“Patterns in a world in slippage”: Playback Theatre as professional development in three primary healthcare centres in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

This thesis is an account of praxis: it examines Playback conceptually, and portrays a programme of practical work exploring the experience of workplace audiences of five Playback Theatre performances, delivered from 2002-2005. The aim of the performances was to assist multi-disciplinary teams of staff in community health centres in Auckland New Zealand to communicate and work together with more understanding of each other.

The thesis describes Playback as a way not only to elicit complex narratives which allow for diverse points of view to be expressed, but also as an aesthetic reworking of these narratives using action, music, dance, gesture and speech, in ways which have been influenced by 20th century avant-garde forms such as surrealism, dada, collage, jazz and poetry. Unlike some forms of theatre, Playback calls on elements of ritual and group method, in that it relies on audience members taking an active part in the performance by contributing narratives from their own lives. The thesis interrogates the notion of audience in theatre, using the words audience, spectator, spect*actor*, participant, public and polis, and specifically investigates two moments of the theatre as polis, in the French and Russian revolutions, when the potential of theatre to engage with the widest cross-section of the nation led to influential experiments and innovations in theatrical practice, each of which influenced the succeeding century. Some Playback discourse and practice is found to contain simplistic, even nostalgic, concepts of personal narrative, and the potential for performers' interpretations in Playback to reinscribe social privilege is noted. In spite of its simple structure, Playback demands extremely complex skills from all the performers, not only the facilitator. In addition, the complex setting of the practical work encompasses both local NZ health initiatives and developments in global health.

The work in each Healthcare Centre is described in a complete chapter: each containing details of the Centre and the Playback, seen through the findings of the patient focus groups, through comments made in interviews by the staff and through the researcher's observation and experience. In all three Centres, existential and emancipatory metanarratives surfaced in the performances and in interviews. Professionalism was seen as meaning different things: at Ngākau it was a measure by which people were found to be unsatisfactory; at Oranga, it referred to applying the lessons of the Playback to one's own practice; while at Pātaka, professionalism was evident in narratives of self care, dedication and seeking clarification and support from peers.

While the study revealed limitations of Playback, it also pointed to some unique contributions this form of improvisational theatre can make to a programme of staff or group development. In particular, Playback can open up spaces, people and topics, for non-dogmatic, pluralistic, embodied thinking and reflection, leading people to more nuanced understandings of themselves and each other, and can even affect attitudes and behaviours.

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To my grandmothers and their sisters: because you were, we are.

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This study received ethical approval in 2003 from the Auckland District Health Board Ethics Committee. Reference number AKX/03/00/040

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Attestation

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Chapter One - Introduction

The river

> *Rangimarie Rose Pere "invoked the notion of waiora[1] as a river of life-giving forces (1991). As a metaphor, the river implies images of ebb and flow, infinite capacity and interaction between multiple complementary processes" (Palmer, 2004, p.51).*

We look at the river and have a folk-story that the future is down-river, where it joins the sea – yet the water down-river is the past, that which has passed us, as we stand on the banks. The future of the river is behind us, upstream, in the mountain springs and glaciers where the water that will be here tomorrow is already forming (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). A similar sense of movement is blown by Benjamin's version of Klee's Angel, who moves backwards into the future, just as people are seen to do in indigenous traditions such as Te Ao Māori[2] (Clifford, 2003):

> The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has got caught in her wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. (Benjamin, 1969, pp.258-259)[3]

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[1] Waiora refers to water of life or living water, i.e. spiritual health. Footnotes are used throughout this thesis to provide an indication of a meaning in English for a Māori word used in the text, where the main text does not already give an indication in English. In any language, some words are, of course, captions for highly complex ideas and are therefore difficult to translate. This led to the decision to use footnotes, rather than bracketed translations. As a committed learner of the language and a writer working in Aotearoa New Zealand, I affirm and value the unique world view embodied in the indigenous language and support its use, protection and celebration. As the first language of Aotearoa New Zealand, it has primacy in this country and I have chosen not to italicise it. In addition to the footnotes, there is a glossary of Māori terms provided on page 418, with notes on pronunciation of Māori words following it on page 420.

[2] Te refers to the, Ao refers to world, Māori refers to the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

[3] Sexist language modified. Where writers use sexist language (*man, he, himself*), which may often have been seen as unproblematic at the date when they were writing, but which, I argue, is no longer acceptable in the pluralist academy, I have substituted such locutions as *person*, *humanity, she, herself*, for four reasons. First, to avoid reproducing such outmoded language and reinforcing such exclusionary practices; second, to overtly address women readers; thirdly to give male readers a lived experience of gendered expressions being used to signify universals; and finally to maintain the stylistic integrity of my text. I have inserted a footnote in such cases indicating that sexist language has been modified and giving the original text. In this case the original reads: "The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them." (Benjamin, 1969, pp.258-259)

"Benjamin's vision [is] of melancholic progress, of history moving forward while gazing backward, longing to recuperate that which has been damaged" (Lee, 2994, p.370). This is a kind of movement that contrasts with a river's flow:

> Michel Serres has played upon the words for time and weather being the same in French (*le temps*) and refers to this turbulent flux as temporal *chiffonage* - '*le temps ne coule pas; it percole* (time doesn't flow; it percolates)' (Serres and Latour 1995, 57-62). [I] have attempted to set off such percolation through the performative practice of the story-teller-guide. (Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p. 178)

Thus the sense of a movement that ceaselessly replenishes itself, evaporates and comes round new; a wind that inexorably blows through these pages, have been part of this project so that at the moment of submitting it, on the riverbank, among mud, ducks, reeds and willow trees, I barely hold the pages as the wind tugs them. E mihi ana ahau i a koe, e Waikato, to tātou awa rangatira[4].

In spite of this sense of only just managing to hold still in the present moment, this thesis is an act of historiography, attempting to shed light on the complex activity of Playback Theatre taking place within the intricately interwoven context of employment and health in 21st century Aotearoa New Zealand. In this it reflects the modus operandi of Playback Theatre, which is in itself a form of historiography, as members of a group tell, formulate meaning, retell, contest and reflect on human experiences, using narrative forms. My commitment to this historicising is epitomised in the interviews with the three members of the first Playback Theatre Company who are still working actively in Playback, presented in Appendix Three – my hope is that these accounts will be of particular interest and practical use to Playback practitioners. The first four chapters of the thesis, then, rehearse various perspectives of its core concerns and explores them, often through juxtaposition and contrast, sometimes through narratives of particular individuals, who it identifies genealogically as 'ancestors' and at other times through quotations from other authors. Sometimes their relationship to Playback is reasonably straightforward, while at other times it is more tangential, yet, in my view, helpful in suggesting ways to activate a view of Playback Theatre which does justice to its many facets and dimensions. In this respect it is, of course, *my* telling: but has been informed

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[4] This is a greeting to the river beside which I grew up, Waikato. E mihi ana refers to the act of greeting, ahau refers to myself, koe refers to you, to tātou awa refers to our river, rangatira refers to chiefly or noble.

throughout by rigorous (sometimes rowdy) dialogue, critique and disputation with Playback colleagues and fellow-travellers in my practice and research communities[5].

How to read this thesis

An image that emerged for the first four chapters of this thesis has been one given to me by a valued colleague in theatre work, Rose Beauchamp, who wrote to me in 1978 from a corroboree near Alice Springs, where she watched the women trace over and over a circle in the red dirt, within which the performance was to take place. As I try to give a sense of the complexity, elegance and interdisciplinarity of action methods, with their dimensions of narrative, aesthetics, carnival, play, critique and group endeavour, a reader working through these chapters may well, I imagine, become frustrated or even infuriated by their spiral movement. For such a reader, to start with Chapter Six, the context and then to read Chapter Seven, methodology, followed by the three chapters which delineate the practical project, may be an easier pathway: my hope would be that then coming back to the first five chapters will deepen and complicate the view you have gained.

Communication within interdisciplinary teams

This thesis describes Playback Theatre in the context of workplace communication and development. The research project which formed the practical dimension of this thesis arose out of the researcher's creative practice and aimed to explore how an action method, Playback Theatre, which calls for audience participation, might be used in workplaces to enable a wide range of individuals, including those for whom complex and theoretical vocabulary in the dominant language is a barrier, to make their insights and concerns available to each other through a sequence of facilitated and aesthetically

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[5] Specifically, I met with a research group fortnightly for four years with my principal supervisor, David Seedhouse, and submitted my insights to the group's critique; while our Kāinga Rua Playback Theatre group proceeds by an on-going practice of reflection, discussion and clarification of concerns. At times, we discussed the practical work done as part of the research and I taped the discussion, listening to it many times to discern the twists and turns of the themes and concerns expressed. In addition, I attended Playback Theatre gatherings, meetings and conferences throughout the years of working on this thesis and was involved in energetic discussion and critique on these occasions. I would particularly like to acknowledge Aviva Apel-Rosenthal, Rea Dennis, Jude Murphy, Deborah Pearson, Mary Good, Martin Sutcliffe, Marilyn Sutcliffe, Martin Putt, Sara Crane, Bev Hosking and Francis Batten in terms of this ongoing critique and deliberation.

rich narratives which form a kind of dialogue. As such, it explored the area of using action methods in professional development and workplace learning. Chris Argyris states, citing Hannah Arendt: "learning that serves action reaches to the core of human social life. Action is how we give meaning to life. It is how we reveal ourselves to others and to ourselves" (1993, p.1). Conversely, the enquiry explored whether people who were confident with complex theoretical verbal or written tasks in the dominant language might at times use such language as a barrier or shield and whether employing multi-modal performance-based methods might assist such linguistically sophisticated people to experience themselves and others in novel ways. These methods form one, perhaps under-used, modality within a range of professional development approaches, from intervention by management consultants (Schein, 1999) to web-based and online learning, facilitated group work, tuition, and individual coaching (Hipkiss, 2006). This study sought to delineate the particular contributions (and pitfalls) of this approach to professional development, especially in the chapters on the practical project (Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten).

It is important to emphasize that while Playback has sometimes been explored as a therapeutic modality or with overtones of healing (Adderley, 2002; Birch, 2005; Hoesch, 1999; Salas, 2007), that was not the focus of this study: rather it sought to address simply the use of Playback in a workplace professional and team development context. This is a context which is frequently a venue for Playback Theatre commissioned performances. In this case, it is ironic that the context available to the researcher was in three community healthcare centres. The audience members were, many of them, intimately involved in therapeutic concerns: however, these performances attempted to assist them to communicate more authentically and in more nuanced ways with each other, rather than addressing explicitly their own needs for healing. It is a feature of many contemporary workplaces in industrialized societies, that some people within hierarchical systems may hesitant about critiquing the status quo: some colleagues may tend to lack of confidence with reading and writing in the dominant language while others simply have strengths in other intelligences (Furnham, Rakow, Sarmany-Schuller & De Fruyt, 1999;Gardner, 1993, 2004). In addition, work teams in a number of environments may feel pressured in terms of such things as time and therefore experience difficulty in organising professional development sessions which lead to change (Bowe, Lahey, Armstrong & Kegan, 2003; Pullon & McKinlay, 2004; Vause, 2003). This becomes particularly difficult, yet important in a busy

community health centre, where the drive to meet the needs of stressed populations can easily lead to overburdened staff. This project explored whether such staff found that action methods could support them to communicate with each other and to address their issues in ways which would translate into changed behaviours.

The contemporary westernised environment, with its technological demands and its tide of undigested information, can lead individuals to a situation where complexity produces disempowerment or oversimplified conflict (Chun, 1999) amid a sense that the problems facing people are bigger than their ability to confront them. Ironically, in what aspires to be a knowledge society, the world can present itself as a series of items of uncoordinated information, rather than articulated usable concepts. Psychologist Kenneth Gergen writes that "in an expanding sea of available information, along with an expanding domain of relationships, we are exposed to an increasing array of authoritative claims—opinions, data, arguments, and proposals" (Gergen, 2000, pp.204-205). To navigate this tide both individual and group reflection become important (Frankford, 2000; Johns, 2003; Valkenburg & Dorst, 1998). Additionally, in such a setting, a programme of Narrative Medicine at Columbia found that listening to and expressing one's experience in stories suggested the "productive hypothesis that the development of attention increases the skills of representation and that the skills of representing increase the attention. Together, they spiral toward affiliation—with individual patients, colleagues, and the institution that houses them all" (Charon, 2005, pp.268-269). An elegant way for colleagues to share their stories and to attend to each other is through action methods, such as Playback Theatre.

Playback was part of a range of theatrical developments which arose during the twentieth century, in an attempt to redefine and reinvigorate theatre, focusing on the relationship between performance and audience (Artaud, 1993; Balme, 1999, 2004; Barba, 1995; Blatner, 2007a, 2007b; Blau, 1990, 1998; Brook, 1968; Callaghan, 2003; Grotowski, 2002; Schechner, 2002; Wilson, 2003). It is a form of improvisational and participatory theatre, which was developed during the 1970s in upstate New York and is currently practised in over 30 countries worldwide. It is part of a theoretical turn towards performance in many cultures: concurrently with its development "some of the chief preocccupations of our time—namely, spectatorship, memory, the body—[have been] framed within the terms of performance" (Marranca, 2006). Performers of Playback regularly receive anecdotal feedback, frequently straight after performances,

about the impact and benefits of the form which consists of a facilitated sequence of spontaneously contributed audience accounts of experiences, memories and insights, each of which is interpreted and reflected back in turn by the performers through music, movement and enactment. However, relatively few research studies of audience experience of Playback have so far been published. Wright (2002) and Dennis (2004) in their theses mainly focussed on the one-off Playback public performance, while Lucal (1996) described Playback as part of his thesis on emergent drama and Rowe (2005) looked in detail at the experience of acting and ensemble work in Playback and discussed the activity of hermeneutic play which he identified as a core feature of Playback Theatre. Within each of these studies, reference, sometimes brief, is made to commissioned performances; however, the present study focussed on looking in detail at audience experience of commissioned Playback performances for work groups, in sessions which were delivered to assist professional development and team-building.

Te Kupu Whakaahua - The Practical Playback Theatre Project

As an account of praxis, this thesis describes work undertaken in a practical research project which was completed from 2002 – 2006. It had been hoped that a video appendix for the study might be able to be presented as part of this session, showing the professional development and team building sessions which were offered at which the staff of three Community Health Centres in Auckland New Zealand became audience /participants for five Playback Theatre sessions. However, it proved to be impossible to present such an appendix without sacrificing the ethical need to provide confidentiality to the participants. A very detailed account of practice was produced, through the researcher's journal and transcripts of the performances, recordings of discussions about the performances and 32 individual semi-structured interviews, which explored the ways in which the staff members experienced Playback Theatre in these sessions. Two rounds of focus group interviews with patients of each Centre were also held to anchor the research in the realities of patient experience of the Centres.

Many of the staff interviewed reported that Playback assisted them to gain insights into their colleagues, their team and the work they do together. In interviews, they made comments such as:

> Meetings staff meetings just sit there and listen to somebody … but what you're doing was a lot of fun too. (woman, administrator, Māori)
> I found to have a good laugh is great, it releases endorphins and things but also one

> of those things where you open up and be vulnerable I got very positive feedback from other people who also said you know "I know *exactly* how - that wasn't just *you* up there that was me too" you know? (woman, doctor, Pākehā)
> From my point of view … it's more like it's from a doctor's point of view a reflective listening thing and it's - instead of someone repeating back the words to you, they actually enact them …and they try and demonstrate the feeling, it's more about the emotions and the feelings. (man, doctor, Asian)
> I was just like clear everything that it was heavy in my brain like all these little things telling me negativity and stuff but it was really clear … it's a real smooth you know…sitting in a nice cool water in Samoa…. (woman, receptionist, Pasifika)

In Playback practice, such positive comments are frequently received informally after performances and I had experienced this during a period of practice spanning over 15 years: the wish to understand more fully what was behind them gave me impetus to undertake a more detailed and thorough enquiry into the experience of Playback performances for workplace audiences. The metanarratives used by interviewees in talking about the Playback sessions and about their workplaces were of particular interest.

The context for this project was firmly rooted in Aotearoa New Zealand where over many years I have been challenged, coached and encouraged in both creative and educational contexts, by indigenous colleagues, teachers and students. Creative practice in such a setting – a society in which there is a dynamic mix of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial[6] practices coexisting in motion and rhetoric – cannot be neutral. One of the potential strengths of Playback and one reason for my continued commitment to use and develop it as a creative practice, is its possibility of creating syncretic theatre, which combines indigenous creative forms with the techniques and exercises which constitute the Playback modality.[7] Thus this project was conceived and executed with a

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[6] *Pre-colonial* refers to the whole system of thinking which is now encapsulated in Matauranga Māori, and which Pihama (2001, p.83) suggests "provides a distinct Māori epistemology and ways of knowing and draws upon a range of both verbal and non-verbal forms for its expression." This unbroken tradition has existed for over 1,000 years in Aotearoa. *Colonial* refers to a way of thinking and doing which implies that there is a centre, (London, New York, Beijing…) in relation to which Aotearoa will always, inevitably, be on the margins. *Post-colonial* is used as in Spoonley (1995, cited in Pihama 2001, p.73), "to mark a critical engagement with colonialism, not claim that colonialism has been overturned...post-colonialism is used here to signal a project by those who want to critique and replace the institutions and practices of colonialism."

[7] In a contemporary book on applied theatre, Hannah Fox (2007, p.11) recently characterised our NZ work with Playback as "a medium to empower Māori culture." However, in my experience it is exactly the reverse that is true: indigenous cultural forms and approaches

focus on interaction with Māori creative practice and research. The practical project for the enquiry was named by kaumātua[8] Ngamaru Raerino, a respected elder colleague in both Māori education and theatre practice. The name he gave to it was *Te Kupu Whakaahua* – literally, *the word portrayed* – his translation into Te Reo Māori[9] of *Playback Theatre*. The project was situated in the complex multi-ethnic employment and service context of the New Zealand primary healthcare sector, and was participated in by a diverse multidisciplinary group of health care workers and Playback performers. Of the 20 interviewees, 12 of whom were interviewed twice, four were Māori, two Pasifika,[10] three Asian and 11 Pākehā.[11] The performing group, which drew on two Playback Theatre companies, consisted of five Māori, one Asian, one Pasifika and six Pākehā performers, in varying teams of between five and eight per performance.

Aims of *Te Kupu Whakaahua*

There were four main aims of the project: first, to use action methods in professional development and team building sessions in a new Primary Healthcare Organization and, secondly, to explore participants' insights into how action methods revealed the dynamics and functioning of interdisciplinary teams. In addition the project aimed to analyse and critique the data gathered with respect to the metanarratives used by the participants and finally, based on the data gathered, to suggest some unique contributions and limitations of Playback Theatre as a tool for professional development and team building.

Design of the practical project

The design of the practical project involved a series of steps in the research process. First, focus group interviews of patient satisfaction with the healthcare centres were undertaken before the Playback sessions and then again six months after the sessions. Second, Playback sessions were given and data was gathered – a session was videotaped (performers only being filmed) in each Primary Healthcare Organization. These Playback sessions were designed to explore team building, power differentials,

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invigorate Playback practice in this country, as they do, I suspect in many other contexts around the world.

[8] Kaumatua refers to elder, often, as in this case, a man.

[9] Te Reo Māori refers to the indigenous language of Aotearoa/NZ - Māori language.

[10] Pasifika refers to people in New Zealand with descent from the Pacific Islands

[11] Pākehā refers to people in New Zealand of European descent.

experiences of hierarchies, staff and patient vulnerability, ideally in a way that would allow for improvements in staff and patient experiences. Additional themes to be explored in the sessions had been elicited ahead of time by the Playback facilitator, from meetings with stakeholders in the service (as is standard practice for Playback Theatre commissions).

Thirdly, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted soon after the action methods sessions with team members, to gain insight into things such as how they described their internal processes at different points of the session; what insights they gained with regard to themselves and other people; the memories of their own lives that the performance had elicited; and what their reflections were about the underlying themes of the session. Follow up individual interviews with the same team members were carried out six months to a year later to gain additional reflections and insights into possible longer term effects of the sessions.

Finally, critical evaluation and analysis of the data took place using conceptual analysis and hermeneutic approaches. This was continuous during all phases of data gathering so that each phase informed the emergent questions and question themes used during subsequent individual and group interviews. Presentation of draft analysis and gathering of feedback on the draft occurred in March 2007 at an action session to which staff and families were invited. The final thesis draft was presented to the Centres for feedback, a month before the final submission of this thesis.

Venues for the practical project

Ngākau, Oranga and (names changed to preserve confidentiality) are Community Healthcare Centres in three different Auckland suburbs which came together in 2002, as New Zealand reorganized its health sector after a change of government in 1999, to form one of the first Primary Healthcare Organizations[12]. The managers of these three centres agreed to be part of the practical Playback Theatre project and ethics approval was received in January 2003 from the Auckland District Health Board Ethics

[12] Auckland is the biggest city in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a population (in 2006) of 1,319,352. It "is the most ethnically diverse region in New Zealand. In 2006, 44.1% of residents were identified as Asian, Pacific Island or Māori" (McClure, 2008).

Committee (reference number AKX/03/00/040). Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten describe the main findings of the work in each of these three Centres in turn.

Outline of the thesis

> *Pathways to remembrance lead downwards - they lead into the past, into the depths of the earth. The past never lies merely 'behind' - it has not been disposed of - but rather 'below' in the depths. In the present, it lies subliminally contemporaneous. (Benjamin, cited in Jackson, 1993, p.3)*

This thesis traverses many fields of theory and accounts of artistic, social and professional practice. It is deliberately, and may seem even wilfully, interdisciplinary: but this is not for trivial or personal reasons. On the contrary, the interdisciplinarity of this account has been necessitated by the complex and multi-levelled nature of Playback Theatre itself as an activity. Previous publications on Playback has come from the angles of literature (Fox, 1986), theatre studies (Wright, 2002), ritual (Dennis, 2004), play and drama therapy (Rowe, 2005), psychodrama (Fox, 2007; Good, 1986), politics (Cocks, Freeman & Halley, 2002) research (McKenna, 1999) and practice (Apfel-Rosenthal, 2002; Arping & Feldhendler, 1999; Hale, 1991; Harris, 1998; Park-Fuller, 2003; Salas, 2003). All of these disciplinary paths can be traced in this thesis, and they often take the form of a spiral pathway. So, for example, Jacob Levy Moreno, Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin may be encountered in several turns of the path. An underlying concern for philosophy is perhaps highlighted in this enquiry: many years of practice in both performance and education had produced many searching questions, which the thesis enabled me to explore. In the first six chapters, this thesis first maps out the ground on which the enquiry has been based. It begins by looking at the form of Playback Theatre in Chapters Two and Three: trying to give a sense of the experience of a performance as well as tracing the influences on Playback Theatre and reflecting on how these influences affect the ways in which the work is both carried out and received. In Chapter Four it explores further what the crucial role of ‘audience’ in performance involves and then, in Chapter Five, looks at the some criticisms of Playback, indicating where shortcomings and mistakes can occur using, in this critique, each of the perspectives in turn which have been employed in the previous chapters. Chapter Six looks at ideas surrounding organizations and how to describe and discuss them, as well as introducing some features of the community health context, both local and international.

Having mapped out this ground, Chapter Seven moves into the action phase of the project, describing the theoretical paradigm of radical hermeneutics and the methodology used: then the next three chapters, Eight, Nine and Ten describe in turn the themes, metaphors and metanarratives explored in each centre: both themes raised in the stories told by the staff members in the performances and also those which appeared in the interviews which enabled the researcher to make visible the internal experiences of audience members.[13] Chapter Eleven notes that "there is a growing disenchantment with conventional educational and training programs offered within organizations….when training courses use traditional academic formats such as lecture and presentation, the busy manager gets frustrated and bored" (Murray & Owen, 1991,p.21). It looks at the unique contributions but also some limitations of Playback as an approach to staff development, team building and education. Finally, it uses the interviewees' own metaphors to describe what Playback offers.

Throughout the thesis, pseudonyms have been given to research participants and names of places associated with the healthcare centres, to preserve confidentiality. Playback performers involved in the practical work for this research project have also been given pseudonyms, although the name of the Playback companies, Kāinga Rua and Auckland Playback Theatre have not been changed.

Additionally, the thesis describes the author's experiences as a Playback practitioner and the creative journey through this research project. The elucidation of this experience will be found in summary form at the end of each chapter, and expanded in Appendix One, where the voice of the practitioner will supplement the researcher's findings and reflections.

(This account of creative experiences will be shown in a different font to enable the reader to follow these two strands which were woven together in the project. This is not done to suggest that these are two discrete dimensions of the researcher: on the contrary I experience myself as an indivisible community of sometimes conflicting voices. It is presented like this simply to make the

13 These experiences are always present in theatrical work and most performers apprehend them through the visceral relationship they have with a live audience, but they are usually hidden and invisible to onlookers. The opportunity to explore such experiences was a very strong part of the intrinsic appeal of this enquiry.

explorations taking place through the practical work of the research more accessible to the reader. Readers who are not interested in personal accounts of creative practice are recommended to skip these accounts.)

Creativity

Creativity[14], creative thinking, innovation: these are all grand terms which are invoked frequently, in a very wide variety of contexts: community action and social change (Aitchtey, 1995; Burkes, 2001; Centre for Playback Theatre, 2007; Jackson, 1996; O'Brien, Opie & Wallace, 2000; Turvey 2000), leadership and work (Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski & Senge, 2007; Flower & Guillaume, 2002; Morse, 2006; Paulus & Nijstad, 2003), cognition (De Bono, 1985; Hooker, Nakamura & Czikszentmihalyi 2003; Jones & Redman, 2000; Milliken 2003; Nemeth & Nemeth-Brown, 2003), education (Bogdan, 2003; Fitzpatrick, Bunevich and Jones, 2001; Griffiths, 2004; Holtom, Mickel & Boggs, 2003; Ironside & Valiga 2007; Johnson & O'Neill, 1984; Lepp & Zorn, 2002; Shapiro & Hunt, 2003), politics (Allen, 2007; Felicio, 1995; Matheson, 2004; Pharr, 1996) and philosophy (Rolling, 2004; Tillich 2000) . As a teenager I read and groped towards understanding Sylvia Ashton-Warner's novel *Spinster* (1960) as well as her later book on education *Teacher* (1963)[15] Like others of my generation, I was profoundly influenced by her writing, particularly her concepts of creativity in work and life; of inhabiting a space in which Māori and Pākehā lived interactively; and of claiming a right to determine how one lived as a woman. Through working as an Infant Teacher of five year old Māori children, as well as having children of her own, and through coping with her own turbulent energies as well as theirs, having experienced a nervous breakdown during the recovery from which she encountered the theoretical writings of Freud (Giblin-James & Thompson, 2006), she had developed a concept of

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[14] A term which appears to have been coined by Alfred North Whitehead in the 1920s: it did not enter the Oxford English Dictionary till 1989 (Meyer, 2005).

[15] Which she had not been able at first to publish within New Zealand, a situation which had led her to fictionalising what she wanted to say in *Spinster*: as Dora Russell writes in the Introduction to *Teacher*, "Difficult as it may have been for progressive educatiors to achieve international contact and understanding, it was in their own native cultures that recognition was most stubbornly withheld" (Russell, 1980, p.8). As Karl Stead writes in Connor & Radford (2002, pp.162-163): "I think the fact that she wrote that book Teacher and couldn't get it published, that's a terrible indictment of New Zealand attitudes at that time. I remember that she only went on to write *Spinster* because it was a way of getting across in fiction some of the ideas that she tried to put forward in *Teacher*. But it was years before that book was published, and it had such important things to say and such important suggestions to make. It's appalling that she couldn't find a publisher for it."

the energy of self-expression inside people, especially children, being like a volcano. Given the vent of creativity, which she offered through her pedagogy of using a key vocabulary generated by the learner's own life world, this energy would come pouring out, in manageable forms and appropriate contexts, but, if suppressed and not allowed to escape, it could explode in ungovernable and destructive ways. In *Teacher,* she wrote:

> I see the mind of a five-year-old as a volcano with two vents: destructiveness and creativeness. And I see that to the extent that we widen the creative channel, we atrophy the destructive one. And it seems to me that since these words of the key vocabulary are no less than the captions of the dynamic life itself, they course out through the creative channel, making their contribution to the drying up of the destructive vent. (1980, p.33)

In the Preface to Teacher, Herbert Read wrote:

> This is an important book – as important as any book can be at this point in history. Miss Ashton-Warner believes that she has discovered a method of teaching that can make the human being naturally and spontaneously peaceable. ….Destructiveness and creativity are opposed forces in the life of the mind. To create is to construct, and to construct cooperatively is to lay the foundations of a peaceful community. (1980, p.11)

Ashton-Warner's practice spanned years of global turmoil which she addressed head-on:

> As Dr Jung says, psychic life is a world power that exceeds by many times all the powers of the earth; as Dr Burrow says, the secret of our collective ills is to be traced to the suppression of creative ability; and as Erich Fromm says, destructiveness is the outcome of an unlived life... So often I have said in the past, when a war is over the statesmen should not go into conference with one another but should turn their attention to the infant rooms, since it is from there that comes peace or war…. So often have I seen the destructive vent, beneath an onslaught of creativity, dry up under my eyes. (1980, p.93)

The usefulness of her work has not faded, though she remains a controversial character, especially within New Zealand. Herbert Kohl, interviewed in 2002 spoke of his connection with her theorising and his discovery of its continued usefulness:

> I still use *Teacher*. I had one teacher who was having an awful time last year. … My student was in a panic and couldn't reach the kids she was teaching. ... It was multilingual, multiracial, multi-everything except white kids. So I actually bought a copy (of *Teacher*) for her, and it really worked. It really transformed her practice. I decided I am going to have to share it with all my students, and she began to share it with others.… What Ashton-Warner is doing – the way she went about respecting kids and provoking something they could give her back to learn quickly but deeply – this is a very profound educational strategy. (Connor & Radford, 2006, pp.166-167)

The importance of creativity is not limited to childhood, or to personal fulfilment: in families, communities and workplaces too, creativity is a valued quality. De Ciantis found that

> Taking a temporary excursion away from words and into images can be useful in breaking blocks in thinking. Working with the corporate audit function of a multinational consumer company…my colleague…and I introduced a nonverbal process of drawing …. The group had been struggling … through two previous meetings. … participants said that the visual, nonverbal excursion had been helpful in surmounting the roadblocks they had experienced previously. (De Ciantis, 1995, p.xii)

Just as De Ciantis used drawing, Thompson cites the uses of drama in working towards non-violent communities in which "the violence prevention curriculum….is not about passivity. It is about using anger not to hurt oneself or one's peers, but to change the world" (Prothrow-Smith, cited in Thompson, 1998, p.208). This is not necessarily comfortable nor comforting: Ashton-Warner brought out the internal worlds of children in her key vocabularies, even when they consisted of four-letter words, to the discomfort of the New Zealand Education Department (Robertson & McConaghy, 2006); and Freire facilitated adults to read the texts and contexts of the world about them (Freire, 1972, 1989): so too Playback has the potential to facilitate groups to *contribute their accounts of experience and their world views* to assist them to deal creatively with the challenges they face.

This enquiry set out deliberately to explore *diverse* work groups because

> several studies show that diversity in work groups is related to increased creativity and innovation (Amabile, 1994), that it positively affects problem solving by providing multiple perspectives and stimulating novel solutions … that it may lead to the creation of new knowledge and insight … and that it may lead to higher level performance if the workgroup is able to handle conflict… (Awbrey, 2007, p.10)

However, diversity in work groups makes team staff development somewhat problematic, as what may suit one group member alienates others (Cunningham, Dawes & Bennett, 2004). In such a situation, I wanted to find out whether creative methods of facilitated enquiry and sharing of insights through aesthetic means could make a contribution which drew a wide range of staff members into participation and visibility.

What is Playback Theatre?

Chapter Two starts by describing the trajectory into, through and out of a playback experience, from the complementary points of view of audience and performers. It then

describes in more detail how Playback makes space for people to form their experiences into narratives and be heard. A commonly quoted statement concerning the efficacy of narrative is that of Walter Benjamin who asserted that "the storyteller takes what she[16] tells from experience … And she in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to her tale" (cited in Sugiyama, 2001, p.239). Further on in Benjamin's article on storytelling he says

> An orientation toward practical interests is characteristic of many born storytellers….this trait can be recognized, for example, in Gotthelf, who gave his peasants agricultural advice….In every case the storyteller is a person who has counsel for her readers….*Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom* [italics added]. (Benjamin, 1969, pp.86-87)[17]

Ben Okri suggests that "when we have made an experience or a chaos into a story, we have transformed it, made sense of it, transmuted experience, domesticated the chaos" (Okri, 1997, p.113), while Hannah Arendt cites Isak Dinesen: "All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them." (Dinesen, cited in Arendt, 1958, p.175). Sugiyama (2001), in discussing the ubiquity of narrative, suggests that the ability to narrate may have been positively selected in human evolution because those who told stories enabled their descendants to live more skilfully:

> more than any other ancient cultural practice…narrative appears well designed for comprehensive simulation of the human habitat – that is for the creation of a 'diegetic world' made up of the salient constraints on human fitness: people, events and phenomena, time, topographical and/or architectural space, and the animate or inanimate objects that occupy it. (p.239)

Chapter Two outlines the proliferation of narrative methods in contemporary theorising and because "we are born into webs of interlocution or narrative, from familial and gender narratives to linguistic ones ….[and] become aware of who we are by learning to become conversation partners" (Benhabib, 2002, p.15), this chapter raises a theme of trust and dialogue. It looks at two theorists, Paul Tillich and Martin Buber who have been cited as significant influences on Playback by one of the original Playback

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[16] Sexist language modified, original follows: "the storyteller takes what he tells from experience … And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale" (1969, cited in Sugiyama, 2001, p.239).

[17] Sexist language modified, original follows: "An orientation toward practical interests is characteristic of many born storytellers….this trait can be recognized, for example, in Gotthelf, who gave his peasants agricultural advice….In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers….Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom. (Benjamin, 1969, pp.86-87)

company[18], Jonathan Fox, who has been, along with his partner Jo Salas, crucial in the educational and theoretical development of Playback as a theatre form. Fox's 1986 *Acts of Service: Spontaneity, Commitment, Tradition in the Nonscripted Theatre* contextualised Playback in terms of epic narrative poetry and non-scripted drama and described the main roles in Playback Theatre as well as including a verbatim transcript of a Playback performance. Seven years later, in 1993 Salas's *Improvising Real Life: Personal Story in Playback Theatre* (2003*)* gave a more practical outline of Playback and has been reprinted several times, proving to be very useful to people beginning their Playback work. In addition, in 1999, Fox edited with Heinrich Dauber a collection of essays which had come out of the first Playback Theatre Symposium, at Kassel University and which had been printed in German first by the Kassel University Press (Fox & Dabuer 1999). These three books have been joined recently by Daniel Feldhendler's *Théâtre en miroirs: L'histoire de vie mise en scène* (2005) and the 2007 *Playing the Other* which Nick Rowe developed from his 2005 Ph D thesis. Since 1990 the newsletter of the International Playback Theatre Network *Interplay* has also provided a venue for theoretical and information exchanges among Playback practitioners throughout the world and occasional articles have appeared in journals or edited books which referred to Playback Theatre (eg. Chesner, 2002; Dennis, 2007; Fitzpatrick, Bunevich & Jones, 2001; Park-Fuller, 2003).

Chapter Two goes on to discuss how Playback, as a venue for aesthetic reflection of narrative, relates to a twentieth century avant garde artistic/philosophical/political tradition, which gave rise among other things to surrealism (Foster, 1997) and the theatres of the absurd and of cruelty, as well as to forms of collage in fine arts, montage in film and jazz in music, which are broadly analogous with Playback, in that they emphasize found materials, improvisation, the impact of the unconscious and the design principles of repetition and contrast.

To speak of an avant garde tradition seems oxymoronic and if it is a tradition it is certainly subterranean (Puchner, 2004) but still, one can trace a network of influences on artistic practice which lead back to what Playback pioneer Fox, calls a "central

[18] Who in the mid 1970s developed Playback in upstate New York

European hot spot" (1986, p.198)[19]. In this hot spot, spirituality was deconstructed in the backwash from the scientific developments of the nineteenth century (which included the new ideas of psychoanalysis and the human sciences); while politics were problematised in the shattering experiences and critique to which the Great War of 1913 (Smith & Dean, 1997; Winograd, 2001) and the socialist revolutions (Jestrovic, 2002; Kleberg 1993) had led. Avant garde creativity was at pains to distance itself from both religious sentiment and political hypocrisy and many of the practitioners of those times saw creative practice as a valid path by which to critique and expose the assumptions found in their social contexts:

> [The avant garde] was unified by what Matei Calinescu has called "a radical criticism of the past and a definite commitment to change and the values of the future,"… a commitment that the poet Guillaume Apollinaire identified contemporaneously as a "New Spirit which...promises to modify the arts and the conduct of life from top to bottom in a universal joyousness." …. And as Apollinaire's words suggest, the avant-garde's commitment to change was social as well as aesthetic. It consisted not only of the sweeping rejection of older aesthetic conventions and traditions, but also the desire to fundamentally alter "the conduct of life" itself (Turvey, 2002, p.35)

The stream of creative projects which have come from this radical criticism have continued alongside and sometimes intersecting with politics and the projects of modernity (Woolrich, 2004). Often vilified at the time, some saw themselves as performing for the audience of posterity as their contexts rejected or remained unmoved by them. Their interaction with the mainstream was combative:

> There is, paradoxically, a long tradition of the avantgarde, despite the fact that the historical avant-garde of the late 19th century launched itself (notoriously!) in opposition against the commodity status of the work of art, the institutionalization of art, and the very idea of tradition. (The word [avant garde] is derived from a military term denoting those leading a charge.) (Savran, 2005, p.10)

A person who led such a charge was Baroness Elsa who strode through the streets of Munich, New York and Paris (Finger, 2005) and also does so through these pages: after looking briefly at her and her art practice, I give more details about the aesthetics of collage and montage which I see feeding into Playback, and then argue that Playback is part of a challenge to binary categories of *mind* and *body* and in fact creates a venue for

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[19] See a discussion of this "hot spot" in the section *A central European hot spot – a confluence of traditions* on p. 154

being thinking, a place for embodied cognition. At the end of the chapter in the section where I speak as a practitioner of Playback (on page 84), a summary of and audience feedback regarding a Playback performance in which I played the role of musician is given: in Appendix One, (on page 431) an extended account of this performance from my point of view aims to give the reader a picture of how the process of performing Playback is experienced moment-by-moment by an active participant.

In Chapter Three, a brief history of Playback is outlined, in which the specific and atypical constellation of skills and philosophical orientations of the members of the original Playback company are suggested, along with a description of the present global reach and development of Playback as a form. The chapter then endeavours to give an idea of some additional dimensions of Playback by looking at it through the lenses of ritual, facilitation, play, group method and polis or public space. In this chapter the ancestors invoked are Jacob Moreno and Hannah Arendt. The last part of the chapter (on page 122) works along what Humphrey (2007, p.23) describes as the "activation of the hyphen [between insider-outsider] which enhances one's chances of surviving and thriving in complex territories". It explains how I am positioned as both theorist and Playback practitioner, focussing issues around operating creatively in the context of Aotearoa. This positioning is expanded in Appendix One *It's all in the context - moments in my theatre life* on page 437.

Audience as performer

Chapter Four looks at the phenomenon of audience. For *performance* to occur, a form of *audience* is a necessary condition. Yet, "although theatre is recognized as being incomplete until an audience witnesses it and creates it for themselves intellectually, spectators are generally relegated to 'receiver' status, having little impact on the process of performance except in standard, structured response" (Kattwinkel, 2003, p.ix). Chapter Four discusses how in Playback Theatre this binary structure of performer/spectator is broken down, as spectators take part in the performance, actively respond to the facilitator and contribute their personal accounts of experience which the performers receive before turning the story into a crafted piece of theatre. Yet, even in Playback writing, until recently, there has been relatively little exploration of the *experience* of the audience, most writers focussing on contributing thoughts and ideas about practice for the benefit of other practitioners. My thesis aims to expand insights into the audience by looking at the specific experiences of the audiences of

commissioned *workplace* performances, which I explored with audience members in two rounds of face-to-face semi-structured interviews. These interviews allowed me to enter the world view of interviewees and gain privileged insights into a wide range of perspectives and experiences. I could never have predicted the drama, richness, conflict, poetry and courage which I would encounter through this extended encounter with the audience. Ka nui te whakawhetai e hoa ma.[20]

Several variants of concepts of *audience* are opened up in Chapter Four, interrogating the words: spectators, spectactors,[21] participants, community, public and polis, which each bring a unique set of connotations, perspectives and practices. Then two moments of heightened relationship between audience and performers are described: France during the revolution when the power of theatre to communicate with the widest possible range of *the people* was foregrounded; and Russia during its revolution when again, experiments in the theatre took place in swift succession which, though largely suppressed in the USSR during the Stalinist era, had a profound effect on the 20th century film, theatre and literary theory through such writers as Bakhtin and Brecht. The ways in which Playback is a form of epic theatre, requiring thought and reflection rather than simple unbroken trance and identification is also discussed in this chapter, in which the concluding section, where the practitioner speaks, explores discursively the European hot spot referred to by Fox and the confluence of Jewish and western European traditions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Criticisms of Playback

Some onlookers or those hearing about Playback for the first time may think that it sounds like middle class people having fun playing charades and expecting to be paid for it. While in some contexts, most notably those in which Playback practice is most directly linked with psychodrama communities, Playback groups may have members who are limited in terms of class and ethnicity identifications, that does not necessarily hold true, as can be seen even by looking at such things as the range of Playback groups currently represented in the YouTube environment (Dobraspace, 2007; Sweepflicks, 2007; Tapestry Playback Theatre, 2006; Vredevanutrecht, 2007). Certainly, Playback

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[20] Ka nui refers to 'is great'. Te whakawhetai refers to thanks. E hoa ma refers to friends.

[21] 'Spect*actor*' is a neologism, created by Augusto Boal in his Theatre of the Oppressed, to refer to an audience who both watch and take active part in performance (Boal, 1985, 1998, 2002). See the section concerning this concept on page 152.

was started by arguably middle class people, but even of the three who are still practising, all stood at a distance from the mainstream tradition, one growing up in the environment of a "deracinated New York Jew" (J.Fox, personal communication, 1999), one having grown up on a Caribbean island in Aruba, with very close relationships with African people, which were followed by two years in Ethiopia in early adulthood; and the third coming from New Zealand. All three of these members had spent time as volunteers in third world countries and their relation to the established society of their time was to some extent one of critique and dissent. When I interviewed Jo Salas about the beginnings of Playback, in 2003, she said of the original company that

> in the first year or so there were 12 or 13 people who came regularly and they all contributed something, they were all part of that initial work. But what you have to imagine is 12 or 14 people very diverse in terms of their backgrounds. They certainly were not all psychodramatists or psychotherapists. There was a plumber who was quite influential in that first group. He was a very brash, macho guy who had been a Vietnam vet. He had that sort of energy. He brought a lot of raw life into the group. And there was a French Canadian schoolteacher, and her boyfriend who worked at IBM. The point I'm making is that we were not all coming from similar professional orientations or life experience. (J.Salas, personal communication, September 29, 2003)

In many of the Playback companies today, similar diversity of background is found (Cocks, 2002; Cocks, Freeman & Halley, 2002). In addition, the work accomplished in a Playback performance, while at times tapping into a similar vein of laughter and play that a game of charades does, can encompass much more complex, disturbing and substantial material, depending on the skills and trustworthiness of the performing team. This enquiry set out to explore what might facilitate this more complex work in a professional development environment. However, the process of enquiry has highlighted some shortcomings of the ways in which Playback is currently being practised, thought about and organized and these are outlined in Chapter Five. First, I argue that in spite of the complexity of contemporary thinking about narrative, many Playback practitioners have retained simplistic and even nostalgic views of narrative, often discounting the performativity of narratives (what is being accomplished or attempted in the moment) and the positionality of the narrator. Instead, there is a danger that Playback performers externalise the narrative as a *thing* which an audience member gives and which they in turn *give back* as the performance progresses. In this chapter, I also draw attention to the ways in which dominant narratives may be activated and reinscribed in Playback contexts, if awareness of valid and often suppressed counter-narratives (Parker & Sedgewick, 1995), are not actively sought and developed within the Playback group. In addition, I suggest that accounts of successes are far more often

shared in Playback publications than those of mistakes or dilemmas and that there is a certain lack of development of the theoretical discourse through the newsletter, *Interplay*, which in my view would be significantly improved by its being guided by an editorial board.[22] I interrogate the loss of some authoritative female voices and lament the lack of publication of diverse Playback authors, particularly noting that Mary Good's 1986 thesis on the role of the Playback facilitator contains a still unsurpassed fine-grained analysis which I have used myself both in my own Playback practice and in this enquiry (see page 102) and which, in my view could still, if published, make a valuable contribution to support emerging facilitators and companies.
In addition, issues of audience safety as a concern of *all* Playback performers, not just facilitators, are raised in this chapter, where I suggest that counselling training could be seen as part of the professional preparation of all Playback practitioners: along with a rigorous self-examination and analysis in terms of political and cultural positioning, and a confrontation with concomitant blind spots. The chapter ends with a grumbling conversation about Playback between an actor, a business woman, a psychologist and an educator (on page 190).

The context - organizations, health, local and global

Many and varied methods have traditionally been used to explore (Tyler, 2006) and enhance the functioning of inter-disciplinary workplaces. Jones and Redman (2000) emphasized the culture of healthcare organizations stating that:

> Over time, organizations tend to gravitate toward the market and hierarchy cultures, and the longer they stay there, the harder it is to change the values ….Organizational culture is often overlooked when major work redesign initiatives and organizational mergers are planned and implemented, but failure to identify and manage the organizational culture can have a profound impact on such endeavors. (Jones & Redman, 2000, p.610)

This project was situated in the complex employment and service context of the contemporary New Zealand primary healthcare sector, and was participated in by multidisciplinary groups of health care workers. Chapter Six details some of the features of this context in terms of concepts of organizational life, team development, the public healthcare sector (both globally and within New Zealand), interdisciplinarity,

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[22] It is important, however, to acknowledge the very important and time-consuming work of all the editors of the Newsletter: Jonathan Fox, Deborah Pearson, Robyn Bett, Nick Rowe and currently, Rea Dennis.

the colonial and post-colonial features of contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand and the call to care. Midway through the chapter, the contexts of the three teams who participated in the performances are described, as they were experienced through what sociologist Strati (2007) calls the "sensible knowledge" (see p. 196) of the researcher.

Philosophical Assumptions and Methodology

Playback proceeds as an interpretive exercise, by a rhythmical alternation of construction and deconstruction: in a performance one person from the audience offers an account which is explored, interpreted, played out; then this is followed by an (echoing, challenging, counterpointing) narrative from another audience member. Folma Hoesch wrote in 1999

> In playback theatre groups don't have a theme at the beginning. People want to be together, experience something new; they hope to find nice entertainment and to feel good. This is a very open attitude. Nevertheless a structure is created and a sequence of stories with a red thread[23] appears in a short period. (p.62)

There is no recourse to a final meaning. Consequently, although other theoretical lenses have their contribution to a rounded concept of Playback practice, radical hermeneutics has provided a theoretical framing of this project which has allowed me not to force the data into rigid or artificially neat categories but to stay alert to the moment by moment accounts people have given of themselves and each other, both in performances and in the interview context, noticing the ways in which they produce themselves and their lifeworlds in the narratives they tell and the metanarratives they employ or relate to. Specifically, John Caputo's statement that "we are all bound together by the mystery of our mortality and by midnight shadows…it is precisely the uncertainty of things that links us indissolubly, which commits us to the dispersal of power structures which think they have the final word" (1987, p.288), underpinned my way of proceeding. The first part of Chapter Seven, discusses these theoretical and methodological choices.

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[23] The metaphor of red thread has become a part of Playback discourse: it comes from weaving, where a red thread is used to anchor and add vibrancy to a pattern. A 1943 book review quotes Krenek's remark on twelve-tone composition that "the (twelve-note) series assures the technical homogeneity of the work, by permeating its whole structure, like a red thread which, woven into a fabric, lends it a characteristic colour shade, without ever becoming consipicuous as such" (E.O.T., 1943, p.60).

In addition, in Chapter Seven, an account of Kaupapa Māori[24] methodology is given and the features of this methodology which were followed in the practical work of the research are described. Early in my membership of Auckland Playback Theatre, a trusted Māori mentor told me scornfully about a Playback performance in another NZ city, where an audience member had told about a large Māori man, in a fearful way, and the facilitator and actors had played this role back uncritically and stereotypically, thereby, in her view, only building a more prejudiced, racist, colonizing world. My friend and mentor was scathing about this. Such misinterpretations are not restricted to any one parameter of prejudice. As Rowe points out, this

> point is forcefully made by bell hooks in a passage which could be read as a forceful critique of playback. 'No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Rewriting you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the coloniser, the speaking subject, and you are now in the centre of my talk' (in Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1996 p.11). (Rowe 2004, p. 210)

Rowe goes on to describe an instance of this misunderstanding and misreading in practice:

> A playback performance to delegates at a Conference in Eastbourne in May 2004 exemplifies these concerns. During the enactment of a story concerning the problems encountered by a man travelling by train with a disabled friend, an actor represented the disabled man as passive and suggested through his speech and movement that he may also have a learning disability. In his feedback the teller said, "That was great, except my friend was much more capable than you portrayed: he was, in fact, a lawyer". This was a gross example of the dangers of playing the other. It highlights the risk that through stereotyping and presumption the idiosyncrasy of the other is appropriated and erased.
> Should these concerns leave us pessimistic about the possibilities of representing the other in playback? Must we see it always as a form of colonisation? (Rowe, 2004, pp 210-211)

These two questions are ones which have traveled with me in my Playback journey, often uncomfortably. They have led me to seek places, colleagues and situations, within which Playback could carry more than colonial stories, could seek to embody

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[24] Kaupapa refers to a purpose or programme. Kaupapa Māori Research is a paradigm developed by Linda Tuhiwai and Graham Hingangaroa Smith, Moana Jackson and Charles Royal, among others. Tuakana Nepe (1991) stated that: "Kaupapa Maori is esoteric and tuturu Maori. It is knowledge that validates a Māori world view and is not only Māori owned but also Māori controlled. This is done successfully through te reo Māori , the only language that can access, conceptualise, and internalise in spiritual terms this body of knowledge… (Nepe 1991, cited in Pihama, 2001, pp. 118-119)

more wholly and integrally its context. Because of this search, with its call to active participation in post-colonial practice, some aspects of Kaupapa Māori research practices have shaped the study in significant ways and these are discussed in the second part of Chapter Seven (on page 239). Throughout the process of this research, I have needed to face issues around a non-Māori researcher doing research which has a Māori dimension to it. Russell Bishop, in his account of Kaupapa Māori research in Denzin & Lincoln (2005) states that:

> [o]bjectivity…is a denial of identity. Just as identity to Māori people is tied up with being part of a whānau, a hapu and an iwi[25], *in the research relationship, membership in a metaphoric whānau of interest also provides its members with identity and hence the ability to participate*. In Thayer-Bacon's (1997) view, 'we develop a sense of 'self' through our relationships with others' (p. 241). …. for non-Māori researchers to stand aside from participation in these terms is to promote colonization, *albeit participation in ways defined by indigenous peoples may well pose difficulties for them* [italics added]. (Bishop 2005, p. 129)

I take my lead from this position. I have been more fortunate than words can tell to have senior Māori colleagues, Aunty Wai Makiri-Mason (Ngati Ranginui, Ngaiterangi[26]), Lavinia Kingi (Ngapuhi, Te Atiawa), Mahina Kaui (Ngai Tahu, Ngati Porou), Tania Remana (Ngapuhi) and Tiana Hodge (Te Arawa), within the Kāinga Rua whānau and I also had significant Māori mentors in my community, especially Ngamaru Raerino (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti T ūwharetoa, Raukawa, Te Arawa) who named my project, Professor Pare Keiha (Te Aitanga a Māhaki, Rongowhakaata) who helped me form my Ethics Application and frequently enquired about the progress of my work - and finally Dr Rangimarie Rose Pere (Ngati Kahungunu, Ruapani, Tuhoe), in whose company I experience another world springing into view and who taught, inspired and also supported me with a reference to underpin my Ethics Application. These people have formed my metaphoric whānau of interest and whatever value is to be found in this work is due to their instruction and support (while the faults remain my own).

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[25] Whānau refers to extended family; hapu to a group of extended families related to an eponymous ancestor, often translated as sub-tribe; and iwi to descent group or tribal group

[26] Iwi affiliations are given for Māori colleagues when known, to acknowledge and honour the collective richness of ngā iwi o Aotearoa. This information is significant for many readers from Aotearoa and so it is also a way to ground this writing in this country. Ngā refers to the plural definite article and is the way plural nouns are indicated ie. ngā = the (two or more). Iwi refers to descent or tribal group.

Specifically, the presence of kaumātua has been an important element of the project as a whole; hui have been a feature of the maintenance of the performing team; whānau[27] and whanaungatanga[28] have kept boundaries open which otherwise might have been more or less defined and impermeable. For example, many of the performers named above have, over the time of the project, had significant periods of employment and residence in other parts of the country; however they maintained their connection with it through participation in the extended whānau structure which tended to cluster around the main kaumātua involved. Decisions were made in consultation with Māori participants in the performances and emerging concepts of my/our theorising were discussed with whānau members.

Ngākau[29]

Ngākau is an iwi-based Health Care Centre, with three clinics: one located very close to the marae[30], and two others in suburbs where there are many people with multiple social and health needs. (One of these clinics, Oranga, was at a distance of about 12 kilometres and at the beginning of the project, operated more or less as a separate group. I discuss the work done there in Chapter Nine.) Chapter Eight outlines some of the findings at Ngākau, where metanarratives of professionalism (especiāally referring to professional standards) , managerialism, emancipation, cultural reclamation and individual self-development were featured in both the individual interviews and the narratives shared in the performance context. The work at Ngākau explored and determined some important parameters around the practice of Playback in this research project, which guided the further practical work in the other two Health Centres.

The Manager of Ngākau seemed enthusiastic about the Playback work and yet at times wished to impose her own requirements on the performances (such as the limiting the forms used to that of shorter improvisational forms, rather than allowing the performance to develop naturally to longer narratives where individual roles were given). In my anxiety of beginning the research and the confusion of what Humphrey

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[27] Whanau refers to extended family
[28] Whanaungatanga refers to relatedness
[29] Names of people and places in the Research Project have been changed to preserve confidentiality.
[30] Marae refers to literally the courtyard of a meeting house, more commonly it is used to refer to the whole traditional Māori community complex, with meeting house and dining hall usually named for significant ancestors of the descent group who are affiliated with the land.

(2007) calls the "hyphen" (p.23) in the insider-outsider role in which I found myself, (for these first performances, I was playing the facilitator, as well as the researcher, role) I allowed this imposition, thus compromising in a way that is counter to what Mary Good calls the role of Producer/Wise Person who "has an ability to retain sense of integrity in the work – organizers frequently want the performance to push their own particular line" (Good, 1986, p. 9).[31] In addition, other practical arrangements were less than ideal: for example, the performers entered into meeting space/times rather than having the chance to modify everyday spaces in ways which might help the audience to shift their expectations from their usual daily meeting concerns into something that was different and more dramatic. These were compromises which led to important learnings (see pages 263 ff.) which formed the basis of the work done in the other two Centres.

Oranga

Chapter Nine describes the work at Oranga which was an integral and valued part of another suburb. Oranga Health Centre had experienced considerable change over the 18 plus years of its existence and had a strong and stable staff group, some of whom had been there for many years. However, it had, with the recent advent of the Primary Healthcare Organization, experienced disruptive changes in terms of management and administration. It had come through some difficult times regarding its internal relationships and some of these themes were evident, both in the stories told in the performance and in the metanarratives used in the individual interviews.

The performance took place within the triangular waiting room of the healthcare centre which is located just off the main street of the shopping centre, in the weekly one hour staff meeting taking place during the middle of one day. The practical Playback session implemented changes based on the work at Ngākau: rather than my attempting to be practitioner/researcher, here another experienced Playback practitioner facilitated the performance; the performers were able to set the space up with props, rudimentary lighting and musical instruments; while the accustomed seating arrangements were changed in order to transform the everyday aspect of the waiting room into a more theatrical kind of space.

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[31] For a chart detailing Good's role analysis of the Playback facilitator, see Chapter Three, p.95.

In the enactments, stories of difference, frustration, family and desperation were told: a strongly emotional story about family tenderness was performed with great resonance and this led to the strongest and most intense moment, which came right at the end of the performance and was specifically mentioned in every individual interview. Eight staff participated in the performance: two receptionists, one nurse and four doctors. All were interviewed for the research; six of them twice.

Chapter Ten outlines the work done at Pātaka , which is located in a different suburb of the city with a very high proportion of immigrants and refugees. Over the period of the project, there were three different managers in succession at Pātaka and this meant that, for example, information which had been given earlier about the Playback performance was not understood by most of the staff by the time the performance was delivered.

However, the staff at this performance which was held in the middle of the day and for which the unprecedented step of closing the Centre had been taken, shared their insights, both professional and personal, at a deep level. Two receptionists, the manager, two nurses and four doctors, all women, attended the performance, which took place in the staff lunch room, located upstairs in the brand new purpose-built medical centre into which the practice moved halfway through the course of this study. Eight of the audience were interviewed, five twice.

The performance opened with one of the Māori actors "flying" the pūrerehua,[32] an indigenous instrument (bull-roarer) which has traditionally been used in Māori storytelling and ritual to clear spaces. Buck says of this instrument that

> the operator, holding the handle, whirled the instrument with increasing velocity until it emitted a whirring sound which developed into a boom. According to one Māori authority it was used in a ceremony to attract rain when needed by the crops. (1966, p.267)

This created a simple, dramatic and somewhat anxiety-producing beginning to the performance as everyone present sat forward alertly and the wooden instrument rotated above the performer's head, narrowly missing the pitched roof of the room and

[32] Pūrerehua refers to the indigenous musical instrument, bull roarer

producing its inimitable deep whirring and humming sound. A shift into personal disclosure was made very early on in the performance when one of the doctors, speaking about her own child's chronic illness, expressed her grief and anxiety in tears. This led into a sequence of stories that progressed through grief, anxiety and comedy to a confrontation with mortality, which allowed for both personal and group experience of resoluteness:

> Heidegger argues in §74 that to "take over," in an act of anticipatory resolution, one's mortality … means to take over the openness of one's "specific" situation, and he articulates that this act is two-fold: (1) choosing to accept one's mortality as what defines one's being, and (2) choosing from among inherited possibilities for living authentically in the situation…. this "two-fold" act of resolution comprises the conversion from inauthentic to authentic existence, with the result that the fullness of authenticity includes *both* an individual element… *and* a social element. (Painter, 2000, p.215)

Existentialist metanarratives were used by other staff members interviewed when they talked of openness, and opening or being opened up, all of which were notable in the discussion of this performance: while some experienced the time of the performance to be a contrast to their usual behaviour because barriers were let down, others identified the openness noticeable in the performance with the quality of the relationships in this Centre. The performance gave them a chance to experience and celebrate this:

> You know I certainly got a buzz out of it really, which I think I, you know, felt in other participants. The openness that we shared, I think, was a sign of the trust that we *do* have with each other…

Unique Contributions and Limitations of Playback

Pluralistic work teams and communities in the 21st century are challenged to create ways of developing and communicating that will strengthen the ties between people without homogenizing the group. While Playback undoubtedly suits some people more than others, it provides one possibility within a repertoire of group education and development methods, and makes available group interactions which contrast significantly with the highly verbal alternatives of online learning, lectures, group discussion methods, coaching or mentoring. Chapter Eleven describes the unique contributions of opening spaces for narrative, exploring a plurality of cultures, expressing emotions, humour, play, and using emancipatory and existential narratives which were revealed both in the stories shared in performance and in the ways in which the interviewees spoke about their experiences of Playback. However, risks were also revealed and these included issues around Playback training, preparation, rehearsing and networking.

The opportunity for enacted and contained personal narrative in Playback offered participants the possibility of engaging in a complex of acts. First, a container for speaking was formed by the ritual and the group attention enabled people to present their worlds to each other as crafted verbally and through non-verbal signs, first of all by themselves. Secondly the facilitator enacted a listening other, in an engagement with an audience storyteller which is reminiscent of the mirroring which occurs in early communication between parent and child (Bowlby, 1982), what Melser (2005, p.56) calls 'concerting' ie. when the two endeavour to bring their communication into the closest contact through attention and imitation. The audience too, at this point enacted a listening other, a containing silent receptiveness for the audience storyteller.
Thirdly, the narrative was reflected and re-presented by the musician in the musical overture which precedes the enactment: at this point, the act of listening was uppermost in the audience. In several cases, the presence of live music in the performance was reported as extremely relaxing by interviewees. Then, the musician and actors worked together to craft a piece of theatre which expressed the narrative. At this point, the audience apprehended the action in a multi-dimensional way, attending to the movement, facial and bodily cues, tones and volume of voices, posture and grouping, as well as the words used. Finally, the audience storyteller was given an opportunity to respond, and rejoined the group.

The ritual of Playback Theatre helps to accomplish the possibility of these acts by the audience members. Avorgbedor (1999) describes Turner's three stages of ritual (developed from the ideas of van Gennep in 1909) and how these have been borrowed and converted into four stages by Richard Schechner as "breach … crisis … redressive action … transformation" (p. 150). He quotes how Schechner distinguishes his formulation from that of Turner who "locates the essential drama in conflict and conflict resolution: I locate it in transformation – in how people use theater as a way to experiment, act out and ratify change…" (Schechner cited in Avorgbedor, 1999, p. 151). This thesis explores the ways in which Playback in a work setting might enable this experimentation and transformation.

Just one example: in one of the performances that formed the practical project of this enquiry, a staff member said "I feel a nervous wreck – I want to make everyone happy but I just feel…" He did not complete this sentence. The facilitator asked him, "Some

of the time?" He said, "All the time. I feel a nervous wreck all the time." To look at Playback in this case, using Schechner's terms, the breach occurs in the offer to tell something. The crisis is in the situation that is told. The redressive action is in the listening, both the actively expressed listening of the facilitator and the containing listening of the audience, while the transformation is contained both in the aesthetic and receptive work done by the performers and audience in the performance time and space; and in the actions and words of the audience, the teller's colleagues in the weeks and months following the performance. In this case 100% of the audience referred to this story in the interviews and many colleagues said they had modified their actions (when interviewed first soon after the performance and again a year later.)

Playback thus functioned as a form of embodied discourse in which both performers and audience made themselves visible as they offered interpretations to each other. 'Embodied discourse' is a term which endeavours to resist the dualism which has surrounded everything to do with the body in Western modernism: historically, the human body, as a constant reminder of our organic embeddedness, has been the location of the intersection between the mastery of nature *and* nature-associated peoples. There the "anxiety that the master-identity (Plumwood 1993) has shown towards his own embodiment intertwines with that similarly expressed towards 'nature', 'femininity', emotionality, and so on" (Twine, 2001, p.32) .This attitude ie evident in thoughts and actions towards nature (Haraway 1991; Opel, 2004), femininity (Irigaray, 1987), and feelings, which are often contrasted with thoughts or reason. In contrast, many late 20th century theorists have seen the brain as indivisible from the rest of the body and the environment: thus thought and voice are seen as located in the body and involved in a polyphonic dialogue:

> Overlaying Bakhtin's notion of multiple rejoinders in shifting context with Damasio's similar structure of brain/body/environment provides a …. polyphony of receptors (as rejoinders) throughout the organism and environment. This kind of system of communication makes it difficult for any one voice to control the others, or to limit the conversation to a simple binary as in the Cartesian model of mind/body dualism. (Riley, 2004, p. 452)

In this research, discursive aspects of embodiment were revealed in the performances, narratives and metanarratives: gesture, voice, relaxation, nature, play, boundaries, and the aesthetic dimension. Moments of intensity and ambiguity in performance were embodied in gestures which carried mulitiple meanings:

> Politically, the turn to embodied politics and the body challenges the prevailing mind/body split that permeates academic theorizing (Conquergood ‘‘Rethinking’’). The body within performance, [is] privileging dialogic performance that brings together various voices, worldviews, value systems, and beliefsin *conversation that resists conclusions*...[italics added]. (Holling & Calafell, 2007, p.61)

In the interviews, many of the staff members described the bodily relaxation they had experienced in the Playback sessions: “it feels, you know, when you see it and, and action it, it’s good - so that you taking it out of your system, you know like … well I mean, it shouldn’t be inside you …” (Oranga). They identified the embodied discourse as having a distinct effect on their own embodiment and related it to the multidimensional stresses of their work lives:

> Medicine I think you need a lot more support for that sort of thing. I think it’s very often a very isolated job … you take on a *lot* of stuff as the day goes on all day long you’re with people …not only their physical sickness but their sadness and their social roles and things you can’t help with … I’m saying that maybe we don’t do enough to help that stress prevention, …So I reckon that should be letting it out rather than withdrawing in - so I, I think, I think you [Playback] should do more …( )

The sense of oneself as part of a natural world was part of this contribution of embodiment that Playback brought into the work day so that one staff member at Oranga expressed it like this:

> I was just relax and and just clear my mind and not thinking of anything, just myself I was just like flying in the air, with myself, it was good…. I was just pleased that “Oh yes it’s a real smooth you know like you meditated” you know that I was just myself and like nice and sitting in a nice cool water in Samoa …

One of the unique contributions of theatre is the way it allows multiple perspectives and dimensions to take place in a present moment which is “still and still moving” (Eliot, 1940, Section V). Armstrong, (2000, p. 114), describes theatre experiences which aimed to “take people beyond the world they already know but in a way that does not insist on a fixed set of altered meanings”. The shifting of viewpoints and phases within a Playback Theatre performance was echoed in the ways in which interviewees expressed their experiences of the performances in metaphors to do with movement. Sometimes the movement related to how the interviewee reacted to the performance while at other times the movement described how the interviewee saw the Playback session itself as operating: “independent neutral people taking elements and swinging

them back to you (Oranga)…you know we've scratched the surface, it'd be good to either scratch a little bit more with various people or go a bit deeper…(Pātaka)"

This ability to move through differing viewpoints and express culturally plural worlds is urgently needed in the contemporary workplace, especially when people come from differing disciplines and world views: "because of the rate of change and the growth of technological complexity, organizations face a need for rapid learning….Increasingly, effectiveness depends on valid communication across subcultures" (Schein, 1995, p.3). Playback showed a potential to both model and assist team members from different viewpoints and disciplines to use communication skills of listening, expressing insights verbally, exploring dilemmas and developing ideas.

The communication within Playback, however, is very different from that found in many of the meetings, papers and conversations which form the discourse environment of a workplace. Playback creates a liminal space which engages the limbic system and encourages relaxation, recreation and new ways of thinking about things:

> Room for 'play', Huzinga's ludic, abounds in many kinds of …rituals.... There is a play of symbol-vehicles ….There is a play of meanings, involving the reversal of hierarchical orderings of values and social statuses. There is a play with words resulting in the generation of secret initiatory languages, as well as joyful or serious punning. Even the dramatic scenarios which give many rituals their processual armature may be presented as comedic rather than serious or tragic. Riddling and joking may take place…. Liminality is pecularly conducive to play. (Turner, 1982, p. 85)

Playback creates a liminal setting where the *everyday* world is disrupted by a combination of ritual framework and improvisational opportunity: in their audience narratives, the storytellers improvise just as the performers do.

> One of Moreno's most original insights was that creativity was most evoked more in the act of active improvisation than in planned calculation. He used the term "spontaneity" to refer to the spirit of opening to the creative possibilities in a situation-the meaning of the term was far more to him than mere impulsivity. Much of Moreno's work may be understood as being methods and ideas for promoting spontaneity in the service of creativity (Blatner, 2002, Section 2)

This spontaneity which opens to creativity and the possibility of new solutions to old problems is one of Playback's distinctive contributions which has distinct relevance to many challenges of groups and workplaces (Balachandra, 2005). In exploring these solutions, metanarratives of emancipation, difference, extremity and of mortality were able to be shared in the Playback performances. The intensity of these was noted by

interviewees and in some cases changed the ways in which the participants interacted with each other, reportedly bringing more awareness and caring into the groups' lives together.

Interviewees commented several times that these benefits of Playback as a method of group communication and team development were *unusual* in the work setting and definitely brought new insights into their work together. The robustness and liveliness of the work meant that within very economical time frames of one hour in the middle of a work day, profound issues were able to be shared and reflected on together. The shared experience then provided a fund of insight, understanding and analysis for the team to draw on

Limitations of Playback

However, three of the 20 people interviewed (all Pākehā and all at a high level in their relative power hierarchies) expressed some reservations about the form. One articulated a sense of being misunderstood by the actors and the other two saw Playback as an activity they themselves were not drawn to because of personal and cultural preferences. All three however also identified useful elements in the performances:

> Well I'm not wildly enthusiastic about these sorts of things generally, I mean I, I know they can, they can they can help in communication and so on - and life's full of things that I don't want to do so… (laugh) And I quite enjoyed most of it you know, people, especially some bits from the staff.

Playback practitioners are unlikely to receive feedback about Playback's limitations unless they actively seek it, so the input of these three participants was valuable.

The need for Playback performers to be well trained and prepared, to rehearse regularly, to actively seek to expand their social and poltical awareness and to be connected into professional networks are also discussed at the end of Chapter Eleven: in the absence of this accountability, Playback could be an unsafe practice. At the best of times, it will always involves some risk: to quote Sappho's *Fragment 84* (translated by Mary Barnard) "If you are squeamish, don't prod the beach rubble" (as cited in Scheper 2007, Note 9).

Appendices

The Appendices to the thesis present: first, the section entitled *The Practitioner speaks*; then, information about Playback from the website of the International Playback Theatre Network (IPTN); transcribed interviews with the three members of the original Playback company who are still practising Playback; a summary describing common forms of Playback; reports written for the health centres based on the Patient Focus Groups; information that was given to participants in the practical project and the consent forms which participants filled in; information about told and untold stories in the practical project; transcripts of enactments of performed stories; and finally an application of Rose Pere's *Te Wheke* model to the practice of Playback.

Journey of the Practitioner

Figure 1 Introduction Collage

This research enquiry came out of over 15 years of Playback practice as an actor, facilitator, company member, as well as a period of service as a member of the International Playback Theatre Network Board. Before that my work had been in community theatre, clowning, storytelling and puppetry for children. Insights generated from the study of English literature and Māori culture, feminism, gay liberation and decolonisation movements were part of these creative activities and therefore formed a substratum of theory which my practice aimed to activate.

To accomplish the aims of the research, as a creative practitioner I needed to set creative aims which mirrored the research aims and included:

- To develop and maintain a diverse Playback Theatre team which could use a wide cultural and creative repertoire and optimally reflect the pluralistic nature of audiences in Aotearoa New Zealand

- To catalyse growth and reflection in the audiences of the Playback performances delivered in these professional development and team building sessions in a new Primary Healthcare Organization.

- To enhance the functioning of these interdisciplinary teams

- To share insights into some practical considerations regarding the implementation of these methods as part of professional and team development sessions.

At the end of each chapter, a brief account from my point of view as a practitioner is given and is often expanded in Appendix One. This is not to be taken as evidence that I hold practice as separate in any way from theorizing: on the contrary, I see practice as highly theoretical and I 'read' the theatrical works I am part of, as both practitioner and spectator, for the theory which they demonstrate. However, for purposes of clarity and ease of reading, I have chosen to present my journey as a practitioner in this way, sometimes in narrative, sometimes in monologue, sometimes in dialogue, sometimes in poetry, and occasionally in a collage of images.

Chapter Two - Playback Theatre: Story, reflection, cognition…

> *Here is where the earth becomes blue like an orange. To say red, to show red, is already to open up vistas of disagreement. Not only because red conveys different meanings in different contexts, but also because red comes in many hues, saturations, brightnesses, and no two reds are alike.… since no history can exhaust the meaning of red, such plurality is not a mere matter of a relativist approach to the ever-shifting mores of the individual moment and of cultural diversification; it is inherent in the process of producing meaning; it is a way of life. (Trinh, 1993, p. 158)*

In any Playback performance there is an ocean of seen and unseen elements and a number of diverse perceivers, all involved in interpreting what they are experiencing. This chapter will first of all describe the trajectory into and out of a Playback performance on the part of audience members and performing group. Then it will discuss Playback through the lenses of: community storytelling; aesthetic reflection and reworking of narrative; polyphony, play and carnival; and embodied cognition. Chapter Three will continue the exploration of Playback by looking briefly at the history of Playback, with reference to several dialogues between the author and the three members of the original Playback company who are still practising Playback; discussing ritual, including the role of facilitator; and describing Playback as group method; finishing by examining some ways in which it interacts with issues of power. Both chapters will call on literature from philosophy, narrative studies, aesthetics, theatre, psychodrama, social theory and previous Playback Theatre writers in order to delineate some of the dimensions of this complex interdisciplinary field.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of describing and the slipperiness of language as described above by Trinh Minh-ha, these chapters work obliquely: with a kind of spiral discourse which seems best suited to the wandering path of induction, the progress of discourse in Playback. Makere Stewart-Harawira speaks of the spiral as a transformative metaphor: one that is grounded in traditional Māori perspectives and yet is "common to many other ancient traditions. The double spiral motif of ancient peoples represents a deep understanding of chaos as potentiality and of coming into being. It represents the minute shift at the centre that transforms the whole." (2005, p.251)

At points, the chapters invoke key theorists who have been helpful guides along the way of practical Playback work and research, to articulate moments of insight alongside important moments of rupture, disquiet and puzzlement. The work balances its address to several audiences, one with knowledge of action methods and Playback and little immersion in theory.[33] Then also, there are other audiences, those of tangata whenua co-workers, constructing an academy in this country which links to the world before colonization in unbroken lineage, yet opens to those of us alongside whose ears have been taught to listen, ka haere ngā mihi i ngā wā katoa[34]. Then there are others, skilled in the subtleties of reading and thinking, working in the academy or in business or bureaucracy, whose bodies may be highly disciplined in other ways as they sit for hours at keyboards, as I have had to do at times to accomplish this work: for this audience, a hope to give you some idea of "what Playback is" is what animates these two chapters. A hopeless hope[35]: I know how little I could visualize it myself when first I heard of it. The whole enterprise sounded hopelessly jejune, irritatingly emotive and self-referential. All I can say is that in experience, it is different, it is more interesting than this and I will try to show how.

'Performance' is the term usually used for Playback Theatre occasions which signally contrast with many classical theatre productions. The greatest contrast is in the matter of authorship which in the majority of conventional theatre productions still stems from a writer, possibly with the help of a dramaturg, to a producer/director – who then directs actors, musicians and technicians who are reproducers of the director's vision of the text. Derrida (cited in Faas), likens this chain of manifestation to a theological structure:

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[33] The bodily expressive, acrobatic, explosive hyperbolic family of my practical work, you who live all around the world, to whom I constantly face in my work both as researcher and practitioner. My hope is that what I have done will not be useless to you.

[34] Ka haere refers to goes . Ngā mihi refers to greetings, acknowledgement. I ngā wā katoa refers to at all times

[35] My recommendation if you have never seen a Playback performance is that you first read the section called *Trajectories into and out of a Playback performance* on page 49 and then *The practitioner speaks: Playing ukulele in the nursing school* in Appendix One on page 423 and then perhaps have a look at the section in Appendix Two headed *Information about Playback from IPTN Website* on page 441, before continuing in these first two chapters about Playback as a distinctive performance modality.

> in 'illustrating a discourse'…[theatre] duplicates logos – the root of all representational doubling of life into body and soul, life and spirit. Classical theater, in short, is theological, at least for as long as its structure preserves any of the following elements: an 'author-creator'; a text which represents author-creator in his absence; directors and actors through whom he 'lets representation represent him through representatives' as well as a 'passive, seated public, a public of spectators, of consumers, of 'enjoyers' (Faas, 2002, p. 254)

Playback is a deliberate contrast to this type of theatre: and in this study I find that its difference is both its strength and weakness. Instead of there being a single author, all involved in the performance are called to authorship: audience members, as they tell their stories, either to each other or when they come on to the stage; the facilitator, who crucially sets up the provocations for the audience response, helps to shape the story if necessary and deals with whatever eventuates; and actors and musicians, playing roles very different from those in the conventional theatre in that they must *compose* the script and the score as well as *performing* it. Playback proceeds by a rhythmic alternation of these three episodes: the facilitator's interactions with the audience; audience accounts of their experiences, one at a time, elicited in dyadic encounter with the facilitator and then the performers' cooperative spontaneous enactment of the audience narratives in what aims to be a responsive, socially aware and aesthetically satisfying playing back. The performance starts with relatively quick cycles of these elements as brief snatches of daily life are shared in moments, and builds to longer, slower story cycles. (For an account of some Playback forms and exercises see Appendix Four).

This is performance in a very interdisciplinary and open sense. Dennis in her 2004 thesis on Playback, *Public Performance Personal Story* presents some of the varied fields which use performance as part of their theory: naming anthropology, sociolinguistics, theatre studies and fine arts as key areas of exploration. Certainly, Goffman and other anthropologists have looked at the ways in which many everyday situations and behaviours can usefully be described by using terms from performance vocabulary. Quinn (2005), gives an excellent account of academic libraries from the perspective of performance theory which I use to discuss health centres as a performance venue in the section From the inner alcove to the outer frame – the performance of daily life in a health care centre on page 226. Carlson, (2002) suggests the interpenetration of these areas of theory:

> Perhaps the most familiar example of this cross-fertilization was the converging

> interests of anthropologist Victor Turner and theater theorist Richard Schechner, but scarcely less important have been the theatrical metaphors in the influential writings of sociologist Erving Goffman, and the emphasis on the performative aspects of language by linguists John Austin and John Searle. ….it is hardly an exaggeration to say that in the study of social phenomena today metaphors of theater and performance are so common that they have become almost transparent…(Carlson, 2002, p.238)

Performance has in fact become ubiquitous as both concept and practice not only in theory but in many sectors of industrialized society. McKenzie in his 2003 article states:

> I believe performance will have been to the 20th and 21st centuries what discipline was the 18th and 19th, that is, an ontohistorical formation of power and knowledge …managers and organizational theorists have studied and designed the performances of workers and institutions, while engineers and computer scientists have created high performance military and communication technologies. (pp. 117-118)

In many environments the contemporary efflorescence of digital performance and the proliferation of authorship and audiencing through cyber-spheres have taken this trope to still more preeminent a positioning: "We see an artist and an engineer negotiate a new collaboration; we are transferred by a series of attractive switchboard operators from Chicago to Wabash. Maps and radar, puppet strings and monitors mediate the relations between distant actors" (Hamilton, 2006). In a world of such constellations of authorship and audiencing, Playback makes distinctive offers. One of its distinctions is that no two performances are the same. While this is true even of scripted live performance, in Playback the scripts and score are unknown before the occasion and never to be repeated. A second is that, as in YouTube where people can leave video or text responses online to a film offering, the audience can *speak back* to previous narratives or images while a third, perhaps increasingly unusual distinction is that performers and audience share bodily space and time.

Playback performances

Performances of Playback vary widely: the International Playback Theatre Network (IPTN) on its website describes Playback Theatre as "created through a unique collaboration between performers and audience. Someone tells a story or moment from their life, chooses actors to play the different roles, then watches as their story is

immediately recreated and given artistic shape and coherence." (IPTN, 2003). [36] (See Appendix Two, for further descriptions of how Playback Theatre works from the International Playback Theatre Network website.) In Appendix One, on page 431 of this thesis is a narrative account of a lived experience of playing the role of musician in a Playback performance (which is not intended to be taken as normative but is simply offered as an account to assist a reader to apprehend how a Playback performance was experienced by one actively involved it.). What follows here, at the beginning of the chapter is a *composite* account of the journey through a Playback performance, formed from training and practice, from observation and from the learnings gained in this research study.

Trajectories into and out of a Playback performance

A Playback experience starts a long time before the performers and audience meet, for both public and commissioned performances, and may continue long after the time spent together. If we see spectators and performers as complementary groups of participants in the performance, each traces a different variant of trajectory in the build up to a performance, in which they experience their necessity to each other:

> it can be said that neither the actor nor the text nor the scenery nor the stage nor the auditorium as material facts are necessary for us to speak of a theatrical event. What is needed is the relationship between the dynamic whole of the scenic elements and the spectator viewing it: in other words it is the function of the spectator that is *indispensable* [italics added]. (Kleberg, 1993, p. 42)

The practical project described in Chapters 8 - 10 of this thesis was an enquiry into audience experience which has assisted the writer to compile the table which follows here, detailing a journey in and out of a Playback performance for both the audience members and performers. By interviewing audience members, I have been able to build up a more detailed picture of their experience than is frequently given in accounts of theatre work, observing these complementary paths of performers and spectators into and out of the relationships that are manifested in the short intense time spent together in the performance.

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[36] Also see information about Playback on the online Applied and Interactive Theatre Guide (Sant, 2001)

All of a performance – both seen and unseen elements

The exploration in my practical project assisted me to build this picture of the complementary roles of performers and spectators as shown in the following table. The phases of activity shown in **bold** font in the are the visible/audible phases of a Playback performance, those which many observers deem to be all that is happening. Of course the complementary pairing in this table is to some extent artificial and deceptive, especially in Playback, since the audience members move into the performing space as they tell their stories; while the performers observe and listen to the audience members closely to find out how to 'perform' them, in effect becoming their audience, as Henry from Oranga pointed out to me in the practical project that formed part of this research: "I think like we had an audience instead of being the audience… we were acting as if we had an audience. The players were like the audience …"(Ora1 Henry, Section 82).

Here follows a Table which attempts to tell a story of the complementary experiences of performers and spectators in Playback

performers	spectators
Possibility - performers	**Possibility – spectators**
The rehearsing process goes on in the company so that they will be ready to perform. This involves gathering regularly, developing skills, sharing details of personal stories and playing narratives back for each other. In addition, the group or one member become aware of the possibility of a particular venue/group/commission	Someone tells the audience member about Playback, or they read about it. They start to think about the possibility of going to a performance or organizing one in their environment. Or – there is no such process. They are just going to arrive in the performance never having heard of what Playback is…any audience has members of both these groups.
First Contact - performers	**First contact - spectators**
A contact is made between the commissioning body and the Playback company. Most often the contact is from a member of the organization who has seen or heard of Playback as a modality of group communication and professional development. Sometimes a promotional communication will have been seen: there are a range of ways in which companies around the world promote themselves:	A contact is made – the audience member hears of this particular company, entertains the possibility of attending, learns of the details when/where etc. the performance may happen. In an organization, the commissioner starts to envision Playback and form objectives for the Playback performance. (Or, again, no such process, someone

through brochures, posters, websites and business cards. However, usually these methods are complemented by word of mouth recommendation from people who have already been to Playback. The company as a whole will usually have participated in the design and messages of promotional communications; however, the first contacts and negotiations are made and followed up by only one or two company members,often the Artistic Director or Business Manager.	is going to organize a person's attendance without their necessarily knowing ahead of time in any detail…)
Negotiation - performers Through talking together, Playback group representatives and a representative of the commissioning body (usually a manager or organizer) engage in interpreting the needs of the group and make decisions about time, space, programming, audience composition, possible themes and goals of the performance. Information is prepared for the audience about what Playback is. For public performances, this negotiation happens more rarely, typically once a year as the annual programme of performances is planned in a particular venue and advertised. Fees are negotiated.	**Negotiation - spectators** The commissioning person becomes clearer about the possibilities through talking with the Playback representatives and interpreting what the performance may be able to accomplish. For public performances, someone takes responsibility for organizing a small group of family/friends to attend a performance, phones people and so on. The costs are clarified. Significant numbers of the prospecective audience in both public and commissioned performances remain substantially in the dark about what they are getting involved in...
Preparation - performers The facilitator is aware of the show coming up and mentally, emotionally, physically prepares for it, interpreting to themselves the type of narrative which may be present or need to be explored. Actors and musicians also prepare in a similar way over the day/hours before the show. Musing, pondering, wondering, brooding, questioning, imagining are some of the actions involved here.	**Preparation – spectators** People who know about Playback, eg. regular attenders at monthly public performances think about narratives they might tell. Others who do not know about Playback wonder what it might be like: in the case of commissioned performances, they may wonder why the person commissioning the performance has chosen Playback at this time…again musing, pondering, questioning…perhaps suspecting,

Performers modify daily routines to be ready at the planned time with good energy reserves.	accusing, complaining…
Performance – performers The performing group are at least partially in control of setting up the space, demarcating it as now a place of theatre. There are usually curved rows of audience seating, with room for the facilitator to move around the audience. Someone takes admission money if this is a public performance. Most Playback groups use fabrics to stand for a wide range of stage props and these are set to one side of the stage with the musicians. Opposite, there are two empty chairs where the facilitator will sit with a series of audience narrators during the performance. A major task for the performers is to warm up physically and also emotionally/mentally to the task of improvisation. This is usually done in any convenient space behind the performing area. "Checking in" with each other becomes a very important task, when performers keep each other up to date with the happenings of their own lives. This enables the performers to know about the emotional and physical capacities of each group member, so that trust is felt in their ability to work together and support each other. As well, the performers are observing the spectators as they come into the audience space, noting a variety of things about the audience: age, gender, representation of dominant and non-dominant cultural/ethnic group members, emotional signals, topics of conversation and so on.	**Performance - spectators** The spectators arrive, pay for tickets and find comfortable seats in the audience space. They observe the performers, and each other. They wait… Some come late, in New Zealand at any rate. A dilemma is whether to allow late-comers to enter the space, and how long (five minutes? ten minutes?) to allow for this…
Beginning of show - performers **The performers enter the performing space in a way that shows the features of ritual and**	**Beginning of show - spectators** **The spectators enter the ritual space of deciding whether or not to**

theatre. **In addition, the facilitator initiates the relationship with the spectators.** **One of the key tasks of the facilitator at this time is to move the audience from the world of their daily preoccupations into the world of personal story.** **To do this, the group as a whole has to prove its trustworthiness, by listening accurately and reflecting back the first very brief narrative moments given by the audience.** **In addition the actors and musicians are at this point showing the audience their skills, and demonstrating how the form of Playback works and what its potential may be.** **The facilitator demonstrates the company's openness to correction by asking at the end of the short enactments whether that was accurate enough or needed amending and asking the performers to re-enact if necessary.** **A 'no-blame' atmosphere of mistake correction is thus created.**	**contribute.** **This involves an oscillation of uncertainty in each time that the facilitator asks for a contribution and then a period of relaxation as another person tells and has their narrative replayed.** **The audience is also judging the performers and the facilitator.** **If this is their first Playback event, they are learning about how the ritual works.** **As narratives are first told and then repeated, the spectators start to remember events and flashes of feeling and memory from their own lives.** **In a commissioned performance, it is very likely that they will have a range of responses to what they see as the overt and covert goals of the performance.** **They will be slotting the ideas that people explore into their previous views of those people and topics.**
<u>Middle of show – performers</u> **The narratives given and the performances are likely to be building in intensity.** **The facilitator aids the audience and the performers to hold their focus.** **The ritual of an audience member contributing a narrative, in a co-telling with the Playback facilitator, and then the performers playing back the narrative, is established. As the shorter narratives develop naturally into more complex ones, a range of Playback forms is used as needed, including, for example, Fluid Sculptures, Pairs,**	**<u>Middle of show – spectators</u>** **The thematic intensity of the show starts to dominate over the audience's preoccupation with whether or not to contribute.** **The spectators experience an emotional response to both the narratives and the enactments.** **Aesthetic judgements are made** **Associations continue to be sparked by the narratives and enactments.** **A range of possible contributions present themselves .**

Tableaux and Stories. (See Appendix Four for an account of these and other Playback Theatre forms.)	
As a collage of narratives and images is built up, contrast is used by the performers for dramatic effect. Theatrical effects of, for example, rhythm, timing, characterization, sound, movement, surprise and contrast are also played with to heighten suspense and theatrical impact.	
A musical interlude may be offered just as the narratives are becoming more complex during which spectators are invited to consciously remember events from their own lives. Subsequently, they are asked to move around the audience space and have dialogue with another person, telling each other the narrative they remembered.	**During the musical interlude, spectators enter a conscious process of recovering memories – OR they just listen to the music. They tell each other a personal narrative, OR they just make conversation. Either way, they make contact with another person in the audience.**
The performers observe the quality of the audience interactions with each other, sometimes joining in and meeting one or more audience members at this point.	
Music plays an active role and at some moments of the enactments may carry the narrative exposition. Gesture, spatial movement, dance and non-verbal action deepen the effects.	**As they listen to the music and observe the actors, spectators are reminded of events and other people in their own lives. They continue to experience the tension of deciding whether or not to contribute.**
Mimesis, characterization and all the actors' skills are brought fully into play. What has been unspoken by the audience member but intuited by the performers can be spoken and shown. Roles can include dead people, inanimate objects, animals and places, as needed.	**Some spectators choose to enter the performing space by contributing a story. The other spectators have a range of responses to the audience actors, the stories and the enactments.**
At times the facilitator will invite people from the audience to become guest actors and musicians. The Playback performers guide these audience performers as needed through the enactment.	**As each teller comes forward the others relax, only to experience the tension of indecision once more at the end of the reenactment. The more involved they are in the**
The facilitator maintains	

awareness of the event as a whole, particularly as the time for the ending of the show approaches.	**reenactment, the greater their tension as they try to decide whether or not to tell.** **If invited, some audience members become guest actors or musicians.**
Ending of show - performers **The facilitator helps the audience to find a way to move on after the climactic narratives and incorporate the experiences of the performance.** **A closing is made.** **The performers receive the audience applause and, in their turn, applaud the audience.** **In the Playback tradition, food and drink would be shared immediately following the performance. Food is offered, tea made, people served by the performers.** **During this time, the performers would be open to discussion with the audience and to feedback and challenge about their work.** **The performers privately re-cap the sequence of narratives, to be ready to reflect on them later. Sometimes notes are made on the performance.** **The performance space is broken down and the equipment packed away. The tea and food equipment is also cleared away.**	**Ending of show - spectators** **The spectators participate in the closing of the show, usually by clapping.** **Some spectators are left with things they would have liked to say.** **Some spectators talk to the performers, ask questions, tell things that they would have liked to say.** **The spectators drink tea, give feedback, discuss the themes, sometimes challenging the performers and facilitator.**
Reflection on show – performers Some performers record notes and impressions from the show. These may be shared by email or phone etc. Usually, at the next rehearsal, processing of the performance occurs during which the themes and narratives are recalled, specific	**Reflection on show – spectators** The spectators talk to each other and to friends and family members about what happened in the show. They think about their memories and the implications of what they have seen. They ask questions and find dilemmas or awkward moments from the show coming back to them over the next few days.

moments and dilemmas of the performance remembered, analysed and pondered on. Performers give and receive feedback. Sometimes a company member has sat out for the express reason of giving feedback and they give their notes on the performance. Some people express what they have learned in the performance. Sometimes key narratives are re-worked in rehearsal to find other ways that they could have been performed. Some companies invite audience members to contribute feedback and discuss this feedback together	They may contribute feedback to the performers if asked for it.
Incorporation – performers	**Incorporation– spectators**
The performers use the learning from this performance in future work. The memory of the performance becomes part of the shared vocabulary of the performing group. Learnings and gaps in capacity are identified and professional development for the individuals and the company is planned.	Both tellers and other audience members may re-tell narratives from the performance in a range of life situations. Spectators reflect on what they have learned about themselves and their fellow audience members. Values are reflected on. Decisions are made.

Table 1 How a Playback Theatre event may be experienced by performers and spectators

It can be seen in the table above that the sections in bold are those usually solely interpreted as being parts of a performance: however the surrounding activities are also integral parts of the performance. The binary performer/spectator is one in which *performer* is usually the dominant term: this is amply borne out by the relative imbalance of theorizing in each of these areas of performance. As Linda Park-Fuller writes: "Despite, or because of, theories that problematize concepts of performance audience, few recent studies of audience exist…" (Park-Fuller, 2003, p.288). Writing in 1968, Peter Brook had stated that "today the question of the audience seems to be the most important and difficult one to face." (p.131).The practical project which was part of this research enabled me to face this question by exploring spectators' experiences through 32 individual semi-structured interviews and this assisted me to build up the depiction above.

Michael Bowman draws attention to the lack of attention paid by performance studies to the audience in his 2003 *Introduction* to an issue of *Text and Performance Quarterly* largely dedicated to the theme of audiences:

> One of the more humbling lessons we have received from performance theory over the last two or three decades is that we aren't as smart as we thought we were when it comes to understanding audiences. In literary and media studies, audience-oriented research has become an important and widely accepted practice. That nothing comparable has emerged in theatre and performance studies, at least in terms of quantity of research, is puzzling, if not embarrassing. (p. 225)

The whole concept of audience and in particular audience as performer is explored in Chapter Four.

A venue for community storytelling – and meeting with two ancestors

> *We continue to demand that stories be told over and over, we want them to metamorphose themselves from the recipes of the manuals into drama and poems, into novels and texts, we want them not only for themselves but for how they seed storytellers' imaginations, how they make other stories....Stories are truly still made, made over, made again, shape-shifted. (Warner, 2004, p. 211)*

Individual telling of personal stories is the micro-event on which Playback performance is built (Feldhendler, 2004; Mazdra, 2006), though "PBT [Playback Theatre] functions to make the individuals' stories expansive – that is representative of more than just one person's experience" (Wright, 2002, p.83). This section first looks at the fields in which narrative methods have been used over the last half century. It then discusses the emergence of a Playback story and problematises the idea commonly voiced in Playback of 'essence' of a story, emphasizing the importance of a plurality of voices. It will take a look at two ancestors of Playback in a brief interlude.

Narrative has become an increasingly recognized aspect of human meaning-making over the years of Playback's development in multiple academic contexts of philosophy (Bruner, 1990; Kristeva, 2001; Noland, 2004; Sugiyama, 2001), political studies (Arendt, 1958, 1968,1970; Benhabib, 1990; d'Entreves, 1994; Kateb, 2002; Schaffer, 2004; Schaffer & Smith, 2004), anthropology (Avorgbedor, 1999; Castaneda, 2006; Jackson, 2006), research (Diekelmann, 2001; Kainan, 2002; Wortham , 2001),

psychology (Apfelbaum, 2000; Bettelheim, 1977), sociology (Frank, 1997; MacAulay, 2004; Srivastava, 2006), communication studies (Brooks, 2005; Langellier, 2002), art (Bottomley, 2002; Ings, 2005; Rolling, 2004), theatre studies (Fiebach, 2002; Nicholson, 2004; Savran, 2005; Winograd, 2001), management and organization studies (Calas & Smircich, 1999; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1995; Rhodes & Brown, 2005), information technology (Kvasny, 2002), law (Gagarin, 2003; Garrison, 2006) and health studies (Aull, 2005; Davin 2003; Lapsley, Nikora & Black 2002).

When people form their experiences into narratives, they enter webs of previous narratives, connections and meaning-making: Seyla Benhabib expands on Arendt's idea of this:

> To be and to become a self is to insert oneself into webs of interlocution; it is to know how to answer when one is addressed and to know how to address others …. Strictly speaking, we never really *insert* ourselves, but rather are thrown into these webs of interlocution … or narrative, from familial and gender narratives to linguistic ones and to the macronarratives of collective identity. (Benhabib, 2002, p.15)

This web of relationships is inevitably inflected by the community affiliations of those listening: the narrative is assisted in its emergence by the audience who listen with intent to the account the storyteller is giving:

> The storyteller's choice will depend upon the perceived needs of the listener…. 'Hark, hark ye people. Listen to these tidings.' These are the first words of the Icelandic Edda…They arrest the attention….In order for the teller to be able to tell, there has to be someone to listen. *Someone has to have the desire to hear* [italics added]. (Gersie & King, p.39)

However, the 'community' though often invoked in a Playback context, is by no means a simple unitary being.

> One's religious affililation, susceptibility to nationalist or nativist imaginings, economic status, class fraction, upward mobility, sexual orientation, gender awareness, age group, civil status, profession and level of education are only some of the multiple, constantly changing factors that figure in the construction of one's sense of 'community'. (Van Erven, 2001, p.256)

In Playback, the narrative is developed further by the facilitator who, when necessary, assists the audience member to form their experience into a usable narrative form:

> Once we have decided to break our silence we need to know when and how the story we tell begins and ends. We require delineation…what matters is the transposition in both listener and teller, from a predominant awareness in the here and now to an engrossed sojourning in the there and then. (Gersie & King, p.40)

The ability to form a relationship of trust with a teller draws on many of the skills that counsellors or psychotherapists also use – with the unusual variant of doing this in front of a whole group of people and while keeping in touch with a whole performance event. One of the original Playback Company, Jo Salas writes "You are in the paradoxical situation of establishing intimacy with one person in the middle of a public event." (Salas, 2003, p.70). The facilitator co-creates the narrative with the audience storyteller to the extent that this is necessary for the purposes of enactment and then hands over to the performers.

This capacity of forming narrative is then further demonstrated when the performers rework the narrative in their enactment and give rise through their embodiment to a number of perspectives in the story. This leads to a pluralism of viewpoints cited by Bruner as the basis for democracy:

> I take open-mindedness to be a willingness to construe knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without loss of commitment to one's own values. Open-mindedness is the keystone of what we call a democratic culture. We have learned, with much pain, that democratic culture is neither divinely ordained, nor is it to be taken for granted as perennially durable. (Bruner, 1990 pp. 29-30)

It is important not to be seduced into the idea that the story as told is an accurate "representation" of an essential reality. Nick Rowe makes this point well in his thesis on Playback Theatre: the notion of the essence of the story, often cited in Playback Theatre discourse, is a "misleading position from which to conceptualise playback theatre because it denies the relational, negotiated and context-rich nature of playback performances." (Rowe, 2002, p. 101). Although the following words from Kristin Langellier are applied to personal narrative performances, they are equally relevant questions to ask of narrative in Playback:

> At the site of the body's details and effects, personal narrative performance imagines and occupies the multiple contingencies of cultural conflict. A politics of personal narrative methodology requires that we ask: whose body (narrator, performer, researcher) is speaking?...what is the relationship of the personal body politics to the body politic? how are other bodies arranged in the text? (Peterson & Langellier, 1997, p.146)

Some of the variants Playback practitioners are aware of in regard to audience storytellers are: motivation for telling; eagerness to tell; affiliation with subgroups in the audience; emotional state; voicing of important themes of the community or occasion; skill as a teller (Dennis 2004). Motivation for telling varies widely – at times hidden agendas may be in action and the performing group need to be alert to this possibility

while maintaining an open orientation to the teller. If the only tellers to be represented in a performance are those who offer most readily, likely to be the more confident audience members, it is possible that a range of experience or perception will not be made visible and other types of tellers may miss out on the experience of forming their lives into narrative that Playback makes available. This would be a loss not only for the audience as a whole, narrowing the cultural range being activated, but also for the ignored individuals, who lose a chance to make meaning: for "[t]he newly popular narrative therapies claim that people 'story their lives'" (Lapsley, Nikora, & Black, 2002, p.4)

Thus, representation of sub-groups in the audience and in the wider community into which the audience fits, is a factor that needs to be taken into account: "personal and collective storytelling can become one way in which people claim new identities and assert their participation in the public sphere" (Schaffer & Smith, 2004, p.6). To have a performance where only one kind of person speaks or is visible, is problematic and runs counter to the strand of emancipatory philosophy which has been an important factor in the genesis and development of Playback.

> Although I did not consciously understand it early in the playback years, I was also seeking to embody a transformational ritual that could be a source for hope without whitewashing what is wrong with the world. As a theoretical support for this interest, I turned to the religious existentialists, including Tillich, Buber, and Moreno. (Fox, 1999a p.14)

The three thinkers cited by Fox take us to an understanding of narratives which work towards emancipation. Let us look briefly at Tillich and Buber and a major influence on them, Nietzsche. (Moreno will be examined in the section of Chapter Three on page 106).

An ancestor: Paul Tillich

Paul Tillich was born in 1886 in Germany, was ordained as a Lutheran minister and taught in Germany until 1933[37], when the Nazis deprived him of his professorship (Stone 1980): he travelled to New York City and worked in the Union Theological Seminary there for 22 years. By the end of his life he had been extremely influential in

[37] He supervised Theodor Wisengrund Adorno's 1931 thesis on Kierkegaard (Braungardt, 2005).

the United States, where he taught for seven years at Harvard University and then another three at the University of Chicago.

In his 1952 book, *The Courage to Be*, Tillich discusses being, courage, nonbeing, anxiety, vitality, participation, individualization and transcendence. He emphasizes the "courage to be as a part" which enables people to be members of groups, with both the benefits and dangers that this participation brings. Clearly, all in Playback need to demonstrate this courage, deliberately stepping into intimate relation with each other, both performers and audience members. Tillich contrasts this *being as a part* with "the courage to be as oneself" (p. 113), describing the situation against which the existentialists of the nineteenth century were reacting, in a passage which still reverberates in post-industrial cultures of the 21st century:

> It was the threat of an infinite loss, namely the loss of their individual persons, which drove the revolutionary Existentialists of the 19th century to their attack. They realized that a process was going on in which people were transformed into things, into pieces of reality which pure science can calculate and technical science can control…. 'humanity', for whom all this was invented as a means, becomes a means …in the service of means.[38] (Tillich, 2000, p. 138)

He goes on to describe twentieth century existentialism which

> has experienced the universal breakdown of meaning. Twentieth-century humanity has lost a meaningful world and a self which lives in meanings out of a spiritual center. …But people still are aware of what they have lost or are continuously losing, They react with the courage of despair, the courage to take their despair upon themselves and to resist the radical threat of nonbeing by the courage to be as oneself." (Tillich, 2000 pp.139-140)[39]

Fox cites Tillich as well as Buber and Moreno as a support for Playback developing as "a source for hope without whitewashing what is wrong with the world" (Fox, 1999 p.14).

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[38] Sexist language modified, original follows: "It was the threat of an infinite loss, namely the loss of their individual persons, which drove the revolutionary Existentialists of the 19th century to their attack. They realized that a process was going on in which people were transformed into things, into pieces of reality which pure science can calculate and technical science can control…. 'man', for whom all this was invented as a means, becomes a means himself in the service of means." (Tillich, 2000, p. 138)

[39] Sexist language modified, original follows: has experienced the universal breakdown of meaning. Twentieth-century man has lost a meaningful world and a self which lives in meanings out of a spiritual center. …But man still is aware of what he has lost or is continuously losing, He reacts with the courage of despair, the courage to take his despair upon himself and to resist the radical threat of nonbeing by the courage to be as oneself." (Tillich, 2000 pp.139-140)

Ancestor and philosopher of dialogue Martin Buber

Martin Buber was born in 1878 in Lemberg, brought up by his Jewish grandparents and educated in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Nietzsche was a major influence and affected his choice to become a Zionist: he edited magazines, wrote and taught, emphasising the teachings he saw in Hasidism regarding the value of dialogue between people and spirituality, nature and each other:

> This fundamental teaching, which is found in all of his work, stems from the insight that in relating to things or objects, I do so quite differently from the way that I respond to a person (a "Thou") who addresses me and to whom I wish to relate. … He cautions that an inadequate relationship results not in the realization of an I-Thou ideal but rather in the more objective--and therefore less desirable-- I-It relationship. (Cargas, 1999)

This way of relating can be seen as being particularly important in the 21st century world which demands from people an ecological awareness with the potential to develop an "emerging spirituality that will mark the twenty-first century [and] will promote a … reverence both for the biosphere as well as for the nonliving elements of the cosmos..." (Campolo, 2000, p.26) However, although Buber emphasized spirituality, he certainly did not do so at the expense of action or of politics:

> Buber affirmed the importance and legitimacy of the political arena. For Buber, the utopian mission was not to abolish politics but, rather, to search continually for ways to minimize its negative tendencies. In totalitarian Germany under the Nazis, he had experienced the destructive effects on human culture and life of what he defined as the attempt to superimpose the political arena upon every other arena of existence… (Eisenstadt, 1997, p.52)

Part of adapting the political framework involves, in Buber's view, the need to engage in rich communicative exchanges (Keely, 2005) and to seek new avenues for communication as he did in his work with the Palestinian community in Israel:

> Though it was important that dialogue have content, Buber believed that the full crystallization of this content brought with it the dangers of routinization and apathy. New contents for interactive communication must constantly be sought…. Such regeneration was urgently needed …in any society threatened by apathy, lack of interest, despiritualization, and… routinization... (Eisenstadt, 1997, p.53)

Clearly, along with other innovative theatre forms, Playback, with its possibility for people to tell their own narratives and position themselves in relation to the dominant voices and myths in their communities, offers opportunities for these 'new contents' to emerge and create new kinds of interactions, for "stories…by virtue of their artful and engaged elements can respond to the inchoate, contradictory, unpredictable aspects of historical experience and can thereby destabilize ossified truths and foster critical inquiry…" (Stone-Mediatore, 2003, p.9)

"Nothing does us as much good as the fool's cap: we need it against ourselves"[40]: Friedrich Nietzsche

> *After all, Nietzsche was a classical scholar, though not a great one. As someone trained in philology, he understood in great detail the cultural importance of a classical humanist education, even though he would also want to question … what he regarded as the sterility of 'technical' scholarship pursued for its own sake.… No one in education can afford to ignore his challenge to contemporary values; his diagnosis of Western modernity in terms of the question of nihilism; nor his positive philosophical and ethical response to present cultural phenomena of 'homelessness,' cultural dissolution and fragmentation and the disintegration of self. (Peters, 2001, pp xi-xii)*

All of the three theorists mentioned by Fox as inspirations in terms of creating of a ritual which could heal without denying the anxiety and despair of human existence, were among the thinkers of the twentieth century who had been deeply influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche[41]: who was a superb stylist (Gay, 2000) and who made a mark on many thinkers (Myerson, 2001) including the Surrealists, Dadaists and others who led the twentieth century avant garde theatre and arts movements. Kaufmann reports that it was not until he was 85 that Buber "revealed in print that at age seventeen – that is in 1895 – he was 'so taken by' *Thus Spake Zarathustra* 'that I decided to translate it into Polish'…." (Kaufmann, 2000). Tillich refers to Friedrich Nietzsche as both a forerunner of existentialism and also its greatest influence:

> The decisive event which underlies the search for meaning and the despair of it in the 20th century is the loss of God in the 19th century. Feuerbach explained God away in terms of the infinite desire of the human heart; Marx explained him away in terms of an ideological attempt to rise above the given reality; Nietzsche as a weakening of the will to live…. There is probably nobody who has influenced modern Existentialism as much as Nietzsche ….(Tillich, 2000) pp. 142-143)

Similarly Moreno, while he was a medical student in the early 20th century "had…created a theatre for children. They invented and improvised plays like *Thus Spake Zarathustra*….The presentations took place either in the park, or in a small hut turned temporarily into a theatre" (Marineau, 1989). Nietzsche's voice has continued to

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[40] Nietzsche, 2001, p.104

[41] For a discussion of Moreno, see Playback as action method: group experience and an encounter with Jacob Levy on page 104

have major impacts on twentieth century thought: for example Michel Foucault, in his 1988 conversation at the University of Vermont, where he said he had come "to try to explain more precisely to some people what kind of work I am doing", made the comment that:

> Nietzsche was a revelation to me. I felt that there was someone quite different from what I had been taught. I read him with a great passion and broke with my life, left my job in the asylum, left France: I had the feeling I had been trapped. Through Nietzsche, I had become a stranger to all that. (Foucault, 1999)

Nietzsche also profoundly influenced theatre theory with his eloquent account in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) of the Dionysian element of "blissful ecstasy that wells from the innermost depths of man" (p. 36) and its contrast with the Apollonian, that "measured restraint, that calm of the sculptor God".[42] (Nietzsche, 2000. p.35).

> "The terms Dionysian and Apollinian [*sic*], we borrow from the Greeks, who disclose to the discerning mind the profound mysteries of their clear view of art, not, to be sure, in concepts, but in the intensely clear figures of their gods. Through Apollo and Dionysus, the two art deities of the Greeks, we come to recognize that in the Greek world there existed a tremendous opposition, in origin and aims, between the Apollinian art of sculpture and the nonimagistic, Dionysian art of music. (Nietzsche, 2000)

In 1886, Nietzsche published a new edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*, with the addition of the fascinating *An Attempt at a Self-Criticism* in which he describes the genesis of his concept of the Dionysian: after a passage excoriating Christian morality which he sees as "from the beginning, essentially and fundamentally, life's nausea and disgust with life, merely concealed behind, masked by, dressed up as, faith in 'another' or 'better' life. … a beyond invented the better to slander this life…" (Nietzsche, 2000), he goes on to describe how he conceptualised the Dionysian:

> It was against morality that my instinct turned with this questionable book, long ago; it was an instinct that aligned itself with life and that discovered for itself a fundamentally opposite doctrine and valuation of life – purely artistic and anti-Christian. What to call it? As a philologist and man of words I baptized it, not without taking some liberty … in the name of a Greek god: I called it Dionysian. (Nietzsche, 2000)

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[42] I remember as a drama student being presented with these two aspects of drama almost as if they were given 'facts' – I don't remember Nietzche being referred to at all. So we studied and examined *The Bacchae* as well as *Oedipus Rex* – but I don't think we fully realised the extent to which, as Nietzsche points out in his study, tragedy itself combines the two elements.

The Dionysian has been invoked in theatre ever since , by name or by implication. In his 1992 *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Augusto Boal has a final chapter entitled *Artistic Creation and Divine Madness* in which he writes

> We are passionate – why then are we not tragic? Our passion, in the day-to-day, does not show or proclaim itself.…The true passion, however, goes naked because it is total, full-on and unsubmissive! - it cannot respect rules or timetables, proprieties or etiquettes. It explodes! It breaks out!
> At the opposite extreme to the tragic passion is clownish love. An emotion is extraordinary when it does not fear death. The clown does not go that far, she does not confront the world: she merely disorganizes it. By means of her own ridicule, she exposes the ridiculousness of others - our own! - which, without the clown, would pass unnoticed; we are so resigned to our own ridiculousness, that we no longer see it[43]. … Step forward the true clown, i.e. our critical consciousness, and this is important: this clown comes dressed as one! We accept it because it has a red nose. Such is the theatre: tragic passion and clownish love. The former justifies our life; the latter corrects our trajectory. (Boal, 2002, p. 295)

The potent combination of ecstatic and deconstructive performance is crucial for Playback with its rhythmical alternation of narrative, dialogue and enactment: at times the enactment may have Dionysian overtones while the rhythmic return to the facilitator who responds to the narrative and enactment and dialogues with the audience, breaks this ecstatic process and invites further Apollonian reflection, memory and thought.

Playback as a venue for aesthetic reflection of narrative

> *Art as an expression of the artist's alienation from society and the given aesthetic (especially important to the Dada and Surrealist movements) led not only to new procedures and new materials but to new forms. The disorientation of the spectator aided the destruction of conventional ways of understanding the world and dealing with experiences according to preconceived patterns. (Sansom, 2001, p.33)*

No matter how fascinating the stories and audience narrators themselves are, Playback performances also crucially involve skilled aesthetic practitioners - actors and musicians – who play these narratives back creatively in crafted ways, that are satisfying to the narrator and to the audience as a whole (Apel-Rosenthal, 2002; Penny, 2002). This

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[43] Sexist language modified, original follows: "At the opposite extreme to the tragic passion is clownish love. An emotion is extraordinary when it does not fear death. The clown does not go that far, he does not confront the world: he merely disorganizes it. By means of his own ridicule, he exposes the ridiculousness of others- our own!- which, without the clown, would pass unnoticed; we are so resigned to our own ridiculousness, that we no longer see it" (Boal, 2002, p. 295)

section will look briefly at the media-rich performance environment many contemporary audience members are immersed in and will describe some of the ways in which Playback echoes this, as well as some of the ways it is a contrast. It will draw connections with surrealist aesthetics and, amid this, will take a sidestep to encounter and avoid a dada ancestress. It will look in more detail at the aesthetics of collage and montage, then scrutinise concepts of mind, body and cognition and argue that an important way to see Playback is as a venue for embodied cognition.

The actors and musicians, from the beginning of the performance, assume positions which make them readily available for scrutiny by the audience. This physical availability is in direct contrast to most of the dramatized performance that many in industrialized societies now primarily experience; the media performance that Baudrillard wrote of:

> "It is useless to fantasize about state projection of police control through TV….: TV, by virtue of its mere presence, is a social control in itself. There is no need to imagine it as a state periscope spying on everyone's private life – the situation as it stands is far more efficient than that: it is the certainty that people are no longer speaking to each other, that they are definitively isolated in the face of a speech without response" (Baudrillard, cited in Auslander, 1992, p. 16)

In contrast to this, the Playback group enact their willingness to be available for the stories and life experiences which the audience storytellers will share. The liveness of the situation makes for what Sarah Kane calls "a completely reciprocal relationship between the play and the audience" (in (Engelberts, 2004, p.164). Engelberts goes on to suggest that

> the ideal voiced by Kane does underscore to what extent current writers and performance practitioners of improvisational theatre alike tend to stress the importance for theatre of the fact that, as a live art, it presents possiblities of direct communication between audience and performers ... (2004, pp.164-165)

The actors are dressed in simple clothing in which they can move easily. A certain neutrality and flexibility of clothing and *mise en scène* is important as the performance needs to be able to take on any kind of character and setting put forward by the audience storytellers. The aesthetic is stark and minimal: indeed a photograph of a Playback Theatre performance shows a stage not very different from that of, say, *Waiting for Godot*. In addition, there can be a stream of surrealism in the way that scenes are

presented, in a combination of art, politics and spirituality which was found in surrealism from the very beginning:

> To destroy bourgeois morality and class inequality, uphold the freedom of the imagination, and release the libidinal energies dammed up in the psyche, surrealism — Guillaume Appolinaire's term — was invented from the nihilistic ruins of Dada to lay the groundwork for building a society founded on liberty and justice. (San Juan, 2003, p.31)

For example, scenes are contrasted with each other in quick succession, social forces may be enacted as roles, two actors may play a pair of shoes, a horse and a dog may have a verbal argument and so on, while social comment may be suggested or voiced. These possibilities are part of the basic language of Playback Theatre and this kind of surrealist enactment inevitably leads to laughter as the audience's expectations are roused, surprised and played with humorously (Boyd 2005). The actors and musicians, in their improvising, freely engage with the unconscious in their generation of spontaneous enactments and work with the found material of the audience stories, in some cases producing the marvelous: not so far removed from surrealist Andre Breton who

> sought to attain the marvelous in order to transform the world. "Style"… had little or nothing to do with Breton's revolutionary agenda. Neither, for that matter, did art. Surrealism, Breton insisted, was a state of mind in which reality and the dream merged... (Tashjian, 2002, p. 194)

Emerging out of the carnage of the 1914-18 war, (as Playback and other radical theatre of the 1960s emerged out of the war in Vietnam) the dada artists "found beauty bitter because they were embittered by a society that venerated beauty" (Danto, 2004, para.2) while the surrealists stated their opposition to concretised establishment cultural institutions:

> We have nothing to do with literature; But we are quite capable, when necessary, of making use of it like anyone else… Surrealism is not a new means or expression, or an easier one, nor even a metaphysic of poetry. It is a means of total liberation of the mind and of all that resembles it.
> …We make no claim to change the mores of mankind, but we intend to show *the fragility of thought* [italics added], and on what shifting foundations, what caverns we have built our trembling houses. (Aragon, Artaud, Baron, Bousquet, Boiffard, Breton, et al. 1925)

They were preoccupied with the overlapping "of the sexual in the visual, of the unconscious in the real" (Foster, 1997, p.xiii): it was in the medical setting of the war that Breton and Aragon had met as medical students at a psychiatric clinic where they had observed treatments which "included free association and dream interpretation, the

very techniques that inspired the automatist devices of early surrealism" (Foster, 1997, p.1). However, they *did not accept* the psychoanalytic primacy of the death drive, emphasizing instead that:

> The day will soon come when we realize that, in spite of the wear and tear of life that bites like acid into our flesh, the very cornerstone of that violent liberation which reaches out for a better life in the heart of the technological age that corrupts our cities is LOVE. (Breton, cited in Foster, 1997, p.16)

Earlier than this in the 20th century, visual artists Picasso and Braque had experimented with collage, in their development towards what became cubism. According to Apollinaire, Picasso "did not hesitate to make use of actual objects, a two-penny song, a real postage stamp, a scrap of newspaper, a piece of oil-cloth imprinted with chair-caning." (Apollinaire cited in Taylor, 2004, p.8). In this recombination of objects, Taylor goes on first to suggest, "a new relationship is enacted between the 'low' culture of stamps and two-penny song and the 'high' culture of professional art" and secondly that the relationship is felt to be "inappropriate, jarring…" (p.8). After Picasso and Braque, of course, collage became a technique used in both dada and surrealism. [44] I am proposing here a detour to meet one of its practitioners (and simultaneously to sidestep, as will be wise…) She is an ancestress whose image, in a recent book arrested and astonished me as I am sure she did many people on the streets of New York in the early 1900s.

An ancestress: Baroness Elsa

Dada artists such as Baroness Elsa in New York used the techniques of collage and assemblage using found objects and had produced "intricate sculptures and sensually attractive collages" (Gammel. 2002, p.10), including Elsa's witty and elegantly sly 1920 assemblage portrait of Marcel Duchamp "served as a cocktail in a wine glass" (p.12) in 1920 and her poetry which was "daring … including colorful visual poems, prose, poetry, and criticism….an entirely new artistic and sexual landscape… openly

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[44] Collage was part, much later, of aspects of popular alternative culture like the Whole Earth Catalogues, and was used in radical theatre groups such as the Living Theatre in whose 1960s production *Paradise Now* spectators were "handed a chart that illustrates the structure of the production – the 'map' conceived by the company" (Biner, 1972, p. 173) which consists of a grid compiled from Hasidic Cabala, Tantric Yoga and the I Ching – a veritable collage of spiritual traditions which gave rise in performance to a 'gigantic, joyous ritual." (Biner, 1972, p.180)

confronting the real world of censorship, birth control, sexual sociability, and lack of female pleasure….[a] formidable arsenal of libidinal images…" (Gammel, 2002, p. 8)

Elsa Plötz was born in Germany, and spent time in radical artistic circles in Munich before moving to the United States and eventually living in New York where she married the Baron and became Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven who during the years of the First World War produced herself as a dada performance (Dahlberg, 2004), complete with tail light on the back of her dress. In New York, she influenced both William Carlos Williams (who however "flattened her with a stiff punch to the mouth" and called the police after her "persistent sexual advances" McKible, 2005, p.64) and also Ezra Pound who both teased and paid homage to her in *The Cantos* (Gammel 2002). She was highly original in actions, work and words and, despite her eloquent images made of found objects, has been, until recently, very little mentioned in accounts of art development, perhaps because of sexism or because of some of her racist views (however similar views have not appreciably affected, say, Pound's reputation…). Her aesthetic daring and personal courage are a reason to meet her; her anti-semitism a reason to dodge her. We are reduced to spectating, alongside others on the streets of New York:

> Steven Watson's account of the Baroness provides a good example of her performed life: 'Every evening between five and six the baroness paraded through Washington Square with her legion of dogs on tangled leashes. No memoir of the period is complete without some report of her regalia. Her head was often shaved—or halfshaved— and then shellacked or painted vermilion. She alternately adorned her head with a coal scuttle, a French soldier's helmet, ice cream spoons, or even a lit birthday cake crowning a face smeared with yellow powder and black lipstick. Her wardrobe included a bolero jacket, a loud Scottish kilt, and a patchy fur coat, but these served merely as a base.
> An adept seamstress, she applied to her costume Kewpie dolls and stuffed birds, flattened tin cans, cigarette premiums, and chandelier pendants. On her bustle she installed an electric taillight. Friends of the baroness were often startled to find their own possessions turning up in her attire. Indeed, the Baroness's flamboyant self-presentation, an aggressive and self-conscious blurring of the boundaries between life and art, was performance art *avant la lettre* … (McKible, 2005, p.60)

All of this in the years between 1910 and 1923! Yet now, 100 years later, in fashion, performance and online, Dada "continues to live on, almost a century after its birth" (Conley, 1999, p.177).

At the same time in Russia, experiments with the theatre were exploring the effects that a kind of collage of rapid onstage changes of tempo, tone and topic could have on the

audience (see the section in Chapter Four on *Russia and 20th century avant garde theatre* on page 148). Having been part of these experiments, Sergei Eisenstein started to work in the cinema and is widely credited with inventing montage or the eliciting of emotion through selective editing of film and juxtaposition of scenes. This technique, having been first seen in *The Battleship Potemkin* (1926), was soon more widely used in Russian film and extended to poetry:

> Arguing that, fact or fiction, "it is all a matter of montage," Tretyakov followed the lead of … the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky [who] approached the distinction between fiction and nonfiction film by emphasizing methods of construction over the materials used by the filmmakers themselves. In making his point regarding the importance of method to filmmaking, moreover, Shklovsky suggested that *poets* could imitate the work of Soviet filmmakers by using the sorts of materials that newsreel artists like Vertov were using. (Kadlec, 2004, pp. 302-303)

Aesthetics of collage, montage and jazz

> *"The principle of collage is the central principle of all art in the 20th century in all media." —Donald Barthelme (1997:58) In sum, the collage is an awkward amalgam of three unresolved elements (1) purely worldly elements, especially such fragments of dailiness as newspapers; (2) purely artistic elements such as line, color, and shape—the typical constituents of form; and (3) mixed or impure elements, or residual images of an imitated nature, ranging from the famous imitation wood grain and chair caning to traces of such domestic objects as clay pipes and such studio props as guitars…."A piece of string, a sunset, each acts" —John Cage (1961). Collage is a practice we tend to associate most often with the visual arts, where it originated. Nevertheless, its modus operandi is readily observable in the timebased and performing arts as well. (Copeland, 2002, p.11)*

The aesthetics of collage, montage (McCabe, 2001; Vicas, 1998) and jazz are useful preoccupations for Playback practitioners: emphasizing aspects of rupturing routine narratives (Banash 2004); generating significance through re-using already existing images, phrases and sounds (Vicas 1998); creating and preserving "a condition of open accessibility or availability to the solicitations of the unconscious" (San Juan, 2003, p.35) and creating a " 'polyvocal' rather than an univocal, work of art…One's attention, one's allegiance are drawn in multiple, often conflicting directions" (Copeland, 2002, p.26). Jazz uses "condensation, fragmentation, and the innovative use of "found" material, articulated always with an eye toward a prior "tradition" (Kodat, 2003, p.1) while synesthesia (Higgins, 2001) too is clearly related to Playback: Van Campen cites Kandinsky's accounts of exploring synesthesia, where sounds, colours and movement were all explored together:

> I myself had the opportunity of carrying out some small experiments abroad with a young musician and a dancer. From among several of my watercolors the musician would choose one that appeared to him to have the clearest musical form. In the absence of the dancer, he would play this watercolor. Then the dancer would appear, and having played this musical composition, he would dance it and then find the watercolor he had danced [28]. (Van Campen 1999, pp.10-11)

These aesthetics are not unfamiliar to many within Playback or indeed in many contemporary cultural contexts: George Dillon, points out the similarity between them and what is happening on the internet, referring to the connected technique of bricolage[45], a yoking together of several different practices to accomplish the bricoleur's purposes. According to Dillon, the internet:

> is a bricoleur's dream world where the maker is like a metal sculptor in a junk yard with the A anchor for a welding torch. … The connector likes to make sense of jumps in unexpected, incongruous directions, …. Similar to cubist collage, but far more involved with text, is the practice of Dada photomontage as developed by Hannah Höch, Raoul Hausmann, Kurt Schwitters and others (Georg Grösz, John Heartfield, Max Ernst). The hypertext page has words and images linking to other words and images; Dada photomontage is made up of bits of photos and other images along with words and phrases from the media, not "things" but signifiers. These signifiers are recomposed into a new whole but point always to another "page" from which they were snipped. So the Dada photomontage is like a sitemap--an image of one way all the fragments go together. (Dillon, 2000).

I have quoted from these theorists and referred to these practices at some length, not meaning to suggest that Playback's aesthetic will always lead to the portrayal of a story told by an audience storyteller using a collage or montage effect. However, it is my contention that the form of the Playback performance as an overall artefact is one of montage and that looking at collage and surrealism will support Playback performers in developing surprising and enlivening aesthetic practice, looking at overall design principles:

> Are there any universal characteristics in design principles…I suggest that almost all the principles can be divided into two groups: the "unity" group and the "variety/contrast" group. The unity group principles can be conceived as compositional strategies that make parts or principles hang together to make a whole through visual relatedness. Repetition (or similarity), approximation, and continuation can be included in this category. Symmetry can be included in this category because it is one kind of repetition. The second category, the variety/contrast group, consists of strategies that break the unity by difference, unevenness, individuality, or novelty, manifested in variety, contrast, and

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[45] Which the online *Random House Dictionary* defines as "1. a construction made of whatever materials are at hand; something created from a variety of available things. 2. (in literature) a piece created from diverse resources. 3. (in art) a piece of makeshift handiwork. 4. the use of multiple, diverse research methods." (Dictionary.com Unabridged v 1.1, 2006)

asymmetrical balance. (Kim, 2006, pp. 22-23)

In addition to these design techniques is the importance of the underlying world view. In this regard, many practitioners of Playback will resonate with Surrealism which

> begins with the recognition that the real (the *real* real, one might say, as opposed to the fragmented, one-dimensional pseudo-real upheld by narrow realisms and rationalisms) includes many diverse elements that are ordinarily repressed or suppressed in exploitative, inegalitarian societies. Based on the dialectical resolution of the contradiction between conscious and unconscious, surrealism indicates a higher, open and dynamic consciousness, from which no aspect of the real is rejected. (Rosemont, 1998, p.xxxiii)

Playback as social play- a meeting with Jane Addams and Innes Pearse

This open and dynamic consciousness is capable of great play: in fact as technology has developed over the last 150 years, "*homo ludens*" (the playing human), rather than *homo sapiens*, (the wise human) was a name that first Johan Huizinga (1955) and then others including Herman Hesse (1970) gave to humanity, seeing that in a society where machines are capable of producing much of what in other times and places was made by human labour, the playful and creative capacities of humans may turn out to be those most needed for survival. Early 20th century educators and social innovators such as Jane Addams of Hull House in Chicago, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931 (Davidson, 2001), identified play as vital to assisting human connection: her radical social commentary (Beer & Joslin, 1999) and work at Hull House involved a creating a similar space of embodied cognition that I perceive Playback to do.

This included some theatrical work:

> In light of the attempt to create pragmatic socialities that would "broaden out in one's mind to an instrument of companionship," Addams increasingly came to recognize the social value of non-verbal forms of interaction, investigating modes other than 'the medium of talk' for the creation of vital public spheres. Shifting her attention to the community-making power of "play" and the 'public game,' she developed a performance-centered vocabulary that furthered the Meadian hope of creating 'conditions which favor' the 'essentially social nature of human action…. Play, beyond any other human activity fulfills this function of revelation of character and is therefore most useful in modern cities which are full of devices for keeping people apart and holding them ignorant of each other[46].' Predating John Huizinga's concept

[46] Sexist language modified, original follows: "Play, beyond any other human activity fulfills this function of revelation of character and is therefore most useful in modern cities which are full of devices for keeping men [*sic*] apart and holding them ignorant of each other" (Addams, cited in Jackson, 1996, p. 346)

> of *homo ludens* and Victor Turner's well-circulated theories of *communitas*, such a theory of play in turn underwrote an argument for the role of theatrical practices in pragmatic social reform, albeit within a modified vision of "Art." (Jackson, 1996, p.346)

Similarly, at the remarkable Peckham Pioneer Health Centre, in London, where in the 1920s and 1930s, biologists Scott Williamson and Innes Pearse explored the creation of an organic health-producing community, the contribution of drama was acknowledged amid the many ways available in the purpose-built centre for the club members both adults and children, to express, in play, their health and life. The Centre was based on the view that life is enhanced by multiple opportunities to audience and perform: people watch each other's activity and are inspired by it to act themselves (Pearse & Crocker, 1944). Where this happens as part of everyday life in a village, or in a city built round squares or piazzas, in suburbs the opportunity to simultaneously perform and watch others may be missing and it may therefore have to be deliberately designed, as occurred in their Pioneer Health Centre building which, in the 1930s, the Bauhuas architect, Walter Gropius, described as 'an oasis of glass in a desert of brick' (cited in Aitchtey, 1995, p.236):

> The building was described at night as looking like a lit-up ocean liner. The building was on three floors, each 160 feet by 120 feet, wide open with interior walls of glass, with apparatus for members to exercise their 'faculties and capabilities'. There was a self-service restaurant (the first in Britain), a gymnasium, two swimming pools, one competition size, the other shallow for children, a concert hall, and a theatre. Whatever was going on was visible all the time; everyone could see what everyone else was doing! (Aitchtey, 1995, p.239)

In Playback, the element of play and mutual audiencing is balanced within the ritual, so that the event is contained firmly, but lightly. Dennis refers to how: "Handelman (1977) conceives public events as an interaction between play and ritual. The public event embodies the paradox of the play message: let us make believe, and the ritual message: let us believe..." (Dennis, 2004, p.40)

Play and the triune brain

Recently, brain research has led us to be able to conceptualise some of the different qualities of being human that each part of the triune brain contributes. The hypothalamus or reptilean brain has been shown to be responsible for the automatic function of the body and the impulses which guarantee survival; the limbic system for the emotions and attachments; and the neo-cortex for "strategy, planning, reasoning and language." (Raimundo 2002, p.50.) There is mutual connection between the limbic and

neo-cortex and also between the reptilean and limbic systems, but no direct link between neo-cortex and reptiliean brain which suggests reasons for the body often eluding rational control in all sorts of ways. Brain research suggests that when play, the ludic element, takes place and is registered within the limbic system

> these interactions activate intra-brain connectivity…Firstly connectivity to the neo-cortex, which will later process that information and interaction, developing new and healthier behaviours….Secondly, connectivity to the hypothalamus or reptilian brain, affecting physiological functions such as blood pressure, breathing, glucose balance, digestive systems and so on. (Raimundo, 2002, p. 56)

For Playback practice, this helps to describe how a performance can generate physical relaxation and refreshment, while at the same time leading to reflection, cognition, new ideas and changed behaviours. The playfulness and emotionality of the performance assist many people to experience these almost paradoxical effects. In addition, for people who do not enjoy conventional sports or exercise programmes, the opportunity to *participate* in theatre activities like Playback provides an opportunity of simultaneous meaningful physical activity and positive energetic engagement with others, as the programmes at both Hull House and the Peckham Pioneer Health Centre attested (Pearse & Crocker, 1944). At Peckham, Aitchtey cites the comment of "one burly character [who] described it, 'The Centre fair blossomed me out!'" (1995, p.238)

Polyvocality & Carnival

> *To celebrate a feast is an art, and the inclination to celebrate is not of itself enough. To ensure that it does not all degenerate into a formless bedlam, it is essential to have a feeeling for the sorts of despair, fear, or anger on which mockery, paradox and satire can be based....It is in this context that the importance of connecting withn tradition reappears. I can testify that nothing summons up avant-garde images like the observation of our carnival festivities. (Dario Fo, 1991, cited in Lawner, 1998, pp.110-111)*

Assisting us to play, are the polyvocal and carnivalesque elements of Playback. It is a theatre of many voices, who celebrate in soliloquies, dialogues, choruses and enactments which are authored by interactive, cooperative creators. Thus it uniquely, as a theatre form, explores and manifests polyvocality and its resulting unpredictability and carnival which are concepts highlighted in the theory of Mikhail Bakhtin (Gardiner, 2004), a Russian theorist who spent his life critiquing the

> theories and practices that reduced the unfinalizable, open, and varied nature of social life in determinate, closed, totalizing ways. To Bakhtin, social life was not a closed, univocal "monologue," in which only a single voice (perspective, theme, ideology, or person) could be heard: social life was an open "dialogue" characterized

> by the simultaneous fusion and differentiation of voices. … Just as dialogue is simultaneously unity and difference, Bakhtin (1981, p. 272) regarded all of social life as the product of "a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies": the centripetal (i.e., discourses of unity or centrality) and the centrifugal (i.e., discourses of difference, dispersion, and de-centering). (Baxter. 2004, pp. 181-182)

Playback takes place among this swirling tension of unity and difference: clearly it is a polyvocal theatre form rather than a univocal one[47]: in Playback *all* of the performers, the facilitator and many of the audience are true authors, inventing original texts in a split second and expressing them, playing with many viewpoints of authorship and using all their resources to do this. The unpredictability of the effect of all these viewpoints coming together relates to the carnival (which for Bakhtin, was associated with the opposite of the sermon), the plurality of voices, the

> worldview [that] inverts the world. Instead of celebrating the vertical ascent of humanity, it celebrates the horizontal, the corporeal, the sexual, the digestive, the excretory. Bakhtin argues that carnival signifies the symbolic destruction of authority and official culture and describes carnival as a liberating escape from official institutions. (Janack, 2006, p. 200)

We return again to the early 20th century: Bonetskaia suggests that Bakhtin's interest in the carnival may have been partly contributed to by the active avant garde artistic atmosphere of Vitebsk where he lived from 1920 – 24, years of artistic experimentation in Russia, before the clamping down of socialist realism:

> Nevel and Vitebsk in the early 1920s were unique cultural centers in which quite a few outstanding representatives of the Russian intelligentsia found a home. There is the special concept of the Vitebsk Renaissance that is connected with the flowering of avant-garde art (Chagall, Malevich, Falk, Dobuzhinskii) in the 1920s and, in general, with a vigorous cosmopolitan cultural life. (Bonetskaia, 2004, pp.10-11)

For Bakhtin carnival is

> …an unofficial, democratic supplement to the ruling culture. It relativizes the official values by their comical reduction ("merry relativity"). According to Bakhtin, what emerges in carnival is primarily the inescapable truth of life juxtaposed with the bodily human and world principle. The hierarchical value system undergoes a reversal: in the carnival way of experiencing the world, the ontological "top" and

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[47] Unlike the conventional scripted theatre, where even though there may be many actors they are all expressing the idea of one author.

"bottom" change places[48]. (Bonetskaia, 2004, p.27)

The tradition of carnival is an unbroken one in Europe and in many countries around the world, clowns and jesters enact this kind of reversal of the mainstream hierarchies. Towsen, (1976) writes of Lucille Charles's 1945 article: "One anthropologist, surveying 136 cultures throughout the world, found that at least 40 had ritual clowns" (pp.7-8). In Aotearoa, one of the most accessible clowning traditions is that within Pacific culture, where Sina Va'ai writes of "[t]he power of the clown (known as *han mane'ak su* in Rotuma and referred to in Samoan tradition as a *fa'aluma*) …"(Va'ai, 2005, p.17). Va'ai goes on to describe how a playwright brings:

> Pacific flavour into his work with traditional forms of Polynesian performance arts like secular clowning, providing a boost to Pacific audiences. They provide local slang, jokes, parody with typical role reversal as seen with Hina's aunt, Mere and Jeke (the use of common Fiji slang 'I love you full speed' and the answer to Mere's question 'But are you virgin?' elicits the current Fiji colloquialism emphasising just the opposite of what is said 'Oh yes! B-i-g virgin'). (Va'ai, p.19)

Contemporary New Zealand variants of this flavour can be found in the comedy of the Naked Samoans and their film and television spinoffs, *Sione's Wedding* (Kightley, Griffin, Graham & Smith, 2006) and *Bro'town* (Naked Samoans, 2004).

Heather Robb suggests that Playback performers can usefully look to these traditions to develop the skills needed for Playback, which in many ways are very different from the skills needed for acting and playing music for scripted pieces of theatre. She teaches and writes of the Commedia dell'Arte and other actor /conteurs and proposes some defining statements about such actor/conteurs, for Playback performers to think about. According to her such an actor

> … doesn't perform in theatres. … plays where people, in the course of their everyday life, are. … remains in close contact with her audience: there is no fourth wall… doesn't need a grant and does not depend on an institution. In order to tell and show more vividly, [the performer]… uses every skill and technique she knows: song, gibberish, mime, dance, puppets, music, masks[49]… The old Commedia dell'Arte players, who also worked from a 'canevas' (the bare outline of a story)

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[48] This is one possible reading of the moment of two Māori actors representing senior Pākehā nurse Trish's story at Ngākau riotously, in a way that deeply offended her. See her account on page 258

[49] Sexist language modified, original follows: "remains in close contact with his audience…. In order to tell and show more vividly, [the performer]… uses every skill and technique he [*sic*] knows: song, gibberish, mime, dance, puppets, music, masks…"(Robb, 2002, p.2).

> were cultivated intellectuals. Their bodies and voices were trained…and so were their memories: they knew by heart hundreds of lazzi (routines)….It used to be said that it took 10 years to train a Commedia player. The parallels for a Playback actor are obvious. He/she needs a culture in oral history: myths, fairy tales, songs, symbols and archetypes… (Robb, 2002, pp 1-2)

In Europe, this history, myth, fairy tale, song, will be from Europe: in other parts of the world the local traditions are available through dialogue and exploration of creative partnerships with indigenous communities: in this way Playback is in a prime position to offer the potential for syncretic theatre to occur (Balme 1999).

A place to be, thinking – Playback as embodied cognition

> *Acting should aspire to being pure thought (Stephen Rea in Gibbons & Whelan, 2002, p.16).*
>
> *I see theatre as a forum. In this forum we can bring together anyone, and we can have an exchange. I'm attracted to the theatre because it brings together my interests in architecture and painting and social concerns. I think I'm still fascinated by the same things that interested me in the very beginning of working in the theatre. It's a way of hearing, a way of seeing—a mental landscape for thinking. (Wilson, 2003)*

In Heather Robb's description of actor/conteurs, embodied cognition can be seen in the work that Commedia dell'Arte players undertook as they manifested one of the "strains of medieval and Renaissance thought and socio-religious practices [which] contributed to richly nuanced and divergent attitudes toward the body" (Bono, 1997, p.179). Theirs was a *counter-discourse* however: in most *official* discourses of western Europe-influenced societies, positivist dichotomies of mind and body; mentality and emotion; subjectivity and objectivity; nature and culture, women and men, are persistent even now, although they break down under close scrutiny (Foucault, 1988; Martin-Smith, 2005; McClure, 1992 Ramazani, 2003). This section will briefly look at the ways in which our knowledges and concepts are deeply formed by the fact that we are embodied beings (Crone, 2003; Hansen, 2000; hooks, 1993, 2002)); and will draw connections with some of the ways performance has the potential to elegantly maximize both personal and social cognition, while acknowledging, in theatre, the "constant tension, which can be augmented or diminished at will, between the body as such and the text inscribed on it; and in general between the human reality of the performers and the semiotic element of the performance" (Rozik, 2002, p.110). It then looks at catharsis and suggests that once again a view that separates mind and body is supported by neither Aristotle, the first user of the concept in relation to theatre, nor Bertolt Brecht, in

many ways his sparring partner (Gobert, 2006). Finally it gives a brief account of Playback as place for thinking, an idea to be developed in more detail in Chapter Four *The Audience as Performer*..

In his 2004 *The Act of Thinking*, philosopher Derek Melser suggests that

> since before Plato it has been believed that thinking goes on people's heads. Either the person does it, in a special place in there, or thinking is the operations – in that special place – of a special impersonal agent …called 'the mind' (2004, p.157).

This implication can be found in theory and practice all around us, in the academy and in popular culture: Oxford Reference Online defines cognition as

> The process of knowing (thinking), sometimes distinguished from affect (emotion) and conation or volition (striving), in a triad of mental processes. Cognitive psychology, which focuses on the use and handling of information (often employing computer models), is now the dominant approach within academic psychology, and has replaced and transformed older behaviourist approaches. (Scott & Marshall, 2005)

This way of thinking about thinking leads to seeing a person as something with cognition inside it, the ghost-in-the-machine concept, or the 'container'

> In their chapter on cognitive conceptions of the self in *Philosophy in the Flesh*, Lakoff and Johnson note that the metaphor "the self as container" is but one of several conceptions that individuals and cultures may use to structure "self" understanding; other metaphors include the "physical-object self" and the "social self." When people look at themselves and others as containers, they often look for one or several features within that self to represent its essence. Hence containment thinking typically leads to essentialist thinking, the belief, note Lakoff and Johnson, that "every entity has an 'essence' or 'nature,' that is a collection of properties that makes it the kind of thing it is and is the causal source of its natural behavior." Lakoff and Johnson term this the "folk theory of essences" and discuss its pervasive influence in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. (McConachie, 2001, p.591)

Feminists have noted that such essentialist thinking and valorization of mentality have frequently been gendered (Flax, 1990; Haraway, 1992) with negative effects for women in education and technology (Fuller, 2005). The male has been identified with spirit and mind, the female with body and with emotion. In a discussion of Luce Irigaray, Shaun O'Dwyer describes feminist ambivalence regarding theorizing about women:

> a great anxiety … is the danger of women becoming assimilated to cohesive, repressive masculine discourse when they speak about or for women, when they produce "a discourse of which woman would be the object, or the subject" (1985b, 78, 135). Such a strategy amounts to a "recuperation of the feminine within a logic that maintains it in repression" (78; see also Irigaray 1985a, 133). Conventional strategies of criticism against patriarchal discourse and struggles to find the truth against patriarchal falsehood will not do, since they too will be recuperated by this

> discourse, and women's subjectivity will be denied again. (O'Dwyer, 2006, pp. 41-42).

As Salamon, writing about lesbian transgression and interrogation of gender writes: "How we embody gender *is* how we theorize gender, and to suggest otherwise is to misunderstand both theorization and embodiment" (2006, p.578). Salamon shows the "boys" of a San Francisco lesbian bar "*shaking up* [italics added], rather than rationalizing, dubious epistemic and moral certitudes" (O'Dwyer, 2006, p. 42). Similarly, Dayal (2002) shows Jane Campion shaking up such certitudes as colonisation and gender roles in *The Piano*. These disruptions link with Bourdieu's concept of habitus which is

> learned, perpetuated and changed through embodied practices—[and] should not be thought of as a collection of rules, but as a series of dispositions and inclinations which are at once subject to circumstances and durable enough to pass down through generations. It is conveyed not only through the observation of bodily movement but also through the orientation and movement of the body through cultural spaces and temporal rhythms. (Hayles 1993, p.160)

DiBenedetto emphasises the fusion of emotion and cognition in visuality while Di Palma (2002) and Colebrook (2000) assert that the body is key to contemporary feminist discourse: "While first wave feminism demanded equality, and second wave feminism demanded difference, the body emerged in the third wave as a means of deconstructing this sameness/difference opposition." (Colebrook, 2000, p.76). Oliver describes how male thinkers named themselves as 'naturally' supreme and in a position of dominance, showing how, for example, Locke, while arguing against might is right in other circumstances "identifies the father as the *natural* ruler of the family 'as the abler and the stronger'" (Oliver, 2000, p.11). Hegel also delineated women's place as the emotional and natural realm:

> Whereas men are capable of higher intellectual life, women inhabit a realm of feelings; "women correspond to plants because their development is more placid and the principle that underlies it is the rather vague unity of feeling" (Hegel 1952, 263). Women are "educated" into this natural realm of feeling "who knows how?—as it were by breathing in ideas, by living rather than by acquiring knowledge. The status of manhood, on the other hand, is attained only by the stress of thought and much technical exertion" (Hegel 1952, 264)…love governs the domain of the family, law governs the State…(Oliver, 2000, p.12)

Much contemporary theory refutes these distinctions on the basis of experience and human rights (though, again, their expression in popular culture and in many contemporary cultural contexts remains astonishingly dominant): while some insights of cognitive science too feed into a breakdown of these rigid dichotomies of mind and

body by showing that in fact all languaging relies on metaphor and that even the metaphors by which we make sense of experience are based on our bodily existence:

> Drawing on thirty years of experiments in cognitive psychology and a desire to construct empirically responsible philosophy, Lakoff and Johnson ….demonstrate that all thinking relies on metaphor; scientific and humanistic truth is impossible without it.
> Lakoff and Johnson's embodied realism holds that mental concepts arise, fundamentally, from the experience of the body in the world. As "neural beings," humans must make meaning within certain "basic-level," "spatial relations," and "bodily action" schemas, plus other concepts resulting from the interplay of experience and patternings in the brain. …Regarding spatial relations concepts, the "source-path-goal" schema, for instance, which humans learn at an early age by crawling from a starting point to an end point, undergirds numerous metaphors that organize certain events in our lives as narratives with a beginning, a middle, and an end. "Balance," a bodily action schema, provides many metaphors for mental health, ethical behavior, and public justice. … Because these and numerous other primary metaphors link everyday experience to sensorimotor phenomena, most conceptual thinking cannot occur without metaphors. Metaphors originating in the cognitive unconscious structure the human perception of all experience. (McConachie, 2001, pp. 577-578)

Theatre provides an experience of shared sensory phenomena along with a rich metaphorical discourse which is played in gesture, sound and movement as well as in word:

> any attempt to analogize vocality or gesture to language is ultimately limited. 'Meaning,' in other words is self-present. But by 'meaning'….I mean a 'significance that is registered within the body's viscera'….as the recent work of cognitive neurologist Antonio Damasio has proved, reason – as posited within the Western philosophical tradition – does not exist as such. … it is in fact integrally related to other bodily processes. According to Damasio's studies, magnetic resonance imaging shows that those parts of the brain associated with reason are also responsible for processing the feelings that we register as emotion.
> Furthermore, he theorizes that an organism's experience of its own internal processes in relation to its environment—an experience that he refers to as "homeostasis"—leads to the development of core consciousness where reason, emotion and, indeed, experience itself can be known as such. Thus, "reason," "emotion," and "experience" do not refer to separate brain functions or states of consciousness; they are merely terms that have heuristic value in enabling us to analyze various *aspects* of human consciousness. Their referents do not exist in isolation; each presupposes the other two. (Walker. 2003, pp.160-161)

Thus it is possible to talk about cognition but important to realize that it includes feeling, sociality and embodiment (Gialcone & Jurkiewicz, 2001). When Evelyn Tribble, used Hutchins' 1995 research into navigation to help understand the way people operated in the theatre "that most complex of human cognitive projects", she found that "Hutchins ….contends that the lines between 'inside' and 'outside' are frequently misdrawn or misidentified'…" Where people tend to think of cognition as

individual, Hutchins suggested that it is easy to "mistake the properties of complex sociocultural systems for the properties of individual minds." (cited in Tribble, 2005, p 141). Tribble states that in looking at the Elizabethan theatre

> our understanding of the playing system, particularly of the mnemonic demands that the repertory system made on its participants, has been consistently distorted by a tendency to view cognition as individual rather than social, which has caused us to imagine the workings of complex group structures in mechanistic terms. In other words, we have mistakenly assumed that properties of the system as a whole must be possessed by each individual within it. Instead, as I shall argue, cognition is distributed across the entire system. This is not in any way to suggest that individual agency has no place. On the contrary, an environment as cognitively rich as the early modern theater is precisely calculated to maximize individual contributions

By creating a group event, as will be discussed more fully in the following chapter, Playback potentially allows for the building of a 'sociocultural system' in which people assist each other to be thinking and learning together in ways which do not separate themselves into body/mind/emotions or individual/group:

> Playback Theatre's characteristics posit an ancient and yet new type of activism by placing the audience's lives center stage, giving audience members explicit agency in the performance event, enabling them to participate directly in "discussing"—through story and metaphorical enactment—the issues their stories raise. It empowers audience members by making them improvisational partners in the performance process, allowing them to articulate their own values and share their marginalized or triumphant experiences in their stories; to experience the validation that comes when someone understands your story even better than you understood it yourself; to feel the dance of tensions between yourself and the company members or other audience members when there is dissent; to talk back to an enactment after it has happened and say to the company, "No, you missed it entirely"; to answer another's story by telling your own—providing confirmation, extension, or argument; or to shape the flow of the evening—offering a theme, a movement, an arc, a resolution. (Park-Fuller, 2003, p.305)

In terms of gender, it can certainly be observed that many women are involved in Playback: but it also provides *for everyone* a venue of embodied cognition in which, as Oliver hopes, the old classifications can be left aside so that

> [t]he body is not opposed to culture and the maternal body need not be sacrificed to culture. If the body is not opposed to culture, then the father's body need not be sacrificed either. The father can be social or part of culture and embodied at the same time, which makes paternal love possible. Traditional theories of paternal authority which seem to exempt all bodies, including the male body, from culture, ultimately base paternal authority and patriarchy itself on the authority and strength of the male body. By challenging the opposition between nature and culture, between the body and the social, we can challenge stereotypes that associate the maternal with nature and the paternal with culture. Conversely, by calling into question the associations of maternal and nature and paternal and culture, we can call into question the opposition between nature and culture. (Oliver, 2000, p.16).

Our survival as a species may rely on such questioning, if it can lead us away from a death-led, triumphalist, militaristic-industrial culture to one in which rather than seeing the natural world as nothing but raw materials to be used we learn to care for the life and wellbeing of our own habitat.

This chapter has discussed Playback as a venue for storytelling, for aesthetic reflection of story, for play and for embodied cognition, along the way meeting some ancestors: Martin Buber, Paul Tillich, Nitezsche and the scandalous Baroness Elsa, as well as Jane Addams and Innes Pearse. These discussions have been framed by, and I hope anchored by, at the beginning a schematic account of the trajectory into and out of a Playback performance and here at the end, in a brief summary of one journey as a Playback practitioner, a hint of my experience in the role of musician at a recent Auckland Playback Theatre performance, a longer account of which can be found in Appendix One, on page 431.

The practitioner speaks: Playing ukulele in the nursing school

I played the role of musician in this performance: having re-joined Auckland Playback Theatre in 2005 to develop the musician role. In Appendix One a first person account of my experience of the performance, from first contact to reflection and feedback afterwards is given. This account takes in the stages of preparation, warm up, performance and incorporation that have been outlined in the section on *Trajectories* on page 51. The stories dealt with the experiences of restructuring the Nursing School which was undertaken by a large group of staff who met regularly for a matter of months. For me as a musician, the magic moment of the performance was when, in playing back a brief story about meeting early in the morning, I quietly introduced a song one of my grandmothers used to sing us when I was a child, *Mockingbird Hill*, and heard to my surprise and delight the song rising softly like mist from the audience as others joined in the singing.

Feedback from the audience

When I emailed staff who had attended the performance, asking for their accounts of their experience of it, two replied. One said

> It's hard to remember back but it was certainly an experience that was enjoyable yet anxiety producing at the same time. My mind was always working hard to make sense of the actors' interpretations and at the same time anxious for the staff members whose actions were being 'replicated'. I remember feeling my jaw clench, my eyes flicking from actor to actor and my body craning at times to see what was happening. I was not in the front row because I felt safer 2 rows back. When I felt brave enough to contribute a story (towards the end) I felt quite vulnerable. I was formulating what I was going to say without knowing exactly how and what would come out of my mouth. I just had to 'trust the process' and found that my anxiety this eased as I began speak.
> On balance, it was a great session.

Another colleague wrote:

> I thought your troop were remarkable, intuitive, and quick witted. There was a lot going on so I am not sure how you ensure individual safety when a troop is coming in with limited information of the dynamic and detail. It was limited in effectiveness by the fact that all staff were not there. It would be most interesting to do another playback session for **all** staff after a year of a restructured division at the end of 2007.

Chapter Three – More on Playback Theatre: Ritual, containment, facilitation; groups, polis, genealogy

> *The theatrical cannot here be summed up in speech: it involves forces, space, law, kinship, the human, the divine, death, play, festivity. (Derrida, 1981, p.142)*

In order to create the conditions for people to share stories of their lives and receive aesthetic enactments of these stories, Playback has to take in several additional dimensions of group activity. Chapter Three will show the ways in which Playback is related to ritual, play, and group method. First, it will look briefly at histories of Playback, with reference to several dialogues between the author and three members of the original Playback company, who 32 years later are still practising Playback. It will then look first at what the element of ritual involves including the role of the facilitator whose knowledge and sense of many paradigms of group activity, including ritual, need to be acute. Next it will explore elements of group experience, introducing Jacob Levy Moreno, foremost initiator of group psychotherapy in the 20th century and one of Playback's acknowledged ancestors. In addition, it will describe some of the ways in which, by allowing for public storytelling, Playback is irrevocably political and can potentially help to form the polis, public space, and here it will introduce a significant ancestress, Hannah Arendt,[50] closing by looking at issues of power and representation in Playback.

A brief history of Playback

Stories of Beginning

> *…and you know the story about how Playback got it's name? Don't you? No? There was a big long table in the Moreno Institute and … Jonathan asked us to come around that table and we'd just sit and we'd brainstorm names. … and this was exhausting, and finally Merlin, Jonathan's stepfather, said "Well what about Play it again Sam?" And we all looked at each other and said "Play… play… play-back Playback" … it just popped out so everybody just knew it then and there …it was such trust in hanging in there until something emerges … (J. Swallow, personal communication, February 26, 2005.)*

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[50] Not already identified as such in the Playback literature but an existentialist philosopher whose mode of thinking and writing dovetailed for me with the way Playback operates especially in her emphasis on *natality*, the occurrence of the new and unprecedented.

In her 2004 Ph D thesis, Rea Dennis suggested that:

> Throughout the second decade, the practice and embryonic theorising of Playback Theatre focused on coming to terms with the application and evaluation of the form within the multiple practice arenas Playback Theatre had infiltrated…. The spread of Playback Theatre has been consistent yet contained, with the basic philosophy and methodology transferred through a predominantly oral process, including international gatherings. This approach has served as a form of quality control and risk management. On the eve of the third decade, access to the Playback Theatre method and the international community was advanced through the establishment of a centralised school of instruction and the formation of an international body – the International Playback Theatre Network. These bodies have served to oversee the expansion of the form and to provide regulation (Dennis, 2004, pp.14-15)

This is one among several accounts of Playback's development: (Brandon, 2001; (Dauber, 1999; Fox, 1986, 1999a, 1999b; Fox, Fox, Salas & Sparrow, 2000; Rowe, 2005a, 2007; Salas, 2003; Salas & Day, 2005). A problem with such accounts is that in them it sounds as if the development of Playback has been a natural process where Jonathan Fox had an idea which was implemented and grew into what we now know as Playback. In any narrative concerning the development of something, one danger is that an easing and smoothing of the bumpy process of daily life that progresses by fits and starts is conveyed, consciously or unconsciously, by those telling the stories. In this regard, it is useful to be able to read the first bulletins of the international network, now online (Playback Theatre Inc, 1990). In fact there are multiple, overlapping places and phases of success, failure, growth, curtailment, beginnings and endings which can be seen in over 30 years of Playback's life. Nick Rowe, in his 2005 thesis, expressed awareness of a tendency to romanticize and mythologise which can sometimes occur when looking at the beginnings of Playback (as in many other organizations):

> The quasireligious references are important to note because they suggest a way of conceptualising playback that I want to bring into question in this thesis. This 'genesis story' is particularly potent when, as is the case of playback theatre, there is a single founder whose life-partner has also been involved from the outset. The existence of this 'original' parental pairing is a powerful formula for myth-making and the formation of charismatic forms of leadership. I have not escaped this transferential dynamic nor has, in many cases, the playback community as a whole. (p.13)

As part of the research process for this thesis, in order to give additional insights into the earliest times of Playback and to expand the voices heard giving accounts of it, I asked to interview the members of the original Playback company still practising Playback, and managed to interview both Jo Salas and Judy Swallow. My concern was to counter the tidy history that can arise over the years: simply by dint of repetition, the

hiccups, failures, griefs and discomforts can get left out and an illusory *received history* starts to be formed. A danger of this is that when others read these accounts, their own tentative and messy engagements in the present moment can seem to suffer by comparison and seem unworthy or insignificant. For this reason, in my interviews with all of the original Playback company members, I asked specifically about the mistakes or the dissonances they had experienced.

When I interviewed Jo Salas, Fox's partner and co-founder of Playback, she described the uncertain quality of the early days:

> When people encounter Playback Theatre now, it's very highly formed. … We have the whole ritual. Well, in the beginning we had none of that, not one single thing. All we had was the idea of theatre based on real people's stories. I suspect people don't imagine this at all…
> We got these people together and we had the church hall. My mental image is of a kind of ricocheting off the walls of this hall – groping for the form of what this idea meant….It was such a collective process. No one can say who created that. The ideas for these things came from many brains.
> Jonathan was contributing and shaping and leading, very much leading through all of this. But we were trying all kinds of things, finding the things that worked. It was a bit like the idea of the sculpture that's hidden inside the block of marble and the sculptor is just chipping away the pieces that are not part of it. I think that's what we were doing.
> I remember also during that time how the vision grew stronger and stronger in me of what it was. I felt like I could really see how this could work, how beautiful it could be, how clean and clear, and I remember looking around and thinking "We'll never get there. We'll never do it, this is not the right group of people" but they were, you know. It just took more time. We really grew into being a working team. …At least a couple of years. Maybe three years or so, three or four years. (Salas, personal communication, September 29, 2003)

Reading this account may encourage people to stay with their own messy originality! I questioned her further on mistakes, omissions, things she wondered on and pondered on: in terms of mistakes, Salas mentioned the most important one as being:

> I don't know whether to call it a mistake, but something that we would have done differently with hindsight was the way it was always, from the beginning, "Jonathan and the group." That's how we put it out to the world. I had a lot of responsibility for doing that, because I wrote the brochures and the press releases and I always wrote "Jonathan Fox this, Jonathan Fox that…"

Although Salas had been instrumental in this way of designing the marketing, as time went on, this oversimplification of the genesis of Playback has had serious consequences for her:

> It came back to haunt me because in fact I was part of all of that creativity, and later on it was very difficult to retroactively explain that actually it wasn't just Jonathan. This is not just about my pride or my ego – it's about the honesty of the process. It's such an old model of the world that there's one name, one person-- and it's almost always a man. That's the old model, and that's the story that the world very much wants. They want the man that we can identify, that we can make famous. The truth is much more complex… It's complex, and people resist complexity... (Salas, personal communication, September 29, 2003)

Yet, it is interesting in terms of Rowe's questioning of the myth-making associated with this early phase of Playback, with its emphasis on Fox and Salas as some kind of primal parents, that *in fact* in my interview with her Salas used a metaphor of conception and gestation for the beginnings of Playback, pointing to the ways in which perhaps she herself still viewed the beginning phase using this metaphor which perpetuates the archetype of the *original parents*:

> And the truth is that Jonathan's vision was absolutely central. This was the person that we were following. It was very significant that he was someone who was both charismatic and tolerant—he held the group together. But the truth is *also* that his idea would have gone nowhere without me and the other people in the company. Sperm without ovum doesn't become a baby. So—retrospectively-- it would have been healthier for everybody, and Jonathan very much agrees as well, if we had recognised that from the beginning. (Salas, personal communication, September 29, 2003)

In 1999 Fox had written of "my café vision … of townspeople gathering to watch fellow citizens act out real stories" (Fox, 1999a, p.11). In this account, Fox *does* give credit to his partner and co-worker, Salas and the other members of the company:

> It is true that for a few brief moments, the concept resided only with me. But very quickly, playback theatre began to involve others, first Jo Salas, my partner in life and work, then the original playback theatre company, then beyond. (Fox, 1999a, p.9)

Judy Swallow, another of the original company who still practises Playback, described in an interview with me in Tempe Arizona in 2005[51] when we were both members of the International Playback Theatre Network Board, how it was Fox's receptive and respectful behaviour towards her which made it possible for her to contribute so actively to the group process:

> And I think looking back one of the most important things for my *own* personal development was that this was the first time in my life where I could have an idea and a male person would consider it … you know like really consider it and so with that I could get enthusiastic and I could say "Oh what happens if we try this and

[51] Printed in full in Appendix Three on page 453.

> what happens if we try that…" and um you know Fluid Sculptures: "Well what happens if we do this with feelings? You know these… machines with feelings? " .... and I think Jonathan's infinitely patient and I felt the security of being able to have *all* these ideas and all these thoughts and all these feelings … then it wasn't chaotic because Jonathan would think about it and say "Okay, well why don't we try this?" (J.Swallow, personal communication, February 26, 2005.)

Clearly, the original company were significant co-creators of Playback, whose contribution is often unacknowledged in the histories of Playback. One way to view Playback may be that it is a group facilitation and improvisational theatre process, certainly seeded by the original company but then further developed all over the world by individuals and groups, with charismatic figures emerging from time to time in different places, to hold the focus of the work in that region, to teach and induct others, and to push the development of Playback forward in their context and sometimes internationally as well, by the strength of their own personalities, previous training and their own inclinations of the time.

Over the years, a series of such charismatic people have come and gone, perhaps naturally moving on to other things, perhaps sometimes subtly side-lined by Fox and Salas as the two of them have continued to hold the position of primal parents and co-founders of Playback. Since 2000, they have accentuated much more unambiguously the 'authority' and accreditation of their training programme through the New York-based *School of Playback Theatre* and now the *Centre for Playback Theatre* with its logo "building communities of understanding" (Centre for Playback Theatre, 2007). Currently their daughter Hannah Fox has also begun to teach in the School and to publish on the topic of Playback, with a chapter in Adam Blatner's 2007 book entitled *Interactive and Improvisation Drama* (Fox, 2007) and an article in a forthcoming issue of *The Drama Review*. A danger of this trope of the founding family is that it may lead to a certain kind of obliviousness to the significance of work accomplished by those from outside the family.

World wide development

Very soon after starting in 1975, Playback Theatre began in other countries, first in Australia and New Zealand when Salas, Swallow and Fox, the three people I interviewed (see Appendix Three for full versions of these interviews) along with a

fourth, also important, company member, Michael Clemente [52], visited Australia and New Zealand. (New Zealand has always had a special relationship with Playback because the co-founder of the original company, Jo Salas, is a New Zealander who has significant family involvements in N.Z. and so she has regularly travelled here, often accompanied by Jonathan Fox.) Fox wrote in 1999 about their 1980 journey to Australia and New Zealand:

> In 1980 a team of four from the original company was invited to teach in four cities in Australia and New Zealand. In each location we performed with selected participants from our workshops, empowering groups to carry on after we had gone. The next year Mary Good from Melbourne spent a month in New York training and observing our work. The result was a flowering of new playback performing companies – in Sydney, 1980; Melbourne, 1981; Auckland, Wellington, and Perth, 1982; Christchurch, 1984.(Fox, 1999a, p. 11)

By the mid 1980s there were also groups in Switzerland, Sweden and Japan and by 1999

> Playback Theatre York hosted the Seventh International Playback Theatre Conference to which 265 people from 26 different nations attended. Companies from Australia, Japan, Australia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the United States, Finland, Germany, France, Holland, Hungary, England and Italy performed in what was, to date, the largest playback theatre conference to be held. (Rowe, 2005, p.11)

At the time of writing, according to the International Playback Theatre Network website there are about 150 companies who are members of the Network in 31 countries. Training and networking are important elements of quality assurance within Playback. (See the section on caveats around Playback practice mentioned in Chapter Eleven, on page 359ff.). These activities are unseen by the audiences or people commissioning Playback performances, yet they are vital to the development and integrity of the practice. Playback training and performance is delivered in a wide range of contexts:

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[52] Salas described Michael Clemente when I interviewed her:
"He had a very strong artistic identity….As an actor, a musician, and a visual artist. He painted, drew pictures. He was first and foremost an artist. And he was, at that age, quite tender and fragile in his being. He'd suffered a lot. He was a gay man and he had grown up suffering. He was someone who had known he was gay, and therefore very different, in a very traditional Catholic family. He was the kind of person who other kids would call a faggot, that kind of thing. And at the same time he had this fire, and not only on behalf of gay people. He was a natural fighter for social justice of every kind and he kept us on track in that way. He was one of the first people who challenged us to really be aware and keep growing and questioning ourselves in terms of what we are doing in relation to the world. He was a person of incredible integrity and great artistic power." (Salas, personal communication, September 29, 2003)

for training actors (Muckley, 1995) and doctors (Doctor, doctor bring me the news, 1998); for professional development in organizations (Ferrara, 2002) in social change contexts (Alexander, 2003; Cocks, Freeman & Halley, 2002; Garavelli, 2001; Prasad, 2004; Samy, 2003); in therapeutic contexts (Paradi, 1999; Patterson, 2005); with children (Adderley, 2002).

Training occurs in different ways in each country and the New York School of Playback Theatre maintains an on-going training programme, with teachers travelling to other countries by invitation. (Centre for Playback Theatre, 2007). Attendance at the Centre is costly in both time and money, however. Practitioners in New Zealand, have been fortunate in that Jonathan Fox, along with other trainers travelled to New Zealand giving workshops frequently during the 1980s and 1990s. For example, I was able to obtain funding for him to be a guest lecturer giving a series of Professional Development workshops at AUT in 1990. In addition, training in New Zealand has regularly been delivered by other Playback practitioners including Mary Good, Deborah Pearson, Bev Hosking, Christian Penny, Martin Sutcliffe, Marilyn Sutcliffe and Francis Batten. There have also been both regional and international gatherings since 1991. Because Playback has developed with various "flavours" in different parts of the world, after attending the first conference in Melbourne, I realized that for me one of the major values of Playback was in experiencing its international and intercultural dimensions because as a theatre form it particularly lends itself to assisting the creation of syncretic forms and expressing a plurality of voices.[53] At these conferences, workshops and presentations were shared which have assisted the evolution of the philosophy and forms of Playback Theatre. (I attended the conferences asterisked in the following list.)

International Conferences

1st Melbourne January 1991*

2nd Sydney January 1992*

3rd Finland June 1993

4th Christchurch January 1994*

5th Olympia USA June 1995*

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[53] I have prioritised these conference experiences, serving on the IPTN Board for eight years, as President for the last two of those years. It was for me ironic, that in order to complete this writing task, I had to miss the most recent conference, in Sao Paulo Brazil, in 2007.

6th Perth January 1997*

Kassel 1st Academic Symposium May 1997*

7th York August 1999*

8th Shizuoka Sept 2003*

Tempe Arizona 2nd Academic Symposium February 2005*

9th Sao Paulo August 2007

Playback as a ritual container for community experience

> *Liminal performance can be said to emphasize a certain 'shift-shape' style; content is pointed to only indirectly. A certain sense of excitement is generated in many of the works, a feeling almost of awe somewhat akin to discomforrt is created....In much liminal performance, there is evidence of certain Dionysian qualities, such as 'disruption', 'immediacy' and 'excess' .... Further characteristics of liminal performance include a stylistic promiscuity favouring eclecticism and the mixing of codes (especially the juxtaposition of nostalgia with novelty), pastiche, parody, immanence (Hassan, 1978, pp. 51-85),cynicism, irony, playfulness and the celebration of the surface 'depthlessness of culture', the decline in the genius and authority of the artistic producer....Additional traits are self-consciousness and reflexiveness, montage and collage, an exploration of the paradoxical, ambiguous and open-ended nature of reality …. It can be seen that the features of liminal performance display a close affiliation to the aesthetics of postmodernism. (Broadhurst, 1999, p.13)*

In Australasia, the place from which this thesis comes, ritual has traditionally taken place very differently from in Europe (M.C.Kenna, 2001; Mills, 2001) (though European rituals can also be found here in many places as new barristers wear white wigs and graduating students sing *Gaudeams Igitur*…). Dennis (2004) opens her thesis on Playback with a quotation from an aboriginal Australian elder, Wanyubi Marika from the Rirratjingu people of northeast Arnhem Land: "We pass our culture and lore on through talking, through talking and the stories we tell through our bark paintings, and our performance, our song and dance performance. A combination of all three together" (Marika cited in Dennis, 2004, p. 1). Indigenous tohuna[54] and New Zealand educationalist Rangimarie Rose Turuki Pere, in an oral commentary on her 2003 book

[54] Tohuna (Tuhoe dialect spelling, in other regions tohunga) refers to expert, frequently applied to experts in healing and spiritual matters.

Te Wheke remarks on the pre-eminence of ritual in Māori settings: "I come from a culture that takes half a day to say hello – yet we are known throughout the world for the way we welcome and honour guests" (R.R. Pere, personal communication, February 9, 2007).

In fact, ritual is a pervasive feature of contemporary life which can be defined in a variety of ways, some featuring socially valorized activities while others are likely to be frowned or looked down upon: the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defines ritual as: " a religious or solemn ceremony involving a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order… a prescribed order of performing such a ceremony … a series of actions habitually and invariably followed by someone" (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2006). One's relationship to the meaning of the ritual and the other participants affects one's view of the ritual: one person's heart-felt experience of participation can be viewed as ridiculous or dangerous to an uninvolved or disbelieving observer. Rituals pervade people's lives, in conscious and unconscious, individual and social ways, so that for some theorists, rituals are the repeated performances by which people create and maintain themselves. Judith Butler (1990, 1999) suggests that even a feature of human life which may often be seen as expressing reality*, gender*, is in fact the result of performance and ritual: "the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated.* This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established" (Butler, cited in Sawin, 2002, p.45).

Ritual can be traced from the very earliest times of human expression: in an article on post-structuralist French theorist Bataille's fascination with the caves at Lascaux[55] Carrie Noland writes:

> Recent research on cave images, both ancient and modern, has supported, in fact, the turn-of-the-century ethnographer's suggestion that various forms of inscription (tracing, drawing, even notation and therefore early writing systems) originated in rituals …. *ritual dances provided the first gestures responsible, eventually, for all varieties of inscription* [italics added]. (Noland, 2004, p.153)

Thus ritual is irrevocably intertwined with symbolic communication. Many theorists use a model of ritual action proposed by Van Gennep (1960) consisting of three

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[55] Which we, in the 21st century, can no longer visit; having to ritually view instead a facsimile (Semitour Perigord, 2007) in order that the original may survive our fascination.

sequential groups of actions and experiences: first separation or the shift from daily life; second, transformation or liminal experience; third, reincorporation or re-emergence into the daily reality. For Dennis in her 2004 thesis on Playback Theatre, ritual was a major element framing Playback. She explains more fully Van Gennep's frame:

> The first phase is the preliminal or separation phase….Participants shift to a more "sacred space and time from profane or secular space and time" (Turner, 1982, p.24). The shift opens a performance space that exists in-between rather than set-apart from ordinary life, a space on the "border, a margin, a site of negotiation" (Carlson, 1996, p.20). Within this, subjects encounter the second phase, the liminal or *transition* phase. Van Gennep referred to this as 'margin' or 'limen' (meaning threshold in Latin). … Turner (1982) claims that "the ritual subjects pass through … a sort of social limbo" in this phase (p.24). He suggests that this liminal space invokes "anti-structure" and facilitates an experience of communitas (p.45). Exiting the liminal phase evokes the third phase … *incorporation.* This phase involves the incorporation of the liminal experience. The subject re-aggregates or re-integrates in society (Guss, 2001). They resume their everyday social roles carrying with them the new perspectives they may have from the experience. (Dennis, 2004, pp.44-45)

The three members of the original Playback company who are still practising, had all spent some time as volunteers in pre-industrial societies before they came together in the Playback work: Jo Salas in Sarawak, Jonathan Fox in Nepal and Judy Swallow in Eritrea. Inevitably, the forms of Playback owe something to these experiences: Fox writes, "[t]wo years of living in Nepal gave me firsthand knowledge of preindustrial culture." (Fox, 1999a, p. 14). Ritual is a common feature of such cultures: in my interview in 2005, with Judy Swallow, she described one of the rituals she experienced in Eritrea:

> there's a ritual that happens at the end of harvest time where each village has its own ritual … basically there's a big huge pyre of sticks…and a big pole with flowers on the top of it. And then the priests walk around it you know and then a one legged man would sit on a horse and go round a few times and then people would run around a few times and then if *all* those things happened before the flowers fell in one direction then that was good! You know … and if it fell in the other direction then it was *not* good luck.[56]
> (J.Swallow, personal communication, February 26, 2005.)

This description implies that ritual is not invariably benign (Hoffman & Lubkemann, 2005): indeed a grim U.S. example is analysed by Conquergood (2002) who describes rituals around the death penalty in the United States. In Playback , like some other

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[56] For the full story, see my interview with Swallow in Appendix Three.

forms of theatre in what Blatner (2007), calls the *applied theatre,* also referred to in some circles as *grassroots theatre* (Burnham, 2000), the aspect of ritual is foregrounded as a way of creating a container which has clear boundaries, is strongly facilitated, and offers a space which enables play, polyvocality and the simultaneous expression and containment of carnivalesque elements. In April 1994, Mary Good wrote in *Interplay*, emphasising the relationship between the ritual container and the space within it:

> The first prerequisite for thought to occur is that the container is adequate, and the second is that there is an absence, or a space. In Playback, if there is no absence, or no space, we not only create dull theatre but also we do not allow the beholder to complete the enactment with their own thoughts. … To misquote the Tao Te Ching, in Playback we use the form to create theatre, but it is on the space where there is nothing that the usefulness of the theatre depends. (Good, 2004, p.7)

Boundaries

Clarity of boundaries is thus essential to the integrity of a ritual form: it must be clear to everyone when the enactment begins and ends, what it does and does not involve. In Playback the ritual is enacted with simplicity and the stages of the ritual are signalled with cues like verbal formulae:

> A consistently surprising experience for audience members has been the transformation of the verbal narrative to dramatic form. After storytellers recount their personal tales, the conductor invokes the ritual phrase 'Let's watch.'[57] This phrase, when delivered, signals to the audience that a heightened state of theatrical performance will follow and covertly requests that audience members suspend reality and join the actors in creating theatre. (Dennis, 2004, p. 205)

Playback theory suggests that the silence at the beginning and end of the improvised performance enactment provide a strong frame which anchors the alternation of enactment and discourse (Salas, 2003). In addition, the performers make eye contact with the audience teller first as they listen and only again at the end of the enactment: in between, during the enactment, they avoid looking directly at the teller. In this way the deliberate ritual at the end of the enactment returns the focus to the person whose life has been enacted and also is a marker which assists the important de-roling of actors and musicians. During this moment, when the performers look at the audience

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[57] A phrase modified by the very assertive musicians in the Sydney Playback Company in the 1990s to that I still most often use myself, 'Let's listen and watch.'

storyteller, returning to their own neutral body posture and energy, the audience also has a chance to let go of one narrative and start to become ready for another.

Another boundary concerns space: in 1993 a whole issue of *Interplay* was devoted to discussing matters to do with space. There is a broadly similar staging of most Playback companies[58], though the exact placement of facilitator's and teller's chairs is a matter of personal taste and even within one company different facilitators may have slightly different placements, according to what 'feels right' to each. Once the performance begins, the acting space is not entered except by invitation, and the teller, who comes up to sit in the chair, is not expected to get up and move around the stage. One reason for keeping the stage clear is that it creates the suspense of an empty space, which the narrative starts to fill and which the performers then bring to life in surprising ways. Also, the phases of a Playback performance take place with different stagings, and the clarity of these groupings on stage assists the audience to know where they are in the process.

It is vital, in Playback practice, to keep the boundaries of five alternating stages of the micro-ritual clear: first, interchange between facilitator and audience members; second, interview with a single audience member and production of individual audience narration, co-created with the facilitator; third, enactment of the narrative (in the Playback form, *stories*, this will contain two complementary stages, the musician's overture during which the actors gather upstage to one side and the staged scene, during which the musicians and actors play the story back together); fourth, acknowledgement, when all the performers drop into neutral and look back to the teller; fifth, comment, correction or feedback from the teller, another time usually of dyadic exchange between facilitator and audience narrator as the group makes the transition out of the story and finally a transition back into the first stage of facilitator interchange with the audience, which leads into a new cycle. If boundaries of the form are kept clear, the work is stronger: if they are hurried through or not observed, something of the vigour and momentum of Playback is lost. (Dennis, 2004; Fox, 1986; Good, 1986; Rowe, 2005; Salas, 1993)

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[58] See the website of the International Playback Theatre Network (2003) as well as YouTube videos (Carey, 2007; Dobraspace, 2007; Sweepflicks, 2007; Tapestry Playback Theatre, 2007; Vredevanutrecht 2007; Wildavidjan, 2006) which show a remarkable similarity of ritual in Playback groups from different parts of the world.

Facilitation

The performance moves through clearly delineated ritual phases, both the larger shape of the whole performance and the five stages of the micro-ritual as described above. Adequate performance in the role of facilitator is crucial for this movement to happen smoothly. In Playback, the facilitator is called the "conductor": in some ways an unfortunate name as to many people it may suggest a person who stands with their back to the audience and draws the performance out of an orchestra, rather than engaging with the audience face-to-face. In fact the chief metaphors being used are electricity and travel: Salas writes that the conductor "is the conduit, the channel through which audience and actors can meet." (2003, p.65) and in our interview Judy Swallow spoke of her invention of the term conductor as part of her contribution in the original Playback group, pointing to its shamanistic, artistic and social guide meanings:

> the word conductor was like "Oh well what about *this* word?" I said,"You know conductor, it's sort of like electricity and then … it's sort of like orchestra conductor …it's sort of like the conductor on a train…" (J. Swallow, personal communication, 26 February, 2005)

I tend to use the word facilitator when talking to people outside the Playback community because it seems to me that this word emphasizes the fact that, as I have experienced, a person playing this role in Playback develops a wide range of transferable and complex skills which can then be used in a very diverse range of other settings. In 1986, Australian psychodramatist and Director of Melbourne Playback Theatre, Mary Good, wrote in her psychodrama thesis, *The Playback Conductor or How Many Arrows will I Need?*

> The conductor is a key person in a Playback performance…who engages the audience, develops the theme and sees that appropriate cues and directions are passed to the actors. The conductor must be able to maintain and support him/herself throughout a whole performance. (p.8)

In her thesis, Good enumerated the roles she had identified by analysing transcripts and observations of different people playing this role[59]. Good describes her four main clusters of roles as producer, social investigator, listener/communicator and guide. She first details what these roles entail in the pre-performance phase, when the performance is being negotiated and planned. The following table shows these roles:

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[59] Early in my experience of Playback facilitating, I read Good's thesis and wrote out in my diary a list of the roles she had isolated, reading through this list and using it as a checklist before each performance, which often felt to me as risky a pastime as an extreme sport such as bungy jumping.

Clusters	Sub-roles	Description
Producer	Wise Person	Has an ability to retain sense of integrity in the work – organizers frequently want the performance to push their own particular line
	Contact Person	Acts as main contact between the organizers and the performers – so that the actors are not bombarded with information
		Has general task of warming the actors & musicians up to acting physically, vocally, personally and as a team
		Has overall responsibility for the way the space is set up – seating, visibility, aesthetics, accessibility for audience members, relationship between actors' position and the audience
Social Investigator		Is able to relate to and discuss their area of concern
	Systems Thinker and Sociometrist	Begins to warm up to the performance – what groups and sub-groups will be present? What questions will open up the issues that are important?
Listener/ Communicator		Is able to talk with and relate to a wide range of people – those commissioning performances
Guide		Warms the actors and musicians up to the group for whom they are performing – so that they are not judgemental or prejudiced – nor are they sentimental
		Deals with any issues that will be blocks to acting together

Table 2 Adapted from Mary Good's Roles of the Conductor Pre-performance (Good, 1986)

To me, Good has isolated essential pre-performance roles. In my experience these are not very often discussed and are sometimes unseen by new practitioners or onlookers who are misled by Playback's deceptively simple surface.

Mary Good's Roles of the Conductor in Performance

This complexity is further expanded by Good in her schema for the roles the facilitator takes during performance, still using her four main clusters of roles:

Clusters	Sub-roles	Description
Producer	Director	Gives direction to the actors about the staging or essence of the story, or a particular way to approach a story
	Meta-communicator	Tells the audience about the process that is currently happening or about to happen
	Producer of audience interaction	Values life and is aware that links between people develop trust and that participation and action bring life. Coaches, instructs, insists on action. Focuses on asking questions and giving instructions in such a way that audience are warmed up positively
	Producer of useful cues for actors	Thinks concretely, focuses the teller and asks questions that will help the actors develop the response
	Storyteller or story shaper	Acts feeling for what will add to the story and what detract, where to end, where to begin, where to move ahead. Pictures the story and its rhythms
	Magician or showman	Utterly believes that what will be created by the actors will be magic and acts and speaks in such a way that the audience is intrigued or captivated
	Creative Artist	Is concerned with developing the warm up in the group in an economical and aesthetically rewarding way, having a sense of timing, an awareness of need for changes in rhythm, both within stories and in the whole performance
	Humorist	Expresses with humour the paradox he/she is involved in at the moment
	Wise Person	Takes an overview and understands the meaning and value of what is happening for an individual or for the whole group ie. is not caught in the unconsciousness of the group, can experience it and step out.
	Ritualist	Recognises the value of producing and creating rituals both old and new in which an audience can be involved
Social Investigator	Naïve enquirer	Acts as explorer venturing into unknown territory, asks the questions that are on everyone's mind, does not assume knowledge without checking it out

	Efficient eliciter of information	Is aware of the drama and of economy – the aim is to find the skeleton of the story as quickly as possible so that there is something for the actors to add
	Sociometrist	Is aware of the whole group or audience and the relationships between people. Much of this work will have begun pre-performance.
	Systems analyst	Sees everything as part of a dynamic and changing whole; may ask teller to choose an actor for an inanimate object so that the full system is shown; may encourage both a child and a mother, or both a student and a teacher, to tell. If other people are in a story a teller tells and they are present, they will often be given an opportunity to respond or to present their picture of the world
	Perceptive Observer	Sits and moves so that they can see and be aware of all members of the audience. Thinks that what they observe in the audience will be relevant to the unfolding of the whole performance. Notices that audience can't hear, are physically uncomfortable and so on
	Objective analyst	Observes behaviour and analyses it using role theory. Particularly relevant to tellers and the assessment of what kinds of action are appropriate
Listener/ Communicator	Active listener	Listens to teller without fear and prejudice and communicates his/her listening
	Double to teller, deep listener	Gives voice to some of the unspoken deeper experience of the teller – a role used with caution and discretion, it is most often appropriately the role of the actors. Sometimes necessary and appropriate at the end of enactment to listen and respond from this role
Guide	Host	Creates a safe enough place – welcomes people, looks and casts eyes over everyone; individuals welcomed by name, thanked for their contributions, responses noticed and responded to
	Meeter	Is a solid entity willing to stand firm and meet the audience as a spontaneous actor, as him or herself; is willing to see and acknowledge discomfort awkwardness etc. in self

		and in the audience; can be firm and clear about intention and purpose; thinks about and prepares the language used and the general approach to each particular group
	Limit Setter	Actively works with the audience and with tellers to set the boundaries in a framework within which the drama, exploration, improvisation can take place. Expresses clarity of purpose through tone, stance, whole being, not simply words. With a teller who is going on, physically restrains them and is clear
	Therapeutic Guide	Based on observations, guides the teller and the actors eg. structures and conducts the interview so that there is a clear presentation of events. At the end of the story, may need to connect with the teller to integrate them back into the present time or to integrate the story. Often this needs to go further so that there is some form of sharing of similar experiences from audience members so that the teller can become one of the community again
	Visionary	Invites and encourages the audience to imagine, to picture. Believes in the innate creative genius in each person and in the healthiness of attuning and activating the imagination
	Group Worker	Works to establish a climate in the room which is conducive to new responses emerging. Able to identify the central concern and theme. Acts as a conflict manager

Table 3 Adapted from Mary Good's Roles of the Conductor in Performance (Good, 1986)

While Good's ground-breaking work is valuable for giving a superb structure for developing awareness of the demands of the facilitator role, I have found it too complex to hold in awareness easily as a checklist during performance, or to communicate to others: therefore I have chosen to group the facilitator's tasks under six headings, which to me are easier to keep in mind as a check during performance. I suggest that this role has many corollaries, some of which are: to the Master/Mistress of Ceremonies (M.C.) of a concert or public occasion; to a kind of aesthetic producer/director of a stage show, ballet or opera; to the sensitive director of a psychodrama or group session, working dynamically with groups and individuals to maximize growth and

understanding; to an artist/storyteller, maintaining an awareness of the meta-narrative being created by the individual stories offered by audience members, relating them to some kind of internal template regarding the possibilities present in such a group and adding one's individual creative contribution; to a social/political analyst or the Joker in Augusto Boal's theatre of the oppressed; and to the celebrant or shaman in a ritual setting. Of course, these roles are not really separate: they interweave and blend. I separate them only for the purposes of describing them and encouraging people to both appreciate their own strengths and develop their emergent roles.

The M.C.

Like an M.C., Playback facilitators, have a primary responsibility for the success of the performance as a whole. They delineate the boundaries in time and space and are responsible to act when these boundaries are infringed in any way. Every facilitator necessarily has a slightly different way of playing this role. They use their own personality and communication style to build bridges between the disparate elements of the performance: the various communities within the audience; the audience as a whole and the performers; the different phases and moods in the performance; and the different stories and life experiences shared. The facilitator threads together these aspects just as an M.C. creates continuity and stylistic wholeness when linking the acts in a variety show. If one reflects on the different effects of skilful M.C.ing as against lame performance in this role, it is clear how vital it is to the coherence and credibility of any live occasion. Heron refers to the way the facilitator uses

> personal power or dynamic presence – [which] is about conscious command of the self in and through the various sensory modes, in active participative relations with other people. I will call these psychophysical modes, since the mind is always involved with them, either in conscious use, or in a half-conscious forgetful state….(Heron, 1999, p.216)

An M.C. maintains an awareness of the performance as a whole and the levels of engagement/detachment and tension/relaxation within the group. A certain amount of tension is part of a theatrical occasion – and the heightened level of tension involved in Playback has been well described by Dennis in her account of the audience state as they sit with the tension of whether or not to tell: one of her interviewees said "I thought 'oh it'll go away,'(laugh) but then it was too insistent….I thought 'I have to say something'…I couldn't hold it anymore" (2004, p. 171). This level of tension requires confident facilitation so that the uncertainty can be accepted without overwhelming the audience participants (and, incidentally, the performers who need to trust the facilitator

and feel safe enough to be spontaneous). In Playback, the role of M.C. is amplified by the addition of other roles.

The Sensitive interviewer

In Playback, the creative and artistic domain is not privileged over that of interpersonal communication and to maintain safety and health for the audience as well as the performers, the facilitator plays a role which has distinct similarities to that of a counsellor or the director of a psychodrama session. This is personally demanding. In psychodrama

> a certain atmosphere can be created by the director in a few swift moments of time. It can be done very simply. It most certainly involves allowing time to stand still momentarily. You pause to realize the nature of your own being…. you must have developed to a great degree certain unshakeable attitudes toward yourself and others …. you must have developed the attitude that everything in your being and in the being of others is…there to assist you. It is obviously no good at all for you to be conscious of your own being and then not accept what is there. (Clayton, 1991, p.5-6)

This description by Max Clayton accurately indicates the on-going personal developmental work which a person taking the role of Playback facilitator needs to do. Again, this dimension of the role is very often unnoticed by the audience or by theatre practitioners from other modalities.

The kernel of Playback performance is in the succession of one-to-one interviews between the facilitator and audience storytellers who want to make a contribution to the performance. At each point, when the facilitator's questioning and attending skills come into play, the quality of what is offered by audience members will be profoundly influenced by how each teller is treated. If the interaction is not sensitive and confident, the audience may rightly avoid narratives of complexity, depth and power. This aspect of Playback facilitation demands an advanced level of self and group awareness. For this reason, some kind of counselling skills training is an important pre-requisite for being a Playback facilitator.

The Aesthetic Director

Throughout the Playback performance, the facilitator also plays a significant role to do with the aesthetics of the show. At all points, the facilitator is reflecting on what has been created so far, on the aesthetic possibilities of these performers, this audience, this theme; and on what aesthetic suggestions or interventions would be possible or helpful

to make. In this regard, they work as an artistic director. The first aesthetic choice, after hearing an audience story, is which Playback form to use. The suggestion may be made in the initial instructions to the performers after the audience member has told their story: the facilitator may also spell out a number of scenes; suggest a stylistic genre ("How about we see this as an opera") or an atmosphere they want to see created ("I think we particularly need to see the uneasiness of the family after the thunderstorm"). In addition, they can give roles to those who have not been chosen by the teller ("Bridget can you play the sea and then, in the last part, the gossiping neighbours"). As part of this role of artistic director, the facilitator maintains aesthetic boundaries as well as physical ones,[60] asking for repeats or modifications where they perceive a shortcoming in the performance. This is an important way to create safety and to demonstrate non-defensively the fact that Playback is not a perfect art but deals in imperfection and becoming.

The Satisfying Storyteller

However, the Playback facilitator does not only remain with these roles. In addition, they have a role of *performing* as a narrator or storyteller, as they co-create, along with everyone else who is present, a satisfying narrative structure through the individual contributions and also through the collage or montage that those contributions and enactments create – this larger gestalt or whole. In Playback training, this is often called "sense of story" (Salas, 2003, p. 17) and it is something that *all* in the group need to develop but is, most vitally, required by the facilitator. While listening to the stories, the storyteller/facilitator helps to elicit the essential elements of the teller's narrative *as story*, is alert to what larger story of the group event is unfolding and supports the emergence of this story. This role leads into the next, because all stories are not created equal, in any society.

The Social/Political Analyst

Similarly to the joker in Boal's work (Boal, 1970), the facilitator also needs to be able to read not only the narrative but also the social and political dimensions of the accounts

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[60] The facilitator ensures that audience members do not enter the performing space: at a Playback conference performance in Seattle, an audience member I was facilitating sprang up from the teller's chair and bounded into the performing space right up to the actor playing her: I had to follow her and take her hand, talking and leading her back to the storyteller's chair: a testing moment for a facilitator!

audience members give of their experiences (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994). See the section of Chapter Four on the audience as polis (on page 143)

for an expansion of this awareness. The facilitator as the one among the performers who most directly dialogues with the audience, needs to be able to see the audience group in a nuanced way, addressing multiple parameters of difference and welcoming all.

The Shaman

Finally, the facilitator at various moments of the performance, holds, builds or releases the energies and level of tension in the group, in the ways that celebrants and shamans do within ritual settings. To do this, facilitators develop awareness of the levels and types of energy within themselves, within individuals, within sub-groups, within larger groups and also needs to become familiar with ritual structures and the functions of different phases of rituals, for example, the structure of separation, enactment and reincorporation (Avorgbedor, 1999; Dennis 2004; Schechner, 2002; Turner 1982).

As a Playback facilitator gains experience, they will discover which of these six roles they are strongest in and which they need to develop more. As a kind of checklist, I suggest attending to these six roles will enable a person to start their Playback facilitating with a multi-dimensional sense of containing the ritual encounter adequately. As they develop, Mary Good's description will help them keep embracing the complexities of the role. However, ritual in Playback also expresses qualities of play, so its rules are not to be solemnly or heavily adhered to but rather carried lightly, as guides.

Playback as action method: group experience and an encounter with Jacob Levy

The multiple dimensions of the role of Playback facilitator have highlighted some of the aspects of Playback which relate to its therapeutic and educational qualities (Marseleva, 2003): these aspects which most clearly contrast with the mainstream theatrical tradition and which, in my experience, cause difficulties in its classification because people from in other theatre modalities sense the contrast very acutely and label Playback therefore as primarily *therapeutic.* This perception is partly valid: its genesis

was indeed inextricably linked with psychodrama in upstate New York in the 1970s, which has led to its connection over the intervening years with psychodrama networks, communities and personnel.

As part of this research project, the relationship between Playback and psychodrama was explored in interviews with Jo Salas and Judy Swallow, concerning the early days of Playback (see *A Brief History of Playback*, on page 86). Swallow explained for me the ways in which the original company accessed and used psychodrama in their practice together:

> Jonathan was on the staff of the Moreno Institute so what he did was he took his salary in training hours – it worked out for the Institute which didn't have much money – and it worked out and he gave the training hours to the Playback people – as the $60 days I remember it was in those days – and so he donated it because he thought that psychodrama was so important – so everybody in the company had a chance to to do psychodrama training at the Moreno Institute. And that was because Jonathan did the teaching….
>
> We had one Saturday a month as well as every Thursday and on the one Saturday a month we could do things… I remember any thing from "we're going to have a performance so let's all take the roles of the people in the conference in the sociology conference – you know … what do they want?" – you know so that's basic, you know, role reversal…(J.Swallow, personal communication, February 26, 2005.)

It is interesting to look at various statements about this relationship made by Jonathan Fox over the years: tracing changes in how he has described the relationship between psychodrama and Playback. In 1986 he mentions his "psychological" training without naming the modality:

> When I started my career in improvisational theatre, I knew that anything might come up, not only in rehearsals, but in performances as well….I did not have a fear of the artistic challenges…but I did fear the Mood side of things ….So I acquired psychological training, which included personal therapy as well as professional education. It gave me what I needed – the skill and confidence to be as sure-footed in the arena of Mood as I was in the arena of art… (Fox, 1986, pp. 117-118)

Earlier in the same book, he had commented on how psychodrama had been stigmatized by both Richard Schechner and Viola Spolin of whom he says "One of Spolin's bad words is psycho-drama" (Fox, 1986, p.68) . He makes the point that "both in experimental and educational theatre circles, identification with therapy has been a threat." (p.68). In 1987, Fox edited a collection of Moreno's writings: *The Essential Moreno: Writings on Psychodrama, Group Method, and Spontaneity.* Twelve years

later, in the *Introduction* to an edited book of papers on Playback, he referred to how in 1973 he had attended

> a psychodrama in Beacon, New York and saw Zerka Moreno in action. She also spoke about J.L. Moreno's Stegreiftheater in Vienna. What I heard from her lips and what I witnessed under her guidance felt like a revelation. Here was a true community theatre. Here was theatre that made a difference. Here was emotion. Here was often stunning beauty. (1999a, p. 10).

Later, in an article in the same book, Fox wrote:

> I came to playback theatre from the pursuit of experimental theatre in the period following the Vietnam War. I thought of myself as a theatre artist. In the course of playback's development, I studied psychodrama to learn the group process skills necessary to conduct interactive social events, recognizing how art and social interaction had to be skilfully blended in order to make playback work. (1999b, p.134)

More recently, he has posted a much more explicit statement about his connections with Playback and psychodrama on the website of the Center for Playback Theatre, explaining:

> In the early 70's I considered myself an improvisational theatre person. I was the director of a theatre company called "It's All Grace," ex-Peace Corps Nepal, and a student of oral epics, when someone invited me to a psychodrama weekend. What I saw there was close to my deepest vision for the theatre: it was intimate, personal, communal, intense. Psychodrama was built on a paradoxical equilibrium of respecting the individual and valuing the group. In contrast to typical hierarchical social structures, psychodrama, with its concept of spontaneity, allowed any participant to take the creative focus at any one moment. Psychodrama also invited deep emotions. I wanted such balance, flexibility, and catharsis for the theatre.
>
> There has been some confusion about the relationship of playback theatre and psychodrama, however. In general, many have incorrectly considered playback to be an outgrowth of psychodrama, or a branch of it. Moreno, before the evolution of psychodrama, directed a theatre group in Vienna called Stegreiftehater (Spontaneity Theater). I feel more allied to that tradition than what developed later. (Fox, 2007, paragraphs 1-2).

Clearly, this relationship between psychodrama and Playback is a dynamic and crucial one, especially in that it potentially addresses some of the safety issues around preventing emotional or psychological harm. Frequently, Playback writings explore themes concerning Playback's demands of individuals and groups (eg. Arping & Feldhandler, 1999; Zankay, 1999).Looking at the life and work of psychodrama's originator, Jacob Levy Moreno, clarifies and expands some of the issues, as Moreno's life work was not only therapeutic but involved significant aesthetic, sociological and philosophical emphases.

Jacob Levy Moreno

Jacob Levy was born in 1889, the descendant of Sephardic Jews who, after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 when they were ordered to convert to Christianity or leave the country, had settled in Turkey, eventually going to live in Bucharest (Marineau, 1989). Jacob was the first to use the name Moreno as a surname: his father's name was Moreno Nissim Levy. (Later most of his family also changed their names to Moreno). The Levy family moved to Vienna when Jacob was six or seven where he first went to school and later to the University of Vienna where he studied first philosophy and then medicine (graduating with an M.D. in 1917). When only fourteen, he started to live apart from the rest of his family when they had shifted away to Berlin and he returned to Vienna. He went from feeling like a special person chosen by God (as he had felt in his early childhood) to being alienated and angry. He rebelled against family, school and society:

> His rebellion against God was parallel with his rebellion against school, the political system, authority in general….Moreno was a fervent reader of Nietzsche, Dostoievski, Kierkegaard, and Whitman. Without being in any way systematic in his reading, he was looking for an answer to his metaphysical questions about life and his own role in the universe. (Marineau, 1989, pp. 22-23)

Of that time, Moreno himself writes,

> My behaviour was very much out of order. I was totally without sensibility…I was, under it all, frightened by what might become of me. I was quite isolated from other people at the time, although I was not lonely….I had the idée fixe that a single individual had no authority, that he must be the voice of the group. It must be a group; the new word must come from a group. Therefore I went out to find friends, followers, good people. (Moreno, 1972, p.205)

From a long and varied life, one early episode shows the social commitment of his early existentialism: the creation, (around 1909) with his friend Chaim Kellmer who had been raised in the Jewish Hassidic tradition, of a *House of the Encounter* in a suburb of Vienna, where any displaced people were welcome to come and to stay without paying rent. "My group of followers and I numbered five young men. We were all committed to the sharing of anonymity, of loving and giving, living a direct and concrete life in the community with all we met." (Moreno, 1972, p. 207) Andras Petö (later the Hungarian pioneer of conductive education with motor-impaired children), and other friends, were part of the group who ran the house: "Every night there were discussions about the practical problems encountered in and outside the house, a great deal of singing, and plenty of fun. The reputation of the group spread quickly and more people joined the community." (Marineau, 1989, p.27) They pondered the coming of the Messiah;

practised anonymity; gave practical help to the displaced people who arrived there; and encouraged each other in their studies and community work. This house was only disbanded, five years later, with the beginning of the 1914-18 War (Marineau, 1989).

In Moreno's accounts, a constellation of key events led to his development of psychodrama and sociometry: storytelling and inventing plays with children; being part of an emergent self help group with prostitutes; and during the war, working with an Italian clinical psychologist, Bannizone, to sociometrically investigate and organize people living in difficult circumstances in refugee camps, taking into account the preferences and disinclinations of individuals to create organizational arrangements which could result in more positive relationships between people. In 1916 he wrote a letter to the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of the Interior suggesting that "positive and negative feelings that emerge from every house between houses, from every factory and from national and political groups in the community can be explored by means of sociometric analysis" (Marineau, 1989, p.44) Borgatta et al. in 1975 suggested that "Moreno's major impact on academic research rests on this work [sociometry]." (cited in Hare & Hare, 1996, p. 118)

Moreno's Theatre of Spontaneity was started in Vienna in the early 1920s in the years before he emigrated to the United States, and though afterwards Moreno described its aim as "to bring about a revolution in theatre, to entirely change the character of the theatrical event" (Feldhendler, 2004, p.90), in fact it partly used the Living Newspaper techniques which had been pioneered earlier in the century in Italy and Russia (Casson, 2000), though Moreno stated that his version was different (Fox, 2006):

> Sometime in 1922 Moreno rented space at 2 Maysedergasse in Vienna. This belonged to a women's group and was used to exhibit members' arts and craft work…the main hall could hold between fifty and seventy five people. ….This is where the new theatre group was to perform. The first presentation seems to have taken place in 1922. The group of actors put on spontaneous plays as suggested by the audience, did some public 're-enactments' of daily news using a technique called 'the living newspaper', or improvised on themes….After a few weeks, and good reviews from the press, the theatre really took off. The auditorium was often packed and the audience learned to get involved.[61] Moreno was the leader of the group and began to learn his trade as a director of 'psychodrama'. It was not yet called

[61] The Women's Craft Cooperative is still there and Jonathan Fox told me at the Playback Symposium in Arizona in 2005, how he had visited it in Vienna in 2004 and seen the room in which the Theatre of Spontaneity had taken place: it was, he said, surprisingly small!

psychodrama, but the basic methods were in place. (Marineau, 1989 p.72)

This work was also clearly informed by an involvement in the avant garde creative community.: he "wanted people to have a love affair with the process of creating not just the products of creativity" (Carter, 2002, p.207). He had been part of a group producing a journal, called *Daimon,* "… a loose-knit association of poets, philosophers and sociologists. They were all dismayed by the war and its consequences. It was in this context that the idea of a new journal took place"(Marineau, 1989, p.55). While, Marineau suggests, he never became really part of *any* group, through his editorship of this journal he was definitely in active relationship with avant garde writers at this time, publishing his own works alongside their writings:

> What exactly was the role of Moreno in founding this journal? He was its editor, and in this capacity did a lot of the necessary 'running around' between publishing houses and authors….the journal was able to obtain contributions from the best known writers of Austria and Europe. The list is very impressive, and includes, Max Brod…Paul Claudel…Blaise Pascal…Martin Buber, Ernst Bloch, Fritz Lampl…Oskar Kokoschka, Heinrich Mann. (Marineau, 1989, p.56)

At the same time, Moreno was also a family doctor developing what he called *theatre reciproque* where he would often

> use his own office or go to peoples homes….call upon members of the immediate family and the larger community….re-enact situations that had initially brought pain, and found that the re-enactment leads to de-dramatization and that liberation often occurs through laughter. (Marineau 1989, pp. 68-69)

However, it was not until after his move to the United States in 1925 and the difficult years re-establishing himself, that Moreno developed his methods fully: "Moreno with considerably input from Zerka Moreno (Fox 1987), developed the psychodrama method from the 1920s to the 1960s…" (Carter 1997, p.25) In the method he and Zerka evolved, "[t]he personal world of subjective phenomena and dreams and the objective world of consensual reality are both addressed." (Blatner, 1988, p.58). Blatner goes on to suggest that psychodrama works in the space of mirroring and projection that has been theorised as part of the infant/adult communicative bond in attachment theory, "what Winnicott (1971) called 'the transitional space' "(Blatner 1988, pp.58-59). Clearly Playback too has the potential to take place in this space.

Moreno's invention of group therapy was deeply influential (Williams, 1989, 1991); as was his emphasis on role theory (Blatner 2006) which has now become as much a part of popular psychology as Freud's subconscious:

> [t]he great freedom everyone can agree upon in America is the freedom to make yourself up, to be self-made. Role-playing, as an act of self-creation, of possible transformation and imagination, has the power to turn one into a work of art… (Marranca, 2006, p.82)

A place in Playback practice where, in my experience, psychodrama is often used is the rehearsal process which in Playback is personally as well as artistically demanding. A level of honesty with and commitment to each other is demanded from co-workers: a former Playback colleague Marilyn Sutcliffe writes of psychodrama what also applies to the Playback actor:

> Adequacy is an element of spontaneity which is very relevant in the moment of entering into the unknown. In order to unveil demons, we want to have an appreciation that what we do in that moment will be enough….it is necessary that one has the ability to be vulnerable and to be willing to reveal oneself in the service of creating some meaning within and between one's internal world and the world we inhabit with others. (Sutcliffe, 2007, p.11)

Furthermore, while most rehearsal processes in the theatre are limited in time and only have the aim of leading to a finished product, Playback rehearsals are part of a long term commitment! Some practitioners rehearse together once a week or so for over ten years. Ideally the rehearsal process attends to all of the domains needed in the forms: physical, emotional, cultural, intellectual, political, energetic, and ritual. Individual and group strengths are acknowldeged and worked on, while shortcomings are seen as opportunities for growth to occur. As it is so atypical of most theatre process, the Playback rehearsal process itself would reward a whole enquiry of its own. Nick Rowe has made a beginning, describing some aspects of it in his chapter entitled *The Ensemble*, (pp. 135-142) in his 2007 book *Playing the other: Dramatizing personal narratives in Playback Theatre,* describing with acuteness his own experience of risking as a storyteller and suggesting that

> Being able to 'practise' with each other's stories is crucial….It sensitizes performers to the impact dramatizing personal stories can have, it gives the actors the opportunity to find the 'narrow ridge' between self and other. Being able to enact the stories of others in the rehearsal room gives the actors the chance to take risks and explore the limits of their risk-taking. (Rowe, 2007, p.138)

Playback shares with psychodrama the six elements of: an ability to work in the 'liminal field' formed by the interaction of internal and external circumstances and events; concern with the experience of individuals within the setting of a whole group; an emphasis on creativity, spontaneity and growth; valuing of the core experience of telling

one's story; the giving and playing of roles; and belief in the power of enactment and aesthetic communication. It differs crucially from psychodrama in that it usually does not propose a specifically therapeutic purpose but rather a range of purposes (see Table Five on page 195**Error! Bookmark not defined.**); involves professional (or at any rate prepared, trained and often paid) performers; does not allow the protagonist to partake actively in the enactment of their story but simply to *view* their story; and is not confined to the therapeutic context but can be done in a very wide variety of settings and time frames.

Playback as polis, issues of power - and meeting Hannah Arendt, who was stateless for 16 years

> *David Luban analyzed Arendt's storytelling as an antipositivist methodology permitting her to understand the period that she called 'dark times' and that includes totalitarianism.… in dark times, when political action and understanding are in danger of being annihilated, only storytelling has the capacity to provide the political thinker with an access route to the political. (Herzog, 2001, p.170)*

Jacob Levy Moreno's work crucially involved issues of power as can be seen in his early work with the homeless in Vienna; it also was deeply connected with performance and creativity as well as healing. Like many of his contemporaries, Moreno did not separate these concerns. For some years in the mid 20th century, these streams may have seemed to diverge, yet once again a confluence of polyvocality, carnival, surrealism, the avant garde, political discontent and change can be seen in many of the theatre and performance works of the last 40 years: the inter-continental community theatre projects (Magnat, 2005) of Eugene van Erven (2001) Christopher Balme (1999), Eugenio Barba (1995, 2002, 2003) Augusto Boal (1985, 1998), Peter Brook (1968), Jerzy Grotowski (2002), Judith Malina and Julian Beck (Callaghan 2003; Rogoff, 2004; Ariane Mnouchkine (Singleton 2003), Guillermo Gomes-Pena (Gomez-Pena and Wolford, 2002) and Guglielmo Schinina(2004); gender and sexuality-based projects (Case, 1991,2000; Cocks, 2002; De Lauretis, 1994; DeShazer, 2003; Fisher, 1986; Forte, 1988; Gordon, 2003; Harris, 2002; Jackson, 1996; Kushner, 2001; Langellier 2002; Latorré, 2006; Myerson, Crawley, Anstey, Kessler & Okopny, 2007; Nnaemeka, 2006; Pastika, 2003; Reinelt, 1986; Scheie, 2000; Shoemaker, 2004), educational and community events which are change-focused (Dorras, 2002; Goldbard, 2001; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Hesten, 1992; Jacobs, 1996;Johnson & O'Neill, 1984; Maunder, 1987;

Oliver, 1997; Selby & Bradley 2003; Wagner, 1999); docudrama (Moynagh 2002; Reinelt 2006); social theatre (Thompson & Schechner, 2004); cultural theatre (Pasolini, 2007); democratic theatre (M.C.Kenzie 2003); music and performance art (Drucker, 1993), and many others. Playback takes its place alongside these developments, bearing the hope expressed by Fox in his introduction to *Gathering Voices* (1999), "that the playback ritual could play a part in healing some of the injustices and upheavals of the past that fester not only in individuals, but in whole societies." (Fox, 1999a, p.15)

Throughout the earliest years of the twentieth century, following the transvaluing of the 19th century pieties that had been started by Hegel, and developed by Kierkegaard, Marx and Nietzsche, many artistic and political movements had been interwoven. In Germany, influenced by Russian developments, Bertolt Brecht and the collective with whom he worked developed the theory and practice of epic theatre, which was explicitly contrasted with Aristotelian tragedy so that "instead of identifying with the characters, the audience should be educated to be astonished at the circumstances under which they function" (Benjamin, 1969, p.150).

Although within the enactment phase of Playback a catharsis of emotions may occur, when looked at from a social and political perspective, the Playback performance is potentially a place of thinking as much as feeling, a place "which would enable citizens to assume political responsibility while resisting their identification as guilty subjects." (Schaap, 2001, p. 750). In addition, many of the conventions Playback uses are also those of epic theatre, such as keeping the audience lights up during a performance and having the performers remain in front of the audience even as they take up and relinquish roles: these conventions make the work performers are doing transparent, or as Walter Benjamin said "pellucid" (1969, p. 147) to the audience[62]. The consequence of these epic conventions is that the audience is encouraged to see the framing and the artifice; the interpretation and judgement within the creative process. (See further discussion on page 152 about Playback's similarities to epic theatre in some of its orientations to the audience)

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[62] I learnt the theory of epic theatre in the late 1960s when taking part in Nola Millar's New Theatre production of Piscator's adaptation of War and Peace and found the techniques of revealing the artifice invigorating. During the writing of this thesis I have come to realise how strongly I feel the form of Playback as epic theatre.

An ancestress: Hannah Arendt

> *Arendt's concept of life is necessarily entwined with her belief in the centrality of natality rather than that of mortality …. Human existence is not just shaped by finitude or death; rather, each new birth instantiates a possibility for future creativitiy and the unexpected. Arent links, ontologically, our human condition to the capacity for action (praxis). She writes '...the new beginning inherent to birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting' (Arendt 1998, p. 9) How this possibility will unfold is not prescribed at the beginning; it is unknowable in advance no matter how good our science and technology is, and it only appears through the living of a life (bios). (Wynn, 2002, p. 123)*

This theme of interpretation and judgement brought me to Hannah Arendt whose thought informed the course of this research project, as did that of her friend Walter Benjamin, whose work she introduced to the English-speaking world in her edition of his collected essays *Illuminations* (Benjamin, 1969) to which she contributed an outstanding *Introduction* containing an account of Benjamin's life with its "inextricable net woven of merit, great gifts, clumsiness and misfortune" (Arendt, 1969, p.7).

As Dossa says, glossing Arendt, "without others 'who see what we see and hear what we hear' (Human Condition p.46), we are unable to distinguish between the real and the unreal, the excellent and the mediocre, and the permanent and the fleeting in our lives." (Dossa, 1989, p.106). Thus, Arendt's idea is that speaking and listening to each other's accounts create the possibility for people to act with integrity and independence (Manning, 1997; Newman, 2001; Peterson, 2001). This research project explored the capacity of Playback to create a venue for such speech, even within small workplace performances. Playback provided a forum for action and speech which interviewees identified as qualitatively different from both their functional exchanges and their day-to-day socializing and in the interviews this capacity of Playback to elicit different kinds of speech from that of everyday discourse was referred to frequently. Nancy, a Māori nurse said:

> when I thought about that play it's about the actors playing back what stories …they're very personal and you don't know some of those things that they talk about - like Henry never goes round saying he's a nervous wreck, Hugh doesn't run around saying 'Oh I've been having problems with my computer … 'cause we don't say those things….'cause there are other things to do … but yeah it made me realize that there're a lot of things going on underneath that we don't know about. (Ora1, Nancy, Section 14)

Arendt regarded theatre as one important venue within which themes and concerns of human life were able to be raised without being reduced to metaphysical simplification or categories. As Kottman (2003) says:

> Hannah Arendt, in an exemplary and influential discussion of the origins of tragedy, declared that "the theater is the political art *par excellence*; only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art." For Arendt, the political essence of the theatre arises from its "pre-philosophical" presentation of human affairs. … By "pre-philosophical," Arendt simply means that the theatre is an experience of speech and action as pure actuality, through which each actor reveals 'who' s/he is by speaking and acting among others. (p.82)

In all of this, what Caputo (1987, p.1) calls the *original difficulty of life* is present: so that a great playwright (I think of Shakespeare and Chekhov and the way their work has survived, while that of more recent but more didactic playwrights has faded) or many an audience storyteller in Playback, are like Caputo's hermeneutics which

> wants to describe the fix we are in, and …tries to be hard-hearted and to work 'from below'….makes no claim to have won a transcendental high ground or to have a heavenly informer…does not try to situate itself above the flux or to seek a way out… (Caputo, 1987, p.3)

Arendt identified theatre as "the political art par excellence; only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art" (1958, p.188). She defined action as agonistic (Honig, 1992):

> With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity, like labor, and it is not prompted by utility, like work. It may be stimulated by the presence of others…but it is never conditioned by them; its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something new on our own initiative. (Arendt, 1958, pp.176-177)

Perhaps it is this *newness of the possible* that gives rise to the almost intolerable tension within some Playback audience members to which Dennis refers (see discussion on page 138).

Arendt's way of thinking was deeply influenced by her life experience of being born in 1906 into a Jewish family in Germany, studying philosophy with Heidegger[63] (Wolin, 2001) and Jaspers, seeing the destruction brought about by fascism in Europe and Russia, taking an active role in researching Nazi anti-semitism and being imprisoned for

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[63] Undoubtedly the affair that she had with Heidegger when she was his student also influenced her greatly always: she remained in dialogue with him to the end of her life, however infrequent their later communication, in spite of the fact that he would not acknowledge her books.

this political act (Whitfield 2007), losing her home and most of her friends and spending 16 years as a stateless person. One of her conclusions, which remains relevant, was a critique of productivity: homo faber, the person as a craftsperson, who could make things, was a logically oppressive being because "only homo faber conduct themselves as rulers of the whole earth…human productivity was by definition bound to result in a Promethean revolt because it could erect a human-made world only after destroying part of God-created nature."[64] (1958, p. 139) In contrast to this exploitative making, she placed action, which "in its most general sense means to take an initiative…to set something into motion" (p.177). In western philosophy, Arendt suggested, the life of action has been seen as of secondary importance to that of contemplation. She stated:

> "The hostility between philosophy and politics, barely covered up by a philosophy of politics has been the curse of Western statecraft…ever since the men of action and the men of thought parted company – that is, ever since Socrates's death."….When the contemplative life is privileged over the active life (the *vita activa*), action is especially distrusted. Contemplatives want to control or eliminate the uncontrolled, unpredictable realm of action and speech, the political realm. (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 83)

Action, according to Arendt, means that we insert ourselves or are thrown into a web of relationships with others, first through our actions and then through the stories that either we or others tell about them: "[t]hus action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it" (Arendt, 1958, p.198). It is easy to relate this emphasis to Arendt's life in which she encountered prejudice and later what she named " the banality of evil" (Arendt, 1964; Geddes, 2003):

> when still a child…she became aware of her Jewishness, not by having been told by her family that she was a Jew , but from the anti-semitic slurs of her schoolmates. If her teachers made anti-Semitic remartks she was instructed to stand up, leave the schoolroom, go home and report exactly what had been said, whereupon her mother would write a letter of complaint to the authorities in charge of such matters….On the other hand, she was not permitted even to mention at home the slurs of children her own age but was told to answer them herself, unassisted. (Kohn, 2007, p.x)

Feldman (2007) suggests that her way of dealing with this life experience, of which the events in childhood were only a beginning, was to become what she called a "conscious

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[64] Sexist language modified, original follows: "only homo faber conducts himself [*sic*] as master of the whole earth…human productivity was by definition bound to result in a Promethean revolt because it could erect a man-made world only after destroying part of God-created nature." (1958, p. 139)

pariah", one of those who, like Heinrich Heine, Rahel Varnhagen, Franz Kafka and Walter Benjamin, could

> "weave the strands of their Jewish genius into the general texture of European life…those bold spirits who tried to make of the emancipation of the Jews that which it really should have been – an admission of Jews *as Jews* to the ranks of humanity…" (Arendt cited in Feldman, 2007, p.xliii)

This contrasted with the 1960s reality surrounding her in her adopted home, America, where "the American response to the Shoah had limited Jewish identity to religious identity. It was fine to be a "religious" Jew but a secular "ethnic" - no that was not possible" (Gilman, 1998). Jerome Kohn in his preface to Arendt's Jewish Writings (2007) points out that she consistently in her writing referred to Jews as " 'my' people, or 'our' people, 'our brethren'" (p. xxiii) and

> Arendt's identity as a Jew, or, as I would prefer to call it, her experience as a Jew, is literally the foundation of her thought: it supports her thinking even when she is not thinking about Jews or Jewish questions. Arendt's experience as a Jew was sometimes that of an eyewitness and sometimes that of an actor and sufferer of events, both of which run the risk of partiality; but it was also always that of a judge, which means that she looked at those events and, insofar as she was in them, at *herself* from the outside – an extraordinary mental feat. (p.xxviii)

Toward the end of her life, Arendt lectured on Kant's political philosophy and formulated her ideas about judgement (Beiner, 1982). Young-Bruehl suggests that she saw judging as needing to include the ability to be:

> … able to see what the world is like from another's perspective. This does not mean adopting another's judgement or agreeing with another's opinion, or even empathizing with another's experience or reading his or her mind. It simply means *using your imagination to see things from another's standpoint* [italics added]….In a lecture called 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,' which Jerome Kohn edited, Arendt had noted: "The more people's positions I can make present in my thought and hence take into account in my judgements, the more representative (my judgement) will be." The validity of such judgements would be neither objective and universal nor subjective, depending on personal whim, but intersubjective and representative." Young-Bruehl, 2006, pp. 166-167)

This is the basis of Arendt's great call for plurality: as it was also of Jacob Levy Moreno and also as representative an American writer as Arthur Miller, also Jewish, for whom "the Holocaust lurks behind *The Crucible*" (Bigsby, 1997, p.8). This is also where Arendtian thought links with the practice of Playback and makes clear the relationship of Playback to politics. Clearly, Playback, through making it possible for people to find out about each other's viewpoints, experiences, and stories, has the potential to play a role in assisting the development of such intersubjective pluralistic imagining, thinking and valuing.

Power and representation in Playback

To be able to do this, however, Playback practitioners need to take cognizance of how they operate in terms of power and representation. This is not a trivial matter: as Seyla Benhabib points out, citing Arendt, after an essay written shortly after the events of September 2001 in New York:

> We can intervene in this process of complex cultural negotiations as dialogue partners in a global civilization only insofar as we make an effort to understand the struggles of others whose idioms and terms may be unfamiliar to us but which, by the same token, are also not so different from similar struggles at other times in our own cultures; through acts of strong hermeneutical generosity, we can still extend our moral imagination to view the world through the others' eyes… (Benhabib, 2002b)

Pierre Bourdieu is a critical theorist whose two axes of economic capital and cultural capital seem to me particularly useful as we look at the need to see through others' eyes and attend to the social and political implications of our Playback practice. He constructs a model:

	+ Economic Capital +	
- Cultural Capital		Cultural Capital +
	- Economic Capital –	

Table 4 adapted from Bourdieu (1998, p.5)

His explanation of this model shows how cultural and economic capital are not necessarily the same:

> While, in the first dimension, which is undoubtedly the most important, the holders of a great volume of overall capital, such as industrial employers, members of liberal professions, and university professors are opposed, in the mass, to those who are most deprived of economic and cultural capital, such as unskilled workers…from another point of view, that is, from the point of view of the relative weight of economic capital and cultural capital …, professors (relatively wealthier in cultural capital than in economic capital) are strongly opposed to industrial employers (relatively wealthier in economic capital than in cultural capital)… (Bourdieu, 1998, p.7)

When a group is commissioned to do a Playback performance, the organizer or director is usually relating, as the performance is being set up, to the person or people in that environment, who control the economic or cultural wealth. Yet, how do the group operate within the social system we encounter? Do we continue to privilege those with the most cultural as well as economic capital, or does our practice of Playback enable

audience members from all positions within Bourdieu's grid to feel able and willing to speak? How is our company plotted on Bourdieu's grid? How much difference or sameness can be seen? These are important questions for Playback practice.

Kalantzis and Cope (1995) suggested that under assimilation and then integration, a politically dominant group guards access into the four realms of nation: symbolic representation, political participation, employment and social services. Of these four they suggest that

> the symbolic realm…is the hardest to shift….Those custodians of the symbolic nationhood – the media, the arts and the education sector, particularly the higher education sector, have been the slowest and most combative when faced with the need to modify norms, canons or representational imagery. (p.20)

Playback works in the symbolic realm: there are questions which are valuable for us to ask of ourselves and each other and they apply with particular urgency to creative practice in post-colonial societies: when performers go in to work with a group of people, how well will we be able to perform for all those who are there? How many of the quadrants of Bourdieu's model of cultural and economic capital are represented in the performing group? Who will be willing to enter into the co-creation of a Playback performance with us (Fox, 2004)? What parameters of diversity do we represent and elicit? These questions are, in a 21st century context increasingly complex:

> creative work increasingly speaks, sings, dances, paints, sculpts and films global and transethnic themes that evoke responses from a widening range of people, recalling other times, other places and other realities that interrelate ethnonational narratives to the most personal. … as Bourdieu has noted, the logic of practice is 'polythetic', located in many places, hence capable of sustaining a multiplicity of meanings that are sometimes contradictory…(Bottomley, 2002)

If the performers are alert to the distinctions, implications and subtleties of the narratives being given to them by the tellers and conversant enough with the cultural and political complexities of their societies to present these narratives convincingly, Playback has potential to illustrate with vividness a literally 'polythetic' performance, within which multiple voices, positions and theories are given living form. This means that political and cultural preparation is a vital part of the rehearsal and research process for any Playback group and needs to be a routine part of keeping practitioners current with their social context.

Important parameters of diversity are those within ourselves: a Playback group can resist homogenization and activate its sense of the polyvocal carnival that each member embodies and brings to the group, as we confront our ancestral inheritances of cultures, physicality, genders, sexualities, beliefs, and values. This kind of scrutiny is the beginning of our plurality: the other 'in here' may be in the things we do not say, the troubling, disturbing ancestors whose presence we do not easily evoke, who frighten or embarrass us, as we work to become congruent with our communities.

In *Interplay*, the Newsletter of the International Playback Theatre Network, people have over the years written about doing Playback in diverse settings. Just a few examples are: with school children (Land, 2003; Moore, 2003; Shoshan, 2003; Urech, 1997), medical students (*Doctor doctor bring me the news*, 1998), members of different castes in India (Alexander, 2003), immigrants (Dennis, 2003; Friedman, 2007), hospital patients (Patterson, 2005), people with disabilities (Chung, 2006) and communities who have experienced trauma (Ferry, 2002; Layman, 2000).

Nurit Shoshan talks of her experience of Playback work in Israel and how important it is, in spite of the "cycle of killing-trauma-grief-pain" (2005, p.1), to speak and to act. "To tell a story, to see it 'live' on stage, in the presence of 'witnesses' allows the person 'to be'. *The strength to exist resides in the strength to express*" (p.2). Maria Elena Garavelli (2004), from a different time and place writes:

> During the events experienced in Argentina after 19th and 20th December 2001, a new people's power manifested itself spontaneously on the streets of Buenos Aires and other cities all over the country. The people took to the streets.…. Local meetings, solidarity dinners, the taking over of factories, protest rallies hosting group artistic creative events – in these the crisis showed itself in a new and creative way. … During the crisis we gave performances of Playback Theatre in the community, at home and abroad, as a means of creating an empty space for people to tell their own particular stories about what was occurring in their country.
> So for us Playback Theatre is a place for *the micropolitics of resistance*; a space between the artistic and the therapeutic, between theatre and psychodrama, between the private and the social. In a time when the media dominate information about events, Playback Theatre offers a space where other stories can circulate, those which are outside official history. (Garavelli, 2004, pp. 17-18)

Daniel Feldhendler, writing in 2001 gives an account of telling a story about the Jewish museum in Berlin, where the gathering was occurring and how the facilitators

> found sufficient Playback forms to bring those present some way further through this conflict, and enable the gathering to find closure….I feel more clearly the necessity

of actively contributing in my work to the use of Playback Theatre as an instrument of the culture of remembrance, where the personal stories of many people may come together, and where they can be connected to the wider history. (Feldhendler, 2001, pp. 9-10).

The practitioner speaks

> *"The colonial regime owes its legitimacy to force and at no time tries to hide this aspect of things. Every statue…all these conquistadors perched on colonial soil do not cease from proclaiming one and the same thing: 'We are here by the force of bayonets….'" (Fanon, 1963, p.84)*

> *"the symbolic realm…is the hardest to shift"*
>
> *(Kalantzis & Cope, 1995)*
>
> *Inherent in the word Reconciliation is the phrase it is never too late to mend'. [sic] And yet there is really no way 'forward' for this demanding process of re-inscription: reconciliation is no 'path', it has no end, and it is always too late. Instead, like the art practice of some among Australia's Indigenous peoples, it entails a continuous re-tracing of what has been, such that what is, is not exactly what will be." (Henderson, 2004, p. 108)*

Positioning myself

From the beginning of my Playback practice, the interface with Aotearoa New Zealand, was a vital and compelling one. I grew up in a family in which there was a pull between the New Zealand family on my father's side, who had been here since 1842 and the English family, on my mother's side, where my mother first came to Aotearoa as an adult in 1941. My NZ grandfather showed me buildings which bore the scars from the land wars: my English grandmother told stories of growing up in Cheam. These two sides of the family were exemplified in my study of medieval English (which paradoxically, my NZ father loved, taught and would enthusiastically declaim) and of Māori Studies: and I found a way to balance the two in my work at university in Drama Studies (see discussion on page 437).

Another underlying world view of painful insights gained through the violence unleashed in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, (through my children's father who was born in 1947, a child of holocaust survivors, as well as through my own birth in 1949 into a family with distinctive scars from the 1939-45 War against Fascism), was a family inheritance which gave rise to a focus on issues of justice and prejudice . This world view was further formed as I started to see the divergence of the generalities of men's and women's interests and power; and, as I grew up, to witness anti-feminist and homophobic attitudes and actions. It was sharpened by the anti-racist movements which grew out of the anti-apartheid demonstrations of 1981. Trenchant challenges were delivered to us then by Māori friends and mentors[65], to look at the roots of

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[65] There was an extraordinary period of several years in the feminist journal Broadsheet, when Māori theorists systematically attempted to educate the feminist community in Aotearoa. Their writings delivered crucial information, theoretical constructs and challenges. After this period of sustained input, which was exciting, inspiring, challenging and stimulating for many readers, they withdrew because, as Hilda Halkyard wrote at the time "White women are too far behind,

New Zealand society which shared a colonial past with South Africa, where many of the values expressed in legislation in there had been taken for granted here (and in many places still held) in the formation of Aotearoa, our own nation. From all of these factors, I knew that there is no such thing as an innocent or neutral witness: in terms of the dilemmas and injustices faced by Māori, that if I did not step into involvement, I would be complicit in the ongoing destruction of a people, culture, language. This has held as true for my artistic and educational work as for my personal life.

This section is expanded in Appendix One on page 436.

White women don't have that much to offer, White women don't have a long-term analysis, White women are individuals " (Halkyard, 1982, p.13).

Chapter Four Audience as Performer

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The two straight lines in Muller-Lyer's optical illusion …are neither of equal nor unequal length: it is only in the objective world that this question arises… one of the lines ceases to be equal to the other without becoming 'unequal': it becomes different. ….the perceived contains gaps which are not mere 'failures to perceive'. (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, pp.6,13.)

"In the beginning was not the word: in the beginning was the listening." (Anon.)

..in the first 25 years our thinking was how to develop this method as fully as we could. In the last five or six years what I've put a lot of my thinking toward is … creating the context … making enough relationship so that you're invited to do Playback or do a programme with Playback. … It's really where it's at right now for many of us. (Jonathan Fox, in Fox & Day, 2006, p.22)

Like any live theatre, Playback Theatre has no existence at all without an audience; though sometimes the audience in question may seem to be *private*, consisting of the performers at a rehearsal or workshop participants. For the two roles of audience and performer are not separate or discrete: are performers not constantly acting as 'audience' to each other and even to themselves to varying degrees throughout all performing; while audiences 'perform' their presence to each other and also at times in approval or disapproval to the performers; and if this is so in other performances, how much more is it so in Playback?

This chapter journeys through some of the ways in which the audience acts as performer in live performance contexts. It looks first at audience perception and interpretation while attending live performances; then discusses the primacy of the audience to live performance including Playback; comments on the relative inattention to audience within performance and theatre studies until recent years; and, in an attempt to repair this lack of attention, rehearses some of the varied terms used to describe audiences, describing the connotations and exploring the contributions of each term to our full appreciation of *what may be happening* with an audience and of the ways in which

Playback performances may call on each specific contribution, to a greater or lesser extent. The second part of the chapter looks at two moments of heightened attention to and focus on, the audience: first, the French and then Russian revolutionary contexts where modifications in the relationship between stage and audience help to shed light on the genealogy of audience address and reception through the 20th century. The chapter finishes by looking at some roles of the audience described in epic theatre, which grew out of the Russian experiments, suggesting that Playback as a practice enacts four elements of epic theatre. It suggests that to think of Playback as epic theatre is helpful in assisting companies develop their practice.

In many ways, like the two lines in Muller-Lyer's optical illusion cited by Merleau-Ponty shown at the beginning of this chapter, a theatre performance cannot be said to have an 'objective' reality at all: even when a sound or video recording of a live performance exists, this is never an adequate account of what the experience was for a participant. The film only records one part of what is happening in the performance: that of the 'text' of the work projected outwards from the being and doing of the performers. A complementary and necessary process of making meaning from this work is simultaneously and symbiotically taking place within the live audience members, the spectators who form the necessary ground for the performance to take place *as performance*.[66] Loxley (1983, p.40) cites Peter Brook's 1968 comments that "in the theatre the audience completes the steps of creation" yet "today, the question of the audience seems to be the most difficult one to face." One difficulty is that theatre practitioners are not sure of *who* is in the audience, who not, and, in each case, *wh*y; another is *how* to keep live audiences coming: as Patrick Primavesi writes "traditional theatre institutions…are losing audiences and can no longer ignore the uneasy feeling

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[66] Interestingly, the new web-based media distribution channels such as YouTube provide alongside the publication of films of live performances, the venue for complementary audience voices in either text responses which are published immediately adjacent to the small film screen; or video responses. This is one source of its contribution to the development of 'liveness' in media-based performance culture – and, surely, its huge popularity. Audience participation is easy, immediate and publicly visible. This interactivity is a huge challenge to many of the traditional media industries who have arguably shown varying degrees of contempt for the audience, many, such as the advertising industry (which has traditionally been a primary beneficiary of television in western capitalist countries) seeing them as sources of revenue and not much more. The generative, often cooperative, responsive and interactive YouTube audience belies this contempt.

that something has definitely come to an end" (2003, p. 61). Thirty-five years before, Brook had written:

> …we look at a rehearsal, watching the actors toiling away at their painful repetitions. We realize that in a vacuum their work would be meaningless. Here we find a clue. ….In the French language, amongst the different terms for those who watch, for public, for spectator, one word stands out, is different in quality from the rest. *Assistance* – I watch a play: *j'assiste à une pièce*. To assist – the word is simple: it is the key. (Brook, 1968, p.139)

It seems clear that study of the audience is integral to any study of theatre. However, such a study is complicated. De Marinis in 1987 wrote of two kinds of dramaturgy: one a

> dramaturgy of the spectator in a passive or…objective sense… [as] a mark or target for the actions/operations of the director, the performers, and, if there is one, the writer…We can also speak of a dramaturgy of the spectator in an active or subjective sense, referring to the various receptive operations/actions that an audience carries out: perception, interpretation, aesthetic appreciation, memorization, emotive and intellectual response, etc." (p.101)

As an offshoot of literary and cultural studies, audience reception studies have a complicated interdisciplinary background (Lee-Brown, 2002). However, much of the discussion is of the reception of written texts and media: live performance has not featured particularly: "very rarely does one find any study of live audiences, although some work has been done on rock concert and sports spectatorship (Auslander 1999; Kennedy, 2001; Prendergast 2006, p.21)

One might think that Playback audiences, being authors and co-creators of the events, were more likely to have been investigated. Certainly, in 1999 Jonathan Fox referred to a hope he had had before starting Playback about "townspeople gathering to watch fellow citizens act out their real stories" positioning the audience as fellow citizens of the performers. (Fox, 1999a, p.10).[67] However, in spite of the integral role they play in live performance, the audience has not particularly been examined, even within the Playback Theatre context: in many of the published articles and books about Playback,

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67 In fact, in the early days of Playback Fox relates telling "my actors that I never wanted them to do this work more than half time…I wanted them to live in the world and be like their audiences, men and women of common work, family responsibilities, and civic duty" (Fox, 1986, p.3), thus emphasizing the importance of close relationship between performers and audience.

although the audience is *implicitly* present,[68] much of the discussion centres (as it does in the majority of theorising in theatre and performance studies) around the performers and their artistic, philosophical, production and facilitation concerns. Linda Park-Fuller, writing in 2003 about audiencing in Playback and looking back some 20 years at a group of earlier writings on audience of performance (eg. Peterson, 1983), comments that over the years since 1983 when the theme of audience had been acutely focussed on within performance studies: "as new theories and methods grew in popularity, interest in the audience receded…" (p. 288).

The performance studies writing in the 1980s had focussed on issues of experience and interpretation. Kristin Langellier, at that time, had used the phenomenology of Mikel Dufrenne to describe the nuances of an audience's perception and the ways in which, rather than being just an empty receptacle, an audience "completes a performance by simply 'being there…. first of all [it] cooperates in …performance by making itself bodily present ..." (1983, p. 34). The embodiment of the audience is a necessary aspect of live performance and is felt in many ways: for example the small sounds that the audience makes as it sits and attends. Herbert Blau refers to Beckett's unusually reflexive moments of postmodern theatre when the text itself refers to the bodily presence of the audience (Blau 1990. p 87): one that stands out is when, early in *Waiting for Godot*, that irreducible work of 20th century theatre in which one can "read Godot 'backwards and forwards, using the *d* as a pivot' to parse both 'God' and the German 'Tod' out of the word" (Gable, 1993, p.2), Beckett has the two tramps straining to listen for someone but hearing, they say, 'nothing'[69]. Didi then says he thought he had heard Godot, and Gogo answers "Pah! The wind in the reeds" (Beckett. 1954, p.13). The breath in the throats of the audience is this wind, just one (but certainly a primal) element of the highly specific bodily experience of being an audience in

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[68] Especially in the role of audience storyteller, when an audience member steps into the role of author and performer, offering an account of personal experience for the performers to work with and, for longer narratives, coming forward to sit on the *storyteller's chair* which sits beside the facilitator's chair, to the side of the stage, in full view of the audience.

[69] Terry Eagleton has written about Beckett's experience as a member of the resistance in the 1939-45 war against fascism: it is not hard to see the influence of waiting for one's contact, or for information, to arrive, in the endless waiting which *Waiting for Godot* takes audiences through. Eagleton writes "James Knowlson is surely right to maintain that 'many of the features of his later prose and plays arise directly from his experience of radical uncertainty, disorientation, exile, hunger and need'. What we see in his work is not some timeless *condition humaine*, but war-torn twentieth-century Europe." (Eagleton, 2006, p.69)

shared time and space, one to which Beckett in this moment confidently draws attention. Diamond also cites Blau's evocation of the way Beckett draws attention to the sounds the audience is making

> The theatre demands that the tramps play, the audience demands something to be done (even if it's nothing), and the play forces acknowledgment of that demand in the "rustle" of breathing heard during the play's repetitive silences. [2] (Diamond, 2002, p.38)

Diamond's footnote reads:

> [2] Commenting on the tramps' haunting "canter" of Act II ("All the dead voices./ They make a noise like wings./ Like leaves./ Like sand./ Like leaves./ (Silence.)/ They all speak at once./ Each one to itself./ (Silence.)/ Rather they whisper./ They rustle./ They murmur./ They rustle."), Blau notes: "… as they sit side-by-side, staring out into the dark auditorium, listening to nothing, who can avoid hearing more of herself, and thus becoming a participant in the drama?'[70](1964:234) (Diamond, 2002, p. 42).

Beckett's moment of the wind in the reeds does not 'exist' when only read on the page: it is an example of "text plus context", the dialogue plus the performance conditions, a model suggested by Robert Loxley writing in the same issue of *Literature in Performance* in 1983.[71] However, almost simultaneously with these articles, classificatory regimes in the humanities were being more widely and seriously challenged and subsequently scholars of performance have not written about the context of the audience with anything like the enthusiasm they give to the *texts* in question, (including in text everything to do with what is offered in the performance.) Perhaps with the proliferation of discourses in such arenas as cultural studies, critical and postmodern theories, anthropology and other social sciences, a portmanteau term like *context* or *audience* has become too difficult to manage. In her 2003 account, Park-Fuller, suggested that "while contemporary theories and methods have given us vocabularies and frameworks within which to talk about audience, they have also

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[70] Sexist language modified, original follows: And as they sit side-by-side, staring out into the dark auditorium, listening to nothing, who can avoid hearing more of himself, and thus becoming a participant in the drama?'[70](1964:234) (Diamond, 2002, p. 42).

[71] Loxley cites "philosopher Arnold Berléant's concept of the aesthetic field in which the art object (including performances) is seen not as isolated or as existing within a vacuum but rather as 'actively and creatively experienced' within a context or field..." (Loxley, 1983, p. 42). The live performance context of course consists of the expectations and previous experiences of the audience members and the social climate as well as the conditions of the current production. The editorial in the same journal had referred to 'the recent upsurge in research on the act of reading, reader-response criticism, and reception aesthetics' (Peterson, 1983, p.33)

problematized the concept of audience to the point of rendering it chaotic, an apparent abyss…" (p.289)

With the breaking down of the normative subject and the acknowledgement of the historicity of viewpoints, speaking for or making assumptions about audiences as collectives was seen as too often tending towards privileging an unspoken dominant perspective and therefore no longer acceptable. So, for example, in terms of gender, feminist and post-colonial criticism challenged masculinist assumptions within performance discourse forms. Trinh Min-ha, a theorist and practitioner of film, writing in 1991, described a moment of contestation about how her work was received at that time in a conflicted audience:

> (…reacting to a film in which women's sufferings have been commented upon by numerous women viewers as being "very intense and depressive," a male viewer blurted out…'The subject of the film is so partial. . . Don't you think it overshadows the rest of the issues? . . . I mean, how can one make a film on Vietnam, where there is so much sufferings [*sic*] and focus on women?' A number of women in the audience express their approval; others hiss.) While the male-is-norm world continues to be taken for granted as the objective, comprehensive societal world, the world of woman subjects (subjectivities) can only be viewed [by some] in terms of partiality, individuality, and incompleteness. (Trinh, 1991, p. 203)

Women like Trinh and the men who were their allies, claimed the right to assume an audience in which women were not marginalised, nor seen as incomplete and to create performances which addressed such an audience deliberately and directly: "in deconstructing the system of representation…performance practice is paradigmatic as a powerful strategy of intervention into dominant culture…[it] provides a visible basis for the construction of a feminist frame of reference, articulating alternatives for power and resistance" (Forte, 1990, pp.268-269). Meanwhile, post-colonial performance practice and theory formed a parallel path of challenging the hegemony of much of western theatrical practice. So Eugene van Erven in his 2001 book on *Community Theatre: Global Perspectives*

> raised the issue of the 'marginality of community theatre within international and national arts hierarchies, reflected by a lack of adequate funding and by what the author sees as critical and scholarly indifference *in spite of the blossoming of post-colonial theatre and cultural studies'* [italics added]. (Crow, 2001. p.312)

However, it is observable that even in much of the feminist and postcolonial writing on theatre, including van Erven's, close enquiry into audience experience is not prominent: although

> these … scholars reject the idea that meaning lies in the artist's intentions, and see the production of meaning primarily in the theatrical production…attention to the (real) audience is noticeably absent, as feminist [and post-colonial] theory in theatre has been text and performance-centred. (Wolf, 1994, p.10,)

It was a premise of the practical project of my research study that enquiry into audience experience (while maintaining a healthy scepticism about the influences on that experience) is an important step of apprehending the significance of performance. In Playback, the complementarity of audience and performers is foregrounded.[72] Later, this chapter will describe the ways in which concerns about audience address became primary in highly political times during both French and Russian revolutions. It will look in more detail at the ways in which early 20th century Russian developments in theatre which were both part of and coincided with the revolution, experimented with audience address and subsequently influenced both theatre and film performance for the rest of that century. It will suggest that the current mechanization and immersion in media which forms the lifeworlds of many people in the so-called 'developed' world has created a moment in which it becomes of vital importance for people to become present to one another in both local and global contexts – and that, while the internet-based media may provide one venue for this mutual presencing, live theatre and in particular the experience of being a performing audience in Playback creates a unique and valuable micro-context for this common presence.

In thinking about what an audience is and does, one place to begin, is by looking at some of the words we have for this phenomenon of people gathered together in the presence of performative action. Let us mull over these words to ascertain the gifts of their connotations to our understanding of performance and of Playback: audience, spectators, spectactors (see footnote 21 above on page 30), participants, community, polis…

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[72] In many ways, I would have liked to place this chapter of audiencing *first* in the thesis, before those describing what Playback is and how it works, in order to convey my valuing of the primacy and complexity of audience in Playback. In my view, the quality of listening may be more important to performance in Playback than anything else: certainly, we have several times refused entry to our company to actors who showed in their audition tremendous acting and authoring skills, but very undeveloped listening abilities; while from the audience too, the willing giving of attention to others' stories is a necessary condition for performance of Playback.

Audience

> *'The experience of my reader shall be between the phrases, in the silence, communicated by the intervals, not the terms.' (Beckett, cited in Pilling, 1976, p.17)*

Herbert Blau, in his 1990 massive psycho-analytically based book *The Audience*, in which, in spite of the fact like Janelle Reinelt I find that he "excoriates many ideas and commitments that I hold quite dear" (Reinelt, 2004, p.115), seems to me to describe in persuasive depth, the ways in which the "indeterminacies of the postmodern" have extended to the audience which if it "is not altogether an absence…is by no means a reliable presence" (p.1). As an audience practitioner, Blau, like Brook, remains critically and anxiously aware of who is *not there* at a performance. He questions the "collective experience" of an audience (p.28) and asks:

> Collective in what respects? To posit such an experience seems no more than a snare or delusion, since it must contain the slippery dialectic and discursive claims of desire, as well as the more unambiguous claims of the dispossessed, who at that particular moment in history happen to be no part of the collective. (pp.28-29)

With the dispossessed not there, perhaps the most crucial sector of the collective is unrepresented? This absence haunts 20th century theatre and Playback is, like some other popular forms such as Theatresports (Johnstone, 1999; Pierse, 1995), an attempt to elude the exclusionary tendency of much professional theatre practice.

Hearing, *being hearing together*, is one key to the liveness of theatre. Blau, discussing the auditing, the hearing action of the audience cites Nietzsche, the trained philologist, who "felt that perception of the deepest kind was finally a matter of the auditory, a reversion of the visual to its primordial state as sound". He alludes to Nietzsche's account of "the glorious moment in Wagner when the eyes of the spectator, scanning an empty sea, are averted from the radical pain of Tristan's wound by the jubilation of the horn," (Blau, 1990, p.99). Similarly Michael Schiavi (2006) describes a "heart-stopping moment" in the Broadway show *I am my own wife*, when after a docudrama which gradually deconstructs and questions the integrity and motivations of the main character (played by an actor), the voice of the real person is played: "speaking a modified version of the play's opening speech on Edison's first phonograph… the … gentle, hesitant voice filled the theatre and invoked… ghostliness" (Schiavi, 2006, p.211). In Playback too, the teller's voice is juxtaposed with those of the people telling their stories. So, a similar gentleness and hesitancy may often be heard, punctuated with silences which are uncommon in the contemporary context: where a proliferation of

sound is a feature of many early 21st century lives. These silences are important: Philip Auslander suggests that "[w]ithout gaps… information become meaningless and oppressive..." (Auslander, 1992, p.14)

Many contemporary live performances create competing saturated sound environments, contributed to by the technological resources now at the disposal of theatre artists. Bonnie Marranca describes how the US avant-garde performing group, The Wooster Group produces a soundscape which demand a great deal of interpreting work from the audience:

> The Wooster Group actors are "figures of speech" more than "characters." Their plenitude of discourses is manifested in modes of direct address, dialogue, monologue, sermon; the interview, the letter, the lecture-demo and talk show; drama, non-fiction and novelistic writing, computer-generated sound and digitally-altered voices…. Varieties of speech style and performance style overwhelm narrative … (Marranca, 2003, pp. 5-6)

Within this clamour, Blau expresses a kind of despondency about what has happened to the dream of a common experience: "what do we do after the orgy? asks Jean Baudrillard, maybe exaggerating the case, in the mordancy of a postindustrial culture where the revolution did not quite take place but receded as another fantasy into the secularization of desire..." (Blau, 1990, p.189)

Monica Prendergast in a 2006 thesis *Audience in Performance*, about teaching young people how to be conscious audience members, describes the ways in which Blau's text usefully problematizes the concept of *audience* as it "catches me off-guard, de-stabilizes and undermines me as I work towards a definition and deeper understanding of audience" (p.121). Yet, in spite of his despair, irony and bleakness, Blau's commitment as a theatre practitioner to the engagement with what the 'audience' experience is, remains apparent in the last words of his text: "[t]hat may look like a boundary at the edge of the stage…but …it is shaped like a question mark." (Blau, 1990, p. 383). It is Blau's question mark that a Playback performance explores over and over again, in its invitations to the audience members to move from their seats and be visible on stage as author and storyteller and in its requests above all to *listen* to one another, to the music and to the performers.

Spectators

will you cross
again?

the you and the i
the you and the eye

what is it that happens in this space between you and me?
is this where the work really lies?
in what you and i bring?
and how do our bodies speak within it?
(a dangerous game)
this shifting mobius strip of ins and outs and mes and yous.
what is this space, this opening?

a wound, unwound, unwinding. (O'Reilly, 2003, p. 138)

The use of the term spectator privileges the visual rather than auditory act and it is the one that I chose to use in my account of the activities involved in a Playback performance (see Table 1 *How a Playback Theatre event may be experienced by performers and spectators* on page 58), partly because the visual aspects of Playback are much more uncommon in a professional development context than are the auditory ones. Although 'audience' is most often used as the collective noun for those present to receive a live performance, as Blau says, paradoxically "we think of the audience, first, as coming to *see* a play" (p.53).

Blau discusses the oscillation between sight and sound, auditory and visual perceiving which occur within performance, describing at length, "the distance of looking and the distance of listening, both of which are determined largely by the material arrangement of theatre space, the architecture of perception." (p.86). He identifies sight in psychoanalytic terms with Lacanian scopophilia, and Oedipal compulsion.

While psychoanalysis may lead us to see viewing in theatrical performance in highly intimate terms of sexuality and voyeurism, the idea of spectator also belongs to that of

spectacle which has arguably become a dominant trope of contemporary culture. As Guy Debord foresaw in 1967: "the whole of life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail, presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that was once directly lived has become mere representation..." (Debord 1967, cited in Schechner 2002, p. 242). The recent proliferation of digital cameras, videos, archives (Foster, 2002) and websites demonstrates an incredible current passion and preoccupation with spectacle: "The Web is awash in video cut-ups today; giddy editors take advantage of bountiful source material in online archives, easy desktop editing software, and mostly free distribution through video.google or youtube.com" (Hamilton, 2006, p.89). People engaged in an experience compulsively step outside it to capture it, believing in it only if they can own it and show it (off) to others.

This preoccupation extends into the theatre where visuality of production has become paramount:

> The past three decades have produced … a glut of terms attempting to capture how theatre artists exploit the spatial dimension. A brief inventory yields spectacle, site, image, heterotopia, simulacra, surface, environment, geography, scenography, visual field, place, and space—to name only a few. Drawing on insights from anthropology, phenomenology, cultural studies, new historicism, and urban studies, critics are working to investigate the cultural meaning of space, to capture its dramaturgical potential, and to rethink performance as a system of communication based on visual vocabulary. (Van den Berg, 2004, p.118)

Yet, one of the ways in which live performance eludes capture is that each spectator will be making a different visual *reading* of that performance as their eyes move, from one part of the spectacle to another and create a unique montage or juxtaposition of images and movements, sometimes resulting in unforeseen effects. (This is a pivotal difference, visually, between live theatre where you co-create your own stream of images and film, which presents you with a pre-determined, interpreted visual sequence.) Some of your interpretive editing will not have been foreseen by the theatre-makers: Blau again, this time speaking as a director, refers to what 'shows up' in performance (he named his 2002 book *The Dubious Spectacle*…): "…as a director… things I had not imagined, also justifiable when you look at the text, have somehow showed up there. 'Look again, look again, / search everywhere,' chant the Furies in the Oresteia" (Blau, 1998, pp.269-270).

Of course this spectacle with its spectators is nothing new: at a women playwrights' festival in Adelaide in 1994, I saw aboriginal storytellers in Australia, working in an unbroken performance tradition of 40,000 years or so, create spectacularly vivid evocations of natural and supernatural worlds that held a theatre of 300 spectators spellbound, with the simplest mise en scène (creating a terrifying ghost with superb bodily acting, the only the prop being dusted-on white talcum powder for example).

Kershaw (2003) traces the critical history of the concept of spectacle:

> an historical denigration of spectacle can be traced back to Aristotle's *Poetics*: "The Spectacle (*opsis*) . . . of all the parts (of drama) is the least artistic, and connected least with the art of poetry." … My main purpose … though, is to begin to develop a more balanced take on the topic, because I believe—along with Debord, Baudrillard, and other major theorists of the contemporary—that spectacle has become constitutive of what I call the "performative society" of today. (p.592)

As an example of a performative spectacle which causes millions of people to behave in certain ways, the Olympic Games, suggests Schechner, influenced by John MacAloon,

> are a spectacle inside which is a festival inside which are rituals inside which are the competitive sports inside which is a presumed 'core truth.'…What has occurred is that only the spectacle – in Debord's sense – *continues unquestioned* [italics added]. (Schechner 2002, p.243)

This power of spectacle can transform the whole world into passive spectators as when terrorists 'perform' actions which are run and re-run on "news" television (Wilcox, 2003): surely at least one of the designers of the 9/11 action was a performance artist or P.R. expert, with the impact of first plane ensuring that many cameras would already be trained on the site and therefore would capture the image of the second plane's crash: "*We lost the image war. Osama wins an Oscar for"Best Director for Apocalypse in New York*" was the caption to a photograph from a Spanish humour website, depicting Bin Laden holding the Academy Award, published in *The Drama Review* of 2003 (Kirshenblatt-Gimblet 2003, p.13). In such contexts as these, a kind of passivity and helplessness within spectatorship is evident. This may feed into the audience passivity which Rowe identified as one of Playback's dangers (2007), when the audience trance may prevent people from protesting when misinterpretations occur.

Spectactors

There is a direct counter to this *passive* spectatorship, one which arises defiantly out of it: this is the concept of spect*actor*, developed by Augusto Boal, the originator of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), who wished to demystify the theatre process, to engage the people attending his productions and to emphasize the activity of the audience who, in some of his forms, enter into the action and suggest solutions to the problems that have been raised (Boal, 1985). Boal was deeply influenced by fellow Brazilian critical educator Paolo Freire of whom he writes:

> we had been friends so long, it seemed like forever….Paulo Freire invented a method, his method, our method, the method which teaches the illiterate that they are perfectly literate in the languages of life, of work, of suffering, of struggle… In Socratic fashion, Paulo Freire helps the citizenry to discover by themselves that which they carry within them….Teaching is a transitive process, says our master, a dialogue, just as all human relations should be dialogues: men and women, blacks and whites, one class and another, between countries. (Boal, 1998, pp.126-128)

Similarly, TO aims to work with people at whatever educational or political level they are and

> has as its first premise, the intention to democratise the stage space – not to destroy it! – rendering the relationship between actor and spectator transitive, creating dialogue, activating the spectator and allowing him or her to be transformed into 'spect-actor'. This transformation can come about in two main ways: either by the citizens themselves (the 'Oppressed' activated as artists) creating the show – the images to be presented – or simply by their intervention during …part of the show … when actors and spectators, on equal terms and with equal powers, improvise solutions or alternatives to the problems put forward by the show. (Boal, 1998, pp. 67-68)

In this way, as Schechner writes "Boal's…Theatre of the Opressed empowers 'spectactors' to enact, analyse, and change their situations" (Schechner, 2002, p.39). In 1994, 20 years after the first publication of *Theatre of the Oppressed,* a collection of essays was published, in which Philip Auslander asserted that "Boal dispenses with the traditional actor-spectator *relationship* [italics added] in favour of the spect-actor who…embodies both functions in a single, self-conscious entity." (Auslander, 1994, p.126)

In doing this, "Boal has created a conflation of Brechtian alienation technique and collective storytelling that dialogues between theoretical/reflective knowledge and practical/visceral experience…" (Salverson, 2001, p.59). People attending TO sessions are encouraged to gain critical distance and reflect on their experiences and world views, while simultaneously being bodily engaged and sometimes physically moving

into creative and aesthetic action. For example, in a TO form called Forum Theatre, a scenario involving oppression and prepared by the performing group in consultation with members of the host community is first shown complete and then repeated, with audience members invited to intervene to suggest alternative words and actions to the protagonist.[73] Outside of TO, however, the term *spectactor* is not well known or used, though Playback makes many of the same demands on its audience ie. they are required to act by giving accounts of personal experience and sometimes by participating in enactments.

Participants

On the other hand, in some Playback contemporary community performances, the audience is seen as a group of participants in a ritual. Dennis suggests that "audience members engage as participants and spectators. During performances, they *actively engage in a personal process of deciding whether to participate and in what way* [italics added]" (Dennis, 2004, p.8). Participation is facilitated by the ritualistic elements of a performance, with the clear and recognisable cues and boundaries that such elements contain. Such performances can include a wide variety of avant-garde, local and community-based events. Daniel Avorgbedor, describing indigenous Ghanaian performances which act out the tensions between performing groups or individuals, cites Turner:

> Each … crisis has what I now call liminal characteristics, since it is a threshold (limen) between more less stable phases of the social process, but it is not usually a sacred limen…. Redressive action rang[es] from personal advice and informal mediation or arbitration to formal juridical and legal machinery, and, to resolve certain kinds of crisis or legitimate other modes of resolution, to the performance of public ritual. (Avorgbedor, pp.150-151)

Schechner himself developed a model stressing the mutual positive feedback structure of social dramas and aesthetic performances (2002) and showing the relation and reversal of social and aesthetic performance. In a social drama, for example, a crisis and in the way it is reported and commented on, staging is hidden while social and poitical action is visible; whereas in the performance setting, staging is visible while

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[72] The first time I encountered TO was when our Playback group was invited to a performance for people with disabilities, where we first enacted an audience member's story and then repeated the enactment, as Forum Theatre, with appropriate interventions from the audience. The person commissioning us said, "The thing I love about Theatre of the Oppressed, is that it always ends up with a hopeful ending."

social and political action, such as bias or political assumptions, are what he calls 'virtual' (below the horizon). He suggests that both types of drama entertain *and* enact: "each event proposes something to get done and each event gives pleasure to those who participate in it or observe it" (2002, p. 68), suggesting that audiences commonly play the role of either spectators or participants or sometimes both.

For Dennis, the combination of ritual and improvisation is part of Playback's distinctive contribution for participants in the event. She suggests that the audience are balancing the call to participate with the pull to spectate and that this causes

> a tension of participation. [Her] findings reveal that this gives significant momentum to the ritual, however it also serves to block it. ... The conductor must enter the flow and ride the wave, interacting with the audience to build the tension between each story so that it contributes to elevating the overall dramatic experience. … Audience members may begin to relax (or withdraw) if they begin to think they won't be chosen. In between stories the conductor must work to maximise the audience's expectation that they 'could be next'. … The rhythm required in the move from enactment to audience to storyteller equates to maximising the momentum derived from the *tension of participation* [italics added]. (2004, p.267)

Dennis explored this combination in the context of a community performance, suggesting that not only did the "collective sharing of the event represent…[for some people] an experience of community" (p. 261) but it also meant that "dominant social protocols in the community context" (p. 275) could be challenged. In a Playback performance all divergent views can be contained to the extent that all participate, some more actively than others, in the ritual.

Community

The intense interaction with the audience, which represents one of Playback's unique features, counteracts the tinge of sadness expressed in many mainstream theatre discussions where, as for Blau, the idea of a cohesive audience is regretted as "the merest facsimile of remembered community" (1990, p.1) contemporaneous with, Blau also notes, "a thinning out of the public sphere." (1990, p2). The "public' is, according to Blau, "a largely statistical mass brought into being by the survey…a fabrication and a distortion, an aberration of the body politic that is a nostalgic fantasy" (1990, p.4). Prendergast 'finds' this poem, made from Blau's citations of Virginia Woolf's final and posthumously published novel, *Between the Acts*:

Dispersed are we (Woolf in Blau)

we have lost
a sense of community

we are divested
of
an audience

(the vast seduction
of dispersive media)
aerials everywhere
satellite transmission
headsets in the bush

("this paralysed frenzy
of the image" <Baudrillard>)
theimagetheimagetheimage
of dispersion
itself
(Prendergast 2006, p.125)

Prendergast's concrete poem alerts us to question the concept 'community' so frequently invoked to describe small theatre audiences, especially when considering local venues: even in the bush, the people may in fact be more tuned in to the hundreds of mass media outlets available to them rather than being in "a community." Yet, paradoxically, they are also, there online or on satellite, in a community: it just can't be seen as discrete in tangible space. They have become involved in what Mark Jackson referred to in a 2007 lecture as *"*remote intimacies*"*: drawing attention to the ways in which technology allows for novel forms of experience and communing to occur (Jackson, 2007, p.1).

These virtual communities contrast with a whole genre of theatre, to which, in many countries, Playback belongs, which has been entitled *community theatre*. The term *community* is frequently used in simplistic ways as when Wolf cites a statement from the 1950s that:

> the uniqueness of Community Theatre lies in its dependence upon the particular community in which it has its roots…[its] chief function…is to expose a community to continuing living theatre, and to provide a participation outlet for such theatre talents as may exist in a particular community. (Gard 1959 cited in Wolf 1994, p.50)

In Playback too, some use the word 'community' in this way, as if it were unproblematic: for example, in his report on his Ph D research, investigating the work of the Sydney Playback Company, Peter Wright wrote of Playback Theatre (PBT) as involving community building through " illustrating …universality":

> It is the particular social-aesthetic dynamic that characterises PBT and facilitates the learning-healing dynamic previously described. This dynamic, because it is art, provides perspective(s) to emotion, engages emotional responses and sensory awareness, and provides opportunities for reflection using multiple and multi-modal levels of (re)presentation. This interaction can also be described as community-building where the learning-healing dynamic enhances awareness of the interconnection between self, others, and experience(s) thereby constructing bonds between participants and acknowledging and illustrating the universality of experience and feeling. (Wright, 2003, p. 10).

Wolf shows how this way of thinking about a community is, in most places, no longer possible because it inevitably causes exclusions. She says "community calls forth contradictory associations: community can unify but while it does so, it defines what it is not...." (Wolf, 1994, p. 325). Lev Aladgem suggests that "community theatre is the drama of, by and for a minority community that uses this artistic practice to reconsider its systems of values, symbols and beliefs, and negotiate with different regimes of power both within and beyond it" (2003, p.181). Thompson and Schechner (2004) suggest that the use of the term *community* in theatre discussions, such as the claims about theatre being able to produce *community building,* may have come about because many performance companies are forced to use the language of the commissioning environment for their economic survival:

> The act of applying theatre to the issue or situation at hand means that the social theatre worker enters a practical and a discursive space already full of psychological and/or sociological reference points. Those making social theatre are aware that permission for projects comes not from arts funders, critics, theatre audiences, or the academy, but from GOs and NGOs, individual bureaucrats (prison officers, teachers, social workers, etc.), and local community leaders.
> Social theatre sells itself by asserting that it "supports self-esteem," "builds confidence," "manages anger," "heals sociopsychological wounds" …. While the work of translation is valuable and necessary…we feel it important to question this very process of accommodation. Even if it is necessary to use "public policy speak" in moments of advocacy, *we must not mistake performances of persuasion for critical analysis* [italics added]. (Thompson & Schechner, 2004, p. 12)

In fact, 'community' is a term which needs to be used scrutinised in the early 21st century. In an online essay entitled *Unholy Politics* Seyla Benhabib paints a chilling but accurate picture of the post 9/11 world and the impact of this picture on our view of 'community':

> The end of the bipolar world of the Cold War brought with it not just multiplurality

> but a global society in which non-state actors have emerged as players possessing means of violence but who are not subject to usual constraints of international law and treaties. All treaties which have hitherto governed the non-use and proliferation of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons have been rendered irrelevant: those who will deploy them have never been their signatories. Furthermore, not being recognized as legitimate political entities, these groups have no responsibility and accountability toward the populations in whose midst they act and which harbor them.… The category of the terrorist as an "internal enemy," as one who is among us, even if not one of us, strains the democratic community by revealing that the rule of law is not all-inclusive and that violence lurks at the edges of everyday normalcy. (Benhabib, 2003)

Benhabib's suggestion to deal with this challenge is convincing. She suggests that while it may still be possible to refer at times to 'community', it is incumbent on all to question who is being included, who excluded, when this form of naming is used. Rather, than using the concept of community uncritically, we could nourish awareness of the struggles around us, eschewing the visual metaphor of what Benhabib (2002) calls "mosaic multiculturalism" where human groups and cultures are "clearly delineated and identifiable entities that coexist, while maintaining firm boundaries, as would pieces of a mosaic" and instead looking for her concept of voices interacting in a conversation, an "auditory metaphor that guides [her] understanding of a complex cultural dialogue…A self is only a self because it distinguishes itself from a real, or more often than not imagined, 'other'"(pp.7-8).

Thus, *the others* help me to understand *my self*. Playback performers who see 'community' in these terms will not be looking for an anachronistic world of harmony and universality (which in fact never existed) but will be alert to, attuned to, undismayed by and will even actively seek, the contesting and discordant voices present in themselves, their companies and the world around them.

Public

> *Hard is his lot, that here by Fortune plac'd,*
> *Must watch the wild vicissitudes of taste;*
> *With ev'ry meteor of caprice must play,*
> *And chase the new-blown bubbles of the day.*
> *Ah! let not censure term our fate our choice,*
> *The stage but echoes back the public voice.*
> *The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,*
> *For we that live to please, must please to live.*
> *(Johnson 1747)*

At the time that Sam Johnson wrote his prologue for the reopening of the Theatre Royal, the theatres in London had become part of a developing capitalist economy, with actors and playwrights no longer being shareholders in the guilds and companies producing their work, but managing, being managed and receiving salaries. This contrasted with earlier theatre organizations which were linked with craft guilds, with shareholding companies of players and with the aristocracy. Tribble (2005) quotes Roslyn Knutson's assertion that these early modern theatre companies in London were organized along guildlike lines. She also suggests that the companies

> learned strategies of growth and productivity from the guild structures, where newly authorized members were absorbed into the commercial life of the profession… as a commercial paradigm, the guild does not preclude hierarchical lines of power between a company and its patron; indeed, the guild is itself a hierarchical structure. Yet its design offers stability … Stability at a company's core afforded a vital range of embodied experience that could be utilized when inducting new apprentices and hired men into the company structures. (p.153)

Judith Fisher (2003) describes the ways in which, in the 18th century "no longer were players protected under letters patent as household servants of the nobility, as those in the prestigious London companies had been during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; they now had a new master – the 'town'"(p.55). The *town* consisted of Londoners of all social classes who attended the theatre after the restoration of the monarchy when theatres were finally reopened legally (some had defied the laws of the Commonwealth and opened illegally from time to time during its rule). With new confidence, the people showed their opinions and wishes without restraint:

> one of the most frequent and dangerous activities, mainly practiced by the gallery spectators, was pelting…In *The Garrick Stage*, Nicoll mentions an occasion when "a keg full of liquor" was thrown from the gallery: "it luckily fell on a woman attired in the latest mode, so that, as the paper announced, her head-gear prevented 'the mischief that otherwise might have been occasioned.'" (Fisher, 2003, p.60)

This is reminiscent of what might happen now at a contemporary sports event, no longer so much at the theatre, in most contexts. It is interesting to note how the so-called 'public' spaces of contemporary performance have become in many western industrialised societies quite strictly configured in terms of culture, privilege and exclusion. These spaces have been labelled as elitist and challenged to open up in recent years by many practitioners: for example, Dorinne Kondo says:

> My commitment to theater as a spur for social change is a testament to its profound

> impact in my own life. Asian American theater has been my lifeline to racial/ethnic identity and a vibrant form of political critique. Theater can stage such visions in multiple ways. … make them accessible to a broader public... (in Kushner, 2001, p. 77)

This 'broader public' is one that Hannah Arendt, drawing on her experience as a stateless person saw as crucial as a defence against fascism:

> Massive isolation undermines the integrity of the individual embedded in historically sedimented ways of living together with other human beings. "Isolation is that impasse into which people are driven when the political sphere of their lives, where they act together in the pursuit of a common concern, is destroyed" (Arendt, *Origins* 474)[74]. "Politics" in Arendt's work is not electoral or parliamentary politics, nor a legal procedure based on civic or natural right. This concept goes to the heart of the polis …and means nothing less than the capacity of "the most elementary form of human creativity which is the capacity of adding something of one's own to the common world"… (Wang, 2005, p.253).

It is in this sense of offering people a possibility of contributing to an open place of discourse and visibility that Playback companies are encouraged to give monthly 'public' performances:[75]

> ...the need to connect, listen, and tell…. that is the heart of Playback Theatre ….As is abundantly clear, today perhaps more than ever, there is a hunger for experiences like playback ….Living as we do in a frighteningly impersonal world, with fragile families and chaotic communities, we find that playback, at its best, can give meaning and dignity to the teller and to those who watch - and listen …. (Irwin, 2001, pp. 84-85)

Polis

> *If high culture is too rarefied to be an effective political force, much postmodern culture is too brittle, rootless and depoliticized. Neither shows up especially well when compared to Islam, for which culture is historically rooted and inescapably political. (Eagleton, 2000, p. 81)*

As cited above in Wang (2005) and discussed in An ancestress: Hannah Arendt (on page 129)**,** Arendt gave the shared space in which she saw people as needing to be visible, the name of the Greek word *polis*, which she saw as

> properly speaking…not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of

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[74] Sexist language modified, original follows: "Isolation is that impasse into which men [sic] are driven when the political sphere of their lives, where they act together in the pursuit of a common concern, is destroyed" (Arendt, Origins 474

[75] The extent to which the 'public' space is determined by the location, timing and personnel of the performances remains a dilemma struggled with by many Playback companies. Every time frame, location and combination of people in the company will call a particular sector of the public in its own way.

> the people *as it arises out of acting and speaking together,*[italics added] and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be. 'Wherever you go, you will be a polis': these famous words…expressed the conviction that action and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere. (Arendt, 1958, p.198)

The space created within live performance has the potential to be part of such a polis: of course by itself it does not create the people "living together" but it can provide a forum or venue for action and speech of a different kind than is possible outside such performances (Chung, 2006; Day, 2003; Garavelli, 2001; Moore, 2003 Van Steen, 2005). Crucially this refers to both remembering and *creating common memories*. The person of action needs their narrative to be received by a thinking, remembering group:

> It is *spectators* who complete the story in question, and they do so through *thought*, thought that follows upon the act. This is a completion that takes place through *evoked memory*, without which there is nothing to tell. It is not the actors, but the spectators, if they are capable of thought and memory, who turn the polis into an organization that is creative of memory and/or history/histories. This is the very heart of Arendtian thought… (Kristeva, 2001, pp. 16 – 17)

While Arendt might not have approved of some aspects of overtly personal, domestic stories being replayed in public (Benhabib, 1999), Playback Theatre has the potential to contribute to an Arendtian *inter-esse*[76] within which narratives can be told and enacted, which narratives and performances are then further remembered by the people who have witnessed them, as for example in Kimberley Creasman's moving account of the way the issue of the Japanese inheritance from the 1939-45 war came up in the context of an Asian Playback gathering (Creasman, 2005). In this way, Playback is always contributing to a political view of the world, (even when the practitioners involved claim that they want to remain resolutely apolitical). For this reason, Arendt's view of the polis, the space of remembrance with its resolving logic and interpretation, may be, I

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[76] "Action and speech go on between people as they are directed toward them, and they retain their agent-revealing capacity even if their content is exclusively 'objective,' concerned with the matters of the world of things in which people move, which physically lies between them and out of which arise their specific, objective, worldly interests. These interests constitute, in the word's most literal significance, something which inter-est, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together" (Arendt, 1958, p.182)

suggest, in spite of its basis in a kind of fiction about Ancient Greece,[77] a very useful one for Playback practitioners.

For Arendt also contributed the concept of living with consciousness and resoluteness, and resisting the temptation of unconsciousness or automatism (Bradshaw, 1989) by confronting the certainties of, not only mortality, but also natality (Bowen-Moore, 1989). Of this concept she wrote:

> the fact that people are capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from them, that a person is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each person is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world.[78] With respect to this somebody who is unique it can truly be said that nobody was there before. (Arendt, 1958, p.178)

This awareness of the possibility of something entirely new occurring led her to be interested in what it is that happens in revolution, an interest which I too explore, from a theoretical standpoint, in the following section.

It is my hope that this scrutiny of the various words available to name the group in attendance at a piece of theatre has helped to flesh out the question mark that Blau senses at the edge of the stage. While in Playback this margin or border is deliberately and rhythmically crossed in ways which are unusual in performance, in fact, in *all* theatre, as I hope I have shown, there are multiple streams of projection and reception, transference and counter-transference, occurring. By looking at these multiple streams, we can discern some of the complex of actions that is occurring in all performance and that Playback externalises for all to see and reflect on. In the following section two key political moments when the theatrical space of remembrance and memorialisation informed new experiments in audience address, are described and then related to epic theatre, which I suggest alerts us to crucial aspects of Playback's relationship to its audiences.

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[77] A fiction which some readers find unconvincingly generalised and sentimental (of course it conveniently leaves out the existence of women and slaves who were identified as belonging entirely to the private world) but which I understand to be a way for Arendt to tell about *what it was like* to live under fascism and see the space of public discourse and debate taken away; and then to live for many years as a stateless person...

[78] Sexist language modified, original follows: "the fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world." Arendt, 1958, p.178

Moments of Audience as Performer in the Theatre/Polis – French and Russian Revolutions

After both French and Russian revolutions, in the period when previous hegemonic structures had dissolved, and before the re-concretisation of stable political and organizational systems, theatre became a vitally important medium for revolutionary communication and creation, in which *the people* were able to experience themselves as polis. Looking at these two moments alerts us to some additional insights regarding what is possible between performers and audience. In my process of research into the theatre audience, these two moments of audience address have stood out as fascinating examples of the power of the audience in live performance; the second moment is related intimately and integrally with Playback's development.

France and melodrama

Scott Magelssen (2005) describes two extraordinary commemorations, *The Fall of the Bastille*, a drama which was enacted inside Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on the evening of July 13 1790 and the *Festival of Federation* which took place the next day on the Champ de Mars, exactly a year after what we now celebrate as the date of the revolution. *The Fall of the Bastille* was phrased in religious terms and placed inside the cathedral, in order to stabilize and distance the commemoration from the violent disruptions of the year before. The King was still alive at this point: within the drama, which was acted by professional actors, appeals to God were made and the chorus used the words from the Book of Judith: "Woe be unto the nation that riseth up against my people; for the Lord almighty will take revenge on them…This was followed by a universal Te Deum" (Carlson cited in Magelssen, 2005, p.35.) Clearly, the revolutionary organizers of the drama wanted to link their actions with divine destiny and to use theatrically ritualistic means to stabilise a very volatile context.

The theme of linking nation and divinity was further developed the next day when a huge military procession went from the Bastille site via the Tuileries where Government officials joined it and finally across a purpose-built bridge over the Seine to the Champ de Mars where 400,000 people including King Louis XVI gathered in a great amphitheatre which had been shaped over the preceding months.

> Thousands of citizens were enlisted to help move the earth into enormous mounds for spectators on the sides of the field. The King himself pitched in (if only with a handful of symbolic shovel scoops.)…[Mass was celebrated]on a twenty-five foot

> high altar in the middle of the field. The King swore to uphold the Constitution." (Magelssen, 2005, p.36.)

The enactment then moved out into the audience as people swore their allegiance to the nation – and the audience then swelled into being all of France as there was a synchronised swearing-in of officials which took place at that moment in cities, towns and villages throughout the entire country. This ambitious celebration bore a marked resemblance to Rousseau's ideas about the theatre which he had expressed in 1758: he was dissatisfied with the "effeminacy of the theatres" (Magelssen, 2005, p.39) and proposed instead outdoor celebrations at which people could experience themselves as "an entertainment to themselves; do it so that each sees and loves himself in the others so that all will be better united." (Magelssen, 2005, p.39). Thus, these two commemorations, the first of many to come in France over the next years,

> can be understood not as a re-staging of a past event, but as an arrangement of archival records to stabilize power....a practical application of Rousseau's wish to remove the spectator from the theatres, where he or she would be tainted by illogical events and alienation from their social roles. Instead, through mass communal spectacles…the citizens would become the spectacle themselves, participating in a narrative of their own history." (pp.43, 44)

The re-staging of this narrative, with its fight between the evil past and the innocent future (often embodied in a young female figure menaced by older males) arguably influenced the development of popular 19th century European melodrama, where this conflict was transferred into the personal realm, so that the figure of a young woman was used to stand for the Republic in revolutionary narratives, (particularly commonly expressed in lithographs) and for Marie Antoinette in counterrevolutionary discourse. In either case, the audience in melodramas still felt free to contribute their voluble excoriations and exhortations. Wettlaufer (1999) shows how even in the discourse of history, Edmund Burke used the trope of theatre in his writing about the revolution:

> This theoretical structure of participatory spectacle and role playing, experienced first-hand by the citoyens, was translated by the quintessential English spectator, Edmund Burke, into the metaphor of revolution as "grand, tragic theatre." This polyvalent trope, reflecting upon both the production and "consumption" of the Revolution in France and abroad, was central to Burke's influential response to the events of 1789…Although as Paul Hindson and Tim Gray have indicated, "Drama was Burke's way of viewing and understanding the order of the political world," 27 in the particular case of the Reflections, the trope takes on a certain dialectic or even counter-discursive meaning vis-à-vis the republicans' own theatrical orientation. (Wettlaufer,1999, p.12)

This widespread melodramatic view of events was demonstrated throughout Europe and melodramas became standard theatrical fare[79] while 19th century melodramatic engravings of innocent young women (Wettlaufer 1999), were still to be found in old rental houses and second-hand shops even in mid-20th century New Zealand, 200 years and half a world away from the original events.

Russia and 20th century avant garde theatre

Aesthetic consequences also attended the Russian revolution. Both before and after the Russian revolution, enactments and theatrical performances were used to experiment with producing specific effects on the audience. Not only practice but also theoretical statements and manifestoes about the theatre were prolific through these years and the complex picture of Russian theatre, with its twin poles of St Petersburg and Moscow, along with extensive networks of citizens' and workers' theatres is like a compressed kaleidoscope of theatrical ideas, prefiguring many of their more extended developments which became central to 20th century world cinema as well as live theatre practice in many countries, including New Zealand.

Lars Kleberg in his 1992 *Theatre as Action*, describes the years of the early 20th century, using a "somewhat archaeological approach of reconstruction and conjecture" and emphasizes that "[c]ontemporaries of the period in question perhaps found it easier to distinguish between positions which at a historical distance tend to be swallowed up in a 'single…discourse'" (p.ix). From the failed revolution of 1905 onwards, in Russia many people who were working for change had involved themselves in theatre and in working together to create a cultural transformation that would succeed.

> Strange and even improbable….the question of the theatre of the future – what form it would take and what place it would have in public life – was one which preoccupied the minds of leading thinkers and writers in the period between the two Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917." (Rudnitsky, 1988, p. 9)

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[79] Conventional theatre history holds that, throughout the nineteenth century "melodrama audiences supposedly were predominantly lower middle or working class persons, who conquered the theatre due to upward mobility in the Revolutionary era" (Gras & van Vliet, 2006,p.472), Gras & van Vliet researched the subscribers to theatres in Rotterdam and found that actually "it is clear that most of the melodrama subscribers … fall in the category 'trade' (62 per cent), middle class occupations and professionals limped far behind (15 and 13 per cent respectively)" (Gras & van Vliet, 2006, p.476).

Experimentation in small studios alongside the complex traditional productions in the professional theatres; hundreds of amateur groups associated with the temperance and People's Palace movements; futurism; experimentation with mime; poetry; and theories concerning a new kind of ritualistic theatre, all combined to create the world of the theatre as a ferment during the pre-Revolutionary years (Jestrovic, 2002; Kleberg, 1992; Rudnitsky, 1988). These developments were not occurring in isolation: some of the experiments were associated with what was happening in other countries, through travel, collaboration or publication. For example, in 1911 Gordon Craig worked with Stanislavsky on a production of *Hamlet* (Rudnitsky 1988) and in 1914 "the Italian futurist Marinetti's 'Variety Theatre Manifesto' (1913) had been translated into Russian… under the title 'Music Hall" (Kleberg, 1992, p.136).

Then, as soon as the October Revolution occurred in 1917, censorship of the theatres, which had previously been severe, ceased and over the next years a great variety of experiments were carried out so that in 1920 Viktor Shklovsky wrote: "All Russia is acting, some kind of elemental process is taking place where the living fabric of life is being transformed into the theatrical" (Rudnitsky, 1988, p.41). It was Shklovsky who in 1917 "coined the term *ostranenie* to describe the artistic strategy of presenting the well-known as if seen for the first time." (Jestrovic, 2002, p.42) This technique of *ostranenie*, making-strange (*Verfremdungseffekt*) or alienation became an important aspect of the experiments of the following years throughout Russia, the rest of Europe and, by extension, many other countries of the world.

Many of the experiments, like *ostranenie,* included specific attitudes to or techniques involving, the audience: on the first anniversary of the Revolution, in 1918, Mayakovsky and Meyerhold produced their first show *Mystery-Bouffe* addressed to the people in which

> …the Futurists had openly and decisively supported the Bolsheviks…Osip Mandelstam …understood at once …describing *Mystery-Bouffe* as 'a simple, healthy school for the enlightenment of the masses.' In addressing a truly broad and semi-literate audience for the first time, the Futurists, especially Mayakovsky, had immediately simplified their language and relinquished deliberately complicated vocabulary and imagery. (Rudnitsky, 1988, p.43)

So for example, Mayakovsky and the great clown Lazarenko[80] collaborated in performances such as "a circus wrestling match in which Lazarenko as a clown referee mock[ed] the challengers of a champion wrestler named Revolution. The challengers include[d] British Prime Minister Lloyd George and United States President Woodrow Wilson" (Jenkins, 1987, p.155).

Kleberg charts the interwoven development over these early years of the 20th century, of naturalism, stylised theatre, ritual theatre, through to constructivism as practised by Tretyakov, Meyerhold and Eisenstein, in which the 'footlights' were eliminated, there was incongruence between stage and auditorium as the stage demonstrated things that had not yet come to pass in real life; and the direction for the first time was outwards from the stage into the auditorium rather than vice versa. "What is shown on stage is the future of the spectators, but it is not an imagined 'picture of the future', rather it is an experiment to be emulated in life outside the theatre" (Kleberg, 1992, p.76).

An example of this work was when in Tretyakov's play for the sixth anniversary of the revolution in 1923,

> the crowd on stage attacks a (German) aristocrat on stage shouting "Bread! Jobs! Socialism!" and the Communist character rushes up to the edge of the stage and shouts to the audience…'Do you hear, Moscow?!' Tretyakov's stage directions continue: 'Unanimous reply from the auditorium: Yes, I hear!' ….one semiotic layer after another is 'peeled away', until the audience is finally confronted with immediate reality. (Kleberg, 1992, p.83)

Ironically, although they superficially seem to be participating, the audience has become a passive complement to the action that is taking place on the stage and is now being seen as 'raw material' to be manipulated and acted on by the director and performers.[81]

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[80] Who had been called "Jester to His Majesty the People" during the revolution: "during the stormy days of the Russian revolution…the Bolshevik forces at the front lines were entertained and incited to greater efforts by a circus clown. During demonstrations and on cavalcades…this popular clown marched on stilts and addressed the participants in verses…He was Vitaly Lazarenko, 'the first shock-brigadier of clowning'" (Towsen, 1976, p.306).

[81] Interestingly, Eisenstein's extremely influential work in the cinema, where he used montage to act upon the emotions of the viewer, emerged out of his theatre experience: he and Tretyakov, having worked together, in 1926 produced very similar works in which it seems very likely that they influenced each other: Eisenstein's ground-breaking film *The Battleship Potemkin* and Tretyakov's play *Roar China* opened within four days of each other (Kleberg, 1992).

In the early 1920s in Russia, as these developments of practice were occurring, systematic research into the audience also began. Experiments in gauging audience response started to be made and theoretical debates about how to collect the data of audience experience were hotly fought in magazines and periodicals: whether this could best be done through questionnaires, through data gathering by coding general audience responses, or alternatively through close observation of selected individuals in the audience during a performance. All of these ideas were trialled (Kleberg, 1992). The whole idea of the audience as the community or polis was thrown into upheaval when Zagorsky, who had, as part of this research activity distributed questionnaires, for the first time explicitly revealed the multiple positionings of the audience members and the influence this has on their experience:

> There is no single spectator, neither is there a single performance. The revolutionary current turned on from the stage splits up the auditorium, organizes and differentiates its positive and negative elements. And the current that is fed back from the auditorium in its turn, splits up the performance, letting each group of people see on stage what its social preconditioning allows it to see. (Zagorskii, cited in Kleberg, 1992, p.96)

This unmasking of the diversity within the spectating group, caused Tretyakov and Meyerhold to re-think their address to the audience and Kleberg describes their new work together in 1927 on the play/debate *I Want a Child.* At this point, Tretyakov produced an article about the performance he intended – a combination of play and discussion which the censors finally agreed to in 1929, after initially blocking it because of "the excessively intimate theme" (eugenics) and… "the 'coarse expressions' used in the text" (Rudnitsky, 1988, p. 198). Kleberg points out the similarities between Tretyakov's ideas and those of Brecht and Benjamin, to be called epic theatre. Tretyakov had written:

> I am no believer in plays whose dramaturgical climax is some sort of generally accepted maxim that restores the equilibrium between the forces struggling on stage. When the plot has been resolved and the moral delivered the spectators can calmly go out and put on their galoshes. I find greater value in plays that reach their conclusion out among the spectators beyond the walls of the auditorium. Not a play that ends by closing an aesthetic circle, but a play that takes a running jump from the aesthetic trampoline of the stage and then continues in a spiral whose loops are consistent in the discussions and extra-theatrical practice of the spectators. (Tretyakov, 1929, cited in Kleberg 1992, p.108).

This clearly relates to the epic theatre of which Walter Benjamin says about the relationship with the audience that

> above all [epic theatre]…desires an audience that follows the action without strain…this audience, being a collective, will usually feel impelled to act promptly. This reaction, according to Brecht, ought to be a well-considered and therefore a relaxed one – in short, the reaction of people who have an interest in the matter. (Benjamin, 1985, p.147)

Kleberg suggests that in epic theatre:

> The element of viewing and critical observation is strongly activated…The worlds of stage and auditorium are incongruent….The instructive or epic theatre is directed outwards, away from the world of the stage. The conclusions of the instruction are to be drawn in the auditorium and specifically in real life outside the walls of the theatre…the instructive or epic theatre assumes that the audience is not homogeneous ….In contrast to the earlier types [of theatrical practice], the instructive theatre does not propose to achieve in the theatre what is impossible in society….Social conflicts must be resolved in society, not in the theatre, but the model can suggest new approaches to their resolution. (Kleberg, 1992, pp.112-113)

Playback as Epic Theatre

Four elements of Playback Theatre can be strongly linked to epic theatre. Firstly, the relationship with the audience endeavours to have the audience as relaxed and potentially, as "considering" as possible. If performers have such an awareness, they will "endeavour to interest the audience in the theater expertly, but definitely not by way of mere cultural involvement…" (Benjamin 1985, p.147).

Secondly, the performance proceeds by interruptions, as the phases alternate of the facilitator's direct address of the audience, the dialogue of audience storyteller and facilitator together, and the enactment of the story in a crafted piece of theatre. "The truly important thing is to discover the conditions of life. (One might say just as well: to alienate (verfremden) them.) This discovery (alienation) of conditions takes place through the *interruption of happenings* [italics added]," (Benjamin, 1969, p.150). While audience members may enter a kind of trance during the enactment stage, this is interrupted at the end of the enactment and the audience is required to move again into their own thoughts and impulses as the facilitator directly addresses them.

Thirdly, when it comes to staging, the actor in Playback obeys Brecht's injunction:

> Actors must show their subject and they must show themselves. Of course, they show their subject by showing themselves, and they show themselves by showing their subject. Although the two coincide, they must not coincide in such a way that

the difference between the two tasks disappears[82].” (Brecht cited in Benjamin, 1969, p.153.)

The audience of Playback sees the actor be given a role by the audience narrator, indicate by standing that she takes it up, play the role and then relinquish it in the final moment of an enactment where all the performers make eye contact with the teller to indicate the return of the narrative into the ownership of the teller. This repeated sequence of visibly assuming, playing and then relinquishing roles assists in the creation of the distance between actor and role and of a form of alienation effect in the audience.

Finally, a highlighting of gesture, a repeatable sign: Brecht had been influenced in this development of alienation by both Russian and Chinese theatre:

> Brecht spelled out his theory of Verfremdungseffekt (alienation effect) in "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," written in Moscow in 1935 after he saw an impromptu demonstration of Chinese acting--known in the West as Beijing "opera"--by Mei Lanfang (1894-1961). In his essay, Brecht articulates a relationship between actor and spectator wherein both become critical observers (not without empathy) of the actions the actor performs. Instead of "real life," Brecht saw in Mei's acting a manipulable system of signs and referents. He celebrated the Chinese theatre's ability to manufacture and manipulate Gestus, actions that were both themselves and emblematic, if not symbolic, of larger social practices. … The Brechtian actor, like Mei, does not live the role, she demonstrates it.[83] (Martin, 1999, p.77)

Movement, dance, positioning, and gesture all play a vital role in the enactment of Playback stories where other visual elements are at a minimum and it was observable in the performances which were closely analysed as part of this study that emblematic gestures were a crucial aspect of the climactic stories of the performances. (See *Mortality: “I’ve faced the crisis – not once but twice”* on page 375). In the Nursing School performance (of which an account is given in Appendix One on page 431), a recurrent gesture of a group hug was used in a story near the beginning of the performance to communicate the self aware narrative about the narcissism of the planning group and was ‘quoted’ several times by the actors in succeeding stories. With

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[82] Sexist language modified, original follows: “The actor must show his [*sic*] subject and he must show himself. Of course, he shows his subject by showing himself, and he shows himself by showing his subject. Although the two coincide, they must not coincide in such a way that the difference between the two tasks disappears.” (Brecht cited in Benjamin, 1969, p.153.)

[83] Sexist language modified, original follows: “The Brechtian actor, like Mei, does not live the role, he [*sic*] demonstrates it. (Martin, 1999, p.77)

each quotation, the audience enjoyment of the gesture was more enthusiastically shown by smiles, laughter and comments. Benjamin, in his discussion of epic theatre suggests that "an actor must be able to space her gestures the way a typesetter produces spaced type. This effect may be achieved, for instance, by an actor's quoting her own gestures on the stage." (1969, p.151)[84]

In these four significant ways, Playback Theatre can be described as using several key aspects of epic theatre's relation to the audience: endeavouring to create the conditions for the relaxed reflection of the audience; proceeding in a montage-effect of interruptions and contrasts, which discourage the trance of identification and dream-like other-worldliness of realism, romanticism or tragedy; creating *ostranenie*, *Verfremdungseffekt* or alienation (making strange) effects, in the way that actors move in and out of role, assume the characters of usually inanimate objects or abstractions and present a version of an everyday world that encourages the audience to see familiar things in a new way; and finally using repeatable and quotable gestures to convey and emphasize commentary on the narrative.

This chapter has made space to consider the part an audience plays in a live performance, looking at the connotations of specific words which are used to describe the audience and exploring the ways in which theatrical innovations developed in the French and Russian revolutions influenced succeeding aesthetic developments. Finally it has suggested four ways in which Playback shows some features which relate to epic theatre.

The practitioner speaks

A central European hot spot – a confluence of traditions

> *You don't know me from the wind, you never did, you never will*
> *I'm the little jew who wrote the Bible*
> *I've seen the nations rise and fall*
> *I've heard their stories, heard them all*
> *but love's the only engine of survival (Cohen, 2001).* [85]

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[84] Sexist language modified, original follows: "an actor must be able to space his (sic) gestures the way a typesetter produces spaced type. This effect may be achieved, for instance, by an actor's quoting his own gestures on the stage." (Benjamin, 1969, p.151)

[85] "Politically, [Cohen] breathes the spirit of Isaiah over the world after the Holocaust." (Monk, 2002, p.1).

> *"I am fascinated by what appears to be a central European hot spot in the germination of the Non Scripted Theatre movement: were the progenitors Goethe, Laban, Brecht, Moreno, and colleagues as yet unkown?" (Fox 1986, p.198)*

This question has been a living companion to me throughout the years of this research project. The European hot spot, living fertile presence in both the family of my mother and that of my children's father,[86] has been active in my life as a guide to, on the one hand, how things are done (gardens made, children reared, soup cooked, lives celebrated) and on the other, how things must never again be done - a reminder of what must not be forgotten (death, betrayal, dislocation). In his 1979 book *Prophets without Honor: A background to Freud, Kafka, Einstein and their world*, Frederic Grunfeld describes the Jewish cultural world of Vienna, Munich, Berlin at the beginning of the twentieth century. As an insider, as he details the life and work of the astonishing array of people whose families, like those of Arendt, Moreno and Buber came into Germany and Austria from eastern Europe:

> For well over a half century the confluences of these two intellectual traditions, the German and the Jewish, produced such an outpouring of literature, music and ideas that, had it not been for its infamous finale, the cultural historians would now be writing of it as a golden age, second only to the Italian Renaissance. It was a time of great poets and painters, of composers, philosophers, scholars, critics; of Expressionism, Dadaism and a new sense of compassion in the arts; of Mahler's *Lied von der Erde*, Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* and Kafka's *The Trial*.
> For the Jews of Germany and Austria, only recently emerged from the mental and physical isolation of ghetto life, it was a time of difficulties and rebuffs, but also of what Albert Einstein called 'undreamed-of possibilities.' He was speaking from personal experience when he described the 'burning enthusiasm' with which so many Jews joined the rush into the arts and sciences. (Grunfeld, 1979, p.1)

Just a list of a very few of the names in Grunfeld's book gives an intimation of the magnitude of these generations : Gustav Mahler, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Albert Einstein, Franz Kafka, Max Reinhardt, Otto Klemperer, Bruno Walter, Peter Lorre, Billy Wilder, Fritz Lang, Walter Hasenclever, Alfred Doeblin, Hermann Broch, Lion Feuchtwanger, Vicki Baum, Karl Wolffskehl, Theodor Lessing, Walter Benjamin, Albert Einstein, Arnold Schoenberg.

In Grunfeld's book, epic tales of escape are told and tragedies unfolded, often simultaneously, with bitter irony. For example, after Freud's books had been burnt publicly in Berlin he is said to have remarked "what progress we are making! In the Middle Ages they would have burnt me; nowadays they are content with burning my book…" Grunfeld points out "even that much progress was to prove illusory…four of Freud's aged sisters were afterwards deported and killed in the Holocaust." (p. 63) Grunfeld proposes a telling analogy:

> Part of my purpose in writing this book is to give British and American readers some inkling of what was lost in the collapse of the Weimar Renaissance…it might be

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[86] My English grandmother Ethel Rice and her sister Margaret went from the Rectory at Cheam in Surrey to Munich in Bavaria, so that Margaret could study painting, in the late 1890s. They were there for ten years, started a dancing school, and were founding members of the Munich Women Artists Association. Margaret had a family and married a philosopher, Rudolf von Delius. Ethel returned to England and married my grandfather, a doctor who had studied in Vienna. My children's father came from a large well-established Hungarian Jewish family who lived within walking distance of the magnificent Budapest synagogue and of whom only his parents, two uncles and one aunt survived Auschwitz and the Budapest Ghetto, He travelled at the age of ten to live in New Zealand in 1957 with his parents and uncle.

> illustrative to imagine, for a nightmare moment that a comparable fate had overtaken the English-speaking world: that schools, universities, libraries and museums had all been duly purged of 'undesirables' and their works; that Aldous Huxley had been beaten to death in a prison camp near Oxford; that T.S. Eliot had died in exile in Peru; that the aged Bernard Shaw committed suicide on a ship to South America;…that George Gershwin had been killed trying to cross the Mexican border…- but that W.H. Auden, Marianne Moore, Louis Armstrong, Aaron Copland and e.e.cummings had been among those rounded up and gassed by the police…it sounds like a science fiction plot…Yet this is what actually happened in my lifetime to the cultural life of Germany and somehow the world has been able to absorb that fact without paying very much attention… (Grunfeld, 1979. p.34)

In fact, over the years I have worked on this study, it seems that the world has begun to pay attention to some extent: 26 years after Grunfeld's book, 60 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, around the time of January 2005, enactments, ceremonies, museums, narratives, all over the world, gave a new acknowledgement to the losses that occurred:

> Britain's chief rabbi and the archbishop of Canterbury joined yesterday to urge students at a London school to remember the lessons of the Holocaust.
> 'We all need to stand together whatever our color, whatever our faith, to defend each one of us when we come under attack,' Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks told more than 200 students at Pimlico School.
> He noted how 'it's incredibly difficult to get a sense of the scale of the tragedy. On 9/11 there were 3,000 victims. During the Holocaust, on average, 3,000 Jewish victims were murdered every day, of every week, of every month, for five and a half years.' (Limor, 2005)

Playback is related by genealogy to these stories: some of the members of the original Playback company along with perhaps its greatest influences, Moreno with his idiosyncratic range of theories and ideas and Buber with his focus on the centrality of I-thou encounters, brought variants of Jewish heritage into the work with them, forming living links to a tradition which, some postmodern theorists have recognised, confronts, counterpoints and leads to irrevocable encounters with an underside of the western metaphysical tradition: Jean-Francois Lyotard "directly appropriates Adorno (Wiesengrund) for his own purposes of theorizing the postmodern condition" (Peters, 1996) and writes of the jews [sic] as those who resist dominant cultures from within:

> The jews got this lesson of a secret, muffled and bending – not political - resistance to the Western metaphysics of will and self-determination from a Book…. 'The jews' are exiled, scattered, oppressed, and assimilated on this scene, but they don't belong to it….This resistance simply mumbles: *the Other is prior to the Self.* (Lyotard, 1997)[87]

Jewish history, art and culture remain for many non-Jewish people a hidden side of the story of

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[87] It is worth noting that in a discussion of the ways Lyotard and other postmodern French theorists use the figure of *the jew*, Michael Weingrad suggests that they are only using superficial understandings of Jewish thought and history, so that "in what is supposed to be the intellectual cutting edge, we find Jewish stereotypes, not only unquestioned but presented as critical analysis"(Weingrad, 1996, p. 79). However, I think that the idea of the Jewish resistance to western metaphysics remains an interesting and fertile one.

Europe, though in recent years, the opening of museums on this theme makes it possible to discover this counterpoint to the more visible, known, histories. Playback concerns itself with stories and often looks for the silenced story (Cohen & Eisen, 2000) and this story of Jewish experience is foregrounded in several written accounts of Playback practice (Dauber, 2000; Feldhendler, 2001; Sperling, 1999.

Orality, scholarship and the supporting community

One way in which the Playback fits with a Jewish tradition is in its emphasis on texts as spoken. Paradoxically, Jews, the people of the book, are among those peoples who have affirmed the primacy of orality (Richman, 1997) which is, says Steven Fraade, "a subject of central significance to the literature and ideology of rabbinic Judaism: that two Torahs were revealed to and transmitted by the people of Israel from the revelation at Mt Sinai and henceforth, one written (Scripture) and the other oral ('in the mouth'…)" (Fraade, 2004)[88] The fact that oral discourse was acknowledged on an equal basis with the written law gives orality (and therefore dialogue and disputation regarding possible interpretations) a validity which by extension dignifies and values the words we choose and the discussions we all have in the present.

> When God gave Moses the Torah, Orthodoxy teaches, He *simultaneously provided him all the details found in the Oral Law* [italics added]. It is believed that Moses subsequently transmitted that Oral Law to his successor, Joshua, who transmitted it to his successor, in a chain that is still being carried on… (Telushkin, 1991)

It is possible to relate the rise of hermeneutics in Europe to the growing interaction over the same years between Jews and Gentiles; and equally possible, says Michael Zank associate Professor of Religion at Boston University, to trace an

> …intriguing rapport between rabbinic and post-modern hermeneutics… [in that] rules rather than creedal formulations make up the structured and firm, yet pliable, ground on which the reality of exile, plurality, lack of national boundaries and institutions, etc. are compensated by [*sic*]; it is, after all, a religious and national system developed and maintained by text-scholars/lawyers; contrary to how the law is projected by lawgivers and experienced by their subordinate subjects…Ancient rabbinic Judaism is thus …textual, reflecting on the ins and outs of textual relations…. (Zank, 2001)

Zank's drawing of the relationship between the orality of rabbinic Judaism and the postmodern refusal to valorize received metanarratives reverberates with my own sense of these echoes within contemporary theatre. They contribute to my sense of Playback as a postmodern theatre form. Harbeck in his 1998 thesis on performance scholar Richard Schechner, described how

> One of the oldest identifiable influences in his work…comes from his childhood: it is a Talmud. When he was very young, his grandfather showed him a Talmud, as he recollected in 1968: "The book itself was like nothing I had ever seen. In the center of each page was a short biblical text. Around it, in varying geometrical patters, and spreading out to the very edges of the page, were other texts…. One did not read

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[88] A professor from Tel Aviv told me at a literacy conference in the 1980s, early in my Playback work, that the words carved on the tablets were different from what Moses *heard*, when the Ten Commandments were given. When I heard that, something clicked for me about Playback: about its cherishing of the spoken word and its opening of stories one on another, as oblique commentaries on each other's themes and contents.

> this Talmud straight across, as one reads normal books. One searched in the page, jumped across blocks of print – and centuries – followed different patterns as the mind and eye wished…One recapitulated history…discovered many contradictory assertions. Or one read it like a spiral unfolding of complicated arguments flowing freely and smoothly through the centuries. The logic of that Talmud is the logic of a space without edges." The Talmud was not only the multiplicity of interactions that is the world: it was an offer of freedom for choosing one's own construction of that world, one's own path. (Harbeck, 1998, pp. 58-59)

Schechner also writes of his the way he senses the future in different ways: saying that "my Jewish part insists that the past always operates on the present" (2004, p.274). Playback also works like this, in a series of patterns, a spiral unfolding: particularly well-suited to a global rather than international world, one where proposing rules and commenting on them in texts (stories, songs, enactments) may be more viable than trying to legislate *anything* in terms of entitlements. I am particularly aware of its potential to offer a ground of unsentimental resoluteness in terms of the dilemmas of the present and the spaces between, the inter-esse that we all share, spaces in which as Hannah Arendt says the unexpected and the new are always happening:

> If action as beginning corresponds to the fact of birth, if it is the actualization of the human condition of natality, then speech corresponds to the fact of distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals. (Arendt, 1958, p. 178)

Playback provides a venue for this action, for this speech. By making a space for an interweaving of stories which can relate, dispute, echo, and reverberate with each other, it seems to me that Playback practice can be situated as much in the rabbinic project, as in the Dionysian and Apollonian ones. We practise in *the spaces between* created by these ways of thinking and doing: especially those of us who choose not only to act and to speak but also to discuss, dispute and write about our life and work in Playback.

Chapter Five - Some Criticisms of Playback

> *It is axiomatic that an act of interpretation is an act of hermeneutic violence. To produce scholarship is to assert one's domination over the subject, to contain its alterity, to "show it who's boss" (Taussig 2006:viii). That said, is it possible that our narratives of hope and transformation produce a particularly insidious form of violence? … The extraordinary complexity of theatre and performance is strange stuff indeed, and perhaps in our rush to celebrate it, we are not being fully attentive to its ambiguities, dangers, and gifts (Edmondson, 2007, p.9).*

This chapter outlines seventeen inter-related criticisms of Playback (potential shortcomings both as a theatre form and also as a community of practitioners), which the process of doing this research project has highlighted.[89] It looks in turn at each of the parameters by which Playback has been described in the preceding chapters and raises issues and unresolved questions. In this introductory section of the chapter, I outline the points which are explored in the chapter.

Narratives

Firstly, as Rowe (2005) has pointed out, the concept of the audience narrative is often concretised in Playback discussion as if an audience story is a real *thing*, applying to a real set of events which have occurred somewhere out there in the real world and which the Playback performers seek to capture, when over the last 30 years general concepts of narrative have become much more complex than this. A **second criticism** is that I perceive that a 'story' is sometimes seen by performers exploitatively as raw material rather than being inflected with *performativity*, contestability and display and therefore something that needs to be treated with a certain distance and scepticism.

This leads to my **third criticism** which relates to the concept of community and concerns a lack of explicit requirements for Playback performers to have experienced or actively seek culturally decentering experiences (as the three members of the original company had done in the years preceding their founding of the company: see interviews in Appendix Three on page 448) and an associated lack of leadership around

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[89] As I write this, I am painfully aware of the imperfections of our own practice, at times! In Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten, where I give an account of our practical work, I have been as transparent as I can about our mistakes. The thought always remains. "Perhaps it is just us!" Yet over 20 years of Playback practice I have both experienced and observed some of the ways Playback can grate or go astray: I share them here as my contribution, however small, to the improvement of our practice.

the value of cultural diversity within companies. A **fourth criticism** around the theme of narratives suggests that there is a lack of clarity and ritual 'debriefing' and opportunity for redefinition and critique of narratives as part of the Playback form, which would alert companies to the possibility that they are reproducing dominant narratives and to the blind points for which they need to seek training and development in terms of social, economic and political issues.

Aesthetics

My **fifth criticism** questions the ways in which dominant mainstream aesthetics may *also* undermine the liberatory aspirations of Playback if performers do not question the limitations of their accustomed aesthetic vocabularies: I suggest that both knowledge of Playback's roots in surrealism and tapping into the indigenous vernacular performance traditions can help to avoid this pitfall.

A **sixth criticism** concerns a lack of coherent, developmental and connected debate about issues, dilemmas and failures regarding Playback practice: this kind of professional self-questioning is a hallmark of the maturity of a community of practice and its lack in Playback discourse is alarming. I suggest that an editorial board for the international journal *Interplay* could mitigate this and lead to more detailed and complex accounts of *practice* in all the roles of Playback: Fox described some of this in his early writings while Salas's book is a good beginner's guide but many articles remain on the level of checklists (e.g. Gisler, 2002) which while useful as far as they go, gloss over the complexities of practice. In particular I contend in my **seventh criticism** that there has not been enough investigation of Playback's failures and the learnings they lead to. The **eighth criticism** relates to embodied cognition: specifically the ways in which Playback history has been revised in some ways to overlook the strong, loyal yet critical group of women who participated in its beginnings – a participation and empowerment which Michael Clemente, a gay man, described eloquently in 1991 (see sections following *A place to be, thinking – Playback as embodied cognition* on page 79). This has led to a strong myth which is expressed in the phrase "Playback family" (implying Fox and Salas as sole progenitors): in fact at the Kassel Symposium "...several [students] noted that the term 'Playback family' felt elitist and exclusive" (Messmer, 1998, p.13) The *founder's myth* about Playback emerging out of Fox's study of preliterary poetry, novel-writing and practice of avant-garde theatre does not include this account of a strong participation of a group of women in Playback's genesis and Playback is the poorer for this, especially as it moves out from the US into countries

whose gender relations may be extremely fraught. Related to this criticism is the **ninth**, that Playback companies who reinforce dominant bodily stereotypes without challenge, are conforming to a mind/body split which sees the body as chaotic and needing to be controlled, cosmeticised and tamed – and that this is counter to the basis on which Playback itself operates as *embodied cognition,* with the body having its own validity as the ground on which both reason and action can be based.

Ethical questions

In terms of ritual and group process, a **tenth criticism** concerns the relatively unexplored field of preparing the audience: especially with work-based audiences, this seems necessary to assist audience members to know what to expect and to be supported as they enter the ritual of a Playback performance. (Otherwise, the activity is like inviting people to play a game in which the host knows the rules, while the guest has to try and guess them.) An **eleventh comment** is that the usefulness to audience well-being of the after-show debrief period is similarly ill-defined by many practitioners, and is often omitted altogether: I suggest that this represents another possible lack of genuine commitment and accountability to the audience. In addition, a **twelfth criticism** is that some companies (including our own at times!) lose the precision of the boundaries in the ritual cycles which make up a Playback performance and which provide essential containment for the strong emotions of the audience. A **thirteenth criticism** concerns the lack of a more coherent and organized vision and strategy for the training of Playback facilitators, this being the role on which the ritual of Playback depends.[90]

On play, the **fourteenth criticism** concerns the need to be aware that the play in Playback needs to be with themes and images, not with people: if a person tells a story about another person who is present in the audience, this represents an ethical challenge for the Playback company and must be addressed with care. A **fifteenth criticism** concerns the lack of required counselling or group work training for all Playback practitioners, so that, for example, adequate post-show debriefing would be seen by all for what it contributes ot audience experience, while a **sixteenth point** concerns a perceived lack of transparency in Playback around one's own culture and chosen values: in my view it is a mistake for Playback to endeavour to portray neutrality. This position

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[90] The advent of free digital video broadcasting through the internet provides a distinct avenue of development for this.

inevitably supports the cultural and political powerholders. My **seventeenth and final criticism** of Playback, one to which I am aware of falling victim myself at times, is that too often it valorizes itself, presenting *hope* as fact.

In delivering this critique, I do not assume that Playback is alone in being a method of working with groups of people and sometimes failing the participants: on the contrary, valid critiques can be and have been mounted of most group education and training methods. For example, two common forms of staff development, lectures by motivational speakers and on-line learning opportunities both disadvantage some types of individuals and groups, particularly those who perceive themselves as less intelligent, less skilled or less successful than their colleagues. It is not the case that people arrive in the workplaces with equally neutral educational experiences nor have they received equal input from public higher education systems: in a health centre, for example, doctors having had at least six years of education and training, nurses and social workers three years, while receptionists may have received a year or less of tertiary training, or may arrive in the workplace with only their secondary schooling behind them. That experience of schooling is itself likely to have been strongly affected by each student's family background and economic situation (Armstrong, 2000; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu, 1991, 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Coxon, 1994; Freire 1972, 1989; Gibson, 1986; Harker, 1984; Hart, 2006; Jones, 1991; Jones, Marshall, Matthews, Smith & Smith, 1990; Lankshear & Lawler, 1987; Smith 2003). In Simonelli's study of 'educational wounding', she found that even adults who were seemingly doing well in their work lives retained layers of pain and confusion, particularly likely to be triggered by learning situations, which related back to their early educational experiences, so that, for example, forty-one year old Anthony, reported an early educator "who really disliked me…[saying] 'I don't trust you boy'". Simonelli tells of the continuing difficulties experienced by Andrew, stating that his "external appearance... and day job as a state construction supervisor cloak his internal experience in any new learning situations. 'A lot of times I don't even know what the hell is going on because of the anxiety'" (Simonelli, 2000, p. 75).

Additional factors which may particularly influence uptake of education using educational technology, which is becoming more widespread as a medium of professional development, are gender and culture (Atkinson, 2002; Clarke, 2005; Simonelli, 2000; Spender, 1995). Pauwels (2000) draws attention to the ways in which language and practices of the workplace are likely to place women at a disadvantage:

> Women…have commented on the (perceived) tensions between power and being female. Some have labelled this tension the 'double bind' situation that women find themselves in: if they act in a feminine way, they are perceived as lacking power…Acting in a way perceived as masculine may provide power and authority to a woman , but at the expense of her femininity ('a ball breaker'). (p. 136).

Fitzsimons (1998) draws on Foray and Lundvall (1996) and the four types of knowledge they specify: *know-what, know-why, know-how* and *know-who*, showing how they are typically learnt in very different types of learning occasion:

> Foray and Lundvall (1996:21) also argue that gaining proficiency in these four kinds of knowledge takes place through different channels.[91] While 'know-what' and 'know-why' can be obtained through reading books, attending lectures and accessing databases, the other two categories are rooted primarily in practical experience. 'Know-how' will typically be learned in apprenticeship-type situations...'Know-who' is learned through social practice and specified education environments, conferences, organization networking… (Fitzsimons, 1998, p. 201)

Many of the more traditional staff training practices observe these kinds of separations: mentoring, conferences and social occasions for people in more elite roles; lectures and on-line learning for lower status workers. Playback Theatre sessions, in contrast to this, have the aim of bringing the members of groups and workplaces into a *common* moment (to some extent at least, acknowledging the divergence of audience experiences). When Nick Rowe writes that:

> Playback theatre…does offer an opportunity for marginalized voices to be heard and acknowledged and for opposing accounts to be registered. That is certainly the claim of the playback community, and it is one that can be readily exemplified. However, *what is perhaps more interesting* …[italics added] (2007, p.171)

he makes it clear by that final, throwaway phrase that he is *not* one of those marginalized voices. For people to whom those voices belong, (in New Zealand, Maori, Pasifika, immigrants, women, parents, queers, people with disabilities) my project suggested that the use of a method like Playback, as *one of a range* of professional development programmes, can present an opportunity for them to be visible to their colleagues and to participate, on their own terms in an event when "something … really happens, something we deeply desire, just because it escapes the closed circle of checks and balances, the calculus which accounts for everything …" (Caputo, 1997, p.160).

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[91] Sexist language modified, original follows: "Foray and Lundvall (1996:21) also argue that mastering [sic] these four kinds of knowledge takes place through different channels" (Fitzsimons, 1998, p. 201)

However, it is also important to look, clear-eyed, at the shortcomings possible with this form, and I do so in this chapter, first in terms of community narratives, then in terms of aesthetic reflections of those narratives, (looking particularly at the roles of actor and musician); then moving through some of the ambiguities and weaknesses of Playback as ritual, (looking particularly at the role of the facilitator); then as play, action method, polis, spectacle, public performance and finally as space for audience participation. In the final section of the chapter when *the practitioner speaks,* a walking uphill discussion about Playback between an actor, a businesswoman, an educator and a psychologist puts some of these objections together: they do arrive at the top of the hill – but only to go down it again.

Criticisms of Playback - as a venue for community storytelling

Over the last 30 years, the explosion of interest in narrative (Kateb, 2002; Rhodes & Brown, 2005; Sternberg, 2003) has coincided with the decades during which Playback Theatre has developed and Playback companies have been founded in many different places around the world. Theoretical developments in many aspects of human studies have been revaluing and looking with more depth and interest at the ways in which people experience, make sense of and remember the world through narratives (Apfelbaum, 2000; Armstrong, 2000; Aull, 2005; Benhabib, 1990, 1993; Boje, 2001, 2004; Bruner, 1990; Carey, 2007; Carpenter, 2004; Castaneda, 2006; Castor, 2005; Crossley, 2000; Damascos, 2003; Davin, 2003; Diekelmann, 2001; Flueckiger, 2003; Goodwin, 2004; Graham, 1999; Griffin, 2006; Gunther & Thomas, 2007; Holling & Calafell, 2007; Ings, 2005; Langellier, 2002; Lapsley, Nikora & Black, 2002; Licona, 2005; MacAulay, 2004; Park-Fuller, 2000, 2003; Pastika, 2003; Peterson & Langellier, 1997; Randall & Kenyon, 2004; Reinelt, 2001; Rhodes & Brown, 2005; Schaffer & Smith, 2004; Shoemaker, 2004; Slater & Rouner, 2002; Sternberg, 2003; Sugiyama, 2001; Wengraf, 2001; Wood, 2005; Wortham, 2001).

Yet, writing about Playback has, with some notable exceptions (eg. Hale, 1991; Harris, 1998; Rowe 2005, 2007), rather simplistically retained its nomenclature of the "tellers" and the "essence" of their "stories" largely implying unitary *subjects* and their *objects*. This reification of the notion of narrative is my first criticism of Playback. A major anxiety before a Playback performance is that there is no script! The quality of the event will depend on the stories the audiences are prepared to share. Therefore much skill goes into making an atmosphere in which the most interesting, personal, insightful,

raw and human stories can take their place. But one of the biggest dangers of the method is that the performers (especially the actors) will simply take the stories, maximise them in superb performance work and then move on.[92]

Playback language tries to defuse this possibility: in the very first newsletter of the International Playback Theatre Network (IPTN), in 1990, statements to try and offset this possibility are evident: the vision statement reads "The spontaneous enactment of personal experience in Playback Theatre builds connection between people by honouring the dignity, drama, and universality of their stories" (IPTN, 1990, p. 1) and in the current 2007 issue of *Interplay*, the newsletter, the IPTN President writes "Action is a theme for my playback work. Playback Theatre to me is about the experience. I am drawn to the immediacy, and the intimacy that is created through the sharing of stories. It is about meeting the other" (Halley, 2007, p. 2). Both statements contain significant shorthand and formulaic portmanteau terms perhaps designed to offset this danger of exploiting the audience by seeing their contributions as simply raw material: *dignity, honouring, universality, intimacy, meeting, 'the other'*. Perhaps such generalised terms are inevitable in pressured, compressed contexts where brevity is needed or desired. But why continue to use such general terms in an era when generalisations have been challenged and discredited and for an aesthetic practice which above all honours the particular? Why not emphasize the intersubjectivity of the practice and keep raising questions about the dilemma of how to keep developing the relationship with the audience?

Additionally, why is there a need in the context of the Newsletter of the Playback Theatre Network, which travels to members in many countries all round the world and is its chief means of communication of theoretical insights, to compress or truncate such discussions? Surely this place, above any other, needs to be a place for communication that is as clear, complex and concrete as possible?[93] Halley's statement contains a

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[92] Hence exploiting and in the end *using* the audience for their own ends this point is elaborated in the criticism of Playback as Group Method later in this chapter, on page 184

[93] I think a possible weakness here is that, unlike most journals which aim to support and develop a field of professional practice, there is no publication board for this journal, one which defines and adapts the journal's goals and strategies, so that the model of producing it has followed the first seven or eight years, when Jonathan Fox edited it as his contribution to the international network. I know that when I was in Halley's position briefly, as president of the international network, I found the task of writing the president's letter in the newsletter

significant clue, when she refers to the theme of "action" being a theme for her understanding of Playback thereby, perhaps, alluding to a preference for action over reflection among many Playback practitioners and a valuing of kinaesthetic over other ways of knowing and thinking including, perhaps especially, reading and writing. In a world which values the written word highly, many people who operate kinaesthetically may grasp the possibility of working rigorously, intellectually and intensely within an action method like Playback and contrast this work with the dryness they perceive in much theoretical writing. (I know this was true for me.) However, it is my contention that in terms of its fundamental dependence on narrative, Playback urgently needs to tap into the more complex understandings of personal story which have developed over the last few decades (and to which, arguably, it has contributed.)

Indeed, rather too often in Playback discourse, the concept of narrative in Playback has remained a somewhat nostalgic, traditionalized one, following a strong lead from Fox who, in his earlier 1986 book, had related both the storytelling *and* the performing in Playback to the pre-literary oral traditions of Europe, describing oral narrative style with its facets of aggregation, concrete narration, ritual and improvisation and looking at its purposes of being "prime repositories for cultural knowledge" in which "the teller included in the tale those moral precepts most valued by the culture" (pp. 16, 17). This has led to a dangerous kind of nostalgia (Kaufman, 2002) within the Playback discourse whose traces continue to be seen in, for example, things like the theme of the York conference (*At the City Gate*) which was opened by a traditional town crier. It is therefore a matter of concern that in a current statement about Playback, its originator Jonathan Fox again uses a very brief reference to the teller's "private story", reifying all the inputs from tellers, performers and audience as "gifts" and incidentally thereby forestalling criticism – which could appear ungenerous and lacking in appreciation for the 'gift':[94]

> A spirit of generosity underlies the playback experience. For the most part, the performers belong to groups that develop their skills through regular practice, then perform for their community as a gift (or near gift). The whole process is based on

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excruciatingly difficult because of the lack of clarity about the purpose of the task. Looking back on the newsletters it is Mary Good who, in the early 1990s when she was president of the network, consistently in her President's letters introduced theory from other disciplines and clearly tried to relate the Playback work to a wider theoretical context.

[94] This, incidentally, also forestalls some of the tough economic questions about Playback Theatre

> the idea of an exchange. The teller tells a private story publicly as a gift to the spectators. The actors risk failure in the enactment as a gift to the teller. The audience gives their deep attention. (Fox, 2007)[95]

In contrast to these simplistic utterances, at a kind of mid-way point between the earliest newsletter in 1990 and the present moment of this writing in 2007, in some of the late 1990s newsletters and in the 1999 *Gathering Voices*, a volume of essays about Playback which emerged from a symposium held at Kassel University in Germany, more complex and theoretically situated accounts of narrative were being developed to guide practice. For example, the 1998 issue of *Interplay* contains several more complex discussions of "story" in one of which, Fred Harris (U.S.) describes a way of what he calls "getting out of the box" to deconstruct narratives "by breaking them apart into fragmentary scenes" citing his "inspiration …[as] the epic theatre approach of Bread and Puppet…"(Harris, 1998, p.10). While there are still some references to "essence" in this issue, it seems that around that time in the Playback discussions, more nuanced descriptions and explorations about the purposes, features and *possibilities* of narratives were surfacing in the organization.

In 2000, Linda Park-Fuller, one of the few Playback practitioners who consistently make connections with contemporary theoretical developments, outlined in *Text and Performance Quarterly* some of the controversies surrounding the value of personal narratives which she saw on the one hand as being valued for their potential to "enable a re-appropriation of voice and reconstitution of self" and their ability to "reveal experience of marginalized peoples and…constitute a liberatory epistemology." (p.21). However, she also described some of the criticisms of personal narrative current at that time: "it has also been criticized for its ethical ambiguity and valuing of the victim

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[95] This statement seems wilfully out of step with a world in which, as Schaffer and Smith assert "Life narratives have become salable [*sic]* properties" (2004, p.11) so that, for example, in April 2007 there was a controversy in the UK concerning armed services personnel being permitted to sell the accounts of their experiences, in one case for a six figure sum. (Guardian Unlimited, 2007). It also masks the situation where some Playback practitioners have waived the early requirement to make their living at least half time from other work, to ensure that they maintain membership of their communities, "live in the world and be like their audiences, men and women of common work, family responsiblilities, and civic duty" (Fox 1986, p.3). In fact, audiences *do* buy Playback performances, one way and another, through tickets at the door, through workshop fees or through the commissions paid by organizations. Although great performances cannot be bought, any more than can excellent service in any role, since outstanding performance is a matter of performers committing extra passion and energy to the work, exceeding expectations, this is not a fact limited to Playback but applies to *all* purchases of performance or service.

(Benton); its exclusion of others (Hantzis); and its potential for reinscribing privileged discourse (Alcoff & Gray)" (p.21).

It is fair to say that these very criticisms have indeed at times arisen regarding Playback and have been strenuously debated within the network of Playback practitioners and performers, especially in the context of international conferences. Urgent concerns about ethical vagueness and uncertainty; the potential to reinforce victim mentalities; to exclude people from non-dominant populations and buttress dominant world views and languages had come particularly strongly into the Playback discourse during and following the Sixth International Playback Theatre Conference in Perth in 1997, which openly sought to address such issues and created a very lively sense of contestation and disturbance. For example, following the Perth conference, Henk Hofman, from Holland described the conference in *Interplay* with ambivalence, contrasting its "full-heartedness" with some of the incidents which happened during it:

> I have to tell you that never in my life (or in my 'drama life') have I attended a conference so full-hearted (even the moments I did not like)… The tall man who came up to me at the closing ceremony. He was in tears. He told me how isolated he has felt after the show in which he has told his story: He was bullied by Aboriginals when he was a boy. He chose for his role Gregory [one of only two African-American Playbackers present]. He asks me if a hierarchy of being hurt exists. The image of the crying man still meanders through my mind…. (Hofman, 1997, pp.1, 7)

Of the same occasion, Jude Murphy from Melbourne wrote: "the offer and the intention were there, right from the beginning, in the Conference brochure itself, to build a bridge between cultures" (Murphy, 2007, p.3). After detailing the inputs from Aboriginal, Māori and African-American participants, she described the same story as Hofman but from a very different point of view:

> Ron came out to tell the first story. This was a story of racial intolerance and violence but unusually for Australia, it was a story of black children victimizing a white child, Ron, the teller. This was not a story I found easy to hear and the uneasiness was reflected in the conducting and the enactment…I wished he hadn't spoken up, and I felt awkward watching and listening. Ron's story was for me a reminder of the great difficulties involved in truly gathering together, of the complexity of what we faced, of our resistance to facing them[96] [*sic*]. (Murphy,

[96] I read in Interplay that I was an actor for this story, alongside people from the USA, Japan, Finland, the UK, Hungary, Australia and US. I remember registering almost bodily a sensation that the teller was trying to close down in some way the theme of meeting on a bridge between cultures and to pre-empt its terms. On reading both Jude and Henk's accounts later, in my view neither of them saw this. As performers we had struggled to keep the theme open and to

2007, p.4).

A strong sense of the contestability and dynamics of narration and reception are visible in these discussions (Batten, 1997): the Perth conference had been attended by, among others, small numbers of indigenous Australians and New Zealanders, by the two African-American Playback practitioners who were board members at that time and by over 20 Japanese Playback performers and students. The themes of inclusion/exclusion and privilege were exemplified daily in the translation between English and Japanese which was necessary in many sessions; were heightened at crucial moments when, for example, the Japanese performers enacted sparely, sombrely and with consummate artistry the story about a conference member's parents and their experiences in a Japanese prison camp in Indonesia; and came to a climax when a senior Playback practitioner Francis Batten, who was English by birth and had played a significant role in training and developing many theatre, psychodrama and Playback practitioners in both Australia and New Zealand, facilitated a session in the conference forum. In response to the debate about Playback and its potential to liberate or oppress which had been ongoing throughout that conference, Batten undertook to expand the sociometric roles of in a story about anorexia told by a middle aged Japanese woman teller so that the stage became filled by people playing the social roles which all impacted on the story. In his 2005 thesis, Nick Rowe states that:

> According to Batten this was a very successful piece of theatre, which '…rendered a moving story, sensitively and delicately.' (2002) However, his view of the work was not shared by a significant number of people in the audience. Although herself supportive of what Batten was attempting, Di Adderley, a British playback practitioner, described to me the 'resistance' in the audience to what Batten was doing and the 'anger and fury' that was present. These views were later expressed in the pages of *Interplay* and in a collection of essays about playback theatre (Fox and Dauber 1999).
> …according to Batten, immediately after the event the teller approached him and thanked him for the piece of work….Later, however, she wrote the following in *Interplay, "*As the theatre started, what happened on stage was totally alien to what I understood to be playback theatre. As the conductor started asking the whole audience as to how they thought about anorexia, my strong emotions as a teller ceased, and *I watched everything that went on stage as a total outsider, but from the teller's chair*.[italics added]." (Rowe, 2005, pp. 283-284)

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represent Ron's experience without affirming his victimhood. In my view to have some shared concepts around the performativity of narrative would support Playback performers in such a situation.

I discuss this event in the section on group method on page 186. For now, as part of the two criticisms I have voiced: **first** of Playback practitioners tending to reify the stories and and **second**, of their seeing stories them simply as raw material, (demonstrating a disconnection from complex contemporary theories of narrative, and instead tending to describe storytelling as part of an almost lost pastoral tradition - a view strongly contradicted daily in mass and electronic media, where personal narrative forms have burst into life in a whole constellation of new and surprising incarnations), I want to emphasize as part of these criticisms around over-simplified views of *story*, that it seems to me that many Playback practitioners and Playback practices as a whole seem not to have clear processes to acknowledge and work from the contemporary awareness that narratives are not simply referential but *performative* statements: that is, people tell them not only to communicate something about the past but to *make something happen* in the present and future.

Importantly, "when personal narrative materializes performativity …there is always danger and risk…because such relations are multiple, complexly interconnected and contradictory…" (Langellier, 1999, p.129). Because of this, it is therefore vitally important when eliciting personal narratives to be not only open and receptive but also politically sceptical in terms of the stories being offered by the audience: as Stone-Mediatore asserts "feminists and poststructuralists have argued that we can no longer trust stories of experience to challenge ruling worldviews, for such stories are themselves constituted through ideological lenses." (2003, p.1) Peterson and Langellier, writing about personal narrative agree and cite Joan Scott's 1993 comment that "what counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straight-forward; it is always contested, and always therefore political" (Peterson & Langellier, 1997, p.136.). To develop this level of scepticism and enquiry regarding stories, it is necessary to move beyond traditional tropes, theatre conventions, story structures and explicitly therapeutic ways of seeing narrative: the requirement Langellier had of researchers is equally incumbent on Playback performers: "To be ethically responsible in studying [or performing] personal narratives, researchers must take care not to reproduce in scholarship [or in performance] the social differences – gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual preference, etc. – that mark Otherness and participate in oppressive systems." (1989, p.271)

This creates an extreme demand of Playback performers: "because ideology operates by 'saturating' our consciousness so that it is embedded in our 'meaning and practices'

(Apple, 1979), emancipation from the dominating influence of ideology may not be possible through processes of reflection…" (Grundy, 1987, p.111). In my view, it is vital that Playback practitioners consciously seek culturally and politically dislocating *experiences*, as the three members of the original company whom I interviewed had, in the years before they came together in the Playback work, when they all experienced a form of volunteer abroad work as young adults, Jonathan Fox in Nepal, Jo Salas in Sarawak and Judy Swallow in Ethiopia. It is my perception that these experiences of being outside familiar cultural contexts helped to form Playback in important, but largely unacknowledged ways: Fox occasionally refers in a kind of shorthand to his experience: "two years of living in a village in Nepal gave me firsthand experience of preindustrial culture." (1999a, p. 14). As far as I know, Salas and Swallow have not published at any length in the Playback forum their experiences in their volunteer abroad experiences, though Swalllow described some of her experience of Ethiopia in my interview with her in 2005 (see Appendix Three on page 456). The lack of explicit requirements for Playback performers to have willingly embraced and looked for culturally decentering experiences forms the basis of my **third** major criticism of the form.

Of course non dominant members of any society live with cultural disruption daily. In this regard, another very great benefit that performers from groups which are non-dominant in any society bring to their Playback colleagues is highlighted: their daily negotiation of such cultural and political dislocations and therefore their shedding of a sceptical eye on what may be taken to be inevitable assumptions, processes or metanarratives is invaluable to any Playback company and needs to be actively sought, and deeply valued. If members of non-dominant groups are not encouraged and supported to share these insights, there is the risk of them being used as tokens, who enable dominance to continue. My **fourth** criticism is that by not designing processes for self-criticism, political analysis and the active seeking of critique into the agreed procedures and structures of Playback,[97] there is a danger of this kind of scepticism towards dominant narratives remaining an optional extra of Playback work, which can be done without. Michael Clemente spoke of the women in the early years of the

[97] While there are strong guidelines regarding these processes, they tend not to have been formulated explicitly and thus are seen as optional rather than necessary parts of the work. Some principles in this regard need to be made explicit in the written Playback discourse.

original company having "a way of making fun of male domination…machoism as an entity, they had a way of needling and making fun of" (Clemente & Fox, 1991, p.4). I doubt that any members of the original company would imagine any Playback groups operating without self-questioning, scepticism towards dominant narratives and critique, these qualities being so much of their introjected world view: but I would suggest that the lack of explicit, agreed processes for these phases of reflexivity is a design fault of Playback that has not yet been addressed, as the initial apprenticeship phase of Playback's development comes to a close. This shortcoming of the work needs to be addressed.

Criticisms of Playback - as a venue for aesthetic reflection

> *"To hold a teller's story in the hand is to hold the raw materials for a poem" (Hall, 2005, p.4).*

The criticisms which apply to Playback's potential to misunderstand story and to reinscribe privilege in its mishearings of story can also pertain to the aesthetic production of narratives in the enactment phases of a performance. When performers join Playback groups, they may be unlikely to recognise, to any great extent, its genealogy in terms of the European avant garde traditions which Fox has cited, which strongly formed the work and some threads of which I have followed in Chapter Two. This gives rise to my **fifth** criticism which is that, without such awareness, many performers will use idioms and performance tropes from mainstream performance traditions and the enactment of stories risks becoming prosaic, obvious and supportive of dominant values. As yet, in my view, Playback has not found ways to assertively counter the potential for this as another level of reinscription of stereotypical thinking, especially when there seems to be a growing tendency in some contexts, not to cast actors in individual roles, although actors speaking in such roles could articulate discounted viewpoints and assist the counter-stereotyping (Heppekau, 2003).[98] Different classes, social groups, cultures, genders, sexualities have distinct though not rigidly defineable aesthetic modes – and to accurately reflect a village, town, city, province, as many of these as possible need to be in the awareness of the performing group, if it is not to enact social exclusion. This is a theme which has frequently been addressed in *Interplay*, the newsletter of the International Playback Theatre Network

[98] When counter-stereotyping does get raised in the Playback literature, it is under the banner of diversity or social awareness: yet this is essentially also an aesthetic discussion.

(IPTN), and it is the energising question of original company member, Jo Salas's, 1993 book *Improvising Real Life* in which she explains both how to do Playback and why certain emphases within Playback are important.

I strongly feel that it is extremely helpful for Playback practitioners to take on board its development out of early 20th century artistic practice which refuted the compartmentalization of endeavour into binary polarised categories: artistic/mundane, mental/emotional, sacred/profane, individual/collective, political/apolitical.
In addition, around each Playback performing group, is a vernacular performing tradition with its own range of forms, whether it be indigenous dance and contemporary rap in New York, singing in Kiribas (Hosking & Penny, 1999), haka in Auckland or bossa nova in Brazil. These traditions contain deep resonances for the audiences in the contexts to which they belong and to step into the public arena on that earth could be seen as needing to learn something of those traditions, if performers can find anyone willing to teach it. Some traditions more than others are secret or have stringent performance requirements based in ritual and sometimes descent lines: even so, to learn something of the tradition connects the Playback group with its context in a way that has the potential to cut through with brutality and grace the readymade narrative tropes provided by mass entertainment forms and ensure that neo-colonial moves are not being re-enacted in Playback aesthetic work. It is not about learning the tradition to then *perform* it but more about learning to connect with the ground on which one stands and to have in one's repertoire an added vocabulary of stance, breath, gesture. It may be that no indigenous teachers can be found – but if classes are available, in whatever format or forum, in my view they are core education for Playback performers.

Throughout the 1990s, when International Conferences occurred every year or two, practitioners shared practical ways of improving aesthetic practice and a nascent tradition of praxis was created as people theorised and gave accounts of their practice in which they reflected on it. For example, Ann Hale, in March 1991 gave a seven-step process to use in rehearsal for assisting actors to be more mindful of the beginning, middle and end of a story: by doing this "a frequent reaction…is astonishment about what is thought to be the 'beginning' of the story. Often the actor portrays something which is only hinted at …this brings excitement to the form" (Hale, 1991, p.7). This kind of support for extending the possibilities of enactment is followed up in *Interplay* by articles like Fred Harris's 1998 article. A panoply of voices is heard, discussing and

debating, sharing very concrete ideas for practice. Just two examples: in March 1995, Mary Good reviewed Mimi Katzenbach's paper on *A Unifying Psychology for the Art of Playback Theatre* which Good describes as 'engaging and thoughtful" (p.6) and of which she wrote "I believe there is a possibility that this paper might be published in a collection of papers. Keep watching the newsletter for news of it" (Good, 1995, p. 9).[99] There were papers published in the records of the first Playback Symposium at Kassel (but not the second in 2005 at Tempe Arizona) and there is a long list of essays available on the Centre for Playback Theatre site: however, the public "Playback" voices have often been dominated by Fox, Salas and now their daughter, Hannah Fox who has a chapter in Adam Blatner's 2007 book on *Interactive and Improvisational Drama* (Fox, 2007) and an article soon to be published in *The Drama Review*. Nick Rowe's 2007 book *Playing the Other* and Daniel Feldhendler's 2006 book *Théâtre en miroirs: L'histoire de vie mise en scène* are welcome contributions broadening the range of voices heard: it is to be hoped that the development of both practical and theoretical writings on Playback, in all possible contexts, will continue and strengthen.[100]

A **seventh** criticism of Playback is to do with a lack of welcoming of uncomfortable questions and accounts of mistakes. Quite common in the newsletter are anxious debates about whether Playback is artistic enough especially contrasting the artistic and therapeutic dimensions of the work. There are feelings of uneasiness running through these debates: for many theatre practitioners, performing improvisation has the disadvantage of a distinct possibility of getting things wrong, while another set of voices emphasizes therapeutic awareness and a third focuses on context. Mistakes in all these dimensions are possible of course. Indeed, in Playback, getting things wrong is to some extent a certainty: it is *how we deal with* the mistakes that defines and describes us.[101] It seems that, on the whole, Playback practitioners seem more

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[99] However, to date, to my knowledge, Katzenbach's paper has not been published in the Playback publications and nor has Good's own thesis on the art of Playback facilitation.

[100] Zarrilli's (2004) phenomenological account of the embodied experience of acting in general theatrical contexts illustrates the kind of description and analysis which would help practitioners.

[101] Theatre practitioners can achieve artistically in works which they spend months preparing, but the audience they long to address may not come to that theatre or concert hall. In Playback, the group goes out into work, community, conference settings: commissions can be sought in the contexts which the group aspires to serve. For these reasons, the possibility of relevance, immediacy and connection with the audience are trade-offs with perfection that Playback actors and musicians are prepared to make

prepared to share in *Interplay*, their international journal, accounts of success than to wrestle with theoretical dilemmas or the challenges brought into sharp relief by accounts of failure[102]. Reviewing *Interplay*, and the publications so far on Playback, and knowing that failure is an inevitable by-product of improvisation, it seems to me that insufficient attention or generating of theoretical insight has been given to date to the questions of what may lead to mistakes or how to find out about and what to do in, moments of failure.[103] As a community of practitioners, the formation of in-groups and geographically proximate networks has perhaps militated against the elucidation of a coherent debate argued through the columns of *Interplay*: and I would suggest that this is partly caused by the lack of an international editorial board which could follow through such concerns and encourage the development of a professionally reflective and self-questioning debate concerned with the induction of newcomers, the prevention of complacency in experienced practitioners and the ongoing evolution of the form. In 2001 Veronica Needa expressed a sense of the pull between affirming the freedom of new performers to experiment and "on the other hand, the more we work with [Playback], the more we realize its power. Proper use of power benefits from further training, supervision, good cognisance of the ritual aspect of Playback Theatre, and the spirit of this work" (Needa, 2001, p. 21).

As a place to be thinking – embodied cognition

Over the years of Playback's development, the body too has changed in theoretical discourse. Where once it was seen as unshakably subordinate and antithetical to the mind, an idea which remains enshrined in many of our language forms and habits, in contemporary terms, the body has led some of the most impassioned discussion and intellectual change of the last fifty years. As the insights of Freud and his students into the ways in which bodily experiences formed mental patterning and personality became part of the intellectual mainstream, separation between body and mind was questioned and challenged. Playback is part of this challenge: it presents ways of thinking

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[102] I understand this, struggling myself with how to write about the failures in the work we did for Ngākau.

[103] Reviewing the articles in Interplay I find that I did indeed open up an account of failing, in the Interplay of June 1996 when I gave an account of handling clumsily the presence of children in a public performance and sought insights from other practitioners (Day, 1996). This opening or in improvisational terms, "offer" was not taken up; or followed up by anyone else. I suggest that an editorial board would assist the development of themes and responses in *Interplay*.

kinaesthetically and spatially, supporting people to explore self- other- and world-knowing through shared bodily experience of space, sound, movement, music.

Chapter Two explored one important aspect of the challenges to the mind/body dualism as it concerned women and non-European people: the Cartesian split left women representing the natural world and the private family world, while the male-identified subject created in the early modern era (late 17th century onward) stood for and participated in both culture and the public world of politics (Gatens, 2004). In addition, "Europe" stood for civilisation while "the rest" stood for barbarism. J.M. Coetzee uses the narrating voice of a magistrate in Sounth Africa:

> Empire has located its existence not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe. Empire dooms itself to live in history and plot against history. One thought alone preoccupies the submerged mind of Empire: how not to end, how not to die, how to prolong its era. By day it pursues its enemies. It is cunning and ruthless, it sends its bloodhounds everywhere. By night it feeds on images of disaster: the sack of cities, the rape of populations, pyramids of bones, acres of desolation. A mad vision yet a virulent one: I, wading in the ooze, am no less infected by it than the faithful Colonel Joll as he tracks the enemies of Empire through the boundless desert, sword unsheathed to cut down barbarian after barbarian. (Coetzee, cited in Pechey, 2007, pp.5-6)

Of course in both these cases there have been significant exceptional voices among the dominant communities: men, like Frederick Douglass, who supported women's political and cultural validity (Kimmel, 1995) and Europeans like Hannah Arendt (Arendt, 1973) who concerned themselves with the ways in which indigenous traditions and experiences from many parts of the world belied, revealed and questioned Europe's view of itself. Indeed, the twentieth century was an exploration and exposure of the fabrications involved in these classificatory regimes even though they have proved hard to shift in some places where this way of seeing human existence is presumed to be *the way it is*. Ironically, many of the voices challenging these putative certainties come from 'the West': Moira Gatens from Australia suggests a way of thinking based on Spinoza to subvert these classifications: so that

> difference could not be decided a priori but rather recognised in the unfolding of shared (or conflicting) aims and objectives of groups of bodies. To seek to create a politico-ethical organization where all, in their own manner, seek to maximise the possibilities of their activity must take into account different beings and their desires, and their understanding of their being and their desires. It is an unavoidable (and

> welcome) consequence of constructing an embodied ethics that ethics would no longer pretend to be universal. (Gatens, 2004, pp. 176-177)

Playback is just such an organization – where people "seek to maximise the possibilities of their activity" and where embodied ethics have the potential to be explored through situated narratives and counter-narratives, but I have to question some of its accounts and understandings of itself as evident in its published discourse and history. My **eighth criticism** concerns significant losses along the way of authoritative female and non-dominant voices: it seems there has also been a reluctance to publish the sustained theorising of women, such as the essays of Mimi Katzenbach and Mary Good.[104] There is also on record, a kind of elision of the contribution of the women members into the development of the original Playback company. As I have indicated, in my view it is not enough to simply state that women were there: unless their specific contributions are noted, the myth of the father/progenitor is sustained and this is not helpful, for the Playback work. Judy Swallow, one of the members from the original company still practising Playback, in her interview on page 457 identified the strong support of Jonathan Fox but also referred to her own contributions:

> And I think looking back one of the most important things for my *own* personal development was that this was the first time in my life where I could have an idea and a male person would consider it - you know like really consider it and so with that I could get enthusiastic and I could say "Oh what happens if we try this and what happens if we try that…"
> And you know Fluid Sculptures "Well what happens if we do this with feelings? You know these… machines with feelings" and Oh look you know…
> And so all those things, the word conductor was like "Oh well what about *this* word?" I said, "You know conductor, it's sort like electricity and then oh yeah it's sort of like orchestra conductor and O yeah it's sort of like the conductor on a train…"
> And I can talk with things like that *only* in an atmosphere of receptivity.… and I think Jonathan's infinitely patient and I felt the security of being able to have all these ideas and all these thoughts and all these feelings and everything else gurgling out of me – and then it wasn't chaotic because Jonathan would think about it and say "Okay well why don't we try this?" …(J.Swallow, personal communication, February 26, 2005.)

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[104] In addition, anxiety about being a man in this activity where there is often a majority of women has ensured that even in a supposedly emancipatory activity such as Playback, there have been several discussions published in the literature about being a man in Playback (Clemente & Fox 1991, Sutcliffe 1993), but none that I could find about being a woman. While this probably results from an anti-essentialist bias among the women practitioners who may not have primarily seen themselves as 'women', what it means is that once again, women are less visible in the theoretical record, even if they are well represented the embodied theory of practical work.

In the early 1990s Fox and Michael Clemente, a founding member of the original Playback company and gay Italian-American, had a conversation about *Being a Man in Playback* in which Clemente referred to this group of women in the original company. He said:

> I felt that there was a strong consistent group of women in Playback. They were strong individuals and very loyal. Somehow their existence and their unified power and their awareness of this power *was one of the things that kept us going for twelve or however many years*. [italics added] (Clemente, 1991, p.4)

This kind of picture is belied by much of the writing about Playback. Clemente also refers to the active critique of masculinity that the women in the original company exercised but his interviewer, Jonathan Fox, seems not to hear what he is saying:

> …they did have a way of making fun of male domination or male
> *You mean machoism?*
> Machoism as an entity, they had a way of needling and making fun of.
> *Yet at the same time we also had a way of being very sexy with each other – talking coarse and using erotic language. This couldn't have happened if the battle lines had been too strongly drawn.*
> Yes, what you asked before was how did I relate to that. As a man coming to terms with being gay and trying to figure out where that really fit into society, I felt like I really related to the women empowering themselves. (Clemente & Fox, 1991, p.4)

It seems to me that the complexity of these interactions have not been evident to subsequent students and practitioners of Playback because the work of documentation has not kept up with the changes in current explorations in intellectual life of discussing and describing embodied minds. Instead, the PR version of Playback which Jo Salas spoke of in her interview with me has become a kind of received narrative. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Salas said, in answer to a question I asked her, about significant mistakes or failures:

> … something that we would have done differently with hindsight was the way it was always, from the beginning, "Jonathan and the group." That's how we put it out to the world. I had a lot of responsibility for doing that, because I wrote the brochures and the press releases and I always wrote "Jonathan Fox this, Jonathan Fox that…" …. That's the old model, and that's the story that the world very much wants. They want the man that we can identify, that we can make famous. The truth is much more complex.
> (Salas, 2003, pers.comm)

This is a serious shortcoming and a challenge to all Playback theoreticians. To this end, I think it is helpful to be strongly conscious of ways of seeing the world which do not

dichotomise mind and body.[105] On the contrary, it is a confirmation and a *support* to Playback practice to know that there are ways of theorising what our Playback practice points to: this encourages the view of Playback as a cognitive practice, exploring themes purposefully and contributing to understanding:

> For Spinoza the body is not part of passive nature ruled over by an active mind but rather the body is the ground of human action. The mind is constituted by the affirmation of the actual existence of the body, and reason is active and embodied precisely because it is the affirmation of a particular bodily existence. (Gatens, 2004, p. 177).

Playback discourse is clarified and strengthened by looking in more detail at the way the body is seen in current theoretical discourse and by endeavouring to support practitioners to move beyond stereotypes and media representations of the body as the field on which the mind exercises control and governance (supremely available now, in the opportunities for pharmaceutical and surgical enhancement!). An **ninth** criticism is that if Playback performances do not consciously and explicitly critique bodily stereotypes, by presenting a range of bodies and abilities on stage, all focussing on being fit and expressive whatever their shape or configuration, in my view, they run the risk of reinforcing dominant modes of viewing the body as controllable, domesticated and potentially chaotic, which reinscribes the body/mind dichotomy and undercuts the work of embodied cognition which the Playback work calls them to do.

As ritual container

Westernised societies may be seen in many countries to have become less formal and ritualised over the last half century. Churches, temples, law courts, hospitals, educational assessments maintain their structures, but personal and social lives have become in some ways less bound by agreed ritual practices, while people engage in postmodern assembly of their own rituals of choice (gym, hairdresser, pub attendance, computer auction) and the milestones of birth, puberty, partnership, eldership and death are marked in extremely varied ritualistic ways.

A **tenth** criticism of Playback is that first-time audience members do not know what to expect and, although at conferences companies eagerly exchange their promotional

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[105] I suspect that this would have been part of the critique of some of the strong consistent group of women of which Clemente speaks.

material, no serious exploration of attempts to prepare the audience seems to have been made. To me, this indicates a serious lack of ethical commitment to the audience. Rea Dennis's 2004 thesis explored the ritual dimensions of Playback performances and found that a major drama of the experience for the audience was in fact the internal one about whether or not to contribute:

> Unlike some traditional ritual performances, the liminal opportunity afforded through the ritualised structure of the Playback Theatre performance has not induced deep trance states for audience members. The study showed that audience members at Playback Theatre have been constantly engaged by the invitation to participate… Audience members assessed new information and considered any intuitive incongruency they felt in response to the Playback Theatre process. The dynamic of reflective distance enhanced the engagement of the audience and introduced a tension of participation. Tension of participation could be considered the more potent tension underpinning audience members' experiences of the oneoff community-based Playback Theatre event; *more than the dramatic tensions emerging from the performative acts of storytelling and enacting* [italics added]. (Dennis, 2004, p 254-255).

In public performances, most often a new audience member is brought by a friend who acts as a mentor and has probably tried to explain ahead of time what will happen (Playback is notoriously difficult to describe, as are many improvisatory forms). However, in an organizational setting, to have an effective way of preparing the audience would support them, especially when the performance is to take place in the middle of a work day, as ours did.[106] With the advent of free internet-based digital libraries, the possibility of sending using video representations of Playback practice represents a positive new possibility for preparing audiences in terms of the particular rituals and expectations of the Playback session (Dobraspace, 2007; Sweepflicks, 2007; Tapestry Playback Theatre, 2006; Vredevanutrecht, 2007; Wildavidjan, 2006).

An **eleventh** criticism concerning ritual relates to the ending of the performance. While the role of the facilitator has been identified as the single most important element in creating the ritual, all company members need a strong commitment and feel for the

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[106] Of course there is the danger that this might put some participants off or intimidate them. However, it is respectful towards the audience to try and inform them to the best of our ability. The difficulty involved in preparing audiences is one that needs addressing by Playback practitioners worldwide and many companies have websites which attempt to do this: it was an element of our practical work which was not well-defined. At the health care centres in which we worked, although written accounts had been given of what the performances would entail, inevitably the busiest staff members had not read these accounts, as was shown in the interviews and this had a marked effect on their experience.

different stages of the Playback ritual first on the macro level, where a performance moves through stages of separation, enactment and finally to the stage of incorporation of what has been experienced and re-emergence back out into daily concerns. In the early days of Auckland Playback Theatre, tea and biscuits were always shared at the end of the performance, as I think they were in many companies. Now however, in my observation, in many companies that stage of sharing drink, food and conversation has been dropped, because the need to pack up and get home before it is too late has been seen to be more important than what was defined quite reductively as simply *having tea*. In terms of the ritual of Playback this needs to be readdressed I think. Dennis, who had, like me, sought feedback from audience members found some reactions which led her to the conclusion that:

> implications arising from the study with respect to the after-show period point to the need for Companies and community organizers to extend the performance in a way that formalises this period.
> Audience members incorporate their experiences during this time. They engage in reflective discussion and they tell more stories. Some require debriefing. There is scope for performances with specific contexts, especially those promoted as forums or dialogues (e.g. reconciliation), to facilitate a more formal after-show discussion. This is a useful way for people to integrate the intellectual responses to the topic alongside the emotional/metaphoric experience of the performance.
> The after-show period is also implicated as a time when the community could take responsibility for assisting people to incorporate their experience of the performance. This instills the notion of respect for the community's capacity to respond. In some cases, it might be necessary to set up formal processes for this. (Dennis, 2004, pp.267-268)

It is worth noting that, as Hare & Hare explain (1996, p.65), when Zerka Moreno wrote a set of rules for psychodrama in 1965, she emphasized that "Psychodrama consists of three portions: the warm up, the action portion and the post-action sharing by the group." Hare and Hare go on to emphasize that sharing "need not be verbal. It could be a pregnant silence, or having group members carry out some activity together" (Hare & Hare, 1996, p. 65). The informality of this stage of the Playback ritual can be deceptive: in many contexts people associate ritual with formality. However, most ritualistic occasions proceed by an alternation of formal (in Playback often the opening words are rather formal in their appearance and tone) with informal, as in this final stage of the ritual when audience and performers mingle and converse. Another way to complete the process might be through feedback forms, facilitated discussions or interviews: however, to my knowledge in most Playback companies there also are no standard arrangements to follow up with audience members and not even a phone number given

which audience members could ring if they wanted to debrief or continue the discussion that the performance has started: this in itself suggests to me that while Playback companies may talk about themselves as engaging in dialogue, their commitment to the audience members may all too easily cease once they have got what they wanted in terms of the audience narratives which provided the content of their performance. An possible loss of this important post-performance stage of the Playback ritual in some companies leads to a need to redefine and redesign it.[107]

A **twelfth**, related point is that, without understanding the meanings and efficacy underlying the ritual, I have observed companies losing the ritual precision of the small micro-cycles which are like the wheels propelling the performance as the participants repeat the five Playback stages of: audience/facilitator dialogue, audience storytelling; musical overture; enactment by musicians and actors; and the final storyteller's comments with feedback and reintegration leading on to a new dialogue between audience and facilitator and a new turn of the wheel. Within each of these five stages too, crucial ritual moments occur which anchor the ritual engagement or transition: as when performers stand up when they take on roles for example, or as the actors unobtrusively and neutrally move to the side of the stage for the musicians to play the musical overture. Again, the heartbeat of silence between the musicians finishing their overture and the actors beginning their enactment is a very subtle anchor point, as is the silence at the end when the performers "turn to look in acknowledgement at the teller" (Chesner, 2002, p.44). Any elision or lack of clarity in such moments tends to suggest unawareness of the requirements of Playback ritual practice. Chesner refers to the way that these small aspects of the Playback ritual all assist the creation of strong containing boundaries which create safety for the audience. One example that she gives is the fact that *only the facilitator* dialogues with the teller.

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[107] Boggs, Mickel & Holtom, writing about the use of role play in an educational setting, state that "although there are many ways the in-class session can unfold, the general sequence has three basic parts: scene and character development, management situation, and facilitated discussion and debrief " (Boggs, Mickel & Holtom, 2007, p.840). The stage of debriefing and facilitated discussion emphasizes learning and prevents unreflective over-identification by both performers and audience. Psychodrama teacher Max Clayton emphasizes that the closure of a session aims to leave all participants connected with the others in the group and "group members frequently warm up to roles that are functional during the sharing phase…due to the quality and quantity of the sharing and the teaching that may be done by the director" (1991, p.62). To me, it seems important to re-evaluate and perhaps even redesign this closing phase of Playback performance work.

> It is a matter of the ritual form that the actors do not address the teller. They have to trust the conductor [facilitator] to elicit enough information in the interview. This 'rule' ensures that there is a boundary in place for the teller. (Chesner, 2002, p.54)

The clarity of these boundaries makes for a robust container within which the audience can explore substantial and revealing stories.[108]

Role of the facilitator

In terms of the ritual a substantial portion of the responsibility falls on the facilitator. While facilitating any event is subtle and multi-dimensional, a person's strengths in one or two areas can often suffice to keep a group moving and engaged: a Playback event on the other hand requires expertise in and confident practice of a challenging array of skills. Mary Good's 1986 psychodrama thesis lists 29 roles that the facilitator is required to attend to (see *Table 2 Adapted from Mary Good's Roles of the Conductor Pre-performance* on page 112). The training for this role has traditionally been delivered in an apprenticeship model, emphasizing contact with the original company and/or with people who have practised for a long time. Yet, there are many people who want to begin Playback as soon as they have seen it or heard about it and who have no possibility of travelling to gain the training. Jo Salas's *how to* book (1993/2003) contains some important information but it is rather brief. Good's thesis is out of print. The **thirteenth criticism** concerns this: there is urgent need of more coherent and organized methods of training facilitators which can involve structures of professional development and accreditation which could be presented perhaps through public institutions or distance education, as well as the endorsing and supporting presence of strengthened local and global networks. Without such a programme, the complexities of the facilitation skills involved in Playback (which are usually not visible to most members of the audience), may not be clear to the larger distributed network of Playback participants which is developing worldwide. Without such awareness of the

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[108] Having said all of this, I do not want to suggest that there is a multitude of immutable rules within Playback: Playback is an improvisational art and this applies to the ritual as much as it does to the other parts of Playback. Sometimes elements of a ritual need to be adapted, because spontaneity is valued in every part of the activity. As in jazz, the actors and musicians have creative freedom and in rehearsals they develop their skills to exercise freedoms within their roles so that, as in jazz "each performer assumes some degree of …freedom with respect to the content and manner of their …display" (John, Grove & Fisk, 2006, p. 252). The important things seem to be, as in jazz, rehearsing intensively enough to be clear about the purposes and sequences of the steps of the ritual, knowing when one is breaking it, signalling to each other when one is doing so, supporting each other and trusting each other in the process.

complex tasks and interests to be balanced, superficial and simplistic Playback facilitation can lead to an impoverished version of the work.

There has been a reluctance to speak clearly about some of the principles behind the decisions made by facilitators because of not wanting to *lay down the law*: as is shown for example when, at the second symposium on Playback at the Arizona State University in Tempe Arizona in 2005, I asked Jonathan Fox about the portrayal of death, in an open dialogue which was part of the final day of the conference:

> FD: in my Playback lineage I was brought up in Playback that if someone talks in a story about a death or about someone who's died they're asking to see it … and the more I've read about the influences on Playback the more I've come to see this as intrinsic to the form…
> JF: Okay there's a specific question there and that has to do with the portrayal of death on the stage. And I would agree with you – although there's no – I feel there's no rule about it – *there's no rule about any of the aesthetic elements of Playback*…[italics added] but if somebody talks about mentions a death… in their story – then chances are you want to portray that… and that by not portraying it often we're in some way avoiding something that's very important about the story that may have more to do with our own reluctance. (Fox, personal communication, 27 February, 2005)

With the ubiquity of digital imagery through venues like YouTube, facilitation skills can be developed world wide through a combination of theoretical discussions, practical demonstrations and supervision: for a multi-modal activity like Playback, this possibility for the professional formation and development of facilitators is a matter of necessity.

Playback as play

The **fourteenth** point is a caveat on the ludic playfulness that Raimundo (2002) celebrates (in his book which describes doing psychodrama enactments with lego figurines) when he suggests that "a playful spirit, in organizations, families and in any type of relationship will contribute to creativity and loosening up tense and rigid behaviours" (p. 18): the playfulness needs to be about the themes and images, and the group *must not* be seduced into playing people off against each other, nor into laughing at people nor reinforcing comfortable accepted patterns of in-crowd and margins. Sometimes an audience member will not feel safe enough to play.

Prendergast (2004), who likes to use the term "playing attention" (p.50) rather than *paying* attention, describes Paul Thom's outlining of the various parameters of the

playful attention of the audience, showing how the six modes of playful attention function: first, as the audience's attention can play over past, present and future; second as their attention strays between the performers as they select what they focus on moment by moment; third as their awareness plays "between content and vehicle" (Thom 1993 cited in Prendergast, 2004, p.41) or in Playback, between audience narrative and the way it is enacted; fourth their awareness may play between this performance and others; fifth between this performance and their own lives; and finally between what is inside this performance space and what is going on outside it. Nick Rowe suggests that the multiple strands of interpretation are part of the efficacy of Playback as a method of opening up stories: "Stories can enslave individuals and communities: the playback process at its best opens up these stories to investigation and playful restructuring" (2007, p.39). To support this idea, he cites psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas who:

> asserts that the fundamental agency of change in psychoanalysis is not the discovery of truths; rather it is the free associative and playful discourse of the relationship itself. He writes: "If unconscious thinking is too complex to be grasped by consciousness, if one person's unconscious can communicate with another's unconscious mind only by playing with it, then psychoanalysis is a radical act….and establishes in place of the morality of the thematic a dissembling spirit that plays the self into myriad realities." (Rowe, 2007, pp.39-40)

If this occurs in psychoanalysis, how much more so in Playback, where the improvisational endeavour ensures that the performers cannot work only from the level of their conscious thinking but use both conscious and unconscious signals? The danger is that one person's playfulness while delighting some, might concern or offend others.[109] The actor may misread the teller, or fail to convey the story as it was. Rowe tells of such an incident:

> During the enactment of a story concerning the problems encountered by a man travelling by train with a disabled friend, an actor represented the disabled man as passive and suggested through his speech and movement that he may also have a learning disability. In his feedback the teller said, "That was great, except my friend was much more capable than you portrayed: he was, in fact, a lawyer". (2007, p. 210-211)

Rowe uses this account to highlight "the risk that through stereotyping and presumption the idiosyncrasy of the other is appropriated and erased" (p.211). He only knew about

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[109] As happened in our work in Ngākau, see Chapter Eight on page 247.

this event because the teller spoke up assertively: in our experience at Ngākau, I only found out about a teller's unhappiness and the awareness of other audience members about this because I interviewed audience members later, something which does not routinely happen in Playback.

As group method

These shifts of viewpoints and meanings are part of Playback as a group action method, which was in its early days closely allied to and emerging in the same place geographically as the American home of psychodrama, and which is open to some of the criticisms which have been levelled at psychodrama. Adam Blatner in his 1988 *Foundations of Psychodrama* described a serious accusation of action methods concerning the relatively public elucidation of personal narratives in a setting without follow-up sessions. Blatner describes how

> Moreno's use of the open group session was shocking to the mainstream of the [psychotherapy] profession….In the 1940s he opened a studio on the Upper East Side of New York City where he worked with 30 to 100 or more people who attended on a weekend evening and paid a price equivalent to that of a movie. The audience became the source of the protagonists in the psychodramas and sometimes served as the auxiliaries[110] (pp.37-38).

This arrangement was deeply shocking to other therapists because it blew apart the jealously guarded confidentiality of the therapy process; added to which it was unclear how much personal support any given audience member might have and whether they were able to adequately deal with the intense feelings that may have been generated in the psychodrama sessions. This directly contrasted with a psychotherapeutic emphasis on safety and follow through in terms of people's feelings and psychological states. This is the territory which Nick Rowe's 2005 thesis traversed as he explored the intersection of public space and private story, giving an example of how the company of which he is a part had been criticised on the basis of inadequate follow up and debriefing:

> Relatively early in the history of Playback Theatre York (1994) the company received two letters from audience members who had attended a performance at North Tyneside Hospital to an audience of users of mental health services and local professionals. The two correspondents were psychotherapists. Their letters follow a

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[110] In psychodrama, auxiliaries are members of the audience group who play the various roles in a protagonist's account of personal experience. Playback differs in having trained professional performers play the roles in enactments, except for some times when a facilitator will call for audience actors and/or musicians for one or two stories in the performance.

> similar theme, which may be summarised as a concern about the 'framing' of the playback event and the psychological safety of the participants. The first correspondent wrote the following: "My first concern was with members of the audience who, after sharing their inner stories, and having 'played back' or mirrored [*sic*] were left weeping and obviously in a disturbed state of mind. Whilst the re-enactment of their experiences could be seen in one sense as being deeply therapeutic if handled say, one-to-one, or in a small group; in another sense (and here, I feel is the rub) they were left to the vagaries of a large audience, who were applauding them and the plays for …dare I utter the word ..ENTERTAINMENT!" (Rowe, 2005, p. 289

Rowe interprets this as being about how much of the personal should be shared in public and suggests that Playback contests the borders between these zones (a border perhaps patrolled more strongly in England, from where he writes, than in many other societies): "What is being contested or transgressed here? It is, among other things, the relationship between the personal/private and the public. Playback invites and dramatizes this transgression" (2005, p. 169). I do not see this so much as a conflict between public and private but more as a matter of accountability to the audience and to being competent professional practitioners so that the play in Playback is with themes and issues and the people are cared for by strong, ritualised debriefing processes (see section following page 179).

My **fifteenth** criticism of Playback is that, while group work or counselling training are supported in many publications (eg. Hale, 1994; Henry, 2003), some Playback practitioners resist them as part of professional preparation for the work and prefer to see their practice as only artistic: while group leaders are required to undertake a specific number of psychodrama training hours (School of Playback Theatre, 2007), this element of training in group processes seems to me a necessity for *all* involved in Playback performance work.

In my practical project Trish, one out of the 20 audience members interviewed, had experienced being misunderstood in a way which was personally upsetting to her and which required her to clarify her position after the performance in conversations and interactions with other co-workers. Numerically this represented 5% of the interviewees.[111] The basic premise of Playback is that people will be self-responsible; will only reveal to the extent that they feel comfortable with; and will correct the

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[111] This incident is described in some detail, along with the practice lessons arising from it, in the Chapter on Ngākau, Chapter Eight

performers if they experience being misrepresented. However, in our project, Trish did *not* correct the performers, although she was a relatively senior member of the work team at Ngākau. This lack of interruption also happened in the Perth conference performance of a Japanese teller's story about anorexia described in the beginning of this chapter (on page 161), when I, along with others present, felt disturbed by the lack of acknowledgement of the teller, who later wrote in Interplay "However, I felt quite strange when the conductor did not even ask my name" (Shimamori, 1997, p.9). Yet neither I nor any of the other people spoke up in the moment. In discussing this event, Nick Rowe ponders on how strong the "trance" of the audience must be: after all, we were mostly experienced Playback performers and surely would not be backward in coming forward? Yet nobody spoke up. These events clarify how complex these moments of Playback are: how can we actively support corrections, interruptions and protests? If we want dialogue, will not all of these things be sought by us? So we would not see a performance *not going smoothly* as a failure. In my view, because the audience has not entered into the event with a specifically therapeutic objective (as they have in a psychodrama session), yet may unexpectedly be precipitated into deeply emotional states, there is an even greater need for some form of group process awareness and counselling training to be a requirement for *all* Playback personnel.

As polis

> *The most deadly part of human life, the sorrow that Karl Marx felt like a scourge, was this oblivion that clouds the understanding of the well-possessed (Mulgan, 1967, p. 148).*

Every act in a group setting is a political act: every theatrical performance is a political performance. An avowal of political neutrality is a political act, supporting the status quo, especially in settings of contestation (Fanon, 1967). Playback is not exceptional among group methods in reflecting politics and contestation (embraced openly or suppressed) in all of its activities. What is less clear is whether it always takes this aspect of its operation seriously, though many writing about Playback foreground methods of doing so (eg. Salas, 2003). One signal that it does take this aspect seriously would be for those working in Playback to ground themselves openly, making their inherited culture and chosen values transparent (Hale, 1974, 1994, 2004; Macdonald, Swallow & Harris, 2001). While this happens in some contexts, in others it is not evident.

For, importantly, cultural inclusiveness begins with oneself. "we take a risk when we insert ourselves into the public - never certain "who" we will appear as"(Schutz, 1999, p.80). Even tentative and developmental acknowledgement of one's cultural heritage and positioning and the myths and possible blind spots adhering to it are necessary for practising scrupulously in any context.[112] Either obstinate turning away from, or obsession with, the oppressed and excluded may both come from an intrapsychic split which is being projected on to the world (Miller, 1987). A **sixteenth** criticism of Playback relates to this cultural and political element. There is a need to be as rigorous in openness about one's own cultural positioning as in the artistic, ritual, and group process dimensions of Playback: it is an indivisible part of all of them.

Relationship with the audience

> A spirit of generosity underlies the playback experience. For the most part, the performers belong to groups that develop their skills through regular practice, then perform for their community as a gift (or near gift). The whole process is based on the idea of an exchange. The teller tells a private story publicly as a gift to the spectators. The actors risk failure in the enactment as a gift to the teller. The audience gives their deep attention. (Fox, 2007)

To me, this preemptive statement oversimplifies and assumes: it makes it hard to criticise Playback and it fudges the economic exchange that is occurring. It states a hope as a fact: this is my **seventeenth** and final criticism of Playback, one that I have struggled with myself: that too often writing about Playback minimises the failures and valorizes the activity. In 2004 Sarita Phadke from Bangalore in India wrote:

> I feel that Playback is a medium, which if handled with sensitivity can and has bought amazing changes. However, its usage in a single direction (quite possibly unintentional) could lead to a disaster. It is no longer a means to an end it becomes the end. (Phadke, 2004, p.31)

This whole chapter has outlined some of the crucial ways in which I see that Playback can let down an audience, can miss the mark, can refuse to be sufficiently involved in the relationships it opens with people. When a practitioner like Heather Robb (1995) opens up an account of adults in an audience closing down children's stories, I cheer

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112 As a lesbian and the parent of grandchildren of holocaust survivors, I am particularly aware of the ways in which Jews and homosexuals have been silenced and made invisibile. I have been taught and I have learnt that silence = death. The pressure not to speak is always so great – oh, not that again! But we are all positioned uniquely and our vantage points make it easy to see some things and hard to see others. (Rosaldo 1989, Jackson, 1996).

because others who reads about it gain insights. The gift is often in mistakes and dilemmas:

> the gift, one might say, is how things 'come,' how the impossible happens. The gift is an event, é-venir, something that really happens…it escapes the closed circle of checks and balances, the calculus which accounts for everything, in which every equation is balanced. (Caputo, 1997, p.160)

There is a truth about the gift in here, about commitment to Playback being excessive, more than you could ever buy with money: unless it is so, we are not really inviting the audience to come into this moment, to show up as themselves and to be part of an event that really happens: and we are not showing up as ourselves, risky identities and all, we are not deeply desiring to meet with them but simply to make a living.

The practitioner speaks: A spiral walk up Mount Eden and grumbling conversation about Playback

An actor, a business woman, a psychologist and an educator were walking to the top of this hill, that was first a volcano; then a Māori village stronghold and a place to store safely the bountiful crops of kumara which could grow on the friable soil that surrounds the mountain; now it is a popular vantage point for teenagers, tourists and locals to look out over the city and isthmus: and one day it will become something else… They are talking about Playback Theatre as they go.

Educator: But can't you explain what Playback is by telling me what it is for?

Actor: I can tell you some things it has been useful for, in my experience and that of others. It relaxes and relieves people, rescuing them from the sea of undigested information which often threatens and overwhelms; delights and creates wonder when it works and leads to all kinds of actions we might give names to: like laughing, crying, learning about the world, understanding other people, realizing that others are similar to or different from myself, gaining distance on what a person has been carrying in memory perhaps for many years, seeing patterns, healing wounds. But I can't tell exactly what it is for, since a single story and enactment may do something for one person watching and something else for another according to what they need or value...

Business woman: Well if you can't say what it *will do,* how can you expect people to pay money for it?

Actor: Isn't it the fact that we often pay money without knowing exactly what we are paying for? In your environment, when a consultant is brought in to work with a group of staff; when you go online and rent a DVD; even when you organize caterers or buy a new computer system – you don't know beforehand exactly what you will receive. Theatre is the same, any performance…

Educator: But we try to find out what we are going to purchase beforehand…we read information packs and reviews, ask others, pay attention to what has a 'good' reputation…

Actor: Playback has all those things too…look at websites, ask for references! With reviews, well, it's a bit difficult. The trouble with Playback is that if you were at a performance, ideally, you were involved, it was affecting your memories, thoughts and feelings: so it's hard to then stand back and review it. Your review will be all about yourself – yet, if you were sitting in just as a critic to watch it and so you didn't really get involved, then you weren't really 'in' the performance, so you almost don't know what happened, and therefore your judgement may not count for much!

Businesswoman: Isn't that handy? It means that you can't get negative feedback because if a person didn't enjoy it, it's their own fault because they wouldn't enter the process.

Psychologist: It must be possible to map the usefulness or not of Playback to individuals: surely one might do something like use a survey and ask them to rate their views of it?

Educator: The trouble is that those who get most from it might be least likely to fill in a survey form!

Businesswoman: Why do you say that?

Educator: It's well known that people for whom reading and writing is not easy often do not even try to fill out questionnaires – some say that that's one of the ways in which hegemony is maintained in any situation. Experts simply say it's the fault of uneducated people that they didn't make their opinion known, even though they know that maybe they can't relate to the vocabulary being used – many times people simply don't try and find out the viewpoint of these people because it's too hard. These are the very people for whom an action approach like Playback might work…

Psychologist: But without a survey of some kind, aren't we left with the situation where you are saying you can't describe the usefulness of Playback?

Actor: Now, look at this view, the way the road curls round the hill at just the right rate to keep us looking ahead, wanting to get there and striding on to see what is round the corner; the unfolding of the isthmus with its ribbons of roads and little houses, below and behind us, wheeling slowly as we move around the mountain. The sky above us with the rironiro (grey warbler) singing to herald the time for planting the vegetables and behind that small scroll of sound, the dull roar of the city's noise. And I haven't begun to touch on the feeling of the sun on our backs as we turn towards the south or the gritty feel of the volcanic soil under our feet, where the rain has washed it on to the road. And those are only a few of the things our marvellous bodies are aware of now. In words, I have to describe them one at a time and that makes people think that they are separate: but they're not. Some people can think better through the body, in action, or in art or music or theatre where many realities can be represented at once and contradictory elements can coexist and rub up against each other like catch of silk fabric between your finger and thumb.

Businesswoman: On come on - that all sounds pretty airy-fairy. You have to admit that the person likely to be commissioning your performance, is pretty likely to be high up in an organization and therefore pretty good at reading and writing – what would make them want to have you lot come in? Aren't you going to upset everything and introduce

a whole lot of dangerous touchy-feely stuff?

Psychologist: Feelings play a very important role in organizations you know, much more than most people acknowledge. Recent research has shown..

Businesswoman Even so, I don't want the whole group stirred up and upset!

Educator: You have to admit, it depends whether the management really want people to have the opportunity to learn and grow and develop or if all those words in their mission statements - the learning society; creativity and innovation; seamlessness of services – are just hot air.

Psychologist: What worries me is that you theatre people pressure someone to tell something deeply personal and then you go prancing off and never think again about what impact you might have made on someone who's a bit on the outer of that group for some reason, or a bit fragile in themselves and who's left shattered.

Actor: But they're all self-responsible adults, *they* know the group, *they* can choose how much to say or not to say…and then if they do get upset, the group is there, they know now about the upset and surely will look after the person, way better than they did before…

Psychologist: You hope! How do you know?

Actor: Look, I know what you're saying…it's not possible to have an ironclad guarantee – but, say, after a lecture where a suave, good looking, well-connected man uses big long words and a power point presentation and keeps talking about his wife and kids - and in which five people out of a group of 25 participate really keenly but the others, from other ethnicities, with much less education, or gay, or feeling shy, plain and stupid, sit there silently – does that guy ever find out how much damage he has done? What is the outcome *there*? Who's left feeling shattered?

Businesswoman: Actually we don't have lectures any more, we have decided that online learning is much more effective - we can actually track who is doing it and how much time they spend on it… And you know the ones who don't make use of the opportunity, the Luddites are the first to complain about it and say how dehumanizing it is – we have a help desk, why won't they even try?

Educator: Hey isn't it great we've come round again to the north – I can't believe how silver the sea is today - with the city buildings like dark blue cut-outs against it! Hey you two, you must know about learning styles, have you thought about that? Some people just don't like reading and writing and don't learn best that way…

Psychologist: Yes well, there are some reputable models for exploring different learning styles. An article last month showed…

Businesswoman: But the online learning firm says they have catered to all of that, they have fantastic sound and colour in their learning packages. Honestly, they are good – and you actors are way too expensive!

Actor: I bet we don't cost anything like as much as that online package

Businesswoman: Sure, but you come and then you go – and we've got that package forever!

Actor: Nothing lasts forever… and you'd be surprised how the memories of the work we do last for some people! And anyway, you know, presenting people with a range of experiences is what it's all about: some with writing and reading that's okay, you have the online packages; some with lectures or mentors; others with personal disclosure, drama, stories, music, ritual – and that's where we come in!

Businesswoman: That and a can of worms! It's all so unpredictable…

Educator: Come on you two, are you ever going to agree? Race you back down the hill and last one down buys the coffee!

Actor: Okay, make mine a long black

Businesswoman: Mine a cappuccino

Psychologist: Green tea for me!

Chapter Six The Context: Organizations, health, global and local

> *In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground… problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution…. in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern. The practitioner must choose. … remain on the high ground … or … descend to the swamp of important problems and nonrigorous inquiry? (Schon, 1987, p.3)*

In most Playback companies, commissioned performances are a major way of funding the ongoing work of the company. Audiences of people who work together and therefore share significant amounts of their lives over time, are different in some important ways from the more "ad hoc" audience which is assembled in the contexts of public or conference performances (Clark & Mangham, 2004). Two of the previous Ph D studies of Playback Theatre, those of Wright (2002) and Dennis (2004) had looked in depth mainly at the one-off community performance, while Rowe's (2005) discussion included accounts of performances from rehearsals, commissioned and public events. My study explored the audience experience of commissioned performances in work groups, delivering five performances with the staff of three community health care centres and interviewing audience members soon after the performance and then again six months to a year later. In this setting, Playback had several purposes, with the over-arching purpose and reasons for commissioning in this case being those of supporting pressured groups to understand each other better in a time of system change, to work together more effectively and to clarify values. The context of health groups was chosen for two main reasons: first, an opportunity arose through the university I was part of to conduct an enquiry in this area; and secondly, community health is an area of work in which communication and teamwork is extremely important to the services being provided, so there was a good chance that the project could be useful to the Centres as well as to the researcher.

Playback can have a range of purposes in different contexts: these purposes and contexts are intersecting. To go from the most general to the most specific they include the purposes set out in Table Five *Some Purposes of Playback Performance*:

To entertain	All performances
To educate	All performances
To model listening in a dynamic way	All performances
To give individuals a multidimensional experience of being witnessed by others	All performances
To give people a chance to make themselves more visible to each other	All performances
To give people a structured way to tell the stories of their life	All performances
To give people a chance to clarify their narrative[113]	All performances
To make spaces for people to express emotion	All performances
To bring an aesthetic dimension into the everyday	All performances
To create opportunities for interaction within a group	All performances
To model creative cooperative group work	All performances
To enable values to be shown in an embodied way	All performances but especially commissioned performances
To elicit and explore underlying themes	Some themed public performances; other commissioned eg. conference, workplace performances with specific purposes
To bring play and spontaneity into stressed and pressured settings	Commissioned performances
To celebrate	Commissioned performances eg. Parties, festivals, milestone

Table 5 Some Purposes of Playback Performances

Life in any work setting is irrevocably embodied: as people share space, time, breath and react to one another physically. In many situations, *the way things are done here* is

[113] Even if the enactment is not accurate, this can clarify what **did** happen

transmitted to new workers by multi-dimensional modelling and mentoring which demonstrates aspects of embodiment such as tone of voice, proxemics and customs around such things as facial expression and eye contact. Yet such behaviour in the workplace is inevitably deeply connected with people's own personal history. People "come to … transferential reactions through early experiences of body and self and through early experiences with others, as these are transformed through unconscious fantasy and sedimented in implicit memory. We then bring these internal meanings to later experience…" (Chodorow, 2003, pp 468-469).

This chapter will first discuss the concept of *sensible* or *embodied* practice and draw relationships between this concept and the ways in which Playback operates. It will then look at some current thinking in terms of organization studies: looking at the ways in which descriptions of contemporary organizations are changing to emphasize teamwork, learning, collaboration, diversity and the importance of being able to work within environments of change and flux.

Then, it will outline some features of each of the three Centres within which this research project took place and endeavour to give a flavour of each through accounts of the researcher's experience. Finally, to ground the study in the particular organizational context in which it took place, it will briefly describe some contemporary health challenges and changes which were impacting on the staff of the three healthcare centres taking part in the project. It will look at issues of health and interrogate health discourse, both globally and also locally in terms of Aotearoa New Zealand, including two Maori models of health, one of which is used again in Appendix Nine, (on page 537) where it is applied to Playback Theatre.

Places of the flesh where the flesh of the world becomes visible – sensible knowledge in workplaces

Many times workplaces have been described in terms of mechanical models, with different units all fitting together to form a well-oiled machine that runs smoothly (Shelton & Darling, 2003). Antonio Strati, a sociologist from the University of Trento, in Italy, in contrast, uses the term *sensible knowledge* to describe aspects of work life which are to do with or derived from the senses:

> Sensible knowledge concerns what is perceived through the senses, judged through the senses, and produced and reproduced through the senses. It resides in the visual,

> the auditory, the olfactory, the gustatory, the touchable and in the sensitive–aesthetic judgement. It generates dialectical relations with action and close relations with the emotions of organizational actors. (2007, p.62)

The ethnographic accounts he uses as examples in his article are to do with people stacking planks in sawmills and stripping roof materials from a building: clearly in such contexts, *sensible knowledge* involves a myriad of subtle adjustments, bodily positions, perceptions and actions which are employed with greater or lesser skill by workers.

Yet, Strati emphasizes that sensible knowledge cannot be reduced to an array of physically present objects and a unitary subject who simply acts on them: on the contrary, the description he gives is of the interface between self and world is much more interactive and indeterminate: he asserts that

> sensory perception is not based on "terminal sensors… able to grasp the world as modes, for the subject of being in the world. Nor are they instruments of a sovereign consciousness, or a subject constituent and autonomous with respect to an object; rather, they are places of the flesh where the flesh of the world becomes visible." (Prezzo 2004)…sensible knowledge…accounts for the subject's intimate, personal and corporeal relation with the experience of the world. (p.62)

This view of experience echoes Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* which "is defined as being-in-the-world…We are both in and of the world. 'Worldliness' is an ontological property of Dasein; it is our context of involvements" (Walton, 1999, p. 101). These involvements are multidimensional and multi-sensory: so, for example, the *Report of the Public Inquiry into children's heart surgery at the Bristol Royal Infirmary 1984–1995* (which investigated how a group of National Health workers had allowed a situation where the survival rate of newborns having cardiac surgery in Bristol was only 50% of that in other places in the U.K) used some sensory data in its critique of what had happened in the Bristol Infirmary. It commented trenchantly on the buildings and physical state of the services in question and drew conclusions about the ways in which these conditions were involved in the events which took place there:

> We were shocked by what we saw at the BRI. There was a sense of delapidation. The corridors were dirty, with an array of discarded equipment and bric-a-brac pushed against walls and in corners. The Intensive Care Unit (ICU) was cramped and crowded. Large items of equipment were 'stored' in the middle of the room, making the space even more crowded. The area previously allocated for children was small and would have allowed little space for family members. The room set aside for parents to await news was small, cramped and windowless. The main lift used to transport children to and from the operating theatre, two floors below, was cramped and old. The space in the alternative lift was so limited that on occasions

> staff who should have been accompanying a child had to run up the two flights of stairs to meet it. Our overall, lasting impression was that Wards 5A and 5B were cramped, overcrowded, overheated, dirty and neglected. It was a tribute to the staff that they were prepared to work there. Although we did not see other wards, it may also represent a comment on the relative importance given to these wards by the Trust.
> We have no doubt that this state of affairs could only have had an adverse effect on the morale of staff and parents and, to that extent, would have affected adversely the quality of care provided to children. (Kennedy, 2001, p. 207)

This lengthy quotation is used to show how individually small details of sensory data can build up a picture of crucial influences which can seriously affect outcomes for people being served by organizations. As Kennedy demonstrates, *sensible knowledge* and the experience of cognition through the body and its multitude of signals apply in a complex way when working with other people, and in a world: he makes the point that the physical conditions, some of which are the result of human action or inaction (things being *dirty* and *neglected*) are likely "to have affected adversely" both the morale of the staff and parents and also the health outcomes for the children. Strati uses a metaphor of honey[114] to describe the stickiness and interactivity of this relationship between people and conditions, so that the conditions can act on the person as well as vice versa. He gives details about how honey "shows an ability to be active and a certain autonomy in its relationship with the human being" (Strati, 2007, p.630). Similarly, a person may become aware through their senses of a physical object or another person, but at the same time these things are acting on us and *the perceptions* of them are inside us so that sensation gives:

> not the mere capacity to "receive" the sensible qualities of people and artefacts…but rather the capacity to enjoy them and understand them by experiencing them within ourselves (Dufour-Kowalska, 1996: 161). It is the fact that I perceive myself as I perceive the world. I perceive… "my inherence to a point of view": such inherence "makes simultaneously possible both the finiteness of my perception and its openness to the plural world". (Strati, 2007, p.63)

One of the points that Strati makes is that sensible knowledge, as aesthetic, is ambiguous: a voice or tune beautiful to one person can be anathema to another. This ambiguity is a feature of aesthetic work and, as a performer, it is sometimes evident that some people in an audience are visibly attending and contributing energetically to the

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[114] Which he reports Merleau-Ponty to have developed "drawing on Sartre" (Strati, 2007, p.630).

event, while others manifest as disaffected, uninterested or hostile[115]. Similarly, when serving a person, one person may respond positively and another negatively to a certain approach; while it is observable that some people (those who are often consequently dubbed *expert practitioners*) seem to know instinctively how to interact with clients or patients in ways which reliably enable positive outcomes in a majority of cases. Thus, many times within a work environment, while a theoretical concept of *embodied knowledge* may not be consciously embraced, yet for most human service workers, it is being enacted daily. It represents a complex and subtle range of experiences, perceptions and readings, which until recently the reading/writing culture of official organizational knowledges may not have been readily able to perceive, acknowledge or reward. Strati describes the way

> managers are often confonted by organizational problems caused by the aesthetic judgements of work colleagues, but they tend not to consider these problems as organizational matters. They do not have the necessary formal training and they seek to deal with such problems by downplaying their importance rather than activating learning processes based on practical experience within the organization. (2007, pp.71-72)

This relates to how distant the healthcare workers in our practical project perceived many of the people responsible for their management to be from embodied practice: a fact which was mentioned either directly or by implication in many of the interviews: Trish at Pātaka said

> I just remember that it was a really busy time and it was, it was a hard time trying to trying to actually be acknowledged … by the management…and the Board. And that's still a challenge, there are still certain members of the of the Board I think who who *do not understand what it is to work dealing with sickness* (Pata2 Trish, Section 25)

It is helpful to identify the following three elements of organizations which Strati associates with *sensible knowledge*: first, they are full of practices of knowing and doing things which are embodied as well as conceptual and the *embodied* practice is the one that often shows the *theory in use* rather than the *espoused theory* (Argyris & Schon 1978, Marnburg 2001) For many of such practices, tests and scores for ability are not available, yet they are the life blood of an organization like a health centre and include such fundamental things as meeting people, helping others, developing new ways of

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[115] In the interviews that formed part of the practical project of this research, a similar range was noticeable.

doing things, keeping track of details, and being able accomplish tasks quickly and efficiently (Prediger, 1999).

Secondly, they are full of the "materiality of organizational life and the constant interaction between the individual and non-human elements like the …organizational spaces…in which they work" (Strati, 2007, p.67) as is seen in, for example, such details as the neglected hallways or the too-small lift at the Bristol Infirmary (Kennedy, 2001). Thirdly, it is important to acknowledge that even *talking* about organizations involves *sensible knowledge* since any description of a concept like organization inevitably uses language which is metaphorical and employs aesthetic categories which have a multitude of interpretive meanings. The usefulness of the concept of *sensible knowledge* is that because it "springs from the perceptive/sensory faculties of individuals, and from their aesthetic judgement… this brings into sharp focus the artefacts and material culture, the bodies and the objects that take part in the everyday lives of organizations" (Strati, 2007, p.75). Without such a concept, it is not easy to speak of the paradoxical materiality and subtlety of everyday life as it is experienced in organizations. Still less is it possible to acknowledge the nuances of the perspectives and practices I observed and heard about in the health care centres whose staff I interviewed.

From the inner alcove to the outer frame – the performance of daily life in a health care centre.

Another metaphor which can help in understanding the work in a community healthcare centre, as in many service-based industries, based as it is on the participants' simultaneous awareness of themselves and of the plural 'others' with whom they interact, is contained in Erving Goffman's theories concerning the performance of daily life (Cahill, 1998; Goffman, 1967; McDonough, 2002). Patients are seen either one by one or in small groups in the 'alcoves' of the doctors' and nurses' consultation rooms or the 'on-stage' venue of the waiting room and reception desk or from the 'off-stage' of the manager's view as she or he crosses back and forth over the backstage area of the staffroom and the manager's office, only encountering the patients as figures, names, and indeterminate groups dimly sensed sitting in the waiting room. Quinn, writing in 2005 about the theatrical aspects of library work used Erving Goffman's "six aspects of social interaction" to describe the performative qualities of daily life in a library. These

aspects of interaction are "performances, teams, regions, region behavior, discrepant roles, communication out of character, and impression management" (p.331).

> Performances take place in what dramaturgists term "front regions." A front region involves performances which may or may not be given for an audience. Performers in front regions try to act according to standards of politeness and decorum, regardless of whether an audience is immediately present…The backstage area tends to be a region where performers prepare for performances, take a break from being onstage in a front region, or relax after a performance without being observed by the audience and without having to put on a front. It is a private area open to other members of the team but not to the audience and usually separated from front regions by walls, doors, or other physical barriers. (Quinn, 2005, pp 338-339)

Clearly, a health centre consists of such regions, with choreographed movement as the 'audience' in the waiting room are sequentially inducted in small groups into the alcove regions of the treatment rooms, which then themselves become small stages for performance:

> Goffman defines "performance" itself as "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers" (22). The fundamental purpose of performance, so understood, is to influence the definition of the situation through what Goffman calls "impression management": the performer seeks to create a certain impression on an audience, and to have the audience accept that impression as part of the operative definition of reality for the interaction. The performer: "can influence [her observers] by expressing herself in such a way as to give them the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with her own plan…" (1959:4) (Auslander, 2006, p.106)[116]

Goffman developed the concept of frames which open out from the most secret parts of the location, available only to the initiated (in the case of the health centre, the manager's office and staff room) through places which are more inclusive and finally out to the entrance way or most external part of the service which is often adorned with signage or decoration:

> Known to social science as its consummate metaphysician of the banal, Goffman interprets the organizing structures of social activity as a succession of proscenium arches, from the inner, curtained alcove that defines the most intimate of backstage areas, meant to be observed only by initiates, to the outer, auratic frame that surrounds the most public of exhibitions like a halo, meant to attract all comers. (Powell, 2004, p.87)

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[116] Sexist language modified, original follows: "The performer: 'can influence [his observers] by expressing himself in such a way as to give them the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with his own plan…' (1959:4) (Goffman cited in Auslander, 2006, p.106)

This way of seeing a health centre helps to highlight the ways in which participants use *sensible knowledge* in the ways in which they relate to their environment and each other, picking up subtle cues which they then act on and to which they adapt their behaviour, from such things as bodily appearance, non-verbal language, tones of voice, or organization of furniture, equipment and space.

Focusing on organizations

Goffman's work has contributed to organization studies and management studies which have proliferated over the last 60 years, as people all over the world have struggled to understand how people work together and what theories, attitudes and practices best help groups of people to achieve results in a wide variety of settings: from small community groups to international non governmental organizations, government organizations, institutions or corporations. Certain ways of using language point to constructs of widespread theoretical models in this regard (Calas & Smircich, 1999; Illich, 1977): for example the phrases *human resources* or *human capital* making it clear that the people involved are being subsumed to the technical and economic imperatives of the organization. A moment of contextualization, widening the view in space and time, is useful here. Early in the 20th century, Jacob Moreno the originator of psychodrama, observed refugee camps at the end of the 1914-1918 War and realized that groups could live in much greater harmony if sociometric testing was carried out and the results of such tests used to assist the way the camp was organized: when this was done there was a decrease in conflicts between those who had to live together in such stressed circumstances (Marineau 1989). Moreno additionally, however, highly valued the individual and developed a psychodramatic method of group therapy in which individuals could improve their self knowledge, valuing and efficacy.

Concurrently, throughout the first half of the century, as industrial developments occurred in more and more countries, the effects of the application of an industrial way of thinking to matters to do with human beings started to become evident (Heidegger, 1977). Soviet Russia and Germany, during the 1920s, simultaneously developed industrially in order to rescue their populations from severe economic circumstances which had been caused by political struggle and instability and had led to devastating food shortages and starvation. Also simultaneously, dominant ideologies in these two societies were sectioning off individuals and groups and classifying them as non-persons, finally and appallingly applying industrial principles to systematic genocide.

> The ghastly bestialization of the Holocaust and its death camps was designed as much to dehumanize as to kill, and it was this that made it the darkest moment in human history. Men have killed one another before, though never on such a scale or with such bureaucratization. (Bruner, 1990, p.22)

It is not the case that other European countries were innocent however: one of the most original perceptions of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Hannah Arendt's book published first in 1951 and periodically reworked over the next 17 years, was her acute perception that

> nineteenth-century overseas imperialists – the European states that colonized Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia – exported to those lands their own superfluous people, their déclassé mobs, where they were overseen by a type of colonialist bureaucrat who became accustomed to treating the mob and the colonized peoples as subhumans and trampling upon their local laws and customs. [Arendt] argued that these imperialist methods in turn corrupted the European states themselves, which carried the methods over into their continental imperialisms. Both Germany and Russia, in effect made colonials out of their own unwanted populations: their Jews, their dissidents. The concentration camp and the labor camp had their prototypes in the Bantustans of South Africa. (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p.55)

Others like legal expert Raphael Lemkin (Docker, 2004) also made this connection between colonisation and concentration camps: then after the devastation of the 1939-45 war, many philosophers and cultural theorists, like Arendt applying insights gained from the experiences of the war, started to challenge the logic of efficiency. They described how, frequently, business practices had been built on this commodifying of the human. In this setting, organization studies began:

> Fleeing from Nazi Germany, Kurt Lewin, one of the early pioneers of OD, obtained refuge at the State University of Iowa (Marrow, 1969). Much of his family—most notably, his mother—did not survive the holocaust. Lewin fell in love with America. He fully believed that democracy was both the antidote for and inoculation against political and social oppression. At about this time, he also began experimenting with Action Research. In the mid-1930s, Ron Lippitt became one of Lewin's graduate students. Lewin, Lippitt & White (1939) published the results of their famous studies of autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles….By the summer of 1947, Lee Bradford, Ronald Lippitt, and Kenneth Benne had founded the NTL Institute as a non-profit educational institute. The first summer workshop was conducted at the Gould Academy in Bethel, Maine, consistent with Lewin's belief that intense personal learning experiences should be conducted in a "cultural island." They called the process that was at the core of these workshops "Sensitivity Training." They worked in small "T-Groups" (the "T" standing for "Training"). … NTL has established its own conference center in Bethel, and has been conducting workshops or "labs" (for laboratories), there ever since. (Freedman, 1999, p.127)

In the years since, and in countries all over the world, organizational theories have multiplied and divided, and any number of threads could be drawn out from them (Hamlin, Keep & Ash, 2001): I am proposing here, however, that Playback Theatre, in

its work with organizations, particularly relates to five threads of organizational theory to do with teamwork, learning, reflection (Paget, 2001), diversity and flux or chaos. These are therefore the themes to be looked at here, before exploring the field of human health – which of course is dynamically inter-related with the health of the environment, including organizations.

Teams

In a 2007 article in the *Harvard Business Review*, Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski and Senge suggest that we need to praise the "incomplete leader":

> It's time to end the myth of the complete leader: the flawless person at the top who's got it all figured out. ... In today's world, the executive's job is no longer to command and control but to cultivate and coordinate the actions of others at all levels of the organization. … globalization and the growing importance of knowledge work have required that responsibility and initiative be distributed more widely….. (pp. 93-94)

The "distributed leadership" which Ancona et al. talk about is likely to involve all kinds of teams (Cohen & Bailey, 1997) which have been intensively examined: "self-managed teams, virtual teams, cross-functional teams, and other types of teams have been …studied as to their role and impact on organizations…. (Dyer, 2005, p.403). When Playback Theatre is invited into an organization, most often it is in support of a team or a network of teams. With its ability to offer team members an opportunity to become visible to each other in novel ways and, at the same time, by having their personal accounts externalised, to gain distance on their own actions and attitudes - thereby opening up opportunities for learning, reflection and critique, Playback can potentially provide a minimally disruptive and time-efficient way of creating group experiences which relate back to the earliest days of organizational development when, in the T-groups, individuals were able to receive feedback and test new behaviours (Freedman 1999, Dyer 2005, Rothwell & Sullivan 2005). The experiences within Playback performance were described by several participants in this research enquiry in terms of the metaphor of openness: a quality most necessary in the contemporary work environment for, as Peter Senge says, '[b]uilding a culture in which people can express their views…is a huge challenge for most organizations." (Senge, 1998, p.4)
This may be a huge challenge: but it is an absolutely *necessary* one, for without it, a team risks becoming dysfunctional. To look again at the 2001 Bristol Inquiry:

> in Bristol too few people had too much power. Unhappily, if the people have flaws, the organization becomes vulnerable. An organization offering a service must, of

> course, have dedicated staff. But that is not enough. It must also have in place within it, systems that allow it to learn, develop and prosper, quite apart from any external mechanisms. A key feature of such systems is that all involved must feel able to be *open* about their work and the work of colleagues. (Kennedy 2001, p.176)

The Inquiry stated that this openness needs to be supported at all levels of the system and that a 'no-blame' climate of discussion needs to be part of any work environment (Dyer, 2001). A wide variety of methods needs to be employed in any organization to ensure that this happens and to keep teams alert to complacency into which they may fall (Hagenow, 2001). The alternative is groupthink which can occur when some people have "critical information that was unknown to other group members and was never discussed" (Cruz, Henningsen & Smith 1999, p. 364). Groupthink is a term which:

> Irving Janis coined … in 1972 to describe "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action." …. It seems that decisions reached through group dynamics require, above all, a dynamic group.As Clarence Darrow neatly put it: "To think is to differ." (Buchanan & O'Connell, 2006, p.37)

By allowing people to share divergent views through narratives which are then interpreted and presented aesthetically, Playback has the potential to offer opportunities to present differing viewpoints in ways which do not lead to blame or polarization, but facilitate openness to both individual and group learning.

Learning

The contemporary context for individual and organizational learning is irreducibly, perhaps increasingly, complex. A 2000 report by the Humanities Association of New Zealand Te Whainga Aronui, (O'Brien, Opie & Wallace, 2000) on what it would take for New Zealand to become a knowledge society, suggests that "we are witnessing a convergence between scientific (innovative), artistic (creative) and humanistic (critical-interpretive) modes of knowledge creation" (p.4) while a current ethics education text suggests that

> the tension between old and new ideas can be illustrated by an idea borrowed from the philosophy of science – the notion of a 'paradigm shift'. The old…set of cherished beliefs and principles – is being called into question by the new forces….Hence a period of crisis exists in which conflicting ideas and principles do metaphorical battle. (Seedhouse, 1998, p.xii)

In this environment, a frequently cited model of learning includes cycles of feedback, reflection and action (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Bowe, Lahey, Armstong & Kegan 2003;

Greenwood, 1998; Hargreaves, 2004; Heidari & Galvin, 2003; Rigano & Edwards, 1998; Rogers, 2004; Schon 1987; Zepke, Nugent & Leach, 2003). Ideally, work-based learning takes in the principles of andragogy: relelvance, self concept, experience, readiness, orientation and motivation (Taylor & Furnham, 2005). Learning is not necessarily pleasurable however: organizational culture consultant Edgar Schein (in Coutu 2002, p.5) draws attention to a relationship between anxiety and learning which can be related to Playback. Schein's view is that experiencing anxiety while learning is inevitable: "there's an inherent paradox surrounding learning: anxiety inhibits learning but anxiety is also necessary if learning is going to happen at all." (p.6) There *is* a quality of anxiety associated with the experience of Playback: Dennis, in her enquiry into community Playback Theatre found that an important engine of Playback was the oscillation of audience states between anxiety (when the search for the next audience storyteller was taking place and each person wrestled with the conflict of whether or not to tell) and relaxation (once someone had been established as the next teller and they could settle into the next period of storytelling and enactment during which they would not be called on to actively participate) (Dennis, 2004). After the Playback performance described at the end of Chapter One, an audience member expanded on this experience of anxiety in her reply to my request for feedback:

> … it was certainly an experience that was enjoyable yet anxiety producing at the same time. My mind was always working hard to make sense of the actors interpretations and at the same time anxious for the staff members whose actions were being 'replicated'. I remember feeling my jaw clench, my eyes flicking from actor to actor and my body craning at times to see what was happening. I was not in the front row because I felt safer 2 rows back. When I felt brave enough to contribute a story (towards the end) I felt quite vulnerable. I was formulating what I was going to say without knowing exactly how and what would come out of my mouth. I just had to 'trust the process' and found that my anxiety eased as I began to speak. (D. Spence, personal communication, February 12, 2007)

In contrast to anxiety, literary scholar Brian Boyd situates the activity of learning alongside play, creativity and sociality: after citing examples of animals and birds displaying signs of aesthetic play (the dances of some birds and primates, the blowing of bubbles by dolphins), he suggests that:

> Curiosity directed at what we can do that gives us cognitive pleasure, whether by engaging our own attention or commanding or sharing that of others, has deep roots in the evolution of intelligence and sociality. But in humans the prodigious development of the frontal lobes…allow [*sic*] us to…select one choice and reject another to produce this or that effect, in a way that ratchets the inclination toward art, toward doing or making something for the mind to be attuned to and enjoy…

(Boyd, 2001, p198)

Such an emphasis on sociality, improvisation (Yanow, 2001) and play contrasts sharply with a view that emphasizes coercion and anxiety: yet in terms of Playback Theatre, the element of play coexists with an anxiety-provoking request for participation. It may be that this unusual combination of play and anxiety is one of Playback's potential strengths which enables it to facilitate usable learning within employment and group contexts.

Difference/plurality

For individuals, teams, and organizations to learn, insights produced by difference seem to be vitally important (Martin, 1990; 1992). Difference occurs on a variety of continua and criteria: rather than getting tied into rigid categories, the concept of positioning suggests itself as a useful way of thinking about difference:

> For Davies and Harre (1990) the concept of positioning…contrasts with the concept of human agency as role player. It is therefore useful for analysis of the production of self as a linguistic and relational practice with the dynamic occasions of encounters. (Gherardi, 2003, p.222)

Clearly positioning affects one's ability to relate and communicate: Rosaldo further expands how, even more basically, one's positioning affects what is *seen*:

> The ethnographer, as a positioned subject, grasps certain human phenomena better than others. He or she occupies a position or structural location and observes with a particular angle of vision. Consider, for example, how age, gender, being an outsider, and association with a neo-colonial regime influence what the ethnographer learns. The notion of position also refers to how life experiences both enable and inhibit particular kinds of insight. (1989, p.19)

Plurality within communities can offer opportunities for learning if there is openness to the one who is 'different' from me: in the current environments of many countries, diversity is part of the discourse of many institutions and groups, most often giving rise to a kind of shopping list of diversity factors. So for example, the New Zealand Health Strategy mentions key parameters of diversity (though it omits sexuality) when it states that:

> Improving the population's health means focusing on those factors that most influence health. There is clear international evidence that key factors include: • genetic inheritance • age • gender • ethnicity • income • education • employment • housing • a sense of control over life circumstances (New Zealand Ministry of Health, 2000, p.5)

However, in spite of the fact that diversity within communities promotes learning, the lived reality may be sharply different, as when, for example, students whose first language was not English, at a New Zealand University were "three times more likely to feel that their 'peers dominate the tutorial…' and twice as likely to feel 'unwilling to interrupt tutor/peers'" (Gill, Tuck, Lee, & Beckert, 2004, p.6). One way of interpreting this situation of being in a marginalised position is to apply Foucault's archaeological approach to the histories of power and conformity:

> power is not possessed by people but is dynamic, moving through weblike social networks. Discipline is not reserved for criminals but is socially pervasive. Any person's slight deviation from 'norms' is met with negative pressure. The source of this 'disciplinary normalization' is virtually untraceable because 'judgement' is diffused within the network of the judiciary, schools, families, police and social welfare. (Hall, 199, p.92)

In many settings, members of the majority group, when they perceive other people as deviating from norms apply all kinds of pressures, for example, students from the majority group dominating university tutorials. (Gill, Tuck, Lee, & Beckert, 2004)[117] The acceptance of this by, for example, students and their teachers as *just the way things are* is what Bourdieu and others call symbolic violence:

> Symbolic violence is the concept Bourdieu uses to explain how the dominated accept as legitimate their own condition of domination. He sees social scientists as particularly prone to become producers of symbolic violence by failing to recognise within their depictions of the social world the social and historical conditions that determine their own intellectual practices as well as those of the subjects of their investigations. (Reay, 2004, p.37)

Yet, domination is counter productive: creativity and organizational research show that a diversity of viewpoints is a strength for most enterprises: Clark, Amundson and Cardy (2002) show that in cross-functional teams, diversity can be very positive, as do Martin, (1992), Milliken and Bartel (2003), and Tribble (2005).

In fact, in the contemporary workplace in many countries, diversity of people in a work team is currently a fact of life (Benhabib, 2002, 2003). Yet, *diversity* as a concept may need, in my view, to be justifiably scrutinised because it implies a fixed viewpoint from

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[117] In one of the Centres, our Playback performance began with a moment in which a member of a non-dominant group (perhaps supported by the pluralist Playback group which contained people of her own community) refused to accept marginalising pressure from a member of the dominant group. See discussion on page 287

which the thing being named as 'diverse' is seen to diverge: thus implying the role of a social observer who knows what the norm is, rather than a being a participant.

> Any view of cultures as clearly delineable wholes is a view from the outside that generates coherence for the purposes of understanding and control. Participants in the culture, by contrast, experience their traditions, stories, rituals and symbols, tools and material living conditions through shared, albeit contested and contestable, narrative accounts. From within, a culture need not appear as a whole; rather it forms a horizon that recedes each time one approaches it. (Benhabib, 2002, p. 5)

The term *plurality*, on the other hand, includes a range of viewpoints within a group and acknowledges what Arendt refers to in her emphasis on *natality*, when she quotes Augustine:

> ("that there be a beginning, people were created before whom there was nobody") said Augustine in his political philosophy. This beginning is not the same as the beginning of the world; it is not the beginning of something but of somebody, who is a beginner herself. It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and in all origins. (Arendt, 1958, p.177)[118]

In Playback Theatre groups these issues of difference, plurality and cultures need to be directly attended to because the individuals and groups for whom one is playing back narratives, as well as one's Playback peers, constantly present performers with unique and sometimes confronting differences from oneself. Certainly in my practical project, differences were foregrounded, both in stories and in the interviews which occurred with patients and health care staff (see Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten).

Flux/chaos

Flux seems an appropriate theme with which to end this discussion of ways of thinking about organizations, in the environment of the contemporary world (Brothers, 2003). The *life* of an organization, no matter how clear, well-ordered and convincing its mission statements and organizational charts, takes place by means of improvisations (Balachandra, 2005; Brent & Bontis, 2002) within the swamp mentioned by Schön

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[118] Sexist language, original follows: "("that there be a beginning, man was created before whom there was nobody") said Augustine in his political philosophy. This beginning is not the same as the beginning of the world; it is not the beginning of something but of somebody, who is a beginner himself. It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and in all origins." (Arendt, 1958, p.177)

(1987). Organizational theory has of recent years found a way of being unafraid of this way of seeing organizations, using concepts from chaos theory and quantum theory, and stating that "the world is less like a machine and more like patterns of relationships. These patterns are unknowable, since to measure something is to change it" (Weick, 2003, p.458). In terms of these theories, leaders are encouraged to move out of a Newtonian mindset where the world was seen as "a great clock-like machine… [with the] machine metaphor … transferred to the workplace. .. managing employees as if they were mechanistic cogs - parts to be manipulated, controlled, and replaced when broken or worn out" (Shelton & Darling, 2003, p.354). In contrast to this view, insights from contemporary science encourage a view of an organization as living:

> Four principles of living things apply to organizations-especially organizations that are undergoing profound change: 1. Equilibrium is a precursor to death. ... 2. Innovation increases near the edge of chaos. In the face of threat or opportunity, living things move toward the edge of chaos, into more mutation and experimentation. 3. Living systems self-organize under pressure, and new forms and repertoires emerge. 4. You can disturb a living system, but you cannot direct it along a linear path. Unforeseen consequences are inevitable. The challenge is to disturb them in a manner that approximates the desired outcome…. Living system is not a metaphor for a human institution. A human organization is a living system. (Flower & Guillaume, 2002, p.18)

So in this survey of concepts from organizational studies which relate to Playback, as we resist the easy (dangerous) generalities of organizational spirituality (Forray & Stork, 2002), we end up where we started, with the living body and its knowing, *sensible knowledge*, with the honey or the mud sticking to our fingers, the bicycle wavering on the point of imbalance, the small cramped windowless rooms of the Bristol Infirmary. This is an apt moment to turn to look at some features of the world of health care within which this research project was situated, looking briefly first at each of the three Community Healthcare Centres with whom I worked and moving from them to a wider health context.

Up on the hill and down in the shopping centre – Ngākau

Ngākau[119] is a Community Health Care Centre that operates on kauapapa Māori principles and is attached to a local iwi and marae[120]. At the beginning of my study it

[119] All names changed for confidentiality purposes.

ran two Health Clinics, one as part of the marae, on a piece of open green expansive ancestral land and the other, some miles away, in a suburb which has been dominated by state housing and serves a population with multiple needs.[121]

There is a strong disjuncture between the working conditions and the atmosphere of the two clinics – one 'up on the hill' and the other 'down in the shopping centre'. Up on the hill, the atmosphere at the times when I have been there is peaceful, quiet, personal. The beauty of the physical environment and the ancestral grounding of the place are very noticeable. The building is a new, purpose-built facility, sunny, warm, clean and elegant. In contrast, when I first started my study, the clinic down in the shopping centre was shabby and old, with holes in the ramp leading to the front door. The second time I visited, they had moved to another new, purpose built facility which was much more welcoming, cleaner and presenting a more open and credible presence in the shopping mall, where it had a prominent and central location, though even in this new building, one of the doctors I interviewed told me how the consulting rooms had been given large windows on to the mall which then had to be frosted so that people had privacy: in addition, at least one of these windows faced west and would not open, so creating an oven-like temperature during the afternoons.

From the point of view of staff

This Centre seemed to me to be a place of multiple expectations, and of the stresses generated by the tension between those expectations, which seemed to include significant aspirations from the iwi, board (see the discussion of the patient focus groups on page 251) and from the Ministry of Health as well as the patients themselves with their very complex needs. The manager of Ngākau was a woman of great energy and vision. My experience of her through my research had been that her reaction to communication from me was often irritable to start with. Yet her actions were wholly practical and supportive.

I observed the members from the large staff group three times, in very different performance contexts. The staff seemed to stay to some extent in cliques or work

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[120] Kaupapa Māori refers to something being run according to Māori principles; iwi refers to tribal or descent group; marae refers to Courtyard of meeting house, more commonly used to refer to the whole traditional Māori community complex

[121] A relieving nurse, known by me because she had been a colleague at the university I am part of, commented to me that she had never seen a population with such extreme needs.

groups and there was quite a lot of banter and teasing of each other. One of the staff said that it would be good to do Playback

> with your own team I think sometimes you can express something that you may not have expressed verbally or that no-one's really listened to… doing it in the role play situation you might think "oh you know I didn't know I was doing that, I didn't know that was going on…" … There can be anger, there can be grief even…(Nga2 Ngaire, Section 49)

It seemed an environment of wero[122], an indigenous concept that I have experienced in Māori situations, where the mana[123] of a person is contacted and explored by a process of challenge, watchfulness and testing. At Ngākau a majority of staff were Maori, from many different areas of Aotearoa, but there was also a group, perhaps 30% of the total, who were Pākehā. There was a tension within the group of staff as a whole, alongside a sense of excitement about what had already been achieved and the challenges ahead of them. Ngākau was a place of potency and potentiality.

Shabby, steady, beloved – Oranga

Oranga Health Centre was started in conjunction with the union movement and had been operating for eighteen years, with many of the same staff in place over that time. It is housed in the main street of a suburb which has a proliferation of mainly Pasifika and Asian focussed shops, in a shabby but seemingly purpose-built building, which centres round a courtyard in which shaggy trees about 20 feet tall provide shelter for a variety of small birds, flowers and a hose coiled among the undergrowth. In its irregularly-shaped waiting room, children's toys were piled at one end, when I visited, while a television screen mounted high on the wall showed health-related films.

During the time I worked with the staff at Oranga, the Ngākau Centre assumed the management responsibilities for Oranga and various changes, including a shared computer system between the two centres, were made. Oranga had been through a

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[122] Wero refers to challenge

123 Mana refers to a concept "beyond translation from the Māori language. Its meaning is multi-form and includes psychic influence, control, prestige, power, vested and acquired authority and influence, being influential or binding over others" (Pere, 2003, p.14). It is a " Melanesian and Polynesian word (also found in Maori), imported into analytical psychology by Carl Gustav Jung (1875 –1961), denoting a supernatural life force, normally originating from the head or the spirit world, that can be concentrated in other people or objects and inherited and transmitted between people, and that confers high social status and ritual power" (Oxford Reference Online, 2006).

turbulent time when I first arrived and in fact, the manager who had agreed to host my research had left by the time my research proposal had been through the Ethics Approval process. However, the returning manager, who had worked there previously for many years, was an extremely open and positive individual: his genuine interest in the project was extremely helpful throughout this research process.

From the point of view of staff

I had more of an insight into Oranga than the other two centres, because my original contact, who had approached the Practice Manager on my behalf, worked there. I made an effort not to ask her for information and in fact I saw her less frequently throughout the years of the project than before it; but nonetheless I had picked up some information about the feelings and operation of the Centre from her chance remarks over the more than eight years she had worked there. I knew that in the past, it had been a very equal work team and that many people had felt that they had input into decisions – and that this had changed with a new Manager.

From what I had heard, I had expected a bitter and angst-ridden atmosphere: on the contrary I observed arrangements which were highly supportive to staff, with the manager reporting:

> I wrote out something … the other day a little questionnaire saying "Why are you here?" because … I thought we should examine our motives, you know why are we here? And someone said "Because of the staff" and I thought that's a high compliment really and a lot of people like working here because of the staff … without doubt we're not Goody Twoshoes but there is something that people appreciate…(Ora1 Henry Section 103)

The clinical staff had their own rooms looking out into the central courtyard and trees. These rooms were of a reasonable size, much bigger than the ones I saw in the other centres, and the staff were able to have personal items on display in them so that they did not seem overwhelmingly clinical. Behind a panelled wall was a staffroom which also opened out with a ranch slider into the courtyard. Round a big table were chairs and a newspaper was always there, along with some publications to do with medicine and health care matters. The layout of the Centre seemed to me particularly effective, giving a sense of relatedness and privacy at the same time. It was built in the 1960s and I observed that even though the carpet and paint work were worn, the size and layout of the rooms were far more practical and solid than either of the two of the brand new, contemporary buildings I saw in the other centres. Still, my impression was that the

staff of this Centre were stressed and sometimes unhappy. Partly this was to do with the intense needs of the patients and, I thought, partly to do with the administrative and management changes that came when the union movement, who had been losing money on the Centre for some years, relinquished the ownership of it and it therefore had to make its own way in the health care system.

New doors for multiple beginnings - Pātaka

The third centre, Pātaka, had also been sponsored by a union and is run by a board made up of the professional and community representatives. The first manager of Pātaka I encountered was committed to good practice and was herself engaged in higher education. When I first encountered the Centre, they were located in half of a prefabricated building, on one of the busiest streets in the western suburbs of our city, with only three carparks available for patients.

The suburbs surrounding them were filled with people from many different nationalities, a sizeable number being refugees. There had been community disharmony (and violence at times) between some of these groups. Whenever I visited the Centre, I found a packed waiting room filled with people of very great diversity, many dressed in clothes of beautiful colours, but with expressions of illness and distress.

During the years of my project, this Centre moved – to brand new purpose-built accommodation, up on a hilltop about three kilometers distance from the earlier rooms. This building was grand in comparison to where they had come from: the waiting room was spacious, light and sunny; when I visited, usually music was playing softly and children would be occupied with the books and toys on the small table and chairs in their corner; there were clinical rooms in which more than two people could meet if need be; and, best of all, upstairs was a proper staffroom and manager's office – where staff members would sit down to have a cup of tea, eat lunch and talk.

From the point of view of the staff

This centre was one in which most of the staff were part time. At the time we did our performances, all were women. The manager who had been there when I started the project had expressed frustration at the lack of awareness of the clinical team for the economic realities faced by the centre: the move was planned so that the centre could expand its patient base and so get on to a firmer financial footing. During my project,

the first manager left, another came and then left within a few months for family reasons, and a third manager took over. Undoubtedly all of these changes were hard on staff and they expressed disappointment that the Board of the centre did not seem to understand their clinical work and what it involved. Many of the staff expressed great commitment to their work and appreciation of their colleagues, saying things like "there is a singular commitment to this place in *spite* [of] everything that happens in people's daily lives … I mean everybody here is … part time and yet the amount of time and commitment that the folks put in is far in excess of what they get paid for." The Patient Focus Groups stated that very effective and useful work was being done (see section on page on page 318). The atmosphere presented to patients was cool, bright and confident.

Contemporary health – a global kaleidoscope

From international to global health

At the time of the research project, 2003 – 2006 the health care system in New Zealand, in which the staff of these Centres were working, was being strongly impacted on by the international health context (Child Mortality Coordination Group, 2006; Labonte & Spiegel, 2003; Moriarty & McLeod, 2006). International health (Elias, 2001; Ibrahim, 2003) has been particularly highlighted in the past decade by threats of biological terrorism and of pandemics (May 2007, Benkimoun, 2006). These threats have brought international efforts and the need for coordination and cooperation (Dukes, 2005; Glass, 2004; Maurer, 2006; Morabia, 2000) into sharp relief: "the threat of pandemic influenza has put WHO at the forefront of international politics" (Bankimoun, 2006, p.1808). Along with the threats and the need for an international response have come important questions concerning how to think about these new conditions (Grunenberg, 2002; May, 2007) and what are the most relevant priorities for global health. In its Millennium Goals, the United Nations set some objectives which relate to health, most notably the eradication of war, poverty, and inequalities. In addition, the Millennium Declaration states among its goals for development and poverty eradication such things as:

> • To halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water.
> • By the same date, to have reduced maternal mortality by three quarters, and under-five child mortality by two thirds, of their current rates. • To have, by then, halted, and begun to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the scourge of malaria and other

> major diseases that afflict humanity. • To provide special assistance to children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. • By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers as proposed in the "Cities Without Slums" initiative.
> • To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable. • To encourage the pharmaceutical industry to make essential drugs more widely available and affordable by all who need them in developing countries.
> • To develop strong partnerships with the private sector and with civil society organizations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication. • To ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication technologies, in conformity with recommendations contained in the ECOSOC 2000 Ministerial Declaration, are available to all. (United Nations, 2000)

Goals are set for the environment as well with an acknowledgement of its irrevocable impact on health:

> 21. We must spare no effort to free all of humanity, and above all our children and grandchildren, from the threat of living on a planet irredeemably spoilt by human activities, and whose resources would no longer be sufficient for their needs. 22. We reaffirm our support for the principles of sustainable development, including those set out in Agenda 21, agreed upon at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. 23. We resolve therefore to adopt in all our environmental actions a new ethic of conservation and stewardship and, as first steps, we resolve:
> • To make every effort to ensure the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, preferably by the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 2002, and to embark on the required reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases. • To intensify our collective efforts for the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. • To press for the full implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. • To stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources by developing water management strategies at the regional, national and local levels, which promote both equitable access and adequate supplies.
> • To intensify cooperation to reduce the number and effects of natural and manmade disasters. • To ensure free access to information on the human genome sequence. (United Nations, 2000, pp 5-6)[124]

In attempting to meet these challenges, where once the World Health Organization endeavoured to deal with such things through *international* services and

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[124] I quote these goals so fully, to foreground the multidimensional nature of health and its embeddedness in social, political and environmental conditions. These statements emphasize that health is much more than illness and treatment. This represents one of the outermost *frames* of this study.

intergovernmental public health policies and programmes, there has been a transition in recent years to a concept of *global* health in which:

> 'global partnerships' and 'global funds'…bring together 'stakeholders' – private donors, governments, and bilateral and multilateral agencies – to concentrate on specific targets (for example, Roll Back Malaria in 1998, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization in 1999 and Stop TB in 2001). These were semiautonomous programs bringing in substantial outside funding, often in the form of 'public-private partnerships.' (Brown, Cueto & Fee, 2006, p.70).

Many projects are being developed to explore ways to meet the challenges through for example, reforming sanitation (Marshall 2004), raising issues locally and nationally (Ibrahim 2003), organizing international networks of conferences (Young 2001, Dickenson-Hazard 2004), working on clarifying priorities (Kates, Sorian, Crowley & Summers, 2002; Mandelbaum-Schmid 2004) and highlighting the risks of the chronic diseases, which have very serious impacts on "low-income and middle-income countries [where costs] are high and often borne by patients as out-of-pocket expenses, contributing directly to family poverty" (Strong, Mathers, Epping-Jordan & Beaglehole, 2006, p.493). In addition, the education of health care workers is being modified and developed to better meet the needs laid out not only by the WHO in its publications, but by professional networks and associations (Hall & Weaver, 2001; Horsburgh, Perkins, Coyle, & Degeling 2006; Oandasan & Reeves 2005; Robson & Kitchen 2007; Tunstall-Pedoe, Rink & Hilton 2003). Health organizations have undergone some of the shifts that Weick (2003) refers to when he talks of the world being perceived as "less like a machine and more like patterns of relationships." (p.458). He adds that as well as being

> unknowable, since to measure something is to change it…[t]hese patterns are also unpredictable, since very small differences in intital condtions can lead very quickly to very large differences in the future state of a system…In an unknowable, unpredictable world, sensemaking is all we have. (Weick, 2003 p. 458)

In moving away from instrumentalising people and endeavouring to educate in ways that help health practitioners to make sense of the changing worlds we inhabit, educators have developed approaches such as storytelling, probem-based learning and narrative theory and have developed research into and practical applications of these approaches which are reported on in many countries (Abrums & Leppa, 2001; Diekelmann, 2001; Griffiths, 2004; Ironside & Valiga, 2001, Koenig & Zorn, 2002;

Parker, 1995; Pfundt, Dawson, Francis & Rees, 2003; Phillips, 2000, 2001; Randall, Tate & Lougheed, 2007, Seedhouse, 2002).

The need for information and joint research has become vital as the international community struggles to address these risks and needs of the global health context, through international and interdisciplinary studies, (Abbasi 2004; Boswell, Cannon, Aung, Hammack, Ienatsch & Prado, 2002; Callister, Getmanenko, Khalaf, Garvrish et al., 2006; Europe's health priorities for the world, 2004; Lintonen, Konu & Seedhouse, 2007; Thylefors, Presson & Hellstrom, 2005) so that a Swiss epidemiologist could write seemingly without Foucauldian irony: "Surveillance is the bedrock of public health" (Morabia, 2000, p.22). As the worldwide picture of research being undertaken is assembled, clearer and, for some countries *culpable* pictures emerge.

> The critical finding… was that 90% of all research funding for health was devoted to the health problems of industrialized countries, whereas only 10% was for research on the health issues of low-income countries…the imbalance is now widely referred to as the 10/90 gap…..improving the efficacy of health technology would save considerably fewer lives than *improving the delivery and use of existing technology* [italics added]… there is a major imbalance between the proportion of lives that could be saved by improving delivery and use of health technology compared with creating new technology …and the relative proportion of grants funded in the 2 areas (3% and 97%) We call this latter imbalance the '3/97 gap.' (Leroy, Habicht, Pelto & Bertozzi, 2007, pp.219, 222)

Moreover, all of this activity is taking place in an unnerving environment, where technological/biological/human boundaries are constantly shifting, so that for example, in the search for protein for human consumption, it is now possible for business/science to think about breeding creatures who seem at face value to belong to the world of 20th century science fiction or 19th century horror:

> Some objectors to animal genetic engineering focus on the violation of animal rights. But reluctantly, many now seem to have accepted that animal rights views do not succeed in establishing that it is morally wrong to make animal microencephalic lumps (AMLs). AMLs are beings with such small brains that they would lack the cognitive capacity to feel pain or have interests; they are "senseless" beings. Thus AMLs would not be the kinds of beings that can have rights, since they lack the cognitive characteristics necessary to possess rights. (Ortiz, 2004, p.95).

In her article, Ortiz goes on to argue for animals having a claim to some kind of 'dignity' which therefore is a *prima facie* reason not to create such AMLs - this shifts the "burden of proof (that it is permissible to infringe upon an animal's dignity) to the proponents of AMLs" (p. 115. However, this development of industrialisation of

production of protein is only a step further than what already happens for animals such as pigs or chickens, which have now very routinely been incorporated into technical/scientific/industrial systems. (Boyd, 2001)

In light of these shifting boundaries, many discussions are taking place, to endeavour to elucidate clear values and the decisions they will lead to: (Alkire & Chen, 2004; Cash, 2005; Dzur, 2002; Hyde, Treacy, Scott, Butler, Drennan, Irving, et al., 2005; Mitchell & Happe, 2001; Seedhouse, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1998, 2002a, 2002b; Sen, 2002). As these decisions are debated, power now has come to be inextricably linked, perhaps disastrously to matters of the manipulation of living systems:

> Michel Foucault's claim [is] that politics in our time is constituted by disciplines of normalization and subjectification that Foucault labels 'biopower.' For Foucault, biopower is fundamentally modern. "What might be called a society's 'threshold of modernity,'" he writes, "has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. For millennia, humans remained what they were for Aristotle: living animals with the additional capacity for political existence; modern humans are animals whose politics place their existence as living beings in question." (Norris, 2000, p.39)[125]

In the face of these politics with their "grid of control on the planet" (Haraway, 1991, p.154), voices of another way of seeing the world are important and it is possible to hear a chorus including Donna Haraway who assert an alternative discourse beyond dualities of domination: "a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, *not afraid of permanently partial identies and contradictory standpoints* [italics added]" (Haraway, 1991, p.154). It may well be that action methods, which use the body as communicative and interpretive have a unique potential to assist individuals and groups to share the experiences of modelling and exploring such realities. Biopower is wielded and contested in specific ways according to context – in order to more fully engage with our environment in Aotearoa New Zealand, I now turn to local stories.

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[125] Sexist language modified, original follows: "For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question." (Norris, 2000, p.39)

Contemporary Health in Aotearoa/NZ – a tale of houses, octopi and eggs

I begin this section by looking at two indigenous models of health, in acknowledgement that these are substantively different from many models developed in the western European tradition. However, they have a resonance with the pre-modern world views in Europe, as demonstrated by the ubiquity of "the double spiral motif of ancient peoples represent[ing] a deep understanding of chaos as potentiality and of coming into being. … the minute shift at the centre that transforms the whole" (Stewart-Harawira, 2005, p.251).

Two Māori models of health

Māori as indigenous to Aotearoa New Zealand have emphasized the importance of their own thousand-year-old traditions and theories of health. While for many years, the health system of the country in some places implicitly acknowledged the existence and efficacy of these models, it has not been until the last 15 years that they have begun to be more widely officially recognized as valid alternative theoretical frames through which to view health.

Whare Tapa Whā is a four square house which has been proposed by Mason Durie to indicate the ways in which Māori have traditionally seen health: a perspective which is widely acknowledged as relevant today and which is quoted in the New Zealand Health Strategy, where it is cited in the section headed "The health sector and determinants of health" to support the notion of "intersectoral linkages":

> The Whare tapa whā (Durie 1994) Mäori health model, which is also known as the four cornerstones of Mäori health, describes four dimensions that contribute to wellbeing: te taha wairua (spiritual aspects), te taha hinengaro (mental and emotional aspects), te taha whänau (family and community aspects), and te taha tinana (physical aspects). It is considered that good health depends on the equilibrium of these dimensions. (New Zealand Ministry of Health, 2000, p.5)

This model means that people working in health need to be aware of much wider aspects of a patient's being than is sometimes the case with technically and scientifically focused professionals. This is not out of step with global concerns: as far back as 1947 the WHO's statements about health have included statements about wellbeing. However, the elegance and community acceptability of the Whare Tapa Wha has meant that it is not only of use in Aotearoa New Zealand but also has the

potential to contribute to a global understanding of health as for example this extract from the British Medical Journal shows:

> Although derived by experts, this model is quite different from many others used in health care in that it is definitely owned by the community. It makes the interconnectedness between different aspects of life and wellbeing explicit, has been the basis of new services, and underpins an outcome measure now used in mental health. (McPherson, Harwood & McNaughton 2003)

Te Wheke, the octopus with three hearts is another model of health presented developed by Rose Rangimarie te Turuki Pere a traditional healer in the tradition of her iwi[126] She adds another four dimensions to those present in Te Whare Tapa Wha and her model, Te Wheke, is being used in both health and education within New Zealand (Love, 2004).

> Rose Pere also introduced the idea of Te Wheke, the octopus, to symbolize the dynamic, multi-faceted and inter-related nature of Maori wellbeing (1982, 1991). Four tentacles embraced the cornerstones of Whare Tapa Wha but the other four gave substance to the importance of mana (status), mauri (life force), nga taonga tuku iho [cultural inheritance] and whatumanawa (emotional life). Waiora, or complete wellbeing, is said to be found when each tentacle, or dimension of wellbeing, receives sufficient sustenance. (Palmer 2004, p.51)

Pere's model, published in her book *Te Wheke* (2003), adds to the concepts of health, empowerment and education in Aotearoa - and through her frequent conference appearances and lecturing tours (Pere, 2006), in other countries as well.[127] She suggests in her book and in the lectures she gives that people have sources of power they can tap into: at a lecture recently she presented her view of how these aspects fit together in terms of health: "Illness is a cleansing. Seven and a half tentacles are fine, if I am sick that is half of one tentacle, tinana. If I keep the others strong I will be all right. Why did I have that cleansing? That's the question." (R. Pere, personal communication, March 14, 2007). Disempowerment, passivity and despondency are seen as coming from messages from the mainstream that is part of the colonizing mentality. In contrast. she particularly emphasizes mana. Mana is

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[126] Iwi refers to extended descent group

[127] In *Appendix Nine – Applying Te Wheke to Playback* on page 534, I apply this model to the practice of Playback Theatre.

> beyond translation from the Māori language. Its meaning is multi-form and includes psychic influence, control, prestige, power, vested and acquired authority and influence, being influential or binding over others....Some Māori leaders with various forms of mana are very humble and are known to do the most mundane chores around home and the community generally. These people know who and what they are and what their role is in terms of their own heritage. These people do not feel threatened by a materialistic, industrial culture. These people do not feel threatened by any other culture or system – they know what their destiny is…. (Pere, 2003, p.14)

Ladders and eggs – the New Zealand Health Strategy

The main imagery in the New Zealand Health Strategy consists of lists, charts and grids that more than anything else look on the page like ladders, tools for climbing out, climbing to escape, to gain desired objects or to accomplish needed actions. However, on page 32 is a diagram of how all the different parts (strategies, toolkits, District Health Boards, outcomes, funding and so on) relate together. There are two external ovals and then six eggs ranged round the inner oval and in the middle is a group of people named "Populations".

The document has aims which echo closely the global perspectives:

> • an improvement in health status of those currently disadvantaged • collaborative health promotion and disease and injury prevention by all sectors • timely and equitable access for all New Zealanders to a comprehensive range of health and disability services, regardless of ability to pay • a high-performing system in which people have confidence • active involvement of consumers and communities at all levels. (New Zealand Ministry of Health, 2000, p.vii)

The first two principles however, pertain uniquely to the New Zealand context:

> • acknowledging the special relationship between Māori and the Crown under the Treaty of Waitangi [and] • good health and wellbeing for all New Zealanders throughout their lives (New Zealand Ministry of Health, 2000, p.vii)

Within this balance health care workers in Aotearoa New Zealand, have to attend to responsibilities to the indigenous people and traditions; to every citizen, from whatever cultural background or subcultural requirement; and to the country's commitments to international and global health risks, interests and initiatives. Thus every day they work and live a multi-dimensional journey specific to the historicity of this time and place.

A Balancing Act – being a health worker in Aotearoa

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the calls for collaborative interdisciplinary practice heard on the world stage, have been particularly strong over the years of this research project, 2003-2007. At a Health Research Council Consultative Conference in 1996, which

looked at questions around evidence, relevance, policy, purchasing and equity, dissatisfactions were expressed: "there was a general feeling that many of the ethical issues in health research and practice have been ignored, and that some of the assumptions made about what is cost-effective favour existing services and current providers." (Paterson, 1996, p.4). When Labour became government in 1999, they worked on health reform legislation which was unveiled in August 2000, when the then Health Minister Annette King said.

> this is…an honouring of a commitment we made to the electorate not in one election but in three elections…. (It was) a commitment that we were going to restore a New Zealand public health service that was based on co-operation and collaboration, that we were going to replace the current commercial and competitive model, that we were going to ensure that local communities once again had a say in the running of health services… (NZPA, 2000, p.17)

In 2002, Crampton, Sutton & Foley, outlining the proposed funding arrangements for Primary Healthcare Organizations (PHOs), estimated that "[t]he needs-based approach to funding should attract most providers serving high concentrations of low socioeconomic groups. PHOs serving more well-off patients may develop more slowly" (p.5). Although there was much uncertainty over funding and structure, contrary to this estimation in fact by 2003 many Independent Practitioners had become part of PHOs, so that for example, HealthWEST in Auckland which was established on 1 January 2003, by November of the same year could report having 140,000 people enrolled through 33 member practices. This population base meant that practices in New Zealand were beginning to be able to provide the data to lead the changes required. An emphasis on statistics had been clearly signalled in the international discourse around health outcomes: "The main advantage of the PHO structure is its ability to get almost total capture of west Auckland health data. There will be huge potential for health planning" (Huge potential for PHO planning, 2003).

This level of data collection was a change to the way things were done: in April 2003, in an article using a war metaphor to describe the PHO 'zone' (*Progress with PHOs: A report from the front*), the Chief Executive Officer of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners had said that "the college is also concerned about the level of analysis and data PHOs are being expected to provide; that should be done by the DHB." (Sheddan, 2003). Love, in 2002 quoted four different attitudes to the collecting

of data in his article outlining the potential culture clashes between public health and individual care perspectives:

> The following comments illustrate the different viewpoints surrounding ethnicity data collection. The first from a Maori health researcher illustrates population health reasons for collecting ethnicity data:
> "The Crown has a constitutional obligation to meet Treaty obligations for Maori. This requires the monitoring of social indices making a Maori/ non-Maori distinction to ensure that Treaty obligations are being met." – Maori Health Researcher.
> The second quote from a policymaker reveals an expectation and assumption that general practice will accept the responsibility to collect the data: "It's up to the GPs. Now there is so much that governments can do but it actually requires some sort of collective responsibility to make a difference. And I hope GPs will be part of that, and perceive it as part of their social responsibilities." – Policymaker.
> The final two quotes, one from a general practitioner and one from a practice manager, demonstrate that while general practice is in a position to collect ethnicity data, the data is not necessarily seen as useful at the service delivery level. Additional commitments of time and resource are needed to provide the data for use in population health planning.
> "There are no benefits [from collecting ethnicity data], I honestly don't think we should." – Practice Manager. "Yes, general practice is in a good position to collect this data. It's our responsibility and we'd do it well." – GP. (Love, 2002, p.319)

In the following years, discussions have arisen around such dimensions as: the ownership of healthcare centres (Crampton, 2005); how PHOs can address the underlying determinants of health (Robinson & Blaiklock 2003), business practice (Briscoe 2005) community participation (Neuwelt et al. 2005) multi-disciplinary research (McLeod 2004), the public/private interface (Austin 2004) and the need for a culture of supporting professional development for primary care professionals (Pullon & McKinlay, 2004).

At the centre of these discussions, but in some cases virtually invisible within them, are the innumerable acts of caring which form the heart of the health care project (Curuge, 2005). Many theorists argue that even thought there may be a "new management fad" of organizational spirituality (Berman Brown, 2003, p.395), an involvement in caring is not valorized in the contemporary context:

> Caring is not only devalued because it is seen as women's work or because government and the workplace ignore its importance, caring is devalued by prominent elements of the contemporary postmodern condition as well. For example [in] the postmodern emergence of individualism…[s]ince independence and self-determination are such highly valued qualities, caring is interpreted as evidence of a sign of weakness and thereby caregivers are posited as being less desirable...(Baker-Ohler, 2005, p.26)

Yet caring is an ineluctable part of the day-to-day existence of most health care workers – and sometimes it involves them in experiences they find very difficult to live with. Gunther & Thomas looked at nurses' experiences of care and found that

> what dominated participants narratives were unusual caregiving episodes accompanied by strong emotional arousal…. Many of the stories began with the equivalent of the statement, 'I came in already tired.' These unusual circumstances required a transcendence of lassitude….Nurses are 'thrown in' to the crisis situation, and they must deal with it without time for reflection….Sometimes years later, participants were still trying to…understand the outcome….They faced the limits of science and skill and plunged into the realm of existential questions for which there are no ready answers. (Gunther & Thomas, 2006, p.374)

Within the caring context, a call is being made and responded to: Baker-Ohler describes the way Nel Noddings uses Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue to look into the moment of caring more closely:

> Noddings….identifies the one-caring as the 'I' in Buber's I-THOU relationship and the one cared-for with the THOU. According to Noddings, caring is relation, relation is reciprocity….the one-caring has a responsibility to the one-cared for, responsibility to answer the call of the other; and after acknowledging the call, responsibility to pay particular attention to the other…(Baker-Ohler, 2005, p.122).

This call is most likely made non-verbally, subtly, to be picked up and responded to in the body, with embodied cognition. Canadian nurse Diana Gustafson tells a story about being a nurse in an emergency unit and being pushed to the limit by the groans that an unconscious man is making:

> In the early morning hours, I stood at this man's bedside, physically and emotionally exhausted. His moaning had become the music of my impotence. There seemed nothing more I could do. I had pushed the limits of my professional knowledge and it was not enough. The curtains were pulled. I dimmed the lights over his bed and muted the alarms on his monitors.
>
> I acknowledged my sadness and frustration as I began to whisper my explanations. Speaking as if he understood my words, I told him his next sedation was not due for another one and a half hours. Gently, I stroked the top of his head as if to smooth away the demons lodged inside. As I did so, a tear escaped my eyes. I felt as I did years later when I tried to soothe my son's hurts with quiet words and a reassuring touch. I continued to murmur mindless nothings -- soothing him, soothing me.
>
> Perhaps it was only a minute or two -- perhaps more. He sighed. It was only then that I heard the silence that enveloped us. He was breathing slowly, deeply, the beginning of a quiet slumber that lasted a couple of hours. I was awash with joy and sadness. Joy -- that he had found a quiet moment, a place of peace. And sadness -- to think that until that moment my acts of knowledgeable and competent nursing care had been disconnected from more embodied ways of knowing what it means to be human. (Gustafson, 2003, p.11)

This is a person interacting with another as an embodied 'thou' embracing Buber, acknowledging the many dimensions of Strati's sensible knowledge, Pere's octopus, or Durie's four square house. She asks rhetorically at the end of her account:

> If we talk about our patients as if they are biological units disconnected from their minds and spirits, then are we, as nurses, also simultaneously creating ourselves as biological units disconnected from our souls? How then can the relationship between nurse and client that emerges from and through the scientific construction of ourselves and our clients be anything but disembodied, disconnected? (Gustafson, 2003, p,12)

And another balance – entering teams as a researcher

As I entered this complex context, I was aware of my 'difference' from the health care workers, as a person for whom language, literature, symbol, and creative arts had been more fertile fields of learning and practice than mathematics and sciences. Yet I was also aware of my commonness with them in being engaged in an enquiry into ways to assist people to live fully wherever they are, in their bodies, narratives and communities. I owe them more thanks than I have words to express, for their generosity in allowing me to be part of their lives for this time.

Chapter Seven – Necessary Fictions and the Disruptions to Keep them Honest: Methodology

With such a fluid activity as Playback, the choice of methodology for this research project was going to be influenced partly by the questions particularly posed in the present study and partly by the exigencies and demands of Playback practice itself (Day, 1999). Developed from the complex philosophical roots described in Chapters Two, Three and Four, Playback Theatre practice can be seen and is constantly being described by practitioners and theorists using a myriad of theoretical lenses. Each theoretical lens leads to a different type of methodology (Grant & Giddings, 2002).[128]

A significant factor in the choice of methodology was the setting in which the study was being conducted. Aotearoa New Zealand in the early years of the twenty-first century represents a society in which diverse theoretical paradigms strive for visibility and dominance. A "theoretically neutral" position is not available in such a discourse-questioning environment; in fact "neutrality" itself is seen to be part of one of the competing voices, that of political and cultural dominance by a conservative majority. Therefore some elements of Kaupapa Māori Research have formed the enquiry in significant ways and these are described towards the end of this chapter. In addition, my own social locations, as outlined in the sections called *Positioning Myself* **Error! Bookmark not defined.** and on page 436, made the adoption of such a "neutral" viewpoint impossible, because of both direct and indirect experience of marginalization and struggle that have led me to view interactions and phenomena in terms of the ways in which power is being held and reproduced in them, a view which might be invisible or unimportant to people positioned differently. This view has led to an emphasis on historicity and situatedness within this research project.

Possible Methodologies

The methodological choices available also come from the threads of evolution in theory and practice which interweave in the Playback environment. Some of these threads call

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[128] As I had seen when, in 1997, at the first Playback Symposium, at the University of Kassel in Germany, I explained the impact of theoretical lenses on Playback practice (Day, 1999), using a taxonomy developed by my colleague and mentor, Mary Melrose: logical positivist/technical/scientific; hermeneutic; critical/emancipatory; postmodern (Melrose, 1996).

on: aesthetic history, theory and practice (Gisler, 2002; Hall, 2005; Salas, 2003); psychotherapeutic and psychodynamic theory through the influence especially of psychodrama on Playback (Adderley, 2002; Fox, 2007; Hale, 1994; Paradi, 1999); existential philosophy (Guignon, 1993; Hodge, 1995) through the philosophical orientation of many of the original developers of Playback as an artistic and social practice and through the development of twentieth century radical theatre (Dauber, 1999; Fox, 1999b; Harris, 2002); cultural studies (Grossbery, 1993) and critical social theory (Gibson, 1986) through the dominant cultural/social paradigms not only of the time and contexts in which Playback developed in its earliest stages but also of many of the contexts and purposes of current Playback practice worldwide (Alexander, 2003; Brunner, 2008; Cocks, 2002; Dennis, 2008; Garavelli, 2001; Kingwill 2008; Garavelli, 2001, 2003; Menges, 2004; Shoshan, 2003, 2005). This proliferation of theoretical elements or what I have called "threads" in Playback leads to some experiences of people *talking past each other* (Metge, 1978) as the cultural assumptions of practitioners and observers in specific contexts remain unseen and taken for granted or lead to misunderstandings with people from other contexts. In a globalised Playback community, this variation of paradigms may be expected, but it makes even more important the responsibility for practitioners to interrogate our theoretical positions and try to clarify them as much as possible when entering into practice-based discussions.

Technical/Industrial/Scientific Paradigm

This way of seeing Playback focuses on the problems of organization, classification, effectiveness, financial base, "fit" in the marketplace. While, at the beginning of the history of Playback, people were encouraged to be "citizen actors" (Fox 1986, p.3) and therefore not to make Playback practice their sole source of livelihood, this has changed in recent years. This change potentially brings the practice and therefore the thinking around Playback into an environment where economic pressures lead to a different (less critical?) social viewpoint simply because the practice is now having to deliver economic benefits to the practitioners in a way which was not needed in its early years. If Playback practice has to deliver an income to the practitioners, the thought arises: what level of income is appropriate? Do the artists see themselves as workers, like plumbers or builders or as producers of luxury goods, like ornaments or perfumes? Or as professionals like psychotherapists? Or teachers – and if so are they like kindergarten educators or college professors?

One strength of the technical paradigm may be that it leads to strongly based companies with an effective orientation to the realities of their surrounding environment, companies which, by having a firm economic base, have the opportunity of developing their practice and refining their techniques, ideas and skills. However, if by doing this they load Playback with a weight of being responsible for their entire livelihood, they may stop asking difficult questions about power and dominance, questions without which Playback can become just another tool or product in the consumer-commodification culture.

Of course, all creative work that is presented to audiences for economic recompense is forced to be related to this theoretical paradigm which pervades societies, to varying degrees. In a society like Aotearoa, I found that some of the audience members for our Playback project viewed the performance in relation to a technical/ economic frame, and either affirmed or questioned its 'value for money', while other audience members in the same performances, framed the activity very differently and gave it other meanings, for example as an interchange between hosts and guests.

Critical Emancipatory

Art and theatre have been sites of critical emancipatory voices in western-based cultures for at least the last 250 years, both as venues of analysis and commentary (McGregor, 2004) and as methods for communicating complex theoretical constructs concerning the power relations between groups of people (Peters, 1996).

> It was Mikhail Bakhtin who, in the 1930s, expounded the notion of the *dialogic* as a feature of social discourse that was also specifically applicable to the arts, and it is a notion that may help us articulate some of the processes that interventionist theatre practice at its best embodies. It links interestingly too (though it is not identical) with Freire's concept, some 30 years later, of the dialogic in relation to the learning process. Freire's concern was with the role of dialogic discourse in emancipatory education deployed in the service of the "oppressed," and it was this concern of course that in turn underpinned Boal's own attempts to shift theatre into a more interventionist, and utilitarian, mode. (Jackson, 2005, pp.110-111)

In Aotearoa New Zealand, two critical perspectives have been particularly influential both to this place and to an international community of voices. From the beginning, some Māori interacted as equals with colonizers and participated in joint activities from their own theoretical perspective. So, Anne Salmond and other writers have recently emphasized that James Cook's voyages were very importantly facilitated and co-led by Tupaia, a chief from Tahiti who joined their voyages and acted as translator and

interpreter between Maori and Cook's crew (Kawharu, 2002; Salmond, 1997). The emancipatory theoretical descriptions produced and developed by Māori in response to the challenges and invasions of colonization are active contributors in the colloquy of theoretical voices within the context of this research.

Similarly, one of the 'givens' of the research was that women's voices are as important as men's and that the insights of gender/power analysis are of significance in all creative acts (Lather, 1991). This too is a perspective which has been present in Aotearoa New Zealand from the beginning of human meaning-making in, for example, the many accounts of female agency in traditional Māori stories (eg. Kahukiwa & Grace, 1984) and more recently in women taking an equal place in political and social life exemplified by such things as the suffrage campaigns of the late 19th century and the sometimes bitter equal pay, reproductive rights, human rights, anti-violence and parental leave campaigns of the late 20th century. I am aware that looking at the story of the development of Playback as a practice embodying theoretical positions, these critical perspectives enable me to identify and describe some moments (Thomas, 1993) which might not particularly strike a commentator who was not heir to such world views. However, within the Playback work itself are multiple acts of interpretation and reframing and the terms, descriptors and subject positions referred to in critical theory, which are often reified and used as if they were 'given' categories, were not sufficient on their own to describe the subtle distinctions and multiple acts of interpretation which are being made in a Playback performance.

Hermeneutics

For these acts of interpretation to be explored, this enquiry needed to use a hermeneutic lens. Through this lens (Gadamer, 1976; Sartre, 1969; Van Manen, 1997), one could see that it was not the case that the audience member provides a reified "commodity," a personal story, which the performers then "add value" to and deliver back to the buyers, the "consuming" audience. On the contrary, a chain of interpretations is being presented as, first, tellers interpret their own experience *to themselves*, then voice this account to a facilitator; it is then interpreted by the facilitator as they verbally craft the story telling together. In response, musicians and actors then make visible their interpretations of the story. Finally, the audience members make multiple

interpretations: of the story as told by the teller; of the facilitator's co-crafting interventions; and finally of the enactment and the performances.

However, hermeneuts, in making their interpretations, are at risk of creating a world of infinite individual interpretations, where relative value cannot be weighed, and dominance and silencing may only be noted in individual terms. The project demanded a more critical view than this, dealing as it did with an environment within which power relations are significantly present: three more or less hierarchical health care teams involved in primary health care centres dealing with the needs of pluralist communities in a (putatively) post-colonial society.

Radical Hermeneutics

I found the view needed to tackle the description and analysis of both the creative work and this research enquiry in critical hermeneutics as outlined by John Caputo in his 1987 book *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project.*[129] In this book, Caputo suggests that radical hermeneutics means a constant questioning even of the words that we use to express the interpretations that we make. In questioning our words and concepts, we expose ourselves to "the ruptures and gaps…the textuality and difference, which inhabits everything we think, and do, and hope for." (p. 6). He grounds himself in Aristotle and draws on the way in which Heidegger read Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* as a story about life as we live it, as distinct from the stable universal concepts about life we are tempted (with Plato) to create. He draws attention also, with Kierkegaard, to the "Aristotelian gesture of feeling around for the elusive reality of *kinesis* which 'exists' in the interplay of potentiality and actuality, which is neither one nor the other, for it is that in-between land which alone describes the dynamics of freedom…" (p. 16). This is often the zone which Playback stories doubly inhabit – firstly the given account of what happened is often imbued with the teller's sense of what the possibilities of the situation could have been; and secondly in the contrast between the listeners' witnessing of the actual performance, which may sometimes be in sharp contrast with their sense of what might have been a possible performance.

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[129] All references in this chapter which are not otherwise acknowledged, are to this book.

Caputo describes "a critical-Socratic praxis whose point is to expose the limitations, to delimit the authority, of every assertion which does set itself up as authoritative." (p. 196) He emphasizes that for radical hermeneutics as for Derrida it is not that "there are no authorities but that there are no absolute authorities, that authorities are always suspect, that they are only as good as the results they produce…" (p.196) From this, he suggests that "there is a kind of unresolved dialectic, a rhythmic alternation, between tentative schemes and their disruption. The former are necessary fictions, pragmatic necessities…and the latter (the disruptions) keep them honest." (p.196) This unresolved dialectic is one of the rhythms of Playback performances, where what is told by one teller may be disrupted, sometimes boldly and immediately, by subsequent tellers.

All of this produces radical hermeneutics as a philosophy which, far from consoling, draws our attention to the "original difficulty of life" (p. 1). It is not a philosophy of unreason, however, but one which sees action, art, religion and even science making their way "by a free and creative movement whose dynamics baffle the various discourses on method" (p.211). Caputo cites Feyerabend's statement that the "basic 'principle' (*arche*) which should guide scientific research is 'anything goes.' i.e. the suspension of principle and arche in an 'anarchistic epistemology' "(pp.211-212), adding to it his own caveat " 'dilige scientiam' love science (then anything goes)" (p. 212), which I take to mean that one must care about doing things thoroughly and with due diligence according to one's discipline. This free and creative movement of searching everywhere, questioning maxims, valuing suppleness, inventiveness and play as well as discipline, relates strongly to the method and even the forms of Playback and is therefore a congruent methodology for the present study.

Caputo's elaboration of radical hermeneutics starts with Kierkegaard who "wants to undo the prestige of the metaphysics of presence embodied in Platonic recollection and have us think in terms of temporality and movement (*kinesis*). Repetition is kinesis, the way the existing individual makes her way through time, the constancy with which she confronts the withering effects of time upon character and faith" (p.16).[130] This applies with sharpness to a person who tells something about themselves in Playback: they

[130] Sexist language modified, original follows: "Repetition is kinesis, the way the existing individual makes his way through time, the constancy with which he confronts the withering effects of time upon character and faith" (Caputo, 1987, p.16).

may feel that they are recollecting, looking back, and of course in a common sense way they are. However they are also repeating, in Kierkegaard's sense: "recollection says that everything important has already been. Repetition says that actualilty must be continually produced, brought forth anew, again and again. Identity must be established, produced. Identity, as Derrida would say, is an effect of repetition" (p.17). By telling about themselves, by choosing to tell the incidents they do, in the way that they do, leaving out or putting in the details and other characters that they do, people create and re-create themselves through telling stories in Playback.[131]

Delineating some aspects of Husserl's thought, Caputo describes a way hermeneutics operates which could be directly translated into how Playback as a practice operates within the fields of human experience: "hermeneutics in the broadest sense means coping with the flux, tracing out a pattern in a world in slippage." (p.37) It is quite possible and even helpful to replace 'hermeneutics' with 'Playback' in this sentence (and such is its fit with my sense of what Playback does that I chose it for the title of this thesis.) Such a statement guides practitioners to operate with the best skills they can muster, without ever hoping to triumph over the indeterminable context within which each human encounter is situated. For, to make the substitution in a subsequent sentence :

> "for Playbackers, the flux is at once the raw material of Playback and its constant opposite. It is at once that which requires fixation, stabilization, regularization, and so gives Playback the work it has to do, and it is that which threatens the whole enterprise of Playback, that which, left unchecked, will break down its entire… edifice." (p. 37)[132]

Such a statement assists us to see in clearer focus, the boundary disputes in which from time to time the International Playback Theatre Network and the Centre for Playback Theatre are called on to intervene, when people engage in something they call Playback,

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[131] A recent article in the New York Times pointed out how the ways in which people configure to themselves and others their accounts of their lives, influences how they live in the present moment (Carey 2007).

132 Original text reads "for Husserl, the flux is at once the raw material of phenomenology and its constant opposite. It is at once that which requires fixation, stabilization, regularization, and so gives phenomenology the work it has to do, and it is that which threatens the whole enterprise of phenomenology, that which, left unchecked, will break down its entire scientific edifice." (p. 37)

without training – sometimes therefore flouting the most basic requirements of the form.[133]

In coping with this flux, in hearing the accounts tellers give of the world and witnessing the interpretations and expressions the performers use in their Playback, audiences are engaged in what Caputo shows Husserl identifying as constituting the world by "a certain *anticipatory* movement, a gesture of regularizing the flow by means of anticipating its regularities…" (p.37) By listening to a constellation of others' accounts of experience, audiences engage in world-building and constituting their own structures of interpretation and meaning, both individual and collective.

However, the audience is also drawn by their encounter with others' accounts of their lives into a sense of their own life as different and the awareness of others' alterity which throws them into "the familiar dynamics of the hermeneutic circle: we stand already (implicitly) in a sphere of which we are not (explicitly) cognizant. And it is the task of 'thinking' to take stock of that implicit sphere" (p.101). Playback assists and facilitates thinking in this way. It opens us up as we, says Caputo, quoting Heidegger's 1966 *Discourse on Thinking* " 'belong originally'…to the open….We belong to the open region from the start, prior to everything." (p.101) Openness proved to be a metaphor very frequently used, in varied syntactical ways, in the interviews on the experience of Playback which were part of this project: openness was noticeable, people were open, subjects were opened up, the process opened people up (see sections on page 332and on page 377).

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[133] During the time of my active Playback life, as the form of Playback moves out of its first foundation phase, I have seen attempts to limit or regulate it. During my time on the International Playback Theatre Network Board, periodic reports would come through of people who were doing something which they called Playback but which had significant differences from the forms as they had been taught by the originators of Playback in the apprenticeship model which has dominated the expansion of Playback.
In addition, I have encountered one time when someone in my own city advertised themselves as teaching Playback yet did not ever attend performances or workshops. Some people's responses to these challenges was to try to formalize Playback into lists of rules, which seemed to me impractical. Radical hermeneutics has encouraged me to view these attempts with skepticism for, it states, "the real obstacle to understanding human affairs lies in the tendency to believe that what we do …admits of formulation in hard and irrevocable rules." (p.212) It has encouraged me instead to continue to seek dialogue even when it is difficult; and to be alert to look particularly at matters to do with fear, trembling, tears, laughter, mistakes and the unrevealed (*lethe*) against which our stories and our work proceeds and to which we are more or less open. I have tried to tell about all of these aspects in our work in this project, particularly in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten.

Radical hermeneutics thus enabled me to explore the lifeworlds of those to whom we performed Playback and to trace subtleties in their narratives. It encouraged me to look at the plurivocality of both Playback as practice and my interviewees in their accounts of themselves, tracing the resting places we may all find in terms of over-arching concepts or references to other genres or texts or narratives – but then also finding the ways in which those concepts were under-cut by other features of our speaking and acting with each other. By doing this, I am not tempted into convenient but ultimately misleading closure, so that I can say, with Caputo:

> We are driven by the passion of non-knowing. Our readings and interpretations, our rereadings and conflicting interpretations, are like so many fingers clinging tenaciously to the edge of the cliff. Instead of arresting the play of meaning, a more radical or more originary experience of hermeneutics faces up to the inescapable play of interpretation, which is all we have to hang on to as our feet dangle dangerously over the rushing rapids below. (Caputo 2000, p.3)

As well as being given the chance as tellers to re-create themselves through repetition and as audience members both to further constitute their world views by virtue of apprehending others' accounts of experiences and the aesthetic reinterpretation of those experiences and of being drawn into experiencing themselves as both different from and open to the other; in my view and experience Playback, like radical hermeneutics, also causes many of its participants to question and keep their questions in play. One of the ways it accomplishes this is in the way it proceeds by a rhythmical alternation of construction and deconstruction; one person's account is explored, interpreted, played out; followed by another which may undercut, expand or contradict it. There is no recourse to a final meaning.

Caputo says in discussing the disavowal in Heidegger of aletheia (truth):

> Heidegger says that *lethe* is the heart of *a-letheia*. Lethe means the self-concealing of the origin, but in that self-concealing…there lies a sheltering…and preserving….Concealment keeps safe, provides a place of safekeeping….The history of metaphysics is the story of so many attempts on the part of metaphysics to capture things in its net, to see to it that things are subdued by the will-to-know, by power-knowledge.…Heidegger came to a …sober realization about the essential, radical concealment of things – that all there is, is dispatches from who knows where (*lethe*). …The truth is there is no truth." (p. 185)

In exploring this resting of aletheia in lethe, Caputo describes the different ways in which Heidegger and Derrida react:

> For Derrida, this moment is experienced as one of liberation and affirmation in a metaphorics of Dionysian celebration…the signifier has been set free into its essential element beyond grammar and logic and onto-theo-logic. But for Heidegger, this moment is experienced in a metaphorics of reverence, openness and *Gelassenheit* [letting be]. In both cases letting-be: in one, the letting-be of the trace, the mark, the signifier, a breaking down in order to free up discourse of every type; in the other, the letting-be of that which itself lets presence be….In both cases, play: the play of différance…" (p.186)

This letting-be, in both senses, is part of the process of Playback: and each sense may be present at different moments of performance. Discourse rules and conventions may be broken at any time by tellers, performers or facilitator or audience, in a play of meanings whose freedom may delight (or offend); and in giving up a search for a 'truth' which can be nailed down, something is allowed which "itself lets presence be" (p.186).

However, this letting-be does not mean not continuing to question: what we are, what the world is. Playback, like deconstruction, promotes undecidability and "[u]ndecidability is the way to keep questions in question. Questioning is thought's movement, kinesis…a way of staying under way."(p.188) It also means questioning, as Derrida does, the established interpretations: "Derrida is a great and gifted critic of …the 'powers that be'…And that is a revealing expression, suggesting as it does the powers that proceed (or which pretend to proceed) from Being as presence." (pp.194-5) Like Derrida, Playback can be

> exceptionally good at showing that these are powers that only pretend to be, appear to be, and that they are, from the ground (which they lack) up, subject to kinesis. They are the powers that become, that have come to be and that will sooner or later come to grief, to kingdom come. (p. 195)

If Playback practitioners have the courage to work together to question our premature classifications, and continually to question our established or premeditated interpretations, then we, like hermeneuts, can be led:

> not to a conclusion which gives comfort but to a thunderstorm, not to a closure but to a dis-closure, an openness to what cannot be encompassed…where we lose our breath and are stopped in our tracks, at least momentarily, for it always belongs to our condition to remain on the way. (p.214)

This description is an accurate one for some of the moments of Playback performance: along the way, death and laughter accompany us: death because as Caputo says quoting Heidegger "mortals [are]…those who dwell in the nearness of death"(p.201) for "that indeed is why we are called humans '…let it be called '*homo*', for it is made out of *humus* (earth)" (p.201). And laughter? Caputo suggests Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Derrida hear it, but Heidegger did not:

> Everything in Kierkegaard and Nietzsche turns on laughter – ironic laughter, exuberant laughter. Always the abyss but always the laughter. Nothing undoes the metaphysics of presence better than laughter. Nothing is more unsettling than laughter. Nothing heals like laughter. Nothing keeps us open like laughter….It is the power to laugh at oneself, one's fears, one's beliefs that liberates and keeps the flux in play, keeps us in movement with the flux and keeps the openness to the mystery from becoming nostalgia and melancholy, malingering and moping. It is laughter which lets things be…" (p.292)

In many Playback performances (as in the one at Pātaka, see account **Error! Bookmark not defined.**ff.). laughter is present in extremely close proximity to 'the mystery'. Caputo's acknowledgement of both death and laughter helped me to keep trying to see and describe what are to me the most important things about Playback:

> humor….is also the stuff of life, of the difficulty and incomprehensibility of life, a way to cope with the *tout autre*. My love of laughter goes hand in hand with a love of tears. I am laughing in order not to be overcome with tears; crying because I cannot help it. (Caputo, 1998, p.216)

I also used this methodology to keep myself from freezing into any premature closure in my enquiry: to keep myself always on the way. "In the place of grand progressive narratives … Caputo envisions the emergence of many 'small myths' with 'salutary and emancipatory aims' (Zimmerman, 1998). Throughout the project, I challenged myself and was challenged by the research participants, not to prematurely classify, create structures or seek for reassuring patterns or certainties, even as I kept looking at their metaphors and *small myths*. Yet I also took from radical hermeneutics its double view of Heraclitus:

> In the one case a purely cosmological Heraclitus who affirms the *play of forces*, Heraclitus the intoxicated extramoralist. In the other case, the Heraclitus for whom the play has to be balanced and fair, for whom the logos means a proportion, a fair share, so that no element can dominate, for whom the soul must be dry and moderate… [italics added] (p.186)

In my view Playback cannot simply mirror suffering, or display it as in the tragic view which "assimilates suffering into a pure cosmology of forces" which:

> makes sense if one is speaking of natural disasters: the hurricane is innocent. …If one is speaking of the natural inevitability of death, old age and disease, the virus is innocent. It makes no sense at all if the natural disaster is precipitated by the greed of industrialists who misuse natural resources; if the disease is caused by industrial pollutants dumped indiscriminately into the atmosphere; if the aging is premature because the body of the peasant has been broken and exploited by the landowner…. *Suffering is not innocent, not when there is systematic exclusion and oppression all around* [italics added]." (p.286)

In Playback too there is a challenge to know about how and where the suffering in the stories we receive, has arisen (Layman, 2000). This is not easy or simple. In the multiple acts of interpretation and representation which occur within it:

> [w]e get a sense…of the 'dimensions' of this 'abyss.' In the one case a purely cosmic view of existence, a ring-dance of forces playing itself out…the other case, a deeply ethicoreligious view of existence which hears the voice of the oppressed crying in the midst of that world rumble. …In one case, an indiscriminate affirmation of the play of all things; in the other case, a protest on behalf of just those places where the play has been arrested and life taken away." (p.286)

This view encouraged me to attend to matters of privilege, silencing and crying out in the stories which were given to us, in the performances and later in the interviews (Ebert, 1992). Furthermore the dialogical elements in the research design, through the performances, patient focus groups and interviews with health care staff, enabled a carnivalesque cacophony to be created, where multiply voiced positions and interpretations could be held in relation to each other. The ways by which radical hermeneutics keeps matters in play have helped me to resist reifying my findings and creating rigid models from them; I have preferred instead to look at the metaphors and metanarratives used, hinted at, voiced, refuted, referred to and undermined.

Data gathering

Semi-structured interviews were first studied (Brenner, Brown & Canter, 1985; Dilley, 2004; Kvale, 1990; Van Manen, 1997; Wengraf, 2001) then engaged in: by using a first, open question about the Playback performance I encountered a range of attitudes, perceptions and interpretations from the participants. Subsequently in each interview, these views were probed by the use of more specific questioning. These interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and then analysed first thematically and then through several lenses: dialogical, intertextual and metaphorical. In addition, patient focus groups were run at the beginning and ending of the project (Leask & Chapman, 2001) and were similarly recorded, transcribed and analysed.

Other forms of data were four videotaped Playback performances, three from the research project and one from our company on another occasion; interviews with the three members of the original New York State Playback company, tape recorded and transcribed; reflective accounts of Playback performances in which I participated as actor, musician, audience member or facilitator; a research journal and memos which I wrote to myself throughout the project; sound recordings of performers' discussions of

the filmed performances; and written documents describing various aspects of the three Health Centres who formed the context of the study.

Data Analysis

Nvivo software was used to assist in the analysis of the data but several other data analysis methods were also used. First of all themes and sub-themes were identified; and from those, seven broad themes which had kept coming up throughout the different codes were explored. In addition each interview was looked at through narrative lenses, to find out more about the distinctive world views, conflicts and metaphors which interviewees used in their descriptions of the Playback experience.

> ...Bamberg (1997) focused on three levels of narrative positioning: how narrators position self and others (e.g. as protagonists, as antagonists, as victims, as perpetrators), how narrators position self in relation to the audience, and how narrators 'position themselves as themselves' that is, construct a [local] answer to the question 'Who am I?' ' (p.337)" p. 663 (Kainan, 2002, p.2)

Looking at these positionings assisted my analysis of the interviews and of the stories people told in the performances. In his 2001 *Narrative methods for organizational and communication research* David Boje suggested that

> The hierarchy lives in the value systems you are trying to analyse....Derrida says Western thought forms these binary opposites, putting them into hierarchies. It is not always easy to find hierarchy because a narrative may pretend to narrate the *only* 'true' reality (p.24).

I therefore also coded the interviews and analysed the performances in terms of binary opposites. Boje (2001) also suggests that sometimes the most important things are not said: "Read between the story lines. Trace what is the writing on the wall and where people resist by being silent. Fill in the blanks as you trace" (p.28). These were helpful suggestions as I worked on the analysis of the data.

Kaupapa Māori methodology[134]

> *The colonial regime owes its legitimacy to force and at no time tries to hide this aspect of things. Every statue…all these conquistadors perched on colonial soil do not cease from proclaiming one and the same thing: "We are here by the force of bayonets…." (Fanon, 1963, p.84)*

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[134] For an explanation of Kaupapa Māori, see Note **Error! Bookmark not defined.** on page 12

One dimension of openness relates to the location of this research and the life experience of the researcher. It seemed to me that working as an artist, academic and knowledge-explorer in Aotearoa New Zealand, I was either going to work in ways that explicitly acknowledged, valued and sought Māori perspectives and knowledges - or ways that explicitly excluded such perspectives and knowledges. My reading about the holocaust had taught me that there is no such position as that of an innocent witness, when it comes to matters of the survival of a people. This is a matter which is actively debated in many settings[135].

I know from my work at differing levels of the public education system in my country, from pre-school to higher education, as well as from my engagement in community arts, performance and political action, that the survival of Māori as a people, with a unique culture, a language and a complex constellation of valuable theoretical insights, is far from secure in this country, and that variations of this situation are evident in the situation of indigenous peoples in many other parts of the world.

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[135] One of them being a recent exhibit in New York where spectators wereoffered a choice between two galleries. The first contained materials engaging Holocaust themes that according to the curators were "disturbing," as any artwork with such themes would be; a second gallery held art that the museum feared many viewers would find extremely offensive. As they reached the limen that separated the first gallery from the second, viewers were confronted with a sign warning of the visual threat of the artwork in the second space, and offering an intervening passageway that would protectively detour visitors out of the gallery and back to the souvenir sales counter of the museum lobby. Though I personally could not find any difference between the two galleries in terms of possible offense, on crowded days two adjacent lines emerged and parted as visitors chose and followed the corridors proposed by the museum. This spatial bifurcation, this division of witness into two, was far more haunting and disturbing than the actual art in the second stigmatized gallery, as the two lines eerily evoked the concentration camp rite of "the selection," where lines of prisoners were moved in opposite directions to death or to precarious existence. But in this museum, in this post-Holocaust world of anamnesis, rather than roads to death or fragile survival, curatorial logic offered a choice between admissible and inadmissible memory. (Feldman, 2004, pp. 165-166)
My thought on reading this account was that the curators were *intending* the eeriness of the bifurcation of the spectators, enacting the selection rite in a piece of performance art and simultaneously calling into question each person's real preparedness to confront what had happened dramatically in Nazi Germany and happens subtly all around us when individuals or groups are made unworthy of attention or respect. Thus, the viewers themselves became the exhibit as an installation was created where what had happened *then* was physically replicated *now*, by the bodies of those visiting the exhibition.

Therefore, in my Playback work, issues of culture have been highlighted, especially since I had left the long-standing Playback company where I had worked for 12 years specifically because of concerns about the treatment of a Māori colleague and of Māori knowledge by my Playback colleagues. After a year, the Māori colleague who had preceded me in leaving the group rang me and suggested we start another group. This we did and have operated our group Kāinga Rua throughout the years of my thesis research, some years more actively than others, but using certain indigenous concepts very strongly in our practice.

In his chapter, *A Kaupapa Māori Approach* in Denzin and Lincoln's *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Russell Bishop emphasizes that non-Māori as well as Māori need to be aware of kaupapa Māori approaches as "for non-Māori researchers to stand aside from participation in these terms is to promote colonization" (Bishop 2005, p. 129). According to Bishop:

> By using such Māori concepts as whānau, hui, and whakawhanaungatanga as metaphors for the research process itself, Kaupapa Māori research invokes and claims authority for the processes and for the texts that are produced …Metaphoric whānau are governed by the same principles and processes that govern a literal whānau… And, as such, are understandable to and controllable by Māori people. Literal whānau have means of addressing contentious issues, resolving conflicts, constructing narratives, telling stories, raising children and addressing economic and political issues and, contrary to popular non-Māori opinion, such practices change over time to reflect changes going on in the wider world. Research whānau-of-interest also conduct their deliberations in a whānau style. Kaumātua preside, others get their say according to who they are, and positions are defined in terms of how the definitions will benefit the whānau. (2005, p. 129)

I will show first how Kāinga Rua[136], our Playback group uses each of five indigenous concepts of whānau, hui, kaumātua, whakawhanaungatanga and an additional one, mauri[137], outlined by Rose Pere in her monograph *Ako* (1994), in our creative practice and additionally how I have used them in the course of this research project.

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[136] Kāinga refers to home, Rua refers to two. The name comes from a proverbial saying "Mate kāinga tahi, ora kāinga rua" – the person with access to only one home (culture) will not prosper, but the person with access to two homes and cultures will. The group included people who wished to work intentionally in a group of Māori and non-Māori theatre practitioners.

[137] Whānau refers to extended family; hui refers to meeting run along Māori guidelines; Kaumātua refers to elders; whakawhanaungatanga refers to making family-like connections; mauri refers to aliveness or vitality

Whānau

Over the seven years of our practice, over 30 people have been part of our Playback group: at any one time there might be anything between six and 15 people defining themselves as part of Kāinga Rua. Many of the members were related to each other: from the beginning our kuia,[138] Aunty Awa has been present, and often in the early days she was attended by the grand daughter, Diamond, at that time three years old who had recently returned to live with her. While at times Diamond was angry and disruptive and found it hard to focus on a rehearsal of over two hours length, at the same time we all knew that this was part of having Aunty Awa with us and therefore part of the life of our group. Similarly, another group member took on custody of grandchildren at two different times of our work together, so those children too became part of the group. At times, I called on my whāngai[139] daughter to help to babysit the children when we had our gatherings and later, she was a great support when she videotaped the performances in my research project. We thus drew on existing relationships which were drawn into our work together. Our Playback whānau grew naturally: sometimes people would come to a performance and then they would express an interest and join in the group as first of all learners and then performers.

In the research project, the aspect of whānau meant that results and conclusions needed to be discussed with the group throughout and also that the three centres needed to be kept in touch with and kept up to date with how things were progressing. In addition, my draft thesis needed to be presented first to the whanau and then to people I had interviewed and I chose to do that in the three separate Centre groups; then later I storytold my research journey in a joint hui[140] and Playback performance for any members of the groups who were interested; and finally through taking the draft thesis to the three Centres two months before I submitted it.

Hui

A hui is a very distinctive indigenous educative, community-building and decision-making institution (Salmond, 1996), of which I had gained in-depth knowledge and

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[138] Kuia refers to female elder
[139] Whāngai refers to adopted or fostered child. A child whom one has fed (whāngai), becomes one's own child.
[140] Hui refers to gathering

some understanding by taking Māori Studies, during my second and third year at university as a school leaver and later, with clearer observation and analysis during a year of intensive Māori language study, after I had worked as an educator for some years in pre-school, primary and secondary settings. Bishop describes the 'spiral discourse' of the hui: in a hui

> the participants address the matters under consideration, under the guidance of respected and authoritative elders… People get a chance to address the issue without fear of being interrupted. Generally, the procedure is for people to speak one after another, in sequence of left to right. People get a chance to state and restate their meanings, and to modify, delete and adapt their meanings…The discourse spirals, in that the flow of talk may seem circuitous and opinions may vary, but the seeking of a collaboratively constructed story is central. (Bishop, 2005, p.122)

From the beginning of my engagement with Playback and Māori people, I had the sense that the simultaneously focused and protected environment of the hui suggested rich possibility for the generation of stories and exchange of life worlds which Playback makes possible.

In 1989, I gained funding from a contestable professional development fund at the institution I worked at, to bring Jonathan Fox, the director of the original New York State based Playback Theatre company, to our institution. Talking it over with two Māori colleagues, (one of whom was Aunty Awa, who ten years later would become the kuia of our Playback company and an actor in the Ngākau performance described in Chapter Eight), we decided to host the workshop in a hui structure: we billed it as "50 hours with Jonathan Fox" because it took in just over two full 24 hour days. Many drama students attended, one of them being Neil, the male actor who fifteen years later, worked on the performing team for my research project and superbly played the role of death in the Pātaka performance (see the section on page 333. Another echo of whanaungatanga…)

Twice during the 1990s I was asked to attend hui in Northland to undertake Playback tuition or skill sharing with groups of Māori performers. The first time we traveled to the marae[141] at Northland Polytech with a group of women who had come together as part of the Magdalena Women's Theatre Festival to be held in Wellington that year.

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[141] See Note 27 on the marae on on page 34

Their group leader had worked with Wellington Playback Theatre and they wanted some additional workshops.

Two of the Magdalena Festival Directors were with us and I experienced the double vision of being a hui participant and at the same time having access to a Pākehā cultural worker theoretical frame, as one of the Festival Directors, Tilly,[142] frequently came in over the top of the Māori frame, shown in such things as cutting short the informal exchanges and networking which went on between the group members at meal times and as the kitchen was cleared up. I felt the grating of such moments kinesthetically, feeling embarrassed by my shared ethnicity with Tilly and wishing that she could just relax into trusting the process of the hui and the ways in which time could unravel seamlessly, without strict distinctions between "work" and "break time" being imposed on it. Bishop quotes "eminent Māori scholar Rose Pere (1991) describ[ing] the key qualities of the hui as 'respect, consideration, patience and cooperation' " (2005, p. 134).

When, several years later, I was asked to go north again, to work with a new company, which contained four of the members of that previous group, Aunty Awa travelled with me: I had learnt that in the setting of a hui, I could not function well without the support and guidance of an elder. Her knowledge of whakapapa,[143] her sense of ritual and how to move groups through different states is highly developed and in turn, she was at that time refining her knowledge of Playback. In addition, I promised her that we would go to Te Rerenga Wairua,[144] the northernmost point of our island, a pilgrimage place, from where the spirits of the dead are said to fly to the next world. This was my koha[145] to her: and in addition we found to our great surprise that the group hosting us made us a monetary koha also. Koha is part of the ritual of a hui: it is a practical arrangement, whereby guests defray the expenses of the gathering. But it is also a symbolic act, demonstrating the important principle of exchange which the hui is designed to facilitate.

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[142] Also a pseudonym
[143] Whakapapa refers to genealogy
[144] Te Rerenga refers to flying. Wairua refers to spirit. The name of the place in English is North Cape.
[145] Koha refers to donation or gift.

In recent years, our group has developed our own distinctive ritual surrounding the hui within which much of our rehearsing and development work is done: we gather in the early evening, share food and then 'check in' with each other (by which we mean share news, reflections, interpretations, emotional states or anything we want to) using a Playback form, in "round robin" all of us moving in a clockwise direction, through the different Playback roles.[146] We have earlier set up our beds at the other end of the meeting house, while we perform near the door, where the rituals of encounter usually take place. In this way we have produced an indigenized Playback practice using a spiral discourse movement. When people want to go to sleep they simply leave the discourse process and go to lie down; sometimes one of the children who has earlier gone to sleep wakes up and needs comforting; at some point, everyone agrees to stop for the night and the meeting house quietens down with voices talking, laughing, quietly singing, and the snores starting.

In the morning we have breakfast together, then work on our skills training, have a kind of brunch and then host a performance for friends and community, which has to be preceded by enough of a powhiri[147] to acknowledge the indigenous context of the ancestral house. Sometimes, the Kaumātua of the house attends to support us by welcoming the visitors to the performance; at other times, he agrees that Aunty Awa can perform the ritual of welcome on behalf of the 'home people' in this case the Māori community of the university. After the performance, we have a meal with the audience, then clear up the marae and go home. A great deal is able to be accomplished in this 24 hour period.

In terms of my research project, several hui were held with our Kāinga Rua group as I prepared the proposal, and a commentary on the research has continued to be a strand of our hui together. In addition, the performances in the health centres which were offered as part of the project, were constructed along the lines of a hui, with sharing of food and formal greetings as well as the give and take that the Playback forms allow for between the 'two sides'. It was noted in one interview that in some ways the actors were

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[146] This echoes the way in which during the first evening of a hui (gathering), in some regions, people frequently take it in turns to speak *round the house*,everyone being expected to stand and identify themselves in Te Reo Māori, thus enabling multiple connections to be made, which can then be followed up during the hui.

[147] Powhiri refers to ceremony of welcome and encounter.

audience, not only performers, so that the two roles of audience and performer oscillated and were held in question by each other:

> Yeah I think like we had an audience instead of being the audience it was I would imagine this is my thoughts but we were acting as if we had an audience. The players were like the audience 'cause there was nearly as many of them as us… (Ota1 Henry, Section 82)

Other participants responded to the hui aspects of the performance and the interviews by formally thanking and acknowledging the hospitality and the gifts shared: "first of all Fe thank you very much for the lunch that you provided for me now for this time and for your team that you brought …" (Ota1 Nina, Section 159) and:

> No I'd just like to say thank you for the beautiful and the loving day that we had on that day. It really lift my spirits that after all this time that I was tense all the time because of a lot of things happening at home … it was very good that you came in the right time. (Ota1 Wae, Section 119)

Kaumātua

Aunty Awa, in her mid-sixties, as the Kaumātua of our performing group, Kāinga Rua, has had an important role from the beginning of the group. She has presided over most of our marae-based training and performance sessions and has been a guide and consultant throughout this research project. She acted in one of the performances, giving rise to some very appreciative comments such as:

> I reckon the other, the elderly lady she was awesome, she was kind of quick off the mark with a scenario… How she interpreted things in her own way - she was quite quick on that. I always wondered - like when she sat down I'd wonder was all right and then she'll get up and as soon as you say "Okay let's start" and then she just bang! straight into one you know… She was very quick off the mark in doing her interpretation of their story that they want to tell… (Nga1 Nena, Sections 50-62)

In addition, I checked out with her the key decisions I needed to make and she remained accessible to me and in touch with the project throughout the years of its active phase. During the time when we needed to feed back the findings to research participants, interviewees and supporters, she has also facilitated sessions and has been a superbly containing presence for the whole process.

E haere ana ngā mihi i ngā wa katoa ki a koutou ko to whānau, e kui, e Weka, ko koe te puna whakahirahira o te wai ora. Kia ora rawa atu koe. The greetings to you and your family go on without ceasing, to you who are a wonderful spring of living water to us. Greetings and may you be very well.

Whakawhanaungatanga[148]

The creating of common ground, or making of relationships is crucial in Playback work, as well as in Māori society. It was partly the cutting across whakawhanaungatanga that I think I felt when Tilly ruptured the flow of the hui I described in the section on Hui (on page 242): I perceived the grating discord of two opposite life worlds with the indigenous one being violated to some extent by the non-indigenous one and unspoken meanings which I did not share suddenly appearing below the surface of our tentative partnership.

The ritual of the powhiri begins the process of whakawhanaungatanga, as the speakers on each 'side' – visitors and hosts – look for common elements, people, ideas to bring into their speeches to emphasise the commonness of the two groups. Normally in a Playback performance, this linking of the two sides – performers and audience – is accomplished by the facilitator, sometimes in concert with the group, and it is a crucial moment in the performance. When we performed in a Māori setting, we began this kinship making during the welcome and then extended and added to it during the performance. In my research process, whakawhanaungatanga has meant that I have endeavoured to keep in touch with the staff of the three centres with whom I worked and to ensure that I maintain positive relationships with them.

Mauri

Mauri is frequently translated as life force (Lapsley, Nikora & Black, 2002). In Rose Pere's *Te Wheke* (2003) she says of Mauri that it

> Is extremely difficult to define in English….All living things, lakes, rivers, the sea, bush and buildings have a mauri that should be appreciated and respected…[it] is an indepth term and…can pertain to an individual's psyche alongside other people….If a child [or person] feels that she or he is respected and accepted, then her or his mauri waxes. (Pere, 2003, p.12)

The liveness of performance was seen by our group to take place within the environment of the waxing and waning of mauri and it was important to interact with each other and with the audience in ways which enhanced mauri. Therefore, after the performance at Ngākau, which had failed in some respects, in the following

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[148] Whakawhanaungatanga refers to creating relationships

performances, we took time to greet the audience very carefully, using indigenous ritual supports such as formal speech making, or the use of the pūrerehua (bull-roarer) to clear the space and take multi-dimensional care of all present.

In the research process, the care for mauri meant prioritising face to face interviews and focus groups with the patients of the medical centres, even if this was difficult to organize because of practical issues. The liveness of the interaction, the mauri of the project, was valued by me and by those who had put faith in me to accomplish something useful on many levels.

This chapter has discussed some of the theoretical choices available to an enquirer into Playback. The choice of radical hermeneutics has been explored, with reference to its particular usefulness for the theatre activity being investigated. Aspects of Māori theory which were part of the enquiry have also been detailed, with particular note being given to the concepts of mana and mauri which offer unique insights. Each of the next three chapters describes the practical work done in one of the three healthcare centres. Although the phases of this work overlapped in temporal terms, to present each Centre in turn has seemed easiest for a reader.

The journey of the practitioner

Playback as a venue for cultures meeting

As a non-Māori New Zealander, who has been given significant teaching by Māori in many areas of life and learning, a key concern in my creative practice has been to make spaces in which Māori and non-Māori traditions, performers and audiences can interact in non-colonising ways. The Playback work of our group Kāinga Rua, as described in this chapter, has explored this concern. We have experimented and continually adapted our work together. For example, as part of our attempt to create this space, we sometimes fly the pūrerehua or bull-roarer at the very beginning of the performance after which quite lengthy verbal self-introductions are made, using the indigenous language, Te Reo Māori as well as English.[149] This links to the ritual welcome and greeting ceremonies which are a widely practised element of the indigenous culture and it links the Playback performance with them, especially for audience members of indigenous and Pacific Islands descent. In my experience Playback lends itself better than any other theatre form I have encountered to this kind of syncretic practice which enables it to be congruent with the culture of its surrounding community. More of the work we have done in a rural part of Aotearoa is described in Appendix One, on page 441.

[149] See section about the pūrerehua in the chapter on Pātaka (page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**343).

Chapter Eight – Ngākau

> *"This urgency, this need to decipher what cannot be said, what is expressed otherwise than in verbal speech which nonetheless arouses the desire for words, this is our human drama. We are always in fine messes." (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997, p. 56)*

This chapter outlines the performance and research work done in the first Healthcare Centre, Ngākau in which we delivered two performances for the group of staff working there, which were followed by two rounds of interviews with staff members who had attended the performances. Significant learnings occurred and small but significant changes were made to the the subsequent performance arrangements, based on lessons learned at Ngākau. In December 2002, while this project was in the planning stages, there was a preliminary Playback performance for staff from all three Health Centres, when they came together at a party in a private home to celebrate the beginning of the new Primary Healthcare Organization. The following January, ethics approval was obtained from the Auckland District Health Board and then the Playback performances at Ngākau were given to about 20 people in February and December 2003, while four Focus Group Interviews were conducted with Ngākau patients in November 2003 and December 2005. As a researcher, I was learning about the project, even as I conducted these first phases of it and some very critical lessons were elucidated in the work at Ngākau. Achebe (2002, p.9) writes about being "frustrated by what appears to be a de-centering of the researcher's fieldwork experience." In the next three chapters I will attempt to give some flavour of my own experience as a researcher, as well as the themes and metanarratives which the enquiry clarified.

I conceptualised my research fieldwork as a journey; taking my cue from Kvale whose work on interviewing I had studied during my preparation for this practical project. He contrasts his preferred metaphor of travelling through the research process with another metaphor that of research as mining in which :

> knowledge is understood as buried metal and the interviewer is a miner who unearths the valuable metal….The precious facts and meanings are purified by transcribing them from the oral to the written mode. The knowledge nuggets remain constant through the transformations of appearances on the conveyor belt to the written storage. By analysis, the objective facts and the essential meanings are drawn out by various techniques and molded into their definitive form. (1996, pp.3-4)

The metaphor of mining seems like an unreal reification of the many occasions of discourse, interaction and creativity which were going to form part of the research project. The metaphor of the journey, on the other hand, fitted with what I already knew about the co-construction of narrative, symbol and meaning which happens in Playback performance: in this way I was to be a

> traveller on a journey that leads to a tale to be told upon returning home….The traveller explores the many domains of the country, as unknown territory…may also deliberately seek specific sites or topics by following a method, with the original Greek meaning of 'a route that leads to the goal.' The interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world, and converses with them in the original Latin meaning of conversation as 'wandering together with.' (Kvale, 1996, p.4)

Thus, the beginning part of the project, which took place at Ngākau, was associated with the kinds of experience one has at the beginning of a journey: anxiety about whether one has the right gear and maps; ironing out technical hitches with one's equipment; excitement at having embarked at last; learning about one's limitations; revising plans; visualizing the end of the journey and wondering whether one will ever arrive.

As I have described in Chapter Six, on page 210, Ngākau Community Health Care is associated with a local iwi and marae. Of its two Health Clinics, the one by the marae has an atmosphere of openness with an expansive view outside, large windows and rooms opening off a pleasant reception area. The shopping centre clinic, in contrast, feels less open, with less connection with the outside and having rooms which seemed to me to be like a maze, their relationship with each other mysterious.

The two staff meetings at which our Playback performances took place were times when the staff all came together. The February performance took place at a Planning Hui when the staff came together at a retreat centre and spent several days on planning their year: our performance was in the evening of the first day, after dinner, in the room in which the staff were going to sleep marae-style[150] on mattresses around the walls of a

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[150] Marae-style sleeping involves mattresses covered in sheets, arrayed in rows, usually around the edges of a room. People bring their own upper sheet and blankets or sleeping bags and choose their own mattress. This involves more than an accommodation choice: it has to do with multi-dimensional aspects of people, notably mauri and wairua (see Appendix Nine). There is often music, much laughter - the

large room. We performed at one end of the room, with some of the staff already showered and in their sleeping attire. The December meeting, by contrast, was an end-of-year staff gathering in the meeting room which was in the building where the management office was located at that time, near the shopping centre clinic. This room was very crowded, with some present sitting on the floor and we had a very small space at one side of it for the musical instruments and the actors' chairs.

This chapter first discusses the picture of Ngākau which I gained from the patient focus groups and then describes two of the key stories shared in the Playback performance. The metanarratives used by Ngākau staff are then explored: those of emancipation, (including sub-narratives of cultural reclamation and self development) managerialism, and professionalism. Finally, the performance elements commented on most by the interviewees are discussed, and in the final part of the chapter, I tell more of my journey as a practitioner in regard to the themes of this chapter in a collage and poem about this work.

Ngākau from the point of view of patients

I held four focus group interviews with the Ngākau patients, three in November 2003 and one in December 2005. The patient focus groups with patients from each of the two clinics were extremely divergent. From the Marae Clinic I met with two articulate, strong young mothers in their late thirties, who were direct about in their expectations and hopes for Ngākau Healthcare. They had very clear expectations including some dreams that the marae-based service would learn to cope more effectively with the kaumātua in the community and also to offer alternative medicine based on Māori tradition which they thought would be appropriate for an iwi-based health service (by the time of the second focus group, this had been instituted). While they had both experienced severe health challenges for themselves and their children, they expressed a sense of satisfaction with the personal service they had received from Ngākau, a concern for the complexity of the issues for the health centre staff and a wish to work in well to support them. One said:

> And it's good having a male doctor and a female doctor. Like for me I won't go to a male doctor for smears and things like that and a lot of men I know won't go to

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setting being one of a combination of a kind of performance for the audience of each other and relaxation.

> female doctors, so having the two, having the choice is really good … I think there's far more positives than negatives in the clinic now. It hasn't always been that way…

When asked when she would date the changes from she said

> Probably since [the manager] took over...the services have been expanded, there's a *lot* of services. …good staff, I don't know if it's because a female's running it … a woman's running it - but that's what I see…

However, they had trenchant questions which they were living with, one asking

> I don't really know much about their medicines and I'm not very happy with that. But because of my lifestyle I don't have time to sit down and talk to the doctor - exactly what are these medicines, if they take them long term or for a short period of time what difference does that make on my kids or on me for instance and (pause) what would the hapū[151] be like in say ten years time if they continue to take this particular medicine? - whatever it's for… all I know is this is that it's cheap and it's accessible and if you happen to come in …a **low** socio-economic group then you can get those medicines virtually free. But then again on the **other** hand is it going to strengthen our hapū?

The patients from the Shopping Centre Clinic were very different: they were people who related severe stresses in their lives and did not express an overall opinion or overview of the service as a whole. A Māori woman in her thirties, Nela, talked of her varied concerns about the need for less waiting, more room (this first Focus Group interview was before the shift to new premises) and more attention. Her comments showed a notable power distance from the organisation:

> Yeah waiting - I understand - I'm used to it now 'cause I've been there so many times I'm used to the time… it's a small place, it's very cramped in there, I find it…In my perspective they could have more rooms...and.... we could be checked out before we see the doctor... A bit more room. a bit more attention and a bit more room… I don't know if you're allowed to use the toilet - I've never, the only time I've used the toilet ever since I've been you know through urine tests but I don't know if you're allowed to use the toilet I'm not aware of that …I don't know if you're allowed…

However all patients very much appreciated the free health care they received from Ngākau and mentioned details of being followed up: for example, the way that the service would work in with local chemists, to facilitate the collection of medicines "I've run out of medicines and I've rung these fellas up and they've rung straight down to the chemist." One of the eight, Dave, contrasted the way he had sometimes been treated

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[151] Hapū refers to sub-tribe

throughout other parts of the health care service, with the far more satisfactory Ngākau personnel:

> You know they're both health departments doctors oncologists, orthopaedics, gynaecologists but it varies from one doctor to the next- so we can be thankful that we have got a couple of goodies up here. Rather than a couple of dick heads.

When I visited the Ngākau Shopping Centre Clinic it felt like a busy place where people with severe needs were treated well, though at times I found the busy and stressed comings and goings of patients and staff hard to decode. Conquergood talks about "getting one's body immersed in the field for a period of time sufficient to enable one to participate inside that culture." (1991, p.180). As I drove to my research work at Ngākau from the city, my heart rate would quicken and I felt a combination of excitement and challenge. From my viewpoint, the vicissitudes of life in the Shopping Centre Clinic were palpable: as an older Māori man with multiple health challenges put it in the focus group: "Well the only thing I can say is money - money is a big factor to everybody who is sick. You don't get enough of it - it doesn't go round to pay the bills. The other thing is stress." This stress was more evident at the Shopping Centre Clinic, while the Marae Clinic was much calmer and quieter. (See Appendix Five on page 474, for the Focus Group Report I wrote for the Ngākau management in March 2004.)

Organising the performances at Ngākau

The relationship with Ngākau was marked by my attempts not to inconvenience the Centre in any way. I was very aware of the status of non-indigenous researcher in a predominantly indigenous organization and the need to make sure that I operated in ways which strengthened the values of whanaungatanga[152] and what Harris and Wasilewski (2004, p.492) identify as "reciprocity… the cyclical obligation." They suggest that this is one of the "four core values which cross generation, geography and tribe." They call these the "Four R's: Relationship, Responsibility, Reciprocity and Redistribution." In their view, reciprocity means "once we have encountered another, we are in relationship with them….the indigenous idea of reciprocity is based on very long relational dynamics in which we are all seen as 'kin' to each other." (p. 493)

To give back reciprocally to the Centre, the patient focus groups were important as the Centre would be able to use the feedback from patients both to improve their services

[152] Whanaungatanga refers to relatedness

and to quote in their quality processes. I made summaries of key issues which had come up in my focus group interviews with the patients and made sure that their confidentiality and anonymity were maintained at the same time that their concerns could be made available to the centre in reports which they had the opportunity of using in the quality control processes (see Appendix Five). However, I was painfully aware every time I visited the centres, of the severe life and death quality of much of their work and how small my enquiry could seem in comparison. I hoped to reciprocate in also making available for staff some opportunities for recreation, relaxation and team communication in the Playback performances which were donated whereas they would normally cost $600 - $1,000 each.

However, I can see when I look back that the anxiety of my attempts to fit the Playback work into the life at Ngākau with minimal disruption caused some essential aspects of the work to be compromised. Just one example is that as the performing group, we came into already existing meetings, rather than having a chance to set up a performing space which Centre staff could have come into as *audience*: that would have created a different kind of time and atmosphere for the Playback performance (and we ensured we did this for the subsequent Playback sessions). This meant that as facilitator I compromised what Mary Good identified as an important pre-performance role of the facilitator, what she calls the Producer-Wise Person who "must retain his/her sense of integrity and purpose in the work. Organizers frequently want the performance to push their own particular line rather than to act as an investigator and mirror of WHAT IS" (Good, 1986, p.9). (See Table 2 on page 99.)

For the February performance, a group of combined Auckland Playback and Kāinga Rua actors was used. However, at the December performance, at their end of year staff meeting, only three of the previous group were available to perform. They were all Māori women and since in the staff group at Ngākau, the majority are Māori women, the decision was made to continue with myself as researcher facilitating the performance and, since the space was very small, the three performers alternated roles of actor and musician.[153] There were moments of real joy, play, exploration of difficult

[153] Possibly it would have been better to wait till a more representative acting team was available; however a sense of urgency in moving the research project forward during the *down time* in my fulltime job was a factor in my decisions as researcher at this time.

themes and recognition in the performance and many positive comments about the performers were made in the interviews, along with some criticisms - directly from one interviewee and in relayed comments from other staff who were not interviewed. The shortcomings of our Playback practice in this Centre led me to reflections from which arose some recommendations for Playback practice in the next part of the practical project. These guidelines, which guided the subsequent practical work, are summarised later in this chapter (on page 263) and expanded on in Appendix One, (in the section on *Notes for Playback practitioners* on page 387). We felt great appreciation for all at Ngākau, especially the manager Nanaia and senior nurse Teresa whose stories are given in the next part of this chapter: the learning which occurred at Ngākau for our Playback work in this research project was absolutely crucial. After many years of Playback practice, giving performances in organizations and at events, the experience of doing this with another layer of intention, as researcher, put me in touch with a different level of tension and exploration, foregrounding the unknown and the dangerous, a place of darkness as well as light.

> Merleau-Ponty used a Gestalt model to remind us of the ways in which consciousness continually shifts between figure and ground. Whatever is brought forth, embodied, and made visible bears with it a sense of other things which are co-present but backgrounded, peripheral and ephemeral…As John Dewey put it, a primary datum of all experience is a sense of contrast between that which is immediate and that which is non-immediate…(Jackson, 1996, p.14)

It seemed to me that participating in this familiar activity of Playback performance, which is nonetheless always risky because it is an encounter with the unknown in the form of new audience members and stories, became additionally and almost unbearably burdened with the freight of hopes, expectations and fears pertaining to the research process. These first steps of the research journey proved extremely demanding, humbling and instructive.

Two Narratives from the December Performance

A Manager's Stress

The first two brief narratives in this performance both came from the manager Nanaia, who first expressed forcefully her sense of the great stress and uncertainty of this first year of the existence of the PHO, during which time she had been extremely involved in negotiations with the government systems. In addition, she expressed disquiet about other more privileged practitioners gaining the privileges of being in a PHO.

Enactment

In the enactment, Aunty Awa, our kuia[154] who is in her 60s and Sonia a Māori woman in her mid thirties, as actors played out this dynamic, spontaneously taking on roles and using the fabrics which are used in Playback as both costumes and props. As they played the moment of challenge, Aunty Awa sprang out into the traditional haka *Ka Mate*[155] while Sonia, looking worried, called out the words "People… finances… challenges", finally coming in beside Aunty Awa and chorusing her haka movements and words: "A upane, Ka upane, Whiti te Rā!" [156]

In the second part, enacting "threat" Sonia first of all draped herself in the blue and yellow materials as she said "but I'm independent" and then she changed her enactment, taking up the improvisational offer of Aunty Awa who said "I don't care what you are, we need the putea money, you're the health department, you've got to give us some putea,[157] we need it so's we can own and operate our own business, can't you listen and hear?" At this point, Sonia started to enact the role of the funding body, taunting Aunty Awa who had taken up the role of Nanaia, holding the material out to one side and then quickly switching the place of it to the other side of her body, so that Aunty Awa had to scurry from one side of Sonia to the other. This bodily and undignified scrambling of an elder worked to portray the ways in which funders impose behaviour on and constantly change what they require of, those seeking to gain support from them. It was greeted with much laughter from the audience.

The enactment reached a moment which would have made a satisfying ending, but Aunty Awa continued the enactment: there was a sense in which she and Sonia seemed unwilling to let each other have the final word.[158] This enactment portrayed in action

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[154] See Note 138 on page 242

[155] Haka refers to traditional Māori chant and energy-raising dance

[156] A upane, ka upane, upane refers to abreast, whiti refers to shine, te rā refers to the sun. Ka mate refers to "It is death." See the words and translation of this haka in the first issue of the NZ Electronic Poetry Centre's periodical Ka Mate Ka Ora (Te Rauparaha, c.1820).

[157] Putea refers to sum of money

[158] Finding the ending of an enactment is acknowledged to be a Playback skill which is easily impacted by such things as nerves, lack of experience or lack of trust between performers. On this occasion, all four of us seemed to have retreated into contracted states, perhaps because of our nervousness. Where, as facilitator, I would normally be able to allay the nerves of the actors and musicians, I was somehow, on this occasion, unable to do so, probably because of the anxiety of my journey as researcher.

the relationship experienced by a Māori health provider and a system which was portrayed as fickle and capricious. The actors were able to show this symbolic relationship using the powerful means of gesture, as outlined above. In this sense they enacted a "secular ritual" which Fiebach (2002) contrasts with a

> religious ritual [which] moves the other world to affect this one. The secular ceremony moves this world and this world only. … a secular ceremony 'shows' by acting in terms of them the existence of social relationships (the Government, the Party, etc.) or ideas or values which are inherently invisible most of the time. It objectifies them and reifies them... (Fiebach, 2002, pp. 22)

After this first enactment, Nanaia again offered a second moment which was also performed: this time it focussed on her stress and again, there was a natural ending beyond which the actors carried on, Sonia flicking the ends of the fabric which they were using as a kind of rope, with Aunty Awa hanging on behind: Aunty Awa whimpered "When is it going to end? *Is* it going to end?" which seemed like an ironic meta-comment on the enactment as well as Nanaia's sense of stress in the story!

In interviews, people indicated the effect these enactments had had on them as they reflected on how things were for Nanaia. For example, when asked what stories stood out for her, Ngaire said:

> I think Nanaia's - the heavy load sort of thing - because I've seen her at times you know being stressed …and you know we've had meetings all of the staff and that and it shows on her at times … And when she's had to come up here and deal with situations with staff - or the running and the management of the place and that - and I can see that that it's - it has been a very heavy load for her (Nga1 Ngaire, Sections 110 – 115

However, it may well have been that because of these early contributions to the performance by Nanaia, the manager, the Playback work was seen as being part of her management tools rather than as a genuine chance for staff to share their perspectives: Deirdre intimated as much in her second interview:

> …there were a couple of colleagues of mine who were real *anti* Playback in fact … even before we got there they'd already had a preconceived idea "Oh you know I don't know why we're bloody doing this and blah blah blah"
> … there was a grumbling and then even afterwards it was a grumbling and then there was you know … then I felt sort of (pause) a need to defend because then it was also a, a, an attack on management you know…
> "Why on earth did…you know management what's this got to do with why the hell?" you know and then there were others that were going "Well you know I , I thought it was okay" and so it became quite personal (Nga2 Deirdre, Sections 9-11)

Unwittingly, by accepting the first two contributions from the manager of the Centre, as facilitator I had played into this sense that some of the staff had that the Playback work was a tool of management.

"Because he's a bloke" – a dissonant enactment

After the replay of another brief account told by a community health worker, Teresa a senior Pākehā nurse, then offered a moment of being pleased because Ben, a new Pākehā doctor, had joined the team. Ben was attending this staff meeting, his first. When I questioned why it was such a good thing, that he had joined, Teresa said laughing "Because he's a bloke!" The audience laughed and Sonia and Riana who were acting at this stage while Aunty Awa played music, looked at each other, smiling and laughing. In the Patient Focus Groups, it had been made clear to me that the presence of a male doctor would be appreciated by the patients, as one of the male patients had emphasized how well the nurses had helped him with things that could potentially be "embarassing". One of the male patients had said of the nurse:

> Well she can set your mind at rest of a lot of things you know that seem to be really … when I first started there - there were um you know some personal things… right and she made me feel...(pause) Well I thought they were embarrassing, after all's said and done it wasn't really!

Haare, an older Māori man had also told of the need for a woman doctor for his wife and Kara from the Marae Clinic had commented approvingly about having both male and female doctors available. Possibly because of this prior knowledge about the importance of gender choice of doctors, which I had obtained in the role of researcher, in the role of facilitator of the Playback performance, I did not probe any further to get some explanation of just what having a new male doctor in the service would mean. In other words, I lost the vital role for a facilitator that Mary Good entitles Naïve Enquirer, who "acts as an explorer venturing into unkown territory….has dropped ideas about 'having to know things'….also… asks the questions that are on everyones [*sic*] mind" (1986, p. 37). In retrospect I can see that I assumed knowledge and understanding on the part of the Playback actors, the lack of which led to their unexpected spontaneous burlesque of the moment. At this point, the ethnicity and cultural dimension is important to mention: Teresa the teller, the new doctor Ben and I, the facilitator, were all non-Māori but three quarters of the staff present and all of the performers were Māori.

Enactment

The actors took up this moment of Teresa's being very pleased that a new male doctor had joined the service in a very light-hearted re-enactment with Riana starting by crying out "I need a man!" and Sonia, after a moment of looking stunned with surprise at this angle, joined in, leading up to an enthusiastic rendition of a popular song "It's raining men, halleluya" to gales of laughter from the audience. This would have been a very good place to finish the enactment. However, Sonia, the co-founder of the performing group, a volcanically creative and sometimes anarchic character, went on, uttering non-verbal sounds and embellishing her performance with a traditional phallic hand gesture which is part of the Māori performance tradition of haka (as well as the vocabulary of, for example, drunken sports fans the world over!)

The room erupted with laughter and scandalized enjoyment. In the role of facilitator, I checked back with the face of Teresa the teller but saw her smiling and so the performance moved on to the next narrative which was Ben's own story about his wife Yvonne who is Māori and her joy and sense of home-coming at joining the iwi-based practice.

Audience reception

However, Teresa later phoned me to make sure that I was coming to talk to her and in the individual interview which I did with her about a week later (the first individual interview in this research project), I found that she had in fact been deeply embarrassed and upset at what she saw as the misinterpretation of what she had said: in her view her commitment to the male patients who needed to see a doctore from their own gender had been trivialized and willfully overridden in order to get cheap laughs.

> "…the clinics as a whole when we're trying to achieve a standard of excellence. However what I saw portrayed then took on the sexual connotation which had absolutely nothing to do with what I had expressed - nor was what I felt - and I think I was as angry with myself that I couldn't say "Stop - this is *not* what I'm saying…" Because when you're in an environment where everybody is laughing and appears to be going along with it… I actually was so dumb founded and it brought up all the things that I see on television … all the things that um sometimes you're subjected to and if it is television you can just turn the television off however I didn't actually feel I could stand up and turn this off and I felt quite powerless and then I felt really angry that I hadn't said anything"
> (Nga1 Teresa Section 9)

For me the misinterpretation and Teresa's silence at the time exemplifies one of the ethical issues which Nick Rowe was dealing with in his thesis on Playback:

> Does the audience 'trance' or 'regression' claimed by Fox and others have such an effect that audience members find it difficult to actively resist?....playback theatre differs markedly from other cognate disciplines such as psychodrama, the theatre of the oppressed and dramatherapy in the way in which it 'confines' the protagonist to the role of observer within the enactment. The teller is not encouraged to interrupt the action or to give a lengthy response to it afterwards. This relative passivity of the person who supplies the 'text' of the enactment raises significant questions. Are tellers being 'manipulated' for the purposes of 'entertainment' as some critics of the form have argued? (Rowe, 2005, pp.284-285)

I had always held that if the group was strong enough and clear enough in our address to the audience, audience members would be able to speak up if the interpretation was unacceptable to them; however, in this case, perhaps because of the overall jitteriness of the performance practice, this feedback from Teresa about the misinterpretation was not expressed at the time. I can readily accept a view that we performers were just not good enough in that moment: still, this will happen to most performing groups sometimes, and thus the potential for this kind of misinterpretation remains a serious challenge for Playback. In this case, the new doctor himself, Ben, saw the enactment as just part of the light-heartedness of the occasion and said in his interview:

> And then you did a little Playback theatre on basically now having a man - and I mean ... it was hilarious I was really I thought it was great… Yeah but you know that was the way I sort of took it you know pretty light hearted sort of thing… (Nga1 Ben, Sections 14-17)

Other audience participants, however, recognized the discomfort of this moment, Ngaire voicing double feelings: "I found it humorous - I found it a bit uncomfortable the one about about Teresa and the doctor." (Nga1 Ngaire, Section 135) while Henry, who attended this performance saw it in more serious terms and identified it as an example of one of the potential risks of the method:

> the one at [Ngākau] had mentioned how glad they were that they'd got a male doctor and the way it was portrayed as a kind of a … it was done light-heartedly but you know like a sexual thing, hello we've got a guy, we've got a guy … and it embarrassed the heck out of this person and she was mortified really … …. Just how much of an impact this thing could make for good or bad ….like if it's portrayed wrongly, or insensitively, it has quite a strong lasting impact. I haven't seen that person for a long while, whether they still cringe at the thought of it, I'm not too sure but they were really quite disturbed. (Ora1 Henry, Section 25)

One of the major disjunctions in this moment may have been that of the cultural differences in what is seen as valid in humour: Holmes and Hay (1997) found that humour in New Zealand is sometimes used as a boundary marker and that

> there is considerable scope for miscommunication. Māori have little choice but to learn to understand and accommodate to the Pākehā lifestyle and to Pākehā beliefs

> and values, whereas it is common for Pākehā to know little or no Maoritanga. Where patterns of humour differ, then, Māori are more likely to understand Pākehā humour, but Māori humour may be misunderstood or unnoticed by Pākehā. (p.148)

When I reviewed the videotape of this enactment with the performers, Aunty Awa, who was playing the role of musician during the enactment, said:

> Everybody laughed at the comments and the playback performance done by the two actors …everybody just cracked up laughing because they could identify with it – it wasn't about personal um doctor versus the nurse or nurse versus the doctor – they missed the point altogether – in Māoridom … we know that laughter is a great medicinal healing process for all of us because of the way that we feel we've been trodden on…
> And sex is another thing – because it's a very natural thing…. there's a certain way of looking at love itself– a male and a female and also a male and a male, or a female and a female - and it's just like your love towards your parents - and there are different types of love and it gets misconstrued…

I wanted to check on the phallic gesture and asked her about it. Aunty Awa replied:

> Oh well that gesture there just says yeah the ure in Māori is the penis and course that gesture there just means good on you being a male … No it isn't rude , because if you were to say what's rude you can liken that with our carvings in our meeting houses[159] – the ure is the male strength because that's where the seed comes from and all males have that… It isn't related to pornography at all so I want to back that up and make it quite clear – because the culture we are brought up in we're so close to mother nature and to human reactions like that… (W. Makiri Mason, personal communication, November 28, 2006)

This moment represented a nexus of cultural meanings around gender, sexuality and ethnicity. Playback, like the family storytelling discussed by Langellier,

> is a cultural location from which to speak at a global moment, and the local context is imbricated in a larger transnational and feminist frame (Hegde 1998)… a performance practice with a cultural dimension because 'culture is not usefully regarded as a substance but is better regarded as a dimension of a phenomena [*sic*], a dimension that attends to situated and embodied difference'… (Langellier, 2002, p. 57)

In terms of gender, our Playback group enacted being a woman in non-stereotypical ways: Aunty Awa, Sonia and myself had bodies which were bigger than the normative feminine while none of us wore makeup or outwardly feminine adornments. Riana, the actor who had introduced the theme of *I need a man* is on the other hand very slim and wore a decorative head scarf. One reason for a lack of adornment is that in Playback

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[159] In many traditional carvings in meeting houses and on carved waka I have seen (the one in Te Papa Tongarewa, the Museum of New Zealand, in Wellington), the genitals are the most realistically portrayed parts of the human anatomy.

practice, actors are encouraged to present as gender neutral to some extent, to facilitate cross-gender casting in stories: but part of it was also to do with our group's particular values of validating non-commercial woman-positive, active and creative performance work which does not demand domestication from women performers. This comes out of feminist theory which

> in the 1970s and 1980s … offered creative women many reasons to write [and perform]: to disrupt and subvert patriarchal definitions of "the feminine," to reconstruct a fluid yet forceful female identity, to locate women's subjectivity centrally in the realm of the body. (De Shazer, 2003, p.5)

In addition, in terms of sexuality, Sonia and myself both identified as non-heterosexual[160] while Aunty Awa has been a significant guide and mentor to gay groups. From this positioning, our relation to power is perhaps likely to be sceptical: as Jill Dolan indicated in her keynote address to the 1995 Queer Theatre Conference, "to be queer is not who you *are*, it's what you *do*, it's your relation to dominant power, and your relation to marginality, as a place of empowerment." (cited in Marra, 2004, p.188). Riana, the only unequivocally heterosexual member of this performing team, had introduced the phallic imagery in her gesturing which accompanied her early line "I want a man, I want a man with a certificate *this big*!" As a lesbian performer, Sonia had then accessed the symbol of the phallus satirically and for comic effect, tapping into Bakhtin's grotesque in which "an obsessive focus on the material functions of the body such as copulation…provokes laughter, which Bakhtin says conquers fear and terror" (Shoemaker, 2004, p.154). What was the *fear and terror* to be conquered by the audience laughter in this instance? Perhaps it was to do with the severe emphasis on professionalism which Teresa emphasized in her interview with me? (See the section on *Professional Standards* .)

Finally, in terms of culture, as Aunty Awa indicated in her commentary on this moment of performance, when she viewed it on videotape, the genitals are a feature of Māori art works such as carving in a way that they are not in Pākehā culture. Their portrayal is not

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[160] Our common experience as lesbian mothers was not something we discussed frequently but undoubtedly it had lent power to our solidarity: when Sonia had left the Auckland Playback company because of racism, I had followed her within two months. Though our new Playback company was not exclusively queer, there was an unstated centrality to queer performance and culture within it, which would not have occurred elsewhere and five of our nine regular performers were lesbian or bisexual.

seen as rude nor are any words to do with genitals regarded as obscenities. Undoubtedly, Sonia was also enacting the role of the indigenous trickster, who says "we live forever in stories, not manners…so tease the chance of conception, tease your mother, tease the privy councils of the great spirit, and always tease your own history…" (Carsten, 2006, p. 105).

However, the fact remains that for the teller, Teresa, the enactment was a misinterpretation of her moment: she was upset by this and after the performance strongly communicated her upset to the rest of the staff at Ngākau. In her interviews, another Ngākau staff member, Deirdre, identified the variability of interpretation as one of the risks associated with Playback: "yeah it's it's it's …interpretation you see and I guess I guess that's the risk with it with interpretation – like, what some might find funny some don't…" Nga1 Deirdre, Section 46). Deirdre went on to draw the analogy between this riskiness and dependence on interpretation to what happens in the very diverse environment within which they are working: "and then and that's the same within - I mean we've got so many different personalities and people from all different backgrounds, beliefs systems that...in this organization and you never all completely agree" (Nga1 Deirdre, Section 46).

Many lessons emerged for me from the experience of this teller. By the time I returned a year later to Ngākau, Teresa had left and I was unable to find out how she saw the experience in retrospect. I deeply regretted what had happened for her and I had apologized to her in the interview that we had soon after the performance, an apology which she gracefully accepted, replying by telling me about one of the positive comments other audience members had made about the performance and saying: "That was certainly a positive thing that came out of it. I think it's great that you know there were some good things to balance that..."(Nga 1 Teresa, Section 39). We owed Teresa a great deal: this misinterpretation contributed to the laying down of seven guidelines of the Playback practice in this research work which were observed for the rest of the project.

Guidelines gained from our work at Ngakau

First, the hope for me to continue to be participant/researcher was relinquished. A former colleague was asked to take the role of Playback facilitator of the next performances. I had learnt from this performance that the researcher role eclipsed or

muddied the Playback facilitator role for me once the patient focus groups had been conducted. Up until the focus groups, the enquiry was broadly similar to a Playback commission but the in-depth perspective gained by dialogue with patients of the practice, meant that I no longer had the beginner's mind needed:

> As the story emerges, the conductor [facilitator] beings to sense its dimensions of meaning…sometimes they are hidden. The conductor may need to follow her own vein of curiosity, to be the 'naïve enquirer' as Australian Playback director Mary Good describes this facet of the conductor's role. (Salas, 2003, p.76)

In the incident above, I had found out in the focus groups that the patients were very aware of the gender of their health professionals; without this insider knowledge, I would have questioned Teresa further, which might have helped her to give the actors a better idea of the depth and seriousness behind her seemingly joking account of a new male doctor's arrival.

Secondly, it was important to have a mix of genders within the performing team. My thought was that the classic phallic gesture which produced such offence might not have been produced had the performing team included a man. A **third** point was that it was also vital to have a mix of ethnicities in the performing team. The fact that the teller, the new doctor Ben, and the facilitator were all Pākehā in a majority Māori gathering which was part of an iwi-based Māori health provider, but that none of the actors were Pākehā, provided a multi-layered cultural encounter whose hurtful aspects for Teresa might possibly have been different with a Pākehā performer in the team.

Fourth, it was necessary to have a nominated musician as part of the performing team. For this performance, the actors alternated as musicians, sharing the role, since two of them are superb musicians. From the outcome of this second Ngākau performance, sandwiched as it was (and as the others were likely to be, because of time constraints in the Centres) in the middle of a working day, I could see that music was a very important component of establishing the Playback space/time as qualitatively different from an ordinary meeting or gathering. In the next performances, a musician was provided.

Fifth, we needed to create clear ritual spaces, almost taking on a role of hosting the performances. In acknowledgement of their part in the research, the giving of food to the staff group was an important part of abiding by the guidelines of kaupapa Māori

research, which emphasizes the importance of taking on responsibility and manaakitanga[161] for research participants: as Linda Tuhiwai Smith emphasizes, among the seven points which "tend to be prescribed for Māori researchers in cultural terms" is "Manaaki ki te tangata (share and host people, be generous)" (1999, p.120). This entailed a reversal of hosting protocols and meant that we needed to take a role which was different from that of visitors who were coming into the health centre environment. It was also a gesture of goodwill and reciprocity which was recognized as such by some participants in the later performances, where, for example, at Oranga, both Pasifika interviewees thanked me formally for this.

Sixth, to reinforce the theatricality of the occasion, the performance group subsequently set up the spaces so that they looked and felt different from a meeting space and came into the space ahead of the audience. This created a sense of something different and warmed the audience up, so that their interest and expectations were piqued. **Seventh**, we started to take time to welcome the audience carefully in a modified form of indigenous ritual in the warm-up stage: this included using some of the indigenous language, speeches of introduction, in one of the centres the use of a traditional musical instrument and in all centres a song. Blatner cites Mintz (1971) when he says that "Time for warming up to the point of creativity and spontaneity is necessary in order to reach a level of emotional expression (catharsis) that will produce insight…(Blatner, 2002)

Thus this whole project owes an enormous amount to Ngākau and especially to Teresa, for the extremely important lessons which came out of the dissonances experienced and expressed by her. The lessons are unforgettable: I am very thankful to her.

Metanarratives

Three metanarratives predominated in the interview accounts at Ngākau and could also be seen in the stories shared in the performances: these were metanarratives of emancipation, managerialism and professionalism.

Emancipatory metanarratives

"Tim Dyce defines an oppressed person as a person who has

[161] Manaakitanga refers to hospitality, or meeting the needs of a person or group on every level

> *no place to tell their story. From extremes like torture and abused people, to ordinary people who need everyday to be heard and seen enough, Playback Theatre can offer a 'home' for their voices." (Good, 2003, p. 6)*

The dialogic relationship with the bureaucracy within which the Ngākau Centre was working, recounted and then enacted in Nanaia's moments, brought up other emancipatory narratives which were also related to the development of cultural confidence and personal development.

"No, I'm not going to be told by the system"

In Community Health Worker, Ngaire's, case, emancipation was explored through another narrative, told in my interview with her. Around her, in her own extended family community, she could see an urgent need for education in the area of skin infections that she had been employed to specialize in, yet she was told by the bureaucracy that she was not allowed to do this work, as she was employed to deal with problems in *other geographical areas*. This narrative had come up for her in the performance, she said in the interview, when she saw:

> Deirdre's one Deirdre's one was to do with you know wanting to do something - knowing what you want to do but not being able to go forward and do it...Being held back … either by management or just the way the system is.
> Well for me it was like when I was asked by - because my work area has actually been over in Queenhill… and being approached by our Practice Nurse here to be able to contact the local primary school here because, you know, a lot of skin infections, children were coming here - and not being able to you know have any contact with them?
> …you know it wasn't just in my Queenhill cover area, it's also round here and I live here and I've got nieces and nephews that go to that school, this local school… I wanted to have access - but being told that "that's not your work area..." (Nga1 Ngaire, Sections 63-71)

Ngaire's solution to this dilemma involved thinking creatively:

> I actually rang the school and contacted them - told them who I was and what I was working on and that our practice nurse here asked if I could you know contact them because I'd like to send them some information, send them an email something that could be included in the newsletter that goes home to parents...
> So I wrote a little thing about ten lines or so and sent it off, emailed it off … And they'd noticed that there were a lot of sores in the school - and sent it off and got a good response from the school so, you know, very happy to receive that and it was included in that following school notice…
> Going up to the RSA the following week and a grandmother coming up to me and saying "I didn't know that that's what you were working on, and I read that notice and I saw your name and I was so pleased that, you know, you had a little bit in there, because I have seen those things around too and it was good to know …"

> Well after that they stopped coming here for treatment so it worked….And Nanaia said, after I sent that email - cause I showed it to her …"That's fantastic it's not going into, you know, you shouldn't do this, you shouldn't do that - you know it's just the five simple steps" - and so it worked! (Nga1 Ngaire, Sections 78-89)

Ngaire did not do this behind the back of the Project Manager: she made her independence explicit.

> I actually told the um Project Manager and she was like "Oh" and I said "But it worked" It worked and I've got positive feedback … from the school and from the community and the numbers and that have just dropped right off they're not coming any longer to get dressings changed before and after school …
> Using your own initiative I think you know, thinking "No I'm not ah not going to be told by the system!" (Nga1 Ngaire, Sections 97-103)

She quickly modified this emphatic and politically explicit statement about *the system*: "It's not a - I'm not blatantly… being anti it or anything…" (Section 106). This emancipatory energy could also be seen in narratives of cultural reclamation and of personal development of agency and independence.

Indigenous cultural reclamation: "something of a revelation"

Several narratives which drew on the metanarrative of cultural reclamation were told in the performances at Ngākau: one during the February performance at the Planning Hui and several in the December performance at the end of that year. A story which was remembered by one of the audience from the February performance was one about a younger Māori man telling about the expectations people had of him that he would understand the language and his struggles because he could not at present do this, but also his determination to learn. This enactment and its effect on the teller was such that it was remembered even two years later, by Deirdre, in her comment that:

> one of the ones I do remember was when Lyall did his part down at the at the retreat you know and he didn't *expect* to get something out of it but you could *see* in his body language and by the time you'd finished that it was something that worked well for him…(Nga2 Deirdre, Section 31)

This theme was elaborated on further in the one story in the December Performance which was mentioned as interesting and valuable by all interviewees, including Teresa. Ben, the new Pākehā doctor told about his happiness at his partner Yvonne's delight at finding this iwi-based practice at Ngākau to work in, after their own private practice in a largely non-Māori suburb had been rendered non-viable after what he repeatedly called "the advent of of PHOs or year zero of PHOs" (Nga1 Ben, Section 8) In my interview with him, Ben re-told the story, contextualising it as a fuller family story:

> Renee's children go to the same school as ours…and [she] had encouraged Yvonne on us, on her leaving the practice in Raranga that she should you know that she should try to work for Ngākau - and Yvonne got in touch and picked up a few sessions here and there.
> It didn't really become a regular proper thing until about perhaps April or May but the more she did the more she was enjoying it … and …it had been quite an, a, a, ah… a revealing and happy sort of time for for Yvonne because …. she had led a childhood and teenage existence you know trying to bury her Maori part - and you know it goes back to the fact that there were some difficulties with her mother marrying her father, you know, the whole marriage in the 1960s was frowned upon, you know, a Maori and a Pākehā and you know there was a lot of that ...
> Amongst those unsettling things … she had been really happy coming to work at Ngākau and had found it, as I say something of a, of a revelation. And you know all of a sudden, found herself being not so embarassed about, you know, her Maori background - as several people in her family like her father - he sold his business - he's now become a sort of a Maori business mentor… and has been learning the language with gusto, for the last three years … they've sort of embraced their past with a vengeance (Nga1 Ben, Sections 30, 32, 39,40)

This story of a family reclamation of culture (with its key points where Ben hesitated or searched for words) was received with great interest and compassion by the audience, and all the other staff members interviewed mentioned it. Ngaire entered into Ben's experience and speculated on the underlying messages abut the transition from a more powerful position:

> pleased - I felt pleased I felt pleased because it was - I don't know maybe he felt a bit of a loss not working for himself any more… you know, suddenly he had no … choices and that, and that the government had decided that this was the way it was going to be …But in the end it's come right. (Nga1 Ngaire, Sections 155-161)

Teresa (even though she had expressed upset at being misinterpreted in the story she had told just before Ben's) still registered the value of Ben's story to the group as a whole:

> Oh I thought that that was great. Oh actually no and I should add that at the Team Leaders' Hui yesterday, people said "Oh we never realized that that was why Yvonne came here" and there was actually a lot of support for both Yvonne and Ben with that story. So for them it was actually a really positive and quite a powerful - so yes, no I'd forgotten that, but yes, they had, they said yesterday that people had said "Wow that's great we didn't realize that Yvonne had Maori blood in her." So it was, yeah, it was lovely for them. (Nga1 Teresa, Section 35)

For Deirdre it was positive because it built empathy with Ben:

> A fantastic thing because we we felt absolute aroha for for Ben because we we felt that "Wow this is something we didn't know" - it made us feel closer to our GPs 'cause we kind of wanted to nurture and protect them, because we thought "Wow!" (Nga1 Deirdre, Section 32)

Henry, the manager of another centre, Oranga, who was present at this performance, particularly remembered the depiction of Yvonne within this story: Aunty Awa had played the part of Yvonne and shown her delight very literally, dancing around the perimeter of the stage and speaking directly to the audience "I'm a Māori, I am, I'm a Māori!" This was received with much laughter and enjoyment. Henry expressed his appreciation of Aunty Awa's acting skills, at the same time indicating his awareness that only the storyteller could finally judge the interpretation:

> I do remember one of the players from over there and she just sticks out as just … she was … I can't really express what it is, I just remember this older lady portraying someone finding their Maori identity and how it meant to the person, I've got no idea … you know, like I can remember the portrayal, but only the person who had brought the subject up would would know really if that was the reflection of how she had felt, so I've got the impression of how it was portrayed, so I still have that … (Ora1 Henry, Sections 25-27)

Cultural reclamation is emphasized by American Jewish writer Tillie Olsen (1983) as "the phoenix rebirth of the human spirit – not only endurance but actually a human resistance that is a balancer and healer of things – the resources including humor, anger, love …" (in Park-Fuller, 1983, p.76). Playback allowed for the exploring through performances of this and related themes in ways which allowed the members of the Ngākau team to become more visible and multidimensional to each other. All of those interviewed without exception, both Maori and non-Maori recognised the importance of this dimension and commented on it. This is a particularly congruent theme with the character of Ngākau as an iwi-based health service.

Self Development: "hell, damn, there's a whole world outside"

Some interviewed referred to emancipation in terms of individual power and self-determination. For Deirdre, the self-development was about moving out of cultural stereotyping. She spoke with urgency and energy:

> see when you've been brought up in the South Auckland and, you know, anything like theatre and, and being out there is, is, is considered, it's not so much a threatening thing, but it's like a, it's cconsidered a *Pākehā* thing, you know, and …So it's like Maori do this way and Pakeha do that way so I, I, I see it as new agey but you know the feedback I get is, is, is that it's just a Pākehā thing - you know? Like counselling's a Pākehā thing you know it's like Maori …
> I, I, I believe, it's my own personal belief that we as, as, as a culture are way behind you know because counselling's considered "Wooo." Playback's considered "Wooo" you know, and I think one of the struggles, I think, is that we have a limited world view …See it wasn't until I got into my nursing, got exposed to other cultures,

> got blah blah blah you know, realized "Hell, damn, there's a whole world outside of South Auckland…" (Nga2 Deirdre, Section 73)

Deidre claims the right to a hybrid identity and the insights it can bring in being a 'third space' from which to view both Pākehā and Māori culture: "hybridity exists in the in-between spaces between the colonized and colonial culture" (Moeke-Maxwell, 2006, p.103). However, for Deidre, this in-between space involved a sense of struggle which she expressed very eloquently. For Ngaire, on the other hand, the observation of the performers' self develoment was celebratory in terms of both their culture and of gender:

> Māori, um wahine toa[162] …Oh just getting up and doing it and the interaction with everybody that was there. You know, if you aren't comfortable in your own skin, I don't think anyone would really just get up there and do what they were doing, in front of a room full of strangers… (Nga2 Ngaire, Section 9-11)

Clearly, the way the performers were *comfortable in [their] own skin* made an impression and was worth celebrating from Ngaire's point of view: the performance work thus enabled a modelling which was one of the values Peter Wright (2003) found in his 2002 enquiry into Playback Theatre:

> Modelling is one of the most powerful ways that learning and healing can occur in PBT…[f]irst the actors model such behaviours as risk-taking, spontaneity and creativity through the spontaneous nature of the form. (Wright, 2002, p. 276)

For Teresa a perhaps unexpected *need* for personal development was revealed when she was misinterpreted: she regretted her lack of assertiveness when she did not speak up to correct the actors' misinterpretation of her story

> I think I was as angry with myself that I couldn't say "Stop - this is NOT what I'm saying" because when you're in an environment where everybody is laughing and appears to be going along with it... . I felt quite powerless and then I felt really angry that I hadn't said anything…(Nga1 Teresa, Section 9)

Assertiveness is defined by the *Oxford Dictionary of Paychology* as: "A form of counselling or psychotherapy developed in 1949 by the US psychologist Andrew Salter (born 1914) in which people learn to express their needs, wishes, and feelings frankly, honestly, and directly, in a way that causes others to take them into account" (Oxford Reference Online, 2006). Teresa was a confident, senior member of the Ngākau staff: it was disturbing that she was unable or unwilling to speak up to correct the misunderstanding that had occurred.

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[162] Wahine refers to woman or women, toa refers to warrior or strong.

The metanarrative of Managerialism: "standing on the outside, trying to decode the door-lock"

At the time of the performances, (2002-2005), in the early months of the introduction of a completely new system for primary health care in New Zealand, this metanarrative was very frequently used in describing the demands of work and life in all of these health care centres. The manager, Nanaia, had opened the second Ngākau performance by introducing this narrative: telling the first moment about her feeling about the PHO:

> We became part of the PHO on the first of July- there've been lots and lots of teething problems ongoing concerns around the way Healthpak does things…concerns around everything that you can think of …

When asked to give words to describe the process of becoming a PHO, she gave the words opportunity and challenge, talking about the

> networking with other providers so shared services …opportunities to sort of earn more money, opportunities to provide better healthcare services for our patients in the area…
> Yet even these opportunities are beset by challenges: …while it's set up for the likes of our services there's also opportunities for the others the IPAs… the Independent Practitioners … to get in on the game, which also pose as a threat to the likes of our services…

Ngaire elaborated on this complex relationship with the bureaucracy in her individual interview by telling a story which exemplified the confusing and changing bureaucratic requirements. At the beginning of her work, she had been asked by someone above the team at Ngākau (maybe at the DHB level, it was not altogether clear in her account) to write a work plan: "I thought 'A work plan what a nightmare I've never done one of those before'" (Nga1 Ngaire Section 16). Her story shows in more detail the type of frustrating interaction with the bureaucracy that Nanaia the manager had herself referred to in her brief narrative during the performance. Ngaire got help in writing her work plan from the Team Leaders at Ngākau:

> Sent it off the first one and got rejected, so went back to the Team Leaders again and I said "Look they want this this and that included and they want more information" and they were going "Well it's that's not how a plan goes - it develops as you work in the role and so you add things you know as you go along." And I said, "Well it's got to go - let's go over it again…" And so we had another go - "Thats really good," everyone was saying, "No - she must be mad if she's going to turn it down again!" Well she did! (laugh) So, you know, I was like, I was ready to throw in the towel, I was getting so frustrated, you know, thinking, you know, "I've never done anything like this before."…Well she actually ended up writing it herself - so I just felt like, you know, what was this whole, what was the point of the exercise? When really

> she knew what she wanted and this key person, she knew what she wanted, why did she even get me to sort of develop it when she kept turning it down? So oh dear - so that was the frustrating part. (Nga1, Ngaire, Sections 16, 18)

It was this story that she said had come into her mind when watching the performance and it is not hard to see the relationship of it to the enactment of Nanaia's moment in which Sonia, spontaneously taking the role of the funding body, kept making Aunty Awa scuttle from one side of her body to another (see page 259). This experience is very common to even one of the most distinguished of indigenous scholars working in Aotearoa New Zealand, Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, who in 1994 wrote

> This process of standing on the outside trying to decode the door-lock has been the story of my formal education and is one shared by many other people whose communities and lands have been colonised by western powers. It is an experience which may account for the fact that as a child one of my favourite Katherine Mansfield stories was the story about two little girls who watched from the outside as another more privileged little girl invited her friends around to see her new doll's house. (p.164)

Both within the performances and the interviews the instrumentalising tendencies of hierarchical and managerial systems were clearly portayed, along with people's negotiations with these systems (Kuokkanen & Leino-Kilpi, 2000).

Professional standards: "it's just not appropriate"

The metanarrative of professionalism was invoked in two contexts: describing the work of the staff at Ngākau, and the work of the Playback group.

For Teresa, the senior nurse in the practice, professional codes had been something she had endeavoured to work on powerfully, forcefully and clearly with her colleagues:

> I mean I guess one of the things in this organization ever since I've been here is I've brought in standards of integrity so there are certain things that are not okay to discuss because we're professionals
> … And when you get people making comments that I just don't think belong in a professsional environment - I've worked very hard to establish - you know look you're a professional and it's just not appropriate to discuss that at front desk or you know we're we're professionals and we have these professional standards…(Nga1 Teresa, Sections 45-47)

This discourse of professionalism was clearly at odds with some aspects of the way life was lived in the Ngākau community where Kara, a patient from the Marae Clinic Focus Group, said

> I mean something can happen today in my street and the rest of the hill will know within three hours. Maybe one hour. …Well it is it's that everybody knows everybody… so everything that was happening at the Clinic everybody knew. And

> see, it's not like in a – confidentiality, I don't know, it's like … "Oh kia ora Aunty oh what's wrong with you today?" and it's like everyone's there and everyone, "Oh well I've got…" you know.
> So it's not your average kind of place where, you know, you go into the doctor's surgery and you don't tell anyone *what's* wrong! And everyone's like, "Oh yes dear, well you know, how's your gout?" "Oh it's really…." You know…
> Like, I know new staff take a while to get used to it, because it's like, "Oh shouldn't be discussing your…" and it's like, "Oh get over it - we all know what's wrong with each other anyway…" (Nga1 Focus Group)

Teresa's emphasis on professionalism in the organization may have been partly what led to the great enjoyment by the audience of Sonia's irreverent playing back of Teresa's story about Ben's arrival: Janet Holmes, in an article about humour and Māori leadership in work situations points out that: "Looking at the 'darker side' of workplace humour…Collinson (1988) points to humour as a control mechanism, encouraging conformity to group norms, as well as a strategy for expressing resistance to management" (Marra, Holmes & Schnurr, 2007, p.7). [163]

Teresa identified us, the Playback performers too, as also not having the professional standards she would have expected:

> I mean there were a whole number of things that I processed as a result of that - and tried to analyse you know "Was is it the way in which it was portrayed, is it my own stuff being out there?" but it was, to me in a group where I would look for professionalism, it was unprofessional ... (Nga1 Teresa, Section 9)

In terms of the professionalism of the performing group, Deirdre in her interview too passed on to us the views of others of the Ngākau colleagues:

> the feedback was, was that the performers didn't present too well, they kind of thought, you know, the way they were dressed … could have been nicer …When shirts would lift up and that, and some of the things said, was that - yeah they felt it was a bit too personal … and they said, you know, "Because we're sort of in a health organization and professionals" they thought that it was they felt it wasn't presented professionally. (Nga1 Deirdre, Section 26)

However, although Deirdre passed on their criticisms, expressing the belief that it was only fair for the performers to know what was being said about us, she reported her own thoughts as being different. When interviewed a year later she had reflected further on these interactions and her own views. This process had clarified even more for her

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163 Sonia, an outstanding artist and traditional weaver as well as actor, musician and parent, has been self employed for several years: her attitudes to Pākehā authoritarianism are consistently sceptical and she may well have somehow picked up on this element of Teresa's self presentation which emphasised professionalism, as she played her moment back with carnivalesque elements.

some evaluations around how she did and didn't want to be, as a professional health worker:

> But actually one of the key things I one thing that came out of Playback theatre was I don't know I just realized "My gosh I work with some really judgemental people" and that's because, because I think, with Playback you're so out there and you, you, you really put yourself out there and you, you know … And that's when I realized wow, there's some, you know, some pretty, you know, judgemental folk. Yeah, I realized I work with some very judgemental people..… Well in all honesty, it's made me stronger, because if anything I've come to realize, and that's just my own feeling, adversity makes me strong...
> And I mean I looked around and I'd actually already decided that there were - I just thought, I don't want a, I have little, oh, oh, oh, what's it? Oh, I don't interact so much with those people, I just don't interact with those people and that's a good thing… (Nga2 Deirdre, Sections 43-4

It can be seen from the syntactical breakdown in paragraph two, "I just thought, I don't want a, I have little, oh oh oh what's it?" that this is a point which is very difficult for her to both feel and express: however, the Playback work, even though it lacked 'professionalism' especially in some of the ways to do with the body "when shirts would lift up", had values which were stronger for Deirdre, the values of courage and self-expression "you really put yourself out there." This appreciation of the courage evident in the performers, especially in the discussion of acting, was expressed by other interviewees at Ngākau.

Performance Elements in the Ngākau performances

Acting

The aspect of performance most commented on in the interviews was the acting: audience members found it amusing, invigorating and inspiring. Aunty Awa, the kuia of the performing group, drew special comments:

> I think I was more amazed at the people performing rather than the scenario (laugh) 'cause I've never actually been to a Playback thing before, so it was quite neat … I reckon the other, the elderly lady, she was awesome, she was kind of quick off the mark with a scenario…How she interpreted things in her own way - she was quite quick on that. I always wondered - like when she sat down, I'd wonder was [she] all right? And then she'll get up and, as soon as you say "Okay let's start," and then she just bang! Straight into one you know… (Nga1 Nena, Sections 50-62)

Ngaire identified the three actors as "Māori, um wahine toa",[164] going on to commend them for "just getting up and doing it and the interaction with everybody that was there"

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[164] Wahine refers to women, toa refers to warrior or strong

(Nga2 Ngaire, Sections 7-11). Ben noticed the actors' skills in assembling a narrative from very scant materials:

> I mean I've got nothing but admiration for you guys I mean… I mean I thought it was great how you guys could just come along and pick up a few key things and ideas from what people say and put it into a little story line - I thought it was actually good (Nga1 Ben, Section 31)

However these views weren't universal: they were contrasted with Teresa's statement that, after the December performance:

> the general feeling at our team leaders' hui yesterday was that the standard of acting [in December] wasn't quite the same as it had been at the hui [in February] - so that they felt that there - things were not quite - were different (Nga1 Teresa, Section 11)

Certainly, Teresa had correctly identified something: probably an unfair expectation was put on the three performers in this performance, to play the dual role of actor/musicians; to come into a staff meeting with no opportunity to set the space up ahead of time; and to reflect the interests and world views of a very diverse audience. In the next performances at Oranga and Pātaka, because of what we saw as some shortcomings of our work at Ngākau, some things were done quite differently.

Audience

The Centre contained a large group of staff which included several doctors, nurses, community health workers, administration staff, team leaders and managers. Many of these staff were at the two performances which were offered to Ngākau, during 2003. However, only five staff members agreed to be interviewed: they included one Pākehā doctor, two nurses (one Māori and one Pākehā,) a Māori administrator and a Māori community health worker. Some difficulty recruiting staff members for the interviews was experienced, partly because of the time of year immediately following the performance (Christmas and New Year, summer holidays for the staff) and partly, I think, because of the atmosphere in the group which arose because of the miscommunication in playing back Teresa's story which had occurred during the performance.

Negotiating the Performance

Nanaia, the Manager of Ngākau, had been one of the original three managers who gave consent for the project. Her support was very practical, expressed by such things as

booking and paying for the Marae and the Community Centre for the Patient Focus Groups. She was very busy at the time of the performances and verbally requested to me that the Playback only include the short forms of moments and conflicts rather than longer stories in which roles are given. As researcher, I acceded to this request, in the interests of advancing the research project; however, on reflection, it was a compromise which I would not quickly make again, as communities need to tell each other their own significant stories and, if the overall shape of a performance is dictated or manipulated, the integrity of the Playback form can be lost. Folma Hoesch writes: "Among groups who do playback we find again and again that the stories respond to each other and furthermore that they offer patterns for solution and transformation" (1999, p.47). In the role of the person negotiating performances, I have frequently, in other situations, been able to maintain to people commissioning performances that we need to allow the performance to take its own shape. Similarly, the spaces offered for the performances were very small and therefore crowded, to the detriment of the mise-en-scène of the shows: again I have often negotiated improved spaces for Playback performances. The dual role of researcher/facilitator somehow contributed to a loss of assertiveness on my part concerning these boundaries.

Information for the Participants

No written material was given to the participants until their individual interviews when permission was sought through consent forms (see Appendix Seven for copies of consent forms) so it is not clear how much they knew at the time of the performance about the purposes of the research project. The February Performance came about six weeks after the Joint PHO performance at which I had given a verbal description of the project, as part of negotiating these centres as a venue for it; it seems probable that those people who had been at the Joint PHO performance had given their version of it by word of mouth to their colleagues. At the next two performances, I made sure that I had provided a written summary of the performance for staff ahead of time.

Research Participants' Views of the Performance

One interviewee emphasized that she herself had enjoyed the performances:

> I actually enjoy the way it brings people out of themselves - or the way it really makes you look at something differently - and think that is what it's like - or you can really identify with it … I find that really healing. ... (Nga1 Deirdre, Section 8)

Some negative feedback she delivered on behalf of colleagues who had elected not to be interviewed was quite specific:

> Okay - there were some that said it's not them. It's not something they enjoy, they don't like being exposed like that … the performers didn't present too well they kind of thought you know the way they were dressed was could have been nicer … And then the other one was sort of, being nurses, it was the health issues, you know, like "Everybody's mouths are on those musical instruments and oh my god you don't know where people have been …" (Nga1 Deirdre, Section 26)

The physicality and embodiment of the Playback performers and form was clearly something with which some of the audience members at Ngākau felt uncomfortable[165]. Another felt it was interesting but probably better not within only the one workplace. Nena said:

> because we work with each other, we know what everyone's going through you know it would be good to hear somebody else's maybe another maybe another medical group - their stories, what they're going through but - not so much our own. (Nga1 Nena, Section 111).

Ngaire, on the other hand, made the suggestion that in terms of organizing performances, it might be better in the team context before doing it in the larger group:

> we're supposed to have this annual hui together and in our own um teams or whether it's as a whole as an organization and I think it would be valuable in any of these situations…maybe maybe better to do it in a team situation first rather than a whole, as a whole organization? (Nga2 Ngaire, Section 45)

However, she also emphasized the value of Playback to create the sense of being in a team especially when things get difficult:

> Oh I think it's definitely valuable…that is one of the most valuable for any you know team situation, to be able to um interact with one another and give that total support to one another and think that yes you know know that you can rely on the others - they are going to stick with you and they are going to you know push along too with you rather than try and chuck you out of the waka[166] (laughs). (Nga2 Ngaire, Section 41)

Ben was pleased with the performance as a contribution to their group life and a contrast to most meetings:

> You know, considering I went down there thinking, "Oh god this is some dull lunchtime meeting - (laugh) that I've had my hand put up firmly to go along to" - I came back thinking, "Oh that was actually quite good fun, you know…" (Ngā1 Ben,

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[165] We took on board the need, in the current health climate, to provide antiseptic wipes for when audience musicians are going to play the instruments.

[166] Waka refers to canoe, symbolically used for descent or affinity group

Section 71)

The Performing Group

The following table gives a description of some demographic information about the performers involved in the second Ngākau performance, their Playback training and experience, and their other work involvements.

Name/ ethnicity/gender/ sexuality	**Role in performance/s**	**Playback status/ theatre training**	**Other work**
Aunty Awa Māori woman Straight	Actor/musician	Kapa Haka training with Pita Awatere Playback training with Jonathan Fox at workshop in Melbourne Kainga Rua member	Educator Kuia Facilitator
Riana Māori woman Straight	Actor/musician	Playback course at Auckland Performing Arts School Auckland Playback and Kāinga Rua member – 10 years	TV Camera operator and director Business owner/operator
Sonia Māori woman Takataapui	Actor	Auckland Playback Theatre member – 3 years Co-founder of Kāinga Rua 4 years	Artist Community development worker Early childhood ecucator
Fe Pākehā Woman Queer	Facilitator	Auckland Playback and Kāinga Rua co-founder Theatre training with Nola Millar, Wellington. Playback Training in workshops with Jonathan Fox,	Works in Learning Development Centre at a university and as a freelance storyteller Former English and drama teacher

		Deborah Pearson, Bev Hosking, Francis Batten and others	

Table 6 Performers in the second Ngākau performance

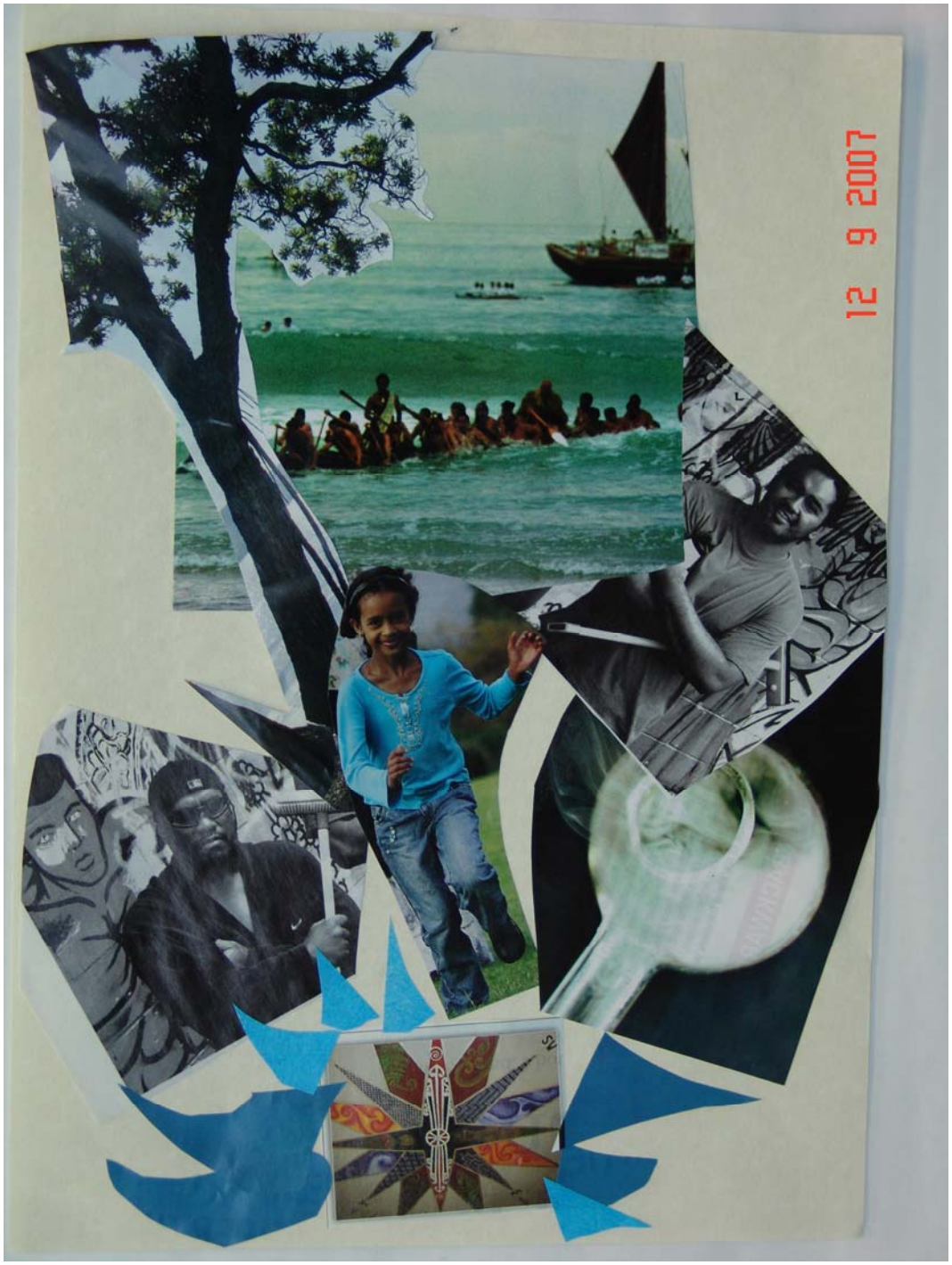

Figure 2 Ngākau

The Practitioner's Journey

i
Strung between bliss
and heartache
Open expansive lip of the cup
of the Gulf
and thronging exciting
disturbing, challenging
valley village

we enter
tentative
your ancient space

looking around
for markers
misreading signals
mistaking giggles
swept away in a gale
of delighted
scandalized
laughter
Not knowing
When
To stop

The carnival has come
to town
and we
must own
up.

ii
how to say thank you enough
to those who formed the journey?
No such thing as mistake – revelation!

Aroha mai e hoa ma
e haere ana nga mihi

i ngā wa katoa…[167]

iii

in an ancient place, wisdom comes up from the roots in the earth
medicines in leaves laid like balm upon hurt minds
the vision of a heart-whole whanau reaches out to the bright sky

Additional positioning of myself as woman, as queer

> *"If othering assumes the other is knowable, saming precludes any knowledge of the other in her otherness. Exposing the logic of othering - whether it be of women, Jews, or any other victims of demeaning stereotyping - is a necessary step in achieving equality, exposing the logic of saming is a necessary step in toppling the universal from his/(her) pedestal…(Schor and Weed, 1994: 48)" (Cited in Martin, 2001, p.172)*

Less than 100 years ago women were not allowed to take degrees in universities. Even today, some women with children find the balancing of the roles of parenting and working in an environment whose structures and predilections have been formed by their other extremely demanding: this scholastic system was set up and functioned for many hundreds of years in a monastic male context and the traces are there, close to the surface. Personal responsibilities for other lives and the wellbeing of children are, on the whole, not welcomed nor taken into account. Of course this is difficult for many men as well.

In the dualistic Cartesian mind set the pairs have been set to dance

woman	man
body	mind
emotions	objectivity
sensing	thinking
care	ambition
soft	hard
wet	dry
warm	cool
nature	culture
craft	art

They are *not* unmarked and marked categories for me: nor are they necessarily gendered. I see all babies, most children, many women and some men playing against these stereotyped

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[167] Aroha mai e hoa ma, refers to be compassionate, friends; e haere ana nga mihi i ngā wa katoa refers to respectful greetings continue to go to all of you.

oppostions, swooping and whooping between multiple points and swinging on trapezes across all these classifications. The dance makes me laugh, when it is not making me cry. I see intelligence, brilliance, innovation, in the Gestalt, the all and more that is, the horizon and the beyond which is what makes the horizon function as horizon.

I question whether Irigaray is right, that in the beginning there was not one but two. (Irigaray 1987; Harmon, 1996). I understand that many men are very interested in each other and in the product of each others' minds and processes:[168] and in my experience many women are, too, interested in each other as women. That is why Hannah, Elsa and Rangimarie, Jane and Innes, are in my story, even though they might not want to be (neither seeing themselves nor presenting as feminists.) I haven't added them as *feminists* but because as I read they jumped out at me and I did not want a journey that implied women had not been there, all along the way, active, assertive, troublesome, innovative, insightful, ambitious, cool: alongside those men whom other men (presumably because of their interest in and need of each other) had tirelessly documented. Did those doing the documenting not see the women there too? Or did they just not find them interesting?[169]

I take my place as a feminist scholar, as a person within the academy who has a right to live in it and work in it *as a woman*: not required to leave my body at the door as I walk in. I know that the men among whom I work do not have to leave their bodies at the door; instead, in my view many of them they have created a language and an intellectual system which fetishizes the body in disguise, (where cognition has to be hard, tough, penetrating). In the men's room many of them share, much knowledge, many contacts get passed around and women and lesbians are only present on sufferance (Pharr, 1984).

Of course not all men are in there: those who are plain, shy, not well-connected, not charming, disabled or with non-standard sexuality, may well experience some of the dissonance I have described above. To some extent, the homoerotic elitism of the academy may be constituted as normal and stable by rigidly silencing the real homos, who are allowed entrance on the condition that, (even if they made their reputation in queer theory), they no longer raise such *minority concerns*.

So, students who are queer, a term whose " non-specificity guarantees it against recent criticisms made of the exclusionist tendencies of 'lesbian' and 'gay' as identity categories" (Jagose, 1996, p. 76) ask us, over and over again: "To make my place in the university safe, please be more visible, as other. Don't make it be that I have to hide who I am to succeed." Yet over and over, people who have come into the academy through concessions won in battles fought politically by people who were brutalized, discarded or discredited by the starkness of the battle lines that had to be drawn at that time, focus on their personal success and I hear them say "My days of queer networking are long gone." I can't blame them: don't want to see them brutalized too; know indeed that I am not *anything* reliably, identity

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[168] But I question whether they *know* that they are interested in each other – I think many times they think they are interested in "the topic" without seeing that they may have formed it in their own image.

[169] This is changing. One of the great experiences for me during the years of engagement in this research was seeing the joint exhibition of Picasso and Dora Maar in Melbourne: an explicit demonstration of creative partnership and mutual inspiration and support especially during the painting of Guernica when Dora's phototgraphs of the painting in progress, fed into the images Picasso painted, as the "unbalanced scenery …reproduced in one photo after another; seems to have influenced Picasso to make modifications in his composition, taking the photographic statement as his point of departure" (Baldassari, 2006, pp.172-174)

statements anyway always end up oppressing someone ("no you are not a transgender lesbian you are a man…") Still, though I was married to a man, have children, am a grandmother, I am much more, I also relate to a whole community of woman-centred life, love and work, I'm here, I'm queer…

Queer Playback

There are queer Playback performers in many companies, but we are often in minorities: therefore at international conferences and symposia, we have begun to gather to perform as queer Playbackers. However, through doing the interviews which were part of this research, to my surprise, I discovered that issues of sexuality have been part of the practice of Playback from the very beginning: an out gay man, Michael Clemente was a founding member of the group and he forced the group to confront issues of homophobia as well as other issues of social justice. I am amazed that no-one from that time let our Queer Playback know this – that for us, our fore-runner (an important ancestor for us) had helped to form the Playback work.

Jo Salas dedicated her very successful 1993 book to him and in my interview with her, I asked her about him:

Jo: Well, he was quite young when he joined us. He was maybe 23, not long out of school. He had a very strong artistic identity.
Fe: As an actor?
Jo: As an actor, a musician, and a visual artist. He painted, drew pictures. He was first and foremost an artist. And he was, at that age, quite tender and fragile in his being. He'd suffered a lot. He was a gay man and he had grown up suffering. He was someone who had known he was gay, and therefore very different, in a very traditional Catholic family. He was the kind of person who other kids would call a faggot, that kind of thing. And at the same time he had this fire, and not only on behalf of gay people. He was a natural fighter for social justice of every kind and he kept us on track in that way. He was one of the first people who challenged us to really be aware and keep growing and questioning ourselves in terms of what we are we doing in relation to the world. He was a person of incredible integrity and great artistic power. I'll start crying if I talk too much about him
Fe: But it's really great for me just to get the sense of him.
Jo: Sometimes, especially in those first few years, we were the object of his revolutionariness. He was sometimes angry towards us.
Fe: What would it be that he felt?
Jo: I don't remember issues. I just remember him being a touchy young man and we were the "authorities." He and I had some moments. My understanding about homosexuality grew through him and that was sometimes painful. I had some blindnesses. I'd been best friends with a boy who was gay when I was in high school and I thought nothing of it. But then later I absorbed prejudices or misunderstandings. It was through Michael that I came back to that place of "So what?" We were very close. We really loved each other. Jonathan and I were with him through his dying and death.
Fe: That's been something that I knew, but I don't know how I knew, that his death was part of Playback somehow?
Jo: He died after the original company had "retired." The actual official life of the company was from '75 through '86. Jonathan had been increasingly travelling and teaching as Playback started to grow in other places and he wanted to have more freedom to do that, not compatible with being part of a company that met every week and performed regularly. He had been carrying a huge responsibility to generate income because by then five of us were being paid by Playback. So at the end of 1986 he wanted to stop. We didn't consider the possibility of going on without him, which is really interesting. Jonathan was very much in a leadership

role. We didn't even talk about someone else taking over. But we didn't actually stop, although at that point we ended our official structure, we closed our office, we let go our manager. But we kept meeting sporadically and performing when we wanted to. At first it was about ten times a year—people would ask us and we'd do it.

Michael was diagnosed in 1990. I remember that we were performing at a conference in Washington DC. The AIDS quilt was there and Michael had just heard that his T-cell count was very low. I remember standing there with Judy looking at the AIDS quilt, and both of us sobbing, knowing what Michael's medical report meant. It was another two years before he died and we kept performing, but he got more and more ill. The last performance-- we didn't know it would be the last --was one that I conducted because Jonathan was away. It was for a conference of people who worked in residential treatment. Michael was chosen twice to play a dying person or someone who actually died during the story. Of course the audience had no idea consciously but they got that aura from him.

The next performance that we were due to do was the one big public performance that we did every year at a place where we'd performed since the beginning. We always got a huge audience, our old fans. But that year Michael was too sick to do it and we decided, "That's it, we're not doing any more." And that was the end. It was very organic. It was over.

Fe: No more performances. So in a sense his end was connected with the end of the original company.

Jo: Yes.

E Mikaere, e mihi ana matou ki a koe. Haere e te tungane, haere ki te kāinga tūturu mo tātou te tangata. Michael Clemente, we acknowledge you. Go, brother, to the true home of all us.

Chapter Nine – Oranga

Oranga Health Centre is an integral part of the suburb in which it operates, having been started by the union movement 18 years before, with many of the staff working there for many years[170]. Because Oranga had been through an unsettled year (the manager who had been instrumental in arranging for me to host my research there had left by the time my practical work started), I was aware that the staff may particularly need the relaxation and input which we hoped the Playback could make available. At the time of the project, the Centre contained several doctors, most of them working part-time, and several nurses and receptionists, most of them working full-time but overlapping in their work hours. The staff group who attended the performance included two Pasifika women, one Samoan and one Niuean, who were receptionists; a Māori woman nurse; a Pākehā male Manager; and four doctors of whom one was an Indian man, one a Pākehā man and two Pākehā women. All were interviewed for the research project.

The centre had been started as a Trade Union initiative in 1987 and some of the patients dated from the very early days of its existence: similarly, most of the staff had worked there for many years. This longevity in the staff group led some of them to suspect that they had nothing to learn about each other: "we kind of think we communicate because we've been hanging round together for so long …" (Ora1 Henry, Section 116). However, at least one narrative in the performance surprised most people and was found valuable by all.

The Playback work at Oranga was impacted on rather dramatically by boundary issues of time and space. The Playback performance occurred in October 2004 from 1 – 2pm on a Tuesday, during the time in which the Centre closed and the staff had their weekly staff meeting. We used the waiting room as a performance venue and, from half way through the performance, patients started to shake the door to try and come in, even

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[170] The small main street on which it is situated is one which I walked many times as a pre-schooler, coming and going from the Play Centre with my grandmother. Although we moved away when I was six and the suburb has changed in the intervening years, the street now lined with many ethnic-focussed shops, mainly Pasifika and Asian, it has a festive market-like atmosphere, with colourful displays spilling out on to the footpath which never failed to give me pleasure and a sense of homecoming.

though the door was locked and there was a notice posted saying that the Centre would reopen in an hour. Similarly, the phone rang at several points, even though the answering machine had been put on. Eight staff members attended the performance and it was noticeable that the staff from Polynesian backgrounds took particularly active roles in the performance and reacted favourably to the opportunity it presented, while two of the Pākehā doctors expressed difficulty with entering the performance experience, discussing this discomfort in interviews using a range of theoretical frames, including comments on their own culture as well as the performance itself and a critique of managerialism. The interviews with staff were conducted in November 2004 and July 2005.

Themes of telling back from marginalised to dominant narratives were explored within the performance and, in the final moment of the performance, the manager of the Centre made an impassioned and extreme plea about his situation of being pulled between the needs of management and staff, the seriousness of which was registered by all present and led to changes of action and attitude. Narratives within both performance and interviews used a range of metanarratives including most notably existentialism, myth or fairytale (Bettelheim, 1977; Campbell, 1970; Jung & Kerenyi, 1963) and a critique of managerialism. In addition emancipatory and professional metanarratives were evident.

From the view of Patients

Oranga is a suburb which has a diverse population from a variety of ethnic and socio-economic groups. The first patient Focus Group was conducted in 2003 when patients were sent over the road to the Community Centre by the Health Centre staff, to be part of the Focus Group Interview. The people who came to the group interview were four women: one Māori, one Pākehā and two Pasifika; and three men, one Māori, one Pākehā and one Pasifika. Some of the patients had been there since the beginning of the Centre: when asked how long, a Māori woman answered "Oh gee too far back. Um oh way back now can't remember just off hand" while a Pākehā man said: "I've been at the Health Centre since the day it opened because I joined through the union movement: they formed it, so as soon as they set it up [18 years ago] I joined it."

The patients reported great satisfaction with the Centre saying things like: "I like the fact that I can talk about anything I don't feel embarrassed" and "you don't get nervous waiting in the waiting room like I used to years ago at another doctor's office." Another

said, "I took my file to the Union Health Centre and my life changed from there. So that was really a step in the right direction and I've never regretted that. Yes." Of the staff, one said: "…my doctor she does her job but she's also almost like… I think sometimes like a bit like a psychologist or she understands what's going on in my head um she empathises." This view was echoed by others and patients were happy to see any of the doctors.

The services were very much appreciated, but some of the things patients wondered about were: getting results from tests: "They send you away to take a blood test – and nobody tells you what the results are..." and getting a second opinion: "… we don't know how to go about it, you know to go to another doctor… It's not that we didn't like the Centre it's just that we want another opinion. To see where things are."
Translation, too, was an issue: one patient had a family member who could translate, while a Pākehā man with Tongan extended family members wondered whether translation services could be provided as, currently, he was expected to translate and to know everything about medical and official matters, which he found difficult. One of the receptionists could speak Samoan and in her interview with me she mentioned that this ability of hers was something that the practice used and something that she felt good about contributing even though she was not paid or officially acknowledged for it. A Niuean patient suggested that a volunteer community translation group might be able to be approached.
Oranga Centre had a long triangular waiting room with toys for children and, latterly, a television monitor with videos of health topics playing for the waiting patients to watch. When I met with patients at the end of my study, they commented favourably on these video presentations:

> Yeah and of course lately they've got those films on health …and I think, by seeing *that,* it's excellent – because I've noticed now a lot of, even the men, are starting to take note ... I watched this man – gosh he was so, I don't know, disgusted with himself, or the TV, or watching that, you know, I think it must have just got to him" (Focus Group 2 Ora 2005, p.2)

In the times when I went to Oranga, there were very often two receptionists on duty, and they were both dealing constantly with multiple demands from the phone, clinical staff and patients coming to their desks. There was a sense of familiarity with the patients, people being greeted by name and children and other family members being

spoken to. One of the patients gave a description of how it felt coming back to the Centre after being away:

> And then I come back from Kaitaia quite recently and I find that … I'm loving it being back here again. … Same as my husband, my husband is a man who couldn't speak because he used to be embarassed about a lot of things you know but he's quite open to them … now he's moved over here …Well he can communicate much better in that way he doesn't feel embarassed or shy about anything now – yeah we feel like we've come home actually. (Focus Group 2 Ora 2005, p.4)

On the majority of occasions when I was at the Centre, patients were moving around the complex in the company of nurses and doctors and there was frequently a hum and buzz of conversation, communication, humour and liveliness.

Metanarratives of Existentialism

Difference – "Not motley just different"

Nancy, a senior Māori nurse and the only Māori staff member, opened the Playback performance by offering a moment in which she commented critically on a comment made by another colleague: "… they said we come from a motley crew and I thought well there are different races here but we're not motley - I don't think we're motley anyway." As she tried to define motley, people offered her meanings including heavy metal, glue sniffers and scruffy but Nancy said no to all of these, suggesting instead her meaning of motley: "a higgledy-piggledy bunch." A senior Pākehā male doctor then corrected her, saying, "But I think what you were not liking was that we don't sort of work in together… This is - motley crew means you're a *crew* you might be motley but you're still *a crew*." Nancy held her ground stoutly and strongly, re-stating her original words, "But we're not motley we're just different."

This is a moment of performative narrative as both deconstruction and testimony, which, Park-Fuller, herself an accomplished performer of personal narrative which both tells a story and critiques (Love, 2004), asserts "serves as a tool for uncovering hidden truths" with "connotations of 'contestation' that adhere to legal and religious uses of the term" (2000, p.22). If, as Cazden and Hymes (1978) assert , "one form of inequality of opportunity in our society has to do with rights to use narrative, with whose narratives are admitted to have a cognitive function" (cited in Langellier 1989, p.266), Nancy was refusing a position of marginality, of being given a received narrative: instead she boldly staked out her position as a senior Māori woman nurse, the only Māori person in

the audience (though there were two Māori actors) as central. She demonstrated her mana: what Rangimarie Rose Pere calls

> a concept [that] is beyond translation from the Māori language. Its meaning is multi-form and includes psychic influence, control, prestige, power, vested and acquired authority and influence, being influential or binding over others, and that quality of the person that others know she or he has! (Pere, 2003, p.14)

In her use of the term "different", Nancy calls on a whole range of deconstructive writings which, since Jacques Derrida started to use the spelling "différance", have discussed just what term might mean (Caputo, 2004; Wolfreys, 2004): my reading is that it signifies the ultimate deferability and instability of meaning and an awakening to how meanings are always necessarily situated in time, space and power configurations. In discussing difference, Caputo suggests that

> … it makes no difference whether you say 'rex,' 'roi,' or 'king' so long as 'we' – those who share the coventions' can tell the difference between rex and lex, roi and loi, and king and sing. The meaning…is a function of the difference, of the distance or the 'spacing' between the traces, what is called, in a perfectly serious way, the 'play' of differences….Derrida is deeply resistant to essentialism, the notion that there are ideal meanings ('presence') that somehow or another antedate the play of traces to which the play must conform itself …Derrida holds…that presence is always the 'effect' of the play of traces, of 'representations'…For meaning and reference are always built up slowly and tentatively from below, from within the networks of codes and assumptions within which we all always and already operate. (Caputo 1997, pp. 100, 101).

This awareness of the 'play' of differences means forgoing an easy assumption of opposition as the main tool of definition. In his essay *In Praise of Devilish Hermeneutics* (2004), Caputo states that "The displacement of oppositional difference by means of differential difference has profound social and political consequences." He goes on to elucidate this assertion with an example:

> Let us take one of the most pertinent and obvious examples: the patriarchal model. This is an oppositional schema of male and female, a vicious binary and hierarchical schema that denies the fullness of the human to the feminine (the opposed, subordinate term). The feminine was conceived of as passive not active, material not formal, natural not spiritual, able to obey but not to command, and so on - the depth of these oppositions is almost unfathomable. By dropping the oppositional schema we are able to see masculine and feminine as nonhierarchically different without - and here I follow Irigaray - having to give up sexual difference. We are able to imagine the production of what Derrida calls 'innumerable' genders, innumerable nuances of the genders, which frees us from the dual prisons of masculine and feminine (p. 120).

A similar oppositional schema of European and non-European or 'other' is often asserted (and in order to *even talk* about ethnicity and colonisation at all, the terms I am forced to use, "Māori" and "Pākehā" imply this opposition, paradoxically, especially since both terms came into use only at the date of our first encounter of each other: before that Pākehā had been English, Irish, French, American; while Māori had been Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Maniapoto, Tuhoe[171]. Only when we encountered each other did the general words Māori and Pākehā come into being). Nancy has plunged in to the first moment of the performance with a disruption of this oppositional thinking. In her assertion, she is "[a]ugmenting our understanding of cultural performances," by her personal narrative which, as Holling and Calafell suggest is one of those that "function as spaces where master narratives are challenged and rewritten through the performance of 'other' histories and traditions that are often silenced" (2007, p. 61). With this opening of the performance, Nancy took on a leadership position and one that refused to be revised into someone else's meaning. Then at the end of the performance, she led again when she took responsibility for farewelling the Playback group using Māori ritual. As Leonie Pihama wrote in her 2001 thesis on *Mana Wahine*:

> Paulo Freire has … stated the oppressor is incapable of bringing about freedom, it is for the oppressed to free both themselves and their oppressors…. Colonisation has impeded the ability of many of our people to think beyond the colonial box. But if we are to create real and sustainable change then we have no option but to resist those impositions and be active in our challenge to the perpetuation of acts and situations that merely continues [*sic*] the oppression of our people. (p.19)

Nancy stepped into a leadership role, at the ending as well as the opening of the performance, taking courageous initiatives. Her brief opening moment was played back succinctly as the three actors burst into action, Niwa moving downstage left, holding out her arms and asking rhetorically of the audience: "Huh - What? Motley? What? Motley, how dare she, we're not motley…Motley! What does she mean? We're resplendent!" Marina stood in the same position but moved up and down with the top half of her body and arms shaking and making vocal sounds which indicated shivering, and disquiet, while Neil climbed up on a chair behind the two women and stretched out his arms, face beaming and chest upwards saying, "*You* may be motley, *I* am proud!"

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[171] Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Maniapoto and Tuhoe are the names of some of the tribal groupings in Aotearoa. At the time of the first Māori/Pākehā contact there was a complex network of tribal groups and confederations in Aotearoa and they remain important social and political Māori structures.

They ended the moment by freezing, with Niwa and Neil using very similar body posture and smiling faces, while Marina looked downwards with a quizzical expression.

Nerissa asked Nancy at the end, "Did that capture it?" Nancy replied, "That's fine" and there was a burst of relieved laughter and applause, possibly contributed to by the fact that during the telling Nancy had refused several interpretations from others in the audience, saying "No" each time as people offered meanings for 'motley crew' - so that both audience and performers were on tenterhooks, wondering whether what they had been done in the enactment would be acceptable to her. In my interview with her, Nancy remembered making this contribution which was spoken strongly and assertively as the first audience contribution of the performance, a refutation of what she saw as a pejorative metaphor which had been laid on to the group, and an assertion of the value of the concept of "difference." She recognized the way her moment had been maximized in the playing back and expressed ambivalence, yet also approved it:

> When I made my comment at the Playback, I didn't mean that as dire as it sounded, as it got played back to me … we might be a motley group but to me we're just individuals and different. It wasn't, it was not a criticism just a comment. But when they played it back it made it look as if it was terrible. (laugh) But however, but oh no, that's fine and it is very interesting when you see…you listen to people's stories and then you watch the Playback….my thing was made a bigger deal of than it was, that's how I felt, but that was fine, that's ok … (Ora1 Nancy, Section 9, 18)

Nancy showed a pronounced awareness of conflict and a nuanced attitude to it. She had earlier in the interview expressed her pleasure at hearing the Māori language being used by the performers, both Māori and non-Māori. She evaluated the limitations of her colleagues though she showed that she understood them, in that she could empathize with non-Maori and hoped that they too would be proud of their own cultures:

> I liked it that it was Māori *really* liked it that you stood up and spoke Māori because you know you think that a lot of Pākehā don't …. it shows me that it's not a token thing that it's for real …because I'm the only Māori here and people have sympathy with our patients but not really, because they they are not Māori or Pacific Island, I'm talking about the Pākehā staff people, and that's fine. And, and I think that's okay because they're Pākehā, and if I was Pākehā, I thought "Now if I was Pākehā (and I don't identify as one even though…) yeah, I would hope that I would be just as, not proud, I don't really like that word, as enthusiastic about and committed about my Pākehā culture as well as I, as much as I am about my own." (Ora1 Nancy, Section 12)

This account by Nancy, uses both the narrative of cultural essentialism (people not really having sympathy with the patients "because they…are not Māori or Pacific") and

also of pluralism (where she "*really* liked it that you stood up and spoke Māori because you know …a lot of Pākehā don't"). The unfinished sentence after "I don't identify as (Pākehā) even though…" implied a reference to her other, non-Maori ancestry.

She expressed a complex and perhaps conflicted vision again in her second interview where she talked first from within a Māori reference of how "the haka has become too common and not revered enough now" (Ora2 Nancy, Section 52) while also expressing a view from outside, criticising some rituals: "some Maori things do go on and on …" (Ora2 Nancy, Section 50.) Nancy expressed these double views succinctly and strongly, extending them to the new Māori management of the Centre: this time the pressure to conform to a certain kind of behaviour was coming from the new iwi-based management of the Centre. Again Nancy spoke up in testimony, telling a deconstructive story against a given view:

> …money is getting spent left, right and centre on things that are not necessary … For instance … we set up our emergency trolley and all the emergency equipment. I got a supermarket trolley to put all our things in it … we can just wheel it around. The End Care people who came and did our advanced CPR course, said it's the best they've seen … it's the best emergency equipment that they'd seen set up. And when people come in, they want a trolley. "But we already have one?" "Oh we don't want that supermarket trolley … we want a proper trolley." So - it's fine to have a proper trolley, but what's wrong with the one we've got? It doesn't get used a lot … so why should so much money get spent on a new trolley … when there's nothing wrong with the old one? …the power goes to their head, they come in here with … um - what's the word? "gung-ho" attitudes and do things their way, even when I've said, "But you know we don't need that". (Ora2 Nancy, Sections 8, 10)

Another difficulty she had with the new management was to do with the lack of consultation:

> the new roles they've created like Team Leaders, others that help the Managers … you know they need helpers to help the Managers … they've got all these Managers roaming around telling us … not asking us, not consulting with us, but telling us what we're going to do which doesn't go down very well here because we are used to consulting with each other and making decisions together. So that's all gone. (Ora2 Nancy, Section 8)

Later in the interview, Nancy distanced herself as a Māori woman and a highly committed nurse, from the new regime, refusing the emphasis on appearance and surface values which she saw being introduced into the (admittedly shabby) Oranga environment and expressing this sense of distance in a cultural metaphor: "…this is not my waka. (*Laughter)* This is not my waka, which I think is quite funny" (Ora2 Nancy, Section 40). Throughout her discourse, Nancy claims a right to distinguish and differentiate both between and within the concepts being defined by both Māori and

non-Māori. As such like other indigenours intellectuals who "use 'the language of survivance (survival + resistance)' " (Carpenter, 2004, p.2), she claims a right to move discursively in relation to all classifications and not to be limited to one position. In doing so she demonstrates her confident inhabiting of a border, like Licona who writes of the 'third space' of third world feminism:

> As a (b)orderlands' being I am neither wholly of one side or the other. I am not either/or but instead both/and. … Third-space lived experiences of both/and dilute notions of purity and authenticity so that neither are meaningful signifiers in third-space (con)texts. Third-space subjects (perpetually) slip and slide across both sides of a border to a third space, between the authentic and the inauthentic, the legitimate and the illegitimate, the pure and the impure, and the proper and the improper. …Third-space subjects put language into play by using disruptive discursive strategies that reflect our lived experiences as fragmented, partial, real, and imagined, and always in the process of becoming. (Licona, 2005, pp.105-106)

Arnold Manaaki Wilson and Janinka Greenwood also use the metaphor of the third space: "Arnold wrote about the third face of New Zealand that would emerge as Māori and Pākehā looked to each other and found what they could celebrate. Later, we found that Homi Bhabha…used the term" (Greenwood & Wilson, 2006, p. 11).

In my interviews with her, Nancy demonstrated her location of the middle ground (Cohen, 2002) and in two worlds very clearly. She was extremely committed as a nurse to excellent practice: "… management don't know how to recruit good staff. The locum nurses we get don't know how to do all the things we do … this is a scary place coming in here for a nurse, for the first time" (Ora2 Nancy, Section 6). At the same time, she was involved in significant family duties which are a clear element of both the Whare Tapa Wha and Te Wheke models of Te Ao Māori (see page 220 ff.): involving as Pere says "loyalty, obligation, commitment, an inbuilt support system [which] made the whānau a strong, stable unit" (1994, p26). Nancy was involved in family commitments:

> Oh I don't know whether - I'm very strong and healthy, but … I'm … I've got lots going on. Around my mother … I still live at home with her … my sister's at home, our house is very small … there's no privacy … I've got no progress towards a place of my own and everything just drags on. For everyone [She is] 93. … I've looked after her for 14 years. And my sister looks after her for 18 minutes and "I'm worn out" and I'm not blaming her. But hey, don't tell me about it. (Ora2 Nancy Sections 70 – 78)

She also told of her determination to have time for herself now: "So when I go out and enjoy myself, it gets a bit resentive, but I'm *me* now. This is my life and it's about time I was mean" (Ora2 Nancy, Section 82). Here, as in other parts of her communication, there is an inhabitation of the borderlands: between and including going out / staying at

home; enjoying myself / not enjoying myself; my life / others' lives; mean / indulgent. It seems that Nancy in many of her negotiations emphasizes the right to carve out her own space in highly contested positions.

In improvisation terms, an 'offer' is what one performer makes when they step out into the performing space and make a clear move in action or speech which allows others to join in strongly: that offer is taken up or not by one's co-performers. In these terms, Nancy led off the Oranga performance with a confident, provocative, powerful and characteristically conflictual offer.

Openness – "Broadening my feelings"

Nancy and the two Pasifika staff members were three of the first four staff to get involved in the performance. One of those staff members, Nina said, "it's good to open up and debate about things and discuss about things because it makes us healthy in the work environment." (A more extended discussion of this metaphor of openness, which was also a feature of the discussion at Pātaka, is to be found in Chapter Ten on page 332). Henry, the Pākehā manager, wondered whether the Playback had been any different from the usual meetings. When I asked him, in the interview, to look back to identify who from among the staff had been the first to participate in the performance he answered:

> Interesting, all three of our Polynesians … Well yeah that's a very interesting thing that hadn't ever crossed my mind till till you mentioned it… Yeah yeah … Yeah oh well that's something to think very good. Yeah they really got into it you know… (Ora1 Henry, Section 136)

It is worth noting that at Oranga, this openness was not confined to the Māori and Pasifika staff: a Pākehā doctor, Sue, also described how the Playback experience worked to open her to a colleague:

> there were some staff members that I was having difficulty with and when one of them in particular … you know shared her sort of story and perceptions I thought, you know, just getting that bigger picture of who she was, I just felt more sort of compassion and tolerance…just entering into entering into an important aspect, me sort of feeling open about her, entering into, talking about a part of her life that she was just very loving about, very committed to… broadening my you know broadening my feelings, and my perceptions of this person …(Ora2 Sue, Section 10, 24).

Sue describes the act of opening kinaesthetically: suggesting that this may be one of the unique potential contributions that Playback offers. Within a group, it may allow a person to become more fully visible to themselves and others - and in this project, this

was often accomplished through narratives which illustrated the person's life *outside* of the workplace, especially in terms of family relationships.

Relatedness through family- "The widening spiral of the Va"

According to Rangimarie Rose Pere, whanaungatanga or relatedness is to do with "that strong bond that influences the way one lives and reacts to his/her kinship groups, people generally, the world, the universe" (Pere, 2003, p.26). Similarly, Hannah Arendt emphasizes a web of human relatedness (Canovan, 1974) which co-exists with the physical worldly in between of facts and objects:

> Action and speech go on between people as they are directed toward them, and they retain their agent-revealing capacity even if their content is exclusively 'objective,' concerned with the matters of the world of things in which people move, which physically lies between them and out of which arise their specific, objective, worldly interests. These interests constitute, in the word's most literal significance, something which inter-est, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together...Since this disclosure of the subject is an integral part of all, even the most 'objective' intercourse, the physical, worldly in-between along with its interests is overlaid and, as it were, overgrown with an altogether different in-between which consists of deeds and words and owes its origin exclusively to people's acting and speaking directly to one another...We call this reality the 'web' of human relationships....(Arendt, 1958, pp 182-183

A similar concept, in Pasifika philosophy, the *va*, the space between, is acknowledged to be crucially important to learning and practices:

> The widening spiral of the *Va*, the space between connecting the 'I', the 'Me' to the 'All-of-Us' in a unity that encompasses everyone … 'Our *Va* with others defines us. We can only be ourselves linked to everyone and everything else in the *Va*, the Unity-that-is-All and now' Wendt 1991a, 307. (Va'ai, 2005, pp.15-16)

Themes of relatedness through family connections came up strongly throughout both the Oranga performance and the interviews. The story enacted in greatest detail, with roles being given to individual actors, involved the Samoan receptionist, Wae telling, in mythical or fairytale form, about the reason she had recently been away: her son, a professional rugby league player, who had gained a position in Australia had returned home completely unexpectedly as a surprise for her. She had been planning to go and visit him in Australia and then he surprised her by arriving at the family home. Wae chose Lyn, our musician (whose ancestors come from the Pacific island of Rotuma) to act the part of herself and Neil to act the part of Joseph her son. Although Lyn had never acted in a performance before (though she often had in rehearsals), her cultural knowledge was worth a great deal to Wae who talked about the way the actors portrayed the story : "it was a very good experience for me and a happy and very

emotional at the same time because I seeing it being a reflection of myself amongst the players … it is true…" (Ora1 Wae, Section 5).

This feeling of satisfaction was still there for her eight months later in the second interview:

> I told a story about my son and that was very very emotional for me and and it was great to see…Neil he was act as my son and the other two girls so that was good, I mean I, I feel that that it's all my emotional way of expressing myself, that it was there and they done it for me, so that was good. (Ora2 Wae, Section 28)

Themes of transformation and tenderness were very clearly expressed in this story and were emphasized in the playing back: especially in the suspenseful build up to the meeting of mother and son, with Lyn as Wae circling the perimeter of the acting space while Neil as Joseph, was upstage centre, laden down with bags, waiting to see his mother. Niwa as musician built the tension by alternating drumming which swelled and faded while she hummed a repeated pattern of three notes, which she first started during Neil's soliloquy to the audience, in the role of Wae's son:

> I remember when I was just– well I remember right back and I remember just being in Mum's arms she just would rock me and sing me – she would do everything for me. And then as soon as I could walk I found a rugby ball…And then, Mum never saw me because I was in love with the rugby ball. And then I was good, then I was very good…Joseph! Joseph! Joseph! (Neil acting the part of Joseph, Oranga performance, October 2004)

The music supported the actors' movements and words. When Lyn and Neil finally met and embraced, Niwa hummed the same repeated pattern of notes but this time she added a harmonious and rhythmic guitar accompaniment to them, thus enriching and deepening the moment. Lyn, in the role of Wae, made to break the embrace but Neil as Joseph nestled into her saying "No! More, more, more…" I remember, as I watched in the audience, feeling a quality of deep silence and stillness in the staff group as they seemed to drink in the tenderness and intimacy of this moment of embracing. Sue, a Pākehā doctor, in her interview later reflected on how the elements that had been brought out in the enactment of Wae's story might relate to the Oranga staff group themselves:

> Well we're quite a - our group? We're quite a family as well … because a lot of us have worked together for eighteen years. I've been here eleven years… there is that quality of family and all the plusses and minuses and complexity that goes with that. Yeah so it's like Wae is a part of our family and she was doing a little enactment of um a piece of her her her biological family … (Ora1 Sue, Sections 18-20)

Sue went more into what this story and the enactment brought up for her:

> I suppose it made me it made me aware I accept this completely it's how it is but…Wae often doesn't enjoy her work here and … and she's not very happy here and so …what's nice is you know just really in that Playback just experiencing her really being where she wants to be which is like in the heart of her family, her biological family…
>
> (Ora1 Sue, Sections 22-24)

Some interviewees were quite aware of how moved Wae was but did not particularly empathise: for example, a Pākehā doctor Hugh saying: "I remember Wae's thing about her son and most of that not that I especially appreciated that but *it made an impression* …" Ora1 Hugh, Section 10). The manager, Henry was aware of the difficulty some staff may be having with Wae and he hoped that the telling of her story may have helped them to understand her:

> …for instance one particular member of staff is not very popular, mainly because of her own work habits and where I, I would have hoped that people understood a little bit more about her … someone said that it did make them feel a bit more understanding about someone and I hoped it was her that they felt a bit more understanding …(Ora1 Henry, Sections 67, 74)

Interestingly, for the other two Pasifika co-workers Tom, an Indo-Fijian doctor and Nina, Wae's Niuean receptionist colleague, Wae's family story triggered significant reflections about their own family involvements. For Tom, this was about his relationship with his own mother and led him to a specific resolution on his part:

> I think the one for Wae was quite nice because that wasn't really a work-related thing but it was more a moment in her life …and it just brought out the fact that you know Mums no matter how old their children get, will always miss their children. … it kind of made me reflect on my relationship with my mum…it just makes you realize that you know your mum's always going to worry about you and love you and care for you and to… make sure you spend quality time with them, that's the thing. (Ora1 Tom, Sections 23-30)

Clearly Tom had been able to enter into Wae's story in a way which clarified his own experience and values as a family member. For Nina, the telling of Wae's story about parenthood awakened painful memories of her own distance from her birth father as well as gratitude for the lessons and values she had been given by her grandparents. In telling this extended narrative during her individual interview, she progressed through a cycle from a feeling of sadness and loss into the perception of valuing what she had been given by her grandparents. She started off relating to Wae's story:

> Oh to me, I feel like…I'm glad it's not happened to me. Yeah I feel like "oh I'm glad it's not happened to me at that time." That how I miss my quality time that

somebody that I really love…
Oh… my Dad I think about my Dad cause because I was adopted I didn't grown up with my real parents and I grown up in my mum's side and that quality time I missed out on my Dad cause I didn't see him most of the time and then he passed away and so I miss him. But it come slowly to have that feeling inside me to just let it go...A very big story it's a big story but I always like talk to my friends how I feel about my Dad how I sadly missed him.
Oh! About him that I don't know much about him cause I didn't grown up with him
Interviewer: How old were you when you met him?
Nina: Thirty something - that old… It's amazing that I look at him that he is my biology father and I look at my other sisters having a lot of fun grown up together with with our parents…Yes, yeah, I got my sisters grown up all together but I was adopted by my Mum's parents and by the time when I come into their family I was totally like I'm a stranger to them because how I grown up and what I learned is totally different: the way we learn the way of our learning is not always the same so…
My side that I was one to things into perfect Put it all in order whatever the priority needs to be done - The other side is like they rely on to their parents…But for me what I learnt from my grandparents, I have to be strong, stand up on my feet and do what I really want to do 'cause I remember that Grandad and Nana always remind me and my other sister (I call her actually she is my aunty but but because we grown up together .. we're known as we're sisters and we are more closer [than] my own real sister). So there, Nana and Pa always remind us "When you grown up, have your own family you have to stand up on your feet if your husband is not that strong to look after you and your children." (*Laughter*)
Yeah they teach us how to look after the children, how to be strong and and build up our dreams, "Make it, build it bigger, don't build it small or just sit there and expect things to come to you, stand up, if you think you do it, go ahead and do it! And do it on the straight way don't go zig zag…Of course you can go zigzag zigzag but if you zigzag come back to the straight path."
And yeah this is how I've been taught when I was first learning and I am quite pleased though, I'm quite pleased cause I still remind my sister about those things and our mum is still alive and she can see the difference yeah of my and my other real sisters yeah…
Interviewer So from that little story …
Nina I'm telling you all my personal family things![172] (Ora1 Nina, Sections 28-60)

Playback works by narratives sparking off each other, but only a limited number are able to be shared in the performance. The opportunity to interview audience members meant that I was able to unearth more of the audience narratives, like this one of Nina's, which had been sparked by the stories given in the performance: I called these "untold stories" and collected them, valuing them as treasures because as a Playback practitioner, I intuited their existence but usually only heard a few of them in the

[172] Nina asked for a copy of the tape of this interview for her family to hear, which I gladly provided to her.

performance or in the discussion afterwards. (See Appendix Seven for a list of these stories – I would have like to tell more of them here, to help people see the underground riches of a Playback performance but space does not allow).

Nina had her own tentative suggestion about how Wae's story might relate to the Oranga group as a whole:

> I think, I don't know, this is my own opinion but I think it's kind of like Wae was, there is something that she feel like she's not being part of the staff or part of the group… I don't know, this is my own opinion, I don't know, I'm just guessing… (Ora1 Nina, Sections 69-71)

When asked where in her body she felt Wae's story, Nina tapped her heart. Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski and Senge talk about the importance of people in organizations being able to genuinely listen to one another:

> Inquiring means listening with the intention of genuinely understanding the thoughts and feelings of the speaker. Here, the listener suspends judgment and tries to comprehend how and why the speaker has moved from the data of his or her experiences to particular interpretations and conclusions. (2007, p.96)

Tapping her heart, Nina relates bodily to what Māori call whatumanawa, the all-seeing eye of the heart: for which no emotion is unacceptable, "there is a time and place for every emotion that a human being can have….No one is seen to be too emotional…the emphasis is on the joy of being both human and divine" (Pere, 2003, p.30).[173] Wae's story of homecoming, and of relatedness through family had sparked personal recollections in the other Pasifika staff, but all at Oranga had registered with interest Wae's story and its enactment, and all but two staff stated in interviews that it had a positive effect on their attitudes towards Wae.

Critiques of Managerialism –" it's my job to make everyone happy and I can't"

Another mythically formulated and resonant narrative was told by Henry, the Pākehā manager who had returned after some time away to be in an expanded role when Ngākau took on management of Oranga. In contrast to the managers in the two other Centres, who were the first in their respective Playback performances to share their own experiences, Henry waited until the very last moment of this performance to share a deeply felt account of what he was experiencing in the job of Acting Manager of the

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[173] See Appendix Nine, on page 534.

Oranga Centre in a narrative which had overtones of the myth of Sisyphus, in which Sisyphus has to roll a rock uphill over and over again (Cioffi, 2006). Henry had just crossed the 'stage' to lock the outer door as patients kept trying to get in despite the notice posted to say that the Centre would soon open at 2pm. The facilitator Nerissa asked him how things were for him. In answer, his words were:

> I'm a nervous wreck half the time just trying - I'm the sort of person I just want everyone to be happy, it's my job to make everyone happy and I can't - so I feel like a nervous wreck… But doesn't everyone? Doesn't everyone else feel like a nervous wreck too? (Henry in Oranga performance, October 2004)

Nerissa questioned the other people in the audience of whom several answered, "No...no." Nerissa the facilitator then asked Henry, "So you feel like a nervous wreck sometimes..?" Henry said, "No, all the time… I pray often."

In the brief (35 second long) enactment, each of the three actors took different roles: Niwa in the centre stepped out, bent her head and pulled her long black ponytail straight up making non-verbal sounds of pain while grimacing. Neil dodged around her from behind, left and right speaking urgently and energetically: "It's really important that you get what you want, it's really important that I help you get what you want, I've ", while Marina stood further upstage right talking to herself "I'll make you happy, I've got to, I've got to…" Neil's words then mounted in urgency: "It's important that you're happy. I've spent my whole life making other people happy, I've been put on this earth to make people happy!"

Niwa tried to push them both away leaning back and stretching her arms but, unable to, folded over and collapsed down between them while Marina folded her hands into a praying position and started humming while Neil, on his knees breathed out "Dear God…" All the performers stopped moving and held a moment of intense stillness and silence.

Nerissa invited any other moments after this one but nobody else had anything to say after this heartfelt account and depiction of Henry's experience of being a manager. The climax of the performance had been reached and Henry initiated a denouement through drawing me as researcher into a description of the next stages of the project, after which Nancy, the senior Māori nurse, closed the performance by making a formal speech in Te Reo Māori, and the group of both staff members and performers sang a traditional waiata[174]:

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[174] Waiata refers to song

E hara i te mea	*It is not the case*
No inaianei te aroha	*That love comes only from the present time*
Nō ngā tupuna	*It is from the ancestors*
I tuku iho, i tuku iho	*Handed down, handed down*.

In their interviews, all the staff who were present showed that they registered Henry's account very strongly. For Hugh, the senior Pākehā doctor, it was the *one* element of the performance that made the whole occasion, which otherwise he did not particularly enjoy, worthwhile:

> The only thing that made any impression on me really was Henry talking about how stressed he was. He usually seems to handle things incredibly well so I was quite surprised how stressed he said he was …I'm not saying it wasn't any use to me, I mean it was, the thing with Henry was useful to me … it was well worth, it was quite a point, it was probably worth spending half an hour, three quarters of an hour, to find that out about Henry (Ora1 Hugh, Sections 6, 55)

There was an additional level of concern for Henry because of his previous illnesses. Sue expressed this health concern the team felt for Henry:

> I think probably some of the other staff feel quite protective towards Henry because he's had two, you know, bypass surgeries and … we sometimes I sometimes get quite worried about that and I know that he gets really stressed and like and we of course cause him stress given his role here …
> (Ora1 Sue, Section 26)

For Nancy, it reinforced what she already knew and her determination not to rely on him too much so as not to add to his stress:

> When I heard Henry's playback, oh when I heard, first of all, when I heard Henry say he was a nervous wreck and he was asked how often, he said *all the tim*e, and then when [they] did the Playback it was so accurate. I felt really sorry for Henry but he said he felt much better afterwards, which shows, you know, it's healthy …So I try not to go to Henry because he has so much on his plate, so when I saw that, it just brought it home to me … (Ora1 Nancy, Sections 24, 26)

Tom, a much younger and very strongly built Indo-Fijian doctor also changed his behaviour after seeing Henry's account of his stress:

> I think - I'm not sure whether it was intended - but the one that really stood out for me was the one when when they characterised Henry's the manager's thing … And then I thought you know I didn't realize that we were putting Henry under so much stress and it's just kind of made me realize that maybe we we we tend to *dump* things on Henry and I didn't realize that he in a way was feeling that way.

> And when they did it it kind of like it kind of like I, I, I felt quite almost uncomfortable …
> I remember because I went away feeling "Gosh imagine if that is the way Henry is feeling the way those actors the actors have been doing it like "Oh my God my life is, my life - I can never keep anyone happy" you know, the way they did it, because he made a reference to God or ...praying and to a certain extent that is how Henry was feeling I suppose because he's answerable to people above him in terms of the owners and the Board of Directors - then we're, whenever there's a problem, you know, he's the one who has to deal with that as well.
> So he is he is under a lot of stress and he's doing a very good job … and I kind of like, *after that performance I have to say, I've been not going to Henry as often with problems* because I think I can - it's not that important … I don't want him to be overburdened… (Ora1 Tom, Section 19, 21)

For Henry himself, the sympathy which was expressed to him by another man was very moving:

> …the biggest effect afterwards, was someone who kept quiet through the whole thing, coming to me afterwards…. And this particular individual, it was a guy and quite a big … you know one of those guys you think … wouldn't have cared less, but he was quite touched and concerned for me as a manager. I was really quite … I was touched by him being touched. (Ora2 Henry, Section 13).

By the time of the second round of interviews, Henry had left the Centre, to move closer to family. His loss was deeply felt by the group but they also supported his choice:

> Henry has held us all together. He's been a very fair manager and you know when you go to Henry that he will always listen. …He has some stress. We will probably never get another manager like Henry again….The place has fallen apart. It's not the same. (Ora2 Nancy, Section 4)

> I'm very happy he's left because … I personally worried about his health a lot. I'm really, really pleased he's left. Very sad but I'm very pleased …. his facilitating was costing him, it was costing him way too much, it was too high a price … (Ora2 Sue, Sections 66-68)

> He's a very, very good manager… He never likes conflicts or taking sides he's not a judgemental person, he's always try and make peace with the whole staff … I never come across to a manager, or to a boss that really understands, very helpful and he's very valued other people's culture. …he always valued the culture … (Ora2 Wae, Sections 32-40)

Henry's telling of his experience through Playback had enabled the staff to become aware of him in a way that led to specific changes in the ways in which they behaved. The intensity of feeling in his account and its mythic enactment as a kind of heroic battling against impossible odds, had made a difference to the ways they thought and felt about his position; and they had made sense of it in a way that affected their decisions. As Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi said in his 2006 Public Lecture at Auckland University of Technology:

> Making sense of something is as much an exercise of feeling, of emotion as it is of thinking. Making something knowable and being excited by that knowledge involves both thinking and feeling. Appreciating nuance and metaphor occurs through both thinking and feeling. (Tui Atua, 2006, p.7)

The Playback session had given the staff new information about Henry's experience, which helped them to appreciate his position and modify their behaviour accordingly. This interwovenness of feeling and thinking may be critical to decision making as neuroscience proposes:

> Summing up much recent work on the neuroscience of the emotions, Antonio Damasio 'suggests that consciousness evolved to allow creatures capable of flexible behavior to decide among alternative courses of action on the basis of past experience and projected scenarios of possible future moves. Decision-making depends on the emotional charges attached to our recollections and our projections, which act as weightings, as 'biasing device[s],' in the tug-of-war between competing inclinations. As clinical studies of brain-damaged patients indicate, decision-making without emotion is therefore impossible. There is no such thing as purely rational choice: reason and the emotions are not separate faculties but are inextricably interdependent… (Boyd, 2005, p. 18)

In the interviews, people spoke with feeling of the influence of managerialism on the shared past of the group and the ways in which past stressful situations had drawn them together in the face of changes in management and administrative structure. Several used metaphors of combat:

> you know as a group they've been …through some pretty hard stuff together…so there is a togetherness there in that they've been through some battles together. (Ora1 Henry, Section 103)
> We've had a fairly colourful history here. Ah I don't know the colourful history was more about a situation where neither side would would would - both sides had very firm positions and weren't prepared to change...(Ora1 Hugh, Section 66)

Sue expressed a hope she had had, that the Playback work could in some way mitigate these changes and difficulties.

> I think that I thought that the sequence the timeline between that performance and then your group working its way round the different centres would be quicker … I was really hoping that that mechanism would be helpful in perhaps us resolving or easing some of the tensions and difficulties in the Centre … (Ora1 Sue, Section 33)

By the time of the second interview, Sue's perception of the changes had become even more critical

> *Now* I just feel very sad that there've been so many changes, so radically different and none of us have that, none of us have got any hope left! (*small laugh*) I speak for myself … you know I, my expectations have, sort of sub zero now (Ora2 Sue, Section 10)

However, when she heard that several other staff members had proposed to me in their interviews that some more Playback performances might help to integrate the new staff who had arrived, her reaction was simultaneously despairing and hopeful:

> Well … I think it actually speaks very well of the people here … I think the fact that everyone here can still say "Well let's … it would be useful" I think that is sort of a mark of them showing respect and hope…you know that some good can come out of, you know, sharing in the different aspects of self in a group (Ora2 Sue, Section 47)

In these accounts, it is possible to see that one of Playback's unique contributions may be that it allows many dimensions of action, including what we call thinking and feeling, to be simultaneously provoked in its audiences. This combination of actions can lead to real changes, as occurred in the treatment of the manager, Henry, when staff modified their behaviour towards him and no longer took to him matters which they could deal with themselves.

Mythical and Fairytale Metanarratives

Two of the stories took in performance took their shape from mythic stories: one, the return of a beloved child from a kind of underworld (playing Rugby League in Australia) and the second, Henry's story of being bound to a place of almost unbearable (Promethean?) suffering. In addition, metaphors of myth were used in the interviews, with Sue talking of the effect of music as "absolution" and others referring to Henry as "an angel, he's there for your darkness and to light up your spiritual way of things." There were also fairytale references such as Henry's use of "Goody Twoshoes" and Nancy's "I'm not going to cut off my nose to spite my face." As Rozik says:

> The interaction of mythical material, which represents the unconscious stirrings of the psyche, with the typical logos of the spectators' culture indicates that the ultimate aim of such fictional worlds is to provide an opportunity for a culturally controlled encounter between spectators and the deeper layers of their psyches and to integrate most disturbing contents into their conscious discourse. ….
> The basic relationship between spectators and stage….becomes instead a confrontation with one's own inner being, including conscious and unconscious layers, in the shape of a mytho-logical-theatrical description. Such a relationship is not one of identification, since it is the very same spectators on two levels: being and self-description…. (Rozik, 2002, p.346)

This relation between conscious and unconscious layers could be seen in the ways the Oranga group formulated their ideas both within and about the performance.

Professional & Emancipatory Metanarratives

These metanarratives, which had been elicited in the Ngākau performances and interviews as discussed in Chapter Eight (on page 272 and on page 265**Error! Bookmark not defined.**) were also evident in the Oranga interviews.

Professionalism- "How I can look into myself"

Professionalism at Oranga had a different slant however, dealing with commitment and not so much standards against which things were measured: Hugh, despite reservations about the decisions made by the new management, emphasized that "I still have the same loyalty to the patients" (Ora1 Hugh, Section 70). Nancy reflected as a professional practitioner on the similarities between the type of reflective listening in Playback and the professional practice of nurses and doctors (Parker, 1995): in Playback the performers interpret what people in the audience says and "it may or may not be how the person sees it which is what happens when you deal with people - we may or may not see it as as how they see it, like for our patients…" (Ora1 Nancy, Section 16). Many other staff members made comments in interviews concerning the Playback work, which illustrated the depth of their thoughtfulness about their own practice: for example Nina, a receptionist, said of the Playback

> It does work, it does work, myself I try amongst our… I try to put on what I know and what we've seen I try to put that into actions within my job…Like how I can look into my self and this is what I have to do dealing with different race … and it's something that I can know myself … It builds up my confidence … (Ora2 Nina, Sections 16, 18)

The interest of the staff members as professionals was also shown in their engagement on a meta-level with the research process: "I am *very* interested in the hypothesis that you have and that I'm aware of to a degree… if it helps and it works then I'm all for it and I'm willing to …see if it works." (Ora1 Henry, Section 7) Nancy too asked me "So what does happen next?" (Ora1 Nancy, Section 85) and continued questioning me about the research, revealing that one of her sons was also completing a Ph D "I'm always impressed by people who do that because I first of all wouldn't do it and I probably couldn't do it" (Ora1 Nancy, Section 100). Sue also said:

> I mean I guess it's a shame that your interviews don't extend to some of the people who've newly come on board like um people…I always knew that when you started doing this that you were … you were starting to do this process at a very sort of interesting important sort of time in the history of our Centre and in terms of in starting up of the PHO so it was a very important time …yeah and it's good that it's

been documented in some way (Ora2 Sue, Sections 48-54)

This professional engagement in the progress of the research was particularly noticeable at Oranga, as was the voicing of some opinions and views of personal, cultural and group empowerment and self determination.

Emancipatory Metanarratives: "I just wanted to finish it properly"

Nancy's opening, conflictual moment was not commented on in interviews by any of the other staff and only two staff members mentioned the very dignified ending of the performance which Nancy performed when she rose and addressed the performers in Te Reo Māori.[175] Wae, a Samoan speaker acknowledged Nancy's playing of this ritual role and expressed its importance for her, using the metanarrative of cultural awareness and affirmation: "finish it with a nice warmth and loving and passionate from Nancy when she thanked you …so yeah that was very good for me as a Samoan and I can respect other people's cultures, very important" (Ora1 Wae, Section 25). The only other person to mention this spontaneously was Sue, a Pākehā doctor whose comment a year later was: "Nancy made a contribution … I can't remember what hers was now but I know she said something she might have just done a little welcome or something…that was nice." (Ora2 Sue, Section 42)

For Nancy herself, however, as for the performers, this ending to the performance was important and it was an interesting link to how she seized the opening moment of the performance to state her position asserting difference in the face of conflict: in the case of the final moment of the performance, rather than talking about her own vision, she *demonstrated* difference in a spontaneous confident enactment of indigenous ritual, tapping into the centuries-old system in Aotearoa of the reciprocity of dialogic exchange. It was not that she did not still have a conflicted awareness of others' views but the opportunity to complete a ritual drew her into unequivocal expression. She described it like this:

> Oh that felt great because I wasn't worried if noone else liked it because to me your mihi … I *really* liked that, so I wanted to not just to leave it…to me it would have

[175] This illustrated perhaps the lack of sympathy towards Māori about which Nancy had spoken in her first interview: saying "I'm the only Māori here and people have sympathy with our patients but *not really* because they they are not Māori or Pacific Island - I'm talking about the Pākehā staff people and that's fine and and I think that's okay because they're Pākehā " (Ora1 Nancy, Section 12).

> been like leaving it up in the air with no recognition in Mâori plus how the waiata…So for me that finished it off properly instead of saying okay we're going back to work now and that was just on the spur of the moment that I did that too … And it was only very little…But I just wanted to finish it properly. (Ora1 Nancy, Sections 48-56)

The Playback context had provided a culturally open space for this expression of self-confident difference and indigenous leadership to occur. The flexibility of the action forms of Playback are very open to being syncretically adapted to fit with the indigenous rituals of most traditions: this is one of its potential contributions to performance work and gatherings in pluralist societies.

Performance Elements in the Oranga Performance

Music

The performance element most commented on in the Oranga interviews was the music, which was emphasized by several interviewees. For some of the audience, the music provided a pathway into the performance and out of the everyday, which was expressed powerfully by Wae, whose story was offered soon after the musical interlude:

> Oh the music yes, they were really cool, you know it's really relax all the tension and all the mind that was worried and stressed and everything, you know, it was really cool…Oohh I was just relax and and just clear my mind and not thinking of anything, just myself I was just, like, flying in the air, with myself, it was good… Well I was just like clear everything that it was heavy in my brain like all these little things telling me negativity and stuff, but it was really clear that I just feel myself, you know that all the things had gone, and I was just pleased that "Oh yes it's a real smooth you know like you meditated you know" that I was just myself and like nice and sitting in a nice, cool water in Samoa...(Ota 1 Wae Sections 81-85)

Sue's appreciation of the music and its effects was described in graphic terms, using kinaesthetic and religious metaphors:

> Then when we had the little break and we had the music … and it was just so lovely and I just suddenly felt so relaxed and it was just it was like I imagine like when, you know, a Catholic goes to a priest and they're given absolution and it was like "Ooohhh" and I just let go all that sort of those internal pressures and things, feeling, feelings of things I had to get done in the next short period of time before I went to my different work place…
>
> And that was just wonderful because I don't often have that feeling of letting go, relaxation, spaciousness in the context of this workplace, because if I relax too much um it will … I'll feel so tired, I'll get in touch with such a tiredness and exhaustion that I won't be able to pull myself back up to do the next session (breathless laugh) …I just felt so good yeah I felt very good. (Ora1 Sue, Section 8)

Tom saw the music as important in how it related to the emotions:

> I think the, I think, yeah the music was good, it was the improvisation and everything and the way the music…the part where they did the relaxing part where you just sort of contemplated the thought, talked to others, that was quite relaxing and, and, I mean I, I, I believe that, you know, music has a a very important part in terms of your emotions and how it can lift up your mood… (Ora1 Tom, Section 12)

Nina described how she saw the music operating, detailing the conflict she felt as the hour of the staff meeting was drawing to a close and patients were rattling at the doors and ringing the telephones:

> But and then again I think "But this is more important" you know, there are two minds of "Oh" "Oh no this is more important" … This is more important for all of us as staff because of the music as well and the music itself. It's, it's the atmosphere, like it's a healing thing - the rhythm of the music it's really like, it's healing inside … it's amazing the tune of the music, the rhythm of the music, I really feel that it's, it's, it's healing me too …Healing my weaknesses healing my feeling negative about others… (Ora1 Nina, Sections 78-88)

Ursula, in spite of the emergency she had been involved in and the frantic quality of the morning she had experienced, expressed her appreciation of the music too, and described its effect on her physically:

> I think I was sort of reliving the morning really, I was quite enjoying the music and I was, I was, I was quite stressed and a bit, yeah it was nice, I did enjoy it, it made me feel a bit more relaxed… (Ora1 Ursula, Section 32)

These insights from the interviewees confirmed the evaluation we had made after the performance at Ngākau that music is of vital importance when going into a workplace daytime performance because of the way its aesthetic communication can cut through the intensity of work preoccupations.

Audience

Most staff members evaluated the Performance positively:

Nancy, the senior Māori nurse said:

> The strengths are that it helps us to see ourselves and to see others and then to act on what we know…I don't like that word empathetic I can't, yeah, to be more in touch with other people and ourselves as well.

Nina, a Niuean receptionist related the experiences in the performances to the skills needed in the job. She remembered the first joint performance for the whole PHO in December 2002, at Mt Summer:

> On that day at Mt Sumner that it was really good, it was really interesting, it was so fun … it's really true how they put into action about how the staff feel about their work and how they like it and how they feel about other staff. And I thought "Mmm

> wow this is another part of myself to learn as well to be open up and honest and communicate with staff…"

Tom could also relate it to work, this time the work of doctors:

> It's more like, it's, from a doctor's point of view a reflective listening thing. ..and it's, instead of someone repeating back the words to you they actually enact them or … they try and demonstrate the feeling. It's more about the emotions and the feelings … it's a different medium to what we do, which is sometimes listen and then repeat things back

For Ursula it was:

> I thought it was interesting there was, you know, quite good performers and, you know, it was a nice, sort of entertaining and different, slightly relaxing way to spend the break, instead of talking about the usual horror stuff which we do…

Sue saw it as having an effect on how people saw each other:

> I've always supported what I think that Playback has the capacity to do, which is just let people experience each other in a different way in a group, just so that they have a shift in their perceptions and expectations of other people - it just changes things a little bit

In spite of the difficult time that the Oranga centre was experiencing, the staff were on the whole open to the experience of the Playback performance and evaluated it positively.

Reservations about the Performance – "I felt a bit annoyed"

The timing of the performance at Oranga, being scheduled in the weekly one-hour staff meeting time, after the staff had been given lunch by the researcher, as a gesture of appreciation to them was, for some staff, very difficult. Ursula, a Pākehā doctor with young children of her own who worked in a very part time capacity at the Centre, expressed her sense of distress and conflict at finding herself involved in something of which she had been unaware. I quote at length from her interview because it seems to me that in any workplace performance such an audience member is very likely to be found and unless interviews such as those in this project are undertaken, their perceptions are very likely to remain invisible:

> As I said I wasn't expecting it and I had no idea what was going on and I had been running late all morning so most of that morning I was about an hour behind …and I'd sent someone to the hospital and we'd had dramas and no ambulances available … or the ambulance was going to be two hours late and I was a bit worried about this woman
> And then suddenly I found out at lunch, you know there's some lunch and then I realized that they were setting up and that something was happening and still not realising what it would be and …I hadn't known it was happening that day or that we were (l*aughter*) going to be part or that there was anything going on with the

> interviewing the study …
> I mean it was interesting to hear what they were doing and I thought it was yeah I was, I didn't like having to eat, as I said at the time I was slightly embarrassed having to eat sitting in the front row while these people were doing things and everyone was talking…
> And yeah I guess I felt a bit yeah a bit annoyed because of that…I think because I wasn't really ready … yeah but I thought it was interesting there was a you know, quite good performer… you know it was a nice sort of entertaining and different slightly relaxing way to spend the break instead of talking about the usual horror stuff which we do (Ora1 Ursula, Section 5).

For Ursula, there were conflicts between finding it "quite interesting" and being "slightly embarrassed" and "a bit annoyed". She also felt that this way of being together was an improvement on the "usual sort of horror stuff" that they were accustomed to talk about. However, her positive adjectives are noticeably modified: "*sort of* entertaining…different, *slightly* relaxing" indicating a wish to pull back from any sort of endorsement of the activity. Clearly, the scheduling of the performance in the lunch hour had been extremely difficult for her and came on top of a morning during which she had not been able to attend to her own needs in even the most basic bodily ways. She said that at the beginning of the performance she felt

> tense I think and… I remember I probably needed to go to the toilet (l*aughter*) …hadn't had a drink or cup of tea, that sort of thing, because there are mornings that, you know you don't completely get those things… (Ora1 Ursula, Section 38)

This amount of pressure is likely in a high-needs caregiving environment such as Oranga and it is important for performing groups coming into such an environment to be cognisant of the possibility of some audience members being in this situation.

Suspicion of Management: "Why've they organized this?"

The Playback Project was also suspected by both Ursula and Hugh, the two staff members who enjoyed it least, of being potentially associated with management and tainted by this connection:

> I remember wondering well who's doing this? Why've they organized this? Is this something that management decided that we need? You know and I was thinking why are they spending money on that? I was a bit annoyed because they've been iffy here where the nurses wages and everything… (Ora1 Ursula, Section 5)

Later in the interview Ursula reiterated this point:

> It was sort of the following week that … I said something the following week they'd been um not wanting to giving the nurses their performance review … and I said, "They spend money on this Playback Theatre !"(*laughs*) I guess and they said "Oh

> no no that wasn't doing it um someone else was paying for it as part of your study…" And it was, oh all right, so yeah it was just I mean - I guess that that coloured my thinking, 'cause I just thought that was something imposed on us without our knowledge or even asking. (Ora1 Ursula, Section 50)

Hugh had also harboured suspicions of the performance being not good value for money:

> I'm a very verbal person so you know to me the rest of it you know floats past… it didn't do anything for me really on the whole, oh I wouldn't say that it didn't do *anything* but it probably affected others more than me. Yeah I didn't feel any great affinity for that part of it… if it were being done on a commercial basis it would take a lot of money you know, all these, we're absolutely short of money, so you know looking at it from that point of view I would be very cautious about … I mean I think there'd probably be something at least equally effective a lot cheaper (Ora2, Hugh, Sections 36-42)

In this situation, the Playback had not in fact been commissioned by the management, but in most cases it will have been. The need to distance the performers from the people commissioning the performance and to indicate to disaffected group members the openness of the Playback group to their experience, is extremely important. How to do so, remains one of Playback's significant dilemmas. In terms of value for money, the combination of Playback's ability to deliver outcomes which are sought by groups and their leaders and the costs incurred by the performing group will lead to a negotiation regarding fees. Four things which stood out in terms of the outcomes in this project were the participation of staff from under-represented groups; the extremely economical time frame of one hour; the memorability of some of the narratives; and the fact that the witnessing of these narratives led to identifiable changes in attitude and behaviour.

Negotiating the Performance

At the time of the original arrangements and consent for the project, Henry had not been the Manager of Oranga: subsequently, as has been mentioned, Henry had returned, though with an expanded role, managing other centres as well as Oranga. However, in spite of not having been part of the original decision-making to host the research, Henry was very interested in its outcome, saying in his first interview: "I am *very* interested in the hypothesis that you have and that I'm aware of to a degree. Because if it helps and it works then I'm all for it…" (Ora1 Henry, Section 7). However, he was also ambivalent about Playback as a methodology, expressing several times in the interviews a negative comparison between electronic, highly sophisticated cultural expressions and the live imperfect form of Playback:

> I, I don't know whether it's a guy thing, or it's a me thing, but I've been in general a little bit anti amateur theatre maybe - I've had an awful lot of time to analyse why and I think it's mainly amateur like badly done theatre in a TV generation era is excruciating. And Playback theatre in this context where the players are only 2 or 3 metres and maybe up to 5 metres away from the audience and if it's not well done it's just horrific… (Ora1 Henry, Section 7)

His ambivalence was noticeable throughout the Oranga performance, as Henry intervened several times to try and make the objectives of the activity more visible to the participants. Similarly, in his first interview, he expressed double feelings, using the metanarrative of the research discipline:

> You you haven't asked me the direct question and I know, maybe you want indirect questions or whatever , did this assist you to communicate better with yourselves? And at this stage I would say "Uumm, possibly…" Now I , I could be hard and say "Definitely not because we talk to each other every day, all the time anyway" but maybe a tiny speck …(Ora1 Henry, Section 116).

His reservations about the method were offset by his general enthusiasm to explore how Playback might work in this setting and his very genuine interest in the academic process: "I mean I'm interested in, I got Psych Two…30 years ago and did a Social Psychology paper…ten years ago and I love the subject so I'm that's partly why I'm interested in the results of this" (Ora1 Henry, Section 28).

This genuine engagement with the research process was beneficial to the project, as Henry assisted in every way possible to facilitate and enable the project to take place, finding the patients for the patient focus groups, booking and paying for the Community Centre in which the focus groups took place, allocating precious staff meeting time to the performance and being very supportive at the meetings I had with him. His influence on the research was very positive. (Perhaps I became one of the many people he was trying to keep happy, as he had told of in his narrative in the performance.) This help meant that I was glad that he had been able to speak out so clearly in the performance about his experience and be heard by his colleagues in ways which affected how they subsequently behaved towards him.

Information for the Participants

Written information outlining the project had been provided to the staff of the Centre. This was a one-page Summary of the Te Kupu Whakaahua (See ***Appendix Six: Information and*** Consent Forms on page 495). However, some members of the staff group, particularly the most part-time ones like Ursula, did not seem to have received this - and it was not clear whether many had actually read the summary. It may be very

unlikely in a busy work environment that all staff read information provided in written form.

The performing group

The performers, who had come together from two companies and rehearsed especially for this performance, were three Kāinga Rua members, two Māori women and Lyn, a Pasifika musician two and two Pākehā *former* members of Auckland Playback Theatre, Nerissa the facilitator and Neil an actor. At one point in the performance, Wae, a Pasifika audience member, requested the musician Lyn to be the actor: Lyn's Pasifika identity was obviously important to Wae as a Samoan storyteller. At this moment, Lyn and Niwa, one of the Māori women actors, changed places. Although Lyn's acting was less assured, since her accustomed role is that of musician, her sincerity and the cultural knowledge revealed in things like her voice intonations and questioning, were satisfying to the teller who laughed as she said in the interview: "when Lyn was doing the same you know I thought 'Oh yes that's how I felt on that day that time' "(Ora1 Wae, Section 99). This illustrated the need for Playback performers to be spontaneous and ready to move into other roles when called on.

Name, ethnicity, gender, sexuality	Role in performance	Playback status/ theatre training	Other work
Nerissa Pākehā woman Straight	Facilitator	Former director and foun-ding member Auck Playback. Practitioner Member of IPTN Trained with Jonathan Fox and other founder members of Playback, attended Theatre Action Centre, Sydney, trained with Francis Batten	Psychodrama trainer Independent psychotherapist
Neil Pākehā man Straight	Actor	Former member of Auck Playback Pracitioner Member of IPTN Trained in University of Auckland Dip Drama and John Bolton's School Melbourne, Former member of Living Stories Playback company, Melbourne	Psychodrama trainee Full time counselor in government funded agency working with adolescents

Niwa Māori Woman Queer	Actor/ musician	Former member of Tai Timu which was a funded project of 1999 Magdalena International Women's Theatre Festival, held in Wellington. Former member of Tiaho, current member of Kāinga Rua Playback Attended two Playback Summer Schools run by Christian Penney and Bev Hosking in Paekakariki	Professional musician in Big Belly Woman, Planet Woman and Pacific Curlz bands
Marina Māori woman Queer	Actor	Former Artistic Director of Tiaho, current member of Kāinga Rua Playback, attended three Playback Summer Schools run by Christian Penney and Bev Hosking in Paekakariki	Free lance film and television director and researcher
Lyn Rotuman Woman Queer	Musician/ actor	Former member of Tai Timu which was a funded project of 1999 Magdalena International Women's Theatre Festival, held in Wellington. Former member of Tiaho, current member of Kāinga Rua Playback (though often unable to participate because of other projects)	Owns and operates independent music distribution company. Works extensively as a musician, including in Big Belly Woman, Planet Woman, Pacific Curlz and other bands

Table 7 Performers in Oranga Performance

Figure 3 Oranga

Journey of the Practitioner

i

Little sloping main street
Of my three year old
Four year old
Feet
Every time I arrive
To set up our caravan of fools
I feel my life
Stretch
Right
Back
Down To meet
Myself and my grandmother
On our way
To play

ii

I see the story
  Of tenderness
    The embrace
    The holding
Actors holding the moment
Watchers drinking it in
    Like trees opening their leaves
    To rain

iii

The man
Is being torn in two
System grinding on

With clatter and graunch
          Of gears
We feel we hear
His tears his prayers

iv

Normally there's no time
For crying
For praying
For standing to greet
For opening to meet
Today
We make
That space

V

But the people
  The people are sick
    Stumbling in, they pour
    Throwing themselves
     At the closed door

This tide
  Pushes and pulls
    The great hearts
Of these
  Weary
    Healers

Chapter Ten – Pātaka

> *Acting is not something we do about the teller's feelings: it is something we do about our feelings in common with the teller. Our gift to the teller emanates from our own fullness of experience. Only as we extend our life experience outside the theatre can we develop the mortal awareness to enter the deeper levels in simple stories, to give that gift fully. (Harris, 2002,p. 5)*

Like the other two health centres in this project, Pātaka is integrally connected into its community: it had also been started by the union movement and had been run by a board made up of union and community representatives. This chapter first describes Pātaka as I found it generally and then from the point of view of the very articulate and appreciative group of mostly immigrant patients with whom I met before and after the practical performance work. It then looks at the staff group who attended the performance and discusses the metanarratives used in the stories and interviews: starting with metanarratives of emancipation which were very strongly present. Secondly, it looks at professional metanarratives noting that in this centre, professionalism had connotations of self-care, dedication and asking for help from colleagues. Finally it describes two existential metanarratives, one looking in more detail at the theme of *opening* which had been apparent at Oranga (see page 294 and the second at the confrontation with mortality. Towards the end of the chapter, the performance elements of modelling behaviours, acting, indigenous music are discussed and finally the organizational arrangements with the Centre are detailed. The section called *Journey of the Practitioner* introduces a significant relationship and loss that was part of this research project.

I had worked with the manager of Pātaka on the planning of my project and found her extremely dedicated. At the beginning of the project, Pātaka was located in half of a prefabricated building, on one of the busiest streets in the western suburbs of the city, with only three carparks available and a small packed waiting room filled with people from many different nationalities, some being refugees. During the years of my project, the Centre moved – to new rooms, up on a hilltop a few kilometres away from the earlier centre. The new building was grand in comparison with where they had come from: the waiting room was spacious, light and sunny and it had a welcoming atmosphere; there were good-sized clinical rooms and upstairs was a proper staffroom and manager's office – we did our Playback performance in one half of the staffroom,

with the staff group sitting with their backs to the stairs and sinkbench, while we performed against the windows to the west against which a blind had been drawn, to give a muted golden back-lighting, which I noticed the actors using to great effect in some of the enactments. The fact that this space was available away from the hurly-burly of the downstairs consulting and waiting rooms was one of the elements which contributed to the performance at Pātaka, which was described by one of the doctors as "at each level … exciting and positive" (Pata1 Kay Section 167). Eight staff, all women: two Asian and the others Pākehā, attended. There were accounts of personal and work-related experience couched in emancipatory, professional and existential metanarratives shared in the performance and in interviews.

From the view of Patients

Pātaka is located in an area with a large number of immigrant communities and this community is reflected in its patient register. One of the interviewees, a nurse, talked in her interview with me about the multiple needs of the patients:

> one of the doctors who's a locum here yesterday was saying and it's something that *everybody* says who comes here "This place is so different, it's unique," um you know she was saying that you know that "I work in another practice" and she said "honestly you know the people just flow through there." She said, "and I would see twice as many patients there as I am *able* to see here. And I *still* can't get everything done!" Because of the language difficulties, because of communication, because of just demand, expectations on the patients' parts are just completely different to the other place that she works at. (Pata2 Trish, Section 25)

The reception staff suggested that in order to collect patients' names and addresses and arrange the focus groups, I should sit in the waiting room and ask patients to participate. This was done over four different occasions and provided a great insight into the life of the Centre as well as a means of observing the work and the patients. A group of ten patients was assembled for the first focus group consisting of a Samoan woman, one Pākehā and two Indian married couples, an elderly Chinese man, and a Somali woman and her daughter. Five of these patients reassembled seven months later for the second focus group interview. Over the time between these two focus groups in mid 2005 and early 2006, although I knew that considerable changes and upheavals had occurred with long-serving staff leaving, the manager changing twice and new staff arriving, the patients reported seeing no unhappiness, which conveyed how the staff had been able to sustain themselves and each other. In the second focus group one patient observed of the staff:

> It's very difficult to actually speak for them how they have done but for me signs, body languages, I would say they have had a very fine year – because there is no sign of boredom or hate or they are always willing and pleasant too. Okay – they are very kind they must be having good you know working relations no?

This suggested to me that the staff had been able to work cohesively together to make sure that any unrest was not transmitted to the patients. Another patient expanded:

> I think when you go in and you see them interacting they feel good themselves, it's wonderful and they all seem to be very happy in that atmosphere and interacting amongst between them seems to be really good…They seem to be helping each other out and things like that also…

A request had been made in the first Focus Group Interview for a Chinese interpreter: by the time of the second focus group a year later, this had been provided and was commented on with approval:

> When I make the appointment, so that I say, I can't, English very difficulty and they say sure they can give that translator… I, for me for my wife – it's next week, Thursday… That is the first time – for my family. Translator come to Centre – help – with translation. That is good, that is good that. I am pleased,pleased to have that for patients.

Getting appointments on the same day remained an issue, as did the increase of fees to $5 for people with Community Services cards:

> before 2004 yes have a time not pay doctors fee, now pay $5 – if cheaper maybe for the low income person that would be very good… um because the person on low income a lot of every day things to spend – if they pay the high fee may be difficult for them…

Many of the patients in the focus groups were in the position to compare the centre favourably with services they had received elsewhere and observed the outstanding commitment of some of the staff.

> The nurses too are brilliant one or two nurses they are almost like doctors when you when they sort of, when you go and talk to them about anything especially Nurse Isabel – I think she is REALLY good really really good…I was suffering from some kind of allergy and things like that and she sort of gave me some treatment along with the doctor and she was the one actually who diagnosed what could be the matter with me, yeah, which was very good.

The doctors and nurses received very high praise from some, especially for their commitment in following up patients:

> Six months back I was going through a low phase and both the doctor Dr Kay and the nurse they said "We are there for you" … I mean I couldn't open up and really tell them but they said "Don't worry, we know that you are going through a rough

> patch and we are always there, you can ring us up and talk to us and feel free." And I thought that was really great, I mean it was really good of them … both my husband and I are diabetics and we've got other problems and they are really treating us really well and sort of very timely help and advice and whenever we have gone to them and approached them for any thing, they are always there for us, and we are really happy with the treatment we are getting.

Another patient said of the doctor: "Yeah it's quite special so, like, I would wait for three days or four days to see her…you know? Yeah so that extra mile that she went for me and that's quite touching." The level and specificity of the patients' feedback concerning the staff was outstanding.

Metanarratives of Emancipation

Feminism: "Men are different"

The interviewees identified the gender makeup of the staff group as part of the effectiveness of the performance: although the Playback group included a male actor, Neil, all of the people in the audience were women. One doctor suggested that this audience composition had an effect on the kinds of stories that were shared:

> I suspect it probably would be a bit different if there was a a male in in the [audience] group… in the sense that well women generally are more expressive and are more open and are more likely to be in touch with personal type of issues…and I suspect also that once one person started it kind of gave permission for others too… (Pata2 Marney Sections 11-15)

Gherardi, (2003) says that "many scholars argue that nowadays 'gender' has lost its importance.…As anatomy stops being destiny, sexual identity more and more becomes a life-style issue" (p.210). For the women at Ngākau however, this was definitely not the case: many of the accounts of experience they shared in the performance and in the interviews I did with them afterwards referred to their gender and came very clearly from their situatedness as women in the social/political construct of N.Z. society.

Isabel, the nurse of whom several patients had spoken in such glowing terms, expressed in feminist terms her awareness of the challenges of her experience of being a working parent:

> Oh just years and years of … I'm a solo mother so, you know, lots of times where I had to leave my kids in order to go to work in less than what, you know, what I would have considered ideal circumstances - but you've got to put food on the table, so you have to go.

> But often you know … you can't - it comes to four o'clock and you know they're going to be home from school and you wonder whether they're beating the living daylights out of each other, or whether they've even *got* home or whether they've been abducted on the way or run over or …
> And so you've always got the two scenarios, you know, going on in your head: there's what you're actually doing, but the other half is, your life's going on all the time as well… (Pata1 Isabel, Sections 19-25)

Isabel went on in the interview to make an overt feminist analysis of the differences between the way she and her ex-husband bring up their children. The story she told in the interview about the difficulty of sharing parenting, had been inspired by the storytelling by two colleagues during the Playback performance who told about the dual role of mother/worker. It contained a trenchant political awareness.

> And for me that was a biggie: I, I never felt safe leaving my kids with their Dad and so all the time they *were* with their Dad, I was always very concerned … [it] felt *very* unsafe for me, you know were they actually going to come back alive, or what were they going to be subjected to? Or you know, were they going to be seeing things that they shouldn't be seeing? …And a lot of that did happen and there wasn't a lot I could do about it… I felt very powerless to … you know feeling that my children were losing their innocence … and *seeing* things that children should never see … yeah that was what was boiling up for me it just ahh (*makes a boiling sound*) you know…Men are different…(Pata1 Isabel, Sections 31-37)

Several of the other staff members also spoke of being working women during the performance and interviews, focussing on the experience of the dual role of parenting and attending to the responsibilities of a complex workplace.

The dual role: "Your children are your Achilles heel"

Two stories of mothering unwell children had led off the phase of the performance that led to sharing of explicitly personal material. One might think that early in the 21st century in Aotearoa New Zealand, with many leadership positions on the national scene and in many organizations being held by women, the arrangements around shared parenting by men and women might have been, to some extent, addressed. However, as Isabel's account above shows, there is still a deep sense of how much juggling women, including educated and empowered women such as doctors, have to do in order to participate in work lives. Derry, writing in the U.S. in 2002 and reviewing a book published in 1999 writes acerbically:

> Startling news of the twenty-first century: We are still trying to figure out how women can work and mother at the same time - or if they really should, or if children suffer? Or how to persuade employers to treat working mothers the same as everyone else, while also understanding the multiple demands on their lives. Forever women have worked and mothered. … Why doesn't the political championing of "family values" translate into actual support for working parents? The questions are

> easier to formulate than the answers….
> In *Unbending Gender*, Joan Williams addresses the conflicts for women and men in the current structuring of market work and family work. Both structures rely, she argues, on particular norms of domesticity and the ideal worker. These are central concepts in Williams's carefully developed thesis that traditional families and traditional work do not serve men, women, or children well. All segments of our society are limited and ultimately harmed by our commitment to an antiquated view of who should do family work and what the ideal worker must do to be valued. (Derry, 2002, p. 221)

Both stories of painful awareness of the pressures of family needs were told by doctors. The first story was told by Kay and involved wanting to protect a son who has been seriously ill; she also told about the conflict that sometimes arises between her and her partner, the boy's father, in which she is construed by him as being over-protective. The second story was told by Nandita, a Sri Lankan doctor, telling about her realizing that she had sent her diabetic son off to school without any breakfast. Both women cried as they told their stories. Joanne Martin, in her study of organizational culture asserts:

> Families are not 'part of' organizations. This exclusion is reified in the distinction between the public and the private domains. The public domain (of the marketplace, the political arena and the legal system) is contrasted with the 'closed and exclusive sphere of intimacy, sexuality and affection characterizing the modern nuclear family.' This dichotomy, of course, is false. The public and private domains cannot be separated in this way. … Furthermore, what happens at work affects the 'family' and what happens in the 'family' affects what happens at work….because most women carry a disproportionate share of domestic responsitiblities, working women are more likely to have to find time during business hours to take a sick family member to the doctor, meet with a teacher, and so on….Many working women … operate at a competitive disadvantage with comparable men. (Martin, 1992, p.114)

These two stories of mothering had a major impact on fellow team members in the audience. Norelle saw them containing important themes:

> you know two of the women have obviously got sick children and that's sort of very very difficult to deal with sort of thing … so they were big big issues they weren't little by any standards they weren't yeah …(Pata1 Norelle, Section 7)

For Trish who later told the story of her awareness of mortality, these stories brought up strong emotions:

> I actually found it quite … I used the word emotive when you asked for words and I expected to find it that way because listening to both Isabel and Nandita you know talking about their kids and the fact that they you know were worried about them and I was thinking "That's every… that never goes away" (small laugh) having adult children of my own…(Pata1 Trish, Section 6)

For one of the receptionists, Marian, the stories showed her to her surprise how much she had in common with these two doctors:

> I actually must admit that I did I did go away thinking about it, about particularly Kay and Nandita… Well as I say it was just I just thought "Gee we all turn up to work and and I'm not the only one that kind of struggled to get here," or…"We all turn up with our sort of work masks on and yeah…" … It's definitely I guess, I just, no it's just more of a, I don't feel so alone really. (Pata1 Marian, Sections 117 – 121)

It is difficult to analyse these stories, embedded deeply as they are in the physicality of being female, of being a parent and simultaneously subject to the conditions of participating in working life in an early 21st century capitalist economic system. I do not want to suggest in any way that it is 'natural' for life to be like this for working women. Nel Noddings writes, looking at the tradition of caregiving:

> Throughout history, women have been charged with caregiving – with caring not only for their own families but also for the ill, elderly and needy in their immediate communities….Today when women in most Western nations have options outside the home and are no longer occupationally limited…educators face a dilemma. We want to educate girls for the wider opportunities now available to them, and we do not want to glorify a tradition that coerced and exploited women. But people still need care and the care tradition is one that should not be entirely lost." (Noddings, 2001, p.29)

For Kristin Cloyes, it is not enough to talk about women being called to care "throughout history" as Noddings asserts: on the contrary it is important to see care "as both an ideology and a practical strategy that is produced and deployed through political discourse. [This] would allow for questioning the terms within which our discussions of care are framed" (Cloyes, 2002, p.212). For the women watching the Pātaka performance, these two stories were strong and emblematic and even months later the memories of them were quite clear. When asked in the second interview, six months after the performance, what she remembered from the performance, several interviewees answered like Isabel: "both Kay and Nandita talking about their children and their concerns over their children, unwell children…" (Pata2 Isabel, Section 19)

Pervasive metaphors of masks and conflict were used in these descriptions. For Marian, the receptionist who had not contributed any of her own experiences to the performance, the outcomes of seeing these two mothers' stories still resonated as she looked back six months to the performance, and even though she prefaced her account by saying first that she hadn't thought about the performance again, she quickly amended this claim, describing as a battle the struggle that she personally has with the dual role of

parent/worker. The Playback had assisted her to see these two doctors in more detail, in a less stereotyped fashion and enabled her to act towards them in a more supportive way:

> I actually haven't really thought about it again, after that, to tell you the truth. I have particularly with Nandita, I you know still think about Nandita, because I know her problems that she talked about are still are ongoing, but Kay also made a big impact… Nandita wasn't in terribly good health herself … although what upset her was when she talked about her son it was just, just realizing that you sort of get this work relationship going with people and you're totally unaware of what's going in their in their own lives, you know, and that they come here, and they play this role, I mean you go home and you play another role and…Oh I felt sympathy but I also recognized that I'm not the only one that comes to work and I've got a lot going on outside of work. You know, you sort of come to work and when you've got a lot going on you feel like you're the only one, that everyone goes home to a perfect environment except you (laughs)
> … It just opened up the the fact that you know it's that everyone's got to fight the hard battle really…I mean without being negative…that we all come here nine to five and do our bit with our work hat on, and sometimes we feel like everybody else is, nobody else has got facing where you might be at the moment, where in actual fact probably everybody is…in their own life…
> Oh I feel a little more, I still feel sympathy, empathy really, sympathy towards Nandita, oh I probably don't feel quite so isolated? Yeah especially doctors, you sort of think doctors sort of have this lovely sort of life outside of work, for some reason, I don't know why…(both laugh) I don't know why I think that! They're only human after all they've got families and they're mothers, I mean we've got lady doctors here and they're mothers…
> So yeah you don't feel quite so isolated and it's just a lesson in reality really. And possibly, I'm aware of, I've always been friendly but I'm aware of sort of 'Hey Nandita how's it going?' you know? 'How's your family and how's your boy going…?' Before I saw a doctor that whisked in and out, whisked in and did their day's work, but I just saw a person in their professional role, and and now I can see the whole picture really… (Pata2 Marian, Sections 7-25)

Just as in the performance, these narratives of parenting were strongly present in the interviews, showing what a large part this role and task plays in these women's lives:

> I haven't got sick kids but I've got teenagers and and sort of battles and things like that and that, that motherhood role of whether to not over protect them, the protection thing and then the letting go thing, that's very real for any mum I think … (Pata1 Norelle, Section 36)

Interviewees whose children had grown up also identified with this concern:

> I mean that's just …I think all of us who are mothers within the team recognize that and thinking gosh, you know, am I being over-protective or …under-protective you know? Getting getting that balance right and it just, yeah, brought back memories of when my kids … they're older but it brought back memories of when they were younger and … there's always one different and I've got four kids and Christopher's

my different one… (Pata1 Trish, Section 109 – 117)

Noeleen, a grandmother, also echoed this concern and commitment:

> Yes I've got three grandsons, so, as a grandmother you're thinking are you doing the best for your grandsons? … Yeah whether you've done as much as you should have done - could you have done more? ….You are worried about them…(Pata2 Noeleen, Sections 59-61)

Isabel summed it up:

> As a Mum, your children are your Achilles heel in a way aren't they? You know you always think "Oh I wish it was wrong with *me* not with rather than for my children." You as a mother would much rather have you suffer than your children suffer and so if a Mum's got a child that's got to go through some pretty hard things, it's pretty tough in that case for the Mum… (Pata2 Isabel, Section 25)

Luce Irigaray suggests that, basing our cognition on the body, there was always not one, but two. It was only the occluding of female experience by the male speaker, which led the emphasis on singularity and unity to be created. She proposed in 1993 that the understanding of this fact of life is vital to the times we are living in:

> Sexual difference is one of the major philosophical issues, if not the issue, of our age. According to Heidegger, each age has one issue to think through, and one only. Sexual difference is probably the issue in our time which could be our "salvation" if we thought it through.
> But whether I turn to philosophy, to science or to religion, I find this underlying issue still cries out in vain for our attention.....
> Sexual difference would constitute the horizon of worlds more fecund than any known to date - at least in the West - and without reducing fecundity to the reproduction of bodies and flesh. For loving partners this would be a fecundity of birth and regeneration, but also the production of a new age of thought, art, poetry, and language: the creation of a new *poetics.* (1993, p.5)

Three years later she suggested

> Marx defined the origin of man's exploitation of man as man's exploitation of woman and asserted that the most basic human exploitation lies in the division of labor between man and woman. Why didn't he devote his life to solving the problem of this exploitation? He perceived the root of all evil but he did not treat it as such....
> It is, therefore, entirely appropriate for a woman philosopher to start speaking of love. It results from the need to think and practice what Marxist theory and practice have thus far ignored…. .(Irigaray, 1996, pp.19 – 20)

While a concern may be that Irigaray may seem to reinscribe feminine essentialism, which then ends up through the employment of the binary systems enshrined in Western thought as valorising the opposed masculine values, in Aotearoa New Zealand and in many indigenous world views, on the contrary, the *two* are not oppositional but complementary, an emergence out of nothingness into a *beginning with two*, in the mutual, intertwined mythical parents. Out of the void came a series of darknesses and then within the darkness Rangi and Papa were together. They were separated only by

their children who had been caught forever in the darkness between them in their close embrace. Because of the separation, tears of rain fall from the sky father, and mists of desire rise from the earth mother. The two are equally compelled by each other, they are both involved as parents, they are both divine (Kahukiwa & Grace, 1984). As a myth, this is an attempt to *tell it how it is* for human being, involved as mammals in these patterns of regeneration. So, the "biologists in search of material" (Pearse & Crocker, 1944, p.13) at the Peckham Pioneer Health Centre, who wanted to study health and not illness, determined that just as "the ant-heap alone represents the full range of function of ant-hood" (p.17) so it is "through the unified mutual action of *two entities* [italics added], man and woman, that alone the full function of our species is manifest…Thus while the individual man or woman is a satisfactory subject for study by the zoologist, physiologist or pathologist, only woman-and-man as a unity can meet the needs of the biologist setting out to study function."[176] (Pearse & Crocker, 1944, p.20).

Yet women within philosophical discourse are caught in forms of language which have been used against us: much of the structure of Western thinking disallows such mutuality and interdependence. By using communicative methods employing more than words, Playback has the potential to sidestep these issues of dismissal. Many of the ways in which the women at Pātaka spoke came out of an assertion of the centrality of embodied experience as female. For example, their views of professionalism strongly emphasised self and team care.

Professionalism

Self and Team Care: "It's like a secondary traumatic stress situation"

In contrast to interviews in the other Centres where professionalism was used either as a kind of ruler against which people and behaviour were measured, or as a defiant individual stand against managerialism, at Pātaka professionalism was expressed in discourses concerning caring for the self and for the whole team involved together in

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[176] Sexist language modified, original follows: "through the unified mutual action of two entities, man and woman, that alone the full function of Man is manifest…Thus while the individual man (or woman) is a satisfactory subject for study by the zoologist, physiologist or pathologist, only man-and-woman as a unity can meet the needs of the biologist setting out to study function" (Pearse & Crocker, 1944, p.20).

doing the demanding work of health care (Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook & Irvine, 2007). As Nandita, a Sri Lankan doctor explained, referring to her own training:

> We were told in our education system it's like a housekeeping you need to sort of clear your emotions of one consult and be ready for the other person arrives to open your mind and receive. And then are hearing and communicating, trying to do the best for the next person, to avoid sort of a building up of… from other consultations or emotions might build up, or it's the self care, sort of clearing your mind from your previous thoughts - of a little bit trauma, or crisis … (Pata1 Nandita, Section 13)

She went on to relate this need for self care to the secondary trauma that is part of the working life of health care providers:

> Yeah on-going therapy it's like a secondary traumatic stress situation that we are in, that we are exposed to. Yeah you know when I read some articles, it was quite mentioned that without realizing we are exposed to … secondary trauma (Pata1 Nandita, Section 45)

Kay, the head of the clinical team, identified the Playback as first being able to meet her individual need for self-development and self-care:

> I think personally I feel myself starved of sort of personal development at this stage of my life you know of any sort of personal growth stuff you know… Extremely busy with family, work and all the balls jumping around in the air you know… the area that gives of course is your personal stuff (Pata1 Kay, Sections 167,169)

She identified Playback as also the sort of method which would help with the stresses involved in the health care work, both for the individual and also the team:

> I think I think … I think medicine, I think you need a lot more support for that sort of thing. I think it's very often a very isolated job … you take on a *lot* of stuff as the day goes on all day long, you're with people, not only their physical sickness but their sadness and their social roles and things you can't help with. And so I don't think … we, I mean, we know that doctors have a high rate of suicide particularly women doctors, very high, very high alcoholism, marriage breakup, you know and so… I'm not saying it's the job causes all that, but I'm saying that maybe we don't do enough to help that stress prevention … (Pata1 Kay, Section 7)

However, she also saw it as meeting a group need for team building:

> The other big element I was looking for really was the potential for team building cause I think the team is such an important nucleus that needs to be continually nurtured really in the in the variety of ways… you know I certainly got a buzz out of it really which I think I you know felt in other participants. The openness that we shared I think was a sign of the trust that we *do* have with each other. (Pata1 Kay, Section 7,11)

For another doctor, Norelle, the usefulness of Playback for personal and team development was to do with self-care and the kind of catharsis which had occurred in this performance: " I reckon that should be letting it out rather than withdrawing in so

I, I think, I think you [Playback] should do more… Mmm I do, I'm a believer, in it…" (Pata1 Norelle, Section 52).

Nandita also suggested that the Playback could be part of a positive team development, suggesting that it could be used as more than a one-off strategy: "It's interesting yeah and had a positive effective on us at that time… it connects the people as a team, if you do it on a sort of regular basis " (Pata1 Nandita, Section 87). Trish, a nurse, suggested that sessions of sharing through things like Playback are part of professional maintenance and therefore should be timetabled and planned:

> I think it's just something that has to be planned it's like team meetings I think you just say "Right" you know "the team needs this support and if we want this team to function in a healthy model then you have to give the team time." (Pata2 Trish, Section 143)

In a 2003 media comment from the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, issues around the ongoing training and development of primary healthcare staff were foregrounded:

> The current draft PHO contract requires a minimum set of services to their population. … it is important DHBs remain responsible overall for building workforce capacity in their regions, including primary care and do not shift such responsibilities through the minimum requirements of the organizations that they fund.
> We … need a healthy workforce, with an environment that gives: A positive vision for the future, Job satisfaction …Opportunities for collaboration with other health professionals, Non-patient contact time to foster team and professional development, and further community engagement …Support, Healthy working hours to maintain personal and professional self care, Sense of being valued (Vause, 2003)

Marney, a Chinese doctor, saw that Playback sessions could help people to do many of these things, in different parts and at different levels of organizations and hierarchies:

> People way up there who have no *contact* with down here well then… it's not as good. You may have an uphill battle but then you may not because the kind of things that you bring out are common to all human experiences. They don't change throughout the ages … bringing them all you know a fraction closer.
> (Pata1 Marney, Section 0 Paragraphs 172-190)

Like Marney and Trish, Kay felt that Playback sessions could usefully be scheduled as part of team maintenance. She identified them as a way for staff to come together as a team:

> I mean some some workplaces, if they're based on a on a philosophy, say a Christian group or something, maybe spend a few minutes praying before they get cracking

> …And I can remember thinking "Gosh what a waste of time get on with it!" but you know I can see now the value of those times when you do take the time to sort of coalesce as a team… (Pata1 Kay, Sections 53,55)

However, in the current economic climate, in spite of messages such as the one quoted above from the College of GPs, she was skeptical about the possibility of this happening:

> Sure. And I can *see* longer term that it costs an awful lot of money to recruit a doctor and be without a doctor for a while and if you don't look after your team the wheels fall off and everybody falls off the side which costs you a heck of a lot more…So I could relate to that up front investment style really but yeah I don't know that the psyche's there at the moment… (Pata1 Kay, Sections 137, 139)

For Marney, who worked in several different health care centres, the way the group were in the Playback performance added to her awareness of the team and the value of this particular group of staff as a unique gathering of people with outstanding professional qualities:

> It's impressive that all the different factors coming to make each person as as they are and what brings so much to the focus is, is, if people have um basically treat it as a job the place would be *nothing* like what it is. (*As she says these last words, impression of clarity and depth*) …So I mean you know I was I was really impressed. I mean sure there were tears and so on but you know that's part of, of the treasure. (Pata1 Marney, Section 0, Paragraphs 27-36)

Marney in this statement referred to another facet of professionalism that was emphasized by several of the interviewees, that of dedication and commitment.

Professional Dedication: "There is a singular commitment to this place"

Dedication is a difficult concept to quantify or measure, sometimes even to describe. Graham described it by showing how nurses involved in caring for dementia patients were called to develop many roles which were demanded by the patients, families, co-workers and society. This involved them in ways which were not necessarily spelt out in the official documents, yet were essential for the *official* care to be accomplished:

> Many nurses felt that they provided care from a definition constructed out of the prevailing model, based upon relationship formation. This relationship formation required them to…develop their activities according to how the relationship with their patients and patients' partners were identified. Therefore two levels of activity were perceived, one 'official' and one 'not official'….The official care provided the bricks, as it were …What it did not include was the mortar to these bricks and that mortar was represented by the work that these nurses were doing. Many found that performing the work of the mortar held the services together so that they would work. If this was not done the system would collapse (Graham, 1999, p681)

Similarly at Pātaka, the staff were involved in *performing the work of the mortar* in ways which demanded dedication. Trish, a Pākehā nurse described the ethos of the clinical staff:

> And that's you know the culture of the clinical staff, if I can just give the clinical staff is 150% You know our hours are 8.30 till 5 or 8.30 till 6 and for Isabel and I, as nurses, we alternate going home early a couple of nights a week, so that we do our forty hour week - but we never *ever* do our our day (Pata1 Trish, Section 57

She identified this commitment as part of the make-up of the people who work at Pātaka: "And the type of people that have to work …Yeah it's more than just a job *you've got to have a passion for for what you're doing*" (Pata2 Trish, Section 189). Marney expanded on the commitment of the staff at Pātaka, especially in light of what was reveled in the Playback performance:

> Oh in the sense that there is a singular commitment um to this place in *spite* of everything that happens in people's daily lives … and I mean everybody here is apart from one of the nurses, is part time and yet the amount of time and commitment that the folks put in is far in excess of what they get paid for. And when when one heard about the background of things and how things entwined into their lives including what happens workwise... (Pata1 Marney, Paragraph 27)

One of the ways in which this dedication was visible in this research project was in one of the stories told in the performance, where a doctor told about consulting a colleague for advice about a particular patient.

Asking for help as a clinician: "how insecure I got about my judgement"

After the two moving stories from the doctor/mothers, there was a musical interlude in which Niwa sang an improvised song, using the lyrics "Life – ah life" set to a simple blues-based tune which expressed a rueful combination of complaint and acceptance. This was a consummate performance from a skilled musician: as Norelle said in her interview, "Nerissa made her sing and she sang beautifully and it was breathtaking" (Pata1 Norelle, Section 17)

After this interlude, Nerissa then asked for someone to tell a longer story. Kay, the clinical coordinator of the group, offered a story of one of her Korean male patients who had come to see her incessantly with many problems and in this particular instance had presented with a cyst on his back. She had worried that maybe there was something here that she was not recognizing and had asked Marney, a very experienced Chinese doctor, for a second opinion. Marney had confirmed that it was not cancer and in the

end, the patient had gone off with an agreement that he was now better and would not need to make an appointment to see her again in the near future.

Neil was given the role of the patient and Marina played the doctor. Karen doubled Marina, voicing loudly and urgently the internal doubts that Kay had told the audience about. Neil's embodiment of the hypochondriacal lugubrious and depressed patient delighted the audience who responded with gales of delighted laughter. This combination of self-revealing vulnerability by the doctor who was the head of the clinical team, along with the comedic depiction of the patient's way of presenting and the oppressive demon of doubt being externalised by an actor, produced a rich moment of risk and boundary.

In the interviews, colleagues mentioned both the openness of Kay in telling this story and also the skilful acting which so pleased them.

> Well I think Kay's one particularly looking at insecurities in your own diagnosis and and how you usually have - you are, the public see you as being decisive and knowing everything and it's really good to bare that part of our job which IS that we don't always…
> I thought that was great because it actually helps everyone else relate … so that you're not presenting your tough face to the world…I thought that was good, that brought out how we all feel and then that leads on to the next phase where you're more able to ask for help and different things and be more open about things you're not quite sure of. (Pata1Norelle, Sections 9 – 11)

Marian noted Neil's acting skills and the uncanniness of the similarity of his portrayal to the real patient:

> Yeah and I knew that patient immediately, yeah, that was actually that was *really* well done that one. As soon as Kay mentioned that patient, I knew immediately and I thought that was very well - and they didn't know, yet it could have been him! It was just just incredible we were all sort of looking at each other without naming any names like "Have they met him?" (laugh) They got it beautifully.
> … I think Neil just picked up on the fact that he's he's so neurotic this man and and everything's chronic and Neil was just amazing it was like - yeah he honestly, I thought has he read his notes? (laugh) (Pata1 Marian, Sections 79-83)

There was evidence of tremendous enjoyment of this story in the whole group. The ludic element of Neil's embodiment of the patient's stooped lugubriousness, his depression and finally his acknowledgement of Kay ("I think you – you good doctor") led to a burst of energy and release which led the group into the next and last story.

Existentialism

Opening: "I was impressed with how open people were"

As at Oranga, a noticeable metanarrative in the Pātaka interviews was one to do with openness and the movement of opening. Isabel described the process as it happened in the performance using kinaesthetic metaphors of play:

> Irene started the ball rolling with with being *incredibly* open about where she was at and followed straight afterwards by Nandita who followed suit completely which blew me away a little bit, that the two of them made themselves so vulnerable right from the beginning. (Pata1 Isabel, Section 73)

This beginning of openness and vulnerability was developed in the performance in ways which participants noted and particularly valued: "there is a singular commitment um to this place in *spite* [of] everything that happens … so I was impressed with how open people were" (Pata1 Marney, Section 0 Paragraph 27). Kay too interpreted the openness of the group as something to treasure: "you know I certainly got a buzz out of it really which I felt in other participants. The openness that we shared I think was a sign of the trust that we *do* have with each other" (Pata1 Kay, Section 11).

Kay contrasted this openness in the Playback performance with how things are at other times in the work together ie. openness highlighted for her in its binary opposite of of closedness and armouring. The experience of openness emphasized the fact that a lack of openness predominates sometimes: "It does us some good I think …To experience that you know …To be surprised and realize how much we've got protective barriers up really the whole time" (Pata1 Kay, Sections 21-25). For Marian too, openness was not how things usually were: instead "we all turn up with our sort of work masks on …" (Pata1 Marian, Section 123). She experienced the Playback as changing this, through the way it opened up the themes of the performance:

> it was nice to know that well not *nice* to know but it was comforting I guess to know that yeah you're not the only one you know that...It just opened up the the fact that you know it's that everyone's got to fight the hard battle really…I mean without being negative…that we all come here nine to five and do our bit with our work hat on, and sometimes we feel like yeah everybody else is nobody else has got facing where you might be at the moment where in actual fact probably everybody is…in their own life…(Pata2 Marian, Sections 15-17)

Opening meant that others were spurred into action in terms of changing their behaviour towards each other:

> The person's exposed themselves and sort of that's, that's, that's for that situation, and I guess we all need to be willing to to offer some other support… (Pata1 Kay, Section 111)

Marney expanded on how the fact that a person had opened up in the Playback *enabled* her as a colleague to offer support:

> I mean it probably I probably don't treat them any *different* from anybody else or it's just how do you say makes them um a more rounded person to me and in that respect *probably* I'm a bit more aware of some buttons that I am probably a bit more careful about pushing more consciously now that I'm aware of that. You know, obviously every so often can enquire about how things are going and this, that and the other *knowing full well that they've given permission way back then otherwise they wouldn't've mentioned them* (*her voice very strong here*). (Pata2 Marney, Section 33)

Thomas Sheehan, writing of Heidegger's thinking, draws attention to how central openness is to Heidegger's view of what it is to be human:

> The most extraordinary thing about all of Heidegger's thought, both early and late, is his unwaivering [*sic*] insistence that *human being is* that 'open' and thus *is* 'the thing itself'…..That is why we should not translate Dasein as 'being-there' or 'being-the-there' or 'there-being but, rather, as 'always-being-open' or 'always having-been-opened'… (Sheehan, 2001, p.12).

Like other forms of radical theatre (Bell, 1999), Playback's call for openness, its ability to allow people to be open, to model openness and to open topics that otherwise might not be broached was strongly suggested in this performance. This element of its action was identified by the interviewees as enabling it to serve the interests and needs of both individuals and the group. It also assisted them to approach issues and events, such as the last story about a patient dying, which were not usually broached in day-to-day discourse yet which were intrinsic to their health care practice.

Mortality: "I've faced the crisis – not once but twice"

> *Our finitude, and it alone, is the intrinsically hidden mystery, overlooked in fallenness and embraced in resolve … Our finitude is the "it" that "gives being" …. In the language of* Zeit und Sein*, our finitude is what* erreicht die Zeit *(opens the clearing) and* schickt das Sein *(makes possible all taking-as). Our finitude is* die Sache selbst*. It does all the work. No more room for Big Being. (Sheehan 2001, p.199)*
>
> *Mary, look, I think I know how sad you are and how serious this loss is …. One could look upon one's whole life as a being-given and being-taken away, that starts already with life itself, given at birth, taken away with death, and the whole time in-between could easily be looked at as standing under the same*

> *law…. If you believed you owned, if you forgot that it was given, that is just too bad for you." (Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, in Brightman, 1995, pp. 306 – 7)*

Trish, a Pākehā nurse, told the last story in an account which approached the limen between life and death (Fradenburg, 1997), the border zone which health care work crucially inhabits. This story was told in August 2005 and was the last story in the performances which our Playback group did as part of the practical research project that underpins this thesis.

The facilitator Nerissa asked for another story saying, "I think we have time for one more." A Pākehā nurse, Trish, spoke quietly from the back of the audience. Her story was simple, about the death from cancer of a patient who had seemed to be recovering. This death confronted her, particularly as she herself had had cancer twice and was at present also in remission. In the face of the event of the patient's death, it was hard for her to keep her positive attitude. Nerissa as facilitator helped Trish to form her story (see Appendix Eight for a full transcript of the story). The telling of this story took less than three and a half minutes and towards the end was this exchange between Nerissa the facilitator and Trish the storyteller:

Nerissa
It's a very very difficult thing isn't it? Yes … because it's your mortality you're facing too
Trish
And and of course your patients don't know that you've been there done that… Mm and you've always got to be up there all the time and yet you've got this demon fighting you as well if you can understand what I mean

The actors moved into enactment, first of all checking with each other. Niwa, the musician, played on the koauau, an indigenous taonga puoro[177] which produced a low haunting flute voice of three or four semitones. Marina was given the role of the patient, and Karen, a Pākehā actor, had the role of the teller, Trish. Karen seemed to be reassuring Marina, who looked at her with questioning eyes. Silhouetted against the backdrop of the bright windows, with outstretched hands, Neil, who had played the difficult patient in the previous enactment, played very fully the ominous and threatening figure of Death.

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[177] Taonga puoro refers to traditional Māori musical instrument

Marina enacted the death of the patient by simply going underneath a yellow cloth – Niwa the musician sang quietly, 'tangi tangi atu' (sing and weep). Marina as the patient pulled the cloth aside to say pensively to Karen and the audience: "I thought I was getting better." Karen engaged in a tussle with Neil as Death, pulling him down off the chair he was standing on and saying, "Get down, I am meant to be up there." Marina slipped quietly out from behind the cloth and stood below and behind Karen, steadying her, saying quietly "It's all right". There was no need to determine whether she was still in role as the patient who had died, or whether she was in the present moment as an auxiliary to the teller: the ambiguity allowed all kinds of possible meanings to be possible without being spelled out. Death remained, but in a lower position to the teller, still strongly present but not dominating.

The complete dialogue for the enactment was as follows:

Death When you work in medicine you are working with me hah
Patient Mm my hair's starting to drop out a bit
Nurse But it it'll grow back
Patient Will it? I'm feeling a lot better
Death And you never know when I'm going to appear
Nurse You're looking a lot better
Patient Am I?
Nurse And your diagnosis is good. And you've been treated for it and things are improving
Patient Yeah I mean yeah I can do more than I used to be able to
Death Or who I'm going to affect
Nurse Just back off
Death And have
Nurse (*Pulling Death down*) Get down, I'm up there, I'm a nurse, I'm up there
Death (*Growl*s) I want to take you too – I want to take you too – and I might come back for you…
Nurse (*Climbing up*) Go away - This wasn't meant to happen I didn't see it going this way
Patient I thought I was getting well
Nurse Sometimes it just feels really really hard to climb up here – but I do it –
Death And I live in the clinics and I live in the streets
Patient (*Standing beside Nurse, steadying her*) It's okay, it's okay. It happens.

When I interviewed Trish a week later, she told me about the conversations with her husband that this telling of her story had brought about:

> I went home and I told my husband about how it was and he too said "You know you're always, you never let that side of you out…You know everybody sees you as the strong one…" So a lot of people don't actually even realize, for me personally…that I do have struggles… With the fact that I've had, you know, I've faced this the crisis……Not once but twice…

> And, and, and that's where where sometimes you know I, I feel like I want to go home and I, I don't want to go out at all to these meetings, or to these education sessions etcetera, that carry on after work. I mean I did that before I had my illness and …and it's…
> You know, I realize that that, you know, my family is, is precious and and I don't - it sparked off from the discussion between my husband and I in the weekend and he said "Oh you know we're we're very lucky" he said "you might not even, we might not even be here having this talk…"
> (Puke1 Trish Sections 18 - 30)

Later in the interview she expanded further on this:

> … As I said just the discussion with my husband, talking about it with him…Actually *he* brought it up it was …like in the weekend he just he just brought up that you know I'm so pleased you're still here because – I…*I have vivid memories of the look on his face I'll never, ever, forget it…* (Puke1 Trish Sections 163-167)

This account suggests what Playback is capable of: the unearthing of an emblematic story, told by a teller, who admits her fears and still faces towards participation in her world.[178] What she brings up about her husband's reaction to her account of telling this story at the Playback session exemplifies how a teller's experience can be deepened through Playback. Telling in this case enriched her world and did not take away from it. This enrichment happened on a very intimate level for this teller, in her primary relationship, and became part of the way in which the core issue of her illness is framed and used in her living.

Another level of reference to this story was added when I interviewed Trish again six months later: she spoke about telling her story once again, this time to a patient. In the following account, it is interesting to note how she produced the account to the patient of her own experience in classical storytelling form, saying "I'll tell you a story." Having told the story once at Playback, having it crafted and given back, then having given an account of it and the enactment again to her husband, meant that it was available to her in a crafted narrative form, which is probably not likely to have been so accessible without the Playback experience:

> I actually found it, that, that, a very positive thing a few weeks ago when I had, you know, I was speaking to a woman who was not considering treatment – and I could see her sitting there and I was saying "Look I strongly advise that you know you think about this very carefully I can't make the decision for you but you know there

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[178] Trish was also the staff representative on the Health Centre Board.

are positive aspects about seeking treatment you know…" And I could see her sort of sitting there and thinking "Oh yes well what would you know?" You know? You get that vibe…
And um and so I, I actually said to her "Look you know I'll tell you a story…" and I actually told her and she was just blown away, I could see the look of shock on her face – "Look at you" you know "…you don't look like you've had cancer" sort of thing. But it's not plastered on your forehead…and I said "You know just *think* about that when you're thinking about your treatment options that you know it's not the end of your life – you can actually go on after it." So … she's actually now, going to seek treatment – so that's a positive I guess …And so just sharing it with her just made such a difference and I was so pleased" (Puke2 Trish paragraphs 66 – 74)

As I sat in the audience during this story and the performance of it, I was aware that this was the last story in the practical project that was part of my research design, as approved by the District Health Board. It was a resonant moment of the power of live theatre which for me, as for Jill Dolan, "remains…a space of desire, of longing, of loss, in which I'm moved by a gesture, a word, a glance, in which I'm startled by a confrontation with mortality (my own and others')" (2001, p.456).

Why did it seem such a great gift that this was the last story told in my project? Some influential texts in the early years of my becoming an adult included Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*(1954) and Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One*(1965). Each addressed death explicitly, Beckett facing it head on in words which I wrote out and had on the wall above my bed as a sixteen-year-old: "one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? They [in my memory it is always 'we'] give birth astride a grave – the light gleams an instant, then it's dark once more" (Beckett, 1954, p.57). Waugh, on the other hand, delineated in lurid detail the phobia about death in American society (Waugh, 1965). In New Zealand, we regarded this account as laughable, not dreaming that many of the practices it described were about to arrive more explicitly into our own society.[179] Later in my education, studying medieval English, I heard of medieval monks living with a coffin in the room in which they wrote, slept and studied, and I saw paintings of scholars with skulls on

[179] However, we are lucky in this country that living in the presence of the unbroken indigenous tradition of confronting death: such things as the tangi (rituals surrounding death) and the way orators mention the dead in every formal speech has profoundly influenced many practices of New Zealand society.

their desks. I recognized a determination not to let our existential predicament, the irreducible fact of our mortality, be covered over with willed amnesia or sentimentality.

All of this meant that when, early in my Playback practice, I was told by my mentors "If someone tells a story with a death in it, even the death of an animal, they are asking to *see* that death," I had a cognitive framework which enabled me to understand in an integrated way, the rationale and importance of this principle of the audience, teller and performers facing mortality together: "The public is not alive, Heiner Muller said, but potentially dying" (Jans, 2003, p.8). However, I observed stories at conferences, being replayed in ways which skirted past showing the reality of death, and so I followed this concern up in a dialogue I had with Jonathan Fox in Arizona during a Playback Symposium in Tempe Arizona at the beginning of 2005,:

> *FD: So in my Playback lineage I was brought up in Playback that if someone talks in a story about a death or about someone who's died – they're asking to see it and because we live in societies certainly in New Zealand and the US – that are phobic about death – it's something that we don't share enough – the witnessing of death…*
> JF: Okay there's a specific question there and that has to do with the portrayal of death on the stage. And I would agree with you – although there's no – I feel there's no rule about it – there's no rule about any of the aesthetic elements of Playback. But if somebody mentions a death on stage – I mean in their story – then chances are you want to portray that… and that by not portraying it often we're in some way avoiding something that's very important about the story that may have more to do with our own reluctance. (Fox & Day, 2006, p.21)

When I think of people working in health, I see that the fact of death as one of the great imponderables in whose presence they must operate. Yet, perhaps this fact is not frequently spoken about in their working lives. That our Playback work could enable this presence to be thought about, spoken of, embodied, shared, remembered, could be seen as a sign of depth and integrity of the Playback form. Death was not made to disappear, was not to be vanquished, was present; yet the individual and the group members maintained themselves and were able to be present to themselves and each other, in its presence. "What is the nature of the call to witness? According to philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, the call by the other…is the encounter through which, in allowing myself to open, I am opened and am taken beyond myself" (Salverson, 2001, p.34).

Trish's story and its enactment was a liminal moment of witnessing (Broadhurst, 1999), on the threshold between the shared world of here-and-now and the incomprehensibility of individual disappearance.

Pātaka Staff

Over the period of the research, there were three managers of Pātaka and, as at Oranga, the manager with whom the project had been negotiated and who had given consent to it, was no longer there by the time of the practical work being done. In addition, the Centre changed premises which delayed the start of the practical work (as the baseline data from the first patient focus group interview would not have been comparable with the second patient focus group if the project had started before the move, when originally planned.) One consequence of this disjunction and delay was that, although a summary of the project had been provided to the staff members, by the time of the performance it had been forgotten. Consequently, virtually all the staff members in the audience of the Pātaka performance thought that the performers would be enacting the feedback about the Centre and its services which I had obtained in the Patient Focus Groups.

In spite of this misapprehension, the performance was identified by all the audience members as very valuable in terms of their work. Pātaka's staff at the time of the project consisted of the manager, three receptionists (of whom only two attended the performance), three nurses and a larger group of part time doctors. All staff at the performance were female. Marney, one of the doctors who worked in other Centres emphasized the special nature of the staff at Pātaka: "there is a singular commitment um to this place in *spite* [of] everything … the amount of time and commitment that the folks put in is far in excess of what they get paid for …" (Pata1 Marney, Section 0, Paragraphs 23-26). I noted in my record of this interview: "As she says these last words, impression of clarity and depth." Often Marney's communication was somewhat circuitous but here she was uncharacteristically direct and emphatic. This sense of the group of staff as a particular asset of the Centre was echoed by other interviewees and was part of the unique flavour of the performance. As Trish, the nurse who shared so much of herself in the performance, said: "it's like a family, we're such a small team that we need to be - you know, we need to get on, we need to be able to share things …" (Pata1 Trish, Section 41).

All present described how they were able, to some extent, to enter into the open space of disclosure. Manifested in the performance was a process of dialogue, exploration and finally approach to a liminal space of openness to mortality. Even one of the two participants who did not contribute any narratives to the performance obtained a benefit from the session: "I felt a bit as I say a bit closed off to contribute but I wasn't closed off to receiving…I don't feel so alone really" (Pata1 Marian, Section 121, 125). The Playback work was acknowledged by all participants to be valuable to them as individuals, as group members and as a service team.

Performance Elements

Modelling: "It wasn't a stand-off performance, it was part of us"

In interviews, the staff members from Pātaka identified as an important contribution to the performance, the fact that the Playback performing team modelled attitudes and behaviour such as listening and caring, which were important in their own practice.

> … I think the biggest thing for me was the feeling from the people there of warmth towards us and that was what made it, it worked! And it was just something, it was just something you could feel… (Pata1 Norelle, Section 68)

This relates to the skills needed by people in the health professions:

> the physician…, must work to understand the patient's past, her reflections, and the account of her story. The patient as a narrative self within not only a biological but cultural nexus must be explored, comprehended and allowed to participate in the process of healing that is itself a moment of restoration to a state of living healthily by and for the patient. (Hester, 2001, p.79)

The Playback process modelled these skills that the health care staff are required to develop: skills of reflection (Johns, 1999), teamwork, listening, initiating, responding to others' suggestions, caring, cultural openness and clear communication[180]. Some interviewees noted the modelling that was going on. For example, Marney identified some of the team working skills and how she has retained the impression of them as time passed:

> I also, no I don't think I could emulate all of your skills but nevertheless fascinating to see and watch I was really impressed.. And it still sticks and stays months down the line…
> *Interviewer: … so what are the skills that you see … in the performance what were*

[180] This modelling may be capable of giving clear health benefits: Birch (2005, p.34) observed that people who were unwell even received a benefit from *watching* Playback rehearsals or workshops and joining in the "flow of the creative process."

they, what did you notice about their practice?
Marney: Quick thinking, team work, an idea was obviously quickly transmitted so that they were able, other person, workers in the group, to go and do a group performance… …and obviously a group that were close that gells well together… no I thought it was brilliant… … freely able to use the resources they have around them ….
Interviewer: So so the skills that you mentioned, particularly those early ones about the team ... how do you see them relating to the skills that people need to work in a group like this?
Marney: Well we are each of us have a role in the running of this place: you know nurses do their thing, doctors do their thing, receptionists do their thing and if things go wrong,well, understanding what another person has to say, getting on with it … working together cooperatively. That was how your group worked wasn't it? The same kind of idea: I mean latch onto an idea, or a thought, or reflection… get on with it, get on with it… And we think about it you know, so many months down the track, it's strongly still there and I'm very impressed with it. (Puke 2 Marney, Sections 35-43)

She also noted the aspect that was modelled of working within a restricted time frame:

it's so fascinating to see *how* professional folk can interpret something sensitively - well I thought it was done sensitively - and I'd say it was also very time efficient you're right it was all within an hour and I'm thinking well how much of that can I actually bring into my personal practising skills? To bring out certain things and get people - you can move on - or to reach some solutions for themselves? (Puke 2 Marney, Section 35)

Norelle noticed the modelling of listening and caring:

Well it made it feel, I think it enabled people, to be more open because they were obviously open to listening, but also a in a caring way, not just with a, a, not just do their own thing, here's a perfect number, we'll do that one - but it was much more a real feeling of caring that came through from them towards us… (pause)
I think one of the ladies actually had tears in her eyes when they were talking about the sick child and I thought you can see that, you know for her it was as stressful, I don't know if she's got sick children but she was feeling it the same as we all were - so it wasn't a stand off performance, that's what I meant, it was, it was *part* of us rather than us sitting, them performing (Pata1 Norelle, Section 21)

Acting

The acting received accolades from several interviewees, some from people who told stories and had picked someone to play them: "I actually thought that they were quite good - again looking at from what I said, they actually they got me down to a tee, they did and it was very amazing" (Puke 1 Trish, Section 151). Members of the audience observing them agreed: "I thought the words and whoo and I thought "*Whoa - this is impressive"* and I must say that I, I continue to be impressed." (Puke 1 Marney, Section 23)

For Marian, who was very distracted by the difficulties in her own life and also by the phone that kept ringing, some of the acting was difficult to follow:

> Once again I don't think I'm as receptive at the moment as, as, I would be, I feel a bit rundown and tired and all that sort of stuff, and I felt some of it was a little bit out there, I couldn't grasp some of it (Puke 1 Marian, Section 65).

However, she commended Neil's acting in particular: "He he's just incredible yeah he's got a real, a huge personality hasn't he? He's quite comical!" (Pata1 Marian, Section 167).

Traditional Indigenous Music

This performance started with sound in a way that the others had not. After the staff had eaten some salad and bread which we had brought as part of our contribution to the occasion and the performance was going to begin, Marina flew the pūrerehua, a traditional taonga puoro which is like the bull roarer. It is an elliptical piece of shaped wood which when rotated overhead at the end of a piece of string about one metre long, produces a dull thudding whistling sound. Mervyn McLean says of this instrument:

> Throughout the world, bullroarers tend to take the same lanceate or lens-like shape and are played by whirling them on the end of a string to produce a deep humming sound. They are prevalent as esoteric instruments...the instrument proper appears only in Hawaii and New Zealand (1999, p.363)

The pūrerehua was traditionally used as part of storytelling and ritual in Māori culture, to clear spaces and to shift groups of people from their everyday mentality. This musical beginning was developed by Niwa's music in which she used other traditional instruments, which were noted by the audience, especially in Trish's story: "Niwa on the music you know, who was sort of, quite spine chilling with the tangi sort of scene, you know so effective and evocative - oh it was *fantastic*" (Pata1 Kay, Section 171). Again this confirmed the importance of the music in the attainment of an atmosphere of concentration and depth.

Negotiating the Performance

Elly, the Manager at the time of the performance, was new and had only been in the position for a few weeks. A written copy of the research design was provided to each new manager. The previous manager, Lee, had been part of the evolution of the research and had passed on a one-page summary outlining it to the staff several months previously. I made several trips were made to the Centre to recruit patients for the focus groups and at those times very positive relationships were formed with the staff. The

facilitator of the Playback performance, Nerissa, also visited the Manager, discussed with her the possible themes of the performance and saw the performance space.

Information for the Participants

It transpired, however, that most of the staff had never seen the one-page summary of the Playback project, which Lee, the previous manager, had circulated and which I had seen posted on the door of the refrigerator in the tiny staffroom of the premises Pātaka had inhabited before the shift to the new Centre rooms. In addition, someone, possibly Elly, had informed staff that the performance would share the feedback gained from the patient focus groups. This had the effect that throughout the Playback session many of the staff were sitting there waiting for the "real" performance to start:

> I didn't really know what it was all about, except that we were told that they would be playing back the …feedback that you'd got from patients. That's what I thought we were getting. So I kept thinking all the way through it, oh when are we going to get to the *real* bit? Then I realized that that *was* the real bit! (laughs) I kept thinking oh they're just warming up… (Pata1 Isabel, Section 5)

Other staff also had this impression and conveyed it to me during the interviews.

Time and Space Arrangements of the Performance

The performance, like the other two performances in the project, was fitted into a busy workday at lunchtime. The performance space was at the window end of the upstairs staff room of the Centre, and this was a space with an atmosphere of its own: the blinds drawn across the westerly windows of the room grew increasingly bright as the sun descended in the sky and this was used to great effect by the actors, especially in the last part of the performance when Neil as death used his outstretched hands and fingers in silhouette against the bright glow behind. The stairs, the peaked roof and the general sense of being away from the hurly burly of the downstairs work environment all contributed to the performance.

The only erosion of the boundaries of this time/space arrangement was a phone that kept ringing: this kept Marian, one of the receptionists, on edge until she had to go down and check that the correct message was playing:

> Unfortunately I was distracted probably for the first half an hour to a certain degree because our phones – we, I had pre-recorded a message. It's the first time we've closed the surgery since I've been here - pre-recorded a message to say the surgery's closed an alternative 111 and all that sort of stuff, our night service and answerphone, it's playing up a little bit, so, I don't know if you heard it, but for the first… and somebody kept ringing. I mean this is what some of our patients do,

> they just kept ringing, the phone would have rung every three minutes at one stage, so I was very aware of that and I actually had to leave to make sure that the message was getting played. … So I was I was really distracted by that and I, I didn't want to get up and sort of leave but had to in the end to go down and check that message …which was playing but whoever it was just sort of somehow thought "Well I'll just keep ringing" (laugh) "Somebody'll answer it!" you know so… I was just really distracted by that. (Pata1 Marian, Sections 101-107)

Neither Marian nor the other receptionist Norelle contributed narratives during the performance: it is very probable that a measure of anxiety over the arrangements concerning the phone may have contributed to this reticence. Once again, the arrangements of the performance have a profound effect on *what happens*.

The performing group

The performers had again come together and rehearsed especially for the performance. Four had performed previously at the Oranga Centre performance, about nine months before, while one new actor, Karen, the current Artistic Director of Auckland Playback Theatre joined the performing team. She had performed at the first Mt Summer performance to celebrate the beginning of the PHO.

Name	Role in performance	Playback status/ theatre training	Other work
Nerissa Pākehā woman	Facilitator	Former director and founding member Auck Playback. Practitioner Member of IPTN Trained with Jonathan Fox and other founder members of Playback, attended Theatre Action Centre, Sydney, trained with Francis Batten	Psychodrama trainer Independent psychotherapist
Neil Pākehā man	Actor	Former member of Auck Playback Practitioner Member of IPTN Trained in University of Auckland Dip Drama and Melbourne, 1992 Former member of Living Stories, Melbourne Playback company	Psychodrama trainee Full time counselor in government funded agency working with adolescents
Niwa Māori woman	Musician	Former member of Tai Timu which was a funded project of the 1995 Magdalena International Women's Theatre Festival, held in Wellington. Former member of Tiaho, current member of Kāinga Rua Playback	Professional musician in Big Belly Woman, Planet Woman and Pacific Curlz bands

		Attended two Playback Summer Schools run by Christian Penney and Bev Hosking in Paekakariki	
Marina Māori woman	Actor	Former Artistic Director of Tiaho, current member of Kāinga Rua Playback, attended three Playback Summer Schools run by Christian Penney and Bev Hosking in Paekakariki	Free lance film and television director and researcher
Karen Pākehā woman	Actor	Current Artistic Director of Auckland Playback.	Works in Human Rights Commission Former English and drama secondary teacher

Table 8 Performers in the Pātaka performance

Figure 4 Pātaka

The journey of the practitioner

This performance, with its resolute confrontation of death as a constant presence within life, happened in mid 2005, a month before I was to leave New Zealand to travel to Spain with Jackie Williams, a friend and colleague from educational, childrearing and community theatre work in Wellington. We then walked for five weeks and 300 kilometres on the Camino de Santiago, the pilgrimage of St James which is based on an old druid pathway across the northern part of Spain to the Costa del Morte (Coast of Death) on the Atlantic.

We got there, on the day of a solar eclipse, which turned the morning grey and the light thin and otherworldly. In the afternoon though, the sun was gold as we climbed the winding road to the light house, where we sat on rocks and waited for the sunset. The sun seemed to hang for hours in the same place in the sky: we leaned on the rocks, closed our eyes, and talked of all the people who had helped us on our five week journey. It was Jackie who called out to me as the sun was setting "Look, look, dolphins!" and I focused on the sea 300 metres or so below

us where 40 dolphins swam into the lighted path of the sun on the water.

Jackie found out six months after we returned to New Zealand that she was very unwell: she walked the path of her illness just as she had the pilgrimage in Spain, incredibly honest and funny, sometimes cantankerous, very clear about what she wanted and didn't want. Somehow I found that I could travel beside her, behind her, coming and going as I always had. She would ask me, during those last days, "Have you done some reading Fe? How is your study?" Earlier she had got me to tell her what was in every chapter of my thesis. She had accompanied me on this enquiry which would not have been the same without her. I too went to the very last moment with her. *"And even though it all went wrong, I'll stand before the queen of song, with nothing on my tongue but alleluia."* (Cohen 2006) (A longer account of our journeys and work together is contained in Appendix One.)

Chapter Eleven – Unique Limitations and Contributions of Playback

> *…ethnographic fieldwork brings us into direct dialogue with others, affording us opportunities to explore knowledge not as something that grasps inherent and hidden truths but as an intersubjective process of sharing experience, comparing notes, exchanging ideas, and finding common ground….This calls upon the intellectual to resist the tendency to ontologize the results of his or her interpretative activity….The fetishized products of intellectual activity all too often assume a life of their own, reinforcing the illusion that life can be possessed, controlled, captured, and pinned down. (Jackson, 1996, p. 8)*

Contemporary communities and workplaces are frequently described as stressed, depersonalised places where there may be a lack of authentic dialogue and communication (Boyle & Healy, 2003; Brown, 2002; Frankford, Patterson & Konrad, 2000; Marcuse, 1964). Farrell & Geist-Martin assert that technology, which might be supposed to relieve such stress, has actually contributed to it:

> Many factors have been shown to contribute to occupational stress. Living in a technologically advanced era, there is the double bind effect of technology in the workplace to consider. Invented to assist employees in completing work more efficiently, innovations such as the word processor, the personal computer, the fax machine, the photocopier, e-mail, and voice mail have all added stress to employees. (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005, p.545)

Playback Theatre is only one of a possible repertoire of team and professional development options: there are many other methods including web-based and online learning, facilitated group work, tuition, individual coaching (Hipkiss, 2006) and mentoring. However, it is one which enables significant face-to-face dialogue and multi-modal communication. The practical project in this research enquiry highlighted some features of Playback performances which allow it to make a contribution as one of this repertoire of methods to assist people to work and live together, as well as some of the elements which lead to it needing to be employed with great care. In the healthcare settings in which this study took place, some reasons for commissioning these performances might be to support a pressured group to communicate more effectively, understand each other and work together constructively in empowering and non-reactive ways (Hyde, Treacy, Scott, Butler, Drennan, Irving et al., 2005; Kuokkanen, Suominen, Rankinen, Kukkurainen, Savikko & Doran, 2007). Three main features of Playback which facilitated these goals included (but were not limited to): the expression of

emotion, humour and play within a workplace environment, which led to refreshment and relaxation; crafted aesthetic embodied reflections of narratives, allowing diverse viewpoints to be expressed in non-conflictual ways which led to seeing one another differently and thus enhancing teamwork; and the clarifying of values which sometimes enhanced the trust and openness in the group, and sometimes did not. In addition, both emancipatory and existential narratives were able to be expressed and embodied. The main metaphors used by the participants fell into the groups of moving, playing, mythologising, and what I have called en-naturing, en-worlding, by which I mean setting an individual experience in the natural context.

However, limitations of Playback were also revealed by the study: the possibility of misunderstandings; incongruence with the preferred learning and communication styles of some group members; and insufficiency in the unseen elements of Playback training, preparation, rehearsal and networking which are vital to robust practice of these forms. This chapter will first look at contemporary workplaces and the health work environment; then at these these limitations and the suggestions for further research areas. It will then describe the potential contributions which Playback can make to professional development programmes and will finish by reflecting on the research journey in *The Journey of the Practitioner*. In Appendix One, in the section entitled *Notes for Playback Practitioners* **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, a summary of learnings about the practice of Playback which we gained in our practical work, are given.

Openness and time pressures in contemporary workplaces

> *"Do not forget that to weave (tramer, trameare) is first to make holes, to traverse, to work one-side-and-the-other of the warp" (Derrida, translated by Alan Bass cited in Kamuf, 1991, p.168).*

> *Thirty spokes on a cartwheel*
> *Go towards the hub that is the centre*
> *- but look, there is nothing at the centre*
> *and that is precisely why it works!*

> *If you mould a cup you have to make a hollow:*
> *it is the emptiness within it that makes it useful.*

In a house or room it is the empty spaces
- the doors, the windows – that make it useable.

They all use what they are made of
to do what they do,
but without their nothingness they would be nothing.
(Lao Tzu, 1997, p.53)

As workplaces and communities become more complex, finding ways for people to communicate their ideas and feelings openly is often problematic especially when it comes to dealing with those who are different from oneself (La Caze, 2002). As Senge says, "building a culture in which people can express their views…is a huge challenge for most organizations" (Senge, 1998, p.4). Yet, without this climate of open expression of views, organizations run the risk of seriously weakening their practice (Czikszentmihalyi, 2003). The example of the Bristol Royal Inquiry (Dyer, 2001) into infant deaths clearly showed that an open climate needs to be evident at all levels of any system and that a blame-free climate of discussion is a vital aspect of any work environment (see Chapter Six concerning *Teams* **Error! Bookmark not defined.**). The situation at the Bristol Royal Infirmary showed some elements of groupthink, which occurs when members of a team have "critical information that was unknown to other group members and was never discussed" (Cruz, Henningsen & Smith 1999). One contrast to this groupthink is called by Howard Gardner the *ethical mind*, capable of stepping outside of the group consensus:

> Once you have developed an ethical mind, you become more like an impartial spectator of the team, the organization, the citizenry, the world. .. you may have to sacrifice respect for another person if your role as a citizen or worker calls on you to do damage control to protect an idea or institution you believe in.(2007. pp. 52-53)

By allowing people to share divergent views through narratives which are then interpreted and presented aesthetically, Playback offers opportunities to present differing viewpoints in ways which can comment on the taken-for-granted and can potentially facilitate individual and group learning. Issues can be raised in narratives which may be difficult to address in other ways: as when Henry at Oranga told a brief narrative about his level of distress, which was then replayed and which led to specific behavioural changes in his colleages. In addition because emotional material such as this is shared, empathy with others in the team is increased, which leads to greater ability to enter into the robust discussions and debates that are needed in most workplaces as paradigm shifts occur and "the old…set of cherished beliefs and

principles – is … called into question by the new forces. …a period of crisis exists in which conflicting ideas and principles do metaphorical battle" (Seedhouse, 1998, p.xii). Playback potentially creates an opportunity for these contesting viewpoints to be openly expressed and attended to in a facilitated, non-confrontational forum.

The pressure of time is likely to be one of the significant difficulties to be addressed when organising workplace team development sessions and here also Playback may prove to be effective in that it is capable of accomplishing a great deal in a compressed time frame, since it uses facilitated group communication and multi-modal aesthetic communication. Interviewees noted this aspect: "Well I think … everything that needed to be covered would have been …It was very busy, but I think fitted in everything that we needed in that hour..." Within this compressed time frame, many different purposes and types of narrative can be expressed.

Aspects of Life and Emotion in Community Healthcare Centres

> As I worked on the practical research project – our performances and the subsequent interviews, I read a 2001 article from Fitzpatrick, Bunevich & Jones who described how in an acute-care hospital in the U.S., Playback Theatre had been used as part of a *Caregiver's Careshop* which aimed to "allow participants to feel free to experience and express a variety of emotions and techniques to help them cope" with the stress caused by the demands of their work lives, noting that: "despite the prevalence of educational offerings available to staff on topics of stress management, time management and healthy living, a missed opportunity for staff to experience a sense of peace first-hand was identified" (2001, p.244). Playback was found by Fitzpatrick, Bunevich and Jones to be able to offer this experience. A similar sense of a shared common emotional experience was referred to frequently in the Oranga and Pātaka interviews. This sharing of emotion enables the "emotional gift economy of an organization" (Fineman, 2006, p.307) where people go beyond the routine tropes of their role descriptions to be both visible and experienced as people make acts of interpretation and action in telling each other about their experiences.
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> In the Playback Theatre work that formed the practical project which this thesis describes, many interpretations had to do with difficulties and incongruities of health care practice and the demands of the bureaucratic context, as in the stories of the managers at both Ngākau and Oranga. These difficulties were accompanied by emotion: Dougherty and Drumheller (2006), in their discussion of the part emotions play in organizational life, draw attention to the role of emotion in sensemaking which, "occurs when there is a shock to the organizational system that either produces uncertainty or ambiguity [*sic*]" (p. 216). In acknowledgement of the role of emotion in organizational coherence, particularly in settings which require emotional restraint, Shuler and Sypher (2000) suggest that "as 'emotional stewards,' managers need to ensure that felt emotions are not unduly suppressed to the point of stressful consequences" (p.84).

In many organizations, even though statements supporting professional development for staff have been made, the need for concrete, collaborative and time-efficient methods of education and group facilitation is urgent. The following statement concerns primary healthcare organizations but it could be applied to many employment contexts

> Not only do primary care practitioners need new, updated and improved skills, they also need to learn to work together in new ways with increased collaboration and effective teamwork. The nature of primary care is changing and old isolated ways of working need to be replaced by new collaborative models. (Pullon & McKinlay pp. 267-268)

Playback is uniquely able to address many of such needs.

Situating this project in my own educational work

> *We live in a time when otherwise intelligent people become total careerists within tightly defined disciplines, and breaking out of that terrible straitjacket of genre is crucial. We in the arts need to discover what comes of a full commitment to what only art can teach. This sounds circular but is not. We must overcome the tyranny of small ambition.(Mac Wellman, in Lang, Wellman & Munk, 2000, p.43)*

During the time of this research, I have also been practising as an educator in a university learning development centre, working with a very wide range of students as they improve their academic practice. Up until 30 years ago, relatively small numbers of any generation (in most countries of the world) expected to have a tertiary education. In the twenty-first century, however, this has changed as technology has caused a major transformation of work and therefore of the skills required of workers. My work in learning development has led to my being well placed to witness some of the pressure points caused by this change. Many current students come from groups who have had little tradition of tertiary study in the western higher education system – and they may therefore be intimidated by the institutions in which they find themselves. This intimidation has usually started many years earlier. Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes how:

> when some Maori students start asking "why" in school, they start getting into trouble. They are often never taught to ask, why? The ones who challenge are actually the ones who, in the end, get through with better grades because, in their challenging they're actually engaging in arguments and they're learning the content of the course. (Hawke and Morrison 1994 pp. 24 – 26)

Feelings of not belonging close down people's learning capacities and make their beginning at the institution harder than it needs to be. Action methods can be used to "warm up" students to themselves, each other and the new setting in which they find themselves (Harrison-Pepper, 1999), undertake writing tasks (Doherty, 1996) and also help them reflect critically on quite complex topics, such as academic theory. In action methods, students move, talk, engage with each other, draw on their own experiences and enter into a world of narrative and symbol which embodies the world of abstract conceptualising. When students interact like this, several things happen.

> "In acting and speaking people[181] show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice. This disclosure of "who" in contradistinction to "what" somebody is - their qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings - is implicit in everything somebody says and does. It can literally be hidden only in complete silence and perfect passivity… (Arendt 1958, pp. 179 – 180)

It is very interesting in terms of this idea of action and disclosure of being to look at what happens in higher education lecture theatres. In many cases students are required to remain in a state of *complete silence and perfect passivity*... almost as if their teachers wanted to see the "what" but not the "who" of the individuals in front of them while, on the other hand, the lecturer is fully visible to the class. To counteract this passivity which, in these earliest moments of being in the university has the potential to cut down on the learning which can occur, when I encounter students who have come to gain academic skills to help them survive, I have found that using action exercises helps them to become more fully present, more refreshed and more engaged in the learning.

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[181] Sexist language modified, original follows: ""In acting and speaking men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice. This disclosure of "who" in contradistinction to "what" somebody is - his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings … is implicit in everything somebody says and does. It can literally be hidden only in complete silence and perfect passivity, but its disclosure can almost never be achieved as a wilful purpose, as though one possessed and could dispose of this "who" in the same manner he has and can dispose of his qualities. On the contrary. it is more than likely that the "who" which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person themselves, like the daimon in Greek religion, which accompanies each man throughout his life, always looking over their shoulder from behind and thus visible only to those he encounters." Arendt 1958 pp. 179 - 180

Living Atlas

One such exercise I ask students to engage in I call "Living Atlas" - it is a kind of enactment of one aspect of the students' histories: I delineate a world atlas in the whole lecture theatre and then ask the students to move to the part of the world that they see themselves as *coming from*[182]. Once there, I suggest that they introduce themselves to two other people who are standing nearby and to share names, programmes of study and anything else that they want to. After they have talked together for a few minutes, I facilitate someone from each part of the world to speak to the whole class about who they are, where they are from and what they are studying[183].

This personal connection is only one of several things that happen when the students place themselves in this way. Another is that it becomes very clear to everyone, including me, what a wide variety of cultural backgrounds we have represented in the group which assists all to be aware of each other and in particular the better prepared students to tolerate a higher level of help to other students than they otherwise might. In addition, as I observe the class, I am able to see the extraverts, the introverts, and make a beginning social analysis of the group. Also, of course, the students have had a chance to talk and to interact both in dyads and with the group as a whole and I, as teacher, am indicating that I see them as having something valuable to offer each other. Throughout this exercise, the students are given permission to be visible and audible - often I have to break into their animated conversatios when I think enough time has been given to their social connections. Action methods, by giving students a chance to move out of passivity into action, with its Arendtian quailities of beginning and revelation, offer an opportunity for students and teachers alike to experience *communitas*, the name Victor Turner gives to the "modality of human interrelatedness" which can " 'play' across all structural systems....Thus, in the workshop, village, office,

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[182] It is up to them how they interpret coming from: whether it means their current home or some kind of ancestral or personal connection to an important place.

[183] Incidentally, I tend to start with Aotearoa and place the northernmost part of Aotearoa, Cape Reinga, at one side of the "stage" area of the lecture theatre, and to work across to the other side to show the southernmost part, Stewart Island. The Pacific I locate in the middle front part of the lecture theatre. In the left aisle are Australia, India, Sri Lanka, Africa, further to the left back are South East Asia, China, Korea and Japan while over in the right aisle are North and South America, The United Kingdom and Europe. The hope is that this grouping enables the Mäori and Pasifika students present in the group to be acknowledged as significant, in an unobtrusive way. This also redraws the atlas and, appropriately for Aotearoa New Zealand, varies the placing of which countries are identified as central and which marginal.

lecture-room, theatre, almost anywhere people can be subverted ... into an atmosphere of communitas"(Turner, 1982, p.45). Turner describes *communitas* as "an unmediated relationship between historic, idiosyncratic, concrete individuals....*communitas* preserves individual distinctiveness... (Turner, 1982 p. 45). Using action methods to assist students to reveal their *individual distinctiveness* is one way, I would suggest, for educators to retain in large group teaching the kind of informality and personal supportiveness which is the hallmark of one-to-one and small group tuition.

Requiring physical movement and interrupting the expectations of students within a lecture environment by inviting them to take part in action methods thus has a great variety of effects. I have only talked of some of them here: how action reveals the "who" rather than the "what" of students; the way that in action the people's personalities and cultural roles will show themselves, thus assisting the teacher to have some idea of what the learning needs of the individuals and sub-groups within the class may be; and the possible achievement of community through allowing individuals to be visible and breaking the anticipated structure[184]. These positive effects have made the effort of training in and learning these methods eminently worthwhile for me as an educator. They also added motivation for the enquiry of this research project, as I strove to understand more exactly what happens for people who are part of action methods sessions.

Limitations of this Study

Three main limitations attached to the conditions of this study. **First**, the environment of the Playback sessions had not been actively sought by the three health centres in which the Playback performances occurred: therefore, the performances were taking place in an anomalous setting. As Donald Schein asserts "*the way in which we enter a ...relationship* [italics added] with a client is in itself a major intervention that must be evaluated as an intervention, not just as a method of gathering information." (1995, p.15). To some extent, this limitation was attendant on the needs to obtain ethical approval to interview the members of an audience: the setting needed to be specified

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[184] There are other applications as when, for example, I found that often students who were more confident with academic writing would sabotage the writing support sessions which I was asked to give to their classes: once I started to use a continuum at the beginning of the session and invite those who were inexperienced or worried to speak, this sabotage largely stopped.

ahead of time. However, it meant that the intrinsic first layer of the relationship had been invented by the researcher in consultation with the three managers of the Centre, rather than coming from them as commissioners of the performances, to the performing group. In spite of this, however, the interviewees were in a similar situation to most participants in professional development sessions, of simply being offered a novel way to participate in team development sessions, which someone at some level of the organization has deemed a good idea: thus the range of positions that we experienced, varying from enthusiasm to suspicion, may be expected in most audiences.

A **second** limitation of this study is that the group of three health care centres and five performances might be seen to represent a small sample. I do not introduce the findings of the research as predictive constructs but more as Michael Jackson suggests: "an invitation to appraise generalizating as a "tool for conviviality," as a way of mediating conversations and social relations (Illich 1973)…"(Jackson, 1996, p.19). I contribute the findings as part of ongoing conversations about organizations, about the needs of primary health care staff, about learning, about performance and about Playback. The 32 individual interviews and seven focus group interviews that I undertook provided rich data, as did the three interviews with Playback practitioners from the original New York Playback company (see Appendix Three on page 448) and the discussions both recorded and unrecorded within the performing group.

A **third** limitation concerns the performance group, drawn as it was from two separate companies. Though all had at least seven years of Playback experience, both companies being part of the International Playback Theatre Network (IPTN)[185], and they had rehearsed and performed together in other venues in preparation for these performances, still this is different from a company that rehearses together over many years. The need to combine the companies highlighted for me how hard it is to create a culturally pluralist performing group: unconscious norms about how to prepare, manage time, place and personnel prove very strong and keep these two companies very distinct in character and organization, even though they have a number of members in common. Yet the project also highlighted how vital such a pluralist company can be to practice in a culturally and socially diverse society.

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[185] Though Auckland Playback Theatre had let its membership lapse for several years.

Recommendations for further research

This enquiry highlighted areas for future research. These include;

- A more detailed enquiry into the role of Playback facilitator. I have suggested publication of Mary Good's Psychodrama thesis (Good, 1986), but in addition I think a phenomenological study of facilitating in Playback would add to the field.
- An exploration into the part played in Playback by the music. Our project showed the important contribution made by the music in a daytime workplace performance. An investigation into the process of performing music in Playback would be valuable and very interesting. Descriptions and analyses of different rehearsal processes; or a phenomenological account of audiencing music in Playback; or an account of being a Playback musician and the demands on the whole being of the musician (which is one of the ways that being a musician in Playback is different from most other musical assignments) would all be productive avenues of research.
- An account of rehearsing in Playback. The notion of *rehearsing* is very different in Playback from most theatre rehearsals, having more in common perhaps with the rehearsal process that jazz musicians engage in (Chari, 2001; Hatch, 1999; John, Grove & Fisk, 2006; Sansom, 2001). A group of performers could undertake such a study together; someone could ethnographically explore the rehearsal processes of several different Playback groups;[186] or the phenomenological account Nick Rowe has given in his thesis and book of telling and performing in Playback rehearsal could usefully be expanded on.
- An investigation into alternative methods of gaining audience feedback. I am suggesting in this thesis that audience feedback mechanisms need to be explored: where once the cup of tea at the end of a performance was seen as fulfilling the purpose of making space for feedback to be given, in my view more deliberate processes might generate more useful information. Just as in revolutionary Russia, the relationship between audience and performers was explored with passion and commitment, so Playback, having opened the dialogue, in my view needs to be prepared to seek the more critical, less satisfied voices because in their reactions and insights lies a great deal of learning.

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[186] Taking in crucial moments such as a member leaving or arriving, the group preparing or reflecting on a performance, dealing with conflict or the formation of sub-groups, new facilitators developing, company renewal and so on.

Situation of the practical project

This practical project took place within a larger performance practice: other performances occurred and were reflected on during the years of this study, as well as Playback and theatre practice going back for many years. The other Playback work that was delivered during the years of this research project is presented here: the items in bold represent the performances which were part of the present study.

When	Context	My role	Data gathering
Dec 2000	Hokianga	Facilitator/ teacher	Journal writing
Jan 01	Tuai	Facilitator	Journal writing
Jan 02	Te Purengi	Facilitator/ teacher	Journal/discussion
Dec 02	**PHO celebration party**	**Facilitator/ researcher**	**Journal writing** **Discussion with performers**
Jan 03	Te Purengi	Facilitator/ teacher	Journal/discussion
Feb 03	**Ngākau Health Centre**	**Facilitator/ researcher**	**Journal writing** **Discussion with performers**
Apr 03	Te Purengi and Tuai	Facilitator/teacher	Journal Writing Discussion with performers
Dec 03	**Ngākau Health Centre**	**Facilitator/ researcher**	**Video of performance** **Individual interviews Dec03/Jan 04 and Dec 04/Jan 05**
Sep 04	National Council of Churches	Facilitator	Journal writing Discussion with performers
Nov 04	**Oranga Health Centre**	**Researcher/ observer**	**Video of performance** **Individual interviews December 04 and July 05**
Apr 05	Disabled People's Conference	Facilitator	Journal writing Discussion with performers
Jul 05	**Pātaka Health Centre**	**Researcher/ observer**	**Video of performance** **Individual Interviews August 05 and April 06**
Nov 05a	Auckland Playback Public performance	Musician	Journal writing

Nov 05b	World Kindness Day Te Purengi Marae	Facilitator/ researcher	Video of performance Performer discussion Journal
Sept 06	Auckland Playback Public performance	Actor	Journal writing Performer discussion
Nov 06	Auckland Playback Public Performance	Musician	Journal writing Performer discussion
May 07	Auckland Playback Public Performance	Musician	Journal writing Performer discussion
June 07	Auckland Playback Public Performance	Facilitator	Journal writing Performer discussion

Table 9 showing the Playback performances during the research period.
(Those in bold type were the ones that formed part of Te Kupu Whakaahua, the practical project of this research enquiry)

The experiences in all of these performances have been formative[187] and have contributed to the conclusions I draw in this chapter and throughout the thesis, concerning limitations and contributions of Playback as a tool to assist communication in interdisciplinary teams. Thus, the data from the performances in the project was supplemented by insights from other contexts.

Caveats around Playback practice

The process of this research highlighted some limitations in Playback practice. I take full responsibility for my part in the imperfections of the practice we did and additionally acknowledge with thanks the effectiveness and sometimes brilliance of my Playback colleagues: while also suggesting that the lessons from failures as well as successes may be of interest to others. My sense of the limitations are expressed here as needs or growing edges for Playback practice.

[187] As have those from my previous Playback experience which began in 1986.

Need to develop pluralist performing groups

In our practical project at Ngākau one teller experienced being seriously misinterpreted and this is something that can always happen with Playback Theatre, characterized as it is by Rowe as: "an improvised form – one that requires a heightened awareness of the moment − because improvisation can allow the greatest possibility of hermeneutic play, of an explosion of meanings and perspective" (2005, pp. 252-253). The fact that there is this play of interpretation was identified by Rowe as one of the sources of the need to be very aware in Playback of the ethics of the practice because "playback does not proceed from the narrative of an autonomous, unified self. Playback performers do not replicate any such narrative, rather they respond to it through multiple subject positions. No one perspective is usually dominant in that response" (2005, p. 309). There is therefore a need to be able to provide as diverse as possible a set of 'subject positions' in the company: this leads to the requirement for Playback companies to scrutinise the composition of their groups in all the vectors of diversity and also to attend to the ability for all members to actively voice their points of view. Specifically in this case, in terms of our performing group, decisions were made in subsequent performances to ensure that there were Pākehā as well as Māori actors and that a male actor joined the team.

Need to develop Playback rituals for debriefing and development

The only way Playback practice in any group is going to progress, is by having difficult discussions with each other and encouraging rigorous self-criticism. In looking at the practices needed for Playback to be delivered reliably, I suggest that Playback theorists could usefully publish accounts on their ways of accomplishing this. Companies too could profitably share and evolve recommendations for *rituals* to be used to ensure that they are challenging themselves to grow and develop in the aspects of their practice that are difficult, particularly in terms of audience experience and cultural pluralism. In the companies I have worked with, this debriefing is commonly done discursively: in my view publication of some ideas about ritualising debriefing and learning from performances would be a very constructive addition to Playback theory.

Need to develop avenues for audience feedback

The opportunity to interview audience members unearthed some responses to Playback which were likely not to have been shared spontaneously. Such responses are needed for the dialogical process within Playback to be a genuine and not feigned one; to offset the danger that Playback performers may commodify the audience narratives and in

doing so, exploit the audience. Therefore, in my view, there is a need to assist audiences to be more in the relaxed attention of epic theatre and less in an entranced state. Only if an interruption is absolutely welcomed by performers, will participants speak out to say that what is happening is not accurate. If this is not done, as happened with Teresa in our Ngākau performance, audience members can be alienated and left dissatisfied and feeling misrepresented. The use of written surveys may seem paradoxical, since Playback affirms the primacy of oral communication, but still in some situations, such as workplace performances, may provide some useful information[188]; while telephone interviews, as used by Dennis (2004) and Wright (2002) represent real possibilities for gathering ongoing formative feedback, as does an optional facilitated audience postshow session for audience members who are interested (Goodwin, 2004). The informal post-show cup of tea is likely only to elucidate the approving comments in my experience: for the disquieting ones to be shared, they need to be actively sought.

Need for all performers to seek counselling training

The depth of stories elicited by Playback suggests that the more people in the company who have some form of counselling or group process training, the more trustworthy the group will become in its orientation to the audience. In the course of this research, Judy Swallow indicated that all members of the original Playback company were encouraged to train in psychodrama, through free training hours generated by Jonathan Fox. To me, this is a more significant detail than the current accounts of the genesis of Playback allow. In my view, while both psychodrama and sociometry have useful contributions to make to Playback, the overall requirement to gain some kind of group process or counselling training may be more important than specifying a particular modality, since contextual opportunities will vary so widely from place to place.[189] At present this responsibility is emphasised for the facilitator only in Playback: I would recommend the requirement be extended so that all company members endeavour to gain these skills as they develop in their Playback work.

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[188] While always bearing in mind that in our project, audience members who were perhaps most attached to their high level of skills with reading and writing were those who are least appreciative of the difference of Playback as a means of communication ie. written feedback may need to be supplemented with graphic or spoken options.

[189] In New Zealand, psychodrama is costly in terms of both time and money while other modalities of counselling and groupwork training may be more easily obtained.

Need for a more structured form of training and accrediting Playback facilitator/conductors

The apprenticeship model, with the New York Centre for Playback acting as the home of training, is, in my view, no longer sufficient to meet the need of Playback facilitators. At present, central to the development of Playback is an apprenticeship model of training, with the Centre for Playback Theatre delivering a yearly programme of training workshops. However, for people without the funds or time to support attendance at the School[190] or living in places far from New Paltz, access to training can be a problem.[191] I suggest that the apprenticeship model needs development into a global decentralised framework of training and accreditation. IPTN is in a good position to assist in this by its nascent network of companies and practitioners, in association with the three members of the original Playback company still practising.

Coordinated but decentralised methods of training and accrediting facilitators and performers would strengthen both the theory and practice of Playback. This would also provide people seeking to commission Playback services with acknowledged quality standards. Distance education combined with practical demonstration via online digital video could be a practical beginning, alongside the processes of regional mentoring and peer tuition, which are growing in many regions.

Need for quality processes

The limitations of the Playback form are mainly to do with the quality of the work done by the performing group. There is an international community of Playback practitioners (IPTN): for information on this see Appendix Two. A problem of what we called

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[190] A five day Core Training costs $750 US in 2007. (This includes accommodation and some meals.) While this represents perhaps not an extravagant fee, the travel from New Zealand costs approximately $1638 US. The New Zealand-based training associated with the Centre for Playback Theatre costs $1525 NZ. Though certainly not unwarranted, these costs currently limit the clientele able to take advantage of the trainings. While there are significant scholarship programmes, probably only a small proportion of the people worldwide who are now developing Playback practice can afford to go to these courses.

[191] . For this reason the Libra Project of the Centre raises funds for scholarships to the school or the arrangement of Playback training in specific places (currently New Orleans, Angola and Burundi – see Centre for Playback Theatre, 2007). However, the relationship of benefactor and beneficiary is not necessarily a helpful one: it might be more important for the equitable healthy worldwide development of Playback is to organize less costly forms of training.

Runaway Playback[192] during the time when I was on the International Playback Theatre Network Board, arises when people set themselves up to perform Playback with little or no training. Currently, a protocol exists whereby members of the international Playback network are encouraged to go to performances by these groups, get to know the people and engage in open dialogue with them, endeavouring to bring them into IPTN. In a recent article, available online Jonathan Fox states a concern that:

> relates to newcomers to playback who think they know more than they do. Here is an example: A school teacher takes a two-day introduction to playback. Then the [playback] instructor hears that this teacher is teaching [playback] to students. The …instructor feels uneasy, since she knows that the teacher does not yet know enough playback to teach it safely and responsibly. She feels she has perpetrated an unethical practice. She resents the teacher for not understanding how much time it takes to build up a secure [playback theatre] identity.
> The preferred course of action is patiently to nurture a connection with this teacher, so that she will see the wisdom of taking more training. At the same time, I think it is a good idea at the end of an introductory workshop to distribute a written statement of ethical practice, perhaps as part of a resource list. This statement should caution against moving too fast as a [playback theatre] practitioner before obtaining a solid grounding in all aspects of the practice. (Fox, 2005)

As a matter of business practice, people wanting to commission Playback groups need to enquire about their training, membership of IPTN and to request references from previous clients. As with any service group, this is a way of ensuring that the group being employed are reliable practitioners. Most Playback companies already have a collection of references that have been voluntarily provided by clients.

Need for a publication programme for Playback

Without a publication programme, the theoretical discourse around Playback, which is still a new and undertheorised creative form, seems somewhat ad hoc and random in its develoment. The work would be strengthened by having an international editorial board which could assist IPTN to maintain coordinated, annotated bibliographies and online databases of articles; discuss priorities and publication focus for the IPTN journal *Interplay,* as well as other articles, books and films; and recommend themes for conferences and symposia, both regional and international. Ideally this board could work with three members of the original Playback company who are still practising and other groups of trainers, perhaps arranging for the development to publication of essays written as part of Playback training; and also seek a pluralist group with translation

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[192] Sometimes called *Rogue Playback,* a name I dislike because of its dehumanising connotations (of mad animals, cheats, outlaws...)

subcommittees to continue to support the development of a global Playback discourse.[193] Theory is important because, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserts:

> At the very least it helps make sense of reality. It enables us to make assumptions and predictions about the world in which we live. It contains within it a method or methods for selecting and arranging, for prioritising and legitimating what we see and do. Theory enables us to deal with contradictions and uncertainties. Perhaps more significantly, it gives us space to plan, to strategize, to take greater control over our resistances. The language of a theory can also be used as a way of organising and determining action. (1999, p.38)

This list of the limitations of Playback also represents a list of action suggestions to strengthen and develop Playback praxis in a worldwide community of practitioners and theorists: enacting theory and describing, sharing and analysing our practice: to develop our theoretical concepts still further. Through this enquiry, specific contributions of Playback also became apparent.

Unique contributions of Playback as a tool to enhance group communication

> *"The most effective training programs are catalytic – creating a very new experience, getting you thinking 'out of the box.' (Senge 1996, p.3)*

Visibility and narrative

Playback opened up a space for people who live or work together to reveal themselves to each other through their speaking as they told about their experience in ways that did not routinely occur in their day-to-day lives. Many of the people interviewed spoke about an opening action: "Kay started the ball rolling with with being *incredibly* open about where she was at and followed straight afterwards by Nandita who followed suit … the two of them made themselves so vulnerable…" (Pata1, Isabel, Section 73).

The chance to tell one's own story in a facilitated narrative is not a common one in a world which for many people is saturated with other people's stories. The Playback facilitator helps audience storytellers to formulate their experiences in narrative form if

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[193] It is important to acknowledge the important work already done in working towards this goal by the editors of Interplay: Jonathan Fox, Deborah Pearson and Robyn Bett, Nick Rowe and now Rea Dennis.

this is needed. This form helps the audience to make meaning because, as Crossley asserts:

> Everything experienced by human beings is made meaningful, understood and interpreted in relation to the primary dimension of "activity": this incorporates both "time" and "sequence". In order to define and interpret "what" exactly has happened on any particular occasion, the sequence of events is of extreme importance. (Crossley, 2000, p. 10)

The facilitator is there to assist people to move out of passivity: Somers (2006), states that:

> we do need to encourage critical appraisal in our audiences…to give them the skills which allow them to become creators of their own stories, thereby countering the increasing tendency for them to be mere receivers of the stories of others. (pp. 348-349)

The experience of having moved into the active storyteller role was a positive one for most of the tellers: one from Pātaka saying "I got very positive feedback from other people who also said … 'I know *exactly* how that wasn't just *you* up there that was me too'" This aspect of enabling colleagues to give sucpport to each other was emphasized by others: at Ngākau, a staff member said: "It made us feel closer to our GPs cause we kind of wanted to nurture and protect them…" At Oranga, all the staff reported changing the way they interacted with the manager, based on the level of stress he had revealed during the Playback:

> he is under a lot of stress and he's doing a very good job and so you know if something comes up … after that performance I have to say I've been not going to Henry as often with problems …

While some group members may have skills with written language, the kind of writing engaged in at work will more often be analytical than narrative: moreover in a pluralist, interdisciplinary group, there will be some members (as this project showed) who will appreciate the support given to expressing values and making inputs through narratives which can easily draw on what Conquergood describes as "all the local, regional, vernacular, naïve knowledges at the bottom of the hierarchy…the nonserious ways of knowing that dominant culture neglects, excludes, represses, or simply fails to recognize" (2002, p.146).

Multiple levels of attending and witnessing are exercised throughout Playback performances. The group becomes an audience and thus released from its accustomed

group dynamics. In this regard, as interviewees noted, it is an advantage to have a facilitator from outside the group:

> I think it's much more neutral, the person's very skilled at it and I couldn't see it working if you had someone from the staff doing it. Yes…it puts everybody on a level playing field
> Yeah I think the facilitation was good, people were able, yeah, talk freely and sort of they open out their emotions and … people less afraid to come into it… the person is sort of neutral isn't sort of known …you know, so it's common to everybody there to sort of contribute equally … so all team members in the same boat…

The individual who tells a story is witnessed as a multi-dimensional person, as they present themselves physically in their appearance and non-verbal communication; select the words to embody their story; reveal their selective emphases of memory and value; and finally are visible to the audience as they attend to the enactment of their story. The externalisation of their narrative and then being able to witness its enactment can be very useful to people: in a recent article, Benedict Carey reports how Joan Didion thought about writing an autobiographical play "about mourning the death of her husband and her daughter, 'I would need to locate the dissonance between the person I thought I was and the person other people saw.'" (2007, p.3) Carey reports how configuring one's memories as enacted narratives can be highly influential on the way a person sees themselves and functions in their life:

> There is a kind of give and take between life stories and individual memories…the way people replay and recast memories, day by day, deepens and reshapes their larger life story…Seeing oneself as acting in a movie or a play is not merely fantasy or indulgence; it is fundamental to how people work out who it is they are, and may become. (Carey, 2007, pp.2, 3)

This is one of the ways in which the space of attending and witnessing in Playback is helpful. As well as the audience attending, the performing group attends deeply to the audience, demonstrating highly developed listening and observing skills: part of their training and rehearsal is in conscious listening to both what is and is not said. Dennis in her 2004 thesis on Playback Theatre pairs listening with risking and shows how both alternate for all participants in the Playback event:

> The interaction between risking and listening requires a certain kind of sharing that represents an experience of community where Self and Other are juxtaposed. The *Self* is engaged as *I* anticipate and act, as *I* take up the offer to risk. The *Other* is evoked by *my* interest in them and *my* commitment to listen. (Dennis, 2004, p.275)

The actors watch and listen as audience members risk telling and participating; then the actors take risks as the audience listens and attends. Peter Wright uses the term "witnessing" for this deep attention that audience and performers alternately practise:

> Because witnessing is dynamic, it activates the inner experiences of the audience [and I would add, the performers]. This further develops feelings of community…empathy with the teller…and the 'red thread' that links stories together across a performance (Wright, 2002, p. 276)

This witnessing of stories is influential. Looking at the power of narrative to influence health professionals to actively help patients, Trzebinski (2005) found that people were significantly more likely to take action to assist people after hearing a story than if facts were presented in a categorical or decontextualised way. Throughout the whole Playback process, the facilitator is required to attend, to the limit of their own capacities, to all that is going on in the occasion (and outside it). Fox writes about the demands of this kind of attending:

> The conductor is 'in' the performance but because his or her continual responsibility is to achieve metalevel understanding of each moment of the performance experience, this trance is of a different nature than that of the actors'. In my experience the aftermath is likely to be more tenacious, often lasting up to 24 hours afterwards. It is as if the effort required to master such paradoxical duties as boundary-setter and truth-seeker, enchanter and explainer, drama-bringer and social talker takes a special toll. (1986, pp. 136-137)

Expression of emotion, humour and play

One of the features of Playback most noted in the research interviews was the playful and humorous atmosphere: "I loved the humour because I think that's so essential in probably any workplace really … I mean it releases good chemicals in the body, and you can feel better…" Brian Boyd describes how human development depends on emotional and communicative turn-taking, in terms that theorists of attachment (Bowlby 1982) and philosophy of mind (Melser 2004) also emphasize:

> For the first six months, infants have a love affair with human faces, voices, and touch. By about eight months, parent-infant "protoconversations" set the scene for the special nature of human sociality and for art: multimedia performances using eyes and faces, hands and feet, voice and movement, in rhythmic finely-attuned turntaking and mutual imitation, involving elaboration, exaggeration, repetition and surprise…(Boyd, 2005, pp.8-9)

The ways in which play, performance, humour, emotion and dialogic learning are integrally related are highlighted in this description. Yet, even though "emotions are an integral and inseparable part of …organizational life" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995) and are beginning to be explored (Ashkanasy, Hartel & Zerbe, 2000; Brown, 2002; Goleman, 1995), the emotional dimensions of people in the workplace are sometimes seen as problematic "emotion's location indeed [being] the liminal space that ancient Greek philosophy strove to negate through the separation of soul and body" (Deslandes, 2004, p.339). This remains, even in an era when much of management theory has affirmed the

importance of treating employees as human beings, in the light of the Hawthorne studies "whereby industry learned that human beings become less productive when treated like machines" (Brown, 2002, p.19). How people are treated is even more important in emotion-laden organizations, which Boyle and Healy (2003) describe:

> Defining characteristics of emotion-laden organizations includes [*sic*] the centrality of emotional labor, whether or not an organization is awash with emotion on a daily basis, and the degree to which service delivery is about dealing with or processing life-changing events such as birth, death or divorce. Examples of such emotion-laden organizations include those working directly on the body, such as health services… (p.355)

An emphasis on the value of individuals is needed as work and community environments become more saturated with media: "The changing nature of work presents employees in contemporary organizations with unique health challenges such as burnout, workaholism, stress, telecommuting, and the emotions that surround these issues" (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005, p.554).

However, work places and organizations do not have to accept this level of distress: and the expression of emotionality, humour and play can assist in relieving tensions and allowing seemingly intractable problems, such as a manager's stress or the confrontation with mortality, to be broached. Raimundo suggests that through "experiential and ludic methods the mind can develop healthier and more appropriate reparatory mechanisms to compensate … incomplete or damaged structures" (Raimundo, 2002, p.50).

Playback makes space for emotion to be present in ways which help participants to make meaning of what is being communicated. One interviewee at Ngākau said: "I saw another view another way of explaining how people are feeling about their work. Rather than just hearing it, yeah, so it was there, actually played out in front of your eyes." The ludic aspects of Playback emerge through its embodiment and also the ways in which meanings are played with: as Rowe says

> the most interesting playback is that which is a little irreverent, which plays, sometimes almost parodies, the meanings that may be attributed to the teller's story. … Effective playback, through the processes of hermeneutic play, loosens the 'ties' of the story, opens up other possible interpretations and reveals the means through which we make sense of our experience. (Rowe, 2004, pp.320-321)

However, some audience members may be less able to enter into play or may be hurt by it: humour and emotion can be both constructive and unsettling (Tracy, Myers & Scott 2006, Holmes & Hay, 1997). Sometimes mistakes will be made in interpretation and the *perturbation* must be faced:

> As arts educators [and practitioners], it is our responsibility to inquire into and become familiar with the dynamics of the creative process (whilst remaining naïve, in many ways, to the variety of its manifestations). For this reason, perturbation — uncertainty, vulnerability, unpredictability, trepidation, concern — must be admitted as dynamics within any arts-based inquiry. Among the most powerful of perturbations are emotion and feeling. (Wright, 2005, p.4)

The very elements of Playback that make it an asset to the learning and enhanced functioning of a group, also make it a risky example of Bakhtin's carnival which, while rooted in political realities (Brandist 1996), includes "exaggeration and excess…In particular carnival exaggerates the body, both its functions and its visual presence" (Janack, 2006, p.202). In the face of this carnivalesque element, ethics and politics become important. One actor's comment on the way to the Ngākau performance "Ooh those nurses in the back row" betrayed a politics of stereotyping, perhaps fear and objectifying, which later perhaps contributed to the pain and distress experienced by the senior nurse when her story was reflected back comically and (to her) obscenely. Nick Rowe emphasizes:

> An ethical disposition to the 'other' in playback performances is illustrated by Susan Evans and William Layman who staged a playback performance for the families and friends of fire-fighters following a forest fire in Washington State in July 2001. Four fire fighters had died in the fire. They compiled a list of 'lessons' that they gleaned from the performance: • Allow for the possibility that not everyone will be helped − some may experience shock watching the playbacks. • Recognise and prepare for the unintended risk of inducing retraumatisation. • The audience won't necessarily feel happy about what you gave them − in fact they may be upset and angry with you for arousing certain issues that are uncomfortable and distressing to address. (Evans and Layman 2001 p.7) Such awareness of the effects of strong affective expression and free improvisation upon the teller and audience indicates the importance of an appreciation of the impact of the intensity of a playback performance on the audience (Rowe, 2004, pp.313-314).

Notwithstanding the possibility of misinterpretation, the overwhelming finding from our creative project was how refreshing the interviewees had found the performances, coming as they did in the middle of the work day. Many interviewees said things like this one from Oranga:

> I think, I think, in our work ,in our line of work and I think in most people's work environments, there's not enough emphasis on just sort of de-stressing, relaxation and having a bit of humour and and something camaraderie injected … If you look at the number of hours people do a year … you know, for all that time, maybe you'd be lucky to get maybe a couple of hours worth of actual time to decide to just sort of … [do] something different…

Hermeneutic play continues as the performing group turn people's accounts of their personal experiences into aesthetic theatre forms. All involved in the Playback occasion are attending to aesthetic considerations: starting with the facilitator who takes responsibility for setting up the space and time, holding a ritual awareness open and communicating to the audience in ways which help them to shift from everyday concerns into a space of aesthetic expression and appreciation.
In the research project, music was a very important element of performance in workplacs. Music has the capacity to move people elegantly and swiftly into another state of mind and has been used in this way for decades in accelerated learning (Shelton, 2003). Sue at Oranga, speaking of what happened to her after the musical interlude said "because of that … I felt a lot more sort of open to experiencing you know with all my senses what was going on …" The senses are engaged by a simultaneous experience of sound, colour, positioning movement and dance, music, speaking, punctuated by stillness, rest and silence. Many of the ways the narratives are played resemble surrealist collages of imagery, poetry and direct address; song, and non-verbal sound being as important as speaking. Emphasis on these elements lifts the performance out of being "normalized and…ordinary" (Howell, 1999, p.155)

The design principles of contrast, variety, asymmetry and surprise, along with repetition, symmetry and continuity can be seen in the way the actors and musicians work together to form the audience stories and these are all also qualities of organizational life and activity (Barry & Rerup, 2006). The audience 'receive' this multidimensional text, bodily, sensibly, intelligently, and their ability to receive it depends on their own bodily state. Each will be in a different place of reception: as Elizabeth Grosz states about bodily reception, "as any calligrapher knows, the kind of texts produced depends not only on the message to be inscribed…but also on the quality and distinctiveness of the paper written upon" (cited in Colebrook, 2000, p.89).

The multi-modality of this reception can lead to an embodied knowing which may be much more linked with the realities of day-to-day practice than most lecture presentations. We "have a chance to see the story embodied and reflected…In creating theatre we *behold the theories of our existence* [italics added], and witness ourselves in the struggle to understand" (Lucal, 1995, p.97). Schön's classifications of high ground and swamp can be applied to any field of practice and the lowland problems that noone wants to address may be explored through the embodied dialogue Playback stories have

with one another: "in the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution" (Schön, 1987, p.3).

As Feyerabend asserts, "the arts…are not a domain separated from abstract thought, but complementary to it and needed to fully realize its potential." (1993, p. 267). In Playback, abstract thought and artistic expression are productively brought together in skilled aesthetic reflection of audience narratives.

Seeing each other differently

Within a multi-ethnic society, where work teams are very likely to include members of different ethnicities, Playback has the potential to provide people with direct experience of the cultural and other dimensions of the diversity within their team, which will facilitate learning and participation of a wider range of the audience than may often occur in other training situations. Certainly there is also likely to be both men and women in a group and different sexualities may be present[194]. Looking at the culture of workplaces and organizational systems, in all societies dominant groups and practices can be identified: in contemporary New Zealand the dominant positions are culturally Pākehā/European; in terms of gender and sexuality male and heterosexual; in terms of learning styles, reading/writing; in terms of multiple intelligences, linguistic/logical mathematical; in terms of dominant senses probably visual.

Individual Playback performers transcend classifications and are like Jacqueline Taylor (2000), when she writes about an autobiographical performance based on her experiences as a preacher's daughter and a lesbian professor "in the end, of course, no one can live up to the burden of exemplariness...[we are] incapable of representing the range of experience embodied in any group with which we affiliate…"(p.71) Yet, she finishes her article with Denise Levertov:

If I bear burdens
they begin to be remembered
as gifts, goods, a basket
of bread that hurts my shoulders but closes me
in fragrance. I can
eat as I go. (Levertov, cited in Taylor, 2000, p.71)

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[194] Further, there are many taxonomies and parameters of diversity exploring learning styles, multiple intelligences and dominant senses (Felder 1996, Gardner 1993).

Such baskets will be being borne by members of non-dominant groups in any interdisciplinary work team or community group. When looking at professional development planning, care needs to be taken to ensure that all offerings do not conform to one set of parameters, but rather than diversity of offerings is available, so that the plurality of the group can be catered to. Wu (2004, p. 182) found that:

> There are four types of intelligence that lead to a successful career, the traditional intelligence (i.e., analytical intelligence) and the other three nonacademic intelligences personal intelligence[195], practical intelligence, and creative intelligence. A balanced development among these four types of intelligence can make a successful career and fulfillment of life.

Many professional development activities will address themselves to analytical intelligence and be heavily dependent on spoken and written words, but because Playback engages a much wider range of communication modes, it is well placed to deliver with particular force to the members of teams who most often experience dissonance or marginalisation because of their culture, language, or preferred learning and communicating styles. In addition, local indigenous and immigrant cultures will be available to Playback groups who contain members who come from these communities: in this way syncretic theatre forms can be created which will appeal particularly to non-dominant group members (O'Donnell & Tweddle, 2003). This was shown in our performances by the particularly enthusiastic uptake by staff members from under-represented groups such as Māori, Samoan, Niuean, Chinese and Sri Lankan audience members of the Playback opportunity presented in our work.

> One of the most notable comments the healthcare workers interviewed made about the process of the Playback performances was the ways in which it encouraged them to see each other differently: which could be seen in the reaction to Ben's story at Ngākau (see page 267), the changed behaviour in terms of Henry's stresses at Oranga, where people deliberately lessened their demands on him as manager (see page 299) and Pātaka receptionist Marian's re-valuing of the doctors as "only human after all" (see the section on the dual role, following page 321). This theme of difference was pre-eminently introduced by Nancy in her seizing of the first moment of the Oranga performance to refute a pejorative view of the staff of the Centre, stating definitively, from her position as tangata whenua, "We are not motley, we're just different."

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[195] Which includes what Goleman (1995) refers to as *emotional intelligence*.

Compressed time frame

> *The constant stream of new products, services, customers, alliances, suppliers, policies, technology, and legislation requires us to learn on a continuous basis. Although we need more and more learning and training, the irony is that we have less time to acquire it….We need to be constantly in action and working yet constantly learning. We know that we need to drain the swamp (that is, develop our knowledge and abilities), but we are so busy fighting alligators (handling the day-to-day crises) that we never get time to do the draining. (Shani, 2003, p.15)*

Playback was able to accomplish a wide range of outcomes within very economical timeframes. The groups of staff gave no more than an hour as described in chapters Eight, Nine and Ten, in which the Playback sessions were given. Action methods allowed people to take from a session what was most needed and most meaningful to them and to express their insights, making meaning from their experiences by using a range of metanarratives.

Emancipatory Metanarratives

Through all the performances and many interviews of this project, stories emerged using varied metanarratives. Importantly, Playback provided a venue for reflecting on power and transformation in ways which people took up and used with alacrity. Some aspects of emancipation were to do with culture, both affirming culture: "I liked it that it was Māori *really* liked it … I really really liked hearing Pakeha people speak it because it shows me that it's not a token thing that it's for real…" and also drawing attention to the ways in which cultures change: "isn't it funny how that's seen as a Pakeha thing?... and yet it's not, it's a Playback thing, it's not a Pakeha thing a Māori thing, it's a Playback it's a, it's a, it's a something different thing…" Similarly, some of the identification was of emancipation from gender and age stereotypes:

> like that the elderly lady that was there how you know on the mark she was … I just felt it thought it was amazing how confident they are and they can just give a … performance just like that from like two minute story

Especially in the all-women audience at ā, sadness about gender issues was expressed: "just years and years of, I'm a solo mother …you've got to put food on the table…" The nature of being mothers was explored in major stories at both Oranga and Pātaka: not in ways that essentialised that experience but rather in ways which brought forward the body as a place of knowing, relating and reflecting. Wae's story of unexpected reunion with a returned hero/ son unfolded around the central image of being held and holding:

while Kay and Nandita's stories of sick children highlighted awareness of the bodily sense of vulnerability involved in being not only a carer in the working world but also holding that responsibility in the world of family. Ward-Griffin, Brown, Vandervoort, McNair & Dashnay (2005) found that

> our research confirmed previous observations (Phillips et al., 2002; Ross et al., 1996) that health care professionals experience high levels of stress in both their professional and personal lives. Furthermore, women in professional positions tend to experience higher levels of work overload and work-to-family conflict and report a higher level of stress than male professionals…(p. 392)

For many of the women present, watching these stories told by mothers was not only very moving but also reassuring in terms of their own struggles: one of them said: "you feel like you're the only one, that everyone goes home to a perfect environment except you (laughs)…So it was nice to know that well not *nice* to know but it was comforting I guess to know that yeah *you're not the only one*…"

Emancipatory metanarratives were also presented when Playback enabled abstract relationships to be externalised: for example when at Ngākau in the story between Nanaia and the funding bodies, one of the actors taunted the other by holding out the material to signify funding opportunities and then switched it to the other side of her body so that the other actor had to scurry round behind her. Playback thus allowed abstractions to be concretised and other events analysed: another staff member told two stories in the interviews which had been sparked by her viewing of this story about power. Shoemaker talks of a performance artist "jumping out of the frame of a symbolic, aesthetic representation to inspire critical consciousness, give historical context to local and national issues, and model the passion and rage required to create real change" (Shoemaker, 2004, p.218). Even when what was discovered was not easy, it still helped to create change: at Ngākau, Deirdre had clarified her values by witnessing some of her colleagues' responses to the Playback:

> Okay it made me realize the the kind of people I want in my life and the kind of person I want to be... I look at my colleages and I thought "I don't ever wanna be where you are" …and then after Playback you know I sort of sat there and then it gave me the strength and then "Yeah I made a damn good decision I'm glad …" I have very little to do with that colleague now…

Existential Metanarratives

At Oranga and Pātaka performances, existential metanarratives were used, both in performances and in the interviews discussing them. In Playback these are often called "deep stories". Paradoxically, however, as at Pātaka, the route to such narratives is often through the grotesque and comedic. Through the alternating phases of Apollonian address of the audience by the facilitator and Dionysian enactment by the actors and musicians,[196] through the construction of dialogue, in the shape and form of the call and response of audience, facilitator and performers, and especially in relationship with the carnivalesque[197], narratives which address the edges of human experience may be able to surface in Playback, in ways which assist groups and individuals to understand each other better and to live/work together with clear-eyed courage.

Carlsen (2006), in discussing organizational becoming as dialogue, speaks of the ways in which imagination of what practice "is, has been and could be" (p.146) is important:

> What seems to be needed … is the repeated celebration of work experiences that contain seeds of excellence and desired futures… the artful borrowings from traditions and tales outside the organizations to expand the circles of meaning inherent in work… and above all *the continuous creation of new horizons of expectation and hope*. By imagining backward and forward in time, we are forever arriving. (2006, p.146)

At Oranga, Nancy addressed an edge or horizon, when she asserted the primary incomparability and difference of the people in the team; while Henry revealed the depth of despair in his situation as manager, pulled in two by the structure within which he was working: Nerissa asked, "Then what happens when it gets even worse than that?" Henry replied "I pray often." A prayer is a call from the edge, as Caputo says: "A prayer is not a constative but a performative, not a propositional truth but rather the truth one makes or does…living truly, that is staying open and owning up to the coming of the other." (Caputo, 1997, p.207)

Staying open, "opening" was a metaphor which occurred over and over again in the accounts of Playback and led to this place of the edges of the known. The deep is one edge, the high is another, the horizon another, all places where language fails. Fortunately we have poetry, music, dance, gesture to support our work in these places:

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[196] Apollonian and Dionysian were terms used by Nietzsche in describing tragedy: see Chapter Two, on page 63

[197] See Chapter Two, on page 74

as at Pātaka the actors composed a poem as they stood silhouetted against the subdued gold light of the blinds on the windows as the sun sank lower in the sky behind them:

When you work in medicine you are working with me hah
Mm my hair's starting to drop out a bit
But it'll grow back
Will it? I'm feeling a lot better
And you never know when I'm going to appear
You're looking a lot better
Am I?

And your diagnosis is good
And you've been treated for it and things are improving
Yeah I mean yeah I can do more than I used to be able to
Or who I'm going to affect
Just back off
And have
Get down, I'm up there, I'm a nurse, I'm up there
(Growls) I want to take you too – I want to take you too – and I might come back for you…
Go away
This wasn't meant to happen
I didn't see it going this way
~ ~ ~ *Tangi tangi atu* ~ ~ ~
I thought I was getting well…
Sometimes it just feels really really hard to climb up here – but I do it –
And I live in the clinics and I live in the streets
It's okay, it's okay It happens…
(Ngākau, July 2005)

This apprehending of the presence of death among the living is a rich moment for a health care team for "those who forget death forget how to live" (Okri, 1997, p.99). And yet, and yet… Arendt, cited by Jackson

> has this concept of natality, by which she means that life is characterised by the constant and often surprising appearance of the new in it. So whether we contrive it or not, or want it or not, something new is always happening, often imperceptibly, in our everyday lives. At the end of the day, something transpired that we didn't anticipate at the beginning of the day. The same in life. This notion of newness, or natality, means of course that the new is always attended by a death or a loss: something's falling away at the centre at the same time as something's being born. (Welch, 2006, p.33)

In the early 21st century, we live among a mighty falling away:

> About half of those forests, in Asia, Africa and South America are already gone…the extinction of a species, each one a pilgrim of four billion years of evolution is an irreversible loss. The ending of the lines of so many creatures with whom we have travelled this far is an occasion of profound sorrow and grief. Death can be accepted and to some degree transformed. But the loss of lineages and all their future young is not something to accept. It must be rigorously and intelligently

resisted. (Snyder, 1990, p.176)

As we resist, and face suffering and death with courage, as well as facing up to our mistakes and insufficiencies, individual and group together, Playback is one of the ways to keep the larger stories alive in our bodies and minds, for, as Snyder goes on to say:

> It is this present time, the twelve thousand or so years since the ice age and the twelve thousand or so years yet to come, that is our little territory. We will be judged or judge ourselves by how we have lived with each other and the world during these two decamillennia. If we are here for any good purpose at all…I suspect it is to entertain the rest of nature. A gang of sexy primate clowns. All the little critters creep in close to listen when human beings are in a good mood and willing to play some tunes. (Snyder, 1990, p.178)

What Playback Offers

As people have asked me about my research and I try to convey what it has revealed, I have come to talk about my findings using the metaphors my research participants used to describe their experiences. These metaphors seem to carry the sense of the Playback work as it impacted them and their worlds, much more strongly than any construct I might form. So it is to the five major metaphors of opening, moving, playing, mythologizing and en-naturing that I draw the attention of the reader at this point.

Opening

The first metaphor is that of the open, of opening, which I have referred to in the section on existential metanarratives above (on page 375) and in Chapter Ten on the work at Pātaka (on page 332). People spoke there about how a colleague was "*incredibly* open about where she was at", how "it's really good to bare that part of our job" and how "I was impressed with how open people were" stating that "the openness that we shared I think was a sign of the trust that we *do* have with each other."

One person's openness produced an effect in that others opened up too, they "followed suit completely" by also revealing themselves. This effect was spoken of by one participant as "melt[ing] my mind a bit." Another spoke of "letting those, the nicer, the nicer kind of feelings kind of set in and broadening my … feelings, and my perceptions of this person": the kinaesthetic dimensions of the metaphor are evident.

Because of this openness, workmates were enabled to offer support to one another: several talked of being able to raise difficult topics such as family illness, which had been raised in the Playback performances, later, in their interactions with their colleagues: "You know, obviously every so often can enquire about how things are

going and this, that and the other, *knowing full well that they've given permission way back then otherwise they wouldn't of mentioned them* [italics added]."

This was a marked contrast to other kinds of interaction at work: the polar opposite of openness was also present in the ways people spoke of closedness or armouring. One team member said that the staff "all turn up with our sort of work masks on" or "[we] come here in the morning and take [off] that hat and put the work one on." By experiencing the openness and "being able to sort of let your guard down a bit," participants had the opportunity "to be surprised and realize how much we've got protective barriers up really the whole time."

Being open is Sheehan's (2001, p.12) translation of Heidegger's Dasein: "we should not translate Dasein as 'being there'…but, rather, as 'always-being-open' or 'always-having-been-opened'…" Opening is both a movement and yet also a having-been-operated-on; as can be seen in time lapse photography of flowers, leaves, clouds, embryos. This is one of Playback's most remarkable effects.

Moving

Opening is essentially a subset of the largest group of metaphors used by interviewees who talked frequently about movement in regard to the Playback experience. At one level, the element of activity in the Playback work gave rise to this: "it's like the saying 'talk and walk' you know." Kinaesthetic expressions were used for both the accuracy of the work: "most of the time I'd say it hits it hits the nail on the head" and also the way it operated: "a value of the session [was] in sort of seeing independent neutral people taking elements and swinging them back to you." The ability to use Playback to gain specific insights for emerging practice was noted: "in those sort of cases which are at the edge or pushing the limits of comfort it's great to get feedback in some way."

In addition, people expressed the insights they gained about colleagues using this metaphor: "it it gave me the sort of empathy about about where he goes" and the effects of the performance were described by many interviewees in kinaesthetic terms: "just the action of *doing* something together, sharing in that I felt was a really nice binding thing… you just learnt also what inward thing's going at back of the mind at other team members and … that's a connecting thing… I can see now the value of those times when you do take the time to sort of coalesce as a team…it helps to gell a group together."

In evaluating the usefulness of the performance one manager conveyed another staff member's sense that "she felt like she was taken away from the work environment for

that period of time and I thought, well, that's nice for her." Several interviewees reported modifying their behaviour towards one another based on what had emerged in the Playback sessions, in some cases consciously avoiding adding to the load of colleagues who had revealed significant levels of stress and in others offering support for situations which had been spoken of in the sessions. So the movement resulting from the sessions was not only metaphorical but came through into behaviours: "it still sticks and stays months down the line…" and it was something that participants looked forward to extending: "I'd love to see it again in after a period of time like six months not so long ago away that that thread is broken as it were But to bring it in and … you know we've scratched the surface, it'd be good to either scratch a little bit more with various people or go a bit deeper." Playback represented a way to move people and also to get things moving among a work team.

Playing

A third set of metaphors concerned play: people spoke of how first one of their colleagues "started the ball rolling" by engaging in the Playback performance and then other team members "…followed suit completely." In addition the performers were described in terms of games "the elderly lady that was there [Aunty Awa] how you know on the mark she was… she was kind of quick off the mark."

It is my observation that the element of play in the Playback work was a major contributor to its ability to approach awkward and even taboo subjects: frequently in the performances, these difficult topics emerged out of the most comedic, carnivalesque moments, as at the Pātaka performance when the comedic portrayal of the lugubrious hypochondriac patient and his doctor's insecurities led on to the nurse's story of her own cancer remission and her unease at a patient's death. It seems as if the safety of play removes some of the more confining inhibitions of everyday thinking and communicating and enables new kinds of interactions, revelations and shared experiences to take place. This enabled people to reveal more facets of themselves to each other "And …you're always… got the two scenarios you know going on in your head: there's what you're actually doing but the other half is your life's going on all the time as well."

The way the Playback was facilitated so as to include all members of the team irrespective of place in the hierarchy was part of creating the opportunity to play: "It puts everybody on a level playing field … you know so it's common to everybody there to sort of contribute equally and um … so all team members in the same boat yeah."

The element of playing clearly contributes significantly to Playback's usefulness in group communication.

Mythologising

A fourth set of metaphors used by participants had to do with myth and fairytale and showed how Playback assisted in the creation of meaning in people's lives by allowing them to relate personal experiences and reflections to larger tropes and cultural narratives.

One interviewee expressed her sense of distinctness from the managerialism which she saw developing in the Centre using the term waka which in Māori terms refers to ancestral and mythical ideas of descent and tribal membership as well as to physical canoes: "And I want to say - this is not my waka…(laughter) this is not my waka which I think is quite funny…" Another expressed the sense of parenthood as vulnerability using a metaphor from Greek myth: "as a Mum your children are your Achilles heel in a way aren't they something you know you always think 'Oh I wish it was wrong with *me* rather than for my children'…"

Many of the stories could be related to archetypal or mythical stories: at Ngākau stories of burdens and homecoming; at Oranga the prodigal son and a story of being tortured (reminiscent of Prometheus or Jesus); at Pātaka stories of wounded children and the battle with death. The story about death was spoken of by a colleague in terms of "one demon what had, somebody had a breast cancer, all the time they had the fear on the back of the mind … you know that's like a demon sitting on this…" while Trish who had told the story referred to the actions that the performers had used when she reflected on her actions in terms of the threat of death: "I got back up on my chair and said "Go away" so that fear cannot consume me…"

The Playback performance was described as "treasure" and one participant said: "it was just so lovely and I just suddenly felt so relaxed and it was just it was like I imagine like when you know a Catholic goes to a priest and they're given absolution and it was like…oohhh and I just let go all that sort of those internal pressures and things…"

Playback was seen as having the capacity to relieve strain and support the team, especially if done regularly: "like six months or or once a year thing something like that happen so that yeah like …you will ease the burden of the workers and the colleagues…" Through externalising their stories and using mythic structures to relate to their own experiences, participants used the theatrical form to think through their individual and group dilemmas (Rozik, 2002).

En-naturing, en-worlding

The final set of metaphors concerns the natural world and involves an action which Playback seemed to be able to accomplish, one that English doesn't really have a word for and so I have had to use the neologisms above. In the ways in which people spoke, it was noticeable that Playback had been able to connect people with their wider context, deeply, integrally, at times collectively and also transformatively. People expressed this in several different ways.

Embodying

The Playback work strongly connected people with the body and they expressed this as they talked about their experiences, one person saying "the action is good because it's like you're getting it out of your mind" while another commented "Oh everybody's has problems, not just you…And then to be able to share them with everyone - it helps rather than sort of trying to keep it inside." The performers were registered in a bodily sense: "I really I was most, I think the biggest thing for me was the feeling from the people there of warmth towards us and that was what made it, it worked! And it was just something… you could feel." Another interviewee linked the theme of stress with illness and saw the Playback as a physical preventative: "yeah just let go of it, the strain otherwise you get stress and yeah get sick and worry about it. It's just a part of the job that you've gotta (sighs) find your way of thinking and get on with it or if you bottle it in, it'll only go mad and go the other way."

The lack of opportunities for personal development experienced by one doctor was expressed using a bodily metaphor of life-threatening hunger: "I think personally I feel myself starved of sort of personal development at this stage of my life you know of any sort of um personal growth stuff you know" and Playback was highly valued for being a contribution in this area.

In addition it helped people to both perceive more about themselves: "it helps us to see ourselves…if this exposes some of our blind spots and hey we could do THIS or this is another valid way of looking at things... then I'm keen to to see it..." and to understand each other:

> Um well doing it with your own team I think sometimes you can express um something that you may not have expressed verbally or that no-one's really listened to…in the ordinary day to day situation but doing it in the role play situation you might think "oh you know I didn't know I was doing that, I didn't know that was going on…" I think you take more notice yeah if it's right in your face!

Playback's effect was registered in bodily terms: "…this has a more you know deep attached emotional feel to it I think where people spoke you know from the depth of the heart…" For some this was experienced dramatically: "I don't often have that feeling of letting go, relaxation, spaciousness in the context of this workplace because if I relax too much it will… I'll feel so tired…that I won't be able to pull myself back up to do the next session." This effect of relaxation was particularly related to the music, one person noting: "Niwa on the music you know who was sort of quite spine chilling with the tangi[198] sort of scene you know, so effective and evocative oh it was fantastic…" while another said,

> So that was a key thing for me hearing that music, it was, because you know how music just can reach one without words, that instant access to the sort of heart really - and the emotions and the being and the spirit…So that felt just wonderful and I had a completely different appreciation of the second half of the session I think because of that … and I felt a lot more sort of open to experiencing you know with all my senses what was going on…

This ability of Playback to add to people's views of each other persisted over time: six months after the performance an interviewee said "I mean Irene only left us this year but oh she's been in every now and again this year she's come in and done some locum work and I STILL see her in a different light to before we had that, yeah." Within a stressful environment, Playback was identified as potentially enabling physical release which can prevent serious stress-related disturbances:

> We know that doctors have a high rate of suicide particularly women doctors, very high, very high alcoholism, marriage breakup, you know and so - I'm not saying it's the job causes all that but I'm saying that maybe we don't do enough to help that stress prevention, not physical things…So I reckon that should be letting it out rather than withdrawing in so I, I think, I think you should do more…

This physical, embodied dimension of Playback clearly contributed to its usefulness and was registered by the participants as integrally important.

Electrifying

Another way in which some people expressed their sense of how Playback worked was through metaphors of electricity. The transition into the Playback performance was described in this way: "you can't just suddenly sort of switch into a completely different way of being...It's very hard to switch from one to the other yeah…"

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[198] Tangi refers to song and cry

Playback's insights were also described using an electrical/mechanical metaphor: "understanding a little bit about about what makes people tick and this is certainly one way of doing it." In addition, the effects of Playback were to make people aware of each other's sensitivities expressed by one interviewee as:

> it's just um how do you say makes them um a more rounded person to me and in that respect *probably* I'm a bit more aware of some buttons that I am probably a bit more careful about pushing more consciously now that I'm aware of that…

Playback had an electrical effect: "you know I certainly got a buzz out of it really which I think I you know felt in other participants." This was seen to be an effect which could be anticipated and built into future planning in the centre: "it's like if you were um burning out with ten different things and you don't know where you're at and and suddenly you have something totally different and it just kind of reenergizes you…"

Lightening

Another metaphor, that of heaviness and the ways the Playback impacted and alleviated this, was also used. One participant, who had illustrated the burdens of her relationships at work by narrating her story in the performance using the metaphor of two bowling balls, expanded on this in the interview:

> I'm having difficulties with a staff member at the moment and it's really quite heavy and it was good to, sort of, like a bowling bag because that's how it was heavy but I mean when I said two bowling bags then it's like *really heavy*

In contrast to this, Playback itself was described by another participant at the same performance as a "fairly light hearted sort of thing" while another interviewee described the sight of the Māori women performers: "it's always a positive um you know uplifting kind of thing when you see women taking an active role in anything yeah…" The effects of Playback were that "it really lift my spirits that after all this time that I was tense all the time because of a lot of things happening at home…" while another interviewee experienced a great sense of release and lightness:

> Oohh I was just relax and and just clear my mind and not thinking of anything, just myself I was just like flying in the air, with myself, it was good… Well I was just like clear everything that it was heavy in my brain like all these little things telling me negativity and stuff but it was really clear that I just feel myself you know, that all the things had gone…

Connecting with the natural world

In a time of increasing clarification that the over-industrialisation of the lifeworld of work in some parts of the world may be one of the potential barriers to meeting the challenges of environmental change and emergency, Playback presented an opportunity for participants to connect with their experiences and relate them in a way which linked them to the physical environment. The sense of stress in the workplace was described in graphic natural terms: "it's like it's like there's a water level because I've got to manage my stress levels here I mean I've got people to see every 15 minutes and I've got to manage my stresses and get on with get on with my job…" This stress was contributed to by the sense of pressure from patients who come

> with shopping lists of problems and an expectation that you know everything was going to be dealt with and …the poor doctor feeling absolutely overwhelmed that they can't you know and the pressure from the patients to deal with it all now …

as well as by colleagues whose immersion day-to-day relationships can exacerbate a disharmony which was changed and modified by the Playback work:

> we're all very busy um and so the facets that jar… it's the reinforcement for that thing happening all the time is there and so more and more the focus is how I might experience and I might feel a worker is, you know, the particular facets I come across and if they don't, if it's not a positive productive interaction, then that gets reinforced whereas *if you do something completely different, you just experience someone in a different way* …

The sense of the team needing this opportunity of interacting in a different way was expressed using a biological metaphor, by one of the team leaders: "the other big element I was looking for really was the potential for team building cause I think the team is such an important nucleus that needs to be continually nurtured really in the in the variety of ways." Humour was identified as one of these nurturing ways: "humour is such a a unifying thing I mean it releases good chemicals in the body, and you can feel better and it can just *totally* sort of take the heat out of a number of situations you know…" Music was another of the contributions which linked people to a natural environment: "that was *gorgeous* …it was beautiful it was just such a tonic… like looking out at these trees it was like *oh*!"

The effects of Playback were described in terms of natural imagery: "a lot of people would say 'Oh I'm too busy' and so on, but um often when you've had a break from something and you get back into it, it's quite refreshing." When asked how the afternoon after the performance had felt, one participant said "feel good! Much much better…Mmm bubbling a-bubbling (*delighted laughter*)" Another described her state in more detail:

> I was just pleased that oh yes it's a real smooth, you know, like you meditated, you know, that I was just myself and like nice and sitting in a nice cool water in Samoa…Yes, yes, fresh air, yes, a breeze and fresh air - that's how I felt on that time, when she done the music.

Another spoke of the afternoon: "after that I just I don't really um think more about it or remember it or I just keep on flowing with the daily things…" One of the doctors, asked at the end of her interview if there was anything she would like to say replied "No - other than keep it going, keep the fire burning because it's it's it's wonderful."

Thus, in the ways in which they spoke of the Playback experience, the research participants showed that Playback offers to groups who work and live together opportunties to open to themselves, each other, and topics; to move through different states and points of view; to release playfulness and facilitate an equal participation of people at all levels of the organization into a common experience; to relate their experiences and think about them using mythical and archetypal stories, thus gaining distance and making meaning from personal accounts as well as learning about each other's mind-sets; and finally, most importantly, to experience themselves as part of a larger moment of the natural world of bodies, energies, and elements. In a time when the human species may be facing severe environmental questions, Playback offers a way of communicating which unobtrusively, gently yet strongly emphasizes our shared context, with all its gifts and challenges. The majority of those interviewed felt that it was a valuable activity for an organization to commission.

Practical Suggestions for people commissioning performances

Some guidelines for people commissioning Playback were highlighted by the insights expressed by interviewees during the practical research project.

Playback can be a positive contrast to other staff meetings

Several staff members interviewed commented positively on the contrast between the meeting with playback input and the more routine ones they were used to:

> "all I can say is based on what I have been told about the other monthly staff meetings …I thought it was good. You know rather than having some starchy boring staff meeting three weeks before Christmas you know I though it was a good idea - do something a little bit different, it is probably a good idea." (Nga1 Ben, Section 61 – 65)

Based on the feedback and my observations, I made the choice to keep with the arrangement of doing Playback within the structure of staff meetings, to minimize the

disruption to the health centres and also to get the fullest representation possible of the staff.

Playback can appeal to staff members who do not respond to other forms of training

Managers and group leaders need to take on board the need to provide a variety of inputs for their staff. It is very easy for there to be domination of the resources available by a certain group of people: " Initiatives to counter this so-called 'Matthias Principle' ('to those that hath shall more be given') are therefore to be welcomed…managers have an important part in ensuring the development of others" (Winterton, 2007, p.332). The corollary of this is that some dominant group members may not enjoy Playback: managers and leaders need to be prepared for this and to emphasize the value of Playback as merely one of a variety of training modes.

Playback can be used for specific purposes

To generate discussion; to process difficult times; to support the group; to share insights; to learn about each other in ways that positively changed behaviours: all of these purposes were addressed by the performances in this project. When commissioning a Playback performance, ask the facilitator what purposes the Playback team can address and come to an agreement, while knowing that its method of addressing purposes may be oblique and not as direct as other staff training methods.

It is not helpful to try to predict or limit the performance

Trying to limit the types of Playback form used may backfire, as it did in the Ngākau session, when the manager's requirement not to undertake extended narratives led to an atmosphere of frustration and a carnivalesque eruption in the performers. Staff will generate the narratives they wish to explore and thematic threads will undoubtedly be visible in hindsight, as exemplified in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten.

Playback performances provide common memories

Because of the multi-modal nature of the occasion, Playback performances are often remembered vividly. Interviewees mentioned how well they remembered the Playback performance: one saying "as an aid to memory I'm sure I'll be able to recount everything that happened pretty accurately …" In addition, the fact that the performance is experienced by the whole group makes possible a shared understanding of people and issues.

Ensure the Playback group is well-qualified and accountable

Enquire about the group's training and development; find out whether they belong to the International Playback Theatre Network. Ask for references and consult people who have previously used them.

Notes for Playback Practitioners

From the practical work contained in this research project we learnt that for performances in workplaces the following points were particularly important:

It is not helpful for people commissioning Playback to dictate forms used

The manager had requested that only short forms of Fluid Sculptures and Pairs be used in the Ngākau performance. My mistaken thinking as the facilitator/negotiator was that this limitation would not be too difficult as the time frame was quite short – less than one hour. However, for the spontaneity of the audience to be honoured and their contributions dignified by appropriate enactment, such truncation is not helpful. We kept coming to the point of story and not being able to enter into it, thus an overall theme of frustration started to emerge. This relates to Mary Good's concept of the Producer/Wise Person in the pre-performance stage (see the section on Facilitation in Chapter Three, on page 99).

The facilitator's work on the performance begins in the warm up

As we traveled to the Ngākau performance, one of the Māori women who were going to perform made the remark, looking back at the last performance some months before, "Ooh those Pākehā nurses, sitting in the back corner…!" This actor had been at the previous two performances. As the facilitator, I needed to note this remark and engage in some dialogue with that actor, which would unpack her previous experience with Pākehā nurses and help her to deal with her preconceptions about these audience members. However, partly because of my dual roles of facilitator and researcher, I let this moment go by. Yet, I still remember with a physical pang, the remark and the tone of voice in which it was said, half joking and yet heart felt. Sure enough it was one of those Pākehā nurses who was misinterpreted in the performance. The woman who had spoken with a kind of dread and scorn was the one who initiated the misinterpretation. This was an eloquent demonstration of the fact that the facilitator needs to take on an active facilitation role even on the journey to the performance!

A performing group of mixed ethnicity is very important

During the course of the Ngākau performance, the only performance in my project with no non-Māori actors in the performing team, a story was told by a non-Māori teller, to me as a non-Māori facilitator, about the arrival of a non-Māori colleague! The majority Māori audience enjoyed the richly cultural and humorous enactment. The performance was distressing to the teller but she did not correct the misinterpretation at the time (see Chapter Six Ngākau, **Error! Bookmark not defined.**). Especially in post-colonial societies, or indeed in any society which is heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity and its corollary, power, mixed groups of performers are extremely important as each performer brings with them a fund of tacit cultural knowledge as well as the more conscious and obvious contributions they make to the team by virtue of training, life experience, community connections and performance knowledge. This cultural knowledge enables that team member to guide and form the group's responses to audience members who are like her- or himself.

Some of the Māori audience members undoubtedly had very similar life experiences to those of the actors and some of the joy in the response may have been from the carnivalesque performance situation where daily rules and rituals are turned upside down and what is

unacceptable usually can be freely expressed. Certainly no other interviewees mentioned the moment with particular disapprobation: but the hurt done to this staff member made the subsequent relationship between the research project and Ngākau Healthcare as an entity rather fragile.[199]

Feedback needs to be sought and welcomed

I would emphasise the privilege I had in this project of interviewing audience members: in Playback we may sometimes leave behind us senses of being misheard or misunderstood that we do not know about. Playback groups need to address the need to gather such feedback and share good practice.

Music can be a vitally important element in performing in a 'daily' setting

As a consequence of the learning in this pilot project, in the performances for our other two Centres, I placed greater importance on the role of music in moving people out of their everyday reality. This was especially important as we were performing in their lunch hours.

The effectiveness of the music was later affirmed in comments made in individual interviews: when asked, "that music, where did it take you?" one respondent said:

Oohh I was just relax and …just clear my mind and not thinking of anything, just myself I was just like flying in the air, with myself, it was good…just like clear everything that it was heavy in my brain like all these little things telling me negativity and stuff …like you meditated you know that I was just myself and like nice and sitting in a nice cool water in Samoa…" (*Ora1 Wae* Sections 82 – 85)

Having accomplished musicians was a priority for the rest of the project and we were lucky to have access to two musicians who regularly perform together in their bands, Big Belly Women and Planet Woman. Their work in the project and in Kāinga Rua has been consistent and important. (See Chapter Eleven, *Music can be a vitally important element in performing* in a 'daily' setting on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**)

Care with setting up the space and ritual can be crucial

In order to gain acceptance for my research project, I needed to work as seamlessly as possible with the Healthcare Centre concerned. This meant working in spaces and times which were not at all ideal for Playback performance. While one of the great strengths of Playback is its portability, some minimal requirements have to be met for the audience to be able to enter a state which is unlike their day-to-day reality.

Normally, when a performance is being commissioned, the Playback liaison person will ascertain that the space is appropriate for the performance in terms of performance arena, sight lines, audience comfort, privacy and audibility. This project took place under slightly different conditions and in this third performance for Ngākau, too much had been compromised:

There was not enough space for the acting arena to be clearly demarcated

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199 It is interesting that this cultural failure took place in a kind of reverse image to that which would be more usual in a post-colonial society: rather than being in the minority, the indigenous in this case were in the majority, both in the audience and in the performing team. What happened was a reverse image of a story that had been told to me when I first started Playback and which has haunted my practice: of a Playback performance in another part of New Zealand, where a Pākehā teller told of a Māori character in ways that 'othered' him (he was violent, big, rough etc.) and the facilitator and performers supported the teller's one-dimensional view.

The audience were cramped and uncomfortable

Some of the audience could not see clearly what was happening

There were no visual markers to delineate this as a different kind of happening

The players arrived into the meeting context, without having set the space up previously

The ritual marking of the beginning of the performance was perfunctory and uneasy.

In the future performances, I made sure that the performing group arrived two hours early and set the space up to transform it from its day-to-day usage. In the Oranga performance, we were working in the patients' waiting room and we worked around the few patients who were waiting, as we reorganized the space. We brought a standard lamp to alter the light qualities in the performing area as well as fabrics to display a novel representation of colour and creativity. The musicians set up at a table, which was set halfway between the audience and the actors' stage. The small audiences were seated in two curved rows so that they could be close to each other but also see some other faces. All audience members had chairs to sit on, while my colleague videotaping the performance, sat on the floor, at the edge of the acting arena.

The roles of host and guest fluctuate in such performances

In both the subsequent performances, there were very careful ritual openings. I spoke first in Māori and then English, to acknowledge the space and to welcome and thank people for being part of the research project. In the performance at Pātaka, before I spoke, Marina and Niwa had performed traditional storytelling indigenous instruments, the pūrerehua (bull roarer) and koauau (flute), to 'clear the space'. We had begun to use this ritual in our other Playback performances, as we observed its effects in terms of moving people from the everyday into a space of listening, reflection, and self-disclosure. At Pātaka, we were performing in a small staffroom above the Health Centre, and Marina had to watch with great care not to hit the ceiling or lights with the pūrerehua as it swung round, a diameter of two metres or so.[200] At Oranga, after I spoke, Marina welcomed people in te Reo Māori more fully and a song was sung by the whole group.

After these two elements, of welcome to the research and acknowledgement of Te Ao Māori, Nerissa, as Playback facilitator would take over the opening of the performance. This three-stage opening, while it took time, was directly related to the pilot performance at Ngākau which had been so difficult . In order to prevent a similar thing happening, the ritual had to be safeguarded, to enable an atmosphere of 'protection' and 'specialness' to be created.

The needs of the healthcare context

In the final steps of the process of documenting this research project, it seems appropriate to return to the context of our practical Playback work, the three

[200] The salutary uncertainty produced by this action, where the sound coming from the whirling pūrerehua is not guaranteed to emerge, may be part of the process of destabilizing the daily round and facilitating entry into another kind of time/space. Certainly the sound when it does emerge has a quality which is extremely evocative and unusual.

community healthcare centres of Ngākau, Oranga and Pātaka, whose staff co-created this journey. Recently, I met one of the doctors, who emphasized to me the contribution she thought the project had made, not because of the performances but in terms of staff members being interviewed one-to-one and given a chance to make sense of their experience in a confidential dialogue at two different times in the very early years of the transition to a new primary healthcare environment. I was very struck by this, as an unforeseen aspect of the research design but it reinforced the aspect of dialogical, embodied cognition which the research process had already highlighted for me.

Certainly, the moments in which I encountered these Centres were ones of extreme change as the New Zealand health care system made the transition from a harsh user pays environment under the former National government, to a more deliberate primary healthcare strategy under what was then a relatively new Labour government. In Chapter Six, on page 220, I have endeavoured to give a picture of this intensely dynamic environment, with its challenges from both internal critique by specific social groups such as women and Māori and external demands produced by the transition from an international view of health to a global one which acknowledges the existence of life threatening global health challenges such as AIDs and the probability of even more contagious conditions in the future (Dickenson-Hazard, 2004) which will require a concerted response. This global health environment has a need for information and statistics which is unprecedented in the context of the informal and personally interconnected society of Aotearoa New Zealand and this has meant a sea change in the ways in which data is collected and managed, which has an impact on the demands of health care workers.

Within this context of transition and stress, the ability of staff to be open on many levels was remarkable and must be honoured here. They opened themselves to themselves, each other, the world around them, our performing group and this research project. By quoting their words extensively, I have tried to make this thesis another venue in which their experiences as well as their unique insights and perspectives can be visible. In the chapters that outline the Playback and research work done in each of the healthcare centres, the characters, events and nuances of experience they are immersed in are described in detail to assist the reader to understand the call to care which they answer every day.

An aim of this thesis was to address a gap I perceived in Playback theorising by addressing very consciously the perceptions of audience members in commissioned workplace performances. In so doing, I attempted first to use Playback as an instrument for professional development and team building and second, to explore in interviews the audience members' insights as to how Playback Theatre revealed the functioning and dynamics of their teams. I have then been able to analyse and critique the data generated in the performances and interviews, particularly looking at the metanarratives the healthcare workers used to express the sense they made of their experiences. From reading closely what my interviewees said, I hope that managers and administrators, those leading interdisciplinary healthcare teams, as well as managers in other employment settings will be encouraged to explore how they might offer action methods sessions to their staff, realizing that, though such sessions will always have an element of risk attached, they offer richness in terms of: authentic

dialogue; spontaneous humour and hermeneutic play which produces relaxation and refreshment in very compressed time frames; seeing each other differently which can lead to enhanced team work; and of clarifying values in ways which reinforce trust and openness or help people to know better how to live together. Ngākau refers to heart, Oranga refers to life and health; Pātaka refers to storehouse of food and precious things. I chose these names, because I saw in you all of these. I will not forget the drama you live with every day and the countless acts of courage and caring you choose to make (or not to make.) E hoa ma, e mihi ana ahau ki a koutou katoa.

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Glossary of Māori Terms

Ahau	I, me
Ao	World
Aotearoa	New Zealand
Aroha	Love
Awa	River
E	Oh (vocative)
E hoa ma	Oh friends
Haka	Traditional chant and energy-raising dance
Hapū	Sub-tribe
Hoa	Friend/s
Hui	Gathering
Iwi	Tribal group
Kahawai	A type of fish
Ka haere	Goes, moves
Ka nui	Is great
Kaumātua	Elder
Kaupapa	Purpose or programme
Katoa	All
Koe	you (singular)
Koha	Donation or Givt
Kuia	Female elder
Mai	Towards the speaker
Manaakitanga	Meeting someone’s needs on every level, hospitality
Māori	Indigenous people of Aotearoa

Marae	Courtyard of meeting house, more commonly used to refer to the whole traditional Māori community complex
Mihi	Greetings
Ngā	the (plural definite article)
Ngākau	Heart
Oranga	Health
Pākehā	People of European descent, in Aotearoa
Pātaka	Storehouse
Pōwhiri	Ceremony of welcome and encounter
Pūrerehua	Traditional musical instrument used in storytelling and ritual, bull roarer
Pūtea	Sum of money
Rā	Sun
Rangatira	chief, chiefly
Reo	Voice, Language
Rerenga	Flying
Tangata	Person
Tangata Whenua	Indigenous
Tangi	Rituals surrounding death, weeping; song; cry
Taonga	Treasured possession
Taonga puoro	Traditional Māori musical instrument
Te	the (singular definite article)
To tātou	Our
Toa	Warrior, strong
Tohuna, Tohunga	Expert, commonly applied to experts in healing and spiritual matters
Upane	Abreast
Wā	Time(s)
Wahine	Woman/women
Waiata	Song
Waiora	Living water
Wairua	Spirit
Waka	Canoe, symbolically used for descent or affinity group
Whakapapa	Genealogy
Whakawhanaungatanga	Creating relationships

Whakawhetai	Thanks
Whāngai	Adopted or fostered child
Whānau	Extended family
Whanaungatanga	Relatedness
Whenua	Land
Whiti	Shine

Note on pronunciation of Māori words

(to help those readers unfamiliar with Te Reo Māori)

Vowels in Māori are similar to those of Romance languages:

a is pronounced ar

e is pronounced air

i is pronounced ee

o is pronounced or

u is pronounced oo

In diphthongs the vowels retain more or less their original sound.

Consonants are pronounced softly.

Appendix One : The Journey of the Practitioner

Research on the pulses

For Mark Jackson

You speak of the wild and aberrant moments of research
And I have moments recorded on my pulses

- when I spoke to the staff at a children's home and registered
In my body
The moment when the senior nurse
turned
against my project of story and body
- how my pulses raced and heart beat and the adventure of the journey turned to mud in which I stuck as I tried tried tried to explain –
seeing glimmers of flame leap up around the table
- and her so white, so stern, so firm, extinguisher

- when in the shabby community centre the thin man scowled and scolded me
stomped out, to my fright
only to return
that night,
when he told me that on his shoulder sat death
(and the air around us turned incandescent)
then I realized in my cells
the smallness of me,
the hugeness of this life
-and-death
place I had chosen to dwell in
and how it would sit in me
as a worry,
heavy company

when my very first interview full steam ahead struck on the rock
of a woman's outrage and distress
righteous anger and disdain

my heart

beat
in my throat,
breath short,
face hot,
astonished and in horror
straining with every nerve to focus, to stay open,

these moments of beginning
live in my body so -
have become part of sinew blood and bone
what I do, what I see, how I know

when the chairman of the board closed me out
when I heard in the car the actor say oo those ones in the back row
and my head so full, I didn't say no!
when I waited for the patients to arrive in an empty community centre
and nobody came
when I realized with a thud
that nobody had read
that summary sheet I had written and sent

all these hot gulping stuttering pulses -
along the way
of the explorer.

ii
And the moment I completed
The last act of that stepping journey

I saw it rise from me, that companion I had been carrying
Bow, and depart
Like in an air balloon, soaring away
Leaving me free to arrange and rearrange the stones, the shells on the beach
Spelling out words with them
H E L P
or
L O V E
or
A R T

or

H E A R T

Not such aberrant moments now
But a patient movement
Up and down the tideline
Picking up and shifting
Keeping and discarding
Bending and lifting
Sorting and showing…

This time is so different from then
When
My scarlet face flamed
And everything was hot
Air dancing and shimmering around me

How not to misrepresent
Now is my concern
With this blackened driftwood
To own up to how it burned…

Playing ukulele in the nursing school

I played the role of musician in this performance: having re-joined Auckland Playback Theatre in 2005 to develop the musician role. In Appendix One a first person account of my experience of the performance, from first contact to reflection and feedback afterwards is given. This account takes in the stages in preparation, warm up, performance and incorporation that have

been outlined in the section on Trajectories (on page 51)

First Contact between Commissioning Group and Performers

I received first an email message from a senior colleague Mel and then a phone message on my phone at the university where I work from Yvonne, a Deputy Dean in one of the faculties at our university, enquiring about the possibility of us doing Playback for an end-of-year gathering they were planning. This was in October 2006 and the performance was to be on December 7. I replied by text message giving the mobile phone number of the Artistic Director of the group, Karen.

Group Organization

About a week later, Karen sent a message out by email to our company members to see whether we could be available for this December performance. I sent back my availability. At the rehearsal preceding the performance by about two weeks, availability was re-confirmed and Karen let us know that the group we were performing for had been involved in a planning process over the last few months and the Planning Group were now disbanding as their plans entered a new phase of implementation by the whole staff group.

On the Day - preparation

On the day of the performance which was to be at 2pm, the group of performers assembled at 12 noon. I met one of the actors, Linda, in the Visitors' Carpark and we made our way to the performing space, a large classroom above the gymnasium. In the space, two or three people were finishing setting out chairs in a large group of curved rows, while others unpacked bottles of wine, juice and glasses on to a table at the back of the performing space, on what would be upstage right of the performing space. Arthur, a man I didn't know came and introduced himself to us as part of the Planning Group.

As musician, I found a small table, placed it where seemed right to me in relation to the audience and the performing area, stage left, and set up the small group of my personal instruments. Karen arrived, with the two suitcases, one of fabrics and one of the group's musical instruments, as well as the three plastic crates on which the actors sit and which they often use for props during enactments. Linda and I set up the fabrics further upstage behind the musical instruments and finished arranging the instruments on the table I had placed…Karen placed the crates in the upstage centre position and arranged two chairs to the stage right where the audience narrator would sit with her to tell the more extended narratives which usually take the greatest part of a Playback theatre performance, after the audience and actors have warmed up with short enactments of moments from people's lives which are played back in a form called 'fluid sculptures'.

Karen seemed to be experiencing anxiety about the other actor Kim and the facilitator Diane finding the room. I felt her anxiety and tried to distance myself from it as I already felt anxious about performing in front of colleagues. She texted them and Kim arrived. We were shown a small room in which we could spend some time together before the performance.

Performers Warming up to Each other

The four of us began to tell each other about what had been happening in our lives. The other performers had done a public performance recently, for which I had been unavailable, so a former group member had taken the role of musician which I often play in this group. Karen was still very anxious about whether Diane would find the right room in this complex university campus.

Finally Diane arrived and we continued to talk about how we were: I was coming to the very end of my work year and had only eight days of work left before my summer break. Kim was also very stressed with the end of year and writing reports for her students; Karen was busy in her work in a government agency; Linda was very much in demand in her work as a fairy; while Diane who runs an independent women's bookshop, was experiencing the Christmas rush in her work. We spent time listening to each other's stories and then Karen told us about what she had picked up in her discussions with Yvonne, the Deputy Dean who had commissioned the performance. A little before the scheduled time, Arthur came and said to us that he felt the time was right to start and that if we didn't, some people might start leaving.

Beginning the Performance – moments

We walked out into the performing space. Diane introduced us to the spectators and then we went to our places. I checked that I could easily reach all the instruments I needed to be able to use and that others were available if I reached out further for them.

Diane asked the audience for the first moment of personal experience to be played back. Yvonne (the commissioner of the performance) took up the invitation, telling about how the Planning Group of this Division of the faculty had been meeting for three months and had become very close to each other, maybe even a bit self-indulgent in their intense connection. The actors formed a very entwined group hug and the whole audience erupted in laughter. As musician I observed the actors closely and supported their movements with music. The facilitator called for a series of brief moments in quick succession, moving to stand near the audience narrators as they gave her their small slices of experience: then we performers would mirror back the moment in movement, words and sound, working in concert with each other. As a result of the re-structuring that had taken place as a result of the Planning Group's work, some of the audience had had to re-apply for their positions of employment and had been interviewed that morning - two of the brief moments shared were about this process.

Longer narratives

The transition to longer narratives occurred spontaneously, as people started to tell longer more complex narratives, involving several characters, and we moved into the Playback form of stories, in which actors were given specific roles to play. First there would be an interview, in which the audience member who volunteered to be the narrator came out and sat in the chair beside the facilitator, whose questions elicited the narrative, and then the actors would retire to upstage left, while as musician I would play a musical overture to the story, in which I would give my interpretation of the story and help to prepare the audience for the enactment.

Story - Meeting in the morning

One story was of the very early meetings that the Planning Group had found necessary, because of the need to accommodate everyone's timetables: they had met at 7.30 am and for one group member, a senior academic, this time was not congruent with her own body clock. She noted another staff member who also found this time frame challenging. As the actors

went into their 'huddle' upstage left, I played my ukulele and sang the words of an old-fashioned song my New Zealand grandmother used to sing : 'Tra la la tweedle de dee dee, it gives me a thrill, to wake up in the morning on the Mocking Bird Hill…" It was a great moment for me when I heard soft voices through the whole audience join in with this song. The atmosphere was peaceful, intimate, reflective…Then the physical comedy of the actors portraying the tired group members in the planning meetings was again delicious to the audience and their laughter filled the room.

Story – Swimming in data

The planning group had gone out to all the members of the Division and researched people's ideas of what should happen in the future. A teller spoke of this enormously demanding process and what it had meant, generating a huge amount of data and how they had needed to sort through the data and make some sense of it. In the playing back, the actors used all of the lengths of coloured materials and tossed them on the floor, mixing them up and finally diving right on top of them and swimming about enthusiastically and untidily. There was much delighted laughter as this was done. Finally, the cloths were gathered up and placed on a white table cloth, signifying the sorting and filtering of ideas that had needed to be done.

Story - On the outside or the inside?

A Māori lecturer spoke about the Māori consultative and supervisory group which had been an important part of the Division for over ten years being left out of the new structure until a non-Māori colleague spoke up and ensured that they were placed in the new structure in a location which the teller saw as being appropriate to their importance, alongside other leadership roles. She described an overlapping time in the very room we were performing in, when the Planning Group had kept the Māori Kawa Whakaruruhau group waiting, a very testing moment of uncertainty. The actors made this explicit in their enactment, "We don't want to colonise you, or this room…"

Story - Misgivings - losing a School, gaining a Discipline?

Towards the end of the performance, a voice of a midwife wondered whether the whole process was going to come up with anything of value in the long term. Inwardly, I was hugely relieved that this position was being voiced as otherwise I felt that there was a danger that the full range of opinions in the group might not be fully expressed. This staff member spoke of losing the membership of a 'School' of midwifery and now having to be loyal to the 'discipline' of midwifery. She said, this word 'discipline' made her think that the head of midwifery should be clothed in leather and have a whip.

The actors chose to enact this in military terms, with Karen striding up and down while Kim on all fours played a mother giving birth while Karen barked orders at her: "Push that baby out, HAVE that baby!" and so on, while the prospective mother cowered and obeyed. The whole room was rocking with laughter.

Last Story - Handing over the Plan

During the enactments, the white table cloth on which the coloured cloths representing all the data had been laid in the early story Swimming in Data (above) had been used again several times as a symbol of the planning process. In the last story, a key member of the Planning

Group spoke of handing over the plan now to ALL members of the Division. Karen, as an actor, took this table cloth, folded it carefully, held it like a baby and then walked right out into the middle of the audience where she handed it over to Mel, a senior faculty member. Afterwards a staff member commented to me how amazing it was that it was Mel to whom the symbol of the 'plan' had been given, as Mel had been openly skeptical about the new plans. It was also Mel who had sent the very first email message, inviting us to do this performance. This was the last moment of enactment in the performance and its ritual nature signalled a handing over from the performers to the audience as well and an invitation to return to ordinary life.

Closing

Diane then spoke briefly to close the performance and the performers stood and bowed to the audience, receiving applause and then ourselves clapping to indicate our applause of all the people in the audience who had given narratives and assisted by their attention, without whom the performance could not happen. We then gave out, as we had been asked to, a copy of the plan, which had been prepared and rolled up like a scroll, to each spectator - and the performance event was complete.

Discussion

Afterwards as we packed up the instruments and fabrics, people came to talk to us. I saw tellers find the person who had acted them and give them feedback about what they had done. Several people spoke to me as they know me from my other work at the university and this was the first time they had seen me in this capacity of performer. One colleague let me know the next day how 'uncanny' it was that the final handing over of the plan had been to such a senior and skeptical staff member.

Processing and Incorporation

We performers quickly spoke to each other about the performance as this was our last performance before the summer break and we were not going to be together again till February 2007. We recapped some of the moments and then the longer narratives. The next day, I emailed what I could remember of the performance to the others in the team and they added details of some of the stories I had forgotten. I passed on to the group the information I had been given about the appropriateness of the final handing over of the tablecloth symbolizing the plan to Mel. Karen replied on the email: "That is so spooky about the tablecloth!!!!!!! I was thinking that one of the things we need to talk about was the fact that as we worked with a group who had had a shared (or not) experience that we were able to create images that lasted for the whole performance – like the smug hug, the tablecloth being the plan." At the next rehearsal some of these ideas would be processed, with individual actors saying what they felt their strengths and weaknesses were and identifying growing points for individuals and for the group as a whole.

Feedback from the audience

When I emailed staff who had attended the performance, asking for their accounts of their experience of it, two replied. One said

> Its hard to remember back but it was certainly an experience that was enjoyable yet anxiety producing at the same time. My mind was always working hard to make sense of the actors' interpretations and at the same time anxious for the staff members whose actions were being 'replicated'. I remember feeling my jaw clench, my eyes flicking from actor to actor and my body craning at times to see what was happening. I was not in the front row because I felt safer 2 rows back. When I felt

brave enough to contribute a story (towards the end) I felt quite vulnerable. I was formulating what I was going to say without knowing exactly how and what would come out of my mouth. I just had to 'trust the process' and found that my anxiety this eased as I began speak.
On balance, it was a great session.

Another colleague wrote:

I thought your troop were remarkable, intuitive, and quick witted. There was a lot going on so I am not sure how you ensure individual safety when a troop is coming in with limited information of the dynamic and detail. It was limited in effectiveness by the fact that all staff were not there. It would be most interesting to do another playback session for **all** staff after a year of a restructured division at the end of 2007.

Positioning myself

> *Inherent in the word Reconciliation is the phrase it is never too late to mend'. (sic) And yet there is really no way 'forward' for this demanding process of re-inscription: reconciliation is no 'path', it has no end, and it is always too late. Instead, like the art practice of some among Australia's Indigenous peoples, it entails a continuous re-tracing of what has been, such that what is, is not exactly what will be." (Henderson, 2004, p. 108)*

From the beginning of my Playback practice, the interface with Aotearoa, the long-standing name for this country (NZ) was a vital and compelling one. I grew up in a family in which there was a pull between the New Zealand family on my father's side, who had been here since 1842 and the English family, on my mother's side, where my mother was the first to come to Aotearoa in 1941. My NZ grandfather showed me buildings which bore the scars from the land wars: my English grandmother told stories of growing up in Cheam. On both sides, England, Wales and Ireland were acknowledged as where we came from. Yet, it was taken for granted in many of the conversations I overheard as I grew, that there was a need for New Zealanders to gain a confident voice in literature and the arts and yet also that there was something raw about the New Zealand way of being (one side cherished this, the other subtly deplored it.) These two sides of the family were exemplified in my study of medieval English (which paradoxically, my NZ father loved, taught and would declaim) and of Māori studies: and I found a way to balance the two in my work in Drama Studies (see discussion on page 437).

Another underlying world view which gave rise to a focus on issues of justice and prejudice, was my family inheritance (through my children's father who was born in 1947, a child of holocaust survivors, as well as through my own birth in 1949 into a family with distinctive scars from the 1939-45 War against Fascism), of painful insights gained through the violence unleashed in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. This world view with an awareness of justice and prejudice was further formed as I started to see the divergence of the generalities of men's and women's interests and power; and, as I grew up, to experience anti-feminist and homophobic attitudes and actions. It was sharpened by the anti-racist movements which grew out of the anti-apartheid demonstrations of 1981. Trenchant challenges were delivered to us

then by Māori friends and mentors,[201] to look at the roots of New Zealand society which shared a colonial past where many of the values expressed in legislation in South Africa had been taken for granted (and in many places still held) in the formation of Aotearoa, our nation. From all of these factors, I knew that there is no such thing as an innocent witness: in terms of the dilemmas and injustices faced by Māori, if I did not step into involvement, I would be complicit in the ongoing destruction of a people, culture, language. This held as true for my artistic and educational work as for my personal life.

It's all in the context - moments in my theatre life

I had seen the process of preparing theatre productions as well as final product since the time when I was three years old that my father produced *Hamlet* at the school he was teaching in: my mother made the costumes and arranged the music, so I was taken to rehearsals. This repeated at intervals of around two years, throughout my childhood and when I was 11, he produced the first summer Shakespeare production at Auckland University, with a young Māori student, Bill Tawhai, as Othello. This meant that Bill became part of our household for some months and so later, when he married, my first experience of being on a marae was at his wedding, when our whole family went on to his marae at Omaio on the East Cape of the North Island of New Zealand.[202] Even then, virtually a child, I detected, in the practices of the marae, superbly designed and executed theatrical rituals, which involved two groups approaching by graduated steps from looking at one another from a distance of 100 metres or so and hearing the karanga (ritual calling and incantation), then approaching to sit within 50 metres of each other, listen to chants, speeches and songs from each other and observe the messages contained in body language, to finally moving in a slow line to touch each person from the other group, in an individual greeting. This gradual approach was conducted within a ritual which was held as serious and even, in some respects perilous: as Ann Salmond says in her book *Hui*, (1996, p.115)

> in earlier times when warfare was endemic and strangers were probably enemies, these rituals were used as a finely-balanced mechanism to manage encounters in peace. Even then they were not always successful, because between traditional rivals tempers ran high, and an exchange of insults or some unwitting offence could spark off hostilities on the spot…

This aspect of uncertainty is part of the creation of a highly effective learning situation: in my education as a teacher trainee 'salutary uncertainty' was mentioned as an important element which facilitates learning. This state was said to be helpful to keep students from relaxing into a state where they knew 100% what was going to happen next and therefore in some senses were partly asleep. Years later I identified one of the vitally important elements in a hui, (the ritualistic gathering in a Māori context), to be that of uncertainty. The rituals of encounter support this uncertainty and even draw it out, moment by moment. However, I also detected, in the hui, a series of interconnected rhythmical practices, meeting the needs of people on every level; physical, emotional, relational, intellectual, existential (Salmond 1996) - which combine to produce a very sophisticated learning environment, in which people are enabled to

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[201] There was an extraordinary period of several years in the feminist journal *Broadsheet*, when Māori theorists systematically attempted to educate the feminist community in Aotearoa. Their writings delivered crucial information, theoretical constructs and challenges. After this period of sustained input, which was exciting, inspiring, challenging and stimulating for many readers, they withdrew because, as Hilda Halkyard wrote at the time "White women are too far behind" (Halkyard, 1982, p.13)

[202] We walked past Omaio as Pramazons 20 years later; while, further on in Te Kaha, we were invited by Bill to camp on the high school grounds where he was principal at that time - and on the morning we left we were fed a wonderful breakfast by Bill's wife Minnie who gave us a preserving jar of kahawai to take with us for our lunch…

make important learning progress, each at their own level and in their own area of interest. Over the subsequent years whenever I have entered a hui, particularly in the context of the marae, the combination of purposefulness, uncertainty, ritual, performance, freedom, multi-modal experience, creativity and humour has impressed me anew with the outstanding sophistication of its operation as an educational institution.

Ten years after first going on to the marae at Omaio, in my study of drama at Victoria University of Wellington, when I was simultaneously encountering a systematic presentation of Māori history, art and culture in a programme called Māori Studies, my version of the play which we had to produce for assessment, was a script for a multi-media show around the theme of the millennial vision of Rua the Prophet, Rua Kenana, about whom I had learned from anthropologist Peter Webster, in four unforgettable lectures about Rua's millennial movement. Even at that stage I felt keenly the lack of New Zealand theatre which told dramatically the stories of the Māori world or the shared Māori/Pākehā past. Later, in our women's community theatre work, we learnt Māori songs together and made a shadow puppet shows sometimes based on Māori legends. At the same time, in my work as an English teacher of secondary students at Wellington High School, with a friend Stephen Sinclair, I facilitated theatrical work with a group of Māori and Pasifika students who grew into Taotahi, a professional theatre group: "Taotahi staged the first full length Pacific Island play ever performed in New Zealand called "Le Matau" (1984)" (The Laughing Samoans, 2007). O'Donnell and Tweddle wrote that

> Significantly, the first full-length PI [Pasifika] play, Le Matau (The Fish Hook 1984) was an intercultural collaboration between Samoan Samson Samasoni and Palagi Stephen Sinclair." (2003, p.53)

I had met Samson when I taught him English in the sixth form and recognized his talent as a creative writer. I wrote some song lyrics for their first production, Atiu, which grew out of work we had done together at school and concerned a boy with a Māori mother and Samoan father. We continued to work together for about three years.

I had earlier been personally challenged to confront racism by these students, a nucleus of whom were in my sixth form English class. This was the time of Racism Awareness Training and some of them experienced this training, I think through a Pasifika Church Youth Movement. Soon after, one of them told me "I invite Palagi[203] to things and they say they will come, but they don't." Several weeks later, she said to me casually, 'Do you want to come to Pipitea Marae, I am doing a youth programme there.' The day she invited me was my birthday. There was no-one to come with me: the day in August was wet and cold, the fence around the marae to the gateway interminable. I went and I am still going.

My journey with Playback began about two years later, in 1983, during a year when I had committed myself to learning Te Reo Māori, the indigenous language of New Zealand, full time. I joined a women's anti nuclear theatre group in Auckland, the only one from our Wellington Women for Peace (WWFP) group to move north for three months for this purpose. Our WWFP group had spent a year or so singing once a week in a city mall and giving out home made pamphlets about the war machine and the need for individual people to take a stand regarding nuclear weapons. There had been contact between the two cities: a member of the Auckland Peace Band had come to Wellington and taught us their songs and, while in Auckland at an English teachers' conference, I had gone on a demonstration with the Auckland group at the Auckland dockyards where we sang to protest the arrival of a nuclear powered (and possibly armed) submarine into Auckland.

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[203] Pākehā/European NZers

Women from these two groups joined forces in October 1983 to form what became known as Pramazons, a group of women and children who walked with prams around the East Cape of NZ[204] performing and talking about issues of war, peace, exploitation of the Pacific and social justice. This area of Aotearoa New Zealand was firmly anchored in unbroken cultural tradition with pre-colonial social and ritual practices, especially as expressed by the older people, even though there was also evident an undercurrent pertaining to the impact of colonization, to be noticed in patterns of substance use, unemployment and apathy.[205]

We Pramazons rehearsed for a month, preparing storytelling, a dance/drama piece about the Pacific called "Pacific Paradise", a puppet show, and a street band. During our rehearsals, one day, one of the group members said "Let's playback a story" and I said "Yes of course", being very used to improvisation from my theatre training. To my astonishment, the group clicked quite suddenly, into a very clear and distinct ritual: the actors sat in one part of the space and a person sat beside the story teller and prompted and facilitated the story being told. Actors were given roles - I remember quite clearly being given the role of the swing that the teller had swung on, in the garden, when she was a very small child - the swing in which she had experienced, in harmony with the sky and the tree and (I think) the setting sun, a whole gestalt of awareness, freedom, joy. As an actor I felt challenged by this role but I remember singing out "Free-ee-e" in role and I also remember to this day the beautiful, full and moving atmosphere created by the Playback. It stunned me.

We told another story as part of our rehearsal process - again one I remember quite clearly, concerning the very early cruelty of the father of one of our group. I think several other stories were also told during the rehearsal process but those I have forgotten. The intimacy and directness of the contact that playing back our stories for each other brought us really impressed me. I loved the simplicity and strength of the associated ritual which made the sharing of memories so safe and clean somehow, so that hurtful and very old memories were able to be made visible. The intimate knowledge of each other that came from this was important as we prepared as a group to undertake this physically and emotionally challenging journey together.

Later, after the journey had started, I told my own story, which had taken place some years before on the same piece of road where we were going to be walking the next day.[206] I told this story on the evening of our third night on the road when we had walked all day through rain to a place at Wainui on the Ohiwa Harbour where we stayed together in the old school

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[204] "Tenko, Tenko!" the children would call out, identifying us with the refugee women from a television show of that time concering English women who were prisoners of war in South East Asia.

[205] It was going to get worse: it is to be remembered that 1983 was before the devastating economic reforms of the later 1980s in NZ when much of the rural infrastructure and employment was destroyed eg. post offices, forestry employment.

[206] This was to be the first story I ever told in Playback. I had been sitting with my children who were something like five and seven years old, in the back seat of a car driven by my father on that road; we were on our way to the little East Coast town where my great grandparents had lived, a place revered by my Dad. We had seen a young woman running along the middle of the highway in the middle of the day. We had had to slow right down to avoid her as had several other cars as well. Her face was distorted in an inexplicable expression of desperation. She seemed to be silently shouting out something, though through the closed window of the car, I could not hear her voice. (At that time, my life too had elements of desperation in it, as I toiled in my role of sole parent to create a viable life for myself and my children, through working to support them and also trying to maintain participation in a creative community to inspire and enliven our world.)

house. I won't ever forget that first experience of simultaneously having a narrative occur subjectively, in my own mind's eye, and externally, in the enactment that the performers made. It was powerful and hugely relieving. My respect for Playback as a form gained another facet.

A couple of nights later, having walked through days of rain with our prams, having performed our songs in the school and been filmed by the television cameras, we played stories back for the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Kutarere primary school, who had given us a place to stay. We had all unpacked our wet luggage (six women and two 10 year old children) and it had steamed gently all day on his patio. We stayed with this family for two nights and on the second one we invited the family to tell stories. We played stories back for each of them in turn in their living room. My first Playback for an audience – how wonderful was the feeling that we had something to give them that no one else could – something that was uniquely made out of our creativity and theirs, coming together out of that storm!

The final Playback memory from that journey, and an influential one for my subsequent practice, took place some hundred kilometres further out on the East Cape at Te Araroa where from a settlement of 280, 70 people had come to our performance (25% of the town, I remember how proud we were!) A Māori musician friend had come to walk and be with us for a few days and we were staying in one of her ancestral houses, Hinerupe, facing the sea, allowed to stay there at least partly because she was with us. As our thanks to her, we played stories for her on the last night that we were there – I remember that she chose me to play her tupuna, (ancestsors), and I did so, sitting crosslegged with my back against the poutokomanawa (the post that holds up the ridgepole). As we played back her story. I felt the power of this form to cut through time, space and culture boundaries. Through her generosity in telling and including us, a stream of energy connected, through the stories and enactments, the past, the present and the future of all of us. I was astonished by this and deeply impressed by the possibilities of this form of letting creativity be part of people's lives.

Boundary disputes, a case study: training films about Playback

In 2002, Kevin Saunders of Perth, Western Australia contacted the Perth Playback Theatre Company who were celebrating their 20th birthday, to ask whether they would agree to be filmed for a video about Playback Theatre. They agreed and a two-volume video called *Citizen Actors: Playback Theatre* (Saunders, 2002) was made and distributed by Hush Videos, who became known as the Contemporary Arts Media in 2004. In their catalogue they said:

> The production of this unique video series (Vols.1 and 2) coincided with the 20th anniversary of the Perth Playback Theatre Company in Western Australia. Volume one is about the philosophy and method reflected in this Company's work: about the ritual of Playback Theatre, the exploration of stories deriving from the individual and the community, about PBT as a form of social inquiry. Volume two explains and demonstrates the aspects and techniques of Playback Theatre which are particularly useful in teaching drama and theatre in schools (Contemporary Arts Media, 2007)[207].

I ordered a copy of this video which was relatively expensive ((U.S. $250 for the set of two volumes, each 55 minutes), for our institution's library. My thinking was that it is very difficult to represent Playback in any form of documentation, but at least these films enabled me to show other people what I was investigating. In my view, the film exemplified the dilemma

[207] In October 2007, this video was no longer advertised on the Contemporary Arts Media website.

about Playback which I also see in some of the theoretical writings on theatre[208]: if one dissects the form and describes the elements of it as discrete, one runs the risk of having killed the living activity in the course of the dissection. However, there were some strengths to this film, especially as it showed the work with school students and there were some wonderful shots of young people's faces as they told their stories and watched the enactments. I took my copy to the Playback conference in Japan and showed it in my workshop: where all but one of the participants had never heard of it. It was not discussed at the conference.

Currently on the Centre for Playback Theatre website is an advertisement for a DVD made by Salas's company in 2006, for which the promotional material reads: "The first-ever training DVD for playback theatre, designed for new and experienced practitioners, trainers, and educators. Produced by Hudson River Playback Theatre and the School of Playback Theatre" (Centre for Playback Theatre, 2007). This DVD is much more possible for an individual person to own as it only costs $45US. I purchased my own copy and will also be purchasing one for our library.

It is an excellent resource and, unlike the one from Perth, manages to keep the living quality of Playback, by having one whole performance shown with an optional voice over commentary by Jo Salas, who is the Artistic Director of the Hudson River Playback Theatre Company and who plays the role of facilitator or Playback Conductor in the filmed performance about which she wrote in 2006 (Salas, 2006). For newcomers to Playback, there is an additional option of watching the same performance with a voice over commentary by Jonathan Fox, introducing them to the form and purposes of Playback. It will be of real help to people all over the world who are learning Playback: in my view, however, it would have been preferable had they referred to the Perth film somewhere in their writing about the DVD. To acknowledge work done before would not have taken away from the excellence of this production: in fact it would have enhanced it. In the absence of such acknowledgement, a relationship of centre and margins is implied which is not helpful for the worldwide development of Playback.[209]

Methodology

Work at Tuai

Throughout the time of this research project, (and for several years before) a group of us have been going each year, to Tuai, near Waikaremoana in a rural part of the country to spend time with Rangimarie Rose Pere, an "[e]minent Māori scholar" (Bishop 2005, p.134) who has been a mentor to many educators, writers, healers and community workers, both Māori and non-Māori, both in Aotearoa and overseas.

Having held varied increasingly senior education positions, and having also undertaken postgraduate studies in education, history and sociology, Pere and her partner Joe, returned to live in Tuai, one of her ancestral homes, in 1990, engaging in the building of a home for themselves and their extended family as well as founding a community education and healing centre there, at Koopu Ariki Marae and Te Pikinga Aio Trust.

It has been a dream to do Playback there and one day to bring an international gathering of Playback scholars to experience the fund of living performative narratives and dialogues which are enabled in such an environment. These are not always easy narratives to witness or to

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[208] And have lived with in the process of this research project.

[209] When I mentioned this story to a friend who had been a founding member of Auckland Playback Theatre, she reminded me that in fact Leon Narbey, a distinguished NZ film director, had shot a film of Auckland Playback in 1985. At present no-one has located a copy of it.

take part in, having elements of madness, violence, loss, anger, betrayal which sit alongside and in the most intimate relation to narratives showing for example triumphant survival, skill, compassion, connection and revelation. As I have become more immersed in the practical challenges of the research project, this vision has had to take a back seat – but even so, we have done Playback four times, over the last four years, at either the January or April gathering, traveling the winding stony road which threads for 100km through indigenous forests.

One year, we did Playback in the village hall, down the hill from where we stay on the marae. They hired the hall and the newspaper reporter from Wairoa came to our workshop/performance. There were three of us from Kāinga Rua, including Aunty Awa. The hall is a solid timber structure, built when the hydro dam employed the locals who had been sent off from the lakeside villages in the 1920s when Waikaremoana became a National Park[210]. Every year Rose and Joe lead the healing gathering next day down to the hall and the tennis court nearby for a table tennis and tennis tournament which lasts all day and ends with the giving of prizes in the evening when everyone goes home tired and satisfied.

On this occasion, held before the main festival, I took the role of facilitator, alongside Aunty Awa and we led a mixed audience of about 30 small children, teenagers, parents and two elderly women, through a series of exercises, for loosening them up to prepare them to portray stories in movement and sound. After we had done an hour or so of this work, some other adults and children arrived and then we did Playback stories.

Grandma, one of the venerable kuia of the small village told two stories, first of her pride at her grandson's success in the national golfing tournament, and then of her determination to help the kiwi in their struggle to survive, to bring kiwi back into the Urewera National Park, despite the ferrets, and to work alongside DOC to make sure that these things happened. Some of the teenagers present had been working on the building of the predator-proof kiwi enclosure up in the Park that day and so her story resonated with everyone there. This ended up being a narrative of courage, with the counter-role of the ferret played with glee and gusto but the kiwi ultimately surviving. I saw again that the Playback form provided a way for an elder to transmit knowledge and values to younger people in non-didactic but powerfully educative ways.

Pātaka

This performance, with its resolute confrontation of death as a constant presence within life, happened in mid 2005, a month before I was to leave New Zealand to travel to Spain with Jackie Williams, a friend and colleague from educational, childrearing and community theatre work in Wellington. We then walked for five weeks and 300 kilometres on the Camino de Santiago, the pilgrimage of St James which is based on an old druid pathway across the northern part of Spain to the Costa del Morte (Coast of Death) on the Atlantic. The pilgrimage was to end at a place called Finisterre, the end of the earth and during it the performance aspect of such a journey was very present to me: the people living along the 700 km route of the pilgrimage are used to the stream of people passing through their lands and their lives. There is a mutual audiencing and performing: sometimes the people live their lives, working in the fields and shops, going to church and the plaza while the pilgrims stop and stare; while at other times, the locals gaze with incredulity at some particularly surprising or interesting antics

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[210] One of my teachers of Te Reo Māori, Te Ariki Mei, used to tell us of this event – "They said our people were spoiling the view!" Usually an astonishingly compassionate and supportive person, he would bristle with bitterness as he shot out this sentence with contempt.

of some of the tide of 200,000 people a year who walk through their homes.

I had been involved in performance work with my friend for over 25 years. Our performances would occur within a sometimes raucous community celebration, as we climbed hills to watch the sun rise in spring or set in autumn, or went down to a little beach by the sea at midwinter to light a fire together. We would come back to a house, share food and wine, and then have the shadow puppet show and sing together a repertoire of songs we built up for these occasions.

During the last ten years, three of us went regularly to visit Rangimarie Rose Pere at Waikaremoana in the remote Urewera forest of the North Island of New Zealand – one year I remember the other two making a puppet show there when there were lots of children present, wind and rain outside. Another time, Jackie helped me and Aunty Awa from our Kāinga Rua group give a Playback Theatre workshop in the hall in the village there, for whomever from the village wanted to come: work described in Chapter Seven (on page 441)

The two of us walked to the end of the earth. She strode ahead, finding new people to talk with and find out about each day, while I walked slowly, alone, relishing the dusty golden path of Castilla y Leon, the standing stones of Galicia. At the end of each walk, we would meet and find a place to stay, finally arriving in Santiago de Compostela and going on by bus to Finisterre. We got there, to the Costa del Morte on the day of a solar eclipse, which turned the morning grey and the light thin and otherworldly. In the afternoon though, the sun was gold as we climbed the winding road to the light house, where we sat on rocks and waited for the sunset. The sun seemed to hang for hours in the same place in the sky: we leaned on the rocks, closed our eyes, and talked of all the people who had helped us on our five week journey. It was Jackie who called out to me as the sun was setting "Look, look, dolphins!" and I focused on the sea way down below us where 40 dolphins swam into the lighted path of the sun on the water.

Jackie found out six months after we returned to New Zealand that she was very unwell: she walked that path of her illness just as she had the pilgrimage in Spain, incredibly honest and funny, sometimes cantankerous, very clear about what she wanted and didn't want. Somehow I found that I could travel beside her, behind her, coming and going as I always had. She would ask me, during those last days, "Have you done some reading Fe? How is your study?" Earlier she had got me to tell her what was in every chapter of my thesis. She had accompanied me on this journey which would not have been the same without her. And I too went with her, right to the end, to the fire.

"And even though it all went wrong, I'll stand before the queen of song, with nothing on my tongue but alleluia."

Appendix Two: Information about Playback from IPTN Website

Building community through personal stories

Playback Theatre creates a ritual space where any story - however ordinary, extraordinary, hidden or difficult - might be told, and immediately made into theatre. And where each person's uniqueness is honoured and affirmed while at the same time building and strengthening our connections to each other as a community of people.

Origins

The original Playback Theatre Company came together in 1975, with Jonathan Fox as its director. This was in the mid-Hudson valley of upstate New York and part of the experimental theatre explorations of the 1970s - looking for ways of reaching out to its audience, bringing theatre closer to everyday reality, and breaking away from the tradition of scripted theatre. Since then, Playback Theatre has spread across the world with companies and practitioners in over 30 countries. It thrives in a variety of settings, existing as community theatre gatherings as well as a professional service to both the business and social sector.

Influences

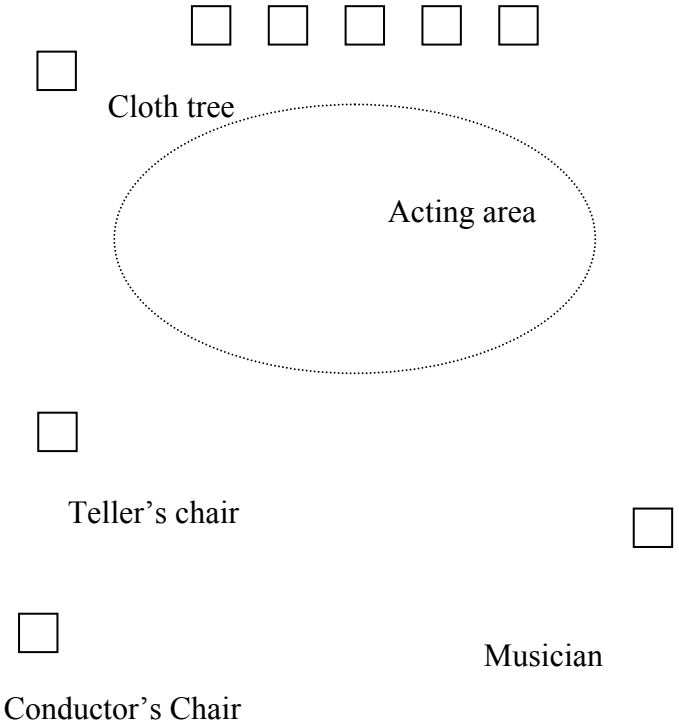
- **Community ritual & theatre:** Jonathan Fox had lived in Nepal and experienced these deeply embedded into the rhythms of everyday life.
- **Oral tradition of storytelling:** where people gather together to hear and share the old stories - the world of myths and legends and folktales.
- **Psychodrama:** while there are differences in form and practice, there are many shared values in Playback Theatre and psychodrama. For example,
  - spontaneity and the release of creative energy
  - inclusiveness – every individual has a place in the collective.

Basic structure

Whether in the classroom, hospital, at a business

conference or in a theatre, there is always the familiarity of this basic set-up for Playback Theatre.

Actors sitting on boxes or chairs



.....AUDIENCE.....

Artistic additions

Each company may have some additional features, for example: a cloth 'tree' at the upstage right corner - a selection of coloured cloth draped over a rail or ladder which can be used in the action. Or upstage there may be a simple curtain on a rail to create a hidden area for the actors to use in the action. These are optional extras.

Rhythm of a performance

There is no script, but there is a rhythm and sequence to a Playback Theatre performance. The Conductor is the host and facilitator of the process. After a period of introductions and warming up, someone will volunteer to tell a story. It could be a short moment, or about a longer event. They may be past, present or future stories. They could be about a very special time or about something that happens everyday. In the course of a performance 3, 4 or 5, maybe more, people will come forward to tell a story in this way. Towards the end of a performance, the conductor may invite reflections on the process, and the

team will create some sort of closure appropriate for the event.

Threads of meaning

Sometimes a Playback performance may begin with an explicit theme, and the stories are offered following this thread. Sometimes there is no theme to begin with, and the underlying concerns and interests of the community will reveal themselves through the deeper patterning of the stories. This is not always obvious, and a skilful conductor may be able to bring this to consciousness at the end of the performance.

Sequence of story

The heart of the playback performance is in the sharing of stories. When someone volunteers to tell, this person, called the Teller, will cross from the audience area to the Teller's chair. The story is told from this place with the support of the Conductor.

- During the interview, the Teller chooses actors to play roles in the story. As the actors are chosen, they stand. When the story is told, the Conductor will say 'Lets watch'.
- The performers take this as their cue to set up for the beginning of the enactment. There may be music to set an atmosphere and mood, the actors may use their boxes or chairs to define the space.
- During the enactment, the actors and musician will spontaneously improvise a re-enactment of the story, and this may happen in different artistic forms, aiming to present and capture the essence and heart of the story.
- At the end of the enactment, the actors look to the Teller as an act of acknowledgement.
- Then there is a closure with the Teller - an opportunity to say something more if they feel moved to. Sometimes nothing more need be said or perhaps a few words, sometimes the Teller is offered a chance for a correction or a transformation of the scene. And the actors will replay it accordingly. The conductor thanks the Teller who returns to their seat. And then another person is invited to tell the next story, and so on.

The simple rules of this sequence form part of the ritual

that is an essential aspect of Playback Theatre.

Ritual

The ritualistic aspect of Playback Theatre provides an important container for the whole experience. The ritual creates a framework, a definition for the process, within which the unpredictable and the miraculous can manifest. When the ritual is held well by the conductor and the performers, there is a subconscious sense of safety amongst the audience. And in this atmosphere, the most profound as well as the most mundane of personal stories will feel welcomed and honoured.

Art

Whether performed as a naturalistic scene, or through abstract movement or sound, or as a dance, or with puppets and song (or a combination of these forms), when the heart of the story is captured with a high level of artistry, there can be profound impact and another level of transformation and healing. When this is witnessed as a spontaneous ensemble creation, it offers a deeper experience of our humanity and collective potential.

Social Interaction

Alongside the fundamental principles of Ritual and Art, Playback Theatre gives attention to social interaction. The ritual and artistic response is only meaningful when there is a good awareness of the whole group experience. This theatre form is in direct service to healing relationship, communication and understanding between people. This is an underlying value, so the conductor interacts directly with the audience with respect and human warmth, and is sensitive to the larger social context of the Playback event. By listening to personal stories we feel and weave the deeper web of our story as a community of people and thus tap into the collective and universal experience. Social change and transformation begins here, as we make space for the stories of the community, through individual voices, and are affected by them.

(IPTN 2003)

Appendix Three: Interviews with three members of the Original Playback Theatre Company

Interview written responses from Jonathan Fox

December 2003

Here are some responses, however feeble, to your questions. I hope it might be of some usefulness to you in your writing.

Getting lost.

I remember a story told in our first ever try of the playback idea. A fried of ours, Sylvia, whose parents were holocaust survivors and made it to the US by traveling via Siberia and the Pacific, told a story about getting lost on the way to see a therapist for the first time. What a rich story!

In my village in Nepal, I was constantly "almost lost," in the sense of not knowing why I was there, what I was doing, or how to go about things. Often walking on the paths between villages I would have a feeling of lostness. I was so alone.

On my trips, in a foreign culture and a strange language environment, I often have a similar feeling of unsureness. But it feels like a healthy uncomfortable. I relate this feeling to Moreno's idea of spontaneity. Being in Japan or being in Burundi, for example, is a constant test of my wits, my

capacity to adapt to different ways, and how well I can function in uncertainty.

Wandering.

Although I wander the world, and do feel allied with Johnny Appleseed, whom some have compared me to, I do not have the reckless courage and zest for novelty of the true adventurer. My core story is closer to the plodder, weighed down by a heavy burden. Struggle is my inevitability and failure my expectation. (This comes perhaps from my history with my little brother, whom I took care of, whom I carried because of his feeble heart, and whom I eventually lost despite everything.)

On the playback theatre stage or teaching in a workshop, however, I feel differently. I am happy to not know the way. I easily risk the unknown, trusting that if I find myself in a dark wood, I (with the help of the others present and some kind of larger spirit) will find the way out to the sunlight.

Frailty.

My heart goes out to the shy ones, the weak ones, those not so capable. I abhor dominance. Now, as I get older, I begin to experience a different kind of frailty--the physical kind, which is hard to accept.

Investment.

What a strange term, compared to calling. Or parenting. Or loving. Ironically, currently I am trying to think more in worldly terms, so that I can bring playback more into the world and ensure my own living from it.

Generous benefactors, where I've feasted.

The mixture of metaphors, economic and culinary, is a bit confusing. Of course there are teachers, formal and not; family members; those hundreds who have extended their generosity to me; and the "Magic Mountains," to use the phrase of ee cummings, those precious individuals, so many of them, one has met on the road.

Jonathan Fox, email, December 2003

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Jo Salas talks with Fe Day

September 29, 2003

Shizuoka, Japan

In the beginning we had none of that

Fe: What can you say about the beginning?

Jo: When people encounter Playback Theatre now, it's very highly formed. We have the scenes, we have fluid sculptures, we have pairs. We have the whole ritual. We have the roles of the conductor and so on. Well, in the beginning we had none of that, not one single thing. All we had was the idea of theatre based on real people's stories. I suspect people don't imagine this at all.

Jonathan had the vision of this kind of theatre, very strongly, and then told me about it. We talked about it and began to play with it. We played with the idea for a couple of months with an improvisational group that we already were part of called "It's all Grace," in Connecticut. We played with it enough to do one performance with that group. I can't imagine how rough it must have been! Because it was just so unformed. But we did it. And it worked. There was at least one story that we still remember to this day. The essential process worked. And then we moved to New York.

Fe: So did that mean moving away from the group members?

Jo: Moving away from that group, yes. About three hours away.

Fe: When Jonathan talked to you about it did you have a reaction? Did you get it?

Jo: Yes, I was attracted to the idea. It made sense to me right away and he asked me quite formally if I wanted to be one of the people who was developing this, because not everyone in our company did. We had been working in a different way. We would have a general theme and we would improvise around it, then choose a couple of scenes, so to speak. We'd put together a little play, a series of scenes. This was the seventies, early '74. It was "hippie" theatre. We would dance on beaches and do our thing there. It was full of great energy and influential for us but it didn't last all that long.
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The people in that group were very interested in playing together and in developing these pieces and then putting them on, finding locations, usually outside. Some of them just weren't interested in this different direction. As I remember, I think we kept doing both for a little while, the earlier work and this new idea--which did not have a name at that point, it didn't have a name for quite a while.

Fe: So it was distinguished by the fact that it was responding to things that the audience said, rather than things that you generated in the company.

Jo: Right. The topics that we'd had in the company were related to our lives. We did one piece about life and death called "Happy's Own Season" and the person who played Happy was dying, or so we all thought at the time. As far as I know he's still alive but he had an apparently terminal disease at that point and so life and death was very much on our minds. We created this piece and so it was very much related to our own lives. There was no written-down script. But we did not create it on the spot. Some people were not interested in exploring something that took place on the spot, based on other people's lives. Others were interested and then some others, who had not been in that group, also joined us. And then Jonathan and I moved away, for reasons that didn't have anything to do with the work

Fe: Why?

Moving away from pollution, towards psychodrama

Jo: It was two things. We wanted to have another baby and we were living at that time a stone's throw from a nuclear power plant which, as nuclear power plants do, regularly had little leaks of radioactive material. We'd seen people in the field across the road with Geiger counters. Jonathan had got a very mysterious illness at one point. We just wanted to live somewhere else. There were other horrible polluting industries around there—Dow Chemical, stuff like that – so we wanted to move away from there to have a baby. Then, during this time of beginning to develop the idea, he also had begun to do psychodrama training. Jonathan had various other theatre influences at work in him, including the work that we were doing. And then he went to a psychodrama open session and that was the missing piece. It wasn't like "Oh, I'm going to do something based on psychodrama"-- but psychodrama presented the missing link in a way. And he realized he wanted to learn more about it. So he began training. He was offered a chance to be on the staff at the Moreno Institute and to complete his training in that role. That was the other reason then, that gave us something to move to. So we moved to a town about half an hour away from the Moreno Institute.

Once we were there, Jonathan used the psychodrama network to find people who were specifically interested in exploring his new idea. I don't know how we referred to it because it didn't have a name, but it was something we really wanted to keep working on. So in that first year we had quite clear ties to the Moreno Institute. After the first couple of meetings we met at a church hall down the road from the Institute.

Fe: Yes, Judy [Swallow] talked to me about that, taking a night off from the psychodrama training and coming to the meeting.

Jo:And other people were there too. Jonathan put up notices on bulletin boards.

Fe: How many?

The first group members

Jo: Well, there were 14 or 15 who initially came, maybe even more than that in the very first time. In first year or so there were 12 or 13 people who came regularly and they all contributed something, they were all part of that initial work. But what you have to imagine is 12 or 14 people very diverse in terms of their backgrounds. They certainly were not all psychodramatists or psychotherapists. There was a plumber who was quite influential in that

first group.

Fe: What sort of influence did he have?

Jo: He was a very brash, macho guy who had been a Vietnam vet. He had that sort of energy. He brought a lot of raw life into the group. And there was a French Canadian schoolteacher, and her boyfriend who worked at IBM. The point I'm making is that we were not all coming from similar professional orientations or life experience. The French Canadian was in a way culturally conservative, with a French Catholic background. Her boyfriend was also, in his life, quite a conservative person. And then there was Judy, who was very core to the whole development of it, who came from a more upper class background and had been in the Peace Corps. Jonathan, Judy and I had all been in the Peace Corps (I was in the New Zealand equivalent, Volunteer Service Abroad). It was quite important that all three of us had had the experience of that kind of service and that kind of adventuring in other countries.

Fe: Was that also about experiencing non-Western cultures?

Jo:Yes, absolutely, we had all put ourselves in situations where we knew nothing about the culture and had been at an enormous disadvantage. Even though we were the privileged Westerner we were also the very unprivileged outsider. We had tested ourselves in that realm and we had also felt that giving yourself, however naïve and idealistic that is as young volunteers, was important enough to let go of all your comfort and security.

Fe: Jonathan had been in Nepal, and where had you been?

Jo: I'd been in Sarawak, in Malaysia, and Judy had been in Ethiopia. Three very different places. But I still feel that it was quite key that Jonathan, Judy, and I all had this experience. Later, Michael Clemente, who wasn't there at the very beginning, was the other person who probably had the biggest impact on how Playback grew, in terms of our convictions and our values.

Michael Clemente

Fe:Tell me a bit about Michael. He came to New Zealand and I know his name but I don't really know him.

Jo:Well, he was quite young when he joined us. He was maybe 23, not long out of school. He had a very strong artistic identity.

Fe: As an actor?

Jo:As an actor, a musician, and a visual artist. He painted, drew pictures. He was first and foremost an artist. And he was, at that age, quite tender and fragile in his being. He'd suffered a lot. He was a gay man and he had grown up suffering. He was someone who had known he was gay, and therefore very different, in a very traditional Catholic family. He was the kind of person who other kids would call a faggot, that kind of thing. And at the same time he had this fire, and not only on behalf of gay people. He was a natural fighter for social justice of every kind and he kept us on track in that way. He was one of the first people who challenged us to really be aware and keep growing and questioning ourselves in terms of what we are we doing

in relation to the world. He was a person of incredible integrity and great artistic power. I'll start crying if I talk too much about him

Fe:But it's really great for me just to get the sense of him.

Jo:Sometimes, especially in those first few years, we were the object of his revolutionariness. He was sometimes angry towards us.

Fe:What would it be that he felt?

Jo:I don't remember issues. I just remember him being a touchy young man and we were the "authorities." He and I had some moments. My understanding about homosexuality grew through him and that was sometimes painful. I had some blindnesses. I'd been best friends with a boy who was gay when I was in high school and I thought nothing of it. But then later I absorbed prejudices or misunderstandings. It was through Michael that I came back to that place of "So what?" We were very close. We really loved each other. Jonathan and I were with him through his dying and death.

Fe:That's been something that I knew, but I don't know how I knew, that his death was part of Playback somehow?

Jo:He died after the original company had "retired." The actual official life of the company was from '75 through '86. Jonathan had been increasingly travelling and teaching as Playback started to grow in other places and he wanted to have more freedom to do that, not compatible with being part of a company that met every week and performed regularly. He had been carrying a huge responsibility to generate income because by then five of us were being paid by Playback. So at the end of 1986 he wanted to stop. We didn't consider the possibility of going on without him, which is really interesting. Jonathan was very much in a leadership role. We didn't even talk about someone else taking over. But we didn't actually stop, although at that point we ended our official structure, we closed our office, we let go our manager. But we kept meeting sporadically and performing when we wanted to. At first it was about ten times a year—people would ask us and we'd do it.

Michael was diagnosed in 1990. I remember that we were performing at a conference in Washington DC. The AIDS quilt was there and Michael had just heard that his T-cell count was very low. I remember standing there with Judy looking at the AIDS quilt, and both of us sobbing, knowing what Michael's medical report meant. It was another two years before he died and we kept performing, but he got more and more ill. The last performance-- we didn't know it would be the last --was one that I conducted because Jonathan was away. It was for a conference of people who worked in residential treatment. Michael was chosen twice to play a dying person or someone who actually died during the story. Of course the audience had no idea consciously but they got that aura from him.

The next performance that we were due to do was the one big public performance that we did every year at a place where we'd performed since the beginning. We always got a huge audience, our old fans. But that year Michael was too sick to do it and we decided, "That's it, we're not doing any more." And that was the end. It was very organic. It was over.

Fe:No more performances. So in a sense his end was connected with the end of the original company.

Jo: Yes.

Ricocheting off the walls of the hall – early collective process – at least a couple of years

But I wanted to go back a bit to the very beginning, before Michael came along. We got these people together and we had the church hall. My mental image is of a kind of ricocheting off the walls of this hall – groping for the form of what this idea meant. Every now and again we would come across something that worked. We'd say "Well, let's try this: one person comes in and does a sound and movement, then someone else" and it worked, and we'd go "OK, that worked-- we'll keep doing that. Now what shall we call it? Let's call it a sculpture, no, let's call it a moving sculpture. No, let's call it a fluid sculpture!"

It was such a collective process. No one can say who created that. The ideas for these things came from many brains. Jonathan was contributing and shaping and leading, very much leading through all of this. But we were trying all kinds of things, finding the things that worked. It was a bit like the idea of the sculpture that's hidden inside the block of marble and the sculptor is just chipping away the pieces that are not part of it. I think that's what we were doing. Then there was a time, within two or three months, where we found a name for it. We had a number of other names that we were playing with and we ended up role reversing with them: "OK, name, how do you feel about being the name?"

Fe:Can you remember who "Playback Theatre" came from?

Jo:No, I don't remember. Jonathan's stepfather claimed that he contributed that name but I'm not confident that he did. He tended to claim things like that.

I remember also during that time how the vision grew stronger and stronger in me of what it was. I felt like I could really see how this could work, how beautiful it could be, how clean and clear, and I remember looking around and thinking "We'll never get there. We'll never do it, this is not the right group of people" but they were, you know. It just took more time. We really grew into being a working team.

Fe:How long from that moment when you thought this will never work until you felt you were actually fulfilling that aesthetic vision?

Jo:At least a couple of years. Maybe three years or so, three or four years. We'd started performing fairly early and, again, looking back with the standards that we have for performance now, I'm sure it was very rough! But it still worked.

Fe:And that's one of the things about Playback, isn't it?

Jo:To be perfectly honest, I sometimes look at people doing Playback now and I think "What is this? How could anyone be satisfied by this?" And yet there are people in the audience going "Oh, that's so wonderful!" It's really amazing. But we were bold as brass, back then.

Fe:So in a way you found a very strong voice for the aesthetic? You and Michael?

Jo:Yes, I did, and then when Michael came along, he did too. I was not from a therapy background. I subsequently got clinical training, as a music therapist, and I fully believe the importance of having knowledge in that direction. But that wasn't my world. I wasn't in the psychodrama world. Like Michael, I did art and music.

Fe: Did you think at that time of your creative life as having a big stream in this other work and a big stream in Playback? Did you compose, were you composing?

Playback was one of the things I did – I did not have a vision of it being my career

Jo:No, I started writing songs a little bit later. Playback helped me enormously to grow artistically. I had a strong desire and artistic direction but I was also very shut down in a lot of ways. From my younger life I had grown up very shy and inhibited even though I saw the world through an artist's eyes. The Playback work that we did broke me open in important ways. It was later, through the work that we did, that I became bold enough to start writing songs. But I had begun improvising with music with Playback. I'd been classically trained as a musician.

How did this fit into my life? I was doing batik a lot at that point, both paintings and as one-of-a-kind art to wear. I had a little business selling, actually, to many of the big New York department stores. I ended up leaving that because ultimately I was not interested in fashion. I was interested in colour and texture and so on. But the main thing for me was that I had little kids. We had one child when we started Playback and then fairly soon had the second one--we did make that move and we did have another baby. In fact I was performing the night before the second one was born – playing music for a Playback show.

Playback was one of the things that I did. I did not have a vision of it being my career, coming out of this earlier generation of women who didn't have careers.

Fe: We hadn't been modelled that, had we?

Jo:Right. And I had started very young. I had my first baby at 21.

Fe:So there was, in a way, a primary self-definition as parent which was what we'd also been given, and then there were all the social changes in the woman's role at that time, weren't there?

Jo:Right, which I was very involved in. I was very involved in the feminist movement. So here I was, a very young mother with this strong artistic interest which was taking various forms, Playback being one of them. Where that was going to take me I really didn't know. I did not have a vision for myself.

Fe:Would you have ever imagined how things are today?

Jo:No, I wouldn't have. I don't know what I would have expected. At one point when Playback had been going for a while, a few years, and we were starting to feel excitement about how far we could go, and about the idea of doing this all the time, I said "I don't want to be full-time

anything." I really liked the idea of doing different things. That is pretty integral to me. And other people concurred. We were, on the whole, people who liked the freedom of having different things going on in our lives

Fe: So now is it still like that for you? Have you still got a constellation of things?

Jo:Well, I must admit that Playback has become most of it, yes, but my life feels most balanced when I do put energy into other things. At the moment the main other thing is writing. Music is now subsumed within Playback-- in my company we do a lot of singing, we put serious time into that. It's very satisfying

Something we would have done differently, with hindsight

Fe:I wanted to ask you, as you look back, if there were any were mistakes or failures that you think were significant or important, that had an influence on what happened?

Jo:I don't know whether to call it a mistake, but something that we would have done differently with hindsight was the way it was always, from the beginning, "Jonathan and the group." That's how we put it out to the world. I had a lot of responsibility for doing that, because I wrote the brochures and the press releases and I always wrote "Jonathan Fox this, Jonathan Fox that…" It came back to haunt me because in fact I was part of all of that creativity, and later on it was very difficult to retroactively explain that actually it wasn't just Jonathan. This is not just about my pride or my ego – it's about the honesty of the process. It's such an old model of the world that there's one name, one person-- and it's almost always a man. That's the old model, and that's the story that the world very much wants. They want the man that we can identify, that we can make famous. The truth is much more complex. And the truth is that Jonathan's vision was absolutely central. This was the person that we were following. It was very significant that he was someone who was both charismatic and tolerant—he held the group together. But the truth is also that his idea would have gone nowhere without me and the other people in the company. Sperm without ovum doesn't become a baby. So—retrospectively-- it would have been healthier for everybody, and Jonathan very much agrees as well, if we had recognised that from the beginning. I carry responsibility for the way that unfolded.

Fe:And yet there's a paradox, too, in that the world might not have been able to recognise it if it had been couched in the new paradigm in the way that it has, say, in a place like Japan. As a publicist you may have had an accurate instinct. Who knows?

Jo:Yes, who knows? I think we could have done it differently. With my company now I'm very mindful of this. I seldom use my name in promoting it. I use it very strategically when I feel my name will help the company, because it does have a bit of brand recognition. But if you look at our material, you won't see my name prominently.

Fe: I think actually that's something that has happened all round the world in Playback companies, that leadership is something that is in process and in flux. But it's highlighted quite significantly in the Playback world, I think, isn't it?

Jo:Right, the co-creativity and the shared leadership

Fe:Yes, and then struggling with the fact that actually some people do bring people together in a visionary way. And then they need other people to implement it.

Playback is the diametrical opposite to the sound-bite

Jo:It's complex, and people resist complexity. It's the same in the political situation. I'm very painfully aware of this process in the United States at the moment with the lies that have been told about the world. They're like little sound-bite lies. The truth you cannot fit into a sound-bite. So the truth doesn't get heard. It's very apparent that this process happens. People's minds are shut down by television. They don't want to take the time to understand a more faceted truth.

Fe:In that sense, it must bring you hope that people all over the world have responded with such intensity to the work that you all in the original company did, because in a way that is countering sound-bites. Playback counters sound-bites, doesn't it?

Jo:Absolutely. And I feel that is the incredible strength and power of Playback. It's the diametrical opposite to the sound-bite. It's about the multifaceted nature of reality. It can show different personal truths. People can hold that, and the form can hold that.

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A interview with Judy Swallow

Judy Swallow in conversation with *Fe Day*

February 26 2005, Tempe Arizona

That's in there and you're telling me your name and the date

J.S. Okay I'm Judy Swallow and I don't know the date February something twenty something twenty six I think?

Yeah 26 (both laugh) and here we are in ARIZONA!

J.S Yes I know (laughing)

And it's the sun, Valley of the Sun

J.S And a couple of sunny lovely days now so it makes it all worthwhile

I know and we went to the Grand Canyon

J.S Yeah and Sedona in the rain…I won't ever forget that Sedona in the rain

I know I know

J.S And Mario our Indian guide to life yeah

Starting off in Playback

So I mean it just would be really great for me if you could just tell me you know like um your now well first of all I reckon just tell me about you and Playback theatre – start wherever you want and I won't basically ask any questions much for the beginning and then I might come back and ask some things so I might take some some little notes but so…

J.S For me with Playback theatre, it was very fortuitous that I was involved because I was a single mother with two kids and I was drawn to take some psychodrama training and you know arranging for childcare because it was residential at the Moreno Institute – I knew very little about psychodrama I kind of had a calling I'd been in a sort of expressive therapy group and so I thought "Oh psychodrama – that's good, I'll do a – oh a summer course okay"

And I didn't realize it was three weeks of residential training (gurgling with laughter) at the
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Moreno Institute – morning afternoon and night – psychodrama! So that was my introduction to psychodrama – three weeks residential – (laughing) which changed my life.

I can't remember whether it was that particular time or the next time which was – they didn't do three weeks ever again they did two weeks the most they could do – but it was one of those very early times and people were just burnt out and they were going to take a Thursday night off and Zerka Moreno said there was this young man that had been training with them, very interesting, wanting to get people together about an idea that he had about theatre so if we wanted to we could go to the church the basement of the church down the street and we could go see what that was about.

So I of course went and I saw this young man with you know curly black hair and flowing batik pants and he was talking about his idea you know and how he'd worked for the Theatre of the Deaf and how actors in New York were just you know all they could do was act, they couldn't have a life and he wanted some way that people could be an actor and have a life.

And people could tell their stories and have you know have it put in – he never said Playback but he had - make drama out of out of stories. And I was thinking "GOD that guy's idealistic what an idealistic man!" (we are both laughing) You know not a put-down but just like "Oh my goodness" and so we did some sort of theatre game-ish kind of things and I remember cause there must have been some international people at the Moreno Institute – we were skating along the floor as if we were ice skating and all of us were moving along as if we were ice skating and Jonathan skates up next to me and he says "Oh and where are you from?" and I said Poughkeepsie which is a town just right up the river and I saw his tongue go in the side of his mouth you know like a little wickedest child a tiny bit (laugh) and he said "Oh are you interested would you be interested in coming back next week? You know would you be interested in being part of this?" And I said "Well, I'm not very exhibitionistic but I do have two exhibitionistic friends, I'll bring them"

So I did, I brought Caroline and Marko and , my friends and they of course loved it and I was doing something with my friends and I had a good time and I figured – "Well I'll do this until they kick me out" and that was – they never kicked me out and so I am here!

And both Caroline and Marco were in the first company and Caroline stayed longer than Marco did – and it was lovely and the first audition one dear friend of mine also joined and so Playback was a time for me to just be with my friends and do this so I was perfectly situated in terms of having a chance to be with my friends and learn and do this..(Pause)

I could have an idea and a male person would consider it

And I think um looking back um one of the most important things for my *own* personal development was that this was the first time in my life where I could have an idea and a male person would consider it - you know like really consider it and so with that I could get enthusiastic and I could say "Oh what happens if we try this and what happens if we try that…" and you know Fluid Sculptures "Well what happens if we do this with feelings? You know these… machines with feelings" and "Oh oh look" - you know. And so all those things, the word conductor was like "Oh well what about THIS word?" I said, "You know conductor, it's sort of like electricity and then oh yeah it's sort of like orchestra conductor and yes O yeah it's sort of like the conductor on a train" and we know could go on …

I can talk with things like that ONLY in an atmosphere of receptivity I'm very very sensitive to when somebody just will block me out, you know and I just – I'm quiet and I become an observer. So in those days I think I just couldn't hold that – you know there was a dam that broke you know with psychodrama opening me up and then with Playback there and all this stuff and *burble burble burble babb le babble babble blblblb* you know (laughing)

And I think Jonathan's infinitely patient and and I felt the security of being able to have ALL these ideas and all these thoughts and all these feelings and everything else gurgling out of me – you know and then it wasn't chaotic because Jonathan would think about it and say "Okay well why don't we try this?" or just took, just let go of my telling about this thought of mine …

So um it was a safe time for me – I didn't know when I was first going into psychodrama training that I would get divorced very soon afterwards – but it happens doesn't it that way? So I didn't want any kind of relationship that couldn't be a deep one you know after

psychodrama training – so Playback was like this and so it was my family and it was a really good thing – and I think it was just at the appropriate time for me because the idea of the Citizen Actor was there and so I didn't have to have training: I was a psych major in school you know and I did dance, I love dance and I did choreography as a student – for a musical and that kind of thing, a made up musical – so dancing was my main my main thing and I liked using my body …

There was one experiment that happened very very early on in performances where Jonathan if I weren't cast in a show Jonathan would say "And Judy will be the spirit of the house or the spirit - " you know so first time getting from the psychodramatic to the symbolic and I experienced that I could really kind of start moving my body to feel something and then the words would come. So that was always how I initiated anything you know from the physical, from the emotional and physical.

I was growing up and Playback was growing up

And so, it was just a lovely way to be there as I was growing up and Playback was growing up, it was all together and I was happy to know that I and Jonathan and Jo had all been in the Peace Corps - you know Jo was in the New Zealand Peace Corps and Jonathan was in Nepal and I was in Ethiopia and it had something to do with this idealism which I recognized even though…(laugh) projection is a wonderful thing. (Both laugh)

And yeah I think I think getting to know people very well for better or for worse and I had the time in my life to have the adult relationships with people in Playback and Jonathan and Jo were very very patient because during the ten years of the original company I was first involved, intimately involved with this guy Marco that came in and then you know all the interpersonal stuff happened as we were performing and those things happened and I sort of set a limit with Marco and he got angry and he started going out with my really good friend who was in the company and Playback and I had to – we were inevitably cast as – he and this other woman were lovers and I was the you know jealous wife watching and we had painful shows you know (laughing)

So I became very very interested in what's the parallel about what's going on in people's personal lives and what we're chosen for … and I was very interested in that and said some day I'll write about that you know – which I haven't ever – but you know I was fascinated by some multi-levelled thing going on – because it happened with me – a lot.

J.S On this vein, there was a show at a psychodrama conference and a woman was telling the story about um quitting smoking she said "I quit smoking today" and Jonathan was so wonderful as a conductor cause he said "Well when was, when did you start smoking?" That was the next question – and where she was started smoking was – she was on a safari which was so… who knew? She was on the safari and all of a sudden this elephant started chasing her and the guide, and they just managed to get away and he took out a cigarette and started smoking and handed her one, she smoked it and that was her first, that was her first time of smoking. Like who knew there was this fantastic story there? And so she picked me to play her and I was the only one in our whole crew that had been chased by an elephant – I had been chased by an elephant too! I was in a Volkswagen but it was scary as hell - I mean how did she pick me? (laughing) The parallels, a lot of parallels in life.

And then I also got involved with somebody ELSE who was in the Playback company – for a couple of years, two and a half years and as we were splitting up one of the advantages was that we were close enough together that we could do psychodramas when people were going through transitions and this guy was not coming clean with me so in role reversal I said what was perfectly obvious to me and the guy said "Oh how did you know?" but Jonathan also directed the psychodrama and I felt very safe with being able to use both Playback and psychodrama to deal with some of the things in the company …not everything but…so I feel very very grateful for that.

And Jo I think was always at the very beginning, she was quiet and watchful …like I think it took a while for her even to bring her violin out – you know we didn't have music and we didn't have anything like that – and I remember thinking that Jo was shy – bringing her violin out and it was just lovely and I wondered at that. And Jonathan was always writing things down in his little black bound books and I talked with Jo once and she said "Oh he has closets full of these

black books – some day he'll write a book" and I thought "but Jo you're writing things down too, you're writing things down" you know how's what about you? So I'm delighted that her book's in five languages or whatever and she has such incredible skills…And she was incredible – she made batik clothes for all of us – not for costumes for Playback but she did batik clothes if we wanted them and she was a clothing designer, she did all kind of things to try to earn money and she did lovely art stuff and made our pants for the costumes.

We had leotards on the top and pants on the bottom that was our second costume – our first one was painter's overalls – they were white painter's overalls that was the first step and the second time we could dye them any colour – whoo hoo – you know and the third one was when we had pants that Jo made for us and then whatever the shirts were – leotard. And then, then we got fatter and fatter and then we didn't think leotards was the greatest idea you know…

I' m sure you must know this, we all got got changed together, that was part of the ritual – men and women all got changed together so we all saw each other in our underwear and everything else and that was you know that was something! (laugh) And there was one time when we wanted to really you know feel like performers and so we took some clown white and put it somewhere on our bodies, under our costumes (laughing) just so that we knew we were in makeup so we put it on ourselves (both laughing). So I think the idea of all of us you know changing together and stuff like that - it's just very cosy and nice and natural and stuff like that – so that was lovely. Our company today does not do anything like that – very mature and comes and goes in their own little way hurriedly getting dressed or you know we don't have that kind of ritual.

So the early days were were good and somebody came to watch and said – "Oh it would be great to have you know music or it would be great to have…" um I think the big thing was set up music – some not Jonathan and Jo but somebody who came said – that was a big thing I think because of set up music you know to ritualize it – it slowly developed that way…

How Playback got its name

And you know the story about how Playback got its name? Don't you?

No.

No? There was um there was a big long table in the Moreno Institute and so Jonathan asked us and anybody else who was in any way involved with Playback – and a lot of people were interested in the idea – to come around that table and we'd just sit and we'd brainstorm names. And people would record it so whatever they want – write it down and people talked about names back and forth and back and forth and we were just tired and nothing was coming and then saying all these things and then one thing seemed okay and the other not. And this was exhausting and finally Merlin Jonathan's stepfather said "Well what about *Play it again Sam*? And we all looked at each other and said "Play play play-back Playback" and we all Playback Playback –all over the table – it just popped out… and everybody just knew it then and there.

It was such a it was such trust in hanging in there until something emerges you know and that was a terrific lesson that night.

So how long? How long had it been happening before then?

I don't know – Jonathan and Jo have the history of it I think but it was in…

A few months?

No no longer than that I think. I think a lot longer than that. Yeah yeah to find the NAME of what it was. Yeah, took a while.

Safety

And then the first performance was for family and friends and I remember my son came up and he was the first teller and he told a nightmare that he had of his toy his playroom or his room where he had toys his playroom being flooded and somehow I was in a bad position in

that thing – I wasn't helping or I wasn't understanding or something like that and Jonathan said "Okay Judy why don't you sit down in the audience"

He was about six I think – so he would have picked me for mother you know and so "Okay Judy why don't you sit in the audience and you watch" watch this dream you know so … I felt very grateful to Jonathan for that (*laugh*) and I think that was one of the first stories of the first show – my son telling this story about how I allowed his toys to be destroyed by flood! (*we both laugh*). I'd just gotten divorced the year before – I mean I separated from John the same fall that Playback started (wow) yeah just the same time so actually it was a deep dream you know his toys, his giant Tinker Toys were getting you know slaughtered yeah yeah yeah

Well so there were some things in there that I'd love to know a little bit about – um – like you talking about the safety of it – do you think it was safe for all the group members or how was it safe or unsafe?

I think it might have been safest for me. You know um sociometrically I was a lucky person you know cause I was in there first and early and then my friends came in and then I also had my friend Caroline who if not then, very soon after shared the house with me – we had a two family house and so she and I could talk a lot after the after the Playback things and you know, hash it through, you know. And Susan and Marco could join occasionally – so I think just the fact of people that I could talk with if there was something that that came up, well we could examine what happened it was good, And so there were other people who didn't have anybody to talk with and I think that makes a BIG difference – it makes a big difference to me nowadays because I don't have anyone to talk with in our company I feel quite isolated in many ways. And I don't find our company safe – as safe for me – I mean I do a lot, we've been together for twenty years but there's an element of unsafety…

It's a very interesting point isn't it because there's something like 'safe enough' or something – safety in a Playback company…

Right right right right right You don't want to be TOO safe because then you're you know stagnant

And um and there was some stuff when you said about baby sitting in the very first one – so how did you manage this is just – the solo mother in me wants to know – how did you manage like to go to a rehearsal every week and all that what did you do for babysitting? And all that can you remember or what did you do?

I THINK there was a fourteen year old girl on across the street and her family was also across the street and she was the babysitter and I look back and I think – the kids were little…

So how old?

When John and I split they were three and five –

Right yeah

So yeah they were little and yet somehow… I always trusted them in some way you know? You know? Or I never thought that anything awful would happen or something… no I mean, when I think we just… we rode around with no seatbelts, the kids were tumbling over the back of the car and all kinds of things all kinds of things …

Psychodrama was important

So again, there was something that you just said about using psychodrama in the life of the company – so how did that work or how did you do that?

It didn't happen very often but we had

Once a year… twice a year?

Well, we had we had one Saturday a month as well as every Thursday and on the one Saturday a month we could do things… I remember any thing from "we're going to have a performance so let's all take the roles of the people in the conference in the sociology conference – you know what's what do they want?" – you know so that's basic you know role reversal – um…(pause) Yeah we didn't very often have psychodrama just that one crisis time and I think somebody else had a crisis time where it was used as a skill there – I think

psychodramatic stuff was – it informed…

Yeah so how many of the company would have been doing psychodrama training?

Um it was important

Or doing psychodrama I guess

Um – (pause) – well Carolyn, Michael and I all were – yeah – and that was also something I got into and then they all got into –and then one person Jonathan asked to join because he'd come to the open sessions in psychodrama – I don't think he went for psychodrama TRAINING – but maybe he did more …a little bit um and then – so that was it. And so that's another little sociometric *pod* for me was the psychodrama people – and I think, well Jonathan of course and then I think Jo did some – you know…

But then Jonathan was on the staff of the Moreno Institute so what he did was he took his salary in training hours – it worked out for the Institute which didn't have much money – and it worked out and he gave the training hours to the Playback people – as the $60 days I remember it was in those days – and so he donated it because he thought that psychodrama was so important – so everybody in the company had a chance to to do psychodrama training at the Moreno Institute

Gee

And that was because Jonathan did the teaching.

And so you wouldn't necessarily be doing training with him, you'd be doing training with somebody else?

Yes and I I had … my father had died and given me money – or I'd got an inheritance – he considered 35 was the age of reason so he had sold off some stocks for me and it was to be used for education. So I told my mother that first of all I needed therapy- and I needed psychodrama training – you know thanks to my father that's what I needed!

And you weren't 35 yet were you?

Oh no I wasn't 35 as a matter of fact it was at her discretion - and now he was gone I said "Okay this is what I need for my education honey" and had I got my? Oh yes I had gotten my Masters already

Psych major at university

So that was quite interesting so that leads really into the those fore runners like you mention the psych your psych major and the choreography and dancing and Africa and it would be really nice to hear about all of those as kind of like some of the things you'd done before…(yeah) and what influence you think they had on you…

Doing Playback? Um not much not much

So in terms of the psych major..?

Not much – no it was like one of these colleges, the seven sister college which in the United States they say you get a really good education you know – it was behavioural psych and all the things which could be graded and measured and stuff like that. So I took sociology which was interesting and I took mostly dance and art and things like that (laughing) and I got a national Science Foundation Grant or this department did … where I studied subliminal viewings and did a study and discovered something that nobody had ever discovered – by chance –

Wow what was that?

It was it's like the human eye can easily see when you know horizontal and vertical lines you know you can say is this picture straight and you know it if you split the eye so there is a very good grid built into our brain for whatever reason – I think it was anyway –how people can see when they are traveling – you know by car you know how they can see fast and which way

they should be and maps which way people could see… Anyway I didn't have to do any of the practical part of it – but the question that this professor had been studying all his life was "Now that they have the technology to do something subliminally clearly subliminally – did people still see in the grid?" subliminally and you'd think that they did – but they saw better in the criss cross – and I asked people to guess – you know like in a clock face and they saw better subliminally they saw better in the criss cross, unconsciously – isn't that the coolest thing? I don't know why…

The diamond and not the square sort of? Oh – and he'd been looking to find things out and you…

I just happened to be doing the experiment

So how was he with you?

Well that's a whole story in itself, a story in itself – I had this whole authority thing because I had an authoritarian father – and so he would say "Well I'll meet you to do dit dit dit you know we'll have an appointment at blah blah blah at this time" so he'd go to the Psych Department and I'd wait for him and it'd be you know not the right time and then I'd go through this whole thing like "Oh I did something wrong I got the wrong time I'm in the wrong place o my god I'm going to get in major trouble, I'm trying to be GOOD, but you know something's wrong and you know he'll never understand, you know you know he's going to punish me" you know all these weird things – And one of his former grad students came by and said "Oh no he's always late, he might even forget about the meeting…" and I had no clue that it might be a problem with HIM, something was always a problem with me and I was terrified that somehow I'd messed up and … so THAT was my big awareness moment of that time …

Yeah well that relates to something you said about in the Playback group being listened to by males

By a male

By a male – and that was Jonathan was it?

Yeah yeah yeah yeah that was what I said – I mean it was very free to be invisible and all that - so then when I'm visible and actually heard it can be very scary. Like I wasn't really scared then but like "Oh I can blurt something out and it can be taken seriously – like the word conductor – or (yeah) like doing fluid sculptures" – or it's like "Whoa that's cool" you know? Yeah It was a good it was a good thing. So I don't know what my life would have been like if Playback hadn't come into my life – I don't know what it would have been like…or psychodrama for that matter you know? Cause that was when I found out that I liked to be more than going on in the roles – you know I had been unhappy and feeling like "Is this all there is?" that whole question and I got into therapy and then into psychodrama….

So was there ever a time that you like resisted? Cause it's like growth and change – in terms of Playback or you know psychodrama – that you resisted or found, you know, held back or, or did you just embrace it and move on?

I embraced it, I totally – yeah right, I was there was no looking back.

Dance

And you talked about the three of you having done you know peace corps so so

Mmm yeah so the peace corps – so the psychology had nothing to do with anything – dance did

What sort of what sort of things?

Um how people move together, how people improvise, how I remember a teacher, I took a choreography final and it had to be a solo and what I did was something where the teacher said something to me which at the time I felt hurt but afterwards I felt… She said something like "Well your style of dance is more like MIME than dance." And I heard it as a negative thing – although I remember a friend who'd studied mime you know in France he came back from his junior year abroad studying mime and we were in a tobacco barn once and I told him

"Tell me you know show me what you KNOW" …You know I remember in the tobacco barn we did mime, mime in the afternoon (laughs) So, so now I think of *course* the teacher saw this in me and she probably didn't say it in a put-down way at *all* …a factual way you know…but…

But you felt "Oh I'm not a dance - that she's saying I can't dance instead of she's saying I CAN mime"?

Yeah yeah right so so I seem to remember that as a pinpoint moment but I I liked dance and I liked how people move together in space and what they're trying to express and I loved choreographing dancers and things like that

SO so when you when it came to Playback you felt like you brought that…?

Yeah yeah I think so, I think so yeah

And what about with Africa?

Well in Ethiopia – I always was interested in stories but I was fascinated by how people saw things differently and so I guess I always was you know - from Aruba this woman Agnes who took care of our family…

First fourteen years in Aruba

But tell me about that - this is Aruba, is this in Africa?

No no Aruba is near Venezuela in South America . So I grew up on an island a Dutch island 25 miles away from Venezuela…

So you'd already lived outside of the States and – how long were you there?

Fourteen years.

Fourteen years right. First fourteen years?

First fourteen years yes. So this STRANGE …that was the United States and I STILL feel it's a strange country…I don't I don't have that feeling that other people have that "This is MY country" I've always been kind of – kind of watching it from outside…

And so what are the qualities of YOUR country sort of like if you think of what this is not, the thing that's this contrast?

Well where I lived was – it is kind of shocking looking back at it – because where I grew up in Aruba it was a very isolated colony on an island where people actually had …it was apartheid…well it wasn't putting the blacks down particularly but it was a company town where there were gates and people who worked in there from outside would have to show a pass to get in, because it was run by Standard Oil and there were English people and Danish people and American people working there and then there were Arubans who worked *for* them or who worked in the refinery, who worked as maids or gardeners you know or something like that you know it was really amazing that I grew up in that…

And so they came in they didn't live with you in the house?

No no they didn't live in the house – and then when we were going out of the colony it was always like you know quite a journey and then the island was like nine miles or 16 miles – you know a big trip outside of the colony …And of course my father was British and so on Friday you had to have fish and chips in a tropical climate …or roast beef, a roast that was…you know so colonial it was pathetic (laughing) you know, bad…

But in the household, Agnes was part of the household, part of the family and I was mostly always sent away from the dining room table at home – because I clicked the fork against my teeth or something like that, pathetic, so I was sent out and I wasn't fit to be at the dining room table and it was with a mixture of both tremendous relief and tremendous like shame you know both – that I was sent into the kitchen to eat with Agnes. So I loved Agnes – and I told you about this dream of Agnes's face a couple of days ago – it was just wonderful – so so

I felt quite alienated at college

So you had that fourteen years and then you had schooling and university here and then you you CHOSE to go away again

Yeah right… as soon as possible. I also thought like this college – the *college* that I was in was an ivory tower college – a friend of mine and I decided that we were going to be migrant workers so we were migrant workers at five o'clock in the morning and we picked asparagus as migrant workers yeah before school started (laugh). We went on a little truck to pick the asparagus we were "Oh maybe we'll write the great American novel!" (laughs and laughs) And then, when guys came to have a date I didn't like the college stuff at all and so I said "Come on we have to go and see some, go to this Polish covered dish stuff" and I'd find church suppers and we'd do polka-ing (bursts out laughing) and I don't know what they thought of me, I don't know what the people thought at the church suppers, I was coming to the church suppers and we'd eat whatever Polish food was there and we'd polka – I didn't know anything about Polish life but I liked polka-ing …

Yeah - so it was just sort of to get away from the stuffiness, was it?

Yeah yeah and the other side of the stuffiness was you know all these people who were playing bridge who were doing things like that and I felt quite alienated and I think … I loved the foreign film festivals and things like that

And there was a wonderful, this was another male who had a big big big influence on me, Leonard Demundo sculpture teacher – and he came to a woman's school and then he taught us welding sculpture and bronze casting and he trusted us so he gave us the key to this thing even when he wasn't there and we were you know dealing with fire, he *trusted* you know again a male that trusts women to be people you know?

You know so that was good, so I actually had a key to a building that was a storage building that I did the psych experiment and I had a key to the sculpture studio and I went out of my room with full intention to do some more experiments or do the statistics or something and I ended up with the other key (laughing) ended up spending long hours in the sculpture studios…

Yeah – and you made sculptures?

Yeah yeah welding and all that stuff it was - I really worked hard – the ART stuff was where my sense of freedom and experimenting and self worth – and even though I wasn't in any way an art major – I took art courses for fun – you know I ended up winning art contests as well – and so some day I'll just get back to doing art for joy..

Isn't that nice to feel that thought? Yeah like it saved you…

Yeah it really saved me because I didn't fit into the college crowd and um ah I wasn't cool - and my father died at the end of freshman year

Oh wow, so you were young

So yeah so I was so I'm sure I was alienated in a certain other way - I mean once I locked myself on the roof of Tory Hall for a week with Chekhov's Diary you know he wrote all these letters – Chekhov's letters – and stories – but a lot of his letters and journals – and ritz crackers and a jar of peanut butter and there was a tap on the roof for water for some reason – so so that was my first couple of days was peanut butter crackers and Chekhov

And what was that about?

I have no idea!

You just decided to go up there –) and was it open to the sky - and so you were there all night? With a sleeping bag? And Chekhov?

Oh I think so or blankets or something like that and I remember looking down and seeing - and Chekhov – so I was feeling one of those sophomore things – but I saw it was springtime and thinking I saw these college girls sunbathing, you know I saw it on the grass and you know I was different I was on the roof with Chekhov!! (laughing)

It's so fantastic isn't it oh it's beautiful

Chekhov o my god.

And what other writers were important to you can you remember? Or thinkers or what what sort of were…?

Oh aside from the regular Bob Dylan and Ray Charles and all those yeah um mm

Cause that's unusual eh Chekhov, where did you get that do you think?

I don't know I don't know I can't even remember what grabbed me so much I always said maybe I'll go back and find out what – or Kafka you know

Oh Kafka you read?

You know…yeah it's interesting I did things like, you know, I was a psych major and I did sociology and all of that stuff so you know that wasn't, you know I wasn't doing fiction…

No? you weren't doing literature at all?

No I wasn't but then I decided well I'll audit the literature classes – cause then I don't have to write the papers you know I can just so I did the, you know Modern Literature, British Literature, or British Drama I guess and I read plays and I really enjoyed the discussions and poetry and stuff like that but I audited the English classes and I didn't do any work (laughing) Just the joy of it…

So you read all the books…

Right and I didn't have to write any of the papers…I didn't spend any time analyzing them…

Wow but that's amazing cause you still had to go to your own lectures and your own classes…

Yeah so that's what I did instead of playing bridge or doing the other things

Yeah you did the other…

Cause I mean college was such a – I remember saying college is such a fantastic thing all this stuff in college it was like swimming around in it …

Had you got a scholarship to go or did someone pay for you?

I think yeah my father paid most of it and I got some scholarship money I think…You know so I just wanted to you know do it

The Peace Corps

Yeah and so then when did you make the decision about Peace Corps?

Oh freshman year I was going out with a guy and I wanted to go in the Peace Corps and he wanted to go in the Peace corps so I sort of picked it up and then after that I always knew I wanted to go in the Peace Corps…and so I think I got together with John an old friend of an old boyfriend in high school and he was very accommodating like anything I wanted to do he'd make it happen - so isn't this wonderful? So I said I wanted to go in the Peace Corps and he said "Okay" so we got married and that was the first day of Peace Corps training and we came into Peace Corps training and we were asked and we'd got married…

Did you tell your mum or anything?

Oh yes yes yes we planned it.

And so you went with him – together?

Yeah yeah and that was that was good because - you know he and I were both very community – we helped them build a library and

So you went to Ethiopia

Yeah and I taught English as a second language and he taught geography and we did adult education and we got a library built which was a big thing and I was interested in how different

people did things – I took a little tape recorder which was just reel to reel and everything else and I remember– we didn't have we couldn't get really anything there – so I had ONE tape I think (I wish I knew where it is now) – and I interviewed the English teacher and the science teacher – and certain things like if your shadow fell on a snake, the snake would die you know and different you know different things like that.

And there's a ritual that happens at the end of harvest time where each village has its own ritual like they're basically there's a big huge pyre of sticks and everything else and a big pole with flowers on the top of it and then the priests walk around it you know dadadada and then a one legged man would sit on a horse and go round a few times and then people would run around a few times and then if ALL those things happened before the flowers fell in one direction then that was good – you know and then if the flowers fell in a certain direction it was good luck and if it fell in the other direction then it was NOT good luck,,,

So I'd think why don't you just get the fire going in that part you know but I guess it didn't work that way 'cause I was there two years and one it was good luck and the next year I was there and I knew people better - it was bad luck and it was like dead silence and the, like the energy stopped in the air. And so I was riding my bike with the science teacher the next day very brilliant science teacher and I was riding my bike and I said "Well the flowers fell in such and such a way and you know it's supposed to be a drought or bad crops you know." And so I said "And look, here's, here's the crop coming up out of the ground you know isn't this stupid?" And he said "don't talk just like that!"

And he was an Ethiopian man?

Yeah right and um and I said – I argued with him because I knew him well and said "But look this is silly look at the crops coming…" And he said, he said, "something will happen." And sure enough the locusts came – it was just amazing. So I mean things like this…

Yeah I don't know but it could have been total chance but he was sure that there was going to be a problem with the crops… and there was and that was the beginning of a famine, that was,you know in 1969 the famine, and we left in 68. So you know, I don't know, but I was always interested in how people see things

And what about how, I mean just the way they were together at different times?

The Ethiopians? Um yeah well people sang – it's not like west Africa - this is Semitic - but there is there is singing and stuff you know

Like how would that happen would it be like on the street or…?

Yeah I think there were – aside from the ceremonies which I saw …

There would be several a year?

Yeah two or three a year – I think the only way that I heard it was in homes – not any big thing just kind of a given thing – we had a student who'd come and sing lots round us (yeah) you know we had a student living with us

And was there dancing as well?

No not too much no

Yeah yeah and so later in doing Playback when you were with Jonathan and Jo when you were with both of them having been in Peace Corps like you mentioned that when you talked about it - so what was it that …?

Well I just think about it as, we all were interested in other cultures other countries or living in the other countries and feeling what it was like to BE the forenzi or (yeah yeah) you know

The one from outside? What's forenzi?

A foreigner so I was in Eritrea so they had the Italian word for foreigner, you know the only white people they'd seen were the Italians in the colonial times and they little kids were like "Taliano Taliano!" But John and I were riding our bikes to school once after we'd been there quite a while and I felt like this is my home – you know 21 years old – you know – and we were riding our bikes to school once and we saw somebody by the side of the road and I said

"Look John a white person" I thought "How WEIRD!" and it was hard to realize that I was white too you know and this person is so WEIRD and so pale (laughing) it was very weird… So an interest in other cultures and stuff yeah um

And then I was a little embarrassed to come back to the States, I was looking at other Peace Corps I thought maybe I could do my whole life doing Peace Corps things. And John didn't have that feeling at all he said "No our families are home, our parents, our families are home and I'm going to go home." But I just could imagine… going other places…

Becoming a teacher

And then feeling embarrassed or there's some horrible embarrassment about being American and middle class you know in my twenties – it was the Vietnam War time and all the other stuff and so a friend of mine wanted to go to Botswana and I thought "Oh my they're doing some cool stuff so maybe I should go to the inner cities and do something in the inner cities and stuff and then to um keep John out of the draf, we would teach anywhere we could find a teaching job and so we were out in Long Island and I wrote to my friend in Botswana and I said (she was a black woman a black American woman who was in Botswana) and I wrote to her and said "Oh no we're here in Long Island!" And she said, "you know if people grow up in the ghetto and they leave the ghetto and get some kind of experience and then they go back and teach in the ghetto that helps. But if you're a white middle class person wanting to do some good in the ghetto… that's not good" You know basically - and if you are, if you've had some experience, and you've come to a conservative middle class white area that's where you can do the most good. Because here you are, they can identify with you…

And I found that that was true when I was a teacher – then – because I could just put question marks on people. So in ninth grade they were they were wonderful…

How old are they?

Fifteen yeah I could just, we could just ask questions and ask questions, I didn't have any answers, they didn't have any answers we just asked questions and I didn't ever have any teaching courses classes so I just by a fluke was hired to teach English – with a psych background! So we did, oh, laughter and what makes people laugh and all kinds of things like that and we did advertisement, you know *The Hidden Persuaders* just came out so I ripped up, I only had one book and I ripped it up and I gave parts and we did… we did reading plays and the kids wanted to put them on and so we'd meet at 6.30 in the morning and rehearse and you know I'd say "Well we'll just do a reading one" and the kids wanted to memorise it and the kids wanted to do costumes and I'd, they'd be pulling me along like "Okay well if you really want to do costumes…" So they'd do double cast plays and Shakespeare and all kinds of things because *they* wanted to do it, it was so cool - and in a secret way I was very glad I got pregnant after a year or at the end of that year because I would have burnt myself out! Other teachers have to pace themselves and I just threw myself right into it, you know into it, and there was a part of me that knew I couldn't have kept it up that way …but it was really fun while it lasted! (Laughter)

The Show in Aruba…

So – anything else that you would like that you think you know – anything else to say?

Yeah there's something, I've thought about this, never told a story about it Playbackwise but when I was a little girl we had very little, you know we had one big box from Sears Roebuck every year and there was no stores really no stores so we had to really think about what we wanted every year – so what I got was a large pad of paper and that was supposed to last me all year I think or some godawful thing like that …

And so I was a little afraid to kind of use paper and throw it and use paper and throw it because I had to sort of do something with each page – so none of those things were any good – but when I got to the cardboard at the back at the end I thought "Oh I have to make something really really useful," you know? (laugh) And so what could I make that would be useful? For a long time? And so I did a whole big sign saying *The Show* 'cause I figured that

would be, that would cover everything (laugh) and so I'd get together with my friends and so we'd do things, you know we didn't do our own stories, but we'd do stories that we'd read and mostly I was a good reader and I would think about what I'd read at the moment – at the moment that was the most important thing I'd read – Oh and I'd tell them the story and we'd act it out and then it was always "THE SHOW" (laughing) so if that was not Playback I don't know what is!!

Yeah and that would have been when you were like what sort of eight or nine…?

Eight or nine

The Show I think that's a great – and you were holding it out…And did you – people- the adult's would watch?

Yeah yeah I'm sure we were so serious Oh and I was so like you know whatever the story was – some big important thing – we didn't have television we didn't have radio we didn't have any of that stuff…

Yeah so you made it

Yeah we just made everything up and wandered around outside all the time (yeah) yeah like that was a good a good childhood (laughing and laughing)

I think we'll say that's a good place to stop – thank you so much.

February 26, 2005, Tempe Arizona

Appendix Four: Some Forms used in Playback Theatre

Fluid sculptures

Fluid sculptures are the often the first form to be used in a Playback performance. Sometimes called "moments" they aim to play back for a teller the complexities entailed in one moment of experience which they have contributed and told the facilitator and the audience about. In the opening phase of a performance, the facilitator aims to unearth a range of these snapshots of experience from the audience – a range of ages, types of teller, types of experience – that will indicate to everyone the breadth and plurality of the audience. These snapshots also aim to let the audience members, particularly those who have not attended a Playback performance before, find out about how Playback works. The performers aim to "maximize the essence" of what has been offered. This does not mean always going for the most graphic enactment but rather attending with close observation the personality, energy state and verbal preferences of the teller and endeavouring to match those as closely as possible. So, for example, a teller who describes their struggle to be heard by their boss, may find their moment enacted as a physical contest by the actors. The teller's metaphors are an important lead – though not the only one. The teller's gestures and unconscious movements are equally important. An actor may choose to echo them and add words to what they see in them. For, an important aspect of playing back audience experiences is to voice and to express what the teller has NOT said as well as what they have said.

In enacting Fluid Sculptures a certain ritual is usually established and is important to communicate to the audience the spontaneous and cooperative *process* of the Playback work.. One actor steps forward or a musician starts to play with a strong impulse to begin the enactment (usually – occasionally two or more step forward simultaneously and in that case they begin together). The strength and clarity of the movement and sound of the first of the enactment is critical. The other performers add to what has been crafted, seeking to portray the fullness of the moment that they have heard. They may choose to contribute something which has not been said but that they intuit from their own resonance with what has been said – in fact that is often where the surprise and drama is for the audience as well as the teller. These contributions are all indexed to the multidimensional nature of human communication – the actors aim to be picking up cues in the subtlest and most acute way possible from the teller. Elements to be attended to in the teller include tone and articulation of voice, choice, speed and energy

embodied in words, metaphors and image in the verbal account given, body language of all kinds: posture, muscular tension, micro movements of hands feet and head, gestures, movement and facial expressions.

The Fluid Sculpture aims to create a brief crafted theatre piece that reflects the richness of the individual experience of living – and then to stop, maintaining a level of creative energy that impels the performance on to the next moment. This involves all of the performers in an important Playback skill: reaching the end. Novice performers often fail to sense when a performance piece is complete and go on unnecessarily: this is one of the key parameters to be explored in rehearsals. Physical, interpersonal and intuitive skills are needed for a group to achieve a satisfying rhythm of completion – ideally Fluid Sculptures will vary in length and keep the audience guessing as well as sighing with satisfaction. The danger for performers of sculptures is to blend and be influenced by the offers made by the other performers so that the crispness, complexity and richness of the enactment is lost.

Story Sculptures

Many companies have developed a narrative form based on the fluid sculpture as a still abstract form which enables them to show the steps in a narrative. Some call them "story sculptures" : they may be made into a series of immobile sculptures and thus become "tableaux" or "frozen sculptures". Early in a performance, or in a setting where there are significant time or visibility pressures, these forms may be a way to enact a narrative which satisfies the teller and audience in a brief form which nevertheless enables change and development to be performed. I remember a performance where the audience was over 700 people sitting at tables in what at times functions as a nightclub – they were about to have their conference dinner and we performed for half an hour with the facilitator using a hand-held microphone to gather the audience stories. In that setting, the story sculpture was the choice of narrative form, because it enabled the steps of the narrative to be recounted – both audience and performers were straining to hear - and the performers to use bold, non-naturalistic performance skills which could project into the large space.

As indicated in this example, in these forms the facilitator plays an active role in structuring the enactment, recapping and summarizing each step of the narrative for the

performers, who then enact brief sculptures or tableaux for the audience. A danger of these forms however is that perfomers may use short cuts and actors in particular may 'mug' and use stereotypical facial expressions rather than using a full range of body and acting skills. While giving short term satisfaction to the audience because they recognize the short cuts and stereotypes involved, these forms in my view need to be employed with care and in rehearsal worked on to ensure that the full creative range of performers is still being exercised.

Stories

Playback Story as a form allows for a different level of exploration of both the individual narrative and the enactment. In this form, very frequently, the teller is brought out of the audience group physically to sit on a chair on the side of the stage opposite the musician, with the facilitator sitting downstage from them. This positioning is subtle and important – the teller, looking at the facilitator, is visible to the audience as a whole and this in itself is a vital aspect of the storytelling: it is both reward and social control. However, the two chairs are placed quite far downstage, like the musicians, so that the actor can turn upstage to watch the enactment and have a certain privacy of their reaction to the staging of their story. It is the facilitator who has the last word on the placing of these chairs which are the venue for some of the most detailed and acute work that they do during the performance.

For,the narrative on which the enactment of a Playback Story is to be based, is a co-creation of both the facilitator and the audience storyteller. It as it this point that the facilitator particularly draws on skills which are often used in the role of counsellor or psychodrama director: skills of active listening, empathic communication, and strategic questioning. However, the role of artistic director is also maintained at this point and only the minimum of information needed for the performers to produce a complete and aesthetically satisfying piece of work is elicited. Roles are given to particular actors as needed and the teller's actor is the first one to be chosen. This gives the teller's actor the chance to warm up differently to the story. For all other roles the teller is asked to give one or two word descriptions of the character to assist the actor playing the role to give the appropriate flavour to their performance. As the actors are given their roles they stand up. Of course anything can happen and sometimes a teller may produce their story either consciously or unconsciously with such skill that it is indeed a crafted work

of storytelling already – and in such a case, often anything the performers do will be an anticlimax. In a situation like this it is quite possible for the facilitator to simply ask for the final moment (or any other moment that they judge to be the crucial one, or the one this teller or this audience most need to see) to be performed as a Fluid Sculpture. Better that, than a lame enactment. This communicates to the audience that the facilitator is taking care of the performance as a whole and that what is happening is not automatic or meaninglessly ritualistic. Such understandings are important to maintain the sense that there is enough containment and safety in the performance to enable people to open and not have to engage in energy-sapping defence mechanisms.

Pairs

A fourth form often used in Playback performances is called Pairs. It is a form that sits somewhat to the side of the narrative progression as it is usually called for by the facilitator to meet the needs of a particular audience contribution in which internal conflict occurs and does not have a predetermined placement in the performance (but nor do the other forms, necessarily, though the progression from Fluid Sculptures to Stories is often seen as the range of Fluid Sculptures warms the audience storytellers up to sharing their experiences more fully; however, it is quite possible, and appropriate to return to Fluid Sculptures if the offerings from the audience call for this.) In Pairs, two performers work together to show the conflicting voices or impulses inside one audience teller. They strive to embody the conflict and amplify it: the emphasis in this form is on maximizing, physicality and contrast. Two or three pairs will enact one conflict and each will endeavour to bring out facets or flavours of the conflict which have not already been seen. This form is useful to free up energy and move audiences through ambivalence.

Other forms

In addition to these four basic forms, many others have been and are being invented by Playback groups throughout the world. The proliferation of Playback forms will undoubtedly continue and at conferences, workshops and festivals, members of different groups will share and explore each other's ideas. For example, after a group member attended a conference in Finland, in 199X, the group which I was part of tried two of the 'new forms' which she brought home with her. In one, which came as I

remember from France, lights were used to tell the story – spotlights, torches, candles. My memory is that we tried this out as a free-standing form and did not continue with it but continued to use torches as props and active elements within our enactments, since at that time we used lighting at each performance and had a lighting technician as part of the performing group.

The other innovation of "Puppet Playback" which she brought back, we did continue with and in fact have developed our own ritual around. For this, actors would go behind a screen and from the array of interesting household objects we had collected (eg. scissors, oven glove, doll, egg-beater and so on), choose one which they would use as their character in the next story. Then they would go out and sit in front of the screen, listen to the story and be chosen for their character in the usual way. At the end of the interview, they would go and retrieve their object-puppet and two people would hold up a cloth above which the story would be enacted by the puppets with voices by the actors and music in the normal way. This form became a wonderfully joyful and light part of our repertoire that both we and the audience enjoyed and we frequently used it in our end-of-year December performance the holiday season approached.

For performance activities to qualify as Playback forms however, certain features would seem to be important: ability to reflect the multidimensionality of human experience; clarity of boundaries; practice and skillfulness; respect for the teller; respect for the audience.

Appendix Five: Reports on Patient Focus Groups

Report on a Focus Group gathering Patient and Community Perceptions of Ngākau Health Clinic

TO: Manager

FROM: Fe Day, AUT, Researcher

DATE: 16 March, 2004

Introduction

As part of a Ph D study, (Auckland Ethics Committee Reference number: AKX/03/01/040), Focus Group Interviews were conducted at the Glen Innes Community Centre and Orakei Marae Adminstration Centre with patients of the Ngati Whatua o Orakei Health Clinic in November 2003. Eight people attended: four Māori women, one Māori man, two Pasifika men and one Pasifika woman.

The researcher agreed to make some of the comments from the Focus Groups available to the Centre Management to assist in the quality assurance programmes of the Centre.

Methodology
Semi-structured interviews were conducted according to a discussion guide containing general questions in the areas of: level of care, information, communication and team work. The researcher had had little contact with the Centre staff at this stage (mainly the manager) and so bias was not a major consideration. The discussions were recorded and verbatim transcripts made.

Themes
From the data received, five major themes have been extracted: Mission (including some comments on history); Services; Family and Community Concerns, including elders and spirituality; Communication, including relationships, and empowerment; and Action Suggestions. Fairly full verbatim quotations are included in this report, to facilitate communication of feedback from patients to the Health Centre staff and to enable the health centre to consider improvements.

Theme One - MISSION
There was a strong sense of the mission of the Health Clinic and of a difficulty sometimes in keeping in touch with that mission:
"..all we have to do is make sure that we keep in touch with the realness around us I mean and not get caught up"

History
Several respondents had a clear view of some of the history of the Clinic:
"there was another nurse there that was very nice um (long pause) but I felt she had her own agendas"
"same with one of the doctors that was there who was there for about two years – I felt she was running the clinic like a personal business … A lot stopped going actually and started going up the road"
"I have seen battles in that clinic…Between management and doctors slash nurse"

The effect of the past disruptions had been serious for the participants. When asked about the effects of so many locums the response was:
"Oh look horrible. You know I have to explain myself to every single doctor. All over again – and my history – you know just for one little thing and you know then they'd have to go through the computer and look up everything …"

However, it was felt that things were on much stronger ground now: "…the people will follow because they're it's this money thing again - if they see that's going well now because that's the

way it's been directed, then the people will follow that - that it's becoming reputable within the community and that it's not just here that we're involved with the clinic it's out in GI and out to Otahuhu and we can only expand"

"I think there's far more positives than negatives in the clinic now. It hasn't always been that way."

Special Character
The special character of the Clinic as a Māori provider was focused on by the respondents and provided both a point in its favour as well as a measure to be constantly striven for:
"I like it because it's accessible in terms of it not being far from where I live um and that it's hapu-owned, and it's a whanau business - I like all those ideas around that. But I think that it's too mainstream and um we should be it is Maori and we do go on about it being Maori a lot but um in my view I don't think very much is done in terms of taha Maori…"

"I'm aware of a lot of things and I feel that um even though it's a Maori service that we need you know the utmost in care – and especially because it's a Maori service because we seem to have more – illnesses and diseases and …"

The Māori nature of the service was seen to impart its own sense of mission:
"We should be doing as Maori that is our you know our you know 'Look after the old and the young'."

Theme Two - SERVICES
The services provided by the clinic were extensively commented on in generally glowing terms:

Diagnosis
"yes I'm happy to have them diagnose our family's illnesses – which is huge…"
"for myself personally the initial examination was quite thorough so you know whatever the outcome that you may regard as good or bad that's - they really are good, quite thorough…"

Nurses
Very clear and categorical approval was given to the nurses for their knowledge base, skills and ability to handle stressful situations:

"The nurse is just so on to it…and you know her data base is really really up to date and um I just feel that she is so on to it where I have never felt that from any of the other nurses at before"

"….the ear clinic is brilliant. Judy who runs the Ear Clinic – she's brilliant – not going to be excelled….Just her knowledge. I find her just you know really just riveting - and um she's been here you know like three or four years and we're lucky to have her and ears are you know a major problem."

"…my son my three year old cut the top of his brother's finger off about three months ago – in the door… my son was in shock anyway and he's only a baby so I went straight to the clinic and they rang Starship and he had to have an emergency operation to sew it back on – but that all happened really quickly only because Lois was so on to it. So I've seen first hand how they react under stressful and emergency conditions."

A male participant appreciated the way the female nurse had treated him:
"I like the staff nurse (laughs) she's really good she's a helpful woman and you know... Well she can set your mind at rest of a lot of things you know …ah you know she can answer questions and give you proper … when I first started there ah - there were um you know some personal things right and she made me feel... Well I thought they were embarassing, after all's said and done it wasn't really!"

Physiotherapists
These staff members also came in for positive comment:
"The physio He does a brilliant job – they've actually always had good physios…"

Doctors
The doctors were seen as giving good service and the choice of doctors was valuable:
"And it's good having a male doctor and a female doctor. Like for me I won't go to a male doctor for smears and things like that and a lot of men I know won't go to female doctors so having the two having the choice is really good"

"I haven't been well but my doctor's given me the right treatment."

"I've got a lot of problems at the moment -just got out of hospital so all these um problems the doctor has been good."

Past Centre doctors were referred to as having performed well too and one was regretted by one of the participants:
"…our one and only doctor, Maori doctor, woman…I don't know what other people think but I think we've lost a good person because she really for a person that was delivering primary care she was in touch with the person the individual rather than with the medicines that she handed out …. Umm she used to tell us about the medicines she used to give us - and why it would be appropriate and why it wouldn't…"

Appointments
At times the delays were problematic:
"Sometimes I'm disappointment in the appointment times cause things get later … like if my appointment's at 12.30 I won't see her till one o'clock…. I'm used to it now 'cause I've been there so many times"

Referral
Appropriate referrals were seen to be a very valuable aspect of the service:
"…they'll oblige you if they can help you they will. If they can't they'll find someone that can."

"…my daughter S - well you know she had been complaining.... and anyway within three days she was in hospital."

An important aspect of referral was liaison with other government agencies:
"…you can get an update on your medicine you know if you need it you know for WINZ you know for if WINZ is asking you… they wrote me out a whole menu for the period that was required by WINZ and that was good of them doing all that…"

Management
When asked how they would date the improvements to the service, a participant referred to the management:
"Probably since Matewiki took over. Ahh the services have been expanded, there's a lot of services. Umm good staff, I don't know if it's because a female's running it or (laugh) a woman's running it - but um that's what I see..."

Money
The financial cost of treatment and services was identified as a potentially very significant and worrying aspect of being ill:
"..you get these other doctors and they jerk you round the bush - and then it cost me a hundred dollars more than what it should have." One participant talked of the difficulty of illness: "Well the only thing I can say is money - money is a big factor to everybody who is sick." This was responded to by a participant who said proudly and triumphantly of the Health Centre: "…Costs you nothing."

Contrast with other services
Accounts were given of other health providers who treated people quite differently:
" not having to wait in the reception like you do at other doctors like – I go down the line every three or four weeks and if I go to the doctor down there I have to wait for an hour …"

"I've walked out of many a doctor's surgery!"

"…um I think there's in Mission Bay but I don't like going up to that Centre cause they're quite cold and clinical - that's the difference see - you know very clinical and very cold…"

"One thing I hate is to go up to the surgery and get a very uncooperative ah…
yeah receptionist… I'm trying to get some information and she goes "Oh listen have you got dah dah dah dah" and it's like I wouldn't be ringing if I wasn't sick"
When asked if this happened with Ngati Whatua, the participant said: "It doesn't - you know - I've rung them a couple of times and they - put you on to the right person. That way no mucking around - that's what I like about them."

Theme Three - FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS
Several participants commented on the way the Centre relates to the whole family and the community, including the extended family with its special emphasis on both children and elders:
"Security and um knowing as a mother (this is for my children) you know that we're in capable hands"

"And I've taken most of my family over there now. Cause I told them to go there…. and I've taken my children and my grandchildren over there."

"I'm happy there, my parents are happy there, we get the right treatment."

Elders
The needs of elders was emphasized, and they were related especially to the use of traditional Māori health practices "as an option you know especially for those as I say kaumatua who are used to having that in their past you know and feeling comfortable with that…"

"Because I just really at the moment I really would like to see so many things done for our kaumatua that aren't…"

"You know there was going to be a Renal Unit there and there was going to be you know I just I just I'd just like to see our old and our young looked after…"

"I want to see our old people happy…and not going to their graves frustrated...you know well they're not all frustrated but I want them to be looked after. We should be doing as Maori that is our you know our you know 'Look after the old and the young'."

Community
Questions were asked about the relationship of the Centre to the wider extended family and the community:
"if we're building a viable infrastructure what does that really mean? and is it to um accommodate the Government in where it's going or is it to accommodate the people in their direction and where they're going?"

Specifically one participant questioned the relation between the health service and the long term wellness of the community:
"and um (pause) what would the hapu be like in say ten years time if they continue to take this particular medicine - whatever it's for… I don't think there's enough answers enough information coming back as to what we're taking and um all I know is this is that it 's cheap and it's accessible and if you happen to come in a socio-economic group a low socio-economic group then you can get those medicines virtually free. But then again on the other hand is it going to strengthen our hapū? To have those particular medicines - and if it isn't then what's our alternative?"

Spirituality
Two participants described wairua or spirituality as being an important part of the way healing can and does operate:
"And it's a spiritual thing you know more importantly it is a spiritual thing. Even if your mind is telling you it's doing you good it is going to do you good because it's your mind that's going to you know - it's telling your body"

"…It's about people, it's about nature, it's about the mauri the mauri…I mean why the trees cause the trees and the plants and the living things and the animals will help you to get in touch with those things. Down to the bees and the you know all those things."

Theme Four - COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS
Participants identified the ability to communicate as key to health care provision. A very seriously ill man told the story of first another doctor and then his experience at Ngati Whatua:
"I'll give you an example all right Look I've been to one doctor - again now he knew what was the kaupapa he knew what the take was - and yet - couldn't come face to face with me and tell me and I went 'You piece of shit' yet here (at Ngati Whatua) I can go walk in here they don't know me from (inaudible) and I can go "Dah dah dah dah dah dah" and they go (whistling sound) and they come up with there you go. The last doctor's couldn't do that."

The emotional aspects of communicating were seen as important
"Communication you know communication is very good there like oh well like me I can talk to them you know like like how how how you feel and all that a lot of things."

In addition, the time taken to communicate authentically was appreciated:
"You know they're not it's not like a cattle shed where they're just going to hurry you out and you've got 15 minutes….you know what I mean …there's plenty of time and they're genuinely – that's the difference I think sincerity - they genuinely care about each patient"

There were some complaints about the lack of specific communication around the medications and their effects:
"Um for our family um it's been a patch up job in my view. I take my kids to the doctor when they're sick, I get their medicine, I don't really know much about their medicines and I'm not very happy with that. But because of my lifestyle I don't have time to sit down and talk to the doctor - exactly what are these medicines, if they take them long term or for a short perlod of time what difference does that make on my kids or on me for instance..."

Participants mentioned the different perspective to confidentiality in an extended family and close community environment:
"Well it is it's that everybody knows everybody – if it goes up to the RSA the world will know so everything that was happening at the Clinic everybody knew. And see, it's not like in a – confidentiality I don't know it's like everyone "Oh kia ora Aunty oh what's wrong with you today?" and it's like everyone's there and everyone "Oh well I've got…" you know. So it's not your average kind of place where you know you go into the doctor's surgery and you don't tell anyone what's wrong! And everyone's like "Oh yes dear well you know how's your gout?" "Oh it's really…." You know"

"I know new staff take a while to get used to it because it's like "Oh shouldn't be discussing your…" and it's like – "Oh get over it - we all know what's wrong with each other anyway. (Laugh)"

Theme Five ACTION SUGGESTIONS
Some specific suggestions were made which would improve services:

Space and facilities
"In my perspective have more rooms...and...."
"a bit more attention and a bit more room."
"I don't know if you're allowed to use the toilet - I've never, the only time I've used the toilet ever since I've been you know through urine tests but I don't know if you're allowed to use the toilet I'm not aware of that…"
"And um oh a little play area for the children, yeah Definitely soft toys - well hard toys get thrown around -Children I find that when I'm there even though I you know I have a child myself but the little ones they're all upset and you know they need something to take off their minds before they see the doctor…The little ones - and the parents, the parents are trying to

grab this child - but the child's just upset with the mother and upset with itself. 'Cause it's unwell and Mum's not doing too or Dad's not doing too well because ...a little bit more for the children"

New or extra services
"We could be checked out before we see the doctor- like our temperatures and that so she's aware of we come in if we're unwell and the nurse can check us before we see the doctor …"
"So um there is one thing I'd like to see and that's um a diagnostic laboratory or like just where we can have blood tests because I have to have blood tests all the time and it's a real hassle for me taking my baby or getting - I find it very hard you know I live here to get a babysitter so sometimes I don't have a blood test done just because I can't take my baby. Last time Lois did it for me and she did say that she could do it if maybe they picked it up like if they became…I said to Lois "Look can you just do it?" and she did and I felt why can't we have this - so that is one thing I know is supported by quite a few people I know would like to see that…"
"Well it might never happen but even a dental nurse who just supplied information but just having - look the kids around here have got shocking teeth just having We used to have Geddes used to bring his caravan up just like once every so many months… J I'll tell you what everyone went - at least you knew they were going. They won't go to the dentist unless they absolutely have to but having it here...in some form....even once a year. They only did the minor things - check ups, cleaning, and fillings I tell you what that's the big that's the big thing… Most people can't afford to I can't afford to go to the dentist . If I can rip my teeth out I will just because it costs a hundred and fifty dollars for a filling Who has $150 for one filling I mean ...That's one thing I'd like"

Housing
Yeah frustrating it is because I just want to see them enjoying their golden years you know and not in some sort of designer multi million dollar mansion just a little nice clean new unit where you know that they can call their own Like looking at Eastcliffe you know you think oh well where's the kaumatua village?
"...just I'd like to see kaumatua housing right here so they could just walk to the Clinic when they had to…"

Education
"I'd prefer we have a school like something like have the Clinic and rongoa and have a like a school where you could do courses 'cause I'd like to do that..."
"Learn about their own whanau Yeah 'cause even like wananga or something…"
"Yeah You know we've got all the facilities here to be able to do absolutely anything so use it you know what I mean…"

The Māori Dimension
To activate this dimension all staff of the Centre would need to understand and affirm its values:
"but if we can make it whereby we're um every policy that comes through that our feedback into those policies are Maori orientated but in order to do that you've got to have an understanding of the Maori world view so if we've got staff that we employ or the staff that we employ should also be having in depth an in depth understanding of the Maori world view. .."
"I mean I only say that because if we're going to be tika and pono about what we do I think we've got to go back to our roots in the way that we think in order to operate and I think that's important because we can easily water down what our Maoriness is all about…"
"the most important as to why I would have a health clinic on marae anyway and that's rongoa Maori and that be a part of the system ..."
"Yeah that's what I'd like to see….Well as you know an alternative as a rule you know whether it be herbal...massage ....you know they are the things that I like. … As an option not not competing…"
"I wouldn't have rongoa in the Clinic - I'd have it next door like in a whare. something a bit more tradiltional looking… Not not bricks and glass …"
"your doctors need to be open about that school of thought you know?
You couldn't have the doctors and the Clinic opposed to the rongoa and vice versa - they would have to go hand in hand"
"I mean you stick to whatever the kaupapa is … I believe that if it's another PHO and you

haven't included (Cough) them or they haven't come on to your PHO - but they have some positive things within their programme that could down the track enhance yours - and it's Maori as well - I'd be supporting them. I would be supporting that simply because we can't we can't get every single Maori in this Auckland eastern Auckland area - and also as Kaitiakitanga we have to look after those people that come here and that looking after may mean that we need to look after those other PHOs that may start up that are concepts within Maori, that do have rongoa clinic and and we can help these other Maoris or people within our community because it's not just about Maori is it when you're giving the service out, it's about the whole community and that we can work and walk together…"
"So that's why I think that um rongoa should be here and I think that more work should be done on it and especially if Maori are going to have clinics, I don't think it's good enough just to "Oh there's money in it there's money in making there's money in health and this"…that's not good enough for us because it won't work. It'll be short term and that's it - and then it will turn into just that - money. And then hey how many people are getting well?"

Conclusions
This lively community had many opinions and experiences to share. Some trenchant ideas for future improvements were made in the focus groups and have been represented here.

Acknowledgements
Without the support of the Centre staff and management, these focus group interviews could not have been conducted. I wish to signal my deep appreciation of them and also of each one of the participants who shared their life and experiences so freely. Kei te haere ngā mihi i ngā wā katoa.

Signed:

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Report on a Focus Group gathering Patient and Community Perceptions of Oranga Health Centre

TO: Manager of Otahuhu Centre
FROM: Fe Day, AUT, Researcher
DATE: 21 January 2004

Introduction
As part of a Ph D study, (Auckland Ethics Committee Reference number: AKX/03/01/040), a Focus Group Interview was conducted at the Otahuhu Town Hall with patients of the Otahuhu Union and Community Health Centre on 23 October 2003. Six people attended: a Maori woman and a Niuean woman, two Samoan and two Pakeha/European people. There were two men and four women.
The researcher agreed to make some of the comments from the Focus Group available to the Centre Management to assist in the quality programme of the Centre

Methodology
A semi-structured interview was conducted according to a discussion guide containing general questions in the areas of: level of care, information, communication and team work. The researcher had had only minimal contact with the Centre staff at this stage (mainly the manager) and so bias was not a major consideration. The discussion was recorded and a verbatim transcript made.

Themes

From the data received, four major themes have been extracted: atmosphere, communication (which includes some reflections on translation), relationship with the Centre and services (which includes a number of subheadings). Fairly full verbatim quotations are included in this report, to facilitate communication of feedback from patients to the Health Centre staff.

ATMOSPHERE
Very positive comments were made about the atmosphere in the Centre:

"Um yes I agree (laughs) um I find that they're very um like um if a bit down then I walk in and one lady they talk about they're there for you yeah they always cheer me up …make me feel at home relaxed"

"And then I come back from (another town) quite recently and I find that um different again it's been taken over by by some other crowd but I'm not too sure on that. But I'm loving it being back here again. Yeah. I'm comfortable, I'm comfortable with it."

This was in marked contrast to experiences participants had had with other health centres:

"That was um it was almost like you were sitting on a hard bench you know everybody in a row…"

"you don't get nervous waiting in the waiting room like I used to years ago at another doctor's office"

COMMUNICATION
The ability of staff to communicate with patients was highly valued by the participants, who mentioned the damaging effects of embarrassment several times:

"…for myself um I like the fact that I can talk about anything I don't feel embarassed um the staff over there are friendly…"

"My husband is a man who couldn't speak because he used to be embarassed about a lot of things you know but ah he's quite open to them because they just and he's moved over here he doesn't used to be over here with me he used to be in (another suburb) I mean doctor-wise and now he's moved over here and he's ….Well he can communicate much better in that way he doesn't feel embarassed or shy about anything now."

"If I ask a question I get it well and truly answered by any doctor there or somebody else."

The diversity of the staff available was seen as a definite advantage:

"They've got multiculture over there they've got ah you, me and our other people here and they all understand each other you know what I mean? I mean if I couldn't understand that one there I would look for someone else and that's not a problem."

In addition the way staff facilitated communication in practical and proactive ways was commented on:

"…the nurse will go and get you a certificate if you require drugs – they'll actually knock on the door and sign sign for a prescription – So – But a lot of people don't know that eh you know, they get frustrated on it."

"If I'm in need of medication because my blood test isn't the way it should be they do phone me and my my doctor sends me a prescription in the mail for whatever medication I need you know from that particular blood test."

However, a point was made about the need for feedback from tests to patients to be routinised in some way:
"Unless you ask – can I give some examples? They send you away to take a blood test – and nobody tells you what the results are. But if you ask they will tell you. But they don't know

that so even some of my people at work who go to the same Health Centre don't don't get the information they should have , and they have a blood test and it's ok there's nothing wrong but they're not told that. Like I had an x-ray done on my back many years ago and I never to this day have known what the result was. You know, nobody ever told me so you know if you're talking about communication I think if you have tests are done then then you know the patient should be told about them 'Oh you had the blood test and er everything was good'."

In addition, one participant had a family member who was struggling with the need to access an opinion from a doctor not within the Centre and there seemed to be an information gap on how to make this happen:

" He wants to say to them he's thinking of having a second opinion with another doctor because he's not satisfied – he's been to have his tests, he's been to the doctor, like I said he's coming down every week and he's worried and I'm worried about it because he's not satisfied, he's not well. He's becoming quite ill. But we don't know how to go about it, you know to go to another doctor… It's not that we didn't like the Centre it's just that we want another opinion. To see where things are."

TRANSLATION
Participants made several comments about the importance to communication of translation - both within the focus group and then informally over the shared lunch:

" …when we came here I met one of my family my ah relations she is a ah a nurse at the over there so she explains it properly you know see if we can understand more more words than me in English you know because she helps me explain to me whatever I want to understand you know? What word I can't understand I ask her and she explains to me."

A Pakeha man wondered whether they could have people who could speak community languages available. His wife is Tongan and she expects him to know everything about official and medical things because he is Palagi. He finds this a real pressure on him. Recently she had had to go to hospital for an operation about women's things and it was so good because she had a Tongan doctor who could explain everything to her in her mother tongue. That was great for him because he knew that she really knew and understood what was happening to her "And I love my wife, we've been married for 30 years and I really love her."

A Niuean woman suggested that the Centre could use a volunteer community group (of which she is part) to bring specific volunteer translators or people who know community languages to help communicate to people. She suggested a community group to help with this
RELATIONSHIP WITH CENTRE
A great deal of confidence was expressed in the relationship the participants have with the Centre and in several cases this extended back over many years.

"no I have a lot of confidence in my doctor and um I wouldn't want to go anywhere else I just hope she'll be there for a long time"

"I took my file to the Union Health Centre and um my life changed from there. So that was really um a step in the right direction and I've never regretted that. Yes."
"I've been at the Health Centre since the day it opened because I joined through the union movement"
"the centre itself it's good I don't find any problems with the twenty years I have attended"
"yeah we feel like we've come home actually"
"As a patient? It's been very excellent."
"of course I went away… and I've come back here and not a problem, I'm back here again … My husband and I"
"And my family, all my family and ah my grandchildren as well. They all go. And we have four adults in my house and four children and they're all registered at the Union Health Centre and we do use the facilities a lot you know."

"I…go there knowing um I'll come out (laughs) feeling good even though you know even though you don't feel the best but um you don't really at the start think oh what's the use of

going there?"

SERVICES:
Several aspects of the services were specifically commented on:

DIAGNOSIS
The participants particularly appreciated the ability of staff to diagnose their needs:

"…my doctor she does her job but she's also almost like um I think sometimes like a bit like a psychologist or she understands what's going on in my head um she empathises."

"She always seems to pick up on things that you know I I think oh I didn't actually say that you know but she seems to pick up on things…"

This contrasted with experiences in other centres in the past which had led to serious problems for patients:

"…the doctor was quite a stern type of a doctor he was you know … for many years just left me out at um I never told him the things I should have told him. If I had I would not have had so many problems later on in my life but I didn't feel able to confide in him so I always put up an 'everything's fine' front. It was only when after a what I call a bit of a misdiagnosis that um that I took my file to the Union Health Centre and um my life changed from there."

STAFF
The ability to access a variety of staff is appreciated:

" I like it that there's more than one doctor on at present if you're unable to see your own doctor you can see a second doctor that's what I do like…"

"GPs if I don't see my GP I'll see the others."

"…if they can't there's still no vacancy for me I'll go and see the nurse and then fortunately the nurse will go and get you a certificate if you require drugs."

"Other staff the staff are very nice the receptionists the nurses um I usually only see one doctor but if my doctor's not there I have seen others and they're all very competent aren't they…"

PROGRAMMES
The ancillary programmes were also positively commented on:

"I like the stop smoking scheme that's going on there and the diet the one for diet."

"There's a dietician there so you can go and talk to the dietician there cause many people will say well the doctor will make an appointment to go somewhere else and they won't go but if it's at the same centre then they will go."

BOOKINGS
In terms of bookings there was a range of experiences, some positive and some less so. The regularly booked appointments seemed to be satisfactory while those occurring suddenly are more problematic:
"I ring up for appointment they good they give me the appointment…"

"…some of the things that I find difficult is that you want to ring up for your doctor you want to ring up and ah all the positions are all the times are taken up so you have to go and see her the next day afterward which to me is a ridiculous."

"You know how you look at it put the phone down at 8.30 in the morning can I give this example to you and now well how on earth can they have it all full? So everyone must be booking before but I wasn't sick on Friday I started to get sick on Sunday and now I can't see

the doctor so that's the frustrating thing ok?"

"I don't have too much of a problem with that mm really because I have to go once a month anyway so I make my bookings in advance but there is some times when you have a health problem that you can't wait until tomorrow, I feel that."

REFERRAL
The participants appreciated that referrals are made when needed:

"…she's very good that she sends me for tests when she thinks I need them and I have usually needed them."

However they identified a lack of feedback to them about the results after the referral (as outlined in the section on Communication):

"They send you away to take a blood test – and nobody tells you what the results are..."

CHARGES
The charges were seen as a very positive aspect to the Centre:

"I never pay the money here to them you know? Give me a free like you know free looking, free doctor Only a few for for tablets you know
Interviewer: So how is that?
Ah it's very good I mean I told them I very pleased cause I never I used to pay all the time I see the doctor I paid the money I paid the money and first time I see doctor here – no money. They never charged me the money…. That's why I very pleased."
Conclusions
On the whole, the Focus Group participants made extremely positive comments about the Centre. Suggestions for improvements included:

Feedback after tests or referral to other services
Provision of information about how to access a second opinion from a doctor external to the Centre
Exploration of provision of translation services
The provision of adequate booking places so that patients can access the Centre as needed unexpectedly.

Acknowledgements
I would like to acknowledge each of the Focus Group participants who gave of their time and experience so generously and fully. I also thank the staff of the Otahuhu Centre who assisted me to set up this Focus Group session. I hope to conduct a second Focus Group at the end of my practical Playback Theatre project towards the end of 2004 and I look forward to that.

Signed:

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Report on a Focus Group gathering Patient and Community Perceptions of Pātaka Union and Community Health Centre

TO: Manager

FROM: Fe Day, AUT, Researcher

DATE: 5 March 2006

Introduction
As part of a Ph D study, (Auckland Ethics Committee Reference number: AKX/03/01/040), Focus Group Interviews were conducted at the Wesley Community with patients of the Roskill Union and Community Health Centre in July 2005. Ten people attended: three married couples, two Indian and one Pakeha; an older Chinese man, a Somali woman with her young daughter and an older Samoan woman.

The researcher agreed to make some of the comments from the Focus Groups available to the Centre Management to assist in the quality assurance programmes of the Centre

Methodology
Semi-structured interviews were conducted according to a discussion guide containing general questions in the areas of: level of care, information, communication and team work. The researcher had had only minimal contact with the Centre staff at this stage (mainly the manager and receptionists) and so bias was not a major consideration. The discussions were recorded and verbatim transcripts made.

Themes
From the data received, three major themes have been extracted: Satisfactions, Staffing, Dissatisfactions and Suggested Improvements. Fairly full verbatim quotations are included in this report, to facilitate communication of feedback from patients to the Health Centre staff and to enable the health centre to consider improvements.

Theme One - SATISFACTIONS
Overall the discussion emphasized the sense of satisfaction that patients felt with the service. Often this was expressed in global and undifferentiated terms:
"I really like the Centre" "… we just feel feel good going there " "I have nothing to complain about from the Centre…" but in many cases particular instances were given. One participant giving positive comments about the Centre emphasized while doing so that "I have compared it with other GPs that I went to first of all" and another stated "because we are able to compare them with the other doctors so I like them a lot better!"

The most frequent and heartfelt comments were made about the staff; however premises and financial considerations were also mentioned with positive discussion.
STAFFING
Collaboration
Positive comments about the staff included: "they do a marvelous job; they are always there for us; they treat my relatives very nice, very easy actually, very friendly". It was very noticeable that the staff were almost always referred to in conjunction with one another:
"both the doctor … and the nurse they said we are there for you anytime"
"the doctor is very friendly and nurses, the receptionists"
"I like is that the doctor and nurse really kind and really friendly"
One participant identified a noticeable quality of the relationships between the staff members:
"I mean I think the rapport between the doctor and the nurses are really very good yes"
Even when a participant started with describing a nurse, the account emphasized the participation of the doctor as well:
"I went to see the nurse first and then she asked me to go through some tests and then when she asked after one week I got the call from doctor saying don't worry everything is fine I was very much concerned about my problem they said it's nothing it's just normal and then it

seemed that they have committed to me…"
Relationships between the staff were perceived as being harmonious: They seem to be having quite a good rapport with each other… (and others) yeah yeah yeah yeah .Absolutely! I mean I think the rapport between the doctor and the nurses are really very good yes" "I think the staff are totally all – they are working it's all together very very good."

The organizational systems that the staff have set up are seen as being part of this harmony and interaction: "there is no concern – things go smoothly and they have a system – the doctor comes he finds a paper all ready for him or her – and she calls the patient – who goes there. So this is a wonderful system. I don't know how what to call this one but I have noticed I have observed that they have a place where they put these forms;" another participant noted that "the system works very friendly and relaxed on time yes very good
This feature of collaboration really stood out with nurses and doctors being mentioned together twelve times.
Doctors
The doctors also were mentioned individually at some points and significant stories told of particular instances, as the one above, where doctor had gone over and above the expected service, gone the extra mile:
"J. is a wonderful doctor because I tell you not only her medicine and things but you know she keeps in touch with you I mean with her busy schedule, she calls I mean she had referred me to a specialist and um I had not got back to her because of my insurance on my ACC had not got back to me. Last week she phoned and left a message I didn't answer her because I didn't have an answer so again she called me up on Friday and she said '… what's happening?' I said Oh that means she is more worried about me than me myself! Yeah I thought that's a good courtesy…"
" we think they are very efficient and very caring and that is the main thing um yeah about six months back I was going through a low phase and both the doctor … and the nurse they said we are there for you anytime I mean just don't think I mean I couldn't open up and really tell them but they said don't worry we know that you are going through a rough patch and we are always there you can ring us up and talk to us and feel free and I thought that was really great I mean it was really good of them …"
The important bond that was created between doctors and patients also contributed to some dissatisfaction, when people were unable to see their doctor. This was also strongly expressed and will be presented in the "Dissatisfactions" section of this report.
Nurses
Positive comments were also made about the nurses: "I really been there three times a week and all those nurses they always good… and the nurses she helps me most of the time… I got my own nurse to look after me all the time."

Receptionists
The receptionists were also mentioned positively and comments made about the relaxed atmosphere in the reception area: "very nice very easy actually very friendly friendly way they treat, the doctor is very friendly and nurses, the receptionists. The receptionist area is also very creative looks, you know, like you're in home, a good feeling and you feel like that you are very much, very comfortable." The receptionists were "very good very good excellent …I like the music…"

Information
Information was seen to be shared effectively by the staff with their patients: "sort of very timely help and advice…" communication was seen to be "clear" and "good". The way doctors encouraged patients to talk was remarked on: "we are asked to sit down and sometimes they'll tell us to converse with them so I would say the rapport is quite good with them". The quality of the listening was seen as contributing to this communication: "My wife and I have some some fear, go to the Centre and quickly we will they see us who listen marvelous."
PREMISES
The premises were commented on enthusiastically and the improvement from the previous rooms was interpreted as being a response in part to patient feedback: "… when they were on Stoddard Rd in fact the place was cramped and small so we were always asking them and telling them to improve their premises but even that has happened now so we can't say that it's cramped!"

The proximity to the chemist and laboratory were noted with approval: "I really like to go to the Centre, pharmacy also in place…all together" and the general standard of the premises especially the reception area were discussed: "very clean very tidy that is the first thing that we have commended in the Health Centre" The ability of both those waiting and the receptionists to look out was identified as part of the good qualities of the reception area: when asked if it was a stressed sort of place, the group responded "No no they don't look it they can look out…Not at all. Yeah. There are magazines there it's a good place." The participant who stated that "it's a good place very beautiful place …beautiful nice…" when asked what atmosphere or feeling the Centre had, said "Oh a healthy one um very happy people."

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The pricing structure of the Centre was identified early in the interview as being one of its very favourable characteristics:

"..like before then my husband was going to (another) GP and then when he goes for the blood test he has to pay $40 Just to get that thing for the blood test but again they have to pay that place for the medicine he have to pay again $40 for that on top of – but here you go that's the thing with the place it's free - you go and then do your blood test, then it's free I mean it makes a lot of difference… moneywise because the people who are here, newcomers, they are really surviving and the medicines and doctors are really too expensive – in that way it is VERY good"

The positive impact that the free services have on children's health services was identified:

"…the best part is children under 18 are FREE…I have got two children they're about six and every time they felt sick I had to pay $30 I mean where do you get that type of money? But this is free – I mean I don't think twice about taking my children there – while in other centres I had to think oh it's just a flu I can manage with Panadol… I mean you know it feels better for me as a mother, to take them there…"

Theme Two – DISSATISFACTIONS

However, there were some dissatisfactions, many of them arising out of the very factors which were so favourably commented on. The ability to keep seeing one doctor; to get appointments; and the need for Chinese language services were all expressed.

SEEING ONE DOCTOR

Participants emphasized the emotional aspects of their ability to really confide in a doctor with whom they had bonded:

"the doctor who we see … is very good and also he knows the he knows of the circumstances and also he um he knows what I'm going through with ah my shakiness and that and my shakiness is you know is off and on all the time but you know it's just the it's a worry for me but you know it's not not that I'm worried about it but it's just…"

"…all doctors are good but only thing is you go and meet one doctor and then you get attached to her… Yeah because of that attachment and the bond that you have with the doctor and what special miles she has gone – as I said I would never think of any other …"

One patient had had to ask to see her own doctor and had to be quite assertive in order for this to happen but as she said "I like to have one you can talk and tell it everything how you feel …"

APPOINTMENTS

There were comments by virtually all participants about the frustration of not getting appointments promptly when they rang up sick:

"Mm cause they don't want the people that are really sick just - they want to see the doctor!"

"I have gone to another doctor and then what happens is he wants though they said there are notes there but some particular doctors or some doctors they want to know everything by the time we tell our whole history fifteen minutes are up. You know? So we've been quite constrained that way. So then we say our doctor she knows everything or at least if she has put in the notes she can recollect faster than any other doctor yeah it's not that we don't mind seeing any other doctors or anything but a bit more flexibility in appointments would be appreciated."

Awareness was expressed about the difficulty of this: "I know they are also human beings"

In some cases the lack of appointments had led to the loss of a patient:

"the girl on the reception said 'It's full up you can't come today you can make an appointment and come tomorrow' that's why my sister finished here and went back to Mt Eden… she went straight to Mt Eden cause that's their family doctor from a long time – and when go you ring up

you're sick you feel sick they ask you to come straight…"

LANGUAGE NEEDS

The difficulty of expressing oneself in a foreign language was expressed: "The thing is if I come for the Chinese say it's great to have maybe would be good because … if the English not good difficulty to describe."

Theme Three – SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

Several opportunities for improvement were suggested:

To assist Chinese patients, having a chart of questions, body parts and explanations in English and Chinese which was used in diagnosis and discussion

To have newer magazines in the reception area "There are magazines there it's a good place …Although they're old (laugh)… Like you can always in every doctors surgery they are old magazines!"

To encourage the receptionists to engage more readily with the patients as they come in: "But they never say "good morning" to you – that's the other thing.... Well before was a young girl was over there before… she's the one who always say 'good morning' and she smiled always and say 'good morning – how are you?'"

To open for longer hours: this is especially an issue for people in paid employment:" I mean if they open late because of the people who are at home CAN go late, but people who are working, we are not working as per our will we are working as per the time schedule. So most of us work from 8.30 or 8 to 4.30 or 5. So every time it becomes a bit too much to ask about you know "Can I go…?"

To open on Saturdays : "if they have … like on Saturdays open on Saturdays… Yeah and like you know suppose on Saturdays they can take $5 more because now we are paying $15 we wouldn't mind paying $5 more it's convenient you know? "

Suggestions were also made concerning the option of becoming an emergency service after hours, of seeing patients in their own homes and of providing a cardiologist at least "once a week or twice a week?"

Conclusion

This lively community had many opinions and experiences to share. Some trenchant ideas for future improvements were made in the focus groups and have been represented here. I am following these patients up in 2006 to explore their thoughts about the Centre as time has gone on, and will report further on this.

Acknowledgements

Without the support of the Centre staff and management, these focus group interviews could not have been conducted. I wish to signal my deep appreciation of them and also of each one of the participants who shared their life and experiences so freely. Kei te haere ngā mihi i ngā wā katoa.

Signed:

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Focus Group Interview Guide used in these Focus Group sessions

Te Kupu Whakaahua - Playback Theatre as a Tool to help group communication and decision making in an Interdisciplinary Practice Setting
Focus Group Interview Guide
With clients

Key Questions:

Thinking about the level of care your family receives, what do you like/dislike about the service you are given?

Thinking about how well informed you feel, what do you like/dislike about the service you receive?

Thinking about how team members communicate with you, what do you like/dislike about the service you receive?

Thinking about how you observe team members communicating with each other, what do you like/dislike about the service in this team?

If you had a magic wand, what would you change?

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Introductory Information - Te Kupu Whakaahua - Playback Theatre

as a Tool to assist Group Communication

and Decision Making in an

Interdisciplinary Practice Setting

Playback Theatre is a type of group work in which individuals from within a group talk about aspects of their lives and a group of trained actors and musicians spontaneously craft a performance piece reflecting what they have heard. The stories are brought out by a trained facilitator who engages the group in a process of self-reflection, remembering, listening and empathy with one another.

This research project, which is more than half complete, is exploring whether this process is helpful for a group of people who work together. Does it assist them in their work together? Does it affect how they see each other? Does it have an effect on the ways they talk and listen to one another?

Three Community Health Centres agreed to be part of the project: Ngati Whatua ki Orakei, Ngati Whatua ki Otahuhu and Hauora o Puketapapa. The project consists of two facilitated Playback sessions during which people from the team share experiences and reflections about their lives and work. One of these sessions happened in late 2002, early in the life of Tamaki Healthcare PHO. What is needed to complete it, is one more performance at Hauora o Puketapapa.

After the performances, the researcher will interview individuals about their reflections on the performance: once soon after the performance and then six months later. So the total time commitment by staff is 45 minutes for the performance and two half hour interviews over the next six months. In addition two focus groups with patients and community are held before and after the project, which can be used for quality assurance processes eg, Te Wana.

In an increasingly mechanised and bureaucratised world, this research asks whether making space for co-workers in an interdisciplinary team to relate to each other in a multi-dimensional way, through the creativity of Playback Theatre sessions, may assist people to work together in positive ways.

Kia ora to all concerned! Many thanks…

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Te Kupu Whakaahua - Playback Theatre
as a Tool to assist Group Communication
and Decision Making in an
Interdisciplinary Practice Setting

Some comments from other participants:

"I mean I thought it was great how you guys could just come along and pick up a few key things and ideas from what people say and put it into a little story line - I thought it was actually good…"

"You know rather than having some starchy boring staff meeting three weeks before christmas you know I though it was a good idea - do something a little bit different, it is probably a good idea."

"…I saw another view another way of explaining how people are feeling about their work…rather than just hearing it yeah so it was there actually played out in front of your eyes - gives you a different view of what's actually going on as far as your work colleagues are concerned and how they are feeling and dealing with their work in their own ways…"

"I was just blown away about how quick it was that they could just get up and do it - you know just like that! It was like somebody'd say something and then they're up and into it straight away…"

"And there is that generation of people – who are cynical about everything – so I guess we were reserved – I would have thought that they were remarkably well – the fact that there were so many people there – and no-one was negative at all I thought was just amazingly good…"

"…when we had the little break and we had the music – who was it sort of playing the guitar – and it was just so lovely and I just suddenly felt so relaxed and it was just it was like… I imagine like when … you know a Catholic goes to a priest and they're given absolution – and it was like "Ooohhh" and I just let go all that sort of those internal pressures and things … feelings of things I had to get done in the next short period of time before I went to my different work place – and that was just wonderful because I don't often have that feeling of

letting go relaxation spaciousness in the context of this workplace … and I just felt so good yeah I felt very good"

Te Kupu Whakaahua - Playback Theatre

as a Tool to assist Group Communication

and Decision Making in an

Interdisciplinary Practice Setting

MORE DETAILS ABOUT THIS PROJECT:

The purpose of the study

Action Methods, in particular playback theatre*, are effective methodologies for improving interdisciplinary group communication. In a health care context, the notion of play is a powerful means for reducing hierarchical distance, for facilitating group decision-making and for empowering people at diverse levels of status within a practice setting.

This Ph. D. project will analyse and critique the use of action methods within several Health Centres which are exploring how to combine as a new Primary Healthcare Organization. Data will be gathered from a practical project, as well as individual and group interviews and some general principles for the implementation of these methods as part of professional development planning within health care contexts will be established.

*Playback is a form of group work in which individuals from within a group talk about their lives and a group of trained actors and musicians spontaneously craft a performance piece reflecting what they have heard. The stories are brought out by a trained facilitator who engages the group in a process of self-reflection, remembering, listening and empathy with one another.

The research questions

To ascertain whether action methods using personal narrative and spontaneous crafted enactment improve communication in interdisciplinary groups in ways which lead to improved team functioning, more effective decision making and, ultimately, improved services to clients.

To explore the following questions:

Can action methods, specifically Playback Theatre be used to uncover alternative worldviews in ways useful and productive to members of learning and professional communities?

How do such methods need to be practised in order to achieve this?

Is it possible for Playback Theatre to be practised within present hierarchical systems, assisting participants at diverse levels of power-holding to critique and evaluate their experiences, assumptions and decisions?

How can the effectiveness of these methods be assessed?

What thoughts and outcomes do such interventions produce over six months or a year?

What are the implications for a post-colonial society, such as Aotearoa/NZ?

How can play and reflection assist people to develop cultural awareness and skills?

The specific aims of the project

To explore the usefulness of action methods as part of professional development and team building in a new Primary Healthcare Organization.

To gain insights into how action methods can be used to enhance the functioning of interdisciplinary teams.

To analyse and critique the data gathered and establish some general principles for the implementation of these methods as part of professional development planning within the health care sector.

Scientific Background of the Research

Within interdisciplinary teams, some decision-makers may tend to be removed from the daily necessities experienced by those in more "hands on" roles. In addition, some people within hierarchical systems feel unable to critique the status quo. They may also tend to lack of confidence with reading and writing.

Bourdieu (1977) points out the ways in which cultural capital is influenced and reinforced through the "most apparently insignificant aspects of the things, situations and practices of everyday life…the modalities of practices, the ways of looking, sitting, standing, keeping silent, or even of speaking…are full of injunctions that are powerful and hard to resist precisely because they are silent and insidious, insistent and insinuating." (Bourdieu, 1991 p. 51)

Such relations, aspects, and practices are often powerfully present in the hierarchies commonly found in public institutions such as the public health system. They prevent the sharing of important information which is later revealed to have been crucial. This results in situations of groupthink which Janis (1982 cited in Cruz 1999) found to have "occurred when individuals held critical information that was unknown to other group members and was never discussed." (p. 364)

For example, the Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry in England found that lack of team work and communication had cost lives: "The need for openness is one of the strongest messages. The report calls for a non-punitive reporting system like those used by airlines…so that lessons can be learned." (Dyer, 2001)

Action methods such as Playback Theatre may be used to enable individuals, including those for

whom complex and theoretical written or spoken language is a barrier, to make their insights and concerns available to peers from other practice modalities with whom they work on a daily basis. In an inter-disciplinary team this means that the whole team has the opportunity to benefit from the insights of members who may otherwise not participate in the group discourse because of factors such as lack of confidence, language ability or culture. The hypothesis is that this will improve the functioning of the team and the services it gives to its clients.

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Notes on the Researcher

During the past five years, Fe Day, (M.A.Hons, T.T.C.), has worked at Te Tari Āwhina, the Learning Support Centre of Auckland University of Technology and in the community in a Playback Theatre company called Kainga Rua in which Māori and non-Māori do community and performance work together, developing action skills and retelling stories from communities. She has also, during this time, served on the International Board of Playback Theatre (see http://www.playbacknet.org/iptn/) and has been part of an informal international enquiry into how Playback Theatre as an action method works. She has developed a practice-based hypothesis that Playback Theatre is a support to group communication and decision making in multidisciplinary teams and this project forms the practical aspect of her Ph D thesis.

Appendix Six: Information and Consent Forms

He Panui - Participant Information Sheet For Clients –

Te Kupu Whakaahua - Playback Theatre as a Tool to help group communication and decision making in an Interdisciplinary Practice Setting

He Maioha – Invitation

You are invited to take part in a study where you give your ideas about how well your health centre staff meet your community's needs. You are invited to take part in focus group interviews at the beginning and end of a project that will last approximately one year. You will have one month to consider whether you want to take part.

Te Kaupapa - What is the purpose of the study?

To find out whether Playback Theatre is an effective method for improving group communication. This is part of an AUT Ph D research project called PLAYBACK THEATRE AS A TOOL FOR GROUP COMMUNICATION & DECISION MAKING which is being carried out by Fe Day, a staff member of AUT, who is being supervised by Professor David Seedhouse, Head of the Centre for Health and Social Ethics at Auckland University of Technology.

Ko wai te hunga i rangahaua - How was a person chosen to be asked to be part of the study?

Members of the PHO clients and communities are invited to be part of this project. A group of clients and community members will be interviewed in a focus group at the beginning and end of the project.

He aha ngä nekeneke o te rangahau – What happens in the study?

There are several phases of the study which will take place over one year:

1. Pre-project focus group interviews of client/family satisfaction

2. Project – several one-hour Playback Theatre sessions with an interdisciplinary audience of workers (one session may include clients/family also) over a period of six to eight months

Individual Interviews – with willing members of the audiences -

Round One: within the first months after the sessions.

Round Two up to six months or a year later

Post-project focus group interviews of client/family satisfaction

Presentation of draft analysis and gathering of feedback on the draft at meetings with staff and families

Presentation of final draft of thesis to staff and families at least one month before final submission of thesis

Tapes and transcripts will be held in secure storage at AUT for six years after the project.

NGÄ HUA mö Ngä Kaimahi – BENEFITS for Health Centre

Opportunity for clients and community to comment on how well they see the health centre working for the community

Opportunity for people from different teams to gain awareness of each other's life experiences and viewpoints

Opportunity to reflect and gain insights into yourself, your experiences, your health centre team and their work

He aha ngä raruraru me nga nawe - What are the discomforts and risks?

Someone might get sad or upset later thinking about what they have told about their life or what they have seen.

Jan Wilson, phone 917 9999 ext 7808 and Aorangi Logan phone 917 9999 ext 9992 , who are skilled and experienced AUT counsellors have agreed to be available to anyone who needs to talk to a counsellor because of being upset or distressed. Please ring them or the researcher Fe Day, phone 3600 311, at any time at all if you need to talk to somebody about anything the interviews have brought up for you.

Me pehea ai e tiaki i te tapu o te tangata - How is my privacy protected?

No material which could personally identify you will be used in any reports on this study. Tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet at AUT

My Participation

Your participation is your choice. You do not have to take part in this study and if you choose not to take part this will not affect your health care.

If you do agree to take part, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time and this will not affect your health care.

The Managers of the PHO have given permission for this study to be carried out.

Health Advocacy

If you have any queries or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may wish to contact a Health and Disability Advocate,

Telephone 0800 555 050 Northland to Franklin.

Compensation

In the unlikely event of a physical injury as a result of your participation in this study, you may be covered by ACC under the Injury Prevention, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. ACC cover is not automatic and your case will need to be assessed by ACC according to the provisions of the 2002 Injury Prevention

Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. If your claim is accepted by ACC, you still might not get any compensation. This depends on a number of factors such as whether you are an earner or non-earner. ACC usually provides only partial reimbursement of costs and expenses and there may be no lump sum compensation payable. There is no cover for mental injury unless it is a result of physical injury. If you have ACC cover, generally this will affect your right to sue the investigators.

If you have any questions about ACC, contact your nearest ACC office or the investigator.

What will happen at the end of the study?

The researcher will present draft analysis and gather feedback to group sessions and will present a copy of the finished Ph D thesis to the team.

Please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator if you have questions about this study:

Principal Investigator

Fe Day, (M.A. Hons, T.T.Cert.)

Email: Fe.Day@aut.ac.nz

Mail address: c/-Te Tari Awhina

Auckland University of Technology

Private Bag 92006

Auckland

Contact Details

Phone: 09 3600 311

He Whakatūpato - Participant Concerns - Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Researcher's Supervisor, Professor David Seedhouse, phone 917 9999 ext 9679. Concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz ,917 9999 ext 8044.

AUT

AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU

This study has received ethical approval by the Auckland Ethics Committee. Reference number AKX/03/00/040

AUT
AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU

Consent to Participation in Research For Clients

He Whakaae kia Uru ki Tënei Rangahau

Title of Project: Te Kupu Whakaahua - Playback Theatre as a Tool to help group communication and decision making in an Interdisciplinary Practice Setting

Project Supervisor: David Seedhouse

Researcher: Fe Day

REQUEST FOR INTERPRETER

(please circle one answer)

English	I wish to have an interpreter.	Yes No
Maori	E hiahia ana ahau ki tetahi kaiwhakamaori/kaiwhaka pakeha korero.	Ae Kao
Samoan	Ou te mana'o ia i ai se fa'amatala upu.	Ioe Leai
Tongan	Oku ou fiema'u ha fakatonulea.	Io Ikai
Cook Island	Ka inangaro au i tetai tangata uri reo.	Ae Kare
Niuean	Fia manako au ke fakaaoga e taha tagata fakahokohoko kupu.	E Nakai
Chinese		Yes No
Somali		Yes No

I have read and understood the information sheet dated March 2003 for volunteers taking part in the study designed to find out whether Playback Theatre assists people working together to communicate better.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered. I have had

opportunities to use whanau support or a friend to help me ask questions and understand the study. I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.

I understand that the performers will be videotaped and that the interviews will be sound taped

I understand that taking part in this study is my choice and that I may withdraw myself or any information specific to me that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without this in any way affecting my employment. If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof as practicable, will be destroyed.

However, I also understand that any group sessions I have participated in will become of general group data which is not attached to any one individual and is then a permanent part of the research process.

I understand that my participation in this study is confidential and that no material which could identify me will be used in any reports on this study.

I have had time to consider whether to take part

I know who to contact if I feel upset at any time about things that have come up during the study

I agree to take part in this research.

Participant signature:.....

Participant name:

Date: 30 July 2005

Researcher Contact Details:

Fe Day, phone: 3600311,

email: Fe.Day@aut.ac.nz,

mail: Fe Day, Te Tari Äwhina, Auckland University of Technology,

Private Bag 92006,

Auckland

Approved by the Auckland Health Ethics Committee on 14 February 2003

Reference number AKX/03/00/040

He Panui - Participant Information Sheet For Health Centre Staff Members

Te Kupu Whakaahua- Playback Theatre as a Tool to assist Group Communication and Decision Making in an Interdisciplinary Practice Setting

He Maioha – Invitation

You are invited to participate in Playback Theatre being performed and to enjoy listening and watching stories about your own and others' lives.

Te Kaupapa - What is the purpose of the study?

To find out whether Playback is an effective method for improving group communication. This is part of an AUT Ph D research project called PLAYBACK THEATRE AS A TOOL FOR GROUP COMMUNICATION & DECISION MAKING which is being carried out be Fe Day, a staff member of AUT.

Ko wai te hunga i rangahaua - How was a person chosen to be asked to be part of the study?

Members of the PHO staff are invited to be part of these performances along with their clients and the families and communities they are part of.

He aha ngä nekeneke o te rangahau - What happens in the study?

There are several phases of data gathering:

Pre-project focus group interviews of client/family satisfaction

Project – several one-hour Playback Theatre sessions with an interdisciplinary audience of workers (one session will include clients/family also) over a period of six to eight months

Individual Interviews – with willing members of the audiences -

Round One: within the first months after the sessions.

Round Two up to six months or a year later

Post-project focus group interviews of client/family satisfaction

Presentation of draft analysis and gathering of feedback on the draft at meetings with staff and families

Presentation of final draft of thesis to staff and families at least one month before final submission of thesis

NGÄ HUA mö Ngä Kaimahi – BENEFITS for practice setting

Opportunity for peope from the multi-disciplinary teams to gain awareness of each other's life experiences and viewpoints

Opportunity for managers to deliver a quality input into the work environment that

validates and appreciates staff

A fun, entertaining experience

Interdisciplinary professional development Opportunity for practitioners from the multi-disciplinary teams to gain self-awareness through interviews

Mö te Kairangahau - For Researcher:

An opportunity to gain information regarding what happens internally for members of audiences of Playback Theatre

A venue within which to ascertain whether Playback is useful for group communication and decision making in health care settings

He aha Te Whakaari Kupu Whakaahua? What is Playback Theatre?

Playback is a form of theatre in which people from the audience talk about their lives and a group of actors and musicians spontaneously craft a performance piece reflecting what they have heard. The moments shared can be as different as a frustration on the way to the performance or something that happened 40 years ago when the teller was on the first day of training! They can be funny, sad, moving, surprising and educational.

The stories are brought out by a trained facilitator who engages the audience in a process of self-reflection, remembering, listening and empathy with one another. Within a group of people who work together, Playback sessions represent a chance for people to see another side of individuals with whom they have contact every day. The Playback team members for this project, come from a variety of ages and cultural backgrounds.

He aha ngä raruraru me nga nawe - What are the discomforts and risks?

Someone might get sad or upset later thinking about what they have seen

Jan Wilson, phone 917 9999 ext 7808 and Aorangi Logan phone 917 9999 ext 9992 , who are skilled and experienced AUT counsellors have agreed to be available to anyone who needs to talk to a counsellor because of being upset or distressed. Please ring them or the researcher Fe Day, phone 3600 311, at any time at all if you need to talk to somebody about anything the performances have brought up for you.

Me pehea ai e tiaki i te tapu o te tangata - How is my privacy protected?

No audience member will be visible on the videotaping and the tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet at AUT

Health Advocacy

If you have any queries or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may wish to contact a Health and Disability Advocate,

Telephone 0800 555 050 Northland to Franklin.

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Principal Investigator

Fe Day, (M.A. Hons, T.T.Cert.)

Email: Fe.Day@aut.ac.nz

Mail address: c/-Te Tari Awhina

Auckland University of Technology

Private Bag 92006

Auckland

Contact Details

Phone: 09 3600 311

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This study has received ethical approval by the Auckland Ethics Committee. Reference number AKX/03/00/040

Consent to Participation in Research For Health Centre Staff members

Title of Project: Te Kupu Whakaahua - Playback Theatre as a Tool to assist group communication and decision making in an Interdisciplinary Practice Setting

Project Supervisor: David Seedhouse

Researcher: Fe Day

REQUEST FOR INTERPRETER

(please circle one answer)

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Cook Island	Ka inangaro au i tetai tangata uri reo.	Ae Kare
Niuean	Fia manako au ke fakaaoga e taha tagata fakahokohoko kupu.	E Nakai
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I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered. I have had opportunities to use whanau support or a friend to help me ask questions and understand the study. I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.

I understand that the performers will be videotaped and that the interviews will be sound taped

I understand that taking part in this study is my choice and that I may withdraw myself or any information specific to me that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without this in any way affecting my employment. If I

withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof as practicable, will be destroyed.

However, I also understand that any group sessions I have participated in will become of general group data which is not attached to any one individual and is then a permanent part of the research process.

I understand that my participation in this study is confidential and that no material which could identify me will be used in any reports on this study.

I have had time to consider whether to take part

I know who to contact if I feel upset at any time about things that have come up during the study

I agree to take part in this research.

Participant signature:.....

Participant name: <click here and type the subject's full name>

Date: <Click here and enter date>

Researcher Contact Details: Fe Day, phone: 3600311, email: Fe.Day@aut.ac.nz, mail:

Fe Day, Te Tari Awhina, Auckland University of Technology, Private Bag 92006, Auckland

Approved by the Auckland Health Ethics Committee on 14 February 2003

Reference number AKX/03/00/040

Appendix Seven: Told and Untold Stories

	Told stories – referred to in interviews	Untold stories inspired by the performance and told in interviews
Ngākau		the struggle the dr had made to make the practice work
		body odour
	Man doctor	the kuia
	Finding her Māori roots	doing a plan for the DHB
	Heaviness of working – bowling balls	kids having sores
		being powerless when the actors misinterpreted
	Struggle of finding patients becoming a rush	being happy with one's body
	Te Reo – learning (at hui)	Māori moving out of the zone
	Young woman moving to Auckland and Ngākau – rugby family (Mt Summer performance)	
Oranga		an unpopular staff member tells
	Motley crew	our colourful history
	Mother and son league player	the awful year I had
	Confusion with Playback arriving	the big story about my dad
		what my grandparents taught me
	computer breaking down	seeing another aspect of a difficult person
	Henry's stress	when Tuesday became like Monday
	relaxing and then going back to work soon	my patients and their results
		my mum is missing us
	stress of receptionists	sending someone to the hospital
	pronounciation (at Mt Rosk perf)	my three kids
		frustrated with a colleague
		untold story of the trolley
Pātaka		when you're a solo mother you've got to put food on the table
	two mums and sick sons	
	car not starting	Feeling unsafe leaving my kids with their Dad
	difficulty diagnosing and	our protective barriers

difficult patient

death of a patient and remission

anxiety

Isabel dream she was Korean

being starved of personal development

it’s a difficult part of my life right now

my boy at boarding school

nice to know I’m not alone in being a mum

farewell to Otara

someone could always have cancer you can’t catch them all

there’s always one different child

the letting go and the protection

if there are some days I’m not on task, its because there’s a lot going ON

as a mum/grandmother you always question whether you’re doing the best in the things that you do

Appendix Eight: Transcripts of Stories in Performances

Performance Ngākau

Story – "He's a bloke"

This is the section of the performance where the misinterpretation occurred

Facilitator

What's one of the things that stands out in your mind – it could be here it could be (pause)

Staff member

Come back to me

Facilitator

Okay

Teresa

A good part is that Ben has started

Facilitator

So Ben has started and that's a good part – what's good about that?

Teresa

Ah – he's a bloke (general laughter)

Facilitator

He's a bloke

Teresa

You might take a look around and notice we're a bit scarce on blokes um and we needed a male doctor and we um needed some new energy and talent and enthusiasm and – it all came in Ben

Facilitator

Right and so so what's your name?

Teresa

Teresa

(Sounds of people leaving, as the actors are listening, their eyes are going to the movement in the audience, it seems as if they are getting distracted, the facilitator too perhaps?)

Facilitator

So how long have you been in the centre Teresa

Teresa

Two and a half years

Facilitator

Two and a half years and – and – you were very pleased when Ben was appointed

Teresa

Delighted

Facilitator

Delighted – so what would be a word for the feeling without Ben?

Teresa

Ah - stressful

Facilitator

Stressful okay and you're worried sort of, you're worried…and stressful and it's great to have this addition that takes away some of that?

Teresa

Absolutely

Facilitator

And gives you – you look so happy when you talk about it – yeah…

Okay let's see this – We'll see the time before with the worry and the stress of not having it, of not having a doctor, a male doctor and feeling like – new energy is needed…

Enactment – We need a man, perhaps a man like Ben

Action	Sound
Riana inhales sharply, bends from the waist, arms out reacning, first to the right and then turning to the left as she speaks.	Riana – I wanna man, I wanna real man
Music child's bells and drum beats, irregular, continues throughout.	
General loud laughter from the audience.	
Sonia faces towards Riana, both with breasts forward, then face turned to audience, sings in a soul singer kind of voice.	Sonia – sings, we need a man, perhaps a man like Ben
Riana turning left to right and back from the waist with arms bent and hands spread – almost marionette-like, Sonia bending from the waist behind her.	
Riana gestures with both hands to show certificate shape, making oblong shape about 1m x 500cm, in front of herself covering the top half of body.	

Sonia bending right over, arms behind her head then head down on all fours. She repeats the gesture with hands from behind her head to down, then grabs hold of Riana's leg round about the knee height, moves her hands up Riana's thigh.	R – I wanna man with a certificate that big
	S – stressful, stressful
Riana starts to sing, arm out to the right, then moving in to her body and out again, dancing.	Anyone – a man
Sonia joins in the song, gets up behind her and mirrors the dance from behind.	R – it's raining men alleluia, it's raining men – like Ben
(Was this the natural end? It looks like it. But neither picked it up. Male voice from the audience, sounds like "men" or "me")	It's raining men
	It's raining men
Sonia making phallic gesture with first of all right hand at her groin, then both hands, then arms out pelvis moving dance, as they both sing out and disco dance together, looking at each other and out at the audience.	S – It's a MAN
	Ahh
	Ahh
	Woo
Sonia looking at Riana, pulling down t-shirt, voices high, like caricatures of 'feminine'.	So much happiness now
	Oh oh
Riana looking at Sonia and smiling, fluffing out her hair, running hands down her own body, then folding arms and hugging herself. Pulling up pants.	It's so nice
	And our patients really like him
Music – clear bell sound starts, slowly then speeding up.	He's so nice
	And it's not so stressful anymore
Childlike movements, bending from waist and using shoulders, talking to each other, hunching shoulders and looking sideways with fixed smiles, body language and voices of little girls pretending to be grown up, jumping up and down, clasping hands by chin.	I'm so glad we've got a man
	For two weeks
	Two weeks of work
	Think he'll stay another two weeks?
	Hope so
	Whew Ooooh
Sonia patting upper chest with open hand. Riana clasped hands by groin. Music insistent bell.	We like Ben
	Makes us feel happy
	Makes me feel happy

When he's around.

~~~~~~

Story – "It's been a tumultuous year"

Ben

It's been a tumultuous year for me

Facilitator

Right

Ben

In as much as – my wife's a GP she's up at Oranga – I mean this time 11 months ago we had our own practice in Howick and the advent of the PHO meant that we had to jump ship – for all the reasons that Nanaia said because we had funding taken away from us, enough to make it unviable so we've been on a bit of a journey this year to find out where we're supposed to be. Fortunately Wendy found herself up at Oranga long before me you know she's sort of found herself this year and you know – she's been one happy camper! (Audience laughter)

Facilitator

Gee that's great isn't it

Ben

Well I might say, she has some Māori in her which up until now, I mean going through medical school was one place where she had to hide that fact, totally, and I mean working with sort of 99% Pākehā practice she hid it completely – so she's had a sort of liberating year this year – and more than that, she always raved about the organization, what a great outfit they were to work for…Meantime for me, you know I sort of found myself having had a practice of my own, I had nothing, I mean what was I going to do? And then things led me to here, and I'm very happy too!

Facilitator

Yeah yeah that's you know that's a that's a big journey in a way, that's a big lot of things to happen for you, things really changed. So we're going to see this as a um several sculptures, just different sculptures. And I'm going to give you the first part which is: in Howick, with the advent of the PHOs everything changed.

Enactment – We can't camp here anymore

Action	Sound
Sonia making a shape of a tent in the air	S: We have to take down our tent, we
~~~~~~

	can't camp here anymore
Music - recorder Aunty Awa looking at her, talking.	Aunty: But that's all right 'cause we're going to go to the PHO. But dear, I am going to go before you they need my services…

Facilitator

So Part Two is Ben seeing Wendy being able to go somewhere and being able to come here to Oranga and expressing something of her own heritage that she hadn't been able to before and you seeing, 'cause when you told me about that you seemed very happy for her, that that had happened because you know there was something

Ben

Oh yeah I'm stoked for her..

Facilitator

Stoked for her okay we'll see – Wendy comes

Ben

She wasn't a happy doctor in Howick, she was a happy mother and a happy wife but she wasn't that happy as a GP and now she's happy she seems very happy as a GP

Facilitator

Right so let's see this part which is – Wendy coming here and Ben seeing that and Ben is – I guess you're still taking hose two roles in a way, so Ben is still in Howick or no, still wondering what's going to happen next and Wendy is happy and he is appreciating that, observing that.. okay let's listen and watch.

Enactment – I'm finding myself I'm a Maori

Aunty Awa embraces Riana, moves away down stage left	Aunty: bye bye dear I'm off to Oranga see you later
Talking straight to the audience Moving back and forth	R: She's taken her tent, she's camped at Oranga.
Holding out her hand to mime shaking hands with audience	Aunty: Oh I'm at Oranga, there are lovely people here, I'm finding myself, I'm a Māori, tena koe Nanaia, nice to meet you, hello all you people
Riana crouched down upstage, looking at Aunty Awa, head on one side, getting up from crouched position as she speaks.	R: she looks she looks happy – she's a happy doctor
Aunty Awa, hands to mouth, speaking from behind her hands. Speaking from side to side, voice crowing. Much	Aunty: Um I'm a Māori, I just want to let you know, I'm just finding myself R: what am I going to dooo? What am I

audience laughter. Riana crouched on floor, hand to head, one leg stretched out in front	going to do?

Facilitator

Okay so the third part is, Ben finds his way here

Enactment – happy campers that we are

Aunty helping Riana get up from floor. Guiding Riana's movements, with tenderness and support.	Music, Sonia sings "Hoea ra (paddle the canoe)"
Riana shaping the tent as she did in the first scenario.	Aunty: Dear, come come. There's this job, down here at Oranga and you'll be just so so happy and I'll be up at Oranga and you can be down here at Headingley helping all the people
Aunty Awa looking at Riana as she speaks.	Riana: Can I put my tent here?
Taps head. Puts both hands on chest. Uses crowing voice. Puts arms round Riana and rests her head on Riana's chest. Riana looks upward. Riana rocks Aunty Awa and sings. Music bell ringing. Audience laughter.	Aunty: Yes yes we're going to both put our tents here. Okay? There's only one waka in this waka (canoe) it's called the Oranga waka, that's Tamaki Makau Rau, the PHO. Have you got it? 'cause I've learnt about myself. Riana: (singing) Happy campers that we are, happy campers that we are!

~~~~~~

Performance Oranga

First moment of the performance, comes after long introductions and mihi and song. And Henry's reply and saying that they have been practicing but not recently so will not sing.

Henry tries to have Nerissa explain Playback

Henry

What are you going to do

Nerissa
~~~~~~

First we have moments
Then a story
Then maybe a musical interlude
And you'll have a bit of time to yakka together then
Does that help to explain?
Henry
I think I have an idea but I don't know whether the others will
Nerissa
I expect some people won't be comfortable and some will but we'll get along with this and keep just ah developing things
Henry
But when it's our turn you might have to say

"Motley Crew"

Nerissa
Anyone a moment from this morning just getting
Nancy
Someone said to me in there at lunch time that and it wasn't' meant in a not nice way, but they said we come from a motley crew and I thought well there are different races here but we're not motley
I don't think we're motley anyway
Is that a moment

(Niwa and Marina are smiling and moving on their chairs, looking encouraging say "That's a great moment")

Nerissa
So in that moment when you hear motley what sort of comes up in you?

Nancy
Ah motley um ah motley

Someone (female)
Glue sniffers

No not glue sniffers - Someone give me a hand for motley

Henry
Heavy metal

Nancy
No – “a higgledy piggeldy bunch”

Hugh
Scruffy

Nancy
No not necessarily scruffy but – you know what I mean eh? Do you? I just think that we’re all different but we’re we’re all um

(Inaudible)

Neil – one of the actors then Sue
We’re resplendent in our motleyness

Nancy
Yes That’s what I mean

Hugh
But I think what you were not liking was that we don’t sorr of work in together

Nancy
No no I didn’t mean that no

Hugh
This is motley crew means you’re a crew you might be motley but you’re stilla crew

Nancy
But we’re not motley we’re just different

Nerissa

So we will hear Nancy's moment and then we can hear from other people even maybe about the same moment.

~~~~~~

Enactment – YOU may be motley, I am proud

Action	Sound
Niwa steps forward to stage left, stands with hands on hips, looking defiant and outraged gesturing with right hand	Niwa Huh - What? Motley? What? Motley, how dare she, we're not motley
Marina uses arms above her head and bending down, shaking them and coming to upright and making a shakey ah sound repeats these movemnents and sounds	Motley What does she mean? We're resplendent! Marina Aaah oohh
Neil climbs up on a chair upstage – gesturing with his arms and hands Smiling, arms out shoulder height, echoing Niwa's position but upstage, face smiling as Nisa's is, Marina looking quizzical.	Neil YOU may be motley, I am proud

Nerissa

Did that capture it"

Nancy

That's fine

Laughter and clapping

~~~~~~

"Precious time with my son"

Wae

My name is Wae and I am for Samoa Talofalava

I just came back from my long time away – I was going to go to Australia

I just spent some precious time with my son I didn't see him for six months

Nerissa
I think this is a story would you like to come up here

Wae
Oh I shouldn't say it

Nerissa
Would you like to choose someone to be you

Wae
I cant choose her because she's a musician?

Nerissa
You can actually

(Chooses Neil to be son)
What would be a word for your son Isaac in this story (Binah's phone goes)

Wae
Happy moments, very emotional as being away too long

Nerissa
So whereabouts would it take place

Wae
Happy moments, very emotional as being away too long. At home in Mangere
He lives in Australia cause he's a player

Nerissa
A player what's kind of a player?

Wae
He's a league player
So we've been apart for six months and he's always homesick – me missing him and for him missing us.

Nerissa

So let's um Let's have it - he's a league player so I suppose and that's a whole different world isn't it. How would you describe it how would you describe his world in Australia?

Wae

Um He's into his sports and he's focused into his league – and yeah he's lonely because he hasn't got many friends or many people except his own team mates or his own team mates he's a team mate of Gary the new Tongan player that plays for Bronco the new player

Nerissa

So he's created a friendship but he's been for home and you

So let's have the first scene in Australia in with Isaac and his world and then let's see the meeting and the being here in Mangere

Enactment- I just can't wait to see my son

Action	Music	Words
	Starts off with drum & beat boxing	Lyn as Wae
		Hello I'd like to book a flight to Australia … yes.. yes
Lavinia doubling behind Neil as he talks about being held, her arms round his waist, rocking	Singing "I'm coming to see my Mum,	
	Im coming to see my family, I'm coming home yes I am"	Neil
		Gary Maybe I could go back,
	Bells and chimes	Marina
		Yes go back
		I could go back and surprise Mum, I won't tell her Im coming Ill get off the airplane I'll catch the shuttle I'll just (knock knock knock) on the front door
		without telling
	Humming starts	I remember when I was just– well I remember being well I remember right back and I remember just being in Mum's arms she just would rock me and sing me
Using a drum for a rugby ball, first Neil by himself and then with Marina		

		– she would do everything for me
		And then as soon as I could walk I found a rugby ball
Lyn upstage packing fabrics into bag	Rattle	And then, Mum never saw me
	Drum little beats	Because I was in love with the rugby ball
Using drum as writing desk for contract	Rattle	And then I was good, then I was very good
Neil kneels down and signs on it.		Isaac Isaac Isaac!
Marina hugging herself between Neil and Lynn, swaying with the music	Chime	
	Humming same notes as before	Mum I've got my first contract – I'm going to sign on the dotted line and I'm going to Sydney
	Bell	
Walking round and round	Mmm my baby	
Neil downstage left then he turns and goes upstage, collects bags		
Neil upstage behind chairs, being held back		Lyn
		You kids be good, everybody be good, I must get to the airport.
	Humming same notes	
Lyn walking round and round the perimeter		I just can't wait to get there I can't wait to see my son and – I can't wait
	Drum swelling and creating tension and suspense	
Neil with lots of		Neil
		Come on come on I've just got to get through and see my Mum!
Holding each other	Wood blocks	
She goes to look at his shoulder		Mum!
		Mum I've got my
	Humming same notes	
		Lyn
	Guitar and singing	Your shoulder
	Humming	
		Neil
		No - more more more

Lyn

You hungry?

Neil

Yes Im hungry I'm sick of Wendy's I tell you

~~~~~~

Last third of the performance, after the Musical Interlude

People talking, the actors watching, looking at each other, smiling

Facilitator

So so where did the um just call out where did the stories take place, just call that out – where did the stories take place, what countries, what place…(pause)

Henry

Auckland

Facilitator

Mm hmm – anybody in another country? Was it um here anything related to here or um

Henry

It all happens here

Facilitator

Mm hmm This is the centre of the universe (laughter) (pause 8 seconds)

Henry

May I have a comment? At least – like in New Zealand you don't get volunteers –or very rarely - you've got a conscript with the right of refusal

Facilitator

ah you're suggesting I do the conscript with the right of refusal way?

Henry

Yeah 'cause we'll just be here till 2.30, just waiting…

Facilitator

Well it'd be good to – maybe a man could tell a story, we've had a woman tell a story…

Wae

Yeah it's the man's time now, two women three men
~~~~~~

Work coming in the door – yet I don't often let myself feel so relaxed

Henry

Lock the door (someone crosses the acting space)

Lock'em Nancy, lock 'em

Nancy

Hi (talking to the people outside

Facilitator

What's it like for you in this process, what's it like in this process, you know people are coming in, what what what happens in you?

Sue

It reminds us it kind of reminds me that for the doctors that the next lot of work to be doing is coming in the door

Facilitator

It's work coming in the door

Sue

It's work coming in the door

Facilitator

Uh huh and what's the other part of you? You know there's work coming in the door and you're sitting here, so…

Sue

It's really nice to be sitting here feeling so relaxed after the music playing and to know that… I don't often let myself feel so relaxed in a lunch hour – because that would make far too hard to crank up the work pace

Facilitator

And what's your name? You're Sue are you? Let's see this as conflict, as pairs, so the actors are going to portray both aspects of you.

Enactment – conflict between anxious working and relaxed present selves

Pair – Marina acting the anxious worker, Neil the one who is relaxed and wants to be here.

Then Niwa and Lynn play the conflict in the music

Marina	Musical pair
When's it going to end?	Wind instrument
	Sharp wooden stick percussion

Neil

Just relax, be here now

~~~~~~

Accepting the computers

Facilitator

Does anybody else have moments when you I imagine you have 'cause it happens all the time

Henry

(Someone gets up to close the door where people are trying to get in again) Pull that second door 'cause it's got a lock on it (this one?) yeah it'll self lock probably – (sounds of locking door)

Facilitator

Any other moments or conflicts …

Hugh

Mine is one that's a major one happens all the time, the computers, this particular one – there was something here in this paper I read this morning and I read at home 140 type of viruses slowing the computer down

Facilitator

And what happens for you. Reading this in the newspaper and experiencing the computers slowing down here what comes up for you

Hugh

Oh just that seeing that it's a more general thing

And

Facilitator

Frustrated or just thinking this is the way the world's going, resigned to it or – what happens?

Hugh

Not so much resigned as accepting, some of the time I might feel resigned but most of the time I accept it wait till it's fixed and carry on

Facilitator

Okay and what's your name

Hugh

Hugh
~~~~~~

Facilitator

Hugh okay let's see Hugh's moment…

~~~~~~

Enactment – the slowing computer

Movements getting slower

Wooaahhh

Slowing down –

Neil - what can you do? What can I do?

~~~~~~

"The phones are non-stop"

Facilitator

Thank you – some other people might have slow computers too…Any other moments Henry

I'm just going to lock that door

Facilitator

Yup

Wae

Us in the front and the phones are non-stop

Facilitator

The phones are non-stop, and this is where you sit and the phones are non-stop

Wae

Yeah and there's patients waiting and the same time the phone or when you put it through to the nurses for enquiry and it comes back to us

Facilitator

And what's your experience when this is all occurring

Wae

We just tell the caller to call back or – whether he or she's happy to hold or or or call back when the nurse is free

Facilitator

Okay so you're pretty laid back when when when this is happening

Wae

Yeah

Facilitator

Okay let's see Wae's moment

Enactment – Talofa lava, Oranga Medical Family Centre, may I help you?

	Talofa lava, Oranga Medical Family Centre, may I help you? (Like a mantra)
	Dring dring Dring dring
	Round here we just keep going like this we can handle this – in fact over the years I've just got very fit, just keep on going like this
	She's busy right now
	I can handle this
	Talofa lava, I'll just put you through
	It's not going to change

~~~~~~

"I'm a nervous wreck"

Facilitator

(Laughs) You're nodding your head – thank you. And Henry what's it like for you?

Henry

I was going to volunteer

Facilitator

I thought you were that's why I

Henry

I'm a nervous wreck half the time just trying I'm the sort of person I just want everyone to be happy it's my job to make everyone happy and I can't - so I feel like a nervous wreck…

Facilitator

A nervous wreck okay - Let's see Henry

Henry

But doesn't everyone? ()Laughter) Doesn't everyone else feel like a nervous wreck too?

Facilitator

I don't know – does everyone feel like a nervous wreck here?

Hugh, Sue, Nancy

No no no mmm

Facilitator
~~~~~~

Some do and some don't probably they have their moments

Nancy

But everyone has their moments

Facilitator

I sure do I'm trying my best not to be a nervous wreck here!

Henry

A moment I can handle a chronic state is …

Facilitator

So you feel like a nervous wreck sometimes and then does it go beyond that

Henry

No all the time

Facilitator

All the time, all the time nervous wreck yeah – all the time and then what happens when it gets even worse than that

Henry

I pray often …

Facilitator

Okay so that's where that's where you led to okay

Enactment – a nervous wreck (35 seconds long)

Actions	Music	Words
Niwa steps out downstage		Neil
Pulling her ponytail straight up and grimacing With pain and effort	Plucked ukelele High notes very fast	I'ts really important that you get what you want, it's really important that I help you get what you want
Neil dodges around behind her, from one side to another speaking urgently and strongly, gesturing with his hands	Niwa making non-verbal sounds Ahh Ohhh	Marina I'll make you happy, I've got to, I've got to Neil
Marina stands further upstage, shaking and looking up and down gesturing with her bent arms either side of her head	Nhhh	It's important that you're happy. I've spent my whole life making other people happy, I've been put on this earth to make people happy
Niwa crumples in on herself with her arms folded around her head. Then breaks out trying to push them away with her arms		Marina Ommm

behind both Neil and Marina Then she collapses down, Neil kneels down, Marina puts hands together and hums , they come to a slow finish	Neil Dear God

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Henry

It's close

Facilitator

So it was close in that it gets worse than that?

Henry

I liked the music

Neil

It's hard to see us

Facilitator

Okay – anyone else. (Pause 12 seconds) This might be a close, this might be it, so that we have a few minutes before one o'clock, before two o'clock…

Henry asks about the process of the research and Fe answers, then Nancy gives a short speech in Māori to finish the occasion and then we all sing:

E hara i te mea	It is not the case
No inaianei te aroha	That love comes only from these days
No ngā tupuna	It is from the ancestors
I tuku iho i tuku iho	Handed down, handed down.

Performance Pātaka

Story about a doctor asking a colleague for advice – "I felt I was getting too you know wound up"
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Nerissa
Who has a story that they'd like to see in a bit more detail – this is where you get to choose the actors to be the different people in the story or elements in the story or objects in the story

Kay
I've got one

Nerissa
You've got one? Okay

Kay
Um I'm Kay where do I go? Out there? Can I sit there?

Nerissa
Yeah yeah whew! you can sit there

Kay [10 50]
This is um this is a situation of relief really, of a man I saw yesterday who has finally actually got a bit better and Marney actually I

Nerissa
So choose someone to be the man

Kay
Neil

Nerissa
Neil – and how old is he

Kay
He's 40 – 38 and fairly slim and (she gets up and bends from the waist) not very confident looking and quite anxious (she sits down)

Nerissa

And you're in the story – choose someone to be you

Kay
Maybe you (to Marina) you're me (grimace) um – shall I tell you about the story, tell you about the man?

Nerissa
Yes tell

Kay
The nurses know this man well and the journey for me with him was that it brought up a lot of my insecurities I guess as a practitioner and that struggle with dealing with ongoing anxiety – my anxiety – and uncertainty really - cause this man was I didn't think was had an organic illness, I thought it was a sort of mind body connection – and we saw him various times once or twice with various chest pains and things and one of the things for me was trying to keep his illness in perspective. He had a cyst on his back right here that became infected and inflamed and he felt it could be cancer – and I was interested to observe myself really in terms of how insecure I got about my judgement of that to the extent that I said "Look Come and see Marney tomorrow and she's good at these things have a look, Marney will have a look too" and gain some other more objective experience because I felt I was getting too you know wound up in the situation
And I saw the man yesterday with great relief because he's gained some weight, the pains have gone and he's on the road to recovery

Nerissa
Uh huh – and you've had a part to play in this, I wonder what your part is

Kay (laughing)
Well that's another dilemma really isn't it – did I prolong the illness, did I assist him in the journey as ably as I could have? (13.16)

Nerissa

I work as a counsellor and therapist so I certainly have these kind of questions myself and there's always that marvellous moment when the person you know develops their functioning and you know they get ready to say goodbye

Kay
Yes Yes which happened yesterday – he said, do I do you want to see me again and I said Ooh No! And I said what about you, and he said Oh No not really and …

Nerissa
And what do you think Marney's part was in this? Can we – choose K to be Marney…

Marney
I remember when I saw him once upon a time right at the beginning of all those various symptoms that he had and sending him off to hospital and all the rest of it I came rushing across town through rush hour traffic and I kept on thinking "what an amazing wife" and um with all these various symptoms and I very matter of factly did whatever I did and sent him on his way – and I was amazed just last week when I um saw him to catch up on all the subsequent events that happened after that one time cause a lot of them had repeated and carried on and gone through all sorts of various ramifications and I thought "Wow!" and then I saw him about um as the second opinion and hoped that what I did was going to make some contribution and said "Come back and see you!" (laughing) [end of disk] As follow up because basically you'd been so involved

Kay
He's one of these guys that as I said at the beginning he's a symptom of this whole thing that, as I said in the beginning is often MORE difficult with refugees and migrants where we don't necessarily understand their health attitudes and behaviour and on the one level

Nerissa
So this man is from another culture?

Kay
Yeah and on one level, objectively you know there's nothing organically wrong with this and on the other level it's all the but what ifs, you know he's got chest pain you've

got to exclude heart disease and there's other less urgent things to exclude, he's got back pain and you query TB and these yeah

Nerissa
You're very thorough in your approach to someone and their health.

Kay
Yes I guess

Nerissa
I guess
We're going to see your story

Kay
Can I go back now?

Nerissa
Yes, yes if you'd like to

Enactment **– one step at a time one day at a time**
~~~~~~

Ngaire
Singing
A long way-ay a little goes a long long way,
one step at a time one day at a time,
all it takes
Is one step at a time, one day at a time,
is all it takes is for someone to listen,
someone to care

Karen stands behind Marina as the teller's actor with her arms around Marina's shoulders and neck
Karen
God Jo what's going to be here today – will you know what to do
~~~~~~

Marina

I'm going to, I'm going to start and do this and then I'm going to do this (making square gesture with both hands, waist height)

Karen

Oh but what if it's wrong Jo?

Marina

I've done a, I've done a lot of work with this patient

Karen

What if what if you prolong the illness?

Marina

No no I'm really confident about this

Karen

You're not

Marina

I'm going to send him to see Marney, I'm going to send him to see Marney

Music, ringing

Enter Neil as patient

Karen on Neil's back

Karen –

I'm cancerous

Neil

Check this one out

Marina

I've really

Neil

It's not good this one

Karen

I'm multiplying…

Music drumming

Marina

No, no, I'm actually going to get Marney to see you – do you remember Marney?

Neil
When I bend over – oh (bending over)
Marina
And we'll see, we'll see what Marney says

Karen walks across the stage as Marney
That's a cyst – that's just a little bit enflamed, a little bit of infection – not cancer…
Neil
Oh
Karen
It'll be better in no time
Neil
You know better, you know better, I've seen her before you know better you're you're my doctor now

Neil straightens up slowly
Marina
Mmm Gee – you've put on a bit of weight
Neil
Eating a bit better
Marina
Oh you know I've checked everything, everything's doing well – and how are you feeling?
Neil
Oh you know that horrible big thing's gone (rotating left shoulder) I can get up in the morning on my own
Marina
So where do you think we should go from here? Do you think you need to see me again?
Neil
I think you've cured me – I think very good, you're very good doctor yeah (shaking her hand)
Marina
Okay yep
Neil

Okay, I'll come back when I'm sick

Marina

Okay

Neil

I'll go and have a life now

Karen

Hey Kay, shall we do some more stuff together?

Marina

No no we're fine, we're fine thank you we're fine (nodding).

~~~~~~

*Story about mortality- "***a woman who died of a condition that I actually had" (3 minutes and 16 seconds telling)**

Nerissa

It's like there was some laughter of recognition there – huh for other people? Does anyone else have a story, I think we have time for another story – I know you all get started again at 1.30 is that right? (looks at watch) Yes, a small story…

Trish

Yes

Nerissa

All right, come out – oh you want to do it from there?

Trish

Oh it's just how um

Nerissa

I'm sorry I've forgotten your name..?

Trish

I'm Trish. Just how sometimes conditions that patients have can sort of bring up um memories of what's happened in your own life and trying to actually be able to deal with those and one that I remember is um a woman who died of a condition that I actually had and had been treated for and I'd been away and came back and

Nerissa
~~~~~~

So choose someone to be that woman

Trish

Oh (pointing)

Neil

Marina

Nerissa

Marina – and choose someone to be you

Trish

Yeah um - K

Nerissa

Is it okay to say what the condition is?

Trish

Yeah, it was cancer, and I'd had it twice and been treated for it and this woman who was a patient of ours also had breast cancer and was treated and was doing quite well and um [06:06] all of a sudden she got ill again and died within a couple of weeks and it was….quite difficult for me for a little while

Nerissa

It's a very very difficult thing isn't it? Yes to, because it's your mortality you're facing too

Trish

And and of course your patients don't know that you've been there done that…

Nerissa

Yes so what is your role here?

Trish

I'm a nurse

Nerissa

Yes – and so she wouldn't have known that…

Trish

Mm and you've always got to be up there all the time and yet you've got this demon fighting you as well if you can understand what I mean

Nerissa

Being up there and having the demon as well

Okay let's see this

~~~~~~

Enactment **– when you work in medicine you are working with me (3 minutes and 15 seconds)**

Music actors huddle

Neil

When you work in medicine you are working with me hah

Marina

Mm my hair's starting to drop out a bit

K

But it'll grow back

Marina

Will it? I'm feeling a lot better

Neil

And you never know when I'm going to appear

K

You're looking a lot better

Marina

Am I?

K

And your diagnosis is good

And you've been treated for it and things are improving

Marina
~~~~~~

Yeah I mean yeah I can do more than I used to be able to

Neil
Or who I'm going to affect

K
Just back off

Neil
And have

K
Get down, I'm up there, I'm a nurse, I'm up there

Neil
(Growls) I want to take you too – I want to take you too – and I might come back for you…

K
Go away
This wasn't meant to happen
I didn't see it going this way

Music - Tangi tangi atu

Marina
I thought I was getting well

K
Sometimes it just feels really really hard to climb up here – but I do it –

Neil
And I live in the clinics and I live in the streets

Marina

It’s okay, it’s okay It happens.

~~~~~~

Nerissa

Thank you Trish Is there something that you want to say now?

Trish

They did it they did it well. Sometimes it’s a struggle to um you know to keep to keep that that positiveness you know you have to keep positive but occasionally little things happen and the fear comes back and it’s always with you.

Marney

It’s really powerful.
~~~~~~

Appendix Nine: Applying Te Wheke to Playback

In this section I apply Rangimarie Rose Pere's Te Wheke model to Playback to see what insights this may generate.

Te Wheke model of health and education

This model of the constitution of the human being has been given by Dr Rangimarie Rose Te Turuki Pere. Of it she says "The Octopus of Great Wisdom with its three hearts can take us to so many different levels. I never cease to be amazed at the amount of knowledge that can come into one's existence" (Pere, 2006). Currently in Aotearoa New Zealand it is used to help people apprehend the subtleties of delivering health and education to Māori, and across all cultures. (See *Two Māori models of health* on page 220). Pere states that though it was conceptualised by Māori, it has been tested by centuries of practical application: she emphasizes that Te Wheke

> …has powerful imagery for me, and helps me to sort out life's challenges. It helps me to honour my total well being, and to uphold those traditions that enable me to do so. It links me into the oneness of everything that exists. (Pere, 2006)

Throughout the years of this exploration, regular journeys to Waikaremoana, the home of Dr Pere and her family have been made and often Playback workshops or performances done there; her support of the application for ethics approval of this project was key. In this section of this chapter, I apply the Te Wheke model to the dimensions of Playback, to see what insights are generated, especially for Playback practitioners. The references are to several written documents by Dr Pere and the ones given as personal communication (R.R. Pere, personal communication, February 9 or 11, 2007) refer to lecture notes made from lectures she delivered in Tamaki Makau Rau, Auckland, during early 2007.

Taha Tinana – physical dimension

Playback is rooted in physicality: it explores embodied cognition and expresses health and self love. Pere says "love yourself to the nth degree!" (R.R. Pere, personal communication, February 9, 2007) All kinds of physical expression are important: "agility, dexterity, rhythm, coordination, balance, harmony, poise, stamina and the sheer joy of being human" (Pere, 2003, p.24). A common theme of Pere's lectures is the importance of not comparing oneself with others: she teaches with stories and tells of a man who visited her and pulled his pants down, asking for healing because one leg was withered and thus smaller than the other. She told him, "Put on your pants you stupid man! The only thing wrong with that leg is that you are stupid enough to compare it to the other one. You can walk can't you?" (R.R. Pere, personal communication, February 11, 2007)

Whanaungatanga – kinship ties, extended family across the universe

Relationship is not just with one's own family but with all families in the universe! Our Kainga Rua Playback company say in our promotional material that we tell stories from "Aotearoa and the Milky Way." Pere emphasizes that our social side is limitless and links in with the four directions. Whanaungatanga, especially with one's own extended family

> is the area where one's aroha (unconditional love based on the same divine presence and breath of life) is tested to the fullest extent….From as far back as the writer [Pere] remembers learning about whanaungatanga, she heard and knew about her many ancestors, her many grandparents, her many parents and her many brothers and sisters across the universe. She learnt that everything across the universe is inter-related and is perfect until it is compared to something else, or is influenced by negative forces. (2003, p.26)

In Playback stories, relatedness is shown, when actors take the roles, move and speak as animals, objects or organizations. The Va or space between in Samoan emphasizes the same

concept:

> This definitive space between all things, the *va* and *va-tapuia*, are concepts in Samoan society involving human relations/relationships in time and space, whether it is mythological (as in the watery spaces out of which Tagaloa, the Polynesian god, created the heavens and the earth) (Kramer 1994, 539-544), temporal or personal ... Aiono F. Le Tagaloa, former Professor of Samoan Studies at the National University in Apia, explains: 'there is the *va-tapuia* between brother and sister (the *feagaiga* relationship, the equivalent to a 'sacred covenant'); the *va-tapuia* between the parent (especially father/mother) and offspring; there is the *va-tapuia* between male and female, between male and male - female and female; there is the *va-tapuia* between host and guest, there is the *va-tapuia* between *matai*; there is the *va-tapuia* between the dead and the living; there is the *va-tapuia* between man and his environment - sea and sky, flora and fauna; then there is the *va-tapuia* between the created and the Creator.' (Tagaloa personal communication 1994). (Va'ai, 2005, p.9)

Hannah Arendt described the "physical worldly in-between" and the way a "web of human relationships" takes place within it (1958, pp.183-184):

> the physical, worldly in-between along with its interests is overlaid and, as it were, overgrown with an altogether different in-between which consists of deeds and words and owes its origin exclusively to people's acting and speaking directly to one another...We call this reality the 'web' of human relationships....The disclosure of the 'who' through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always fall into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt...It is because of this already existing web...that action almost never achieves its purpose…

For Playback practice, this tentacle, whanaungatanga, of Te Wheke the octopus, demands that practitioners consciously see those whom we meet in the performances and through the stories told, as relations of ours: whether the role be one we would normally take on or not; whether it is that of a war-monger, a criminal, a distant planet or a pair of shoes.

Hā, Taonga Tuku Iho – breath, treasures that have come down

In this model, a person's culture is a cloak which they aim to carry with pride. "One important belief is that AIO Wairua [divine source] has given a unique heritage to each and every culture across the world….The way that people transmit their culture helps make cultural diversity enriching and exciting" (2003, p.28). There are several implications from this: first that one gives priority to knowing one's own cultural roots and sees them as travelling with us in the world, nourishing and being nourished by us. Particularly, one's suppressed or discriminated against cultures need to be reclaimed and celebrated. An active role in transmitting culture is given to the older generation and both men and women are involved in this:

> Grandfathers, fathers, particularly spend as much time with their young offspring as the mothers and grandmothers. Like the women, the men could perform the nursing duties for young infants with great tenderness and care. Both men and women were involved with delivering babies. The writer's grandparents generation was just as close as the parents generation. She was included and involved in everything they did. (Pere 2003, p28)

Then, the culture of others is to be acknowledged and seen as just as important to them as one's own culture is to oneself. For Playback groups, cultural composition has to be a concern in a multiethnic society. For us in Kainga Rua, this has meant that we cannot maintain the traditional Playback rhythm of weekly rehearsal, simply because the commitments of Māori company members made it impossible. Instead, periodically during the year, we gather for 24 hours (sleeping and performing in the traditional meeting house which is part of the university at which I work) and spend time together, in an intergenerational group in which all help to look after the younger children and all are expected to participate as equals. Children as young

as four have been able on one or two occasions to play the role of musician superbly in small performances, in the event of a company member being unable to attend, because of their exposure to this training and rehearsal process. This way of configuing creative practice is diametrically opposed to the European atelier which excludes children but it has brought the possibility of operating in terms of respecting the taonga tuku iho of Māori group members.

Ranga Whatumanawa – relating to the emotions and senses

According to Pere

> there is a time and place for every emotion that a human being can have. The author was encouraged to express rather than repress her emotions. …it is not unusual to see both men and women cry for sadness or sometimes joy. Tears are regarded as coming from the sacred pools of healing. No one is seen to be too emotional…" (2003, p. 30).

Playback is an excellent example of a form of activity that explicitly uses the receptivity of Whatumanawa "The all seeing eye of the heart" (R.R. Pere, personal communication, February 9, 2007); which is sometimes described as intuition, the synthesis of all perception that has impinged on us both consciously and unconsciously through the senses. Playback also aims to be a rich communication form in sensory terms, where the validity of emotions is affirmed and strong emotional expression fully accepted. This has implications for Playback company life as well as honest reflection of stories and welcoming of emotional content.

Hinengaro – the female who is known and also hidden, the mind

This concept of the mind is not one that is seen as being in a binary struggle with either tinana, body or whatumanawa, emotion; nor is it identified with the male or masculine, as in Cartesian dualism. Instead as one of the eight dimensions of a person the wholeness of this 'hidden mother in all of us' (R.R. Pere, personal communication, February 9, 2007) is emphasized:

> Hine (female) is the conscious whole of the mind including ngaro (hidden) the closed consciousness. Hinengaro refers to the mental, intuitive and 'feeling' seat of the emotions. Thinking, knowing, perceiving, remembering, recognising, feeling, abstracting, generalising, sensing, responding and reacting are all processes of Hinengaro – the mind. Another name for the open intuitive mind is Rongo-ma-tane…the personification of peaceful pursuits…The closed conscious mind also carries another name, that of Tu-matau-enga (the personification that stands for rationale understandings…. The writer was brought up to be absolutely fearless so that no one could control her by fearor by tampering with her mind. The hinengaro – the mind must be free to move in an infinite direction. (Pere, 2003, p. 32)

Pere associates Rongo and Tu with right and left brain and thus hinengaro includes whole-brain learning, acknowledged in many educational settings including that referred to by Felder who wrote about how brain dominance was used to prevent one cohort of engineering students dropping out because of the courses being taught In a way that emphasized only one brain modality:

> In the early 1990s, Edward Lumsdaine and Jennifer Voitle, then of the University of Toledo's engineering college, studied the [brain dominance] types of the college's students and faculty members. They found that many engineering students and professors were left-brain thinkers--logical, analytical, verbal, and sequential. Their data also indicated a strong attrition rate among right-brain thinkers, with many of them dropping out despite earning top grades in analytical courses. ...The authors

> reviewed the existing mechanical engineering curriculum, found it skewed toward left-brained thinking skills, and set out to provide a better balance by introducing more creativity, design, innovation, and teamwork into selected courses. Students worked in teams formed by the professors to provide balance in HBDI [brain dominance] types. Student performance levels and attitudes to the course improved considerably because of these changes. (Felder, 2001, p.21)

Playback allows people to engage the whole brain as they work with left brain sequentiality, logic and words alongside right brain spatial organization, creativity, and music. The richness of both the brain hemispheres working together creates a memorable event: as one of the interviewees remarked: "I could probably give you some detail on everyone who spoke… I'm sure I'll be able to recount everything that happened pretty accurately so I could say "Yes it's a good memory aid"" while another said:

> I remember the girls that were um you know doing the role plays and some of the staff that got up and spoke about themselves… I remember quite a bit of sense of humour coming out of it and also people were able to I think identify certain staff members by the role playing

Looking at brain function and memory in regard to language learning, Kennedy (2006) suggested that:

> Enriched environments promote neuronal development. We use our emotions to tell us what is important to learn and what to remember. The brain stores information based on functionality and meaningfulness. Emotions drive attention. Attention drives learning and memory. (p. 479)

Many of these principles are built into the world view which Te Wheke illustrates and Playback as an activity has the potential to bring this affect-rich, relationship-based and multi-sensory learning into play.

Mauri – life principle, thymos, psyche

Mauri "can pertain to the life principle and the ethos of animate and inanimate things" (Pere, 1983, p.32). It is "an abstract concept and is extremely difficult to define in English" (2003, p.12); however, in my experience, once learnt about, it is an extremely useful and applicable concept. Everything is seen as having a life force and the actions people take and reactions they have to each other either strengthen or weaken that life force. Pere particularly applies this to children, asking:

> How carefully do we feel for and consider the mauri of every child in our care? Have we done everything we can do to build up that mauri or do we damage it in a small way each day? It is the right of every child to get the best from the family or community she or he lives in. If a child feels that she or he is respected and accepted then her or his mauri waxes. (Pere, 2003, p.12)

Every person can learn to take care of their life force:

> If anyone brings negative energy into my space, my presence, I move into 'neutral', so that I can move back from the situation that brought us together, to find the solution. I refuse to have people lumber me with their 'baggage'. My mother did not give birth to me, a 'Miracle', just to have someone, trample, insult, or violate me. (Pere, 2006, p.2)

This reverberates with a central concept of Hannah Arendt's thinking relating to this miraculous fact of natality:

> This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and in all

> origins. Thus, the origin of life from inorgainic matter is an infinite improbability of inorganic processes, as is the coming into being of the earth viewed from the standpoint of processes in the universe, or the evolution of human out of animal life. The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability…the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle…with each birth, something uniquely new comes into the world. With respect to this somebody who is unique it can be truly said that nobody was there before. (Arendt, 1958, p.178)

In her work Ako, a monograph reprinted by the Te Kohanga Reo National Trust Board,[211] Pere writes about facilitation in terms of life force:

> Tangata mauri…deals with policy making and the role of facilitators within each whanau or hapu. These people devise a plan of action to cater for the needs of the people particularly in regard to group undertakings….The best schemes are those that enable all the adult members of a whanau to come in and participate so that there is an even distribultion of energy, power, labour and credits. Facilitators who do not know and observe the qualities, strengths, attitudes and the contributions of other members of the whanau will not bring about the full benefits that such a network can make possible. (1983, p.33)

This concept is applicable in Playback to both people who facilitate performances (conductors) and to the wellbeing of companies. It is helpful to look at the level of life force in individual members and to aim to enhance each other's life force and that of the group as a whole. This alerts the team to becoming aware of the mauri of the groups with whom they work in performance and the need to work to support the mauri of the group.

Another important dimension of mauri is to do with environmental awareness:

> Do we consider the mauri of other living things? Do we feel for the mauri of the bush, the mauri of the sea, the mauri of the stars, the mauri of the sun? …What about the mauri of Paptuanuku (earth mother)? Papatuanuku gives and we continue to take. An important tradition of the Māori is to plant another tree of trees should one be chopped down and used. Some of the first Europeans who came to Aotearoa scoffed at the Māori and their 'Gods'. What they did not fully appreciate was the fact that everything in the universe is regarded as having the same divine right. All the influences that one feels are personified as much as possible, so that one can see herself or himself as being inter-related with everything across the universe. (2003, p. 12)

For Playback actors and musicians, this is a support to the impulse to embody the natural world in a given story: to speak or sing for the sea, the trees, the stars. Playback work is part of helping people to feel the mauri of the environment surrounding them, animate or inanimate. We can speak for the cars, the buildings, the oil, the computer!

Mana- uniqueness, divine right, influence, prestige

Mana is another hard concept to translate, so much so that it has transferred into English as a noun used in its own right: Oxford Reference Online defines mana as

> A Melanesian and Polynesian word (also found in Maori), imported into analytical psychology by Carl Gustav Jung (1875 –1961), denoting a supernatural life force, normally originating from the head or the spirit world, that can be concentrated in

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[211] responsible for the Māori language preschool network throughout New Zealand

other people or objects and inherited and transmitted between people, and that confers high social status and ritual power (Oxford Reference Online, 2006)

For Pere, it is the bedrock of all her teachings:

Taku mana, taku mana, mana motuhake - Taku mana, taku mana, mana motuhake - Taku ihi, taku ihi, taku wanawana - Taku ihi, taku ihi, taku wanawana
My absolute uniqueness, my vested authority is paramount - My authority, my life force is awe inspiring. There has never been anyone else exactly like me, and there never will be. I am a unique being… I have a direct line to the Source of Life, and I do not need anyone to mediate on my behalf. I cannot repeat this enough times. I am from Ra Ngati Ra (the living breath from the beginning and the ending of the Central Sun, the Divine Spark) and so are you (2003, p.14).

Mana can be handed down usually to the oldest in a generation, although it can also be earned by outstanding performance in a certain role. We all have a responsibility to take care of our own mana:

Again I will not let negative energy move into my 'sacred space' if I can possibly help it. I was brought up to believe that I was perfect, unless or until I compared myself with someone else. I was brought up to believe in and love myself. (Pere, 2006)

In Playback practice, people's uniqueness can be both demonstrated and enjoyed: both in audiences and in company life. Comparisons will damage this and the evaluative, comparative thinking of so much of western-based thinking needs to be challenged by Playback's conscious demonstration and support of the uniqueness of each person.

Wairua – spiritual dimension

One of Pere's sayings is: "I believe I am a 'spirit' having a physical journey" (2006, p. 1). In her 2006 address to the Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect she goes on to say of this tentacle of Te Wheke, referring to the etymology of wairua, wai (waters) rua (two): "Spiritual dimension. Spirituality – two waters. I need to keep myself spiritually safe" (2006, p.1). In Te Wheke (2003), she makes it clear that this is not about a specific religion, writing:

There are both the positive and negative streams to consider. Everything has a wairua, for example, water can give or take life. It is a matter of keeping a balance….The Māori people who have retained their own ancient teachings have always believed in AIO Matua, (God/Goddess, the Divine Parents)…The natural place of worship/communion with AIO Wairua is Papatuanuku – Mother Earth, where one can relate to the hills, spaces of water, the heavens, everything that is a part of us. The communication is at any time, with any one, any where and any place. The writer respects all cultures and religions. Who is she to judge or question? (p.16)

Given adequate practice of the forms of Playback, existential metanarratives will emerge, as they did in the practical work of this project. In my view, partly guided by the weaving arms of the octopus, what is important, in those moments, is to forbear from metaphysical imposition, but to keep as much as possible the sense of not-knowing which maintains our openness to the infinite: as Sheehan says in his commentary on Heidegger: "Ever unfinished and always on-the-way, we may think of ourselves as stretched out towards full self-presence, but we never arrive there. Our lack-of-full-being is what makes us be human…Our lack-in-being 'causes' and maintains our openedness." (2001, p.199).

In 2006, I had the honour of hearing a public lecture from Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi in which he contrasted "god-sickness" which to him was "the dimensions of complacency created by theology, religion, Church and culture" (Tui Atua, 2006, p. 1) with the kind of gap registered by us as people in terms of a lack of final understanding, which he identified as "God-chasing."

Indeed, in the concept of horizon of understandings, there is always a further, beyond that horizon: "Man 'belongs originally'…to the open…and the open itself…is something which thought cannot get beyond." (Caputo, 1987, p.101)

As Pere says, in sharing the model Te Wheke, "All the influences that one feels are personified as much as possible" because that is the way people can perceive our relatedness with the environment and our human context - and act on it. In his lecture, Tupua finished by quoting Michael King a beloved New Zealand historian and scholar:

> In the rise of mist from the estuary and the fall of rain, in the movements of the incoming and outgoing tides, I see a reflection of the deepest mystery and most sustaining pattern in all of life: that of arrival and departure, of death and regeneration. And, in seeing them, I feel satisfaction. I am thankful that this piece of earth exists and we upon it, to see and to experience these things: and – thanks to the miracle of human consciousness – to know that we experience them" (King, 2004, pp. 240-241).` (cited in Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, 2006, p.15)

The model of Te Wheke is, to me, very useful to Playback practice, particularly in the dimensions contained within it which are not commonly identified in other ways of looking at what constitutes a person: here I particularly think of hā, mauri and mana. In the practice of Playback finely drawn perceptions, distinctions and expressions are needed: I offer this description of a philosophical framework from our environment of Aotearoa, as a contribution to assist us all to develop our practice. I honour the world view from which it comes – ka nui te whakawhetai ki a koutou, ko Whaea Rangimarie Te Turuki ko to whānau ataahua.