identifies a research gap in "attuned, right-brain dominant play in adults either within or outside the therapeutic setting" (p. 255).

Daniel Stern (1985) offers a model of child development of a core self that explores pleasure through the senses, with social and verbal rings of development that are built around this sensory self. Anita Barrows (1995) suggests a model for a developmental process that starts with sensory experiences and includes all our relations. In that way, it seems that sensory experiences in adulthood would connect with a deep, core self, beyond social or verbal exchanges. Furthermore, experiential connections to the steady cycles and tangible, sensory nature of the earth could support other participants through transformational experiences as they engage with the interplay of emotional expression, authentic impulse, and conversation in a dramatic reality. Earthly cycles and sensory anchors have midwifed me through utter undoings as I "let this happen" (Harper, 1995), burning through that which wasn't me moving ever closer to my core self (Beck, 2009). Eric de Bont is a Dutch clown practicing out of Menorca, Spain who blends energy work, clown, and experiential land connection. He suggests that through these practices, we can move through "very strong personal themes, patterns, habits, at the same place where the wounds, personal traumas, and tragedies lie" (de Bont & Maiwald, n.d., n.p.) to the joy and child-like capacities of our clowns. It takes us to our core,

"without influence of society or others" (n.p.). While, for the sake of a manageable research-creation doctoral study, I have looked only at my own experience, I feel there is great potential to expand this research along this vein. I will explore a few potential practices later in this chapter.

Centering

Near the end of my study, one of my advisors asks me, has clowning via a land based emotive journey served as centering me within an Indigenous land scape? At first, I don't know how to answer.

I think of arts-based research and the prerogative to engage with image and practice as the basis of inquiry. Half way through my research in 2016, I painted a large red circle on a piece of brown kraft paper and put it on the wall of my room beside the tree painting. I re-read the first chapter of this dissertation on arts-based research and think again of the circle. I remind myself that artistic knowing involves breathing in uncertainty (or as a friend commented in my master's thesis, *breathing uncertainty in*), or perhaps a conviction in the Life-beingness of change. Fred Donaldson (1993) writes that this kind of openness asks the hard work of creativity and play, the creation and destruction, the making and breaking, held in compassion for oneself and for others. Scary or exciting, or a loving looping movement between the two.

I think of the process of individuation, which can be defined as the union of one's conscious self with one's personal and collective unconscious, or in other words, the movement towards wholeness. Carl Jung (1962) called individuation a primary process of growth and change in the human psyche and an innately healing process. Through clowning, other experiences of spontaneous and physical theatre, and land communication and relationship, I have researched and practiced a playful and egalitarian earth connection; an appreciation of ambiguity and both/and; practices of collective, unbridled joy; and continued adult learning and growth through play, curiosity, and the capacity to love. Through the same practices I have also researched and practiced emotional navigation, following authentic impulse, and physical communication. Strong instances of fear and shame as I was integrating these modes of knowing into my conscious life led me to believe that these are part of my personal unconscious. This practice towards wholeness or individuation is to do so even and especially when the roles or parts contradict one another, exist simultaneously, or bewilder our brain with the illogic logic of paradox. The clown role can move between these differences with ease, "which makes inner paradox become a form of logic: the logic of flexibility and incessant process" (Gordon, Shenar, & Pendzik, 2018, p. 93), or perhaps, the logic of constant change. They suggest that acceptance of our differing and paradoxical parts and roles can "support self-regulation" (p. 93), the liberation of less adaptive behavioural patterns, and the potential for a transformational process through a psyche that is more integrated with personal and collective shadow.

As I wrote earlier in the thesis, Gregory Cajete (1994) suggests that individuation in an Indigenous context is not an individual act but one that is embedded in land, community, and cultural and spiritual practices. I found this differentiation both intriguing and significant, and I ask myself how I might or how I have related collective individuation with humans and other-than-humans appropriately to a European /settler cultural concept. In original Celtic cultural and spiritual practices, Frank MacEowen (2007) and Tom Cowen (1993) write that contradictions were complementary and part of the cosmic whole. Nature was "entwined with the human psyche" (p. 106) as a "living, intelligent being" (p. 104). Fairies, the Gaelic tricksters, are paradoxical (Greenslade, 2002) and the cultural myths complex and ambiguous (Blackie,

2016). British writer Sharon Blackie (2016) proposes a modern heroine's journey towards wholeness as one from head towards rootedness in the world and our bodies, land, and communities: a "journey of collective re-enchantment" (p. 361). A recent article by a British applied theatre doctoral student, Cathy Sloan (2018), conceptualized the impulse towards individuation, particularly as it pertains to addictions recovery, as rooted in the body's felt sense and deeply embedded in relations.

I think of land. Gregory Cajete (1994) writes that for Indigenous people, (literally, those who feel a visceral connection to land), personal inquiry and connection "is predicated on interaction with the soil, the air, the climate, the plants, and the animals of the places in which we live" (p. 84), as well as with other humans. This is part of an ancient human foundational practice of the psychology of place. In my improvisation and dramatherapy class, I learned that projection is an everyday process of the psyche in an attempt to relate to and understand the world that involves the typically unconscious movement of parts of ourselves or our emotions onto other people, places, and things. Through connection with a theatrical technique, participants dialogue and play externally with an internal conflict and find some kind of new insight to or dynamic with a problem (Jones, 1996). In Clown and Mask, I experienced projection in dialogue with my masks. "Ask the mask," John would frequently say when faced with a question regarding the creation of a turn. Stephen Buhner (2004) suggests that perceiving and experiencing nature through the felt sense is another way to welcome our unconscious emotional desires into consciousness, as mirrored back to us through feelings. He calls this a "holistic/intuitive/depth mode of cognition" (p. 2) through the senses used by Indigenous people to learn directly from the world and feel a sense of belonging. Similarly, Gregory Cajete (1994) writes that Indigenous psychology / psychology of place involves projection of internal archetypes onto the land as a "living soul" to which they have responsibilities, as to other humans; this gives an understanding of "the roots of human meaning as grounded in the same order that they perceived in nature" (p. 186).

In a Sto:lo cultural context, storytellers learned through both human and other-than-human mentors (Archibald, 2008). Likewise, Mi'kmaw ecologist and storyteller Shalan Joudry (2018) shares that "in Mi'kmaw cultural ways, we learn through our personal relationships

(n.p.)." Leanne Simpson (2014) tells a story of land-as-pedagogy, where an Anishinaabe girl learns to trust her feelings and worldly knowings in experiential, socially embedded land-as-learning contexts. John Borrows (2010) shares teachings of land's sentience and agency "upon which many Anishinaabek people attempt to build their societies and relationships" (p. 243). As I listen to podcasts by Mi'kmaq community leaders Shalan Joudry (2018) and Frank Meuse (Joudry & Meuse, 2018), I have the sense of how little I know of the land stories, the sacredness of where I live. The language. A community a half hour drive away is offering language classes, but just for community members. Someone directs me towards a website and pronunciation guide. Kwe', wela'lin, wela'lioq: hello, thank you, thank you plural. Punamuiku's, apiknajit, si'ko'ku's: frost fish moon, snow blinder moon, month of the sugar.

I think of not just an emotive journey but also one of authentic impulse and affection, as in affecting and letting myself be affected, in attending to my own resistance and learning in the present encounter. I think of my experiences both on a theatrical training stage and a community "real life" stage at Tegridy to show myself not as I wanted to be from moment to moment but as I was feeling, without judgement, letting myself be seen, not trying to be more, as intrinsically worthy (Coburn & Morrison, 2013). I think of authentic impulses both on the stage of life that led me to Nova Scotia, to Tegridy, to the spiritual center where I live now, and in theatre training that led me to forgotten parts of my inner landscape to be remembered and integrated. A comic protagonist, I have learned, is one who exists in process and in relation (Gross, 2014). As different from a tragic hero who exists in struggle and solitude and who is concerned with triumph or defeat, the comic protagonist is a hero for being herself (Ponce de Leon, 2009) who journeys towards wholeness (Hinton, 1981). Like in cultures where the trickster sacred stories are still alive and present, s/he reflects this as well – a hero for being who s/he is (K. Hele, personal communication, 2018). From a Jungian perspective, Michael Bala (2005) calls the fool archetype the "core emergent self" who acts on intuition and risks embarrassment, humiliation, and failure in her quest for wholeness while walking at the edges of her known world. I think of my old hag I discovered, barefoot in mud, with her red bundle of wood. She is right mad, with the energy of rage that is capable of enacting true change. I think

of my troll father mask, stoic even when all feels hopeless. I think of my baby eagle, who is happy to co-exist in pain and discomfort with the purity of tender silliness. Clowning, as I see it, is an enlivening inquiry process for adults, with part of that process in our relationship with the earth. A practice of playful personal investigation is not the kind of earth activism I expected to find when I began this doctoral research. I wanted to be a hero. Instead I have become a fool, and I am all the better for it.

Later I find out my advisor's question was a trick one. He reminds me that from an Indigenous perspective, we (humans, other-than-humans) are always already in relation, and the path is to find out what those relations are, in active, storied, lifelong learning, in mutually sustaining ways (K. Hele, personal communication, April 16, 2019).

Contributions to Conversations and Practices

On my walk over to the hunting cabin to edit this epilogue, I hear them before I see them: the caws of a murder (does three count?) of crows and the *kriiiiiiiiiii* of a red-tailed hawk. The crows are diving and swooping; the red-tailed hawk circles six or seven times and then redirects towards the south, wings flat and wide. My original spiritual encouragement to embark on a doctoral project was to *SPEAK, SPEAK LOUDER!* As I moved through the project, I began to understand that the accumulated readings, writings, practices, and experiences could give me a voice as part of greater conversations. Where will Natural Clowning contribute to research? I can imagine several possible fields.

Applied theatre has an established tradition in Australia and the United Kingdom with relationships between social action, theatre, and education. While some consider it a developing field in Canada (Freeman, 2014), it has in fact been in practice but under other names such as community engaged arts (L. Fels, personal conversation, April 16, 2019). The Theatre and Performance Research Association (2017) in the United Kingdom has an applied and social theatre working group that looks at the "application of drama and theatre to community, educational, and therapeutic settings… to raise questions about the ethics of practice and research in applied and social theatre, and the relationship between practice,

research, and teaching in this aspect of scholarly inquiry" (n.p.). Programs in applied theatre at Canadian universities include the University of Victoria, Cape Breton University, and Concordia University.

Land as pedagogy as related to human connection and wellness is an ancient practice; Natural Clowning will contribute to current conversations already taking place through Indigenous and settler writers such as Leanne Simpson, John Borrows, David Abram, and Sharon Butala. I see this fitting perhaps in conversations from a settler perspective in Canadian Studies as offered at institutions such as Carleton University and University of Mount Allison, in interdisciplinary environmental studies such as the program at York University, or one of the many ecopsychology programs in the United States[37].

This study will contribute to the scholarly conversations amongst other *clowning* performers / teachers / scholars including Jacqueline Russell in Calgary, Julia Lane in Vancouver, and Sue Proctor in Winnipeg and Montréal, and to practice both geographically in the creative community in Nova Scotia and demographically with other Clown and Mask teachers and performers across Canada and abroad.

If the long-term goal of Natural Clowning is to explore and articulate adult personal inquiry and learning as a connector between clowning and land relationship, I see this happening in two ways. Firstly, to provide opportunities for soul liberation in others as defined by Martha Beck (2003) – a celebration of the uniqueness, beauty, and non-standardization / industrialization of the living experiences and patterns of a conscious, feeling, sensing, loving human being. Secondly, to provide opportunities for a deeper allegiance in non-Indigenous Canadians to earth relationship as reciprocal, communicative, and mutually transformative, with all our relations as living patterns for a healthy human psyche and society and a humble alignment towards local cultural wisdom. I am envisioning two creative frames going forward to package and share these ideas: Laughing and Singing Our Way Through Emotions and Clowns in the Woods in performer and teacher roles.

[37] https://www.apadivisions.org/division-34/about/resources/graduate-programs

Laughing and Singing Our Way Through Emotions

In the summer of 2018, I make a brochure for Natural Clowning and put them up around town, although I notice that most people still give me a glazed and confused look when I try to explain the work I want to do. A few weeks later, an acquaintance and her husband approach me as I am working on one of the computers at my local library.

"We saw your brochure. And we heard of a Buddhist Center workshop far from here doing something around fear and singing and dancing. We think you could pull this off here, one workshop a month," she announces. "Laughing and Singing Through Fear. You could also do Laughing and Singing Our Way Through Anger, and Through Sadness."

I look at her, stunned with joy, an unexpected career angel messenger! I had begun to realize the depth of training and experience to teach clowning well, and she had somehow articulated just what my soul wanted to offer as the next step along this path.

I began several free experimental rounds with feedback time with friends in the late summer of 2018. I read about trauma-informed practice and incorporated aspects like a clear playshop outline at the beginning, marked transitions between playshop elements, and emphasis on participation by choice (Government of Nova Scotia, IWK Health Center, & Nova Scotia Health Authority, 2015). I then developed a format: 1) introduction to the playshop and ground rules – no put downs, challenge by choice, and celebrate mistakes with a ta dah!; 2) opening circle; 3) heart-centering or Stephen Buhner's (2004) inner child meditation 4) warm up; 5) collaborative theatre improv games; 6) emotional yoga, or the clown practices I learned from Shannan Calcutt and Andrew Wilmer that take participants through physicalized emotional extremes; 6) toning and a group singing game adapted from theatre games; 7) creative integration activity (for example a group collage, a haiku, a moving sculpture); 8) discussion on the gift of one emotion per session; and 9) a closing circle or meditation.

I have already written on *Laughing* (humour, play), as well as emotional navigation. This year, the Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance offered Voice for Clowns. For teacher Fides Krucker (n.d.), *Singing* "is not polite – it is messy and deeply human" (n.p.); with its deep connection to the autonomic nervous system through breath and voice, it is an invisible

part of the body that shows impulse and truth easily as another path to emotion, creativity, and unconscious parts of the self. My second energy work teacher, Debrae Firehawk, calls sound and voice a way to incorporate chakra and aura work into group sessions (class communication, February 2019). In the spring of 2019, I will be a practicum case for a Sound Healing practitioner, bringing more singing practices into my toolbox. I also see this format as a forum to bring in other elements of applied theatre practices I experienced such as Augusto Boal's (1995) *Rainbow of Desire* and Matthew Fox's (1986) Playback Theatre. The Mental Health Commission of Canada (2012) recently identified a gap in peer support programs for positive mental health.

As these workshops progress, I feel Fabo begin to inform my teaching persona: her loud confidence, co-creative spontaneity, and unapologetic self-delight. I don't yet know all else that I am drawing from these workshop experimentations and how they have impacted my own thinking about clown experience and pedagogy. I can say that as nervous as I have been to put this research into action, I learn about clown experience and pedagogy by doing clown pedagogy. I make mistakes, and some people who come hate it, but some people love it and want more. When an activity flops, I am tempted to take out the old bludgeoning stick and berate myself, but I keep the mantra of one of my favourite writers and sociologists, Martha Beck, in mind - *Tell me where I'm wrong!* - and continue to ask attendees what can be improved.[38] And lo and behold, I begin to have increased attendance and simultaneously deeper and more hilarious experiences with people. So far, in a wellness center in my town, we have Laughed and Sang our way through fear, anger, sadness, shame, and jealousy - one every month. Other organizations such as an addictions recovery center, a women's centre, a return to work program, and the federally-funded Kids Action Program have expressed interest in playshops for their clients or staff. What is the pedagogy of failure? Of risk? Is this synonymous with a pedagogy of creativity? How could such practices support others who tend towards anxiety, depression, and shyness? These are questions I can carry forward with me.

With performance, I want to practice audience engagement and dropping the script. To practice improvisation and two-way conversations, I will organize an informal performance of

[38] https://www.oprah.com/spirit/martha-becks-5-best-pieces-of-advice/all

Doctora Doctora once a month with different groups of friends and acquaintances and ask someone to film each time. I'll have forms for audience members with the questions I identified for future performance research in chapter VI, as well as documenting time for me to reflect on my audience conversation and improvisation as well. I have been invited to give a workshop at one of the future mental health summits happening in the valley in Nova Scotia; conferences could be a possible future performance site for the clown turn. Fabolous clowning performances could be a way to liberate stigma around or open dialogue about mental health. There appears to be a research gap in this realm, although one woman I found, Candice Roberts,[39] is a Clown and Mask-trained performance artist who looks at links between creativity, mental health, healthy community, and expression based out of Vancouver. I also plan to return to the Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance within the next three years for more clown training, inspiration, and laughter with my foibles and experiences.

[39] https://candy-bones.com/

Clowns in the Woods



(Clowns in the Woods photo shoot, October 2017. Photo credit Juele Hortie)

Cherokee scholar Francis Lee Brown (2004) links affective education with the honouring of the earth and the peoples on the earth. He writes that in the late 1690s, John Locke's philosophies used in English public schools (and later exported with British colonizers) simultaneously valued reason over emotion and promoted "undeveloped" land as ripe for taking, perhaps as a justification for colonialism. Francis Lee Brown asserts that

> when the European male (Zeno, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Descartes, etc.) separated their mind from their heart and, in medicine wheel terms, began the oppression of the heart by the mind that they also separated themselves from their environment. One might argue that this emotional detachment from their lands allowed them to leave their homeland and export their philosophy of oppression throughout the globe. When Europeans became detached from their affective awareness, it enabled them to avoid the emotional feedback from their exploitation of the world's peoples and environments. The oppression of the European heart by the European mind was the beginning of the oppression of Indigenous peoples, women, and the earth itself (p. 28).

I wonder about this split of mind from heart as a beginning of oppression or harming of self as well. Francis Lee Brown calls for not only connection in education between cognition and emotion but also to the spiritual and physical aspects of being and learning and argues that affective education, from an Indigenous perspective, is a key element of decolonization. This makes me wonder, what about from a settler perspective?

Sometimes in the course of this study, I would go to a wild place after a period of intense mental exertion or computer time. I would feel a kind of filter between me and the other-than-human until I danced around, did some spontaneous picnic table drumming or singing. I would feel a subtle shift in my connection to sensory perception, my breath, my body, and then a melting of that filter to a physical feeling of oneness with the forest. Martha Beck (2012) suggests that wordlessness is a precursor to oneness. It moves consciousness from the verbal left hemisphere to both hemispheres, particularly the creative, intuitive, and sensory brain regions. She gives a number of paths to connect with wordlessness, including meditation, play, intentional sense-connection, dance, movement, and song. She notes that

> You may notice that the first two skills, wordlessness and oneness, aren't actions but states of consciousness. Our culture gives such things little value; we're all about doing, doing, doing. Imagination and Forming will probably feel more familiar to you, more concrete. However, if they aren't used from within the state of consciousness achieved through Wordlessness and Oneness, Imagination and Forming have very little power (p. xxv).

This reminds me of the work of Vanessa Watts (2013) in chapter III, who emphasizes the necessity of communication in land relationship as listening and then acting, as different from sustainability or stewardship. Rick Fehr (2013) reflects on cultural story paradigms of place being intertwined with story, as different from a settler narrative he presents as significantly remiss in a willingness to engage with land, or the world "*on* the world's terms" (p. 274). How do I imagine clowning as a social turn outside of the proscenium space (Jackson, 2011), redefining culture, if cultural transformation starts from within? How might we engage bodies, feelings, senses, and aesthetic response to beauty? What kind of conversations could happen, need to happen about land (Simpson, 2016)? What about conversations beyond words, from a place of feeling, between all beings?

In 2014, the summer before I began my doctoral program, I gave an experimental afternoon workshop in Natural Clowning in Killaloe, Ontario that involved collaborative improvisation and clown games in a friend's back yard. At the time, one of the participants expressed a desire to spend a day in the woods in emotional-physical clown-mode, in verbal silence, while another imagined clowning combined with canoeing down the Bonnechere River. A few years later, I hosted an hour-long Clowns in the Woods session at Tegridy in the

exploratory stages of my research with collaborative improvisation games and free play in costume and clown nose in a pine forest. One of the participants said afterwards that she felt "without baggage" and wanted to know more about the theory or ideas behind what I was doing. I have mentioned Eric de Bont and Daniela Maiwald who are already doing such work. Elise deGuire also offers a clowning in nature course in St-Damien outside of the city as a chance to be in relation with the forest and the river, to rest busy minds and follow bodies and instincts. As I look to the future, I am curious to explore future Clowns in the Woods workshops with others through play, movement, and sensory connection in nature. Going forward, I would like to integrate this liberatory feeling with a practical application to a participant's life. I imagine 1) an outdoor sense meditation such as I learned from Brian Mertins and practice every morning as a warm up meditation; 2) dropping into body communication and feeling (wordlessness and oneness) through the theatre games and free nature play; 3) activities from some of Martha Beck's coaching practices (imagining and forming), and 4) a plant walk forage home to integrate the experience and to link the woodland time with "normal life," as I learned from the teachings of wilderness practitioner Stephen Harper (1995).

(photo credits Justine MacDonald, Juele Hortie)

Natural Clowning as Inquiry: An Ecology and Performance Towards a Scholarship of Feeling examined theatrical clowning, particularly Clown and Mask, and nature as a world view

as practices of inquiry. It investigated arts-based research as a category separate from quantitative and qualitative research and explored images of emergent new paths and labyrinths to conceptualize such research. I learned that arts-based research and research-creation return again and again to practices of inquiry to clarify and synthesize, with other quantitative and qualitative practices that can be used for triangulation. Concepts of affect, effect to beauty, and co-creation influenced the study; being in the room and welcoming the shadow were central to it. Two principle sites of research and creation informed the practice of Natural Clowning: Tegridy Farm and the Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance. The former is part of Mi'kma'ki, the latter on Odawa land.

Land communication and relationship was one main path of inquiry in this study. As a Canadian settler, I examined questions of identity, belonging, and traditions of nature as a world view in my own European heritage with an eye to cultures of this continent. I touched on at concepts of cultural appropriation as different from cultural inspiration and how I might encourage an ongoing practice that unsettles settler expectations in myself and others as related to concepts of land. Land communication, a key concept in nature as a world view, looks to sentience and perception through the heart. Land communication suggests the need for personal understanding towards wholeness for clear seeing and feeling. *Theatrical clowning* was the other main path of inquiry. As I moved towards clowning before this doctoral study began, I began to see how clowning could be a personal inquiry process for adults. I looked into clowning traditions in Europe and in settler North America and found myself most drawn to Richard Pochinko's Clown and Mask. Paradoxically, mask work in Clown and Mask revealed hidden parts of myself to be costumed and spotlighted, appreciated for what they are. Play, humour, and dramatic reality also contribute to personal inquiry in clowning, as well as emotional navigation, physicality, and a two-way conversation between performer and audience that transforms. As per a teaching practice, I began to seek a methodological perspective rather than certain techniques to help participants open and liberate themselves through this kind of adult improvisational play. As I looked back on study imperfections, I could see potentials to invite trickster in as more of an integrative energy.

Before I started this research, I wanted to save the earth and the people on it. Instead, through nature as a world view and clowning, I found my roots, my human and other-than-human place, and a laughable and lovable community inside myself. Innocence after experience finds adult freedom in recognizing and expressing feelings and authentic impulses. Sensory, creative, and movement practices can help to work out emotions and retrain the brain into healthy affect regulation. This is now known to be possible into adulthood with new information on brain plasticity. In other words, Natural Clowning could offer opportunities for adults to feel, express, and integrate those parts of self which were disempowered or disenfranchised as children for a more resilient and flexible sense of self in moments of adversity. I propose that this process of individuation is not just an individual act but one that is in context, with all our relations. I look forward to contributing to conversations happening in applied theatre, land as pedagogy, and Clown and Mask. Additionally, I am excited to create and share future practices that generate insights, contribute to pedagogies of creativity and risk, and deepen this theory and practice of Natural Clowning as a personal inquiry practice for adults. May this work be a humble offering in service and in light. I am deeply thankful to all the beings, living and unseen, who have supported me in this journey.

Rest

The other day I held a door for a clown. I thought it was a nice jester.

(internet joke)

So how to conclude what is effectively an opening to what comes next?

I walk into the forest on the land where I now live, the spiritual center with a sense of humour, down the road from Tegridy Farm. The sky is bright blue after yesterday's snowstorm. Muffled tracks dot the ground, and dry branches make a rattling sound as I brush past. The trees close upon the trail ahead. As John my clown teacher said frequently during my first Clown and Mask training, *ah, the unknown!* My snowshoes grip the ice underneath the powdery snow and beat a path behind me. I loop around right into the open field, a blanket of white save lines of tracks that punctuate the landscape. Past the frozen pond, left through the wild blueberries, down the slope through the elderberry and fiddleheads that will unfurl in the spring. I hear her before I see her, a raven's gurgling call. I look up into the clearing in the forest canopy, where she circles, circles, circles. I stand and watch (*longer than you think you should*, as I learned from my nature mentor). And again she loops, loops, loops high in the clear blue sky, ever more distant, until I let out my breath and continue my walk home.

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Appendix A – Land Relationship Exploration

Previous to my doctoral research I spent fourteen years in earth activity facilitation and learning, on a paid and volunteer basis and as a personal health and spiritual practice.

Doctoral exploration

Kind of activity and role	What	Where and When
Participant	Group nature mentorship with Brian Mertins, bi-monthly Skype conference calls. Weekly checklist activity sheets re: local trees, plants, birds, animal tracks, and geology. Encouraged curiosity, sensory engagement, relationship observation.	Montréal, QC, Ship Harbour, NS, Middleton, NS, March 2015 – October 2015
Participant	Tracking sessions with Brian Mertins.	Clam Harbour Beach, NS, Fall River, NS; August 2015, March 2016
Member	Land resident at Tegridy Farm: collective house garden plot, firewood harvest from mixed forest (maples, birch, and some softwoods like pine). Some fruit and nut mulching, harvesting, and processing: 44 kinds of established apple trees, a few pear, plum, and peach, hazelnuts, hicans (hickory pecan cross), and sweet chestnuts, blueberry, haskap, and red current bushes. Harvesting wild plants: wild blackberry, nettles, teas like red clover, dandelion. Other medicines like dandelion root, balsam fir sap.	Nictaux, NS; May 2016 – November 2017
Volunteer	Five days with De-ba-jeh-mu-jig theatre. Gardening, traditional Ojibwe teachings.	Manitowaning, ON

Appendix B – Theatre and Clown Exploration (Learning, teaching, performing)

Getting warmed up, coming to clown

Kind of activity and role	What	Where and When
Undergrad course, student	THEA 132 Exploring Theatre: Drama Process in Applied Theatre Department with Juliana Saxton. One time clown course, Shannan Calcutt, Clown and Mask tradition	Victoria, BC, Sept. 2000-April 2001
Community Theatre Class, student	Kate Rubins Theatre, including Commedia dell'Arte characters and improvisation	Victoria, BC, Jan.-April 2008
Improvisation classes, student	Theatre St. Catherine; Improv Montreal	Montréal, QC, Fall 2008; Spring 2013
Classes with Salsa Descalza, participant	Salsa classes mixed with movement, Theatre of the Oppressed games, and clown	Montréal, QC, Fall 2008-Fall 2014
Courses, participant and facilitator	Storytelling/Oral Histories/Identity and Performing Stories. Initiated guest clown teacher, facilitated clown class for students	Montréal, QC, Fall 2009-Winter 2010
Contact Improvisation dance week, participant	Skinner Release techniques and Eryn Dace Trudell	Leviathan Studio, Lasqueti Island, BC, summer 2012
Community clown classes, organizer and participant	Community clown classes with Nadia Cicurel	The Standing Room, Montréal, Winter, 2013
Training, participant	Nose to Nose level 1 with Vivian Gladwell: The Courage to Be	Montréal, July 2013
Workshop (one time), participant	Authentic movement – Sylvia Berlin	Montréal, May 2014
Training, participant	Clown and Mask two week intensive (Baby Clown) with John Turner	Manitoulin Island, July 2014
Training, participant	Nose to Nose Level 2 with Vivian Gladwell and Blondine Maurice: Embracing the Unexpected	Montréal, July 2014

Workshop, facilitator	Natural Clowning experimentation	Montréal, QC and Killaloe, ON, summer 2014

Doctoral creation exploration

Clown turn, performer	Just Watch Me! Open Stage	Montréal, September 2014
Training and performance, participant and musician	Shadowed Promito Playback, musician for a show	Montréal, September 2014-Dec. 2014
Training, organizer and participant	Clown classes with Sue Proctor	Montréal, Fall 2014
Workshop, teacher	Community clown classes to students and community members	Montréal, QC, Fall 2014
Course, student	Process as Practice – Research-Creation methodology (Concordia)	Montréal, Winter 2015
Workshop, participant	Butoh with Diego Piñon	Studio 303, Montréal, February 23 and 24, 2015
Training, participant	European-style clowning with Elise Deguire	Caserne 18-30, Montréal, January to April 2015
One time workshop, participant	Developmental Transformation (DVT) with Jason Butler (Concordia)	January, 2015
Clown turn, co-creator and performer	Oily Business with Sue Proctor and Julian Duarte at People's Potato	Concordia University, Montréal, March 2015
Playback performer, musician	Music for The Living Histories Ensemble	Vanier College, Montréal, May 2015
Workshop, facilitator	Clowning with youth at the Deanery Project workshop	Ship Harbour, NS, Summer 2015
Collaborative outdoor performance, participant	Around Here (pseudonym)	Northumberland Shore, Summer 2015
Musical improvisation night	Organized and hosted weekly musical "jam night"	Tegridy Farm, Nictaux, NS, January – October 2016
Workshop, participant	Clowning weekend	Red Clay, Upper Economy, NS, 2016
Clownesque salsa dance	Co-facilitated with Francis Lovett	Nan's Rock Shop, Wilmot, NS, May 2017
Clownesque vision board art project	Co-facilitated with Francis Lovett	Nan's Rock Shop, Wilmot, NS, May 2017
Clownesque land ceremony	Facilitator	Tegridy Farm, Nictaux, NS,

		May 2017
Training, student	Boot Camp (Clown and Mask)	Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance, Manitoulin Island, ON, July 2017
Training, student	Joey and Auguste (Clown and Mask)	Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance, July 2017
Turn, performer	Doctora Doctora at The Capitol	Middleton, NS, January 2018
Clown turn, performer	Beep Beach at Broken Leg Theatre	Wolfville, NS, February 2018
Clown turn, performer	Doctora Doctora at the Capitol	Middleton, NS, March 2018
Multidisciplinary Natural Clown program	Annapolis Royal Regional Arts Council	Annapolis Royal, NS, June 2018

Appendix C

Clown Rules (Clown and Mask)[40]

- Get yourself off
- Be honest
- Have fun
- Breathe
- Let us affect you
- Make contact
- Follow the impulse
- Take us into your world and bring us back with a new awareness
- Surprise yourself
- Surprise us
- Take risks
- Be flexible
- Drop the script (you can always go back to it)
- Keep us (the audience) safe
- Go for the unknown
- Rule of three
- Believe
- Trust
- Be specific
- Listen to us
- Listen to yourself
- Think out there
- Clown logic
- Up and out
- Keep the conversation going
- More, more, more
- Know when to leave
- Physicalize
- Ride the wave
- Gifts from the gods
- Be visceral (think with your blood)
- Play with rhythm
- Follow the rhythm
- Be zany

[40] Baby Clown training, July 2014, Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance

- Six impulses
- Break all the rules

Appendix D

Consent Forms

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM - General

Study Title: Natural Clowning as Inquiry: An Ecology and Performance Towards a Scholarship of Feeling
Researcher: Megan Hyslop

Researcher's Contact Information: 902 840 1734; meganhyslop@yahoo.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Louis Patrick Leroux

Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: 514 848 2424, ext. 5617; Patrick.leroux@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study: Concordia University graduate scholarships, Quebec government bursaries and loans program, Concordia Conference and Exhibition awards, Annapolis County Regional Arts Council (ARCAC) scholarship, Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance scholarship

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this research-creation doctoral study is to explore my experiences in theatrical clowning and land communication as practices of inquiry and how they have impacted my own development. My writing style for the dissertation will be a mix of theory and story. Since I

explore how my experience fits into my own socio-cultural identity in the greater Canadian context, some conversations and relationships that take place as I explore these practices may be brought to bear in my dissertation. I will create and share a public clowning performance as part of my dissertation and film it. This ethics form is to ensure there is a process of consent and respect for any outside influences or parties.

B. PROCEDURES

I will ask participants, over the course of 1 hour and 30 minutes, to sit quietly in a park five minutes from ARCAC (the Annapolis Royal Community Arts Council) in Annapolis Royal and to play 2 theatre games, to write haikus and to make a collective collage at the Arts Council. This portion of the event will not be filmed. I will keep the haikus and collective collage until I finish writing the dissertation, after which I will burn them.

For the written portion of my dissertation, if I am reporting a casual experiential conversation that occurred in a public place, or if I use any information from the workshop at ARCAC, I promise to give the person I talked to the right to look at my reporting of that interaction in my dissertation or to remove identifying details or to use pseudonyms upon request. I will send this ethics document as a reference point for them. If they do not give consent, I promise to remove the text. For the performance, before filming, I will ask oral consent from audience members and explain the possible dissemination potentials.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I am the subject of this study. I expect risk in this research to be minimal for those people I have interacted with during this research and no more than what they would experience in day to day living. Benefits include laughter or pleasure from watching a funny clown show, feelings of inspiration from watching a form of creative expression, or a feeling of satisfaction from reading about an interaction put into a larger research context around holistic wellness.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

My computer, which I keep in my home, is password protected. I will gather the following information as part of this research: field notes, or written documentation of my experiences, saved on my computer and hard drive; analytic reflective memos, or short messages to myself about feelings, short conversations, intuitions, or pieces of research that seem to fit together in some yet to be identified way; and filmed documentation of a clown performance. I keep my data on my computer, and I am the only one with access to it.

I intend to publish the results of the research. Any participant mentioned in a casual interaction will be given a consent form with my email address; they will either be an acquaintance or a colleague whose contact information I already have. I will specify that they can ask for their information to be removed up until submission of my final dissertation for publication with Concordia's database of dissertations (March 2019). I will give the option of pseudonyms and changed place details for anyone involved in my stories, as well as engage in process consent. Someone who has given consent before always has the right to withdraw consent. However, it is important to emphasize that this research is primarily about my own inquiry and learning through theatrical clowning and land communication.

PARTICIPATION OPTIONS: TO BE FILLED IN

[ ] I accept that my name appear in publications of the results of the research.

[ ] Please do not publish my name as part of the results of the research.

[ ] Please use a pseudonym and alter place

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to give consent to be referenced or portrayed in this research. It is purely your decision. My contact information is meganhyslop@yahoo.ca; please know that you can withdraw consent to be implicated in the project at any time or to have more identifying details changed.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) _____I_____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact me. You may also contact my faculty supervisor whose information is on the first page.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM – John Turner

Study Title: Natural Clowning as Inquiry: An Ecology and Performance Towards a Scholarship of Feeling

Researcher: Megan Hyslop

Researcher's Contact Information: 902 840 1734; meganhyslop@yahoo.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Louis Patrick Leroux

Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: 514 848 2424, ext. 5617; Patrick.leroux@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study: Concordia University graduate scholarships, Quebec government bursaries and loans program

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this research-creation doctoral study is to explore my experiences in theatrical clowning and land communication as practices of inquiry and how they have impacted my own personal inquiry. My writing style for the dissertation will be a mix of theory and story. Since I explore how my experience fits into my own socio-cultural identity in the greater Canadian context, some conversations and relationships that take place as I explore these practices may be brought to bear in my dissertation. I will create and share a public clowning performance as part of my dissertation and film it. Audience members may be asked to participate. This ethics form is to ensure there is a process of consent and respect for any outside influences or parties.

B. PROCEDURES

For any written material, if I am reporting a casual experiential conversation that occurred in a public place, I promise to give the person I talked to the right to look at my reporting of that interaction in my dissertation or to remove identifying details or to use pseudonyms upon request. I will send this ethics document as a reference point for them. If they do not give consent, I promise to remove the text prior to publication. They also have the option of keeping the text but removing identifying details or using a pseudonym. For the performance, before filming, I will ask oral consent from audience members and explain the possible dissemination potentials. This ethics form is particularly for John Turner, one of my most influential clowning teachers. You have the option and right to remove any of your identifying details or the segments that mention you. Please know that my intention is to publish this material. You can withdraw consent up until publication with Concordia University's dissertation data base (March 2018).

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I expect risk in this research to be minimal for those people I have interacted with during this research and no more than what they would experience in day to day living. Benefits include laughter or pleasure from watching a funny clown show, feelings of inspiration from watching a form of creative expression, or a feeling of satisfaction from reading about an interaction put into a larger research context around holistic wellness.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

I will gather the following information as part of this research: field notes, or written documentation of my experiences, saved on my computer and hard drive. Analytic reflective memos, or short messages to myself about feelings, short conversations, intuitions, or pieces of research that seem to fit together in some yet to be identified way. Filmed documentation of my final solo clown performance. I keep my data on my computer; it is password protected and I keep it at home. I am the only one with access to it.

I intend to publish the results of the research. Again, I will give the option of pseudonyms and changed place details for anyone involved in my stories, as well as engage in process consent. Someone who has given consent before always has the right to withdraw consent. If an adult is mentioned from casual conversation in my writing, I will already have their email through social circles. I will send the consent form. Withdrawal of consent can happen up to when I submit my final dissertation for publication in Concordia's archives (March 2019). However, it is important to emphasize that this research is primarily about my own inquiry and learning through theatrical clowning and land communication.

PARTICIPATION OPTIONS: TO BE FILLED IN

[ ] I accept that my name appear in publications of the results of the research.

[ ] Please do not publish my name as part of the results of the research.

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